



# CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE



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# Christianity

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THEME EDITOR: Brent Lewis

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## God Cares For Us Nobodies

**W**hy me? Does that ever bother you? It does me. Maybe you think that because no one knows who you are that you are not particularly important. Or perhaps you have some feeling that because of your relative insignificance, it doesn't matter whether you live a life of holiness and goodness. After all, nobody notices anyway. Furthermore, doing evil sometimes at least brings some sort of recognition, even if it's the wrong kind. After all, acceptance is important for all of us, right?

Most of us feel inferior at times. We have feelings of inadequacy or we feel unimportant. So much of this kind of feelings is normal, even actually serves a good purpose, causing us not to think too highly of ourselves. But the Christian has vision. He will not long be affected by such feelings. The reason is simple. He can see beyond them. His faith connects him to the Divine, anchors him firmly to that which transcends time and lands in eternity. He is motivated by visions of that which is better, that which is reserved for the faithful. He has his eye on the goal. A realization that God knows who I am will not allow me to feel unimportant very long.

It impresses me greatly that God has noticed the insignificant, that He has not neglected those of us who are the nobodies in life. We may never be powerful or have a recognizable name or face, but He knows who we are. He sees me in my insignificance. I really like the thought of that.

The Bible makes heroes out of nobodies. In 2 Kings 5, the little Israelite girl who was the servant of the wife of Naaman is not even named, but she is of vital importance to the story, for it is because of her concern that Naaman contacts the prophet Elisha and eventually is healed of his leprosy. What a fine young lady she was. What devotion to God she had. What faith in His prophet. And what is her name? Insignificant? Never! I'll tell you one thing—Naaman knew who she was. He may very well have named his next youngster after her.

But the greatest story of God's care for the simple people is in the New Testament story of Jesus' appearance to the two men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). Jesus has just been resurrected from the dead. Interestingly, He does not show Himself to the Sanhedrin, or to the news media of His day, nor to some huge throng of people somewhere. No, he appears to two simple, insignificant

men on the road to Emmaus. Who were they? No one knows. Oh, we are given the name of one, but even that name means nothing at all to us. And in the very midst of a busy schedule of personal appearances designed to authenticate His resurrection, He takes considerable time to teach two simple men. How odd. Why did He not make some more public declaration instead of appearing to these two obscure people? Somehow it seems to me that Jesus wants us average folks to know that He cares for us, too.

**A**nd then there's God's great hall of honor for the faithful. Just as baseball has its hall of fame, and football, and hockey, and cowboys, and aviation, and on and on, even so God has enshrined certain individuals in His great Hall of Faith, I call it. Obviously I speak of Hebrews, chapter eleven. As you enter, you are impressed with the murals of the great men of God—men like Noah, Enoch, Moses (you can see him in the painting as he stands on a huge rock, with the wind in his hair, his nostrils flared, his eyes blazing and his shepherd's rod stretched out over the parting Red Sea). Over there is Abraham, and Sarah stands by his side. And on the other side there is Joseph, and Isaac, and David, and Gideon, and on and on.

But at the end of the hall of fame for the faithful there is a curious plaque. There is no painting, only a simple statue standing stern, feet firmly planted and with a buckler in one hand and a sword in the other, obviously poised for the most intense conflict. It is an inscription to the unknown heroes of faith. The inscription says that they were so important that the world "was not worthy" of them. And who were they? There are no names on the plaque, no accolades paid to these individuals by name. But God knows them! Yes, He knows every name. Not one hero of faith has escaped His attention—or His appreciation. He has forgotten none. What a thought! How grand the realization that even though the world never knows, He sees. His all-seeing eye reaches even insignificant me!

Folks, it's time we stopped being ashamed of who we are. We are not nobodies. It's time that we put confidence back in our step, and the smile of acceptance back on our faces. We walk with the King, people! He knows us! We are His and He is ours!



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# Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 663 Denise Drive, Melbourne, FL 32935

## Some reflections on Saratoga, Arkansas

Dear brother Bowman:

Recently, in *Christianity Magazine*, you referred to Barney Stanton. We lived in Saratoga in the 60's—one of the first works in preaching my husband undertook. Saratoga was quite a unique place and laid a good foundation for the years to come.

I thought you might enjoy an article my husband wrote in the bulletin he edits [*article follows this piece*]. It was dated September 7, 1983.

Not too many people know that Saratoga had three churches in town in the 60's. I do not know about the present situation there. All three were churches of Christ. One, the faithful blacks; another, the faithful whites; still another, a group that supported human institutions. At that time, there were no denominations located there. My husband preached for the blacks and whites. It had never crossed their minds at that time to meet with the whites, though I am sure there would have been no objections if anyone had just thought about it.

The entire school system in Saratoga was made up of those who had heard the gospel. Teachers were members of the church, the principal was a member of the church, even the coach and his wife were members of the church. Many times, raising our children, we have thought about how wonderful to raise our children in such an atmosphere. We got homesick for Florida and came back, but sometimes wonder if our children have missed such an atmosphere as only Saratoga could give.

There never was a smarter bunch of teenagers than the class my husband was privileged to teach at Saratoga. They would work hard and do memorization that most people would not believe. Brother Stanton made sure all the little boys grew up knowing how to lead singing. They might not use the ability later down the road, but it wasn't because they didn't know how. Most of the teenagers grew up in the little hometown, eventually fell in love with one that was already a member of the church, and later married and settled down there, not leaving

the area. We have never run into another place quite like Saratoga!

Just thought you would enjoy hearing a little about Saratoga and the Stantons. We love them, too.

Janelle Hastings  
Dade City, Florida

## "Up In Paradise Valley . . ."

Our friendship began with Barney and Eron Stanton when my wife and I moved far away from our relatives to the little town of Saratoga, Arkansas, to proclaim the gospel. They were the kind that would take you into their home, make you feel welcome with hospitality, want you to share Sunday dinner, etc., with them. Eron was the faithful companion of Barney, a tall, devout Christian and an elder in the Lord's church. They were married almost sixty-five years. Recently, when Eron passed from this life, Barney wrote to us, "We had a happy life together." This happy life was an inspiration to all who knew them. When a husband and wife sincerely serve the Lord, their relationship will be a happy one.

They trained their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Barney wrote, "All of our children are faithful Christians." This fact brought great comfort to Eron. I agree with the apostle, John, "Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth" (3 John 4). Precious memories were hers to enjoy.

The Lord's church at Saratoga was the most important thing in their lives. I recall Eron saying, "I live to go to church." When one service was over, she was eagerly anticipating the next. She felt the way David felt about worship to God: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord!" (Psalm 122:1). God wants all of His children to live for the purpose of worshipping Him.

My wife and I were sitting in a singing, following a gospel meeting one night, when tears came to my wife's eyes. She explained to me, "That particular song just reminded

me of the Stantons." Eron could teach and admonish in song. She was blessed with a beautiful alto voice, and her husband with a strong bass voice. As they would sing the words, one would be impressed with the genuineness of their praise. I can still hear her singing, "Up In Paradise Valley . . ." Now, she has gone to see what she was singing about.

She loved to read from God's word. It was work for her to read, because she had poor eyesight, but she tried hard to study from His will and obey it. She listened carefully to each sermon preached. She loved to hear the wonderful words of life.

The Lord greatly blessed us letting Eron and Barney influence our lives. We are so thankful for such a godly woman. She will be missed. Her influence will live on. She was determined to "do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8). "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

In many ways, Eron was like the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31; therefore, I will close with these words: "Her children rise up, and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praiseth her, saying, Many daughters have done worthily, But thou excellest them all."

Don R. Hastings  
Dade City, Florida

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*We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?*





# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Progeny

**T**he instinct to reproduce ourselves is surely one of the strongest drives in man—perhaps the strongest.

It has little, if anything, to do with the sexual urge; our desire for offspring is more psychological; it somehow fits our finite existence into the infinite scheme of things.

Have you ever wondered about the extraordinary importance of progeny in the minds of the patriarchs of the Old Testament? To be the father of many nations, of countless descendants, was considered a consummate blessing. I wonder why? I count it a small misfortune when a genetic line comes to an end (and I probably would feel it rather keenly were it mine), but I do not regard such matters with the gravity of the patriarchs.

The answer, I believe, has to do with a Christian's more spiritual perception of family. When one becomes a Christian, he enters a new family—"and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:18). Within that spiritual family, where we all become the children of God, there are all the human relationships which exist in the physical world. There are older women and younger women—mothers and daughters. There are bachelors with devoted sons. As Paul wrote of Timothy to the Philippians: "But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served me in the gospel" (Philippians 2:22). So he could address the book of 2 Timothy "to Timothy, my dearly beloved son" (1:2). Paul had a vast progeny who loved and honored him. They were the legacy he left to the world after him.

Our physical descendants are and should be precious to us. Christians have special obligations to love, nurture and teach our children. But my children are most dear to me as my spiritual children.

One of my students at the university paid me a

compliment at the conclusion of this semester. She coyly told me that she wished she had a grandfather just like me. I confess I was somewhat taken aback. I told her: "Young lady, I am old enough to be your father—not your grandfather."

But I love being a father and a grandfather in the spiritual family. There are scores of young people that I know scattered around the world that I would relish calling my children. Their babies are like grandchildren. A congregation which does not include a range of age groups misses one of the chief joys of being a part of God's family; it is like being separated from one's children and grandchildren. To meet with the young each week ties me to the future—and it ties them to the past. The sons and daughters of God are my progeny.

## Generation Gaps

**M**y son, Robert, and I were talking the other night about the tendency of each generation to react against the ideas and habits of the older generation. The present generation of young people are turning conservative in reaction against the counter-cultural revolt of the 1960's and 1970's, which had itself been a revolt against the earlier generation.

We looked around for an explanation for this recurrent pattern. I could find only one. Each generation was disgusted by the mess which the last generation had left behind. The last generation failed to make the world fit to live in. And each generation is right in that judgment. But the present crop will do no better and their successors will blame them for it.

The lesson is: "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:14).



# Principles of Church Growth (III)

Rodney M. Miller

We must become a people of love. The lack of love one for another is a major problem in too many of today's congregations. Too often congregations cannot get along with each other in the same city when both of them oppose human innovations equally and yet they won't fellowship each other. History often reveals that a fight started in a congregation and it split into such bitterness and hostility that a new congregation was formed, and now the two of them cannot stand each other. Too many business meetings are nothing more than who gets his way, with disagreements and hurt feelings. The bitterness then spills over into the Bible classes and sermons, as well as table-talk in small cliques that are polarized around certain personalities. Then we wonder why the church does not grow! Brethren, the Lord never puts *healthy babies in contaminated incubators*! God will not give a harvest of newborn babes into a situation of fussing, fighting, and bickering.

What is the divine mark of a Christian? Many say "baptism." It is true that one must be baptized, but that is not the mark that the Lord gave by which the world can judge if we are *His* disciples! John 13:34-35 says that the world can tell if we are His people by one simple test: *Do we love each other or not?* If the world looks at the local assembly of the Dogmatic Hills Church of Christ and all they see is fighting, fussing, and bickering, they surely have the right to say, "These are *not His* disciples!" This, then, is the really sobering thought by which today's world has the God-given right to judge us—our love, or lack of it, for each other.

But there is yet another verse which is even more sobering: John 17:21-22. Here, Jesus prays that *His* disciples be one, and this "Oneness" is impossible without love. In the first Scripture, John 13, He gave the world the right to judge us by our love—but here He gives them the right to judge His Son by our love for each other: "That the world may know that thou didst send me," and is the criteria by which the world can

determine Jesus to be the *Son of God*. If we do not love each other and be "One" as He prayed, it will not only reflect on us, but on Him also. The world will say that He did not come from the Father.

This is really a sobering fact! When we fuss and fight, and we cannot get along, it will tell the world two things: (1) that we are not disciples of Jesus, and (2) that Jesus did not come from the Father. Thus, we simply *must be* a loving people. The church is not growing because we are not that kind of people in too many places. By our obnoxious name-calling, negative fault-

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finding spirits, and "McCarthyisms," we have run off everyone who might be interested in filling their spiritual needs.

From the above passages we can draw up a composite of our responsibilities: 1. **The command to love.** This is not optional equipment. 2. **The object of love.** This does not say, "Love only those that agree with you on the 'one-child elder position,' and those who dress like you in their three-piece suits." It does not say, "Love all the strong Christians that never foul up." It simply says to "Love one another." 3. **The quality of the love:** "as I have loved

you." Do we want the Lord to love us enough to forgive us of our failures? Of course! Then we must be ready to love our brethren enough to forgive them. We are to love "as He loved us." That is a big order. 4. **The result of love:** "that they may be perfected together in unity" (John 17:23), to prove that Jesus is the Son of God.

A necessary element of church growth and demonstration of love is accepting each other as brethren in the local assembly. Romans 15:7 says, "Accept one another then, just as Christ Jesus accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." As soon as a person enters the assembly they begin to sense whether or not they are accepted. They may not be dressed exactly like everyone else, or be of the same economic group or of the same educational background. In too many congregations there are cliques which never take anyone else into their fellowship. This lack of acceptance will destroy the church. The cold, distant attitude of not speaking to strangers, of not warmly and personally greeting the visitors and making them feel welcome, shows a lack of acceptance on our part. Remember that Christ loved us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:6). He did not wait until we became good enough to deserve His love before He took the first step and was crucified for us. So it should be toward those with whom we come in contact. We have the choice of holding back until they have proven themselves worthy of our time and attention—or we can take the first step in unconditional love for them. *Love will change the world.* Jesus proved that! Love will change people in a lost world today, just as it did two thousand years ago.

In conclusion, the church's growth depends on people allowing themselves to be changed by God. Until we are being changed into His likeness, until there is a reality in our lives, we can never change the world.

We must have "the real disease" before we can give it away!

15 W. Par St., Orlando, FL 32804



**Brent Lewis**



# My Brother/My Self

## Don't Be Angry With Your Brother

**W**ebster defines anger as "a strong passion or emotion of displeasure, and usually antagonism, excited by a sense of injury or insult." I hesitate to write about anger because I am not as patient and forbearing as I ought to be. But maybe we can benefit together from a look at this vital problem.

If you will examine the word "anger," you will find that it is fittingly only one letter short of "danger." It is the cause of many problems among brethren. And it always has been. Cain was angry at God because He did not accept his sacrifice (Genesis 4:3-5), and it led him to so lose control that he killed his own brother (4:8). Intense human pride is often the sole reason for man's anger, serving as a catalyst for this "sense of injury or insult." Jonah became angry when God did not destroy Nineveh (Jonah 3:10-4:1); Naaman was incensed when God sent a mere servant to tell him to dip in the dirty Jordan (2 Kings 5:10-12); and the elder brother was insulted when the father made a feast for the long-lost returning brother (Luke 15:28). In each case, anger welled up inside because of human pride.

Anger usually destroys relationships (Genesis 49:6) and causes others to be frustrated and discouraged (Colossians 3:21). It also destroys the person who exhibits it. Anger is an acid that will do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than anything on which it is poured. In some of the old "Amos and Andy" shows there was a big man who would slap Andy across the chest whenever they met. Finally, Andy got enough of it and said to Amos, "I am fixed for him. I put a stick of dynamite in my vest pocket and the next time he slaps me he is going to get his hand blown off!" Andy hadn't stopped to think that he would also get his heart blown out in the process. When we blow up in anger, we can expect similar results.

There are occasional times, however, when we should show anger. Moses was angry when he came down off Mt. Sinai and found the people worshipping an idol (Genesis 32:19), just as Paul was provoked when he saw the many idols in the city of Athens (Acts 17:16). Jonathan was angry at Saul when he realized that he was trying to kill innocent David (1 Samuel 20:34). And Jesus was incensed at the money-changers in the temple who had turned God's house into a den of robbers (Matthew 21:12-13). Righteous indignation is always right. In fact, sometimes we do not get mad when we ought to. We just need to be sure that we are mad for the right reason — and at the sin, not the person.

**B**ut what is the solution to anger? The Christian must simply exercise self-control (2 Peter 1:6). Wrath is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20); self-control is the fruit of the Spirit (5:23). God's disciple walks by the Spirit, not by the flesh. He must not speak harsh words against his brother. He dare not harbor up hatred in his heart so that he will not speak to a brother for whom Christ died. Rather than being angry against a brother, he must be reconciled to him (Matthew 5:23-24), for "every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment" (5:22).

These are terribly sobering words. We must give heed, for in far too many places — often in the same city and even in the same church — brethren are angry at one another, isolated, cold and distant. God will not accept such attitudes. We must repent. Don't be angry at your brother. It will bar your entrance into heaven.



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# Woman's World

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## Woman — An Exalted Creature

Ruth Thompson

### Fulfilling Her Role in

#### "Loving Her Husband" (Titus 2:4)

I beg your indulgence with me as I submit the third article in woman's role as a wife. I had thought to get into other responsibilities of woman's obligations, but circumstances compel me to continue this theme for this one time.

Why is it that we are seldom aware that we are *now* living our life? We have a great tendency to live in a dream world, with wonderful plans for our future, thinking that our happiness depends on achieving those goals. We "delay" our happiness for these dreams. We scrimp and save, do without now so that we can "live" tomorrow. It is a very rare couple that takes life as if they only had that one day to live. How many times do we experience some unusual incident, some funny happening, something that you and your husband alone share? You are on a trip and you run into a character in a cafe that really amuses the two of you. How many times in the years that follow do you stop and have another laugh together over that experience!

You are reading God's word together, and you come across a passage that you had never really thought about before. Every time you come across that passage you remember exactly where you were when the two of you first learned it.

You go into the garden, and see the first-ripe plum, with the rosy glow of sweetness and goodness in it. You take it in the house, and pop it into your husband's mouth. He relishes it with delight. Mmmm . . . good!

In these simple, unplanned incidents, how many of them depended on having "arrived" or on money? No, that is not what happiness is all about. Happiness is not the accumulation of wealth, or even the spending of it. Happiness is sharing with someone you care for, the everyday things of life.

Happiness is being contented with what you have. Happiness is recognizing that we live today, we share today, because we have no promise of tomorrow.

Happiness is *relishing* each moment of life as it happens, regardless of our circumstances; of *building* our lives into what God wants us to be, a two-some who are first of all dedicated to Him, which results in a greater dedication to each other.

As we grow older, we begin to see the wisdom of God more clearly, and understand fully that "God knows our frame" and wants us to be happy, and has given us the pattern for such a life in His holy word. If we set our minds on the things

severe blow of losing that companion, all you will have left are memories. Now is the time given you by God to make them good memories.

I am grateful to a loving Father that my memories are good ones.

I lost Floyd just two months ago.

429 Eastside Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92701

**Editor's Note:** These fitting and poignant lines were penned by Ruth in October, 1984,

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**"Young ladies, appreciate your husband, relish your life together, savoring each precious moment, and make it meaningful. Life is too short to be spent in bickering, complaining and quarreling. The two of you are building memories. They can be good ones, or they can be bad. It all depends on the attitude of you both."**

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above, rather than on earthly treasure, we will be happy, though we may never possess an abundance of material things.

Young ladies, appreciate your husband, relish your life together, savoring each precious moment, and make it meaningful. Life is too short to be spent in bickering, complaining and quarreling. Whether you realize it or not, the two of you are building memories. They can be good ones, or they can be bad. It all depends on the attitude of you both.

Some day, if life should deal you the

after Floyd's death in August. It was my great fortune to be intimately acquainted with them for a number of wonderful years. Their relationship was a splendid model of what all married love should be. I am grateful to Ruth for her willingness to write for *Christianity Magazine* so soon after her loss and I have encouraged her to continue. Some of our readers may wish to buoy her spirits by expressing appreciation for her work as well as condolences for her great loss. You may write this grand and great lady at the above address.

—Brent Lewis





## Games Churches Play

**W**e read recently of two large Texas Baptist churches involved in a friendly rivalry over the size of their respective bowling alleys. They were also admirably equipped with gymnasiums, jogging tracks, saunas, etc. There is nothing startlingly new about this. Increasingly American churches have begun to take on the atmosphere of health spas, their facilities heavily accented with the smell of sweat and the sound of running feet. Their calendars are filled with social events and entertainment. They no longer aspire merely to be a spiritual refuge for the sinner but the agent of his social life as well. To say that this trend has trivialized churches and brought into their fellowship people attracted by the wrong thing is to speak the obvious. It is also gratuitous to add that many of these churches are made up of those who claim to be undenominational New Testament Christians.

Somehow I have real difficulty envisioning first century churches, in a life and death struggle to save a generation from hell, blythely engaging in building gymnasiums. And the New Testament has certainly not helped my problem, what with the writers' failure to either mention or imply such activity by the churches. Some will no doubt feel that my problem is one of anachronism; the same kind of difficulty one has in imagining the apostle Peter tooling around in a Chevrolet (or to make it really tough, a Mercedes Benz). But that really is not true. Citizens of the Roman Empire were not strangers to recreation, entertainment and physical culture. They loved it. Their children played no less than five different games of ball and the Roman emperors were masters at building public baths and putting on athletic spectacles to keep the minds of the populace off politics and their own miserable lot in life. Augustus even threw in free haircuts.

It certainly was not lack of opportunity or appeal which kept New Testament churches out of athletics and entertainment. The marvel is, given the times, that they did not set up gymnasiums, public baths and banquet houses in every community. It certainly would have improved the public image of a people who were being called "haters of all mankind" (Tacitus). Even the most carnal minds would have been impressed by a program like that. The disciples must have had a compelling reason for their restraint. We believe it had to do with the will of God.

Though not much of an athlete myself (one friend describes my efforts as "spastic") I do not question the relative usefulness of physical exercise and recreation (1 Timothy 4:8). I am even more persuaded of the value of close social ties between Christians (Acts 2:46; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1-2). I am in regular association with

brethren who will be found encouraging the Lord's people to get to know and appreciate one another through the sharing of life's day-to-day experiences. It is evident that close family ties cannot be cultivated among Christians who only see each other briefly during worship assemblies.

But this does not make me happy about the social and recreational programs of local churches. The burdening of the churches with such activity has served to drain away vital energy and resources needed to accomplish the work God ordained them for (1 Timothy 5:16). The Lord did not commission or equip local assemblies to become social clubs—centers of recreation and entertainment. He did command them to join together in the study of the Scriptures and in worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Heb. 10:24-25) in order to produce spiritual maturity in all disciples and train them for service (Ephesians 4:11-15). This was to be the task of elders appointed in every church (Acts 20:28), men whose qualities lay in godliness of life, knowledge of God's word, and the ability to teach (1 Timothy 3:1-7), not in physical culture and entertainment. While it is true that New Testament churches were also found supplying the needs of gospel preachers (Philippians 4:15-16) and their own poor (Acts 4:34-35) the primary function of the churches was to nurture the saints to maturity.

**M**y point is simple. Local churches in their uncomplicated structure were never intended by the Lord to direct the whole range of a disciple's duties. This "team-work" is but one expression of our discipleship which began as a personal response to the gospel and continues in the main to be a life lived out as an individual. We are fully persuaded that the great majority of our work in Christ is to be fulfilled, not collectively, but individually—in the home, the school, the working place. While it is true that no local church has done its work unless it exhorts the disciples to absolute commitment in all areas of life, there are many things which the church *must* encourage in its members but *cannot* engage in as a body. The local church must exhort saints to take up honorable occupations for the provision of their own needs and those of the poor (Ephesians 4:28), yet the church is not thereby authorized to finance its own work as a body by business enterprise (1 Corinthians 16:2). In the same way, the church must exhort individual disciples to hospitality and wholesome social activity, but it is not equipped or directed by the Lord to finance or oversee such activities.

The collectivization of our thinking and the institutionalizing of the churches has impressed a carnal generation, but at the cost of stripping individual disciples of personal initiative and ardor for the Lord. We have built institutions, but we have destroyed Christians.





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Brent Lewis

### Little Things

**W**hen John Brodie was one of the highest paid quarterbacks in the National Football League, he was interviewed by *Sports Illustrated*. "Tell me, John," said the reporter, "why a million-dollar quarterback holds the ball for field goals and extra points." Brodie's answer was simple and immediate: "If I didn't, the ball would fall over!"

The Lord's people are a team and their success depends on the small acts of multitudes of Christians. We live in a society that glorifies "bigness." If it's not great or tremendous or colossal or huge, then it's not worth our attention—or so we're told.

But Jesus was always concerned with the ordinary. He paid special attention to the individual. He glorified the man that we're likely to ignore, and He ups the stock of every man we down.

1. The everyday life of the Christian is mundane, but important. You can honor Christ in your day-to-day existence so that others will see Him in you. Lord Russell wrote: "Those who live nobly, even if in their day they live obscurely, need not fear that they will

have lived in vain. Something radiates from their lives that shows the way to their friends, their neighbors—perhaps to long future ages." It is because we do not see the whole picture, the long-lasting good that may come from our deeds, that we tend to demean their importance. No good deed should ever be regarded as little or inconsequential.

2. We must recognize the necessity of beginning. I read a great deal about the acts of the apostles, but nothing about the resolutions of the apostles. We need to get started in helping a sick neighbor, showing kindness to a brother, and speaking a word of love and hope to the lost. Matthew 25 gives us a startling picture of the final judgment when it says that we will be held accountable for the little things we're talking about, but not doing today.

3. We must perceive the urgency of continuing in little things. Big accomplishments are found in the accumulation of little things. They come about by "the working in due measure of each several part" (Ephesians 4:16) of the Lord's body. We must not "grow weary in well-doing" (Galatians 6:9). George Merritt

(*Truth for Today*) says: "When I was a very small boy, I did a lot of huckleberry pickin' in the mountains of Tennessee. At least, I picked berries until I got old enough to be scared of the rattlesnakes and copperheads. I used to wonder why my father and older brother picked more berries than I. Now I know. They would pick all of the berries, large and small, in a particular clump before moving to another bush. I would only pick a few of the biggest and choicest berries and move on in search of more big berries elsewhere. I spent most of my time searching for the big berries, and they would get their buckets filled before I would get mine half filled."

It is easy for us to make the same mistake in life—to go about looking for the big, spectacular occasions—while passing by the little but all-important opportunities. The articles that follow will help prevent you from making such a soul-shriveling mistake. Read them carefully and even repeatedly.

And remember—if *you* don't hold the ball, it will likely fall over!

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# LITTLE THINGS

Jeffery W. Kingry

## Seeing Beyond Appearances

SEEDS DON'T LOOK LIKE MUCH. HAVE YOU ever planned your garden and decided on two or three rows of corn, a few tomatoes, maybe some carrots and turnips? Then it's off to the store or the seed catalog. Up here in Vermont, we start out seeds in "flats" under artificial light while there is still snow on the ground because our growing season is so short. In the garden store I can recall hefting a bag of seed saying to myself, "That seems enough." It was. Enough to plant forty acres of, with some left over. It requires a certain faith to look at a seed—a hard, grainy, dark nothing—and envision a full-grown plant.

Then there is the TV ad for the phone company. The scene that comes to mind is of the mother with a phone to her ear as she folds clothes. She is talking to "my baby" who apparently is away at college and left one of his sneakers at home. She closes the advertisement with, "You say you're going to law school next year! You're still my baby!"

Perceptions are funny things. Nothing stays the same, but the mind always tries to fix the swirling events around us in a static way to provide a kind of artificial stability. Poor old Mom hasn't changed her attitude despite the fact that her "baby" is going away to become a lawyer. The gardener can't relate potentiality with reality. We all have the same problem. A narrow driveway only looks like it is lengthening when we face it with a snowshovel in our hands. The reality at any moment is always fixed. It is our perceptions that must change.

### Bigger Is Better

Sometimes we confuse greatness and size with significance. Because the large things appear to be great and the sizeable things seem important we let appearances fix their value. Christianity, however, changes the world's deceptive standard of values, often placing them in reverse order: the "little" cup of water given to the thirsty becomes of great value; the weak are strong, the meek inherit the earth, he who is greatest is the servant of all.

It is one of the chief missions of the child of God to pierce veneers. We must see beyond the outside. As Jesus said, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Look back upon your own life. It may *appear* to be a great success. We live in a world of image—a world of synthetic success determined by material terms. People who make a lot of money are called "successful." People who are good looking, in good health, well educated, who drive handsome cars and wear sophisticated clothes and live in pretentious homes are enthroned in our society as *better* somehow. That is a *value* judgment determined by materialism. Yet, let this veneer of value be stripped away and we see the things that count the

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most. How quickly would we give all of our precious goods to hear healthy laughter from our child's lips? Your love for your family may sometimes be shown in the giving of things, but the love itself is spiritual and of inestimable worth. "Better is a dish of herbs where love is, than the fattened ox and hatred with it" (Proverbs 15:17). A preacher's library can be counted, but his knowledge is the only truly precious commodity. "There is gold, and an abundance of jewels; but the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing" (Proverbs 20:15).

"What shall a man give in exchange for a soul?" Much of the bigotry that exists in the world is a result of a faulty

way of looking, not on reality. What if that one you don't get along with at church were suddenly struck by a car? You run to his side and cradle his dying head in your lap as the crowd gathers. What do you say now? "Say, brother, I want to go over how you've been using the church budget again. I think you're wrong . . ." Hardly seems appropriate, does it? We don't see those we dislike as people like ourselves—they are "enemy." Yet, in the context of sin, death, and judgment there are no differences. We are all men hurt desperately by sin, in dire need of the blood of Christ. The "little" things don't really matter.

In the church we sometimes judge value on a false scale. Brethren talk about who "won" a conflict in a church on the basis of who makes the most noise, or gets in the last word. Some brethren judge the value of a Christian's contribution to the church in terms of public service—preachers, elders, men—and they are perceived to be of greater worth and their contribution of more value because it is public. The dissatisfaction some men feel for their "part" is a confusion of appearance and value. The thing that may be "little" in our eyes is actually vital and necessary. One way to determine value is to judge its value if we did not have it. What value can we place on the life the mother controls day by day in her nurture and admonition? What would happen if your contribution were no longer given? We have the story of Dorcas of Joppa, who died and was mourned by all the disciples (Acts 9:36ff). Peter came to the upper room where she had been lovingly laid, washed and prepared for burial. The widows wept and showed Peter all the clothes she had painstakingly sewn by hand for the needy of the church. Dorcas was mourned. She was missed. Her contribution did not appear to men to be great—but in the hearts of her brethren, her contribution of love and sacrifice was missed. Value has no relationship to size, bigness, or greatness. It carries its own reward.

P. O. Box 26, Milton, VT 05468



# LITTLE THINGS



## Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things?

Kenny Chumbley

JUST THE OTHER DAY A PAPER CROSSED my desk bearing this headline: "4,000 To Attend Greatest Singing Ever Held By Churches of Christ in Texas." (I just love a good understatement.) The accompanying article readily offered justification for the claim: "3,000 to 4,000 would attend; "outstanding" song leaders would direct; a college chorus and select quartets would perform. I searched the column for a word about the spiritual nature of worship, the need for scriptural songs, or even a warning against singing to be seen of men—the kind of things I thought determined true greatness. I found nothing even close. Undoubtedly the organizers will have their "greatest" singing ever. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.

There's an unfortunate tendency among men to measure significance by stature. It's the old Goliath mentality that bigger means better. And many Christians have succumbed to it. They have become embarrassed by the tremendous trifles of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:18-31). In catering to their pride they've substituted the gargantuan for the genuine and the opulent for the authentic. Like Laodicea of old they now place trust in their goods, rather than in their God (Revelation 3:17).

Let me tell you something. I have friends who couldn't play small forward on their son's grade-school basketball team, but in my mind they stand head and shoulders above everyone else. And you know why? It's because real significance is determined by holiness, not height. Whenever we forget this basic principle and come to take a small view of the small things of the gospel, chances are good we already stand on digression-ground.

In 536 B.C. the Persian prince Cyrus the Great marched into Babylon. In keeping with the Lord's design he almost immediately issued a proclamation which ended seventy years of Jewish exile. "The Lord . . . hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem. . . . Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him"

(2 Chronicles 36:23).

Thus armed with the blessing of God and the sanction of the king some 50,000 Jews made the initial return home. Under the direction of Joshua and Zerubbabel they cleared the rubbish, reinstated the sacrifices and relaid the foundation of the Temple. But opposition soon arose. "The adversaries of Judah . . . weakened the hands of the people . . . and troubled them in building" (Ezra 4:1,4). The people were frustrated and the work of restoration came to a screeching halt.

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not height.*

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For fifteen years the Temple was neglected; a spirit of defeatism had settled in. Finally, to chastise their lethargy and to stir their enthusiasm the Lord commissioned the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The writings of these men give a number of insights into the Jewish attitude, but we want to focus attention on the factor cited in Zechariah 4:10: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" In the Jews' eyes, the Temple they were building looked like a shack when compared to Solomon's structure (Haggai 2:3). And the con-

tempt they had for their construction had drained them of any sense of urgency about the work.

Whenever such an attitude is adopted, three things inevitably result. They who despise the day of small things:

1. **Reject the methodology of God.** God has repeatedly show-cased His love and mercy through the small and insignificant. For instance, it was a *little* maid who told Naaman to find Elisha, who told him to do the *little* thing—"wash in Jordan" (2 Kings 5:13)—and it wasn't until he did that his "flesh came again like unto the flesh of a *little* child." The Carpenter came from the *small* town of Nazareth (John 1:46). And it was *ordinary* fishermen Christ chose to be His witnesses (Acts 4:13). God regularly displays His power by use of the small (2 Corinthians 4:7).

2. **Neglect the work of God.** Too many churches are dead in the water because they've decided that the small things of God's work won't really work. They spend their time bemoaning their frailty, rather than working with a reliance on God's ability. "The time is not come that the Lord's house should be built" (Haggai 1:2) is the watchword of hell's procrastination, not heaven's progress.

3. **Lose the greatness of God.** It has been said that General George Armstrong Custer was motivated by a belief that "only those who dared mighty deeds were truly alive." He was dead wrong. Listen to me: it sometimes takes greater courage to do the minute than the mighty. "Be strong, all ye people . . . and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2:4). We lose the greatness of God's presence whenever we fail to do His work.

To borrow a line from J. B. Phillips, "Your God is too small" when you do not believe He's big enough to work through the small. Let us not despise the way in which the Lord delights to work. And should you ask, "Isn't this making a mountain out of a molehill?" I answer, without hesitation, absolutely!

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# LITTLE THINGS

Peter J. Wilson

## Little Things in Evangelism

AMERICANS HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO THE "bigger is better" syndrome for years. The story is told of three men talking about elephants. The Frenchman talked about the love life of the elephant, the Englishman talked about great elephants he had hunted, but the American talked about how to produce bigger and better elephants.

Logically, the church in America has not escaped the same influence. For several generations we have been told that the secret of success in taking the world for Christ is bigness—big meetings, big campaigns, big TV and radio networks, centralizing of small efforts to provide maximum effort, etc. An examination of New Testament evangelism and successful evangelism today would cast real doubts on such emphasis. In his book *Why Churches Grow*, Flavil Yeakley presents a statistical survey that shows that those churches with the "bigger is better" mindset have, on an average, reached a "zero growth" condition (losing more members by death and apostasy than they are gaining by conversion). The churches that are growing are those who are getting back to basics and stressing the "little things" in evangelism.

A number of studies and surveys on evangelism have shown that as high as ninety percent of all "conversions" are directly related to a personal invitation from a family member, neighbor, or fellow worker. Yet, the tremendous potential of a personal invitation has not impressed many church members.

In John 1:40ff, the pattern is set. Andrew finds the Messiah and immediately runs to tell Peter. "He brought him to Jesus"—beautiful words! Philip finds the Christ and invites Nathanael to "come and see." We never read of Andrew's work in latter years but whatever was accomplished by the great apostle Peter can be directly linked to that one simple invitation extended by Andrew.

A 17-year-old boy from Northern Michigan, overwhelmed by the magnitude and sin of Detroit, was standing on a sidewalk in front of an open-door

**The tremendous potential  
of a personal invitation  
has not impressed  
many church members.**

Pentecostal revival, amazed at such a display. A 16-year-old girl stood for a moment and visited and then said, "If you are interested in religion, why not come to services with us at the church of Christ Sunday?" Whatever I have been able to accomplish in thirty-eight years of preaching—the numbers baptized, the preachers trained, the congregations established—can all be traced back to my wife, Irene's, simple invitation.

Let me tell you what the single individual can accomplish. In our work here in Portland there was an 88-year-old brother, Lester Deal, who has since gone to his reward. Brother Deal worked at several secular jobs, but his avowed vocation was "a personal evangelist." He never ate in a restaurant without extending a personal invitation to services to the waitress. He never left a bus without leaving a tract on the seat he vacated. As he watched on a downtown street, a hardened criminal was being taken in shackles from a van into a courtroom for trial. Lester handed the man his card and offered to come and visit with him. After several studies, and a court order allowing the man to leave the jail to be baptized, a soul was added to the Lord. When, at an advanced age, he lost his sense of direction while downtown and a gentleman drove him home, Lester made an appointment to study the Bible. When he and his blind wife were going to have to give up their little house and a lady came from the bank to help them with the papers, he arranged a study with her. Up to the week he died, he was talking Bible to nurses, doctors, and patients. Oh, it would be interesting in the day of judgment to hear all the good that the Lord accomplished through that one humble and dedicated life! But it

was a life of "little things."

Handing a tract to someone or leaving one where it will be found may seem like a little thing, yet many souls have been won by such. I think it was Sewell Hall who told me of a Christian who left a tract in a restroom of a public building in Washington, D.C. A man from India, whose job was to clean the restroom, picked it up, became interested, contacted the church, and was baptized into Christ. The last I heard of him he was preparing to preach the gospel. Whatever good he accomplishes in his life will be directly traced to that "little thing" of leaving a tract in a restroom.

Having a number of Christians meeting in a home once a week to study the Bible, sing and pray, and encourage friends and neighbors to participate may seem like a "little thing" but thousands have been led to Christ by such efforts. The Mormons learned that they had a 0.1% rate of "conversion" by knocking on 1,000 doors but that the percentage went up to 50% when members invited neighbors into their homes for a study.

Many aids and schemes have been tried in the area of personal evangelism. In my experience, having experimented with film strips, charts, cards, etc., there is nothing more effective than one person sitting down at a table with another person with a Bible between them.

Having said all of that, let me emphasize that it will not be our programs, our advertising, our gimmicks, that will lead the world to Christ. It will be God's power working in us through the gospel coupled with our fervent prayers that will accomplish the task. Unless we have a burden on our hearts continually over lost souls, unless we pray daily (even with tears) for their salvation, and unless we commit ourselves to doing something specific every week in the interest of those souls, we are not walking in the footsteps of those who cried and died for lost souls (Luke 10:41; Matthew 9:38; Romans 9:2; 10:1).

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# LITTLE THINGS



## Remember the Mustard Seed

Gary Henry

"SMALL AS A MUSTARD SEED." SUCH WAS the Hebrew proverbial expression for very minute things. And that would have been the saying Jesus' listeners recalled when He said to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Tiny as it was, the mustard seed produced a tree-like shrub which sometimes grew ten or twelve feet tall. So, Jesus said, is the kingdom of heaven. Its beginnings are seemingly small and insignificant—but it grows into something vastly more expansive than might have been expected. As with the mustard seed, so with the kingdom: the results of growth are out of all proportion to the apparently "small" beginnings. In what ways might the truth of this parable of the mustard seed relate to our own lives today?

1. All that is gold does not glitter. If one merely *looks* at a mustard seed, its powerful potential may be missed. This nearly microscopic speck does not appear to be very consequential. But external appearances do not tell the whole story about the mustard seed—and neither do they tell the whole story about human beings. In the household of Jesse, for example, Samuel learned that the character of a king sometimes resides in the merest stripling of a boy. God said to the prophet, "The Lord does not see as man sees; for a man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). When the boy David battled Goliath, it became evident that smallness of size is no measure of spiritual stature.

Had we lived in Jesus' time and judged Him solely by externals, we would have seen nothing lordly about Him. Yet He today sits at the right hand of God as the Lord of lords and King of kings. Had we observed Jesus' apostles outwardly, we would have seen nothing revolutionary about these very ordinary men. Yet,

within a generation their preaching had shaken the Roman empire to its roots. Had we investigated superficially the people and circumstances involved in the history of primitive Christianity, we would have seen nothing far-reaching about the movement. Yet Christianity has altered the course of human history and survived the passing of two millennia. Even today, "not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" (1 Corinthians 1:26). And when we are tempted to disregard some unimposing brother who has little apparent potential, let us remember the mustard seed.

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*Like the cumulative effect of regular investments in a savings account, worthwhile endeavors usually require time for the "compounding" of interest.*

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2. Great things come from growth. The difference between a small mustard seed and a large mustard tree is: growth. In the parable, emphasis is put upon the contrast between the littleness of the seed and the greatness of the plant which unfolds from it. The kingdom of heaven grows; it does not explode into fully-developed completeness all at once. In life, most beneficial things are like that. Time is required for the stable growth which produces beneficial maturity. Thus we are advised, "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9).

Projects which begin big and announce themselves with a great fanfare often end disastrously. Witness the Tower of Babel. It is usually better to begin obscurely and grow, like the mustard seed, than to commence with a flourish of trumpets, raising expectations which we may not be able to fulfill. Small things *repeated over time* become large in effect. Like the cumulative effect of regular investments in a savings account, worthwhile endeavors usually require time for the "compounding" of the interest. We live in a society that thrives on the big deal and the overnight success. But when we are tempted to underestimate the good that can come from slow, steady growth, let us remember the mustard seed.

3. Beginnings are important. Great as its potential might be, the little mustard seed is of no use unless it is planted. Once planted, it begins developing into a tree in which the birds may nest. The end result dwarfs the beginning which had to be made before it could be achieved—but the beginning had to be made. All great accomplishments have to be begun before they can be finished, and by far the greater percentage of them have to be begun with some inconspicuous act. Even the longest journey begins with a single step. When they thought of the scope of the task, how the apostles must have staggered when the Lord said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That they accomplished the task may be credited to their courage to *begin*.

Life is filled with goals that seem too large to achieve. The Lord's work at times seems impossibly great. Our individual responsibilities often seem discouragingly awesome. Yet there is always a first step that can be taken—there is something we can do to begin the work. Even one person, acting in faith, *can* make a difference. And when we are tempted to complain, "The job is too big; it won't do any good to start it"—let us remember the mustard seed.

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## LITTLE THINGS

James W. Poppell

### Faithful In Little, Faithful In Much

IT HAPPENED WHILE WATCHING THE Marian Gwinn (of Collinsville, Oklahoma notoriety) appearance on Phil Donahue. It wasn't what she, or her lawyer, or Donahue said that did it. It was the attitude of the people in the studio audience and the colossal ignorance they displayed about the nature of Almighty God. Most took the "it-is-nobody's-business-but-God's-how-I-live" position, and then acted as though God really didn't care that much about it either. He is, according to them, so loving, forgiving and understanding that He will not condemn us for our sins. One young woman admitted living in fornication and still claimed to be a "good Christian." It was this classic display of arrogant ignorance that made me realize how superficial most people's religion really is.

I am afraid that is also true for some of us in the Lord's church. For example, why do many of us attend services faithfully, but do little else? Why do we feel guilty about our failure to win souls, but go on without doing it? Why do we feel guilty about lack of prayer, but go on without praying? Why do we feel guilty about our failure to instill a personal faith in our own children, but go on watching the tube (via VCR, HBO, or worse) hour after hour, night after night? Why do we lament the busy pace we live in that robs us of time to be alone with the Lord, of time for holiness and silence in the soul, but go on in the same frantic race to the grave (an appointment we are so obviously ill-prepared to meet)?

Why, we are nothing more than spiritual dilettantes! Dabblers in things of the soul. Religious effeminate with a limp-wristed devotion. Like the invocation at a football game or the sermonettes at a modern wedding, our spiritual integrity is nothing more than a tacked-on trivial remnant from better days. The sad truth is that we have no time for, nor interest in, the discipline necessary for developing true spirituality. We are too busy making more money and spending it on ourselves. This all-consuming

passion to enjoy ourselves robs us of our best energies so little are left for godliness.

That is why we tire, like the money-loving Pharisees, of hearing the Lord say that it is impossible to serve Him and money (Luke 16:13-14). It is not that we mean to lose our souls to get our money. It is that we believe we can have our souls and our money at the same time.

Money, however, belongs to God. If I could call the rich fool up from the dead he would tell you that (Luke 12). He had to die to learn that "all these things"

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***When a woman can really want a new sofa—one without a hole that is hidden under an afghan—and can still sit on the old one giving thanks to God for it while she cherishes happy memories of children and friends who helped wear the hole in it, she is content.***

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didn't belong to him, but to God.

Money is a trust given to us by God to be used and spent in a way that pleases Him. It is not merely given for our personal pleasure or self-indulgence. *Because we have worked hard to obtain a sum of money does not give us divine permission to spend it as we please.* We are still stewards who must be faithful to the trust placed in us.

What does your checkbook register and the bills you owe to MasterCard, Visa, Sears and all the rest say about your faithfulness as a steward? Why do

we charge so many things we cannot pay for today thinking we can pay cost plus 18% per annum later? My dad says it is because "our want is bigger than our getter and we just can't wait." Sounds familiar, but where is the spiritual discipline in that?

*Be content* is a truth so familiar that it has lost its power and lies bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul. "Be content with your wages" is the message of a crazed prophet dressed in funny skins. "Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" are the words of a radical. A man with no ambition must have authored the lines, "Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have." Who lives by such principles in the land of opportunity?

Getting ahead, as we call it, is not the problem. It is *wanting to get ahead so badly that we lose our peace of mind, our spirit of gratitude, and the right order of our priorities.* Wanting is not wrong unless it goes too far. When a woman can really want a new sofa—one without a hole that is hidden under an afghan—and can still sit on the old one giving thanks to God for it while she cherishes happy memories of children and friends who helped wear the hole in it, she is content. But the woman who is always complaining has problems with her heart. You could make the same application to a man who wants a new car that doesn't have 135,000 miles on it and four-month-old french fries lost in the crack of the seat.

*He who is faithful in little is faithful also in much.* Money, and the things money can buy, are the testing ground of the soul. The little decisions about them that we take for granted as our right to make, and whether we make them with reference to anything other than our own desires, are the tell-tale indicators of our faithfulness. Those who fail here are of little use to the Lord. Those who succeed are vessels for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

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# LITTLE THINGS



## Significant Nobodies

Royce Chandler

PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING IN HIS LIFE and ministry was associated with the insignificant and the mundane: a barn for a delivery room; a feed trough for a baby bed; a common laborer for a stepfather; a despised city for a hometown; tax collectors, beggars, the simple-minded, prostitutes, lepers, the uneducated, and hotheads for friends. It's no wonder, then, that the "somebodies" were insulted by Him and disgusted with Him. Jesus just had a way with the overlooked and the unimpressive.

Most of the truly outstanding, respected "somebodies" we have come to know in the gospel were originally nobodies, persons the upper and ruling classes would hardly have recognized as important or significant in any way. Before Jesus turned them into some of the world's greatest men, who were Peter, Matthew, James, Bartholomew, and the others? What distinguishing credentials would have raised them to the top of their generation? But now their names are constantly on our lips, because Jesus gave them key roles and set them on stage before the entire world, to perform as leading men in presenting God's redemption to all generations of men.

But what of the "bit" players who never got a lead role; whose names, even after Jesus used them, still don't come rapidly to mind? Isn't this where *most of us* fit in God's scheme of things—unknowns on the stage of history just trying to scratch out a simple part in the work of heaven?

But what a delight to know that God can take a nobody and use him to accomplish a significant work! Who honors the servant of Naaman, who was responsible for saving this significant Syrian from his own rage (and from leprosy) by just calmly persuading his master to go dip in the Jordan? And Naaman's servant girl was the other nobody God used to bring about one of the more famous miracles of the ages. Do we talk daily about Paul's "famous" nephew who overheard and reported the

hunger vow in Acts 23? And what was the widow's name whom Jesus used to teach such a great lesson on giving in Luke 21? Who were the colt's owners (Luke 19:33) who made possible the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem? And what about the seldom remembered man with the pitcher of water (Mark 14:13), used to find a Passover place? And who were all the other "nobodies" God used throughout history to bring about His purposes? Though unheralded, how great a part they played in bringing about the grand designs of God.

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*There's Nestor,  
the taxi driver, who  
personally led about  
thirty people to the  
Lord. There's Carlos,  
the prisoner in the  
federal penitentiary  
who opened the door  
into the whole  
country of  
Colombia.*

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Though some sought Him out, how many kings, governors, princes, doctors of learning, business executives, or bank presidents did Jesus ever seek out to use? Jesus was a Heavenly Comforter to the world's little people. He opened the doors of life to all those despised, hurting, sinful nobodies and offered them His treasury of forgiveness, comfort, peace, love, and self-respect.

While we wait around for the well-known preachers to do something great, or pray for some sort of spiritual extravaganza, the Lord is busily working His ways through myriads of little nobodies that hardly ever get noticed.

There's Nestor, the taxi driver, who personally led about thirty people to the Lord. There's Carlos, the prisoner in the federal penitentiary who opened the door into the whole country of Colombia. There's Neil and Shirley who worked countless hours to originate a tremendous Bible class teaching system now being taken all over the country among the Lord's churches.

Ever hear of Irene, who, unknown to the rest of the local church, has for four years been teaching a Bible class in her home? Or of the eleven-year-old Christian who has shown a great sensitivity to the emotional needs of his peers and has been personally responsible for stimulating a couple of them to self-respect and spiritual interest? How about the Maldonado brothers, who insisted on giving up their front-row seats at their father's funeral so that some outsiders could sit up close enough to hear the preacher teach the gospel, and who then insisted that the preacher forget about their father and teach those outsiders? Maybe the sister who spent countless hours studying, counseling, consoling, and crying with the sister whose husband left her? You don't know them, do you?

Nobodies—that's what they all are; but, oh, how significant they are to the unfolding of God's grace to those around them. Will the Lord consider me to be humble enough to be useful in such ways? It wasn't Elisha who influenced Naaman, it was the nobody. How many times might Jesus have already used you, just a humble and "insignificant" Christian, to bring about wonderful fruit? Unimpressive and unknown—that's okay; but just let me be *useful* in some way: carry a pitcher of water, loan someone a colt, give a needed word of advice—whatever! For "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalms 84:10). By the grace of God, even the most common Christian can be used to link together the marvelous workings of the Almighty.

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# LITTLE THINGS

## A Doorkeeper in the House of God

Bob Crawley

IN BEAUTIFUL WORDS OF PIOUS COMMITMENT to God, Psalm 84:10 declares, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." This declaration is the epitome of an entire psalm of devotion to God and His righteous way. In the first and second verses, the worshipper exults, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even faineth for the courts of Jehovah." In verse four he says, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house." And in verses eleven and twelve he concluded, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Jehovah of hosts, Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

### What Does It Mean?

The expression in verse ten: "I had rather be a doorkeeper" (ASV, KJV, etc.) is written in the margin and in other more literal versions as "be at the threshold." Whatever choice of wording you prefer, the point is clear. The psalmist had rather have the lowest position, or the least standing, in the things of God than to have the richest place in the wicked affairs of this world. What a confidence in the value of the business of God! What a willingness to forego all of the honor, the acceptance, and all the high positions that the God of this world offers to those who will fall down and worship him!

### A Historic Irony

There is a bit of historic irony in the choice of figures in this psalm. According to the traditional, and probably correct, caption of this psalm, it was assigned to the "sons of Korah." It was their ancestor, Korah, who led in a rebellion against Moses, Aaron, and against Jehovah in the wilderness. Korah was seeking a position of honor and pride. The rest of the congregation of Israel was told, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men . . . lest ye be consumed in all their sins" (Numbers 16:26). The descendants of Korah, to whom this psalm was assigned, in the appointment of courses for the priests in the time of David, were

given the office of "doorkeepers" of the tabernacle, serving at its "threshold" (1 Chronicles 9:19; 26:1,12-19). Perhaps these Korahites, better than most men, could appreciate what a great blessing it is to serve in some simple way in the work of God rather than to perish while dwelling in the tents of wickedness. We should learn as much.

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***The issue raised in the text is a question of rank or status. To be "a doorkeeper," or to be "at the threshold," is to be a servant of the lowest order. The world generally rejects such lowliness in favor of prestige and praise from men. They "love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi."***

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### A Matter of Status

The issue raised in the text is a question of rank or status. To be "a doorkeeper," or to be "at the threshold," is to be a servant of the lowest order. The world generally rejects such lowliness in favor of prestige and praise

from men. They "love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi." This craving for offices and titles of honor is very conspicuous in many churches and among many erstwhile Christians. It is tragic that they have not learned to prefer the way of Jesus: "Whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted." The exaltation will not be given by the world but God will exalt us in His own esteem for our humble service in His house.

### Some Examples

There are outstanding examples in the Bible of people of God who made the better choice. In Hebrews chapter eleven it is recorded that Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter . . . accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." At the time of his choice, Moses could not have foreseen the earthly greatness his choice would bring. He cared only for the fact that the Israelites were the people of God and that their destiny was the subject of God's covenants.

The world imagines that the apostles of Christ were powerful prelates who enjoyed lives of pomp and glory. Quite the opposite was the case. Theirs was a life of being despised as "unlearned and ignorant men," who were compelled to admit, "silver and gold have I none." In spite of this, Saul of Tarsus, who could have boasted of his leadership in the Jews' religion, in his education by Gamaliel, and in his prominence as a persecutor of Christians, laid all of this aside and declared, "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ . . . that I may gain Christ, and be found in him."

What honor and glory could one receive in this world to compare with the "kingdom [or kingship] of God and his righteousness?" It should be enough for the most ambitious of us that we can be in the house of God, merely as a doorkeeper, standing on the threshold.

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# LITTLE THINGS



## Blessed Little Egos

Dale Smelser

UNEASINESS. IT WAS VAGUE, BUT I suppose that describes as well as anything what I used to feel after preaching in a gospel meeting. Having received the praise "meeting preachers" receive (and one believes most brethren sincere in their expressions), having been graciously entertained and the focus of much attention for a week, the anticipated time to head home would finally come. But after the happiness of reunion, it was back to being just a regular person in his regular responsibilities in life, at home, and work. And there it was the next day. Uneasiness. Of course, you see why immediately—which makes me wonder why it took me awhile to see. One goes from extraordinary to ordinary in one day.

This leads to the suspicion that preachers who spend most of their time in meetings with well-established churches do not live in the real world. This is not to say some of them do not handle it well. But pride and the illusion of self-importance are such a danger that we can appreciate the Lord's decision regarding Paul, who established so many churches and had so many disciples relying on him and his gift of apostleship. God chose to allow the continuation of Paul's affliction so that he "should not be exalted overmuch" (2 Corinthians 12:7). In Paul's suffering that humbling messenger of Satan (and it is Satan who is responsible for our sufferings), Satan may have won the battle, but he lost the war. He lost because the success of that physically handicapped, but noble and humble apostle, magnified the power of God rather than himself. Such would not have been so evident in the self-interested posturing of a talented man motivated by his own ambition.

The need for ego-stroking needs to be defeated, especially by those in positions of influence. Failure to do so will produce the sting of inner frustration when we are disappointed. On the other hand, when successes occur and are flaunted there are other temptations. One arises out of the attraction of some to the

presence and person of conspicuous glory. The person whose ego needs to vaunt his abilities, and the person attracted to such, are drawn together, and unsurprisingly in their mutual need, fall prey to the ego stimulation of illicit relationship.

The apostles had to outgrow the desire for personal glory, you know. They maneuvered for it and even asked Jesus who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Matthew 18:1). When they

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***How dare  
we impute greatness  
to one simply  
because he was born  
to royalty and fame,  
or to one whose ruth-  
lessness has brought  
him wealth and power,  
or to one who through  
opportunism acquires  
prominence. Earthly  
station, power, and  
prominence have  
nothing to do with  
greatness.***

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were ashamed to acknowledge their desire for position, they argued privately about it (Mark 9:33-35). One of the things Jesus did to counter that was to set in their midst a little child and declare, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:5). True greatness is achieved by small egos.

And there is a reason for that. I am intrigued by Jesus' answer to the request of Philip to see the Father. Jesus said,

"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Here is the God of glory who made heaven and earth and all that is in them, who spread out the heavens as a tent to dwell in, and whose sovereignty brings rebellious princes to nothing. Yet when we see Him manifested bodily in the person of Jesus, we see that He declined the trappings of worldly power as He had not even where to lay His head. Rather than receiving pampered service, He came to serve (Matthew 20:28). And serve He did, even to washing the feet of others and suffering the reproach of a sacrifice for our sin. Jesus is what the Father is like. Serving. Yet we truthfully sing to God, "How great Thou art."

No wonder Jesus taught that *service is greatness* (Matthew 23:11). That is an unalterable fact of God's nature and of man made in His image. How dare we impute greatness to one simply because he was born to royalty and fame, or to one whose ruthlessness has brought him wealth and power, or to one who through opportunism acquires prominence. Earthly station, power, and prominence have nothing to do with greatness. To suppose they do is a rejection of God's nature, a perversion of His order, and manifests superficial and ungodly priorities. God could have been powerful, sovereign—and a tyrant. But it is how He served us, especially in all that culminated in Jesus, combined with His majesty, that arouses awe and praise, that makes Him astoundingly great.

So, greatness is achieved by small egos because it takes that to put preoccupation with self aside and serve others. In our various callings in life, let us serve. In the kingdom, let us serve. Though fellow workers, or even some elders, deacons, teachers and preachers, should covet eminence and wield power in self-glory, *you* can still possess a humble, blessed little ego that desires good for others and rejoices to serve. And thereby be like God, than whom none is greater.

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# LITTLE THINGS

C. G. "Colly" Caldwell

## A Cup of Cold Water

"JUST A CUP OF COLD WATER IN HIS NAME given may the hope in some heart renew . . . just a small, kindly deed that may cheer another is the work God has planned for you" (J. R. Baxter, Jr.). Jesus said, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42).

Dave Johnson had been an alcoholic for years, had trouble holding a job, and was abusive to his wife. Jean was peculiar in lots of ways (I always thought her hypochondria drove him to his bottle), but she was a faithful Christian and she stuck it out with Dave in marriage through all those miserable years and never lost hope. While I was preaching in Hobart, Indiana, Dave returned to the Lord and gave up the booze. By then his body was dissipated and he was *truly* sick most of the time. He tried hard, however, to do all he could do in his last years to help the work of Christ. We built a new meeting house during that time and I, too, tried to do what I could. I did not get my degree in "Handyman Skills" (I'm sure I would have been better served if I had) and so, almost immediately, I hit a nail wrong and not only bent the nail but also broke my hammer. I just threw the hammer aside and went on to another job but, unbeknown to me, Dave slipped my hammerhead into his pocket, took it home, and brought it back the next night with a new handle all set to be broken again by a clutzy preacher. Dave's heart would not take the carpentry work, but his heart was filled to do what he could, and that's what he saw to do.

Many deeds, often taken for granted and seemingly of little value, mean much to those who are the beneficiaries. We think of water as costing almost nothing. We bathe in it, wash our clothes in it, flush it, and waste it without a thought. A thirsty traveler or a bed-ridden dying invalid does not see it so. Maybe we should be more ready to notice, and to give, things which we

have to spare and which we would never miss to those who need them so badly. They may be more valuable than we think.

Jesus has told us that at the judgment many of us will be turned aside because we did not give a drink to a thirsty person (Matthew 25:37). It would have

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cost us nothing. It would even have taken little time. It would have been so valuable to the recipient and our expense would have been only a little thoughtfulness and compassion. Jesus' list of little deeds included visiting the sick, providing clothing for those who needed it, and feeding someone who was hungry. How difficult would it be for us to pay

attention to those around us, whom we say we love, and fulfill Christ's wishes? We could mow our neighbor's yard when he is sick or away from town. We could wash her clothes when she is burdened or grieved or busy. We can *help*—and that is the work God has planned for us.

But you say, "Oh, this really isn't much." "They can go to the tap and get their own water with no effort." Maybe so. Surely Christ was not demanding that the gift itself be so valuable. He said, "a cup of cold water *only*" because the thing itself was not nearly so important as the thought behind it. We need, more than the *needy* need. We need to *think*. We need to *care*. We need to *share*. We need to *love*. "Oh, this really isn't much," you say. The thoughtfulness is much! The concern is much! The love is very much! Too many think that if they cannot do some great thing they should do nothing at all!

The good thing about a "cup of cold water" is that nearly anybody can give one. Most old people in nursing homes can still give one. A child of only three or four years can give one. It doesn't take much effort or strength to give one. We don't have to have much of this world's goods to give one.

Isn't the "cup of cold water" a wonderful illustration of what pleases God? Be assured that He notices. He is not the only one who notices, however. Those to whom we give, notice. And *we* notice. Don't you feel good when you have paid attention and done something good for someone? Wouldn't you sleep better tonight knowing that last night you had sat with your neighbor's dying father or mother so your neighbor could get his first good night's sleep in many days? Don't you appreciate your meal more knowing that part of it has been shared with the family of your sister in Christ who needs it, or who needs not to have had to prepare it? It truly is "more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) even if it is just a "cup of cold water."

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# LITTLE THINGS



## Great Power in Small Packages

Sewell Hall

ONLY TWENTY-TWO POUNDS OF URANIUM went into the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Compared to conventional bombs it was very small. Yet, it wrought the destruction of 20,000 tons of TNT and changed the course of history.

Thankfully, peaceful uses have been found for nuclear energy. Great cities are lighted and great industries powered by its reactors, and lives are being saved by its medical applications. Yet, realizing its destructive potential, we maintain strict safeguards to keep it in the hands of those who are trained and aware of its deadly possibilities.

There is another substance, however, one pound of which has more potential for good or bad than those twenty-two pounds of uranium which fueled the first atomic bomb. Each pound of this substance comes in a small package weighing five to ten pounds. Each year more than 85,000,000 of these packages are distributed among as many individuals around the world, many of whom are inexperienced and totally ignorant of proper procedures for the beneficial development of this latent power. One of these packages may well have been delivered to your home.

That these packages can be destructive is proved by the fact that one of them became Adolf Hitler, another Stalin and another Napoleon. It is also true that one became Abraham, one the apostle Paul and another Martin Luther.

Obviously, the small package described above is the body of an infant. The one-pound substance with such potential is the brain of a child. "Out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

No more astounding miracle has occurred through all of history than the incarnation. The attributes of the omniscient, omnipotent, omni-present, immortal, immutable, invincible, invisible God were compacted into the pound of flesh which filled the cranium of the babe of Bethlehem. It was the qualities of His mind which made Him "the express image" of God's person, dwelling

among men. Perhaps these were modified for the time by the fact that He "emptied Himself," but the fact remains that at that time, all of the second person of the Godhead was in that precious little head.

Only slightly less marvelous is the content of the mind of any infant. Whatever of the image of God is in the child is in that little brain, placed there by God. Untouched by evil, it is as pure as the mind of Christ. It has the power to choose the course of its life: whether it will respond to "the upward call of God"

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(Philippians 3:14) or to the "earthly, sensual, demonic" wisdom of the world. Which choice is made will determine its eternal destiny and will influence the choice of many others. At the same time, the choice it makes will be greatly influenced by others, especially its parents. What a responsibility we must accept!

Many Christians, realizing the great responsibility of parenthood and the increasingly evil influences in our modern society, sometime wonder if it is right to bring children into such a

wicked environment. Grandparents, especially, shudder to think of the contrary winds and cross-currents into which their little grandchildren are launched. It was a sin-sick world into which John the Baptist was born. Rather than seeking to escape the responsibility of children, however, his parents prayed for children.

When John was born, the neighbors asked, "What kind of child will this be?" (Luke 1:66). His father did not wonder. Old enough to be a grandfather, Zacharias looked down into the face of his infant son and said:

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways;  
To give His people the knowledge of salvation  
For the forgiveness of their sins.  
(Luke 1:76-77)

The neighbors must have thought that old Zacharias was just carried away by the kind of idealism so often seen in younger fathers. Idealistic it may have been, but unrealistic it was not. Indeed, the dreams of that old father were realized and the world was truly blessed by what the child became.

Perhaps more idealism is what parents need today—more faith in God to believe that with His help great men and women can still be raised up to change the course of history. But if this is to be, every effort must be made from the day of birth to protect the little mind from evil. The best way to accomplish this is to fill it with what is pure. That little brain which weighs less than one pound at birth will reach its full size (three pounds) by the age of six. And it is during those six years that the learning process is most rapid.

Jesus always had time for children and He taught us to be equally concerned for them. He said, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you will be great" (Luke 9:48).

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# LITTLE THINGS

James W. Ward

## He That Is But Little

MOST HOUSES DO NOT CRUMBLE UNDER flood or hurricane, but rather under the accumulated ravages of little things: a crack here, a torn shingle there. More drivers are forced to walk by a dead battery than by a blown engine. Few marriages are destroyed by sudden overwhelming problems, but by small daily grievances unresolved. "He that despises small things," said Emerson, "will perish little by little."

God is mindful of little things: (1) He has greatly blessed the "least in the kingdom of heaven," and (2) He has given great responsibilities to them.

Matthew 11:7-11 demonstrates the

redemption he knew nothing of." John could preach only that the King and kingdom were coming, but the least among Christians can proclaim the full gospel message of salvation brought by a crucified, risen, exalted Jesus. What the Old Testament worthies (John included) could only long to know (1 Peter 1:10-12), "he that is but little in the kingdom" knows fully. None has put it more vividly than Matthew Henry when he said that "a dwarf upon a mountain sees further than a giant in the valley."

Brethren, just think how great John the Baptist was—and yet the least

and two-talent men. No, not the same return on his money; that would have been unfair. But he did expect the best use of his money by each servant. The one-talent man cheated his master by not doing his best. Full of fear, he buried his opportunity and returned just what he was given.

Think back about the parable of the sower. Didn't the good soil vary in richness, some bearing fruit "a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23)? Yes, but each fulfilled itself. So must we, my brethren. How much ability is wasted by saints who feel that they cannot measure up to someone else?

God used several "little things" to teach us some valuable lessons in Proverbs 30:24-28. From the ant we learn industry and preparation. The rock badgers exhibit sensibleness and humility. The locusts demonstrate unity, while the spider instructs us in perseverance. If God can teach such powerful lessons by such insignificant creatures, what could He do through us if we would only cooperate with Him?

I love to read such chapters in the Bible as Romans 16 and Hebrews 11 because they tell of the innumerable host of little saints who are big in the eyes of God. Do you remember Junia? How about Urbanus? Or Stachys? Herodion? Maybe you don't, but God does. The faithful in the last part of Hebrews 11 are not even named, but Scripture says that the world was not worthy of them (verse 38). They were significant to God.

The coach looked over the team. The smallest boy didn't have much skill, but he had grit and loyalty; he never missed a practice and he practiced as hard as the best players. "Get in there, Kid," said the coach. The kid got in there and did his best. Afterwards, he ran up to the coach, beaming. "I don't think I made any tackles," he said, "but I jumped on the pile five times."

Come on, brethren, we're in the game; let's at least jump on the pile now and then!

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**"From the ant we learn industry and preparation. The rock badgers exhibit sensibleness and humility. The locusts demonstrate unity, while the spider instructs us in perseverance. If God can teach such powerful lessons by such insignificant creatures, what could He do through us if we would only cooperate with Him?"**

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first point. There, Jesus made a contrast between John the Baptist and the "least" saint. He praised John as being strong and resolute (not a shaken reed, verse 7), self-sacrificing (not clothed in soft garments, verse 9), a prophet (verse 9), the subject of prophecy (verse 10; Malachi 3:1), and the forerunner of the Messiah (verse 10; Malachi 3:1). But for all John's greatness, Jesus declared the least in the kingdom is even greater. Perhaps *The Pulpit Commentary* gets at the truth: "The weakest Christian is greater in privileges than the greatest of the Old Testament saints. John could preach repentance, but the joys of

among us is greater than he! Though the knowledge of this God-given stature humbles us, at the same time it gives us a sense of self-worth that will not let us shirk the call of high heaven.

Which leads us to our second point: God has placed great responsibilities upon the least in the kingdom. Actually, He expects exactly the same from every Christian, the greatest to the least: *our best*. He will not accept excuses for less than that.

Do you remember the story of the talents in Matthew 25? What did the master expect from the one-talent man? Just what he looked for from the five-



# That's Life!



Dee Bowman

*COURAGE RELATES TO SMALL THINGS, TOO.* It is not always large battles that require the most of it. It takes courage to go on when you're tired. It takes courage to cry when you know that by doing so you're making yourself vulnerable. It takes courage—great courage—to face yourself, to be honest with yourself. More than I have sometimes.

\* \* \*

*VICTORIA LINCOLN SAYS IT WELL* (*The Arts of Living*). "But courage," says she, "goes on to see that the triumph of life is not in pains avoided, but in joys lived completely in the moment of their happening. Courage lies in never taking so much as a good meal or a day of health and fair weather for granted." It takes courage to grasp the moment, good or bad.

\* \* \*

*I PICKED THIS UP SOME TIME AGO:* This was scribbled almost a century ago by an anonymous soldier of the Confederacy:

"I asked God for strength that I might achieve—I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for help that I might do greater things: I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.

I asked for riches that I might be happy—I was given poverty that I might be wise.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life—I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for—but everything I had hoped for.

Despite myself, my prayers were answered. I am, among all men, most richly blessed."

\* \* \*

*IT SEEMS TO ME* that people who spend all of their time finding fault in others very seldom have time to find any fault in themselves.

\* \* \*

*WHEN PAUL SAID IN 1 CORINTHIANS THIRTEEN,* "Love thinketh no evil," he used an accountant's term. Literally he says that love doesn't store anything up to be used later on, like an accountant would store a set of numbers in memory so that he can come back to it later. Actually, we are ill-fitted for vengeance. If a friend needs punishment, we likely will be too soft. If it's an enemy, we'll likely lay it on too strong. Perhaps we better leave the storing up to God if there's any to be done.

\* \* \*

*I LIKE TO TALK TO OLDER PEOPLE ABOUT HEAVEN.* Seems like they just have a better view of the city.

\* \* \*

*I WOULD NOT WASTE MY TIME ARGUING* whether or not the Scriptures state that a Christian *must* attend services on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. It isn't necessary. To argue that you don't *have* to be at every service is to show a want of sense as to why such assemblies were planned in the first place.

1. They offer a refreshing oasis in the midst of our parched and empty society.
  2. They help us keep our defenses up.
  3. They keep us within our discipline.
  4. They are a refueling stop as we run life's race.
- Why would we *want* to miss?

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* "I need desperately to learn to say no, for such is a measurement of my true independence. I need to learn to accept the challenge regarding small things in life in order that when the important things require it, I will respond automatically. I need to learn the joy of finishing. I need to learn to communicate more fluently and more often with God so that I will come to be more like Him. I need to learn the true worth of hope so that I will have the wherewithal to stand in time of trouble."



## An Elder's Wife

Vital to the smooth operation of any local establishment of the Lord's church is a devoted person who has no title, holds no office, and has no authority save that of an ordinary Christian. Yet this person holds the power to disrupt or to expedite the most carefully laid plans and the most important works of the church. This quiet but influential person is an elder's wife.

Elders' wives come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors and textures. She can usually be found long after services are over, sitting in a parked car by herself — waiting — or in an empty, unheated auditorium after the crowd has gone — waiting. She gets a lot of Bible reading done this way, and she knows where all the songs are in the hymnbook.

She knows the loneliness of long evenings at home while her husband is out trying to correct other people's troubles. She is alone because her children are usually old enough to be occupied with their own pursuits, if they have not left home altogether. So she occupies her time with busy work — and waits.

An elder's wife must be as staunch as a rock, as busy as a beaver, as quiet as a mouse, as biblically informed as a preacher, as flexible as a rubber band, and as patient as a mother of triplets.

She must know how to change her plans without notice, how to keep a meal hot and tasty for two hours after it was ready to serve, how to hold her temper — and her tongue — when people criticize her husband, and, most of all, how to use time profitably while she waits for her husband to get out of a prolonged conference.

Hers is the frustration of knowing little and being able to tell even less, when people expect her to know all and tell it. She knows the heartache of watching her man wrestling with a problem not of his own making and which he cannot discuss — even with her. Hers is the responsibility of setting an example of faithful Christian wifeliness, not because anyone wants or intends to follow it, but simply because her husband is an elder. She has the burden of knowing that, of all the positions and offices in the Lord's church, her husband occupies one of the two or three whose qualifications depend on the character and caliber of his wife as well as of himself.

An elder's wife likes a peaceful church, worship services, Bible classes, potlucks, children, younger women, going visiting with her husband, opportunities to serve, company, a night when her husband has nowhere to go, getting to go home when church is over, short business meetings, people who don't cause any trouble.

An elder's wife worries about what people think of her husband, what people think about her, what people think about her husband *because* of her, whether her children are faithful as she taught them to be, church members who aren't faithful, whether the roast in the oven at home is going to burn before her husband gets out of that unscheduled meeting which was called for "not more than five minutes" a half-hour ago.

Her life is hard, but she wouldn't have it any other way. She loves the Lord with all her heart and feels the warm flow of satisfaction that comes of knowing that she dedicated not only herself, but even her home, her husband and her family to the service of God and the betterment of His kingdom. She knows that she has a reward in heaven, and she is willing to do more of that which she has already learned to do so well — wait.

And even if there were no heavenly crown to look forward to, all the trials of body and spirit become trivial by comparison when a man of God, exhausted from long hours of tending the Master's flock, comes home late at night, takes her in his arms, and says, "I just couldn't make it without you!"

— Author Unknown



# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Yea, none that wait for thee shall be put to shame . . . For thee do I wait all the day . . . For I wait for thee" (25:3,5,21).

## Waiting For Jehovah

**W**hat does it mean to "wait for Jehovah?" In verse 2 the psalmist says that he has trusted in Jehovah and that those who do so will not be put to shame. The promise is clear: our heavenly Father will never let His children find Him untrue. Whatever He says, you can count on. God will always remember His covenant, so never doubt Him. Trusting in God is "waiting on Jehovah."

Then, at verse 5, we find the psalmist extolling *patience* or *steadfastness*—which, of course, is the companion of faith and trust. We can cheerfully wait when we know that we are not going to wait in vain. Notice that we are obligated to wait on the Lord in service, in worship, in expectancy "all the day"—*everyday*. The faith of the Christian must be a tried faith to be worth anything at all (James 1:2-4), and if it meets the test, it will bear up under continued trial without yielding to it. Understand that you are going to be tried, and your steadfastness under that trial is a part of "waiting for God." One of the things that will help us to not grow weary in waiting for God is to remember how long and how graciously He has waited for us (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9).

Verse 21 shows that waiting on God involves our own integrity of life. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for thee." To pretend to wait for God without the practice of true holiness of life is hypocrisy. There are many who claim to be waiting on God whose lives belie their profession.

How does one "wait for Jehovah" in 1985? What are some useful ways we can put this psalm into practice in

our lives? I am convinced that we wait for Jehovah when:

1. **We pray to Him.** "If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins" (2 Chronicles 7:14). Prayer is an affirmation of our faith in God as well as our own humility and dependence. It is a statement that we believe God *is* and that He *hears* and that He can *help*. We are dependent upon God and we must never forget it. To fail in constant prayer is to fail to "wait for Jehovah." (See also Luke 8:1,8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 4:6.)

2. **We bear up under trials and persecutions.** Paul says that "we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For in hope were we saved . . . if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience [steadfastness] wait for it" (Romans 8:23-25). James says, "Be patient therefore, brethren . . . the husbandmen waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth . . . we call them blessed that endured" (James 5:7-11). We must not quit serving the Lord, no matter how difficult it may be. Trials will come and we may be persecuted, belittled and demeaned for being true to the Savior. But "waiting for Jehovah" compels us to endure.

3. **We live expectantly of the Lord's coming.** Jesus told of the foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) who were not prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. They grew careless; they slept; they took no oil for their lamps. We can become so busy in the activities of life that we do not attend to the things of God. To do this is to fail to "wait for Jehovah." Paul says that it must be our business "to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

So here are some needed qualities in the life of the Christian—prayer, steadfastness, expectancy. All of these things give us the proper balance to life as it really is—not as it seems to be. Make no mistake—the world will try to crowd these important activities out of our daily experience. Those who "wait for Jehovah" will not let it.



## Her Hat On A Nail

It was a warm lazy Sunday afternoon the first time I saw her. I was sitting "on" a pine plank church bench waiting for the services to begin when I looked out the front door and saw her walking across the church yard. She shaded her eyes with a cardboard fan as she passed through sunny patches between huge oaks.

Beneath her hat white hair reflected the rays of the sun. Age gave dignity to her slow walk; she bore gracefully the burden of years. She steadied her walk with a knobby cane. At the church steps she paused, looked briefly across the nearby cotton fields, then firmly took the two steps into the building.

She took in the whole congregation with one look and curtly nodded to all. She put her cane and fan on a pew, removed her hat, walked to the wall and hung her hat on a nail.

I went over and introduced myself. She firmly shook my hand and said, "Well preacher, I've come a long ways to hear some good preaching."

I looked into a pair of young and dancing eyes that lit up a face that was wise with years and molded firm with character and said, "Well, I've come a long ways to do some good preaching." She turned away chuckling to find her pew. We were friends from then on.

I preached often at that place and many times I saw her hang her hat on a nail. We often repeated the same saying, "She came to hear good preaching; I came to give it."

Years skipped away and I went from there to other fields of labor. Some time ago I returned to preach in a week's meeting. The building was modernized; new faces filled the room. I sat in an unfamiliar factory-made pew. I could see the church yard only partially through a side window. The huge oaks still stood shading the men talking and smoking and waiting for the "bell song."

I caught myself looking for a familiar figure, but I knew she was gone. I looked at the new sheetrock wall and the nail was pulled. In the chambers of imagery I could picture the past and see a familiar figure hang her hat on a nail. I listened to a far away voice, "I expect to hear some good preaching today," and I caught myself mumbling, "I came to give it."

I thought of her coming to the portals of glory. "Come in," said the Lord. Then motioning to a jasper wall He said, "Hang your hat on that golden nail." She nodded curtly and said, "Lord, I've come a long ways to find peace and rest." "I came to prepare it," He said.

Years have passed, age is making its erosions, but the power and charm of that simple, warm, child of God lingers until this day. I see its beauty in a twinkling star, and hear it rustling in the leaves of an oak and when I shade my eyes on a bright sunny day.

And when I think of people like her I thank God that He has enriched my life, filling it with such "little incidents, dear people and precious memories." May God be praised for His mercy, and may we all be wise to see the riches God has for His children.

—Jack L. Holt



# Mining The Scriptures

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

## The Sermon on the Mount

**"First be reconciled to thy brother" (Matthew 5:24).** Jesus began this section of His sermon with a series of warnings about the severe judgment destined to fall upon those who allow their anger to issue in hateful verbal abuse of others. He continues His theme by outlining the only way of escape for such offenders of the law of neighbor love (5:23-26).

What Jesus requires of us when we sin in this way is what the majority of men seem to dread most intensely; He demands that we face and deal with our victim. The context indicates that the brother who "hath aught against thee" is not just someone who is disgruntled, but one whom we have indeed wronged. In this case the worshipper is guilty, not just misunderstood. Other verses confirm this meaning (Mark 11:25). The gift-offerer needs to repent and seek his wronged brother's forgiveness. The dispatch with which the guilty party is to act, breaking off right in the midst of sacrifice, reflects the urgency of the situation and emphasizes how the mistreatment of others negates the worship of God. Scripture is full of this principle (Psalm 66:18; James 3:9-10; 1 John 4:20-21). The abuse of others serves to shut the door of heaven against us.

While the secularist has tended to treat worship with a measure of contempt as he emphasizes right conduct toward others, many religionists have historically tried to use worship as a cover for moral failure. This was the long suit of the Pharisees who sought to expiate by zealous ceremony their abuse of men (Matthew 23:23-24). But the Pharisee did not originate this skewed view of things. Several centuries earlier Amos had warned the smug citizens of Samaria that God had had His fill of their pretentious worship. What the Lord wanted, said the farmer-prophet, was righteousness and justice (5:21-24). Jeremiah, a hundred years later, had echoed the same theme in Jerusalem (7:21-23). Jesus tried to teach the Pharisees the lesson of the prophets. He sent them more than once to the words of Hosea: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13; 12:7). The Lord had little success in His endeavor but there were always the few like the scribe who observed that to love God with all the heart and one's neighbor as oneself was "much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:32-33). Jesus said that he was not far from the kingdom.

So what is the lesson here? When we have sinned against another the need is not for more dedicated attendance at worship assemblies or greater liberality in the Sunday collections or more spirited personal evangelism, though these generally might be more seriously treated

by all of us. The urgent need of the hour is for repentance and reconciliation with our injured brother or sister. (Husbands and wives especially need to hear this. Remember that husbands and wives and children are "neighbors," too). David addressed himself to this matter in the case of his own grievous moral failure with Bathsheba and Uriah: "For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:16-17). Don't try to offer God worship when repentance is required.

We must learn to address our sin and those we sin against with directness. "I have wronged you; please forgive me" are words that have gotten no easier to say with the passing years, but they are words which people with our flawed record must learn to say from the heart. Otherwise, there is no hope. Human relationships will be savaged and our relationship with God will simply be terminated.

It is impossible to estimate just how many of the Lord's disciples today are destroying themselves because they lack either the humility or the courage to repent of sins against others and seek their forgiveness. The dark secret of their guilt rests like some massive stone in their hearts, stultifying worship and sucking the spiritual life out of them (Psalm 32:3-4). If such is the case with you, quit parading the corpse in worship assemblies. Put an end to self-defense and self-justification. Go quickly and be reconciled to the one you have injured. The pain of repentance will be small indeed compared to the agony of continued guilt and alienation.

**"Agree with thine adversary quickly" (5:25).** Playing still on the Pharisees' narrow concern with civil penalties, Jesus continues to make His point in the metaphor of the civil court. To understand this as mere prudential advice to settle "out of court" in order to escape the vagaries of corrupt judges would not only trivialize the Lord's words but it would also set them at odds with their context. Jesus is still treating the issue of sins against others. The "adversary" is not the one who has brought some baseless charge against you but one whom you have injured, defrauded or defamed and whose case is just. Pride may counsel you to brazen it out, but Jesus urges a speedy reconciliation in view of a divine judgment which will be executed without mercy (verse 26). It is just this kind of judgment that sinful men cannot bear. Better that we seek mercy hastily while the opportunity is open to us. Even divine clemency has its limits.



# Bondservants of Christ Jesus

L. A. Mott, Jr.

## Philippians 1:1

**T**he epistle to the Philippians was written by Paul as a prisoner (1:7,12-30), most likely in Rome judging from the references to the praetorian guard in 1:13 and Caesar's household in 4:22). A close and special relationship had been maintained between Paul and the Philippian disciples all through the years since the first preaching of the gospel in Philippi. He speaks of their "fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now" (1:5). They had been partners in Paul's afflictions, sending to his need

and hoped to follow that with a trip of his own to Philippi after his release (2:19-30). The entire epistle glows with the tender feeling and concern of the apostle for the Philippian disciples.

Timothy had been a large part of Paul's connection with the Macedonian churches, including the Philippian saints, all through the years. He had joined Paul's party, evidently at Lystra, on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-5) and, consequently, though he is not specifically mentioned in the narrative (Acts 16:6-40), must have been with the group when the work of the

It is abundantly evident that Timothy as well as Paul had had a long and close relationship with the saints at Philippi. No wonder Paul adds "and Timothy" in the salutation (Philippians 1:1), though Paul was clearly the sole author of the letter, for he begins immediately (1:3) and then continues throughout using the first person singular and refers to Timothy in the third person when he does speak of him (in 2:19-24).

Paul often uses the self-designation "an apostle of Christ Jesus" in the salutations of his letters to indicate the capacity in which he writes. But evidently this note of authority was not thought necessary in this warm and friendly letter to such close friends. And Paul defines his position by calling himself and Timothy "servants of Christ Jesus."

The Greek *doulos* was not a hired servant but a bondservant, a slave. The word implies work, of course, but more than that. It refers to one who belongs to someone else. Paul was the property of Jesus Christ and committed to executing the will of his Master.

One cannot read this little epistle (especially 1:12-26) without realizing how fervently and thoroughly Paul was devoted to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the passage about Timothy (2:19-24) is just as clear that Paul's young assistant also thought of himself as a servant of Christ Jesus.

I have to keep turning back to this little epistle to correct my wayward mind. It teaches us so much about the mind of the disciple of Jesus. Several of us where I live have been meeting together in small groups, reading Philippians together and using it in a month-long discipline aimed at learning how to see things through the eyes of a disciple.

Perhaps the principal thing that stands out in Chapter 2 is that the mind of a disciple is the mind of a servant. But Paul's self-designation in the first line of the letter ought to remind us preachers and elders that we cannot effectively teach our people to be servants until we ourselves learn the mind of a servant.

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**"I have to keep turning back to this little epistle to correct my wayward mind. It teaches us so much about the mind of the disciple of Jesus. Several of us where I live have been reading Philippians together, learning how to see things through the eyes of a disciple."**

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more than once from the time he left Philippi (4:15-16), and lately had sent to him in Rome by means of Epaphroditus, their messenger (2:25-30; 4:10-20).

Epaphroditus had become seriously ill, "nigh unto death," while ministering to Paul in his confinement, but "God had mercy on him" and he had recovered, so that Paul was able to send him back to the Philippians both to relieve their minds about Epaphroditus and also as the bearer of news about the latest developments in his own case. Paul planned to send Timothy to Philippi as soon as the outcome of his case was clear

gospel began in Philippi. Paul had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica in Macedonia from Athens (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5; see Acts 17:14-16). On the third journey Paul again sent Timothy to Macedonia, this time from Ephesus (Acts 19:21-22). A little later Timothy was with Paul in Macedonia on the way to Jerusalem after Paul's long Ephesian ministry (Acts 20:1-6). And finally, Timothy appears as an assistant of Paul during the latter's confinement in Rome, from which Paul had plans to send Timothy to Philippi (Philippians 2:19-24).



# An Open Letter to Subscribers: Plans for 1985

The editors of *Christianity Magazine* met recently and decided to commit ourselves to publishing the paper for another year. We have been encouraged by the enthusiastic support we have received from those who have subscribed to the magazine. We believe it is doing good and for that reason we have determined to continue another year.

The progress of the paper has been good, if not spectacular. We expect to end 1984 with a subscription list of about 4,000. That number has continued to grow each month and we are hopeful that the growth will continue.

The growth of *Christianity Magazine* has not been sufficient, however, to make the paper financially solvent. All of those involved in the magazine have given freely of their time; in addition a sizable cash subsidy has been required. The editors greatly appreciate the assistance of those people who have contributed articles and other work to help us get started.

We solicit your help in 1985. We cannot continue to publish the magazine indefinitely unless we secure sufficient subscriptions to pay its publication costs. Here are some ways you can help:

**1. Resubscribe.** Many of your subscriptions will be due for renewal near the first of the year. We need your prompt attention to renewal. When billed, you will notice that the price for 1985 has been raised to \$15 per year. We feel that the higher price is realistic and it is essential for our survival.

**2. Gift Subscriptions.** Nearly twenty-five percent of the present subscriptions to *Christianity Magazine* were presented as gifts. We hope that many of you will resubscribe for those receiving the gifts (if they will not do so themselves) and that you will consider giving it to others. *All gift subscriptions will remain at the price of \$10 per year.* After your initial subscription you may send as many as you wish for \$10. If you wish, we will notify them of your gift by sending an attractive presentation card.

**3. Church Bundles.** We are also providing a number of churches with bundles of the magazine to be distributed to all members. These are sent directly to their homes. A number of individuals have chosen to do this, too. You may send 25 subs for only \$18.75 per month (this is the cheapest way possible to subscribe). If you would like to know more about the bundle rates, see page 3 and/or contact Bob Hardage at business office address and phone on that page.

**4. New Subscribers.** We have not reached many of the Christians who we believe need to be reading the upbuilding material we are publishing. Many have not heard of the magazine. You are our best avenue to those people. We need your help in reaching them. *Tell a friend they need Christianity Magazine!*

We will keep you informed about our progress and we are looking forward to having you aboard in 1985.

*The Editors*

P. S. Please let us know your change of address well in advance of your move. It is very costly and time-consuming for us when you do not do this. We will appreciate your help.



## Better Is The End Of A Thing Than The Beginning Thereof—Ecclesiastes 7:8a

The young mother set her foot on the path of life. "Is the way long?" she asked. And her Guide said, "Yes, and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning."

But the young mother was happy, and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children, and gathered flowers for them along the way, and bathed with them in the streams; and the sun shone on them, and life was good, and the young mother cried, "Nothing will ever be lovelier than this."

The night came, and storm, and the path was dark, and the children shook with fear and cold, and the mother drew them close and covered them with her mantle, and the children said, "Oh, Mother, we are not afraid, for you are near, and no harm can come." And the mother said, "This is better than the brightness of day, for I have taught my children *courage*."

And the morning came and there was a hill ahead, and the children climbed and grew weary, and the mother was weary; but at all times she said to the children, "A little *patience*, and we are there." So the children climbed, and when they reached the top, they said, "We could not have done it without you, Mother." And the mother, when she laid down that night, looked up at the stars and said, "This is a better day than last for my children have learned *fortitude* in the face of difficulty. Yesterday, I gave them courage. Today, I have given them strength."

And the next day came strange clouds which darkened the earth—clouds of war and hate and evil, and the children groped and stumbled, and the mother said, "Look up! Lift your eyes to the Light." And the children looked and saw above the clouds an Everlasting Glory, and it guided them beyond the darkness. And that night the mother said, "This is the best day of all, for I have shown my children *God*."

And the days went on, and the months and years, and the mother grew old, and she was little and bent. But her children were tall and strong, and walked with courage. And when the way was hard, they helped their mother; and when the way was rough, they lifted her, for she was as light as a feather; and at last they came to a hill, and beyond the hill they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide.

And the mother said, "I have reached the end of my journey. And now I know that the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, and their children after them."

And the children said, "You will always walk with us, Mother, even when you have gone through the gates."

And they stood and watched her as she went on alone, and the gates closed after her. And they said, "We cannot see her, but she is with us still. A mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a living presence always."

— Temple Bailey



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### Preaching Among the Indians in South Africa

In the 1860's, about the time of the Civil War in America, a considerable number of families migrated from India to work in the cane fields of South Africa. They adapted well to the new environment and during the century that has passed each generation is increasingly "at home." Today, they represent approximately 3% of the population.

The apartheid policy of South Africa has kept a majority of the Indian people (about 700,000) living together in a large area of land assigned to them near Durban in the province of Natal. Because they continue to live together, they retain their Indian culture and customs much longer than they would otherwise. The Hindu religion predominates.

Not long before the James Lovell family went to South Africa in 1973, a small group of these Indians were converted to New Testament Christianity. The Lovells went first to Port Elizabeth to work with two other preachers, but when they became aware of these Indian brethren, they determined to move as close as possible to their area and to help in their growth and development. This led them to Pinetown, near Durban and even nearer to the Indian residential area.

Jim has worked well with the Indians. He was determined from the beginning not to become their bishop, but to remain an evangelist: teaching and training them to be indigenous, self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating congregations—looking to the Lord rather than to him, and to heaven rather than to America, for their strength. In the ten years since the Lovells began their work, the number of congregations has multiplied by eight and the membership by a larger factor.

The Lovells would be the last to claim credit for all that has been done. Some other Americans have lived and worked in the area, including the David Beckley and Gene Tope families. A South African, Piet Joubert, made the first contact with the Indian brethren and Basil Cass and Paddy Kendall-Ball are presently working among them. The Indian brethren themselves have shown a remarkable evangelistic zeal, providing an example for believers everywhere. But the power that has accomplished it all is God's, working through the gospel.

Sometimes it takes the kind of work the Lovells are doing to remind us of the true source of power. It is easy for us to develop such an emphasis on numbers, and

personalities, and methods, and aids, and facilities that we come to think of them as essentials.

Try to imagine the reaction of the Lovells as they read a magazine article from the U.S., stressing the necessity of a colorful classroom with plenty of light, electronic visual aids, and carpeting to allow the children to sit on the floor while being taught. As they read, Judy's classroom for her Indian children was a concrete driveway next to the house of one of the members, and her students were sitting on four or five little benches with no backs. Her lessons were punctuated by the smells of a sheephead being scorched next door to make curry, and she had to compete for the attention of the children with a loud neighborhood radio and the bell of the passing ice cream wagons. The church itself was meeting in the space between the back of the house and a high retaining wall a few feet behind it, protected from the sun and rain by a canvas awning stretched between the house and the wall. "Colorful curtains and carpets?" *Indeed!*

From the beginning, Jim's family has been a team. Judy's willingness to leave her family to live in a "foreign land" sets her apart from many "preachers' wives," and Jim's testimony is that she has never complained about missing anything from America. She adapted herself quickly to the very different customs of the Indians and has been quite active in teaching women and children. Julie, Jeff, and Jennifer (their children) were young when they left the United States and had little say in the decision to go. But recently, their say was the determining factor in a decision to extend the family's efforts in South Africa for at least another three to four years. They are now 19, 18, and 16 years of age.

The Lovells did not go to South Africa because they were failures in the U.S. They were working with a fine congregation when the decision was made and there would have been many other places they could have gone if they had simply desired a change. They went to South Africa because there was a need there. The satisfaction of fulfilling a need is one of a preacher's most gratifying compensations.

Recently Jim was asked, "If you could turn back the calendar and make your original decision again, would you go to South Africa?"

The answer was immediate and definite: "Sure!"

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341





# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## Remembering

Apparently cluttered with a record of every trivial encounter of our experience, our minds have a very limited capacity to call most of that memory to the conscious surface. Most of us remember very little about our past. I am always amazed at the trivia which some people can scrape out of their minds. When he preaches, Dee Bowman regales his audiences endlessly with tales from his faded youth—dredging up stories of Betty Bowlegs and Billy Beltbuckle which seem too far-fetched to be products of his vivid imagination.

But most of life's experiences escape even Dee's introspective eye. None of us could reconstruct with any accuracy a week out of our life twenty years ago. Actually, I can hardly remember what I did last week.

For the most part, we remember only particularly poignant moments in our experience—some of them

times of momentous social import and some profoundly private. I remember Pearl Harbor, sitting intently before a huge old cabinet radio, listening to the news of the bombing. I remember being interrupted in the midst of a class at East Tennessee State University to be told that John F. Kennedy had been shot. I remember saying "I do" in a little church in Russellville, Kentucky, and I remember sitting on the fantail of a destroyer in the midst of the Atlantic Ocean in the absolute peace and serenity of a hushed sunset—lost in the mellowest of meditation.

But for a Christian there are no memories which rival our spiritual recollections. God intended for those memories to strengthen us. Hebrews 10:32 states: "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of affliction." Probably no moment stands more vivid

in the life of any Christian than his recollection of his spiritual birth. It should be recalled not as a mystical, better-felt-than-told, experience, but rather as a moment when we lay hold on what God has done for us, being "buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Talk to almost anyone who has been baptized into Christ. They will remember the occasion; they will tell you how they felt; they will privately recollect their fervent intents in that moment of illumination. I once asked Harold Dowdy how he got prospects for his very active teaching program. He told me, facetiously but with a point: "I can't tell you how to find your first prospect, but if you ever baptize one, I guarantee you he will take you to others."

It is easy to lose that enthusiasm. As life goes on, we often

fail, we get tired, that mountaintop experience gets pushed back into our subconscious. It is the inevitable loss of innocence. Asked by someone about the practice of sending inexperienced men to work in hard places, I once justified the practice with the assertion: "The young do better in difficult circumstances, because they do not already know that they cannot accomplish anything." They are closer to one of those powerful spiritual moments.

The rest of us, as Hebrews instructs, must use our memory. We must think back on the truths that converted us; we must remember the good intentions which moved us. And all of us need to be busy collecting other memories to sustain us—memories of personal battles to escape the slavery of sin and of comradeship with others in doing good. The savoring of that past will be the key to your future.

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## Rules for Living

**E**very person is anxious to find what will make him happy. The search for the fountain of youth was an effort to bring perpetual strength and vigor and thereby happiness. Most of the work we do is somehow intended to bring us the income we need to promote happiness. The same with play. We play to be happy. Engaging in various athletic events, either as a participant or a spectator, is designed to bring happiness. Parties, movies, and a host of other things are intended to make us happy. And yet, all around us we see despondency, depression, suicides, drug overdoses, and general unhappiness. Why?

Our word "happiness" has the same root ("hap") as does "happen." This gives us some insight as to how happiness comes. It comes from what "happens," and is thus dependent on externalities for its fulfillment. When things around us happen to be bad, chances are we will not be happy. Conversely, when our circumstances are good, we have a much better chance for being happy.

The Christian should be more interested in the state of "blessedness" than that of "happiness." Blessedness is a kind of sublimated state of happiness—one that produces peace of mind out of a knowledge that one is right with God. Blessedness is a kind of ethical state of happiness. It's a higher kind and does not depend for its fulfillment on things that happen. In fact, a person can maintain this kind of happiness even in the midst of difficult and sometimes excruciating circumstances (Matthew 5:11).

I want to cite just five simple things that will enhance your peace of mind and thereby bring this higher happiness to your life. Not just a temporary, fluctuating happiness, but one that has real quality and is lasting.

**Learn to say no.** Actually, the need for being independent should be obvious to every Christian. We simply cannot run with the crowd (1 Peter 4:4) and hold to our higher values at the same time. Like any other discipline, it's hard to say no, but the person who has mastered the art will be much happier in life, mainly

because he is operating on a higher moral standard, and out of his own conscience, not someone else's.

**Accept the challenge.** I believe boredom is one of the prime causes of unhappiness. We need to be challenged in order to know that we are important. It's vital to our self-esteem. When we are not actively involved in the pursuit of some good thing we are inclined to feel worthless, valueless. To accept the challenge requires basically two things: the humility to bring yourself under the control of Christ; and the personal diligence required to work when you don't feel like it.

**Learn the joy of finishing.** To fail to finish is to be unsatisfied, no matter how hard you've tried. To be fulfilled we must finish the job. Many a project has been begun only to fail for want of the purpose necessary to finish it. It's a part of counting the cost to ascertain whether or not we can finish a thing. And what a joy to stand off and view the finished product. To finish is a vital part of doing it "with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

**Communicate with God.** The hope we need to stay on course is to be found only in faith, which comes from allowing God to speak (Hebrews 6:19; 11:1). And the spiritual energy which is needed to propel us toward the goal is furnished to a large extent by our regular conversations with our Father. How sweet to hear from a friend. How much sweeter to have contact with our Heavenly Father.

**Don't forget your heritage.** Throughout the Old Testament the men of God reminded the people of where they came from. Heritage is important. We are encouraged when we realize that we have an intimate association with some important person. Of how much more value our relationship with God. David made plea for God to "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Psalm 51:12). It is absolutely necessary in all circumstances that we remember who we are—Christians, bought at an awful cost.



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# Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 663 Denise Drive, Melbourne, FL 32935

## The death of a saint

It is with sadness for ourselves and sympathy for brother Lowell D. Williams of Kirkland, Washington, that we report the death of his beloved wife, Doris. Sister Williams passed from this earthly life on Friday, November 9, 1984, while undergoing heart surgery. Her death was sudden and unexpected, and is a shock to us all. Brethren James Puterbaugh and Don Givens officiated at the service which well over 400 people attended. Truly, a great Christian lady, wife of an elder in the Kirkland congregation, and wife of a faithful gospel preacher shall be missed. She left us a supreme example of the "worthy woman." Cards of condolences may be addressed to Lowell Williams at 13000 N.E. 84th St., Kirkland, WA 98033

Don Givens  
Kirkland, Washington

## It does make a difference what banner one writes under

It had been a long, hard day, and it was with a great sense of pleasure that I kicked off my shoes and settled down to read the newest *Christianity Magazine* (always a spirit-booster). With a lovely sense of surprise I saw that an article of mine [*"Going the Second Mile," Christianity Magazine, November, 1984, p. 9*] had been printed! Wow! I couldn't wait to tell my mother! But then I noticed the lead-in banner. "Listen, Ladies . . . ?" I had written an article about King Josiah, and the example he shows us today by his faith in God and his deeds. What did that have to do with "Listen, Ladies . . . ?" Had I inadvertently written a "woman's article?" Were King Josiah's actions speaking only to women? Are men not required to "go the second mile?" Or, since I am a woman, are only women allowed to read my words? Are women the only ones who need to?

Forgive me if I seem a little harsh. I am sometimes puzzled by how few women write

articles and books on subjects other than those relating to home and family. I sense a vast untapped source of knowledge in the church today—that of intelligent, wise women who could by written word add greatly to both men and women's understanding of the Bible, *if they feel they would be appreciated and respected*. People do notice a difference in how women and men in print are treated; *every person who mentioned having seen my article asked me why I had put it under the banner "Listen, Ladies . . . ?"* Before I crawl down from my soap box, let me ask one question: Does the gender of the author matter when the author speaks truth?

You gentlemen should be commended. You are putting out a fine magazine, one of the best I've ever read, and I thank you for your hard work and diligence. If your readers offer up criticism every once in a while, we do it in the spirit of love, for we appreciate your efforts on our behalf.

And, yes, my mother is very happy!

Martha Ladyman  
Austin, TX 78753

## Concerning "the ugliest editorial staff ever assembled"

I have seen most of you in gospel meetings and although you are by no means "pretty" [*see Christianity Magazine, November, 1984, p. 32*], it is somewhat excessive to say you are all ugly. Perhaps "rugged" would be a better description.

Nevertheless, I am renewing my subscription to your magazine. Frankly, I don't care if your faces would make a train take a dirt road, I like your magazine immensely.

In the past year I have recommended *Christianity Magazine* to all the brethren I know (six at last count . . . just kidding!) and sent you a list of names to send complimentary issues to. Several who received those issues have since subscribed and the rest will either eventually do so or remain hopeless heathens.

Keep up the good work and let's pray that 1985 sees a tremendous increase in your

subscriptions. There are several hundred thousand brethren out there, and most subscribe to things like *Time* and *Newsweek* and *Field and Stream* and *Life* and specialty magazines in diet and health and such like. Many of us even subscribe to professional magazines to help keep us up on the changes and challenges of our chosen fields. So why are we so reluctant to subscribe to magazines such as *Christianity*, *Apostolic Messenger*, *Today*, *The Preceptor*, *Guardian of Truth* and the many other periodicals dedicated to the spiritual aspect of life?

I sometimes wonder where our true interests lie when I hear of the struggle that some magazines labor under while the popular secular material (like *People* or *The National Inquirer*) is easily found in most homes.

Despite the fact that you have been forced to raise the subscription price to \$15 per year, it is well worth the price. If I cannot afford that, then I cannot afford to take the family out for pizza even once this year, either!

Frankly, I can't see facing 1985 without a good pizza every so often. Ditto for *Christianity Magazine*. Send it on, brethren!!!

Richard Williams  
Taft, California

## See Page Three for Information on Ordering Bound Volume No. 1

*We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?*





# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Healing

I am frequently asked to write encyclopedia articles about the restoration movement because of my books on that subject. Done over and over that becomes a boring job and I only do it now when the pay is good or when there is some inviting twist. I just recently finished a twenty-five page paper entitled, "The Healing Tradition of the Disciples of Christ." It is scheduled to be published by Macmillan sometime this year in a volume entitled: *Caring and Curing: Historical Essays on Health, Medicine, and the Faith Traditions*. I accepted the assignment for money, but before I finished it had piqued my curiosity in several ways.

First, I was amazed by the little that has been written about those who set out to restore New Testament Christianity about human health and happiness. Mine was a hard article to write. When I had finished, I felt that I had twenty-five pages of fluff. I told the editors that I could have written a dozen articles about the pentecostals in the time I spent on the restoration movement.

There are several good reasons for this vacuum. In the first place, many of us have been deeply committed to doctrinal soundness, and much of our attention has been directed to solving problems of belief and practice. Regrettable as that may seem to some, I believe that is as it should be. Our relation to God is our first and heaviest responsibility and rightly occupies our attention. Second, we place a relatively low value on this life—looking longingly to the next world where we shall be at peace with God. I believe such other-worldliness is profoundly biblical and eminently useful in constructing healthy world views.

Having said those things, as time permits and circumstance demands, our lives will be enriched as we consider the insight God gives us into the sanctity of life

(including but reaching beyond the rejection of abortion), sexuality, sickness and suffering, and death. In the process of living we will experience all of those things.

By far the most prolific body of writing about healing by recent Christians has been in doctrinal opposition to "faith healing." Once again, that has been a matter of necessity. The twentieth century teaching that God still works miracles of healing flies into the face of the biblical teaching that miracles were used by God to confirm His revelation: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebrews 2:3-4). It also fails the test of reason, leaving behind as shattered refuse the sick and suffering who receive no miracle from God.

What is left then? Much. The prayer of faith is left: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Not a halting, half-hearted, ritualistic acknowledgement of God's sovereignty, but a fervent appeal for help. And there is concern for one another. Do the suffering know you care? Have you prayed for and with those whom time and circumstance have brought low? Have you placed a caring hand on a filthy or diseased head to let them know you are not ashamed to touch them and to love them? Hospitals and rest homes can sterilize and feed the sick and suffering, but they will not love them and pray for them.



# When Cookies Are Biscuits

Matt Qualls

We had expected change when moving to England, but assured ourselves that a common language would make adapting much easier. Yet, our English acquaintances seemed bemused by many of our common American expressions. What's more, familiar items suddenly had unfamiliar names. Cookies were "biscuits," and biscuits were "scones." French fries were "chips," and potato chips were "crisps." Body weight was expressed in "stones," while "pounds" were the standard monetary units. Luggage packed in a car was put in the "boot," and the oil was checked by looking under the "bonnet." In addition to all the new terminology, I soon discovered we were the ones with the accent.

Following English sports was a particular challenge. Instead of baseball, cricket was the standard summer fare. Cricket vaguely resembled baseball in that a ball was thrown to a batter who attempted to hit it and score runs without getting out. But the similarity ended there. The pitchers were "bowlers" who ran thirty yards before bouncing the ball off the "pitch" (field, to us) to the batter. Instead of one batter, there were two batsmen standing opposite each other in the middle of a circular field. As partners, they took turns batting, attempting to score and accumulate as many runs as possible before getting out. On occasion, a batter might score a "century" (a hundred runs) or more before being dismissed. Instead of short-stop or centerfielder, there were fielding positions like "gully," "silly mid-off" or "deep-fine leg." During each day's six hours of play, the players took customary breaks for lunch, then later for tea. International matches were contested over five days, yet could end in a draw. Being the sports fanatic I was, this kind of action hardly seemed palatable.

Our first reaction to such changes were no doubt like those of any ordinary tourist exposed to such differences for the first time. We listened or looked on in amusement to things that at times seemed absurd to us. All was constantly

compared to our ingrained American ways. Yet, slowly, imperceptible transitions occurred. English phrases and expressions began to surface with increasing regularity in our vocabulary. As I watched more cricket, the terminology and strategies became more apparent and the game interesting. To top it all off, driving on the "wrong" side of the road began to feel very comfortable.

What happened? Well, I suspect it came about because we stopped viewing

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English life and habits from a distance and began experiencing life as they would. Viewed from their environment and background, their apparently odd behavior seemed very natural.

Similarly, as Christians, any relationship can be enhanced by a willingness to put ourselves in the place of another, giving consideration to why they act as they do. When the next Jehovah's Witness appears at your door, a realization of the attractiveness of this false doctrine can help us understand his com-

mitment to it. This will cause us not only to combat his error, but view him as a misguided soul who needs the gospel. Does the seemingly dogmatic viewpoint of a fellow member irritate you? Getting to know and share his background with him might just cause us to appreciate his concern. The frustrated parents of an apparently irresponsible teenager will be all the wiser in administering their guidelines by recalling from their own experience the great demands of adolescence. Many misunderstandings arise in marriage when snap judgments are made concerning the behavior of a spouse. Holding that evaluation in abeyance until the matter is discussed and mutual feelings are considered can keep a minor conflict from erupting into a major controversy.

The Bible provides ample motivation for seeking to understand others. No doubt Christ, as Creator, could have understood our plight without partaking in human flesh. Yet, are we not emboldened to ask for God's help with the realization that our High Priest has experienced temptation as we do (Hebrews 4:14-16)? Paul, after his conversion, set aside personal prejudices shaped by his background and attempted to become all things to all men. This did not mean compromising the truth revealed to him. It did mean that he wholeheartedly pursued the obedience of his own kinsmen, recognizing the attitudes that shaped their rebellion (Romans 9:1-5; 10:1-3). He might just as easily forego personal liberties for the sake of a Gentile convert, whose conscience had been shaped by idolatry (1 Corinthians 8:9-13). Should not our concern for others be just as great?

Cricket will never be our national pastime. The U. S. and England will no doubt remain two great nations divided by a common language. But just as we attempt to understand ways foreign to those of our country, let us be Christians who better ourselves by unselfish consideration shown for others.

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Brent Lewis



# My Brother/My Self

## Don't Envy Your Brother

**F**rom the very beginning envy has been present among men. Cain was touched by anger and hate when his brother's sacrifice was accepted by Jehovah. Abel's success was so unbearable to his brother that envy placed a crude stick into Cain's hand and he slew him. Many a brother since then has been attacked and assassinated by the sin of envy.

Our word envy is derived from two Latin words—"in" which means "against," and "video" meaning to "look upon." Thus the word means to look against, to eye with evil intent. The Bible well describes this sin in 1 Samuel 18:6-9, when it tells of David returning from the slaughter of the Philistines, and all the women of Israel praised David by saying, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." That was more than Saul could take, and the next verse says, "And Saul eyed David from that day forward." Saul eyed him with evil intent. That is envy.

What is it about man that he cannot allow others to be praised without feeling mistreated, left out, and short-changed? What is this sin which no man will readily admit? Have you ever known anyone who confessed the sin of envy?

Whether openly admitted or not, still those who are envious make two stark admissions. First, they feel inferior. Pride is at the root of envy. It is hard for some people to admit that they are second rate at anything. Third rate would be to consider suicide. Secondly, the envious person craves the isolation of selfishness. No man is an island, but many would like to be. In Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, Envy speaks: "I am envy, begotten of a chimney sweeper and an oyster-wife. I cannot read, and therefore wish all books were burnt. I am lean with seeing others eat. O that there would come a famine through all the world, that all might die, and I live alone! Then thou should'st see how fat I would be." What selfish isolation! One's secret wishes often prove how small his heart is.

Who is it that are envious? Well, the child of God is sometimes envious of the child of the devil. He envies his wantonness, his debauchery, his so-called freedom. He envies the fact that the wicked seem to prosper, and the righteous do not. David faced this problem in Psalm 73

and says that when he thought this way, he was "brutish and ignorant" (verse 22); he solved the problem when he took the long-range view by going "into the sanctuary of God, and consider[ing] their latter end" (verse 17). The righteous should not be envious of the wicked for at least two reasons. First, we cannot see into the darker rooms of their lives. They do not live a life free from trouble, but are plagued by insincere friendships, violated trusts and shallow relationships. They have no satisfaction or peace, but "are utterly consumed with terrors" (verse 19). Second, their prosperity is temporary. "Surely thou settest them in slippery places: thou castest them down to destruction" (verse 18). All of us must heed the precept: "Let not thy heart envy sinners" (Proverbs 23:17).

**B**ut what may be worse is that we envy one another! It is incredible to me that brethren in the Lord will manifest envy. I know of some brethren who cannot stand it when some brother has been more successful than them in the business world. If somebody makes more money than they do, or if their children are smarter and better-liked, or if they are more prominent in the community—they cannot be happy for them. Then there are those who are envious because someone leads the singing more (or better) than they do, or someone else was chosen to serve as an elder, or someone was invited to somebody else's house for dinner—and they were not! And maybe the sin of envy is demonstrated the worst among us by some who are preachers. We are burying our heads in the sand if we do not see that some are incensed because others hold more meetings than they do; some use their position of pen and pulpit to "get" others by whom they feel rivaled; and some criticize others in their work because they feel threatened.

We must rid ourselves of this terrible sin, or it will destroy us. Many years ago the citizens of Thasos erected a memorial to Theagenes, a celebrated victor in the public games. This so enraged an envious rival that he went down every night and tried to throw the statue to the ground. After repeated attempts he was at last successful. But when he lifted the statue from its pedestal, it toppled and crushed him to death. "Envy slayeth the silly one" (Job 5:2, KJV).



# Part-Time Preaching

John McGuire

"Are you the preacher?" "Well, I do the preaching." Even after several years of doing almost all the preaching where we were members, I still answered this way. If I truly did not believe in a separation of clergy and laity, should I have hesitated in calling myself "the preacher" just because I also hold down a full-time secular job? Maybe my hesitation was justified in that I did not want to be claiming to do all that a full-time preacher would do. Then again, maybe I just did not want someone to expect me to do all that a full-time preacher is expected to do. However, I have finally come to be able to say, "Yes, I am the preacher." Considering all the above, however, I have no problem in calling myself—or being called by others—a "part-time preacher."

Some time during those years of coming to regard myself as "the preacher" while still working at a full-time secular job, I also came to feel good about accepting part-time support for the preaching. It seemed to me at first, that if I was still able to work at a full-time job, the partial support did not enable me to spend more time preaching. Thus, why should I accept the support? I came to realize, however, that it is not good for a congregation not to give such support when able to do so. If I did not need the money, I could quietly return it to the contribution and still establish for the congregation the practice of financial support for a preacher. Through the years, I also became aware of hidden extra expenses involved in the work. My wife was probably aware of these before I was.

I also gladly accept being called part-time because, although it has certain sacrifices, it also has certain special advantages. When I put in some time or effort that is considered extra, I am shown extra appreciation. "After all, you are only part-time." My full-time counterpart, however, for the same extra time and effort, may only receive a comment such as, "That is what you are paid for."

Part-time preachers are not always

exempt, however, from the tasks that we have come to expect of "the preacher" that are not actually a part of just "doing the preaching." Weddings, funerals, and visiting those to whom it is special to have "the preacher" come instead of "one of the members," have all become part of this. People look to the preacher for these as an honor to his work. We should learn to accept them as such.

If some feel that the term "part-time" falls short of recognizing the sacrifices

self-made martyrs—only grouchy volunteers.

Part-time preaching can help one to appreciate a lot of things and many good people. I realize that even before I regarded myself as "the preacher," others did already. I appreciate their confidence and support. Even if some of us are part-time preachers, there are no part-time preachers' wives or children. The wives and children of part-time preachers are still full-time in their roles. Certainly we

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involved, we should remember that all forms of service to God demand sacrifice. David refused to go through the motions of sacrifice if it did not personally cost him (2 Samuel 24:24). I believe the principle of cheerful giving taught in 2 Corinthians 9:7 applies to all that we give or do in the Lord's service, not just to what we drop in the collection plate. If I cannot do the work of part-time preaching cheerfully, I should not be trying to do it at all. There are no

have given them a role that includes many things. I appreciate my full-time preacher's wife and children.

The Lord looks down on us in love, expecting us to choose a place in His service that we judge will render the maximum good. I appreciate this, and hope I have made the right choice for myself.

I also appreciate Monday holidays.

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## Unity Comes In By the Back Door

**D**avid once observed that when Israel dwelt together in unity it sent a thrill through the heart. It was, he said, as refreshing as the fragrance of the holy oil on Aaron's priestly head or the dew that dropped from Hermon's summit (Psalm 133:1-3). Unfortunately history indicates it was a condition as infrequent as it was desirable. Jesus urged His disciples to love one another and prayed that they might be *one* as He and His Father were *one* (John 13:34-35; 17:21), but, as in Israel's case, the record of those who call themselves Christians has not been encouraging. Perhaps it would be helpful to take another look at the nature of the unity our Lord sought and the process that produces it. Paul, in Ephesians 4, has some important things to say on that subject.

The most rudimentary fact that the apostle states about the unity of Christ's followers is that it is expected and, therefore, possible (4:3). Paul's earnest appeal becomes a cruel joke, an entreaty to hopeless labor, if Christian oneness is a practical impossibility. Clearly, it is not that. Paul grounds the "unity of the Spirit," not on some airy sentimentality, but on the oneness of God, the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the unity of the revelation of the divine will (4:4-6). It is a unity that has substantial expression in "one faith," "one baptism," and "one body."

Nevertheless, the apostle Paul notwithstanding, many have abandoned as impossible any unity based upon the pattern of truth in the New Testament because that approach has failed to unite all who claim to be Christians. Needless to say, it did not do that in the first century. Even with inspired apostles present many of the churches were frequently wracked by division. Paul's letters leave no doubt of this.

What needs to be understood is that the "unity of the Spirit" only serves to bring together those who are wholeheartedly committed to the will of God. We can make that determination about ourselves but only God knows for sure about others (2 Timothy 2:19). However well-intended, there is a great presumptuousness in deciding for ourselves who ought to be united (the people who appeal to us) by the truth of the Scripture and then renouncing "patternism" because it fails to meet our expectations. The same approach to marriage would have caused us to abandon that institution long ago. Unity on the word of God is possible, not for all who *say* they are sincere disciples, but for those who are. God will always have His people and they will be united.

The second truth that surfaces in Paul's appeal to the Ephesians is that unity among Christians is not automatic but the product of diligent effort (4:3). Keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" requires more than a

commitment to the unifying facts (4:4-6). There is also the need to cultivate the unifying spirit (4:1-2). It has been my experience that some disciples who are virtual clones when it comes to their convictions are capable of the most vicious conflict because of attitude. It is my guess that pride and self-will have divided more churches than doctrinal conflict, and there has certainly been enough of the latter. If we are to live consistently with our calling we must have the self-emptying mind of Christ (Philippians 2:1-8). There must be a spirit of lowliness in our attitude toward ourselves and a spirit of long-suffering love in our disposition toward others.

Unity among brethren does not automatically occur because they are all Christians, not even if they are all earnest Christians. Unity takes labor that is often arduous. And that is the problem—some people are not willing to pay the price. I confess that in my weaker moments I would like to go where you just preach and everybody spontaneously becomes one. Frankly, it would have been nice if my wife and I could have had the same experience in marriage—no conflicts, no misunderstandings—but candor requires me to say that we have had to work hard for the close relationship we have. When the call of the gospel brings together in a local assembly men and women of widely differing backgrounds and levels of spiritual maturity it should be obvious that some real effort is going to be required to mold them into a family. When two people get married there is a sense in which they instantaneously become *one* (Genesis 2:24) but they will spend the rest of their lives together trying to *be one*. From the moment one is baptized into Christ he is united in a relationship with all other Christians (Galatians 3:28) though he will never see most of them. But in the face-to-face relationships in local churches we are compelled to give that unity of relationship a practical expression. That will take a tremendous dedication to God's word along with much prayer and patience.

But the interesting thing about all this, and this is the final point of Paul's exhortation, is that we do not become one by seeking unity, but by seeking to grow up in Christ (4:11-16). Unity is a function of spiritual maturity. It comes in the back door while we are all diligently trying to live more Christ-like lives. Unity is not our primary goal but a by-product of the effort to "grow up in all things into him who is the head, even Christ" (4:15). If you want to have unity where you worship then diligently and *patiently* nurture each disciple on the word of God until he is no longer a child but a full-grown man in the Lord.





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Dee Bowman

### The Parables for Today

**T**he parables of Jesus are some of the most interesting reading available to man. They are at once arresting and inditing. They are filled with the human drama. They are some of the purest form of instruction known to man, for they combine the most eloquent principles of truth with the practicality necessary to make them usable.

Parables differ from other forms of "example-type" teaching.

A parable is different from a fable in that it is never intended to deceive or confuse the hearer. In fables, trees speak; so do animals. Not so in parables. They are always just a slice out of actual life.

Myths are used sometimes to illustrate truth. But the parable is not like the myth. The myth, while used to illustrate truth, is often passed along as being truth. The Greek myths are a good example. They are told as if they actually happened. Parables are obvious illustrations of truth based on actual day-to-day happenings.

Parables differ from proverbs basically in terms of length. The proverb is most often a short, pithy, saying, while the parable will most likely take the

form of a narrative story. (See Roger Hendricks' "The Purpose of Parables" in this section for a further discussion of parables by Jesus during His personal ministry).

I believe the Parable of the Sower to be typical. In fact, in Mark's record of the famous allegory of Jesus (Mark 4:1ff), he says, "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?" This would seem to indicate that the understanding of all parabolic teaching is based to some extent on understanding the Parable of the Sower. I believe there are several reasons why this parable is antecedent to all others:

**It teaches the value of listening.** No matter how vivid the illustration of the truth, no matter how motivational the speech, no matter how clever the example, the material is no good when it is not heard. The Parable of the Sower teaches the importance of hearing (see Mark 4:3,9,16). In Luke's record of the parable he says, in the same context, "Take heed therefore how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." To cause people to listen seems to me to be the design of all parabolic

teaching.

It shows the need to expulse prejudice and preconceived notions. There is no place in the religion of God for judging before the fact. Nor is there any place for an admixture between truth and error. The Parable of the Sower illustrates this by showing that only pure heart impressions are valuable. Truth frees (John 8:32) and only truth—undiluted truth—heard, can free.

It shows that uncultivated soil is the key to productivity. When we allow our minds to be cluttered by the weeds and thorns of this life, we cannot expect the seed to produce as it should. We must keep a constant vigil to make sure our hearts are ready at all times to receive the word. Only when our minds are receptive can we reasonably expect spiritual productivity in our lives.

When the Parable of the Sower is properly understood the others come much easier.

In this month's theme section we have a look at a "today application" of the parables of Jesus. I think you will recognize their timeless beauty, their unflinching applicability, their unworn practicality. Read the information carefully. Make it work for you.

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY

Roger M. Hendricks

## The Purpose of Parables

"AND THE DISCIPLES CAME, AND SAID unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matthew 13:10-11).

Upon casual observation, these verses seem to state that the Lord, in teaching by parables, had a two-fold aim in mind: (1) to enlighten; (2) to conceal. This thought seems to be fortified by an appeal to Mark 4:11-12 (which we shall note later). Should anyone believe, as I most surely do, that the parables were designed, not to conceal truth, but to more clearly reveal it, he must certainly come to grips with these two passages.

### The Significance of Matthew 13

Some Calvinists contend that individual predestination is the subject of these verses. In verse 11 "you" is thought to equate those predestinated to eternal life; "them" those predestinated to eternal damnation. Since this is not a treatise on Calvinistic error, suffice it to say that the verses do not bear that meaning because no such predestination is ever taught in the Scriptures.

Some believe that "you" is a reference to the apostles while "them" applies to the rest of mankind. But, if this were true, it would mean that only the apostles could know the truth. Or, if the contrast were between the disciples ("you") and non-disciples ("them"), only the disciples could know the truth. That being the case, how would non-disciples ever become disciples, since a knowledge of truth is necessary to becoming such? Moreover, why would Jesus send His apostles "into all the world" to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), if only the apostles and/or disciples could come to knowledge? No, such explanations as these do not express the real meaning of our Lord's teaching.

What does Jesus mean by "to them it is not given?" Obviously, He means that some men cannot learn the truth! But the real question is, "Who?" Let the context help us. "Them" is indicative of those

people who "seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (verse 13). Just who is in that category? Are all non-disciples? No, never! There are many non-Christians who can and will learn the truth as they come in contact with it. The people under consideration here are all people with a particular disposition of heart. Their "heart is waxed gross" (verse 15). They don't desire truth, they refuse to accept truth, and, thus, they are incapable of learning truth.

On the other hand, men with open minds and honest hearts can learn (verse 16). And since hearts can be changed, Jesus utilized the various means at His disposal (including parables) in an effort to open hearts and enlighten minds.

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### *Are parables designed to reveal, or conceal, truth?*

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#### A Brief Look At Mark 4

"And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive" (verses 11-12). This sounds, at first glance, as though Jesus is discussing His aim and intent in teaching by parables. In reality He is speaking of results.

The use of "that" in our KJV is worthy of careful study. While modern usage generally refers the word to reason, cause, aim, or intent, biblical usage often signifies result or effect. Consider this example: "The angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying . . . take the young child . . . and flee into Egypt . . . for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him . . . he . . . departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I

called my son." Note the expression "that it might be fulfilled." Did Joseph take his family into Egypt to (aim, intent) save his son or to fulfill prophecy? His aim was to save Jesus. A result was that prophecy was fulfilled. (See also Matthew 2:19-23 and Psalm 51:4 where "that" signifies result, not aim.)

So it is with Mark 4:12. "That" does not suggest an intention on the part of the Master Teacher to hide His truth from unwelcomed recipients. His appeal was to all men. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9; Matthew 13:9). It was "who-soever will, may come." His glorious truth wasn't hidden. It was opened to all who would accept it; to all who "had ears."

#### The Purpose of Parables

"Jesus knew himself to be God's Messenger to Israel at the supreme moment of her history, called to alert men to the great crisis which was the inauguration of the Reign of God. If his alarm signals' (and many of his parables were just that) were to work, they could not afford to be unclear. As St. Paul said (1 Corinthians 14:8): 'If the trumpet gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for the battle?' Accordingly, Jesus' parables, when first uttered, cannot have been dark riddles designed merely to mystify the multitudes" (A. M. Hunter, *Interpreting the Parables*, p. 13). I believe that. Jesus taught that men might learn. But some refuse to learn. Paul writes that some are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). But let not such men try to saddle Jesus and His apostles with the responsibility of their ignorance. The reason for their inability to learn is that they "resist the truth" (verse 8).

Dear friend, the wonderful Book of God, with its matchless and marvelous truth, was written for our enlightenment. May God, thus, help us to see the light.

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY



## The Lost Sheep / The Lost Coin

Johnie Edwards

THERE ARE NO MORE PAINFUL WORDS than that of being told that someone we love has been lost! Imagine, as a parent, the agony of not being able to find a small child that belongs to you. When a child is reported missing the whole countryside turns out in hopeful search for one who is lost. The parents of Jesus felt much sorrow as they, for a while, did not know His whereabouts (Luke 2). As Jesus later was teaching in parables He used the story of the lost to teach the disciples some lessons He wanted them to know.

The parable of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin in Luke 15 should help make us aware of some great lessons Jesus expects us to know.

1. **A wandering sheep.** In the parable of the lost sheep the sinner is pictured as a wandering sheep. God's people are referred to as a flock (Acts 20:28) and from time to time wander away from the fold. When one leaves the flock of God, the parable of Lost Sheep declares that he is lost (Luke 15:4). The reason the wandering sheep is lost is that he is in sin and is separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2; 1 John 3:4). As a sheep may not be aware of his being separated from the flock and his shepherd until he cannot find his way back, many individuals wander away from God not intending to become lost.

2. **The love of God.** Surely the leaving of the ninety and nine in search of the one lost sheep shows the love, care and concern that God has for the lost. Paul told the Romans, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). A passage often called the "golden text" of the Bible says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

3. **Seeking the lost.** The shepherd searched for the lost sheep "until he found it" (Luke 15:4). We often sing "Seeking the Lost" at the worship service and then go away from the place of worship and forget all about the lost. As

we recall that "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), let's be found bringing the wanderer back into the fold. We are saved to save and have been taught to teach. Peter pictured men in this way: "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). Every church could work from a "lost sheep" list and bring them in from the fields of sin.

4. **Diligence.** In the parable of the Lost Coin diligence was employed in the finding of the coin that was lost. We often

what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:27).

5. **A rejoicing time.** When the lost sheep was found, as well as with the lost coin, there was "rejoicing" (Luke 15:5-6,9). Perhaps we have gotten too busy to find time to rejoice as we should. We are told to "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15). We need to rejoice when the lost are found. The Lord's people everywhere need to take the time to say words of encouragement

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**"As a sheep may not be aware of his being separated from the flock until he cannot find his way back, many individuals wander away from God not intending to become lost."**

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wonder why we should worry about just one that might be lost. The man with the one lost sheep could have reasoned, "I have ninety-nine saved sheep" or the woman with the lost coin could have said, "Only one piece is lost"—but they didn't! As we realize the value of just one soul we will be more diligent in caring for, finding and restoring the lost. Paul urged the Galatians, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). These two parables certainly point out the value of soul-saving. Jesus said, "For

to those who obey the Lord as well as those who are being returned to the fold. Can you imagine a parent not rejoicing when his lost child has been found? Even heaven itself is aware when a sheep comes home. "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

Let us all be excited about going after that which is lost, until we find and bring them back to the fold so heaven can continue to rejoice.

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY

Allan Turner

## The Unmerciful Servant

THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL servant is a study in forgiveness. It is told by Jesus in response to Peter's question in Matthew 18:21 concerning forgiveness. "How oft," he said, "shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" In response, the Lord said: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven" (verse 22). In other words, the Lord was teaching that His followers' willingness to forgive was to be infinite. As an illustration, Peter was told of a merciful and forgiving king who forgave his servant an unpayable debt (10,000 talents—\$90,442,567 in 1985 dollars). After being forgiven such a great debt, the servant called a fellow servant and demanded that the latter repay a small debt (an hundred pence—\$150 in 1985 dollars). When his fellow servant was unable to repay, the unmerciful servant had him thrown into prison. When such behavior was brought to the king's ear, he recalled the unmerciful servant, reinstated his debt, and delivered him to the tormentors. In ending this parable, the Lord said: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (verse 35).

We cannot read this parable without knowing that the merciful, forgiving, and wonderful king is none other than our own Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we, like the unmerciful servant of this parable have had our unpayable debts cancelled. As a result, we are made to rejoice in the fact that our Lord is certainly rich in mercy (Ephesians 2:4). "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). To this we unashamedly say, "Amen." But there is more.

Having been forgiven by our Lord Jesus Christ, it is therefore quite easy to identify with the king of this parable, but it is much more difficult to identify with the ruthless, unjust and unforgiving servant. But when we gaze steadily upon this thankless and uncaring individual,

we see, as his features and characteristics become clear to us, one not unlike ourselves. For we, too, having received undeserved forgiveness, have dealt unforgivingly with those who have trespassed against us. Like the unmerciful servant, we, too, have often acted in an unbelievable fashion.

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Inundated by the Lord's love, mercy, and forgiveness, we ought to be moved "in our hearts" to forgive those who have "sinned" against us. We should be "kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven [us]" (Ephesians 4:32). As recipients of God's grace, we

should not need to be threatened in order to do that which is right. But alas, we who are washed in the crimson blood of the Lamb, are from time to time much more carnal than spiritual. Therefore, threatenings are unfortunately, but absolutely, necessary.

Indeed, it is absolutely sobering when we realize that our previous state of unforgiveness can be—and will be—reinstated if we are unwilling to forgive others. And although we are not normally in the habit of thinking such, being washed in the blood of the Lamb is not just conditioned on hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized—but also upon our willingness to forgive. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). Of course, it must be understood that forgiveness, whether bestowed by God or man, is predicated upon repentance (Luke 17:4).

Two thousand years ago Jesus stood before Pilate and said: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). The parable reflects the "not of this world" nature of the Lord's kingdom. In this and other kingdom parables, the Lord contrasted the teaching of His kingdom with that of the world. It is indeed unfortunate that such heavenly teaching has been and will continue to be rejected by the world. Well has the Scripture said: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). But, on the other hand, if we both understand and live out in our lives the true spiritual reality of this parable, we will, in fact, be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that [we] should show forth the [virtues] of Him who hath called [us] out of darkness into marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9), i. e., a kingdom obviously "not of this world."

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY



## The Rich Fool: By No Means Extinct

Jay Bowman

JESUS ONE DAY WAS DISCUSSING IMPORTANT spiritual matters when a man broke in and demanded, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me!" Jesus refused to intervene in this purely material dispute. He showed His impatience with the question by replying, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Then He said to the crowd, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

To illustrate covetousness, Jesus then spoke a parable about a certain wealthy man whose field produced bumper crops. He had a storage problem, for his barns were brimming full. Like the prudent man that he was, he sat down to decide what to do. This is a problem most men would like to have. I can imagine that he enjoyed wrestling with the matter. Finally the decision came. "I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."

This decision by itself was not so incriminating. But, he continues, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." In these words the man reveals his true character, a character Jesus condemns.

God called the man a "fool." The reason given is that he would not live to enjoy these provisions. Then Jesus remarked that everyone who (1) lays up treasure for himself and (2) is not rich toward God is like the rich fool. This includes anyone of like mind in any age.

It may sound strange to us that Jesus condemned a man who was only asking for his own inheritance. We've been taught to insist on our rights. But, Jesus rebukes this man because, having the opportunity for rich spiritual benefits, he could only think of his inheritance.

Throughout the ages there have been some sins that are more "respectable" than others. Murder is horrible, adultery is shameful, lying is regrettable—but, covetousness? That's not so bad. Anyway, it's a vague, nondescript sort

of thing that nobody really commits except maybe Scrooge. Covetousness is when a weird old man sits fiendishly in his chamber, cackling and running his fingers through a trunk of gold coins. Nobody else is really covetous.

But, Jesus says we should beware of all covetousness, and the plain implication is that he who worries too much about his inheritance is a covetous man.

The rich farmer made several errors, the kind that modern man would not

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even call errors. It is impossible to overlook his selfishness. Twelve times he uses some form of the word "me." Add to that another five verbs in the second person ("thou") which really refer to himself, and the word "soul" (which could be translated "Self"), and you get some eighteen references to himself. Self was all he was thinking of.

Secondly, he didn't know the ingredients of a successful life. He thought happiness was to be found in the things he possessed.

Thirdly, his confidence was not in God as the daily provider of his food. He had earned it himself and stashed it out in the barns.

Fourthly, he presumed he would live a long, healthy life. He promised himself a perpetual sequence of resting, eating, drinking and rejoicing. He assumed he would be around to enjoy all his accumulated goods. God had other plans.

Do you suppose that we in this century have anything in common with the rich fool? Many would say, "No." And yet, it is a very common thing to see Christians with the idea that, "My money, honestly earned, is mine, and I have no responsibility to spend it on anyone else but me." We see young people who plan their lives much as the rich man did. "I will learn my trade. I will work hard and make my fortune. I will provide for myself a generous nest egg. After an early retirement, I will spend many years doing all the things I like to do." For the rich fool, it was the goods in the barn. For us, it is the IRA, the annuity, the certificate of deposit or something else, all of which are right in themselves if we don't lose sight of God as our daily provider. It is foolish to assume we have a lease on life or that our personal circumstances will permit us to enjoy what we have in the bank. The problem was not that he was rich, but that he was a fool. His riches allowed him the independence to reason like a fool.

We need to remember (1) that we are stewards of God's abundance; (2) that material possessions in themselves cannot provide a happy life; (3) that God provides for us every day even if we have a large retirement income; and, (4) we must not ignore the possibility of an early death or of health (and other) problems that forbid the enjoyment of that income. We should enjoy our lives to the fullest but remember to be thankful. The really important "goods" are the ones He sends to us one day at a time.

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY

## The Ten Virgins

Clark Dugger

FOR THOSE WHOSE CHIEF CONCERN IS going to heaven when they die, the Parable of the Ten Virgins provides an effective reminder that we must be prepared for the Lord's return. To be sure, the central truth taught by Jesus in this parable is one of vigilance and readiness for that great day. I'm confident it would behoove us all to be ever cognizant of the fact that "now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11).

Jesus directs this poignant story to His followers, those who would be looking forward to His return. The parable succeeds Christ's statements in Matthew 24 concerning His return, vividly illustrating His conclusion: "Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44). Such admonition is emphatically restated by the Lord at the conclusion of this parable: "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).

The parable, found in Matthew 25:1-13, tells the story of ten maidens who wait for the bridegroom to arrive so that they may accompany him and his bride in procession to the marriage feast. All expect to have a part in this joyous occasion, all bring their lamps with them, all wait with great anticipation for the groom's return, and all sleep as he tarries. But upon the groom's arrival five of the virgins are unprepared, having failed to bring the oil necessary to fill their faltering lamps. Unable to borrow what they did not bring, they leave to buy more oil and miss their anticipated participation in the marriage festivities.

In the parable the wise are contrasted with the foolish. Yet in this contrast only one thing distinguishes the two: "the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps" (verse 5). In all other respects the ten virgins appear identical. And until the announcement of the groom, all expect to meet him and enter the marriage feast.

The foolish virgins were unprepared because of their own carelessness and shortsightedness. Unfortunately, such

negligence and nearsightedness can be found today among the Lord's people. Many feel safe and secure as they wait for the Lord's return solely because they have "obeyed the gospel" and are attending the "right" church. Peter warns of such shortsighted complacency, imploring brethren to "give more diligence to make your calling and election sure" by adding to your faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (see 2 Peter 1:5-11).

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There is no indication that the foolish virgins were hypocrites; they were merely foolish. They were lacking in that which was essential to be ready for the groom's return. More than this, they were unaware of their deficiency until it was too late. Consequently, they sat confidently waiting for the groom's arrival, wasting all time and opportunity to prepare for it. Paul warns against a life of wasted opportunity as he writes, "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).

One of the greatest challenges facing God's people today is lethargy and apathy toward individual responsibility to the cause of Christ. The Lord's work is the greatest work of all, and the doing of it affects not only the growth of the Lord's body (see Ephesians 4:11-16), but the salvation of our own souls (see 1 Corinthians 15:58). Only through doing God's will shall we inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21). Therefore our service to God ought not to be measured by the least we can do, but by the the greatest contribution we can potentially make to the kingdom of Christ. Remember, the wise virgins were prepared because they brought ample oil, not the bare minimum.

The rejection of the five foolish virgins is reminiscent of those spoken of in Matthew 7:22-23 who called Jesus "Lord" and did many "wonderful works" in His name. Although they, too, expected to enter in, they were rejected. We must be careful not to let the sphere of our discipleship be limited to any one area of obedience. Instead, we must obey the Lord without partiality, attempting to please Him in all aspects of life. To stand against the errors of institutionalism, instrumental music, or the social gospel—all the while failing to be the sort of a parent, husband, or brother God expects, or living a life of ungodliness, is to foolishly stand unprepared for the Lord's return.

God's people *do* have the hope of heaven. But we must beware not to confuse the "blessed assurance" that accompanies an active, living faith with the self-deception and false security that so often escorts spiritual neglect. May God help us all to have a growing and vital faith—a faith which works through love (Galatians 5:6), and understands that once the opportunity to do God's will is lost and our light for the Lord goes out, it's too late to rekindle our flame when the Lord returns. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY



## The Rich Man and Lazarus

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

YOGI BERRA, COMMENTING ON BEING behind in a baseball game, is reported to have said: "It is not over until it is over."

Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) teaches the same lesson about man's life. Those who seem to be ahead now, may wind up losers and vice versa.

Two things meant a great deal to the Pharisees: (1) money, verse 14, and (2) public esteem, verse 15. They carefully maintained a public posture of righteousness to impress folks—but behind the scenes they were "full of extortion and self-indulgence" (Matthew 23:25). They correctly taught life after death—but wanted all the advantages of this present life. Jesus told them they could not have it both ways by serving God and mammon. They "derided" or turned up their noses at Him (verse 14).

It is in this context that Jesus told this story. Things that meant so much to the Pharisee in this world would mean little to him in the next world. Things that meant so little to him now would mean so much then. Little is said about the rich man's morals or ethics—only the implication that he had been unconcerned about Lazarus's physical welfare or his own (or his family's) spiritual welfare. Nothing is said about how he got or spent his money. Nothing is said about the life of Lazarus other than his deep poverty. It is not Jesus' point to detail the lives of either man—but to show the money-loving and publicity-conscious Pharisees what really mattered in the long run.

The rich man had the creature comforts which the money that the Pharisee loved could buy and, no doubt, the public esteem that went with it. Lazarus had none of this. He was about as low on the scale of finances and prestige as one could be. He would have settled for the crumbs from the rich man's table (verses 19-20).

In the final analysis, what difference did the net worth of either man make? "It was not over until it was over." The only thing that mattered was where they would be after a few years on earth were

finished. This story is not teaching that either poverty or wealth is to be preferred in this life—but that all that "mammon" has to offer is worthless in the long run. God alone can offer everlasting advantage.

Lazarus, who had known little security in life, was carried after death into the security of "Abraham's bosom" (a Jewish expression for Paradise) while the rich man who had enjoyed the "good things" (verse 25) of life was now begging for a little water.

In Hades, the rich man was not too interested in money or things that go

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with it. He was concerned with the flame that tormented him—if he could just get a little water on his tongue! He was concerned about keeping his brothers out of that place (verses 27-28). Surely they would listen to one from the dead! But, they had the words of Moses and the prophets—a messenger from the dead would make no difference. A heart unmoved by God's all-sufficient revelation will not be moved by other means—even if it moves it will not be toward God.

I am not too concerned with whether this story is a parable, as some think, or a historical account, as others think; but

am inclined to agree with Adam Clarke: "If it be a *parable*, it is what *may be*; if it be a *history*, it is that which *has been*. Either a man *may* live as is here described, and go to perdition when he dies; or, some *have* lived in this way, and are now suffering the torments of eternal fire. The account is equally instructive in whichever of these lights it is viewed."

I am concerned that we, as Christians, get the point of it. It may very well be that many of the "good things" of this life that we now consider so important can become a hindrance to our receiving the good things of the life to come. And that the "evil things" that we seek to avoid by our compromises and/or over-emphasis on temporal things are little compared with the evil to be suffered after death.

What if we do live in the better houses, drive better cars, give our children all the educational and social advantages—if we have been so involved in providing them that we have not had time for spiritual development for ourselves and our families? What if a wife's job ensures the children's comforts and advantages she wants for them—if she is too busy or too tired to rear her children for the Lord (see Titus 2:3-5)? What if one has compromised his Bible-based convictions to keep a good paying job or to keep the support of friends? After death, will we be any better off than some poor family that never had any of these things? What about worse off?

What if one becomes or remains poor because of his faith and being really spiritually active? What if he has to settle for a lot less than he would if he were not so careful about ethics, morals and spiritual service? It would be hard to have less than Lazarus had—but look at him after death!

If you are tempted to be influenced too much by the allurements of the "good things" of life—like financial prosperity, social prestige or public recognition—read the story carefully again and again.

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY

Jerry Accettura

## The Talents: A Modern Application

LET'S ENTER INTO THE WORLD OF pretense. Pretend you are employed by a profit-making computer firm. The company's owner selects you to be the president for one year. Your duties include the carrying out of his instructions which you will receive in a weekly letter. When the owner returns, he finds his company in complete disarray. The secretary at the reception desk is casually gazing around while filing her fingernails, the trash baskets are overflowing and other employees are taking an unscheduled coffee break. Suddenly you hear a knock at the door of your "oval office." It's the owner! In negative tones, he asks you to explain what has gone wrong with his business and also asks whether you have received his weekly letters. With a confident smile you inform him that every Wednesday the employees have gathered for a study of his instructions and that some workers have even memorized portions of the letters. After a thoughtful pause, the owner asks you a very practical question: "But, have you carried out my instructions?" Your reply is, "Carried them out?" How would you feel if our pretend-story was real?

In the parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus instructs man that he will be judged on the basis of how he has used the gifts which have been granted to him by God. Of what nature are these gifts? It is easy for us to see that we differ in our physical and mental capacities; for example, some people are born with strong and healthy bodies while others are weak and more susceptible to disease. Again, some are blessed with high scholastic intelligence and others with high musical aptitude or, possibly, mechanical abilities. Unfortunately (in a sense) these and other aptitudes are not distributed equally among men and some are favored with more aptitudes or talents than others. One unfavorable result of this differing distribution of talent is that it fosters the development of a spirit of competition.

**Competition.** When unsure of our own talents we often cast eyes of envy

upon those who are multi-talented. If our attitude is "leader or nothing" we will often do nothing. However, a man of few talents is unsuited for responsibilities which require the multi-talented individual. Mothers must accept the looks and mentality of their children and not turn jealous eyes on the gifted children of others. Dads must learn to support their sons when they choose the cello over the pigskin. Preachers are sometimes notorious for their competitive spirits and are frequently aided by brethren in "fueling the fires of envy" which may destroy a fellow "soldier of the cross." We must accept ourselves and develop a growing determination to do the best we can, despite our limitations. Cooperation rather than competition will come when we learn to rejoice in the accomplishments of others.

**Faith In The Master Promotes Cooperation.** The motivating force behind cooperation is a genuine faith in Jesus Christ. Those who have this kind of faith seek to know and respond to the Lord's instructions. For example, Mark's gospel records an account of the woman who poured the precious ointment of spikenard on Jesus' head; His response to those with Him was, "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:2-9). Moses knew and responded to the Lord with the mighty rod in his hand, when he fearlessly led the Israelites in victory over Egypt (Exodus 14:15f). Dorcas held the needle in her hand that repeatedly stitched the torn garments of the poor among her (Acts 9:36-39). Today, in most churches I've been associated with there is a "Candy Man." His hands give candy to the youngsters gathering for worship. They aid in sweetening up more than little teeth. They fill hearts with joy and are remembered when these children grow to adulthood. Our hands can cook meals, pass out tracts that declare God's will for mankind, touch shoulders of sorrowing saints, or write letters of encouragement to elders in the church. We must discover our talents through the painful art of honest evaluation. We must suppress inflated

egos on the one hand, and not be given to a false sense of humility on the other. True servants of God know and do His will. It is impossible to do God's will in the absence of cooperation with others. Finally, it is of equal importance to the Christian that he develop a willingness to persevere in the face of great odds. He must refuse to accept failure.

**Faith In The Master Overcomes Failure.** A growing faith in Jesus overcomes failure. Joseph, Jeremiah, Moses, Paul, Job, are just a few heroes of faith mentioned in the Bible who serve as examples of people who followed the Lord's instructions in the midst of circumstances that could have led to failure. A contemporary example is provided by a disaster which befell Thomas A. Edison in December of 1914 when a chemical explosion burned his warehouse to the ground. Despite the serious financial setback and the loss of the results of years of experimental investigation his son recalled Edison's request that his wife be summoned since "she will never see a fire like this one again." Subsequently, he built another warehouse on that site which was bigger and better than the first one. Numerous other examples are to be found in the history of this country; indeed the refusal to accept failure is considered one of the admirable qualities in the national character of the American people.

When we are depressed, lacking the confidence and spirit to press on, we should seek a "heart rebuilding" program from the word of God. We must have the courage, in spite of the setbacks, to pursue the goal of a strong faith in Christ and unity among brethren. We must be willing to "pay the price" with hard work in order to achieve this noble goal. When the Lord comes again, will He find us engaged in letter-study alone, or in carrying out His instructions? Are we reflecting our gratitude for Jesus' supreme sacrifice by *doing all we can?*

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY



## The Prodigal Son

Harold Fite

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON HAS been described as "the greatest short story in the world." It speaks of sin, sorrow, and salvation. It exposes the sinful desire which led to the son's demand, departure, destitution, and degradation. It reveals strength of character, as the Prodigal came to grips with himself, repented, and returned with resignation to his father. It proclaims the joy of restoration, and articulates the beauty of a forgiving father. It expresses the attitude we should have toward those who return to God from the "far country."

The parable of the Prodigal Son is a drama that is repeated frequently. As the curtain rises, we observe a young man who has fallen on hard times. He is feeding swine. He is destitute of money and friends; he is hungry. In spite of his stinking environment, he is tempted to eat the husks that the hogs were eating. This man has hit rock bottom.

To what can we attribute his unpleasant situation? How did he come to this tragic end? It all began with the demanding of his inheritance and the inordinate desire which prompted it. The Scriptures imply that he wanted his inheritance that he might go into a far country and spend it in riotous living (verse 13). He wanted to experience the carnal pleasures of life. I would think, remembering a time in my youth, that there was a song in his heart and a spring in his step as he left his father's house, exhilarated, almost giddy with the exciting sense of freedom.

He was leaving his father's oversight: no longer would he hear "don't do that," and "do this." He could go where he pleased. He could do as he pleased. What a beautiful day! It's great to be alive!

Buoyed by the sense of freedom, he was, in reality, plunging himself into bondage: "for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage" (2 Peter 2:19). We belong to him whom we serve. "Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin" (John 8:34). We remain free as we live

within the confines of God's law.

This young man "took his journey into the far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living" (verse 13). What possibly took years to accumulate went "down the drain" in a senseless search for pleasure. The Prodigal lived for the present with no thought of the future. Sin is a waste: a waste of time, talent, and money.

His dissipation contributed to his destitution. The Prodigal found himself in want (verse 14). This is how sin leaves us. It never fulfills its promises; it doesn't

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*The parable of the Prodigal Son is a drama that is repeated frequently. We observe a young man who has fallen on hard times. He is feeding swine. He is destitute of money and friends; he is hungry. He is tempted to eat the husks that the hogs were eating. This man has hit rock bottom.*

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satisfy. It leaves a fathomless void which cries out for fulfillment. Bereft of friends and funds, the Prodigal Son "joined himself to one of the citizens of that country: and he sent him into his fields to feed swine" (verse 15).

This is where we found him when we began this article. He had no one to blame but himself. He couldn't blame his father, friends, or society. His life was what he chose it to be. He made the decision; he is responsible; he must accept the consequences.

He magnified his legal rights to the

exclusion of his moral rights. Rights granted to us by law are not always the same as moral rights. There are sins we may commit legally, but not morally. Under the umbrella of legal rights the Prodigal carried out his evil design. Young people! As you leave home to enter the higher schools of learning, you can live in the gutter if that is what you desire. You have the legal right to do it, but not the moral right. The Prodigal Son did not distinguish between the two.

Now what is he to do? Continue his "pigpen" existence? Rob someone? Commit suicide? To his credit, he "came to himself" (verse 17). He resolved to return to his father, make his confession of sin and acknowledge his unworthiness. He returned with resignation, and with the happy contemplation of restoration.

"While yet afar off his father saw him" (verse 20). Now, some fathers would have said to themselves, "Well, here he comes. I knew he would come back when his money played out and he got hungry." We fathers might have listened to his confession rather stoically, then replied sternly, "Go on back to your room, and when you have proven yourself, we'll talk about it."

But not this father! He "was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." The fatted calf was killed. The penitent son was adorned with the robe reserved for honored guests. The ring, suggestive of the covenant of love, was placed on his finger. Shoes were put on his feet (barefoot suggested shame and mourning). This was a happy time: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

Now, the elder brother . . . but, that is another story.

For those of you who have left the Father for a "pigpen" life-style in a "far country," return to the Father. He is compassionate and forgiving. Your return will cause the angels in heaven to rejoice (verse 10).

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY

Eric Earnhart

## The Pharisee and the Publican

THE BEAUTY OF PARABLES CAN BE FOUND in their simplicity, and this is no exception. In six short verses, Christ addresses one of the basic elements of our spirituality—our attitude toward God, and our attitude toward ourselves. This is a story with two very different men, two different prayers, and two messages for us. For those who “trust in themselves that they are righteous” (Luke 18:9), it is a strong rebuke and warning. To others, this parable is a message of hope and joy.

Consider the Pharisee. Apparently he is a good man. There is nothing in the text that suggests he is a liar or hypocritical. Here is a man who not only keeps the law, but goes beyond it, fasting more than he has to, tithing more than is required. He thanks God for his own righteousness, but doesn't seem to give the Lord any credit. He asks God for nothing, and to hear the Pharisee tell it, he apparently needs nothing.

Just as the Pharisee can think of nothing but his own goodness, the publican can think of nothing but his sin. He is so conscious of it, he cannot bear to lift his eyes before God, or even venture close to His temple. His agony must have been great indeed as he beat on his chest and begged God's forgiveness. He went down to his house justified. In a nutshell, the Pharisee asked God for nothing, and the publican asked God for everything. That is the message of joy in this parable. If we humble ourselves before God, however great our burden of sin, God will look on us as He did the publican. The Bible doesn't tell us how that tax collector felt after his prayer, but I imagine a great weight rose from his shoulders. I can see him rejoicing and praising God all the way home.

Humility is not just a good Christian quality, it is a Christian necessity. Paul exhorts us to put on “humbleness of mind” (Colossians 3:12). Peter tells us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time. In humility we can find greatness—not the greatness of the world, but greatness in the eyes of God.

Being humble in 1985 isn't always easy. People today aren't concerned with serving, they want to be served. We live in a time when people cry for “my rights,” we are told to “believe in ourselves,” and we are pressured to “blow our own horns” while those around us serve our needs. How can Christians keep a humble spirit in a world like this?

One way is to **remember who we are.** We are all sinners (Romans 5:12). We are mortal and only on this earth for a short time (Hebrews 9:27). We are the creation of God Almighty, and we exist

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parable.*

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to glorify Him, not ourselves. The publican knew who he was, and he knew who God was. That's why he couldn't lift his eyes, or even approach God's house. I don't think you would have heard the publican use the Lord's name lightly, as many Christians are prone to do.

**Remember who God is.** Spend some time reading the Psalms, and experience the incomparable greatness of our Lord (Psalm 66:3). It is a humbling experience, and a joyful one, when you consider the love He extended to us in the form of Jesus Christ (John 3:16). The life of Jesus was the greatest example of

humility mankind has ever seen—an example we are to follow. Paul says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-7).

Christ's life is a lesson for us. He was born in poverty, He lived to serve mankind, driving this point home by washing the feet of His disciples (John 13:4-15). When the multitude came to take Him to His death, Jesus had a choice. He could have called twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53) and undoubtedly the world would have proclaimed Him king, and we would still be in our sins. But He humbled Himself, the world spit on Him, He died in shame, and our sins were nailed to the cross with Him. Even a brief study of His love and sacrifice will drive the pride right out of your heart. And as Christ was exalted by God, so will God lift us up if we humble ourselves, putting His will first and ourselves last (James 4:10).

There is an old story about a Christian who dies and finds himself at the gates of Paradise. He is asked to list all the good works of his life, and if he scores 100 points, he will be accepted. The man hesitantly begins an account of his life, how he has lived faithfully, led many to salvation, served as an elder; in fact, some might call him a model Christian. As he finishes he is told that he has a grand total of one point. The man hangs his head and says, “Then I'll just have to throw myself on the mercy of God.” That, he is told, is the other 99 points.

We can't trust in our own works as the Pharisee did, for if we lift ourselves up, God will bring us to nothing (Luke 18:14). Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death. That is true greatness. Not the greatness that the Pharisee held dear, but the greatness of serving Almighty God.

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY

## The Incomparable Pearl

Joe Neil Clayton

THE PERSIAN GULF, WHOSE OIL FLOWS TO enrich the industrial world, yielded a different sort of riches in Bible times. In its salty beds, mollusks meticulously coated intruding bits of grit with a substance that delights the eye, patiently producing pearls, satiny lustrous organic gems. A pearl's general value is reckoned by its rarity, but the value escalates according to its shape and size. Only the most symmetrical and brilliant ones are prized as adornments. Behind the delighted eye of the esthete beholder is the subconscious appreciation of the years needed to form that perfect pearl, the jewel that issues from a living organism.

In Matthew 13:45-46, the Master told a brief parable to enhance our sense of the value of the "kingdom of heaven" (which we can appreciate, if our eyes and ears are blessed, seeing and hearing, verse 16). He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Being careful to avoid minute application of this parable (a rule often violated), we are impressed with the subtle lesson that the kingdom of heaven has an abstract value worthy of total abandonment of every other "pearl." The merchant accounted the possession of the *one pearl of great price* sufficient justification for selling all, and buying it!

Christ Himself is like that merchant. Having been shown "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time," He rejected Satan's conditional offer to give them to Him (Luke 4:5-8). Our Lord sought only one kingdom, and sacrificed all to have it. He is the "certain nobleman," who "went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom" (Luke 19:12). It is a kingdom "not of this world" (John 18:36), or as in another image, "The kingdom of the world is become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15b).

The Lord would have us follow His example. He said, "Seek ye first his

kingdom" (Matthew 6:33). Instead, men seek inferior pearls, failing to discern the value of the pearl of surpassing glory when they find it! They are satisfied with idolatry, philosophy, and mediocrity, when they could possess the "kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Hebrews 12:28), the "eternal kingdom" (2 Peter 1:11).

Why has the value of the kingdom of heaven gone unrecognized? Partly because it has been upstaged by Satan's beguiling images of earthly glory. Christ

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*Only the  
most swinish  
of men would  
trample pearls under-  
foot (Matthew 7:6).  
But those who  
fail to appreciate  
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price," even while  
"seeking goodly  
pearls," are  
the tragic  
losers.*

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is not the only potential victim of such temptation. Satan offers the "kingdoms of this world" to any who will "fall down and worship" him. The most vulnerable of Satan's dupes are found in the "Me First Generation," who are in hot pursuit of these lesser "pearls" that gratify their ingrained, but unenlightened, selfishness.

Though the "kingdom of heaven" is a prize that offers much more than these other "goodly (yet imperfect) pearls," it, like them, appeals first to our self-interest. But immediately upon posses-

sion, it calls for the *sacrifice of self* (Matthew 19:12; Luke 9:23-27)! We find it is peopled with those who are "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3), and also "poor as to the world," though "rich in faith" (James 2:5). Also, it can be "entered" only by those whose "righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 5:20), and who "do the will of the Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). It is, finally, the possession of those "persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Matthew 5:10). All of these doleful considerations cause weak-willed and casual men to hesitate and equivocate in receiving it, thereby emasculating themselves even more!

Only the most swinish of men would trample pearls underfoot (Matthew 7:6). But those who fail to appreciate the value of the "pearl of great price," even while "seeking goodly pearls," are the most tragic losers.

But *farsighted* men follow their Savior. When He, "for the joy set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God," He became the one to whom we should look as the "author and perfecter of *our faith*" (Hebrews 12:2). A "pearl" of surpassing value is for possessing, not for trading. The merchant of the Lord's miniscule parable sees this truth, and sells everything he has. At the end of the transaction, no other pearl is in his treasure!

Once the choice is made to possess the incomparable pearl of the kingdom, the wise "merchant" finds that the "dire consequences" that caused shortsighted men to hesitate are mirages. The Lord's "commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). The Lord's "yoke is easy," and His "burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). Even our "affliction" is "light," and "worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

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# THE PARABLES FOR TODAY

Roger M. Hendricks

## The Good Samaritan

THE GREAT DEBATES OF JESUS ESTABLISH Him as being not only the master respondent, but also the most eminent of all teachers who ever set forth practical truths to which their auditors were impelled to make a response. When, for example, "a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:25-26). The lawyer supposedly an expert in Jewish law must make his response as the debate is begun. Notice, however, that more is required than a simple answering of the Lord's question. Whatever reply the lawyer gives, from his point of view must be true of his own life before eternal life can be his.

There should be little doubt in the minds of serious Bible students that the teaching of God's Son was designed to produce changes for the better in the lives of all who heard (hear) Him. The utilization of parables as a medium of instruction was no exception to this rule. Parables were designed to quicken the understanding and to clarify spiritual truths by stating them in vivid and attention-getting ways. Statements such as those found in Mark 4:11-12 ("That seeing they may see, and not perceive") and Matthew 13:11-15 ("to them it is not given" to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven), which seem to indicate that the Savior's intent in parabolic teaching was to close the minds of His hearers and/or to conceal the truth from them have been misinterpreted in such a way as to stand in conflict with His purpose in coming, living, teaching, and dying. As far as intent is concerned, God does not withhold the truth from men. As far as result is concerned, many men cannot see God's truth because of improper attitudes of heart. In other words, the parables were designed to enlighten but some men refuse to be enlightened—even by the simplest and plainest of teaching. Would the lawyer of Luke 10 prove himself to be such a man?

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . .

and thy neighbor as thyself" was the lawyer's response to Jesus' question (verse 27). This was, indeed, a summation of the law's teaching. However, I doubt that the lawyer expected the Nazarene to agree with the law. Jesus was beginning to be plagued by a false reputation as a lawbreaker. And any disagreement with the law at this point

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*To see  
the despised  
Samaritan, in  
Jewish thought  
probably the lowest  
form of human life,  
rise so far above  
prejudice, hatred, and  
social injustice as to  
manifest in a most  
practical way the  
(agape) love  
demanded by Jewish  
law is, or certainly  
should be, soul-  
stirring. Doesn't it  
make you want to  
emulate his  
example?*

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in the debate would give this "expert" an upper hand. How shocked he must have been when Jesus said, "Thou hast answered right." How defeated he stood when the Master appended, "This do, and thou shalt live" (verse 28). For neither he nor any other, save the "antagonist" who confronted him, fulfilled these requirements of the law.

But the lawyer was shrewd! The

debate must not end in this fashion. He must justify his life without renouncing the law. Thus, "Who is my neighbor?" was his next bold question.

"And Jesus answering said . . ." Now read the parable in Luke 10:30-37. Jesus could have answered, "Anybody" or "Everybody." But how much more vivid is this truth when couched in parabolic language that arouses our interest, challenges our hearts, and silences our rebuttals. To see the despised Samaritan, in Jewish thought probably the lowest form of human life, rise so far above prejudice, hatred, and social injustice as to manifest in a most practical way the (agape) love demanded by Jewish law, is, or certainly should be, soul-stirring. Doesn't it make you want to emulate his example?

Could there possibly be a nobler object to this parable than that of revealing in so clear and concise a fashion the true nature of genuine love? If so, it surely must be that of inspiring the same brand of self-sacrificing love in our own hearts—and lives!

I appreciated reading the following in my research for this article: "That cheap rarity which costs nothing more than a trifling subscription or contribution, is common enough. But that self-sacrificing kindness of heart, which cares not what trouble is entailed, so long as good can be done, is a grace which is rarely met with" (J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, Vol. 2, p. 376). How true!

Truth, if it is to be of benefit to us, must be put to practical use. Love, if it be real, will be demonstrated in practical ways in our lives. The beloved apostle John stated it so very well when he wrote, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). It is no more wrong to profess our love than it is to labor for physical food (John 6:27) or to drink water (1 Timothy 5:23), but isn't it so much better to exemplify it in practical ways—as was true of *The Good Samaritan*?

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# That's Life!



Dee Bowman

*JUST BEFORE THE SERVICES STARTED*, brother Homer Hailey took his seat on the front row. He leaned back to me and said, "Better pray for me, brother Dee, I'm doing a brand new lesson—one I've never preached before!" Think about that! Past eighty and still preparing new sermons. I learned from that simple little happening and it made me proud to be doing what I'm doing.

\* \* \*

*WHEN I WAS A BOY IN SCHOOL* we used to play a game called "Red Rover." We would line up in two groups and face each other. Separated by some fifteen or twenty yards, each group would join hands. We would then scream out, "Red Rover, Red Rover, let \_\_\_\_\_ come over!" He would then run and try to break through the human chain. If he could, he could take someone back to his side with him; if not, he had to stay on that side. It was the kind of game where the most popular names were always called first. It was kind of sad to watch those who were not called for some time. Sometimes I was one of them. Anticipation turned to sorrow when your name was not called at least early on.

We need to remember the feelings of others. Our failure to recognize others, to show interest in even the insignificant person, can cause great pain if we are not careful.

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*MALLS ARE INTERESTING PRODUCTS OF TODAY'S SOCIETY.* I think one thing that has made them so successful is the fair-like atmosphere they all have. There's an aura of the festive at all of them. And what makes that so is people. There are all kinds—big, little, fat, tall, short, young and old. It's fun to just sit and watch them. And fun to try guessing about them. What are they like? What do they do? And would I like them? But while you're doing that watching, categorizing, typing, do you stop to think that they're watching you, too? What can they tell about such observations? Reckon

your Christianity shows through?

\* \* \*

*ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS TO FIGHT IN LIFE* is the tendency to become frustrated with people. Some-time ago I found something to help:

Five most important words: I am proud of you.

Four most important words: What is your opinion?

Three most important words: If you please.

Two most important words: Thank you.

Least important word: I.

*Forbes Magazine, 1951*

Please allow me the liberty of a slight adaptation:

Five most important words: How can I help you?

Four most important words: Do you know God?

Three most important words: I love you.

Two most important words: You, too.

Least important word: Mine.

The difference is involvement. It's hard to be frustrated when you're involved in trying to help people.

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* "The worst bondage is exile from peace of mind.' Ah, contentment, thou art indeed elusive! But even a small amount of contentment is a very good thing and worth almost any price."

\* \* \*

*I HAD GONE TO THE CAFETERIA TO EAT LUNCH.*

As I sat at my little table, I watched a young man come through the line. He was dressed in faded blue jeans and an old flannel shirt. He wore run-over shoes and his hair was rather long and unkempt. I thought to myself as he came along, "There but for the grace of God goes my son." He removed his meal from the tray and sat down. And bowed his head and gave thanks for his food. I was ashamed. May God help me to learn not to judge before the facts.



# Please Don't Crush the Blossoms

Joanie Greer

"These clumsy feet still in the mire,  
go crushing blossoms without  
end.

These hard well-meaning hands we  
thrust among the heart-strings of  
a friend.

The ill-timed truth we might have  
kept, who knows how sharp it  
pierced and stung?

The word we had not sense to say,  
who knows how grandly it had  
rung?"

These words from "The Fool's Prayer"  
graphically describe how we verbally  
run roughshod over the feelings of  
others. In my mind's eye I can see an old

of sensitivity to the fact that at that  
moment in the life of another, Chris-  
tianity may be a very fragile thing? With  
thoughtless words do we discourage  
others from the good works that might  
be the very thing that would reach  
another? Do we crush others without  
end because we do not take time to  
really "bear their burdens" and accord  
them the "preference" which they are  
due?

Some feel that being "well-meaning"  
licenses one to say just any and every-  
thing. Colossians 4:6 admonishes us to  
"Let your speech be always with grace,  
seasoned with salt, that ye may know  
how ye ought to answer each one."

"sends forth scorching words" as a  
"worthless man."

Consider the timeliness of a comment.  
Even though something may be truth, it  
is wasted if it's ill-timed. Solomon said  
that a word fitly or "timely spoken is like  
apples of gold in pictures of silver." If a  
word timely spoken is such a valuable  
thing, then ill-timed truth is worthless.  
If one has some information that would  
benefit another, he should consider the  
timing. Don't hit him when he is down.  
Proverbs 15:23 says, "How delightful is a  
timely word." Teachers of classes can be  
heard expressing despair over lack of  
participation by the class in discussion,  
unaware that they are sabotaging the  
efforts of individuals to participate. This  
is "ill-timed truth." When someone is  
making a comment in class, is that the  
time to correct his grammar? If com-  
munication is going on, is that the time  
to point out a word incorrectly conju-  
gated? When a teacher does this, he not  
only frightens that participant into  
humiliating silence, but also other  
would-be participants.

While one is being careful with his  
words, he needs to also be careful with  
his silence. Too often we are miserly  
with our praise. God tells us in Proverbs  
3:27 not to "withhold good from those to  
whom it is due." Why, then, do we do  
it? Is it selfishness, envy, thoughtless-  
ness? "The tongue of the wise brings  
healing," according to Proverbs 12:18.  
We usually seek help for the serious  
problems we face in life such as illness or  
financial troubles. But to whom do we  
go with our injuries from all the small  
innumerable difficulties of life that have  
no specialists? We should be able to turn  
to one another and expect a "tongue of  
healing." Frequently we view our rela-  
tionship with others like owning an  
automobile. If it runs, that's good. If it  
breaks down, get it repaired. But we  
forget about maintenance. Words are a  
wonderful tool for "maintenance" and  
uplifting. Don't withhold them. They're  
free—and you have a never-ending  
supply.

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## "With our mud-caked words, do we reveal our lack of sensi- tivity to the fact that at that moment in the life of another Christianity may be fragile?"

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cow plodding down a trail with mud-  
caked feet. She does not see the butter-  
cups and primroses that grow along the  
path. She is oblivious to the struggle  
they just experienced to push their way  
through the earth. She is completely  
insensitive to the fragileness of their  
existence. She is not even remotely  
aware of the joy and beauty their  
presence may hold for others, and so she  
tramples them underfoot.

Does the rashness with which we  
choose our words ever make us like  
that? Do we verbally stomp along,  
oblivious to the struggle our fellow  
Christians may have just experienced in  
their efforts to live a godly life? With our  
mud-caked words, do we reveal our lack

Solomon says that "the heart of the  
righteous ponders how to answer." The  
word "ponder" means to put together  
with other things. What should one put  
together with his answer? The apostle  
Peter had some suggestions in 1 Peter  
3:15 when he said to answer with  
"gentleness and reverence." Titus 3:2  
says to "speak evil of no man . . . to be  
gentle, showing all meekness toward all  
men." One can usually find an indi-  
vidual who takes pride in speaking his  
mind and boasts about giving others a  
piece of it. Solomon has something to  
say about this attitude. "A fool does not  
delight in understanding, but only in  
revealing his own mind" (Proverbs 18:2).  
In Proverbs 18:19, he describes one who



# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Judge me, O Jehovah, for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in Jehovah without wavering" (26:1).

## How To Serve God Without Wavering

**H**ow does one keep going in the service of God? We may begin to serve Him, but it is always difficult to maintain one's diligence and faithfulness. It is quite easy to "become weary in well-doing" and if we are not very careful we may waver and let our service to God slide. David reveals some three things that he did (and we may do) which will keep one from "sliding."

1. **He was sincere in what he did.** "I have walked in my integrity" (verses 1, 11). Anyone who serves God without his full heart in it is bound to fail. David was beset with enemies at this time, but because he knew that he was *sincere* in his life, he trusted God—and was quite confident that he would overcome those enemies who were trying to shake his faith, blemish his name, and defeat him. Look at his challenge in Psalm 62:3: "How long will ye set upon a man, that ye may slay him, all of you, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?" The man who truly trusts in God as David did and who is sincere in his service to God will not be like a leaning wall or a tottering fence! We must develop and maintain genuine service.

2. **He was constantly aware of God's grace and goodness.** "Thy lovingkindness [grace] is before mine eyes" (verse 3). This will certainly keep one from wavering—to have a grateful sense of God's goodness to us. We must "home in" on the wonderful blessings that our Father

bestows. Most men begin to slide when they forget about God, and particularly when they fail to count their blessings. Awareness of God's goodness to us will also stimulate our goodness toward one another. We should see God's lovingkindness as an example to follow. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:13). And it seems that there was a by-product of such awareness of God's grace and goodness in David's life. It compelled him to govern himself by the word of God ("I have walked in thy truth," verse 3).

3. **He cultivated the holy worship of God.** "I will compass thine altar" (verse 6). In connection with this, David says that he was careful to "wash his hands in innocency" (verse 6)—that is, to guard against all sin and keep his heart from anything which would hinder his drawing near to God (see Psalm 24:3-4; James 4:8). It is likely that David alludes here to the practice of the priests' washing before they went in to minister before God (Exodus 30:20-21). We, too, must prepare ourselves in lives and hearts for the worship of our holy God (Matthew 5:23-24). "Compassing" the altar signifies a diligent regard for what was done in worship—a dutiful attendance to the service. It is a sure sign of sliding or wavering when we merely go through the motions of worship, constantly allowing our minds to wander. We must not just come to the altar, but we must "compass" it.

Of course, there are certain things that *must not be done* if we are going to remain faithful to God. These are discussed in verses 4-5. We must avoid evil associations (Ephesians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Psalm 1:1). When one takes care to keep clear of bad company, he makes great strides toward keeping himself from sliding, and thus standing before God (Proverbs 22:24-25). Sometimes we cannot avoid being in the company of sinners (1 Corinthians 5:9-11), but we do not have to *participate*—"sit with them" or "go in with them." David not only had an aversion to such people, but he hated their wickedness (verse 5; 139:21). Standing requires determination; the Christian must be different (Acts 2:40).



# Evangelistic Experiences of Two Dedicated Disciples

Edgar McFadden

Joseph Ash was a well-known Canadian pioneer evangelist and historian. His lifespan was from 1808 to 1895. On one occasion, while still young in the faith, he met an excellent young man by the name of John Ford, a Carson Baptist from Dungannon, Ireland. They soon became good friends and interchanged ideas on all religious topics. There was agreement in all save on the design of baptism, the work of the Spirit, some Calvinism, and so forth. It was not long before Ford embraced the reformation

their difficulties.

Brother Ford located a small school room and announced services for the next Lord's day. They had a congregation of fifteen or sixteen men that Sunday. Besides singing, brother Ford prayed and brother Ash read about half a chapter in the New Testament followed with comments on each verse. He trembled in every limb and when finished brother Ford then read some. Once again they sang, prayed, and dismissed their first meeting after

I want to obey that command; I want you to baptize me." Both brother Ash and brother Ford were in a fix. The demand for baptism was made; now it must be decided if that demand would be complied with or not. Their decision that it must be done was quickly made. Brother Ford said, "Well, brother Ash, it must be done and I cannot do it." "Well," said brother Ash, "I have never performed the act, but I have seen it done. I think I can do it and I will." It was a critical moment, two young men following their daily avocation and neither of them preachers. They knew the prejudices of all men in the community would be against them. For them to minister in holy things was thought to be awful.

They took the precaution not to have the baptism public. Their reasons were that if they made any mistakes it would bring the act into derision and make laughing stocks of themselves. They agreed to meet on the sandy beach of the beautiful Lake Ontario on the next Wednesday evening. A group of six or eight in number met and grouped together to pray under the All Seeing Eye and the heavenly host rejoicing over the scene. It was a beautiful evening, the sky was a little hazy, and the waters were calm. A slight ripple splashed the shore while the pale moon, about half full, cast her silvery light over the waters. All nature seemed hushed into silence. They sang a hymn in the silence of that hour and then all knelt, with tears of rejoicing, to pour out their souls to the God who knew their hearts. The trembling of brother Ash left him in full possession of his strength and nerves. He took the confession and led the tall, heavy man into the water to a proper depth. Then, "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19), brother Ash baptized him for the remission of all his past sins, and raised him up to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). That was his first baptism. John Hancock, a local Methodist preacher, was the man baptized.

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**"Both brother Ash and brother Ford were in a fix . . . They took the precaution not to have the baptism public. Their reasons were that if they made any mistakes it would bring the act into derision and make laughing stocks of themselves."**

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fully. They met on Lord's days, walked through fields and forests in lonely sadness, talked, prayed, and sang together.

At length brother Ford proposed they should commence holding meetings in Cobourg. They talked over various difficulties about a house to meet in and how they should entertain those who would attend, if any. Neither of them had ever attempted to preach or even hold a prayer meeting. They allowed their zeal for the Lord to override all

announcing another next Lord's day. The format for the second Lord's day was the same except they had a much larger audience and two women.

It was at the conclusion of the fourth Lord's day that a fine young man approached brother Ash and brother Ford and demanded baptism. He said, "Brethren, you have taught us the way of the Lord as we never knew it before; you have showed us what the Lord requires of all, how that all penitent should be baptized (immersed); and now



# Mining The Scriptures

## PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

### The Sermon on the Mount

**"E**veryone that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery" (Matthew 5:28).

These are radical words and even kingdom citizens must struggle not to resist. Their severe probing of the heart brings pain as the Son of God touches the raw nerves of our moral diseases. Jesus, having dealt with the problem of hate and malice, now addresses the problem of lust. The Pharisees had certainly treated the issue of adultery but only superficially. Their concern was to avoid a capital offense (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). One can almost hear the way they said, "Thou shalt not *commit* adultery" (Exodus 20:14). Jesus, in contrast, tracks the sin of adultery to its lair (Matthew 15:19). As the hatred of the heart is murder, so is the unbridled lust of the heart adultery.

This principle was not an obscure part of the Mosaic covenant. The tenth commandment pointedly said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17). Paul, while still a stranger to the gospel, and a Pharisee, had been severely penetrated by this command (Romans 7:7). Even Job, a man who apparently lived before the law, understood this ethical truth. "I made a covenant with mine eyes," he said, "How then should I look upon a virgin?" (Job 31:1).

Though some extended application might be made from this passage to the raw and unprincipled carnal desire which some single person might harbor for someone similarly unattached, Jesus' use of the word "adultery" makes clear that His present concern is with that illicit desire which violates the very spirit of the marriage covenant (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). The Lord's concern in this whole section is with our duty to love others. No married person can do justice to his mate while given over to unrestrained desire for another. Though yet a matter of the mind it is called what it is—sin.

The Lord is not dealing here with the mere momentary passing of desire through the mind; otherwise there would be no distinction between temptation and sin. (We should not be aghast at the suggestion that the lust of the flesh might have made its approach to the mind of our Savior while He remained sinless, Hebrews 4:15.) The words, "looketh upon a woman to lust after her" help us

to understand the exact nature of the transgression. This is not a fleeting thought but the gathering up of one's mind for the purpose of lusting. The Greek text describes a person who directs his thoughts or turns his mind to a thing; in this case, lusting after a woman (or a man). Obviously, we do not look at everything we see. The eye takes in a vast panorama and it is left for the mind to focus the attention. David's sin was not in *seeing* the unclothed Bathsheba but in *looking upon* her, setting his mind and ultimately his unbridled lust upon her (2 Samuel 11:2-5). David wanted the opportunity to possess Bathsheba, and found it. His violation of Exodus 20:17 would have been no less had that opportunity never presented itself.

Although the English word "lust" accurately connotes the sensual overtones of the Greek verb (*epithumeo*), it may lack the attendant thought of possession which is inherent in it (Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 194). The sin being described by Jesus is the calculated cultivation of the desire to possess one to whom you have no right. If this sin is to be escaped, the very first approach of such thoughts must be decisively rejected, before they can take possession of the mind and will. In the language of an old proverb: "You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair." If we find difficulty in distinguishing between the temptation and the sin in this case it is far wiser to err on the side of caution than on the side of recklessness.

**T**he war of the kingdom citizen with lust in these times is destined to be severe and hard-fought.

We are not going to easily escape the miasma of lasciviousness, fornication and adultery that has descended on this generation. Let no disciple be smug (1 Corinthians 10:12). There are no societal restraints to lean on. Our strength and defense must reside wholly in our own deep and unshakable resolve to keep ourselves pure for the Lord's sake. In the final analysis that is where the issue of our faithfulness in the kingdom has always been decided. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

(To be continued.)



# The Community of the Saints

L. A. Mott, Jr.

## Philippians 1:1

**P**aul addressed his epistle "to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Of the Pauline epistles sent to groups of people, four were addressed to the saints (Romans 1:6f; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2). The Greek for "saints" is literally "holy ones"—but the word holy is not easy to define.

We must start with God. The first usage of the word holy is Exodus 3:5 (holy ground). At the Exodus Jehovah revealed Himself as holy (Exodus 15:11;

said to be holy because of their relation to God—ground (Exodus 3:5), sabbath (16:23), garments (28:2,4), place (28:43; 29:30), anointing oil (30:25,31), angels (Mark 8:38), apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:5).

God's people are called "holy ones" as being a people consecrated to the holy God. They are made saints by divine call. "Called" in Romans 1:7 and 1 Corinthians 1:2 is not a verb but an adjective describing saints. They are chosen in sanctification (holiness), to which state they are called by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13f). The saints are those God

to any sort of congregation, gathering or assembly without regard to its nature, whether a gathering of craftsmen or workers (Acts 19:32,41), citizens of a Greek city-state (Acts 19:39), Israelites in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) or that of Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18). The distinguishing nature of any particular *ekklesia* must be determined from usage and connection in context. Consider the addresses in the five epistles referred to and observe how the *ekklesia* or congregation is described, defined and distinguished by the modifiers attached to the word. The modifiers in 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 2 Corinthians 1:1 tell a great deal about the congregation addressed—ownership ("of God"), locality ("which is at Corinth") and composition ("them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints"). Composition is also indicated by a modifying phrase in 1 Corinthians 14:33 ("the churches of the saints"). The phrase attached to "churches" in Galatians 1:2 ("of Galatia") indicates the locality of the congregations addressed. 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1 contain phrases indicating the composition of the church intended ("the congregation of Thessalonians," NEB) and a relationship (union) to God and Christ ("in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ").

I do not see much difference in the two addresses used by Paul. The churches addressed were composed of saints. The saints addressed made up local churches. The saints at Philippi are called a church in Philippians 4:15. But one can learn that they were a church without reading past the first verse of the epistle. Paul wrote a single letter which was expected to reach "all the saints in Christ Jesus that [were] at Philippi."

Some people think one may be a disciple of Jesus without being a part of the congregation of believers. But the saints at Philippi did not exist in isolation each from the others. They were a community. That is the way it is with "the saints in Christ Jesus."

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**"Some people think one may be a disciple of Jesus without being a part of the congregation of believers. But the saints at Philippi did not exist in isolation from the others. They were a community."**

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Leviticus 19:2). So God is holy. "The Holy One of Israel" was Isaiah's favorite name for God (Isaiah 1:4; 5:19,24; 10:20; 12:6; etc.).

God in His nature is infinitely separated from His creatures (Isaiah 40:18; 55:8f), and that applies not only to His power and wisdom but to His moral nature as well. The holiness of God had been branded upon Isaiah's consciousness at the time of his call and the vision of overwhelming holiness had wrung from him the confession of his own uncleanness (Isaiah 6:1-5).

God is holy and other things are

has called to Himself (1 Peter 2:9), sanctifying them by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:10,29; 13:12), by which their sins are removed. Sanctification as a state, therefore, is not a human attainment but a state to which God by His grace calls sinful men. The interchangeable usage in Acts 9:1,13 shows that "saints" is another name for the disciples of Jesus.

Five of Paul's epistles were addressed to churches (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). The Greek for "church" was applied



# An Open Letter to Subscribers: Plans for 1985

The editors of *Christianity Magazine* met recently and decided to commit ourselves to publishing the paper for another year. We have been encouraged by the enthusiastic support we have received from those who have subscribed to the magazine. We believe it is doing good and for that reason we have determined to continue another year.

The progress of the paper has been good, if not spectacular. We expect to end 1984 with a subscription list of about 4,000. That number has continued to grow each month and we are hopeful that the growth will continue.

The growth of *Christianity Magazine* has not been sufficient, however, to make the paper financially solvent. All of those involved in the magazine have given freely of their time; in addition a sizable cash subsidy has been required. The editors greatly appreciate the assistance of those people who have contributed articles and other work to help us get started.

We solicit your help in 1985. We cannot continue to publish the magazine indefinitely unless we secure sufficient subscriptions to pay its publication costs. Here are some ways you can help:

**1. Resubscribe.** Many of your subscriptions will be due for renewal near the first of the year. We need your prompt attention to renewal. When billed, you will notice that the price for 1985 has been raised to \$15 per year. We feel that the higher price is realistic and it is essential for our survival.

**2. Gift Subscriptions.** Nearly twenty-five percent of the present subscriptions to *Christianity Magazine* were presented as gifts. We hope that many of you will resubscribe for those receiving the gifts (if they will not do so themselves) and that you will consider giving it to others. *All gift subscriptions will remain at the price of \$10 per year.* After your initial subscription you may send as many as you wish for \$10. If you wish, we will notify them of your gift by sending an attractive presentation card.

**3. Church Bundles.** We are also providing a number of churches with bundles of the magazine to be distributed to all members. These are sent directly to their homes. A number of individuals have chosen to do this, too. You may send 25 subs for only \$18.75 per month (this is the cheapest way possible to subscribe). If you would like to know more about the bundle rates, see page 3 and/or contact Bob Hardage at business office address and phone on that page.

**4. New Subscribers.** We have not reached many of the Christians who we believe need to be reading the upbuilding material we are publishing. Many have not heard of the magazine. You are our best avenue to those people. We need your help in reaching them. *Tell a friend they need Christianity Magazine!*

We will keep you informed about our progress and we are looking forward to having you aboard in 1985.

*The Editors*

**P. S.** Please let us know your change of address well in advance of your move. It is very costly and time-consuming for us when you do not do this. We will appreciate your help.



# A Lady Looks at the Psalms

Donna Keith

The poetry of the Old Testament has always held a special appeal for me. I am certain that a large part of that appeal has been due to my enjoyment of poetry as a style of writing. Through the sounds, meanings, and connotations of words along with the use of figurative expressions, the poet is able to combine his words into a musical language that has an intensity not found in other types of literature. The Psalms employ these characteristics to convey some of the deepest emotions of the human heart and are as beautiful as the poetry of any nation.

In the last two or three years, however, I have gained an appreciation

the most prevalent ideas in the Psalms is that of trust in God. This often-repeated advice is essential for anyone who wants to do God's will. We must have an attitude of complete trust, total dependence, and willing submission. We must believe that God will take care of us no matter what circumstances may develop in our lives. Whether we acquire many material possessions or relatively few, we must trust the Lord to "uphold the righteous" (verses 16 and 17). Whether we are alone in this life or have family and friends to comfort and support us, we must believe that God "does not forsake his saints" (verse 28). Truly and deeply trusting in the promises of God

have it in our hearts, we must also find enjoyment in the ways of the Lord. "Delight thyself also in the Lord" (verse 4), David says. With the resulting commitment will come involvement in whatever is necessary to put God first in our lives. Life in this society and this century requires much involvement in earthly affairs—from job responsibilities to efforts involved in raising children. But when hobbies, extra jobs, or social activities (even with other Christians) hinder our study, prayer or acts of love and concern for others, something must change. Total commitment to God will prevent our becoming so involved in preparing for the next life.

3. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him" (verse 7). Even as trusting, committed Christians we may wonder occasionally what God has in mind for us. We may become discouraged when difficult times cause us to stumble. But we must not be "utterly cast down" (verse 24). The Lord will hold us up and direct our lives. Sometimes the way is hard to understand. At times God's purposes are unclear and uncertain. But we must take comfort in God's word and constantly improve our submission to His will. We must wait on the Lord because those who do so "shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31). David tells us that he "waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined to me and heard my cry" (Psalm 40:1). If we truly believe that "the Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all that he has made" (Psalm 145:13, NIV), we will be able to maintain our faith through any circumstances in life with patience and contentment.

In whatever situation a Christian woman finds herself in 1985, the Hebrew poetry of the Psalms can and should be used as encouragement for righteous living. May we always find comfort in these ancient words: "But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him" (Psalm 37:39-40).

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**"Even as trusting, committed Christians we may wonder occasionally what God has in mind for us. We may become discouraged in difficult times."**

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for the Hebrew poetry that is much deeper than its literary style. I realize much more fully that the Psalms should be viewed as practical Scripture to apply to my life. They have contributed much to helping me have the contentment and peace that I believe all Christians should have in life (Philippians 4:7; John 14:27). The words of David, Asaph, Solomon and the other poets can be helpful for a Christian woman in 1985.

Among their words, some of the most meaningful to me are in the thirty-seventh psalm. The exhortations given by David in this passage can be used as the keys to peace and contentment on the earth. I will consider three of these.

1. "Trust in the Lord" (verse 3). One of

we can "say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Psalms 91:2).

2. "Commit thy way unto the Lord" (verse 5). Another very evident spiritual characteristic of the psalmists is commitment. We can never attain true joy and peace in our lives without having made the decision to serve God at all costs, even when the "wicked plots against the just" (verse 12). Anything less is hypocrisy and can only lead to our being unhappy on earth as well as to our suffering eternally. In order to have this dedication and determination, we must have the law of God in our hearts (verse 31). Obviously, we must know God's word and understand it; but really to



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### The Qualls and Creels in London

**H**ow do you approach a sprawling city numbering millions of people, most of whom are basically irreligious and some of whom are practically hostile to the gospel? Answer: you approach the people of such a great city just as you would those of a small village—one by one.

London is a city of more than 7,000,000. Besides its large population of English people, there are millions of immigrants and students from all parts of the world: Africa, Asia, Australia as well as North and South America. The opportunity for preaching to these people has sufficiently challenged Matt Qualls and Rich Creel that they have taken their families across the Atlantic to England for that purpose.

The method most used in London involves hand distribution of the first lesson of a correspondence course to as many mail boxes as possible. Matt figures he can distribute about 750 per day among the high-rise apartments that form the major portion of London housing. In the 3½ years that he has been in London, he has distributed more than 100,000 lessons. Considering the fact that each mail box may serve two, three, or more people, it means that a quarter million Londoners have had some possible exposure to the truth through Matt's efforts.

Delivery of Lesson One, of course, is but the beginning. On an average, six responses can be expected for each one thousand distributed. The lessons for those responding must be graded and additional lessons sent until they finish the course. Once they finish, they must be visited and further studies arranged if they appear to be good contacts. All of this means considerable office work (often involving the wives) and many miles of travel, occasionally by automobile but usually by public transportation and on foot.

Those converted by these efforts are attending three different congregations, two of which have been established in the past five years.

One of the young congregations, known as the Elephant and Castle church, has recently moved to a new meeting place in what is known as St. Michael's Hall on Lant Street. This is only two blocks from Burrough Underground Station and not far from London Bridge Railway Station. Rich and Beth Creel, who arrived in London in mid-1983, worship with that congregation. Over 250,000 lessons have been distributed by Rich and others in that heavily populated area and the congrega-

tion is made up largely of converts resulting from those efforts.

The other congregation established recently meets in Woodland Park Primary School on St. Anne's Road in South Tottenham. The congregation remains small, but it provides a meeting place for a few converts who would be unable to reach other places of worship. Their services are on Sunday afternoons. Matt meets with them and shares in the preaching.

Matt and L'Von worship at other times with the Kentish Town church where Matt regularly teaches classes and also shares in preaching. That church meets in a building, known as Hope Chapel, which the church built 113 years ago. It is located on Prince of Wales Road in the Camden Town area, near Regents Park. A visit to Hope Chapel is an interesting experience for Americans not accustomed to English services. One is reminded of the universality of the Lord's church as a variety of foreign accents blend with the crisp English of the British brethren in prayers, reading and teaching. Matt and L'Von have been well accepted in that widely known congregation.

In addition to the efforts being made to reach the lost, Matt and Rich are spending considerable time edifying new converts and training young men to teach others. One such young man, converted only in the past four years, is now being supported partially by the Elephant and Castle church so that he can spend more time conducting home studies and preparing for his teaching in the public meetings of the church.

**M**any Americans visit London each year. For those who truly seek God's kingdom first, worshipping with a congregation of God's people in London will be the climax of all of their experiences in that historic and cosmopolitan city. Obviously, the Qualls and Creels are too busy with gospel work to serve as guides and too limited in facilities to offer lodging for tourists. But they would be delighted to provide information concerning the time and location of services and to give directions for reaching the meeting places of the churches. Their addresses and phone numbers are:

Matt and L'Von Qualls, 14 Sydney Road,  
London N10 2LP, Phone (01) 883-6889

Rich and Beth Creel, 2 Forest Lodge, 357 Alexandra  
Park Rd., London N22 4BR, Phone (01) 889-1149

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341





# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## On Nuns, Hippies, Moonies, Women, Yankees and Other Curiosities

This world is filled with strange and exotic creatures—curious to behold and well-nigh impossible to understand. Fortunately, I was a mature adult before ever coming face to face with a nun, hippie, Moonie or Yankee. I did from an early age learn that women existed—though I understood it was not something which was to be publicly discussed.

It is interesting how provincial we all are in our thinking. Southern hicks are hardly more guilty than others. When I was teaching at the University of Georgia, we invited a prospective faculty member to come to visit the campus. He lived in Chicago and we thought he would be very favorably impressed by the serenity and natural beauty of Athens, Georgia. It had not occurred to us (though it was true) that the media had featured some civil rights

violence in the Athens area in the weeks just before. Anyhow, our prospect accepted our invitation to visit the university, but he told us that his wife had insisted that he stay in Atlanta (sixty miles away) for safety. We told him that everyone in Athens was afraid to live in Atlanta and would not even visit Chicago. It just didn't work out.

There are several lessons for Christians to learn about such things. First is the revelation Peter learned in his encounter with Cornelius: "... Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). Male or female, black or white, northerners and southerners, God loves them all: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord

over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 10:12).

But there is another lesson which perhaps is more difficult for us to grasp than the general truth that all humanity stands equal before God. It is the inherent sameness of all humankind. Scratch the surface and underneath is a human being. Some are perverse and their religious aberrations are products of that perversity. But many of those who seem exotic and strange are fellow pilgrims—confused, anxious, searching, and ready for honest encounter.

I sometimes speculate privately about the culture shock experienced by the first century preachers of the gospel. They were unlearned and rustic men—products of a narrow and bigoted culture. And yet, they went and taught the world. I know of their dif-

ficulties with the Greeks. Can you imagine them encountering Indian Hindus, and Chinese Taoists, and cannibals, and pygmies? Eating with Cornelius must have paled beside some of those encounters. But they were all people, and they needed to hear about the Son of God.

\* \*

"God himself, Sir, does not propose to judge man until the end of his days."

—Samuel Johnson

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## Personal Work and the Batcave Syndrome

**I**t's hard to do personal work, especially in the city. Churches everywhere are frustrated, concerned, even discouraged over the lack of personal work being done. I talk with preachers who just want to throw up their hands and quit.

Why is it so hard to get personal work done today? Obviously, a large part of the reason is our indifference, our preoccupation with the material, our improper management of our time. But there's a general disinterest among people that must be considered, too.

Yes, I know we can do better. I'm trying to do better. But why is it so hard? Why the disinterest among people? There are lots of reasons, but I want to address just one that I think is at least part of the problem. I call it the *Batcave syndrome*.

Remember the Batman serials when you were a little boy? Or, if not, call to mind the resurgence of the popularity of Batman and Robin as a television series in the early seventies. Of course, no one knows the real identity of Batman and Robin, crime fighters extraordinaire, the composite of all that is good in man—macho, muscle, intelligence, tenderness. And when they have finished with some mission, these caped crusaders jump into the Batcar, squeel out to the outskirts of Gotham City, skid into a turn on some obscure road just as a hedge of bushes and trees miraculously opens up and there it is—the Batcave, their haven of security from the outside world.

I am not a social scientist, but it seems to me that a kind of *Batcave syndrome* has evolved in our modern society. And not without some good reason.

People live in the fast lane today. Pressures are immense. Nerves are frayed, raw. There is pressure at home to be successful. There is pressure at work to do more. There is pressure from peers to conform. There is the inner pressure of one's own conscience, which rebels against what is personally thought to be wrong, but which is mostly acceptable to others. Then there's the freeway. Talk about jangled nerves, how about those folks who fight (and that's the word for it!) freeway traffic every day? Rush! Turn! Jump! Move! Get over! Bear it, grin about it, take a deep breath, but it's still there, setting on edge the teeth of even the most even-tempered men.

The fact is, we just live (most of us, anyway) in a pressure cooker.

And so when the day is over and we finally victoriously reach our own street, turn down the block, push the button and the garage door opens, there is a big sigh of relief and for a little while at least, we are out of the rat race. No more bossy drivers, no more executive memos, no more orders—just peace, sweet peace. And on weekends, our Batcave takes on an added significance, because we can hide behind our privacy fence, start the grill, turn on the TV, and thumb our nose at the outside world for two whole days. It's certainly no accident that "weekends were made for Michelob" sells people. It's not so much the beer, but the escape from the pressures of life, that is appealing in the commercial.

**N**ow, what does all that have to do with personal work? Well, just this. If you cherish and protect your own privacy for evenings and weekends, do you think others are any less protective of theirs? I think people are so tired of being pressured all day in various, subtle ways that they are completely protective when it comes to their private time.

What can we do? One thing is certain, we must get the evangelistic work we do back on a personal basis. Programs are no substitute for the spontaneous reaction of some person to your recommendation of Christianity as seen in your own personal holiness. We need to radiate the peace and freedom from anxiety that is possible in Christ Jesus. All these things start with me. I must consider myself to be personally responsible.

And another thing. We need to get rid of the conscience-salving excuses we have so ingeniously devised. Churches spent millions of dollars last year in seeing that preachers had the support they needed to preach the gospel. And that's great! I would not for a minute discourage that. But my question is this: did *you* bring someone to Christ last year? Did you *personally* get out and work at saving a soul last year? Or did you just feel good when the elders announced that we spent \$100,000 on evangelism last year?

The answer to our problem is personal. It's you. It's me. Not us—*me!*

What we need most of all is to get up, get out, and do it!



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# Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 663 Denise Drive, Melbourne, FL 32935

## A reader applauds Ruth Thompson's refreshing presentation of godly women

It is so refreshing, in the midst of "exalted women" created by the minds of people, to see and hear of God-fearing women who tell of God's true spirit.

The modern-day concept of women advertises that they are in constant struggle with life's forces and rights. But I think the best advertisement comes from the quiet, but loud, instrument of God that speaks to us a relaxed assurance that there is no such thing as dominance, only strength from above. And this strength tells us that "favor is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30). If any exaltation is to be done, let it be done with wisdom and kindness (Proverbs 31:26), understanding that the word exalt means "on high," and this we do together (Psalm 34:3). Who can find a virtuous woman? Let her own works praise her in the gate (Acts 9:36; Romans 16:1-2).

David Hawthorne  
Columbus, OH

## Taking a closer look at the Old Testament

There is a trend seemingly developing among brethren which I believe to be dangerous. It is the attitude that we need not pay a whole lot of attention to the Old Testament in sermons and Bible classes. We preach we need to study the Old Testament to learn God's purpose for man, His dealings with man, and proper and improper attitudes man has displayed toward God as well as his fellowman. Yet, we teach very little from the Old Testament.

My question is, "Why?" Certainly the answer is not that we have absorbed all there is to know about it. Also, with premillennialism being so prevalent, we need to know the purpose of national Israel, and have a proper understanding of the "kingdom prophecies."

It seems to me mere surveys in the Old Testament will not accomplish the teaching

of these matters. This is not written to speak disparagingly of teaching surveys or topically. They have their place. It is good sometime to see the forest. But, sometime or another, what is wrong with looking at a tree? After all, God made it.

W. M. Timmerman  
Highlands, TX

## A veterinarian wishing to practice with a Christian

In June, 1985, I will be graduating from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville College of Veterinary Medicine with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. I am currently trying to locate a practicing veterinarian who is a Christian with whom I could locate upon graduation. I would appreciate your help in locating such an individual.

By way of personal history and goals, prior to entering Vet School I preached full-time for 10 years in Tennessee and Texas. I am interested in locating in an area where I could be of benefit to the Lord's work by fill-in preaching, etc., especially for congregations which are unable to support a full-time preacher.

I would ask those who may be interested to please contact me. Thank you.

Ken Osborne  
4201 Crosby Dr., No. 305  
Knoxville, TN 37919  
(615) 584-3427

## Questions and observations from a female subscriber

Dear brother Lewis:

Have enjoyed and appreciate the articles and spirit in which they are written. Some of the writers I have never heard of; some I have heard preach and have read their writings over a period of years. You don't remember me but I knew you in Tampa thirty years ago and know your parents. You are fortunate to have them as your parents. [I heartily agree with that observation, BL.]

One subject I would like to see some articles on is when some of our men pray, they say "we are weak and sinful," or some time "we are sinners." I don't believe I am a sinner, though I do sin. I ask people to obey the gospel to be Christians; if we remain faithful we are not sinners. I want to know if you think I'm wrong. [Would some of our readers like to address this question?]

Also, is there any scriptural reason the members can't occasionally have a meeting to discuss things concerning the building, classes, just getting the feelings of members? I had one woman say to me, "I never know what's going on. The men meet in a back room to discuss everything." We women do sometimes feel we are not part of the work of the church—especially ones without a husband. I'm not complaining, but know an article on this subject would be appreciated, maybe by men as well as women. [We would like to hear from any of our readers about things that are being done where you are to solve this problem. Is there a way this could be or is being done?, BL.] Lack of communication seems to be a problem where I attend. Maybe it is only because everyone is too, too busy.

Thank you for listening to me. May God bless the ones who are working to bring us such a fine paper.

A sister in the Pacific Northwest

## See Page Three for Information on Ordering Bound Volume No. 1

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# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Restoring New Testament Christianity

*HEADNOTE: I have recently completed a rather long article on the history of the restoration movement in America to be published next year in the Encyclopedia of American Religion by Charles Scribner's Sons. I thought it might be interesting to our readers to run excerpts from the article, accompanied by some commentary.*

\* \* \*

**T**he leaders of the varied nineteenth century restoration movements in American Christianity generally believed that they were a part of the quest for religious reform which began with the Reformation. They often called themselves reformers and set out to strip the church of the unscriptural additions of the centuries. They acknowledged that the reformers of the past had gone as far as their insight would take them, and they honored them for their contributions, but they saw in the Protestant churches of their day countless perversions which destroyed the unity of the church. Successful reformation would have to be based on a return to the pattern of New Testament Christianity.

Some early American restorationists were aware of similar movements in the British Isles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Two movements which played direct roles in the formation of the largest restorationist group in America, the Disciples of Christ, were reforms of the Church of Scotland led by John Glas and Robert Sandeman and James and Robert Haldane. The movement begun by Glas and carried forward by Sandeman came to America in 1763 and established a congregation in Danbury, Connecticut which later became a Disciples church. The Haldanes were important leaders of the small Scottish Independent churches of the early nineteenth century and they had direct contact with several restorationist leaders. Their ideas were widely known in America as well as Scotland.

It was in America, however, the restorationist thinking was to flourish in the nineteenth century, contributing to the establishment of a number of new sects and influ-

encing the thought of a number of others. The idea of restoring New Testament Christianity to its original purity seemed a perfect corollary to the secular understanding of the meaning of the new nation. As American democratic society represented a stripping away of the unjust and unreasonable restraints of feudalism and monarchy, so the return to simple New Testament Christianity was an attack on religious privilege and ecclesiastical tradition. As the post-revolutionary generation of Americans lionized reason as the divine path to the discovery of natural law, so restorationists believed that man's reason would reveal the primal truth in divine law. The secret in both cases was honest investigation and an open mind. As the political democratization of the nation challenged the remaining remnants of privilege and class distinction and claimed a symbolic victory with the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, so the restoration movements of the early nineteenth century were religious challenges to the churches of the elite—bold assertions by the common people that they were able to construct and manage their own religious affairs. Finally, the idea of religious restoration fit well with the optimistic mood of early America. The political vision of a just and rational society meshed with and promoted an ebullient post-millennialism in nineteenth century American religion. Most early restorationist leaders shared to some extent that optimistic vision and saw their work as the key to inauguration of God's millennium in the nation He had prepared for that task.

\* \* \*

**COMMENTARY:** The idea of returning to the purity of New Testament Christianity is, it seems to me, innate to human thinking. Even as men have sought to reform nations and cultures, in every age there must have been those who longed for the simplicity and fervor of the early church. We shall never be able to identify most of them, but one can hardly doubt their presence through the ages.

(To be continued)



# The Great Physician

Joel D. Todino, M.D.

In many of the song books which we Christians use, there is a song by William Hunter called "The Great Physician." Perhaps the composer reflected upon the verse in Deuteronomy 32:39, included in Moses' song to his congregation: "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." The idea of healing is a very comforting and real concept which we, as human mortals, think about more and more as we age and are afflicted with a variety of diseases. I am confronted daily with the plea of a patient to help relieve him of his pain and suffering.

After many years of training and then continuing study and work, we physicians have the sobering responsibility for the mortal lives of our patients. We guide, teach, sometimes plead, cajole and beg with our patients to follow what we, with modern medical techniques, think is good advice. Thought of in this physical way, most people can understand: following the prescription by a competent physician is designed to bring ease to suffering or pain and, perhaps, a cure for illness. Most reasonable people, after paying for a doctor's visit and receiving instructions or a prescription for medicine, would not even consider throwing away the medicine or ignoring the instructions. If you had a black mole and the physician said, "That looks suspicious for cancer, and I think we should remove it," you would more than likely follow that recommendation, hoping to catch it early enough for a cure. Surely the attitude, "I don't believe that and I'll just take my chances," may prove to be harmful. Many other examples of this could be given, but I'm sure most readers will get the point. If you understand the premise of a good physician and good advice, then certainly it would be foolish to ignore it.

Now think for a moment about what we do to ourselves in the more important spiritual realm. Here we do not have merely a *good* physician, we have a *great* physician. Here we do not have just good advice; we have the only soul-

saving advice that God has made available to us. Just as physical illness leads to physical death, spiritual illness is responsible for our spiritual death. The illness is sin, which, after accountability, afflicts every person. Clearly Paul teaches us these principles in Romans, where in chapter three he writes, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and then in chapter six we read, "For the wages of sin is death" (verse 23). So, as opposed to physical illnesses, where some may have certain ones and be spared others, in the spiritual realm *none* of us is spared. It is a universal disease. But, also, as opposed to the

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instructions.***

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physical where only some diseases are "curable" (and most of those only for a short time—because we all will die physically of *something*), in the spiritual realm there is a universal cure. Wouldn't we be foolish if we, understanding the disease causing our own deaths, ignored a cure which costs little and is 100% effective? Everyone who "takes the cure" is healed!

The idea of sin is also expressed as a "bondage," very much like an illness that enslaves—perhaps best understood in the physical as an addiction to drugs, tobacco, alcohol and the like. Again in Romans, Paul points to sin as "having

dominion" over us in such a way that we are in bondage or are slaves to sin. As with the physical, we are offered a cure. Unlike the physical, though, where "cures" for the above-mentioned addiction may run a 30-40% success rate, the success of the cure of our bondage to sin is 100% if "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you" (Romans 6:17).

Now comes the crux of this whole matter; indeed, "crux" it is, in the true meaning of crux, i.e. "cross." Yes, the cure is plainly stated. Again we can turn to Romans 3:24 where we read, "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." What does this "cure" say to us? First, that we are justified—another way of stating that we are freed of our account owed to God because of our sin. Yes, we are saved! Secondly, it is free. Unlike the doctor's cure, there is no fee. God's grace is free. How do we then receive this free gift? Paul tells us in Chapter 5 of Romans: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2). We have *access* to this grace by our faith. Thirdly, we have redemption, which means that our debt has been paid. We had gone into debt to God when we separated ourselves from Him through sin, but now it is paid and we are no longer separated. And, finally, the whole "cure" is summed up with the idea of being "in Christ." How can we understand the idea of being *in* Christ? Turn again to Paul's explanation. He tells us that the only way to gain "spiritual blessings" is to be "in Christ" and "in Him" (Ephesians 1:3-4), and that he, Paul, had to be "crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20) so that he was able to be among those "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

You see, then, that the spiritual cure is safer, better, less expensive and 100% effective. One only needs to, by faith, turn to Jesus and obey or follow His prescription.

308 Livingston Rd. S.W., Rome, GA 30161



Brent Lewis



# My Brother/My Self

## Pride Destroys Relationships

**O**ur age is saturated with the kind of philosophy that fosters human pride. The media screams at me that I am to look out for "Number One" and that I should indulge myself in every delight and not settle for anything less than the best because I deserve it.

Humanism adores man. Though our age is particularly threatened by its relentless assault on every man, woman, boy and girl—its onslaught is not new. William Shakespeare placed these words on the lips of one of his characters in *Hamlet*: "What a piece of work is man . . . how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"

There was a time, however, in the not-so-distant past when pride was generally viewed as the font of all sin. That day is no more. What with self-awareness, self-assertiveness, demanding one's rights, and so on—the Christian is liable to find himself succumbing to a "me-first" philosophy. And that is diametrically opposed to the attitude that God expects of him. Pride is not in our own best interest. That's why God tells us not to be proud (Proverbs 16:5; James 4:6). Pride destroys relationships. What are some common manifestations of pride?

**1. Pride in one's social standing.** The words of James 2:1-9 are not out of touch with our own experience. "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man, in vile clothing, and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool; do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" (2:1-4). It is very probable that we might make the same kind of distinction in 1985. Do you suppose that there are not brethren *now* who "have regard" to people because of who they are, or who they know, or how they dress? Are we too good to sit on the same pew with someone who does not "measure up?" Have we set our mark too high as to those with whom we'll associate? Are we a part of a cliquish minority in the local fellowship of believers?

**2. Pride in one's intellectual attainments.** Paul said, "Knowledge puffeth up" (1 Corinthians 8:1)—and indeed it does. There is nothing worse than an intellectual snob—one who is far and above his poor, ignorant fellows. This kind of pride separates between brethren. When we become so educated, cultured and refined that we cannot associate with—and enjoy—those who are "beneath" us, we are fools. Paul said, "If any man thinketh that he is wise among you in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise" (1 Corinthians 3:18). The intellectual needs to accept God's way, the way of humility.

**3. Pride in one's wealth.** The tendency of the rich is to trust in his riches and thereby to become arrogant. There is probably not a clearer warning about this than that given by Moses to Israel in Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17-18: "Beware lest thou forget Jehovah thy God . . . when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein, and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied . . . lest thou say in thy heart, My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth." Riches puff up, too.

**4. Pride in one's spirituality.** This may be the most repulsive of all pride. The egotistical swagger of the Pharisee so provoked the Lord that He "spake a parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought" (Luke 18:9-14). Spiritual pride may lead one on a vendetta against his brethren, even in the name of the Lord, as it did Diotrophes (3 John 9); it may congratulate God on His good fortune to have such a wonderful disciple; or it may masquerade in a self-abasing, syrupy humility. But, whatever its form, spiritual pride always produces a critical spirit.

We must dispense with pride, for it builds walls between brethren. It is pitiful to see brethren separated for life, torn asunder, because of pride. Too proud to say "I'm sorry," too little to say "I was wrong," too puffed up to say, "Will you forgive me?" The chasm of enmity will forever remain unbridged, and brethren will lose their souls eternally, unless one says, "Forgive me," and the other says, "I forgive." Do you need to say these words? Are you too proud? Conquer your pride or it will destroy you.



# Telephone Talks

## Mis-Fits In the World

Jesus did not fit very well in the culture into which He was born. He was not considered a great man by most of His peers; He would not have been nominated as the most successful man of His nation, much less of the world! After all, He was poor, without formal education and without position. As a religious teacher He was completely rejected by the religious leaders of His time. A common opinion, shared by some of His own family, was that He was a mad man, or possessed of a demon.

If this was true of Jesus in His culture, we should not be surprised if it is true of those who are truly Christlike in any culture. In fact, Jesus predicted that. He said to His disciples: "It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" (Matthew 10:25). And again: "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

Following Jesus is not the road to greatness in the eyes of the world. We must understand that. Being like Jesus on the job, in the home, or in the schoolroom will mean:

- Frequent reference to God in conversation.
- Absolute respect for the name of God.
- Pure speech free from obscenity, profanity, vulgarity or abusiveness.
- Recognition of the authority of God above the authority of any man.

All of these things—and others—were characteristic of Jesus among men and they will be characteristic of those in whom Jesus dwells. The world will consider us odd. But God will say of us: "This is my beloved son." That will be worth it all.

## Weaknesses

Judas was called by Jesus to be an apostle right along with Peter and John and Matthew. He was given the same opportunities as they were given to hear the teaching of Jesus and to be influenced by His perfect life. He had the same possibility of developing into the kind of strong and useful preachers that they became.

But there was a weakness in Judas. Of course, there were weaknesses in all of them, but while the others were working to overcome their weaknesses Judas was nurturing his.

His weakness was covetousness—the love of money.

He could have overcome it—with the help of Jesus every weakness can be overcome—but instead, he fed his passion for money, even by stealing from the little purse of money maintained for the use of Jesus and His disciples.

Judas fed his passion until it became an overpowering master. That master gained such a hold upon him that he even sold Jesus into the hands of His enemies for thirty paltry pieces of silver. Then, ashamed of what he had done, he went out and hanged himself—the victim of what had begun as a mere weakness.

Do you have such a weakness? It may be the love of money, or the love of pleasure, or love of the favor of men. You can begin right now and, with God's help, you can conquer it! Or, you can feed it, and excuse it, and humor it, and give in to it until it becomes a master so strong that it will conquer you.

The choice is yours!

—These thoughts prepared for Dial-A-Bible Message, Atlanta, GA by Sewell Hall





## A One-Man Revolution

**T**he gospel of John with its myriad fine details bears the unmistakable mark of the eyewitness. The writer tells us carefully that the loaves with which Jesus fed the five thousand were made of barley and gives us that compelling picture of Jesus' empty tomb, the burial robes, all neatly arranged, lying quietly abandoned. But John is especially remarkable in the very profound way he treats the response of those individuals who are confronted with the Son of God. One can almost sense their unspoken thoughts as they wrestle with the inconceivable. A notable example of John's way with the thinking, as well as the words and deeds of his subjects, is found in his account of Nicodemus' nocturnal visit with Jesus (John 3).

John has already carefully set the scene for his readers before this Jewish ruler appears at Jesus' door. Before his encounter with this very interesting Pharisee, Jesus had already done two things. He had caught the imagination of the multitudes in Judea with a series of mighty wonders and startled the establishment by driving a pack of thieving merchants from the Temple courts (2:13-23). As an immediate introduction to the appearance of Nicodemus a brief paragraph states the special problem which Jesus faced during the first year of His teaching. His miracles had captivated the masses but they had as yet no grasp of His teaching. For them Jesus simply became the charismatic leader on whom they fixed all their own misguided expectations about the kingdom of God. They were ripe for disillusionment and Jesus knew it. He did not trust Himself to their enthusiastic but shallow and uninformed faith. At this point in his story John introduces a classic example of this kind of mentality in the person of none other than a son of the Sanhedrin.

Nicodemus' approach to Jesus is deferential and hopeful. If later on the vast majority of the Jewish high court will "know not whence he is" (John 9:29), it is apparent that as Jesus began His work there were several of them who were impressed if somewhat perplexed by Him. Like the population at large they were compelled by His miracles to confess that He was "a teacher come from God" (John 3:2). Jesus' abrupt reply to what appears to be a very genuine approach still startles the reader. He does not even acknowledge or thank His visitor for his generous stamp of approval but bluntly says, "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (3:3). Why does Jesus make such a seemingly rough transition? Because He is responding to the counselor's thoughts rather than his words (2:24-25).

One can almost reconstruct the scenario playing itself

out in Nicodemus' mind as he approached his rendezvous with Jesus. He could already see the look of amazed delight on the Teacher's face as this man of influence and power presented himself at His door. What joy his offer of allegiance would bring to the one who until this time was struggling to make do with a cloddish group of Galilean peasants who were wholly without standing. Nicodemus would provide the vital breakthrough to power. He perhaps envisioned himself being invited to a place of great prominence in this burgeoning movement.

Nicodemus was stunned by Jesus' response to him. He had imagined bringing all his glory into the kingdom and now hears Jesus say that nothing he has is of any value; that he is not fit for the kingdom of God, unable even to breathe its air. The man who came with visions of some great carnal empire is suddenly impaled on his host's demand for a personal, internal spiritual revolution, a revolution of the heart. His mind has been elsewhere and he is not prepared for a spiritual demand. He stumbles awkwardly over it in a state of disarray. Like so many others attracted by Jesus' miracles he had no idea of the true nature of heaven's kingdom. There was no excuse for a "teacher of Israel" being so ignorant of the importance of faith and righteousness in the divine order but he was a child of his times. Jesus knew that if he was to be saved there had to be a radical change of direction.

**T**he passage of the years has not changed human nature. Men are still trying to take the kingdom of God by force (Matthew 11:12). They deal in carnal attractions and exciting personalities. They are very deferential toward Jesus but they do not listen to Him. They simply seek to use Him to work out their own scenario of what salvation is about. For many of them, like Nicodemus, it is still wealth and "wisdom," power and success. There has been no new birth, no willingness to renounce oneself and sit down trustingly before the Son of God, ready to respond to every word.

Will Durant, in his little addendum to his massive work, *The Story of Civilization*, pays grudging tribute to the importance of spiritual conversion: "The only real revolution is in the enlightenment of the mind and the improvement of character, the only real emancipation is individual, and the only real revolutionists are philosophers and saints" (*The Lessons of History*, p. 72). The philosophers have utterly failed. Only Jesus has succeeded. If I may borrow the words of American poet Robert Frost, Jesus has invited us "to a one-man revolution. It is the only revolution that is coming." We are advised to humbly accept His invitation.





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Sewell Hall

### Sing Unto the Lord

**W**hen Nehemiah had rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, they were dedicated with great joy. "The singers sang loudly, . . . the women and children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off" (Nehemiah 12:42-43). This was the song of one city, but Isaiah anticipated such praise on a universal scale in the glorious age of the Messiah:

Sing unto the Lord a new song,  
And His praise from the ends of the earth,

You who go down to the sea, and  
all that is in it,  
You coastlands and you inhabitants  
of them!

Let the wilderness and its cities lift  
up their voice,  
The villages that Kedar inhabits.  
Let the inhabitants of Sela sing,  
Let them shout from the top of the  
mountains.

Let them give glory to the Lord, and  
declare His praise to the coast-  
lands (Isaiah 42:10-12).

The time for such singing is *now!*

Exuberance and enthusiasm in song can compensate remarkably for a lack of talent and training. Seldom will one hear a more thrilling rendition of "Amazing Grace" than from fifty thousand Scots-

men at a football match in Great Britain. But alas, they are drunk, and the same cause that produces their song may, a few minutes later, send them out across the city wrecking everything in sight. No wonder the apostle Paul wrote: "And be not drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19).

Good singing provides a legitimate attraction to those who are not Christians. It is an opportunity for a greater demonstration of emotion so desperately needed in many congregations. And it is an activity in which every individual can actively participate. Surely singing deserves every effort we can make toward improvement. It is with this in mind that the following pages are offered.

Though the contributors to this section vary widely in musical background, they share a love for God and, consequently, an interest in singing and its effective presentation to God. They have provided us with general thoughts on praising and teaching in song, with historical facts regarding the development of song down to the present, with

practical suggestions for improvement, and with an investigation of some doctrinal matters which arise in connection with the questions of instrumental accompaniment and the types of songs prescribed for Christians.

Not one of the writers, however, is interested in a mere technical improvement of singing. The most important improvement of all is that of the heart which produces the song. When our hearts are duly filled with appreciation for the glorious blessings we enjoy in Christ, our very natural and very acceptable response will be an uninhibited song of praise.

Come, we who love the Lord,  
And let our joys be known;  
Join in a song of sweet accord,  
And thus surround the throne.

The hill of Zion yields  
A thousand sacred sweets,  
Before we reach the heavenly fields,  
Or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound  
And every tear be dry;  
We're marching through Immanuel's  
ground  
To fairer worlds on high.

—Isaac Watts, 1709

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# SING UNTO THE LORD

## Praising God in Song

Robert E. Waldron

ONE OF THE BASIC IDEAS IN THE WORD "praise" is to cause to shine. When we sing, describing the glory of God—we cause that glory to shine. Praise means to laud, to extol, to commend.

Once a youngster asked, "Why does God want to be bragged on?" This child thought praise sounds a lot like bragging. There is a world of difference. First, there is a great necessity for us to know God—to know His character and His mighty works. Without this

the natural response of a soul face-to-face with the glory and majesty of God.

David the King was also referred to as the "sweet singer of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1). From his earliest days as a shepherd, music filled his heart, and the love of God filled his soul. In the great outdoors beneath the canopy of the firmament he feasted his eyes upon the work of God's creation. "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which

hung by a thread he could say, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He answereth me out of His holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustaineth me" (Psalm 3:4-5).

Not all singing is praise. When we do sing praise, we should praise sincerely with hearts filled with the knowledge of God. Our praise is but vain words if it is not in spirit and in truth. No one can properly extol God who has not done some meditating about God.

Songleaders should be highly aware of the power of singing to set the tone of worship. All the technical expertise in the world is useless if there is no fervor of heart. As with all positions of service, songleaders sometimes forget the one whom they are meaning to praise. Sometimes songleaders will worry more about their "performance" and their "position" as the songleader. It is impossible to praise God when one's heart is so full of self.

The last five Psalms (146-150) all begin with "Hallelu-Jah." This expression literally means "Praise ye the Lord." Many of our songs have this word in them. These songs are particularly songs of praise. When we sing "The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen could ever tell," or "Let ev'ry mountain, ev'ry hill peal forth in joyous lays"—we are extolling the majesty of God. "A mighty fortress is our God," "Wonderful grace of Jesus," and many more are songs that praise God. A song does not have to have the word "praise" in it to be classified as praise, but the idea must be there.

We need all sorts of songs: songs that thank God, songs that admonish, and songs that exhort. But there are many times when we need nothing more than to let our hearts leave this earthly scene and move heavenward with souls bursting with the admiration of God and let our voices sing forth blending with the wondrous song of heaven: "Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things" (Revelation 4:11).

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knowledge we cannot have the proper relationship with Him. Also, other than the general ideas of power and deity (Romans 1:20), we can know nothing of God but what He reveals to us.

Parents who want their children to love them are not trying to get their children to *brag* on them, but there is a need to teach children gratitude and appreciation.

Second, we need to recognize how awesome this being called God is. Let me put it this way: praise and worship are

thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:3). He who had seen the storms and had observed the ways of the wild animals could speak graphically of the Lord who "makes the clouds His chariots" and provides for the beast of the field.

In all the praises David wrote and sang of God, one thing stands clear: David praised a God he knew. God was David's shepherd, his rock, his high tower. David had known the protecting power of God. Therefore, when his life



# SING UNTO THE LORD



## Teaching and Admonishing in Song

Jerry Earnhart

AS A TEACHING TOOL "SINGING" HAS many admirers. And rightly so. It is God's own handiwork. Not only are songs eminently suitable for instructing man, but also for effecting extensive change in his life.

The astonishing power of song over mind and body has been well-documented in our society of late. In his book, *The Day Music Died*, Bob Larson perceptively outlines the prominent role which rock music (both in form and lyric) has played in subverting our youth and in executing a cultural revolution replete with sexual permissiveness, spiritual confusion, domestic and political upheaval.

The song is a mighty instrument, not only for perverted purposes, but for good as well. If put to holy use, much can be accomplished for the glory of God and the benefit of man. It was certainly not for amusement that Moses, shortly before his death, taught the Israelites a song which reviewed their past and future history in the light of God's judgment and mercy (Deuteronomy 31:30-32:43). Moses was an able teacher, and this song was designed to instruct and to warn his people. The mere oral and written transmission of this information did not satisfy Moses' perception of Israel's needs; thus, he designed to capture the message in song.

Although it does not lie within the scope of this short article to delve into all the reasons why music aids in the educational and motivational process, suffice it to say that music does enhance our ability to recall what we hear. Educators have long recognized the value of melody in impressing words upon the mind. For example, children learn the names of the books of the Bible in their proper order much more readily when they are couched in song.

Given the educational advantages of singing, it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write to Christians, saying: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). Lightfoot suggests that "teaching and admonishing" describe "respectively the positive and negative side of instruction." Accordingly, "teaching" would here have to do with imparting truth, that is, instructing in the faith; "admonishing," on the other hand, would involve "putting in mind" with a view to effecting change, whether by way of encouragement, reproof or warning. What God then envisions and actively pursues is a holy priesthood of

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into our  
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worshipful believers instructing one another in melodious chorus concerning gospel truths and urging one another to adjust and conform to divine righteousness and holiness.

Even a casual review of hymnbooks in use by Christians today reveals that, though the emphasis may vary from song to song, most hymns combine both teaching and admonition. Even John Kent's stirring hymn, "On Zion's Glorious Summit" and William B. Tappan's somber composition, "Olive's Brow," both of which are decidedly

didactic (instructive in content), do not totally lack in admonitory elements. In the former the approach to admonition is indirect, in the latter it is by way of implication.

In other hymns admonition receives the primary emphasis. "Faith of Our Fathers" by Frederick W. Faber is an example of quietly reflective, somewhat subtle encouragement to a whole-life commitment to the faith. Charles Wesley's more rousing hymn, "Soldiers of Christ, Arise," calls us pointedly to action in the revamping of our personalities in the mold and power of God: "Leave no unguarded place, No weakness of the soul." "Did You Think to Pray?" and "What A Friend We Have in Jesus" exemplify admonition in the form of gentle reproof. "Pray All the Time," however, expresses painfully sharp rebuke: "The world has lost the right of prayer, And saints have failed to pray; What loss sustained beyond repair! How blind of heart are they!"

We would do well to study our hymns and thoroughly familiarize ourselves with their basis in Scripture. After all, the Spirit-elicited preparation for mutually successful instruction through song entails putting Christ's word into our lives. Some songs are simply Scripture set to music, others are Scripture paraphrased (such as "All People That On Earth Do Dwell"). "I Am the Vine" involves the exposition of Scripture. Numerous allusions to Scripture characterize most hymns.

Singing wields a profound influence upon us all. A relentless barrage of godless music threatens to destroy our generation. How urgently our appreciation for and experience with truly godly singing needs to grow! This is true not only as regards good songs already available, but as regards those yet to be written. "Our God, He Is Alive" and "Lord, I Believe" by A. W. Dicus serve as examples of much welcomed additions to our singing repertoire in recent years. May God bless other such efforts as well.

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# SING UNTO THE LORD

## The History of Music in the Bible

Morris D. Norman

THE HISTORY OF MUSIC IN THE BIBLE IS an intriguing study. The "Song of Moses" in Exodus 15 is the earliest mentioned. Singing then ranges through the history of Israel on into the New Testament until we hear the New Song sung before the throne of God in Revelation.

The character of the songs covers a wide range. There are didactic songs designed to instruct; liturgical songs used in special services as responsive readings; songs of meditation and reflection; of praise and devotion; of prayers and petitions. Some are ethical to teach moral principles; some to invoke evil on God's enemies. Many are Messianic; some penitential; some penned out of sorrow, others out of joy and thanksgiving.

"When Israel saw the great power which the Lord used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses. And then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and said, 'I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea'" (Exodus 14:31-15:1). Thus begins a nation, chosen of God, separated to Himself out of bondage, and thus begins songs of praise from a believing and grateful people. The song that follows describes the triumph provided by God and gives due recognition to the majesty of Jehovah. "This oldest hymn . . . echoes through all hymns of the following ages and also through the Psaltry." Jehovah is Israel's strength and song. He is praised for His power, holiness and loving kindness.

At the close of Moses' life, God commands that he write a song that will, with the law, be a witness to future generations (Deuteronomy 31:19-22). It was to be taught the sons of Israel, that when evil comes upon them as a result of forgetting God, they may know that God knew of their intent even before they entered the land. The song (Deuteronomy 31) "contrasts the unchangeable fidelity of the Lord with the perversity of

His faithless people." Pay heed, the song says, Jehovah is the Rock, with perfect works, just, faithful and righteous. Israel is corrupt, foolish in their rebellion. God's rejection of them resulted from their rejection of Him. But God will have compassion on their afflictions and "have mercy on His servants as He annihilates the foe." "The song embraces the whole of the future history of Israel, and bears all the mark of a prophetic testimony from the mouth of Moses." (Quotes from Keil and Delitzsch.)

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The Song of Deborah (Judges 5) was on the occasion of Barak's defeat of Canaan and the death of Sisera when Israel was delivered from calamities brought on by apostasy. God had exalted the nation but their glory declined with new gods. Deborah appears on the scene and the conflict and victory that follow are described. The brave are commended, the cowards and indifferent are rebuked. The song shows the character of the nation and its God.

Poetry and songs reached their zenith in the golden age of David. Samuel had laid the foundation with his leadership and the schools of the prophets. David,

a born poet and musician, was close to God from his youth. Seventy-three of the psalms are his, others by men associated with him. When David brought the ark to Jerusalem, he set up singers and players. From then on, music in the temple was attributed to David. Levitical singers praised God when the temple was dedicated by Solomon.

There were other times of jubilant singing, as when Athalia was assassinated, when Hezekiah restored temple worship and Josiah renovated the temple. Singers were listed among those returning from Babylonian captivity.

Predominant in the Psalms is praise of Jehovah. He is creator, deliverer, protector; He gives strength, refuge and victory; He is righteous, holy, faithful, merciful; in Him are joy, gladness and honor; He is to be exalted, honored and praised; He is the Rock and the Shepherd.

There were times when singing was subdued. Joy, gladness and singing were absent as Moab was punished for her sins (Isaiah 16:10). Israel in Babylon hung their harps on the willows and refused to sing in a foreign land (Psalm 137).

In Revelation a "new song" is sung before the throne because the Worthy Lamb has redeemed mankind by His blood (5:9-10). Thus the 144,000 sang this "new song," the "song of Moses and the Lamb" (14:3; 15:3), the song of victory over sin's enslavement, a song of praise to God who creates and gives life.

Songs of the Christian reflect all this and more. We have more reason to rejoice, to praise God. God's purposes of the ages have been realized by us. Our benefits are spiritual as God's chosen heritage: "singing and making melody in our hearts unto the Lord;" "singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord;" "by Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name;" "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

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# SING UNTO THE LORD



## Singing Since the First Century

Randy Pickup

EARLY CHRISTIAN MUSIC WAS AN OUTGROWTH of Jewish worship. It was natural for the psalms and other Hebrew songs to serve as a basis for the hymns of the new church. The difference, of course, and what gave rise to subsequent development of more original "Christian" hymns, was the desire to sing praise to the now-having-come Messiah. Thus, hymns and spiritual songs soon appeared, based mostly on New Testament writings and reflecting the Christian's joyous response to a risen and glorified Savior.

The singing in the early church was simple and chantlike. Augustine wrote that it was "more like speaking than singing." Some of this might have been the result of tradition, but perhaps it was also largely due to the thinking that the aesthetic aspect of music was "too worldly and sensual to have religious value" (*A Concise History of Church Music*, William Rice, p. 12), and might be dangerous in arousing evil pagan-like emotions and thoughts. In any case, it was only in later centuries that the "quality" of singing was developed and embellished.

Over the next centuries musical technique gradually improved and more and more hymns were written reflecting these changes as well as the cultural and geographical areas in which they were produced. However, by today's standards, the songs were still very simple and modest. It was not until the periods of the Reformation and the Renaissance that we begin to see the introduction of more complex tunes and harmonies.

Martin Luther and John Calvin stand out as chief contributors, not only to the doctrinal aspects of the Reformation but also to the development of Christian hymnody as well. Luther wrote and translated hymns and was also greatly responsible for having many outstanding composers of the day prepare excellent choral music for many hymns. Calvin, while being profoundly opposed to the use of instruments in worship, did allow the Psalms and other biblical texts to be attached to simple tunes, some

borrowed from popular tunes of the day, and thus contributed to the rich musical tradition beginning in church music.

It was also during this time that we begin to see the publishing of Protestant Psalters (collections of metrical psalms) and hymn books. Followers of reformer John Hus, known as the Bohemian Brethren, published the first hymnal in 1501. Here in America, the Puritans published in 1640 the *Bay Psalm Book*,

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a profoundly influential hymnal, but one which contained only words of songs with the names of familiar tunes accompanying them. As we come down to the Restoration period, preachers such as Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell began editing words of familiar hymns and compiling songs for hymn books, but again, with no tunes.

In his address, "Our History Through Music," given at the Annual Cane Ridge Day on June 19, 1984, Edward B. McCurley explains the use of these early

hymnbooks as follows:

Each set of words has a notation concerning the meter in which the song should be sung: L.M. (Long Meter); S.M. (Short Meter); C.M. (Common Meter); or a system of numbers. If a person or congregation knew only one C.M. tune, that same tune could be applied to any set of words with the C.M. notation. For example, the tune to "Amazing Grace" can be applied to "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" or "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." Early hymnals omitted the last one and one-half measures of the latter hymn.

In this manner, a person knowing only one C.M. tune could sing roughly twenty percent of the songs in the book. Familiarity with an L.M. tune, such as "Old Hundredth," enabled one to sing another twenty percent. Knowledge of four or five tunes, each in a different meter, enabled a person to sing nearly all the hymns.

It is easy to see from the above explanation that things were a little (?) different in those early Restoration days from what we know today with our polished song books of sometimes complex tunes and harmonies. In fact, in many cases the singing in the churches was more than difficult, it was just plain bad! (Not that it isn't pretty awful sometimes today, too!) However, we must remember that much of their "quality" problem was the result not only of a lack of education with many (generally as well as musically), but also of thinking similar to that which we have already noticed as characterizing early Christians—that church music should recognize the worship aspect, not necessarily the aesthetic aspect. As Campbell and others felt, the words should be emphasized and not the tunes. Anything that might detract from focusing attention on the thoughts of the sacred words they believed would be destructive to Christian zeal and edification and thus be wrong.

You know, I wonder if we should reflect on this thinking and ask ourselves whether our singing today is truly "with grace in our hearts to the Lord."

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# SING UNTO THE LORD

## Improving Congregational Singing

John M. Kilgore

"O COME, LET US SING FOR JOY TO THE Lord; Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation" (Psalm 95:1). The invitation of God to come and worship Him in song is one of great privilege and responsibility. Expressing our love, joys, hopes, fears and sorrows to the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort" is a blessing beyond description. Because of who God is and what He has done (Psalm 95) we are moved to worship Him who is both spirit and truth. Therefore the importance of congregational singing and its improvement must first be understood in terms of the greatness of the God who commanded it.

Also, congregational singing gives verbal expression to at least four aspects of our God-given nature: intellectual, emotional, aesthetical and social. Therefore, congregational singing serves as a special conduit of our personality as we reach out for fellowship with God and brethren. Let us then overcome the "it's good enough" syndrome and press on to a greater facility of expression in song. Do we ever reach the pinnacle in our ability to express our thoughts, feelings, and sense of beauty to those we love? Our great God and His marvelous works and the needs of ourselves and our brethren demand that we do all that we can in harmony with His will.

As we now turn to consider ways and means of improving congregational singing, let us be warned to remember what it is we seek to improve. Is it pitch, rhythm, tempo, harmony and other things relating to the physical act of singing? Well, yes; but only as these can be beneficial means of reaching the only proper end—worship of God. It is always easy to turn means into ends. Musical virtuosity is of itself no guarantee of true worship; in fact, it often is a hindrance.

No congregation will easily improve its singing without first having leaders committed to doing so. This does not mean that the elders or leading men have to be musically gifted. But they must be men of sufficient spiritual depth and vision to see the need and benefit of song

worship and be willing to commit the necessary resources to its improvement. Leaders can make no greater contribution than those of determination, encouragement and enthusiasm. Specific plans can be left to others, but the atmosphere conducive to growth in singing must radiate out of the lives of the men out front of the flock.

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*No congregation will easily improve its singing without first having leaders committed to doing so. This does not mean that the elders or leading men have to be musically gifted. But they must be men of sufficient spiritual depth and vision to see the need and benefit of song worship and be willing to commit the necessary resources to its improvement.*

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Next, a comprehensive plan needs to be formulated involving all elements of the church in both the planning and execution stages. At its core there should be a clearly communicated understanding of the nature of true worship. Pulpit and classroom teaching are effective means of beginning this. The plan should also include song leader and congregational training.

**Song Leaders.** The nature of today's congregational singing, especially for large groups, demands a trained song leader. Effective leaders are those able to give simple and clear signals which draw only that amount of attention necessary to coordinate group singing. The good leader's techniques permit the congregation to think about what they are singing, not how they are singing or who is leading. Remember, our assemblies are for worship. Basic song leader training and practice should be given at other times. The practice of having every willing man take his turn regardless of ability or training will rarely improve the singing.

**Congregation.** Begin with the recognition that it will take a planned, determined effort over several months to teach the attitudes and skills necessary for singing to improve. Many have never experienced singing that emphasizes heartfelt expression rather than musical virtuosity, but all in time can be led to do so. Start with those who already enjoy singing, and teach them how to serve as non-elitist centers of enthusiastic leadership. These can lead the way in sitting toward the front and together, in blending our voices rather than strong ones overpowering the rest, in sitting up straight to utilize all our energies, in watching the leader so all can be together, in expressing more of ourselves by varying tempo and loudness and in singing more from memory to concentrate on the meaning of our words. Singing classes of limited duration need to be included as a regular part of the teaching program with instruction in simple music skills, in song meaning and in learning new songs. In all of our training, be sure to include the children so that from an early age they can learn to worship with the songs of Zion and not merely know singing as a form of play.

In the end, congregational singing as worship is tied to the persons we are. In order to improve it, we must become better persons.

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# SING UNTO THE LORD



## Effective Song Leading

R. J. Stevens

TO BE ASKED TO LEAD SPIRITUAL SONGS IN the assembly is to be given the privilege of directing the congregation in worship to God. The leader is not just leading singing, he is leading others in true worship. An effective song leader is one who realizes the importance of his work.

1. **Sincere faith in and love for God are prerequisites to effective song leading.** Sincerity is contagious and our worship must be genuine and earnest in order to be pleasing to the Lord (John 4:23-24).

2. **Songs must be selected that appeal to the heart of man.** Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 teach that we are to "sing and make melody in the heart" and "sing with grace in the heart" to the Lord. Singing must edify the hearts of those who worship in order for it to be acceptable to the Lord. An effective song leader will take this into consideration.

3. **It follows that songs must be selected that the congregation can sing.** Most of the members of a congregation are not able to sight-read new songs. They are in the assembly to worship the Lord in spirit and in the truth. If they are unable to sing the song, that part of their worship is vain. Learning new songs can be done at special services or classes set aside for that purpose. When most of the members know the new song, use it in the assembly worship.

4. **A theme followed such as faith, hope, love, etc. makes the song service more effective.** Using Scriptures before the song is also helpful. Songs that complement the sermon ought to be used whenever it is possible, especially before the lesson.

5. **It takes a whole lot of planning to make our song leading effective.** A song leader needs to know well in advance that he is to lead the singing so that he can have time enough to plan his part of the worship. The song leader doesn't want to find out at the last minute that he is to lead any more than a preacher wants to find out at the last minute that he is to preach. There could be cases of emergency but for this to happen on a regular basis is without excuse. In plan-

ning the song service the song leader needs to use a variety of keys and rhythms. It is monotonous to sing the same key over and over. It is also dull to sing the same rhythm over and over. Most of the songs are written in ten different keys (C, F, B flat, E flat, A flat, D flat, G, D, A, E). If the first song is in the key of G, it would be good to have the second song in the key of D; the third in the key of A; the fourth in the key of E, etc. The audience will be bored with too much of the same key. Also in music we have common time and com-

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mon time. Common times are 2/2; 3/2; 2/4; 3/4 and 4/4. Compound times are 6/4; 9/4; 6/8; 9/8; 12/8. Suppose the song service begins with "Heavenly Sunlight" (Key of G—9/8 rhythm); followed by "The Love of God" (Key of D—4/4 rhythm); followed by "Looking to Thee" (Key of A—12/8 rhythm). This might sound complicated but it will help to keep the song service from being dull. I have copies of keys, rhythms, and numbers that I have given to song leaders to help them in their selections. I will be glad to send this list to anyone

who is interested.

6. **Enthusiasm is vital to effective song leading.** A quarterback on a football team who has an enthusiastic spirit can motivate his teammates to have the same enthusiasm he has about the game. A song leader who is sincerely enthusiastic will motivate the audience to have the same enthusiasm he has in his heart about singing praises to Almighty God. Everyone knows that there is nothing as contagious as enthusiasm.

7. **The desire to improve is also an important ingredient in being an effective song leader.** Recently several of us had a song leaders' school in Colorado and we were impressed with all the men and boys who had come for miles to improve their abilities in the area of song leading. However, there were several men present who were already excellent song leaders. In fact, they were as good at song leading as those of us who taught. But they desired to be better and were improved when they left. Song leaders need to be continually improving in sight-singing ability, song directing, pitching songs and learning newer songs. We will lose our effectiveness when we think we have learned all we need to know. The effective servant of the Lord is one who always sees the need of growing in every area of his life as a Christian. Many song leaders have good voices but do not know how to pitch the song correctly. Therefore, the song is led too high or too low, taking away from the effectiveness of the song. This can be eliminated if one learns to use a pitch pipe. Also songs are sung too slowly most of the time because the one leading does not know how to direct. This can be corrected. More experienced song leaders will gladly help those who desire to be helped.

Effective song leading is accomplished the same way effective teaching is accomplished. It takes a lot of "want to" mixed with hard work. However, when you see the fruits of more effective worship in song, it will be worth the price.

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# SING UNTO THE LORD

David Curtis

## Selecting Suitable Songs

HAVE YOU EVER SUNG "I SHALL NOT BE MOVED" as an invitation song? Or perhaps, "Sing and Be Happy Today" in preparation for the Lord's Supper? I hope not. But I do hope that the mental picture these suggestions create will help you see the potentially disastrous effect of poor or careless song selection on a worship service. Though these examples may seem a bit far-fetched (alas, they are both real), it is quite likely that you have seen a congregation's spirit of worship crushed by a series of slow, lifeless tunes, or reduced to chaos by too many unfamiliar song selections. Conversely, you have probably seen services that were uplifting and edifying because

styles of worship, songbooks, and abilities in Christ's church, these guidelines are very general, intended only as suggestions for your consideration.

1. **Pick good songs.** The oversimplification is intentional. Don't hesitate to make value judgments about the quality of songs, but be sure to judge soundly. By *good*, I mean two things—the thought content of the song, and the musical content of the song.

It is often assumed that a song is scriptural if it is in a book published by one of "the brethren." As a songleader, however, you have the same responsibility that a Bible teacher has to see that your teaching (yes, that is what you're

match the occasion. Don't simply choose a group of songs with an invitation song at the end. If you know the sermon topic, build the songs around it. If not, create your own lesson and teach it with songs. Don't limit yourself to picking songs that merely talk about the same thing. Try to create a progression of ideas that together form a whole greater than any of the individual songs.

Don't ignore the *musical* structure of the service, either. This principle is most important on the Lord's Day worship when the Lord's Supper is taken, because the worship itself is usually more structured. The first song should always have a good tempo, and be easily sung and well-liked by the congregation. Without the momentum this provides, the entire worship service may not get off the ground. Calmer songs that inspire a contemplative mood help prepare for prayer, or the Lord's Supper. Try to choose songs whose combined words and musical effect will create the appropriate mood for each part of the service.

3. **Keep the singers in mind.** Two things can frustrate a congregation's efforts to praise God in song: leaders that sing the same songs all the time, and leaders that sing new songs all the time. Pardon me if I sound contradictory. I mean this—you should always try to expand a congregation's repertoire of good, scriptural songs, but exercise care. Use special song services and informal gatherings to teach new songs to as many as possible before introducing them into regular worship services. To improve congregational singing, you must challenge members with new songs and songs that help develop skill—but be patient.

For many Christians, singing is one of the few ways they can actively participate in the worship, and therefore is very precious to them. When you select songs, remember that you are controlling (largely) this path of worship for many others. Do it carefully.

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**"Have you ever sung 'I Shall Not Be Moved' as an invitation song? Or perhaps, 'Sing and Be Happy Today' in preparation for the Lord's Supper? I hope not. These examples may seem far-fetched, but alas, they are both real."**

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the song leader took time and care to choose songs that would enhance the worship and complement the lesson.

One of the principal differences between an uplifting song service and a disappointing one is just that—time and care given to song selection. Too often a song leader is seen frantically thumbing through the songbook two minutes before worship begins. The result is a random set of hymns, chosen only because the leader was familiar with them.

Here are some practical guidelines that (I sincerely hope) will help songleaders make selections that will enhance worship services. Given the variety of tastes,

doing) is God's will. Before you lead a song, read all the words carefully and determine whether or not they reflect the Bible's teaching, within the limits allowed by poetic license.

Many also assume that musical content is unimportant if the words are scriptural. A tasteless or inappropriate musical setting, however, can render the very best words almost useless for edification. Though musical judgment is largely subjective, there are some objective standards of quality and dignity that you can cultivate by avoiding songs that are more entertaining than edifying, more "do-wah" than "do well."

2. **Give the song service structure to**



# SING UNTO THE LORD



## "Is Any Merry? Let Him Sing"

Bill Hall

GOD, IN HIS INFINITE WISDOM AND foresight, provided a natural response for every mood and condition that man faces. For times of affliction, there is prayer. For times of sickness and guilt, there is the summoning of good men (elders) who can assist. For times of cheerfulness and joy, there is singing. "Is any merry? let him sing" (James 5:13).

The natural response for the godly man, however, will not be just to sing "any old song," but to sing psalms and praise. The godly man lives with an awareness of God. In his cheerful moments he sees God as the source of his joy and happiness. Where could he find a better avenue for expressing his joy and gratitude than in the words and melody of:

"My Jesus I love Thee, I know thou  
art mine;  
For Thee all the follies of sin I  
resign;  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior  
art Thou:  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis  
now."  
—W. R. Featherston

or in the words:

"He leadeth me! O blessed thought!  
O words with heavenly comfort  
fraught!  
What-e'er I do, where-e'er I be,  
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth  
me."  
—Joseph H. Gillmore

Indeed, one indication of the depth of a man's spirituality and godliness is the songs which he *naturally* sings when he is merry.

A happy church is a singing church. The happy church does not view the singing portion of its worship as a dull, emotionless requirement, but as a powerful expression of its love and praise and joy. The happy church does not allow its singing time to be cut short so the preacher can have more time. Rather, in its singing it builds enthusiasm and emotion that enhances every other part of its worship.

Happy homes often express their happiness through singing psalms. This can be done in a more formal way while sitting around a table with song books in hand, or in less formal ways, while riding in the car or working around the house. We once heard a teenage girl where we were visiting request that we sing their "family's theme song"—no, not "Tennessee Waltz" or "Mares Eat Oats," but L. O. Sanderson's lovely hymn, "The

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Lord Has Been Mindful of Me." Her request resulted in joyful praise from a joyful family.

Happy Christians find singing as a natural way of expressing their joy when they get together. We are not suggesting that every social should be built around singing, but having a group in for singing can make for a good evening. It is an activity in which Christians of varied backgrounds and interests can all

participate, leaving no misfits.

But some are hesitant to have a group in to sing. They are fearful that the jovial surroundings are not sufficiently conducive to true worship. In some cases, their fears are well founded. Spiritual songs containing God's name and divine truth should be sung with reverence and respect. We have been in groups where the challenge of the music—getting the parts to come in at just the right moment and timing the half-beats—was obviously the predominant concern, and where every song ended with hilarious laughter. Such casual use of that which is spiritual cannot be right. At the same time, a cheerful atmosphere that makes it easy to laugh does not automatically render worship and praise impossible; in fact, it is under these very conditions that the Holy Spirit says, "Let him sing psalms." Somewhere, then, between that thoughtless joviality that makes "praise" irreverent and that somber, death-like atmosphere that makes "praise" virtually impossible is a happy, merry environment that makes true praise so easy and natural. It is this environment that we try to establish when we invite a group in to sing.

Some of the songs of the world have aesthetic and even moral value, but many of them are pure filth. The Christian must be cautious. He can no more please God in singing filth than he can in speaking filth. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37). We see no wrong in a person's singing the songs of the world that are morally pure, but better still: as Moses and the children of Israel sang praises after their deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 15); and as David would "give thanks unto the Lord, and sing praises unto Thy name, O most High" (Psalm 92:1); and as the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" around God's throne sing "Worthy is the Lamb" (Revelation 5:11-12); so today, "Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

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# SING UNTO THE LORD

## Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs

Hiram Hutto

THAT CHRISTIANS ARE TO ENGAGE IN "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" is obvious (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). But what are "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" and what is the difference, if any, between them?

It is generally agreed that a hymn is a song of praise to God, while a song is a more comprehensive term embracing not only praise but additional subjects as well, limited by the term "spiritual." What controversy there is centers around the question: What is a psalm?

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* has this intriguing note, "PSALMOS in classical Greek means the twang of the strings of a musical instrument; its Hebrew equivalent (from ZAMAR 'to trim') means a poem of 'trimmed' and measured form." Some claim that a psalm always retained its etymological meaning, i.e., a song sung to musical accompaniment. In this they are mistaken, for based strictly on etymology, the word *psalm* meant the sound produced by the twanging or plucking of a string, and only later acquired the idea of *accompanied singing* (and finally *singing*, without the instrument inhering in the word).

Relying on such scholars as Trench and Lightfoot, some claim that the "ecclesiastical definitions" of early "church fathers" include the instrument. A more careful reading of the original contexts of these "definitions" has led some later researchers to state that such are not ecclesiastical definitions of a practice contemporary with these leaders, but their effort to explain the superscriptions of many of the Old Testament psalms. These leaders were actually using this, not literally for church music, but allegorically for godly conduct by Christians. Most lexicons define a psalm in the New Testament by such terms as *a song* or *a sacred song* without mentioning an instrument.

If a psalm is not a song sung to musical accompaniment, what is its difference from hymns and spiritual songs? In their commentary on Ephesians, F. F. Bruce and E. K. Simpson state, "these designa-

tions of sacred songs differ but little from one another," and "Trench (NT Synonyms) has elaborated the lines of distinction perhaps beyond warrant." In *A Cappella Music*, Everett Ferguson concludes that the three terms are used in the New Testament without any precise distinction (p. 14). Our thesis is: psalms would be songs with the general character of the Old Testament psalms, though not limited to them (so Thayer).

### The Content of the OT Psalms

The psalms deal with a variety of subjects, but most of these are included in two dominant ones. The Hebrew title for the book means "Book of Praises," and even though only two psalms (100

thanksgiving for all His benefits whether spiritual or physical, confession of guilt and unworthiness, entreaties for forgiveness, and requests for help, protection, and guidance, confident of God's ability and willingness to provide what is asked for. Like praises, these grow out of Israel's national history and especially the experiences of the individual psalmists. Examples are: 17, 20, 72, 86, 90, 102, 142.

### The OT Psalms'

#### Influence on NT Worship

Christians are to sing psalms, but certainly not all Old Testament psalms are suitable for our worship—for example, those songs that encourage animal sacrifices (20:2-3; 51:18-19; 66:13-15), or those which endorse actions incompatible with the conduct of Christians (58:6-10; 137:7-9; 139:21-22; 149:6-7). What principles of the psalms should influence our singing?

Since a hymn is a song of praise to God, and since most of the psalms involve His praise (thus of the three types of song we are told to sing, two of them involve God's praise), should not this say something about the number of songs which praise God that we use when we worship?

Three qualities of the psalms are impressive: 1. **They are intensely emotional**; that is, virtually every emotion of man is expressed in the psalms: fear and trust, despair and hope, joy and sorrow, guilt and penitence. Singing expresses emotion. 2. **They are preeminently religious**. All the expressions, whether of emotion or history, worship or daily life, lofty or mundane, are expressed in their relation to God. 3. **They are always reverent**. The God of the psalms is the high and lofty One. Holy and reverend is His name. They never seek to "commonize" Him so as to bring Him down to man's level. Instead they seek to lift man up, to encourage him to aspire to be like God. Even psalms of joy are expressed in noble and dignified words. Should our singing do less?

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and 145) bear that superscription, no less than twenty are songs of praise, and seventy-five or more mention praise in some form. Here, God in all His attributes of love, power, goodness, providence, faithfulness, creation, righteousness, protection, is vividly set forth, and as a consequence praise is due Him, and His people worship and magnify Him thereby. Examples of such psalms are: 8, 19, 29, 146-150.

While praise is expressed in most psalms, almost as many are prayers. While those express the majesty of God, these express man's awareness of his utter dependence on God. In these, the psalmist describes his trust in God, his

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# SING UNTO THE LORD



## The Search for a Mechanical Instrument of Music in the Worship of Christians

Lynn D. Headrick

"CAIN WAS A TILLER OF THE GROUND . . . And . . . brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord" (Genesis 4:2-3) but this act of worship was not acceptable to God because it was not done by faith. Jubal "was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ" (Genesis 4:21) and even to this day there are many harpists and organists. If one allowed his special abilities or natural inclinations to form the basis for worship to God, imagine what would be done! "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Pressed to find where truth authorizes the use of a mechanical instrument of music in worship to God, many believers have instituted a diligent search to find justification for their desire to use harps and organs, etc.

### The Search Begins in the Old Testament

Here the searcher quickly finds Psalm 150 and reads, "Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with the stringed instruments and organs." Have we so rapidly found authority for Christians to use a mechanical instrument? Christians are "under law to Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:21) and Jesus has taken the old law, including the Psalms, "out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14; compare Luke 24:44; Hebrews 9:17). Today, no American citizen would think of appealing to the Laws of England because they ceased to have force on July 4, 1776, nor will this citizen be judged by the Articles of Confederation as were post-Revolutionary War Americans; but our appeal since March 4, 1789 is to the Constitution. Just so, our appeal must not be to what God said to the patriarchs, nor to the Law of Moses, but our authority proceeds from what is written in the Law of Christ. The search must continue for authority for Christians to use a mechanical instrument of music in worship to God.

### Mechanical Instruments

#### "Justified" Because:

1. A worship scene in heaven pictures

a harp (Revelation 5:8). This is highly figurative language, the intent of which was not to depict what is to be in the church. Even if such were the case, the requirement would be for *each* worshipper to have a harp and a golden bowl full of incense.

2. It has been used for many years by those who claim sincere devotion to the Lord. But Jesus teaches that worship which follows authority no higher than the traditions of men is vain (see Matthew 15:7-9). Among my mother's things, on a yellowed scrap of paper, she had written, "If we follow customs we cannot be taught." Of course, she meant the customs of men. The traditions of

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---

the apostles must be followed (2 Thessalonians 3:6) and the apostles do not authorize the mechanical instrument in worship to God.

3. Some scholars uphold the use of the mechanical instrument. Yes, today, as in Jesus' day, some scholars fail to handle the word of God aright because they receive honor one of another and do not seek the honor that comes only from God (see John 5:39-47). Scholarly, scriptural exegesis will not result in authority for the mechanical instrument in worship by Christians. We will have to search some more because we have not yet found the instrument.

### Mechanical Instruments Are Only Aids

On this basis some believe that they

have found justification for their piano in worship to God. If God had said to make music, then we would have authority to play the piano (instrumental music) or to sing (vocal music) or to do both. God has authorized singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), a specific kind of music. This excludes any other kind of music just as the specific, gopher wood, excluded any other kind of wood being used in constructing Noah's ark. The organ and the piano are not aids, they are additions to God's word. We must search on.

### "Where Does the New Testament Say Not To Use It?"

It doesn't. But it does authorize singing by so specifying (Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13). If you are sent to the store to buy milk, you do not have to be told what not to buy. The search through the New Testament for a mechanical instrument of music in the worship of Christians is fruitless.

### "At Least I Should Be Able to Hum"

Hmmm! By humming we do not teach and admonish one another nor do we thereby speak one to another. Our worship to God in song should serve the purpose of building up the congregation in the faith but humming will not do so. Let us simply be content to sing as God has instructed.

### Conclusion: The Importance of Attitude

We may feel personal exhilaration, a tingling of the spine, a calmness of spirit or receive an aesthetic benefit from sitting in a place of worship and listening to the glorious peal of an organ or the soothing strains of the harp, but we must bear in mind that God, not mortal man, is the one to be pleased in worship. "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29). "While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being" (Psalms 146:2).

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# SING UNTO THE LORD

Howard Whittlesey

MANY PEOPLE FEEL THAT THEY SIMPLY cannot sing. Therefore, they sit silently through the entire portion of the worship devoted to singing. Recently we asked Howard Whittlesey, a public school music teacher and a gospel preacher, to make some comments that would be helpful along these lines.

**CM:** Howard, many people feel justified in "sitting out" the song service because they feel that God has just not given them the talent to sing.

**Howard:** I wonder what they mean by this. Do they mean, "I don't like the sound of my voice;" "Others make fun of my voice;" "I never took voice lessons or sang in the choir at school;" or "I can't read the notes in the music?" Regardless of what excuse might be offered, the underlying fact of these statements is: "I don't understand my responsibility to God and to the congregation in connection with singing."

**CM:** Singing in worship involves both a physical and a spiritual exercise. Which is more important to God and to the congregation?

**Howard:** The fact that singing is one of the five acts of worship should help to answer this. In each act of worship we are dedicating ourselves to God. God desires only that kind of dedication from each of His servants that will result in an uninterrupted relationship which grows stronger even into eternity. Do not misunderstand this. How our voices may sound to us and to other men is important because the better the voices sound, the more inspiring the musical experience. However, a good musical experience is not all the Christian must seek.

**CM:** So you feel that we should sing whether we feel particularly competent or not?

**Howard:** Yes. Singing in worship is man's "chariot" in which he may rise to heaven and be with the One who died for us all. In singing we praise and glorify Him and we realize increasingly that we are singing to One who knows our spiritual

## "Help, I Can't Sing!"

weakness but loves our spiritual sacrifice. Paul said, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15). Was Paul in a music training program? Unlikely, isn't it? Paul may or may not have had good musical ability. Yet, Paul said, "I will sing." The spiritual implications of his example far exceed the physical, once we understand the verse. Paul simply meant that our singing must make sense both to God and to the congregation—spiritual sense.

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**CM:** Why do some people find it more difficult to sing than others?

**Howard:** Some have bona fide physical problems which affect even the speaking voice. Others feel inferior beside those whose musical training exceeds their own to whatever degree. Some grew up in an environment where singing was absent and to them, singing is a problem much like that of a fish out of water. A few might have difficulty with the

selections made by a song leader. These are problems which find their best solution in the spiritual realm.

**CM:** From your experience as a choral director, what suggestions would you make to those who have difficulty singing?

**Howard:** First, I would suggest that they sit next to someone who sings well. In this connection, though some may not like the suggestion, sitting near the front is helpful. Acoustics vary from building to building, but in most buildings it is very hard to hear the full effect of the singing in the rear of the building. Sitting toward the front, you catch the sound of all the good voices. Those who lead singing can verify this.

Second, an immediate practical remedy may be listening to recorded hymns of high quality to help learn the songs and broaden the repertoire.

Third, a person who is serious about improving his singing might consider music lessons from a teacher. Voice lessons are best, but piano lessons are also helpful in providing immediate reinforcement as you hit the keys. Someone else in the home who can sing may be able to help an individual learn to sing the scale and then go on to simple melodies until he can sing the more complex songs we use in worship. Let me also add that we should impress upon our children the responsibility to get music training in school and thereby become more effective singers in worship.

**CM:** Do you have any final word to add?

**Howard:** Just this: we are taught in Revelation 15:3 that the people of God will be singing the song of Moses and the Lamb in heaven. All who dedicate their bodies and spirits to God will see heaven as merely a continuation of something which they, with God, established in this life. To them, singing with the spirit and with the understanding will be no problem. "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

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# That's Life!



Dee Bowman

*GENUINE FELLOWSHIP TAKES TIME.* It has to be cultivated. You have to suffer with someone a little, be driven together by some storm, endure some problem. It takes trusting, and trusting has to be learned. It takes mutual concern, a caring kind of compassion, the kind that is not afraid to be seen. But most of all, it takes love—the kind that forgives, because tolerance is the offspring of love, and love is the foundation of fellowship.

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*MAN CAN NEVER DETERMINE THE FATE* of a “dying man on his way to be baptized” until he can know two things: the hearts of men, and the secret things of God. Since he knows neither, it behooves him to remain silent regarding such matters.

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*SOME PEOPLE LOOK AT CHRISTIANITY* through the wrong end of the telescope. G. C. Brewer once said, “Instead of measuring professed Christians by the divine standard, they measure the divine standard by professed Christians.”

\* \* \*

*YOU HAVE TO GET YOUR HEAD DOWN TO PULL.* But when you get your head down and don’t pull, it’s called discouragement.

\* \* \*

*WELL SAID:* “The elect are those who will and the non-elect are those who won’t” (Henry Ward Beecher).

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* “Everything is constructed of its

several parts in both nature and atonement. Man, because of ego, pride, rashness, or sometimes just plain laziness tends to answer all religious questions by substituting one part for the whole. One group emphasizes grace, another the blood of Christ, another the Holy Spirit, another faith, another works. The truth relates to all of them, but none of them by itself contains the whole truth.”

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*SOMETIMES I THINK WE HAVE CONVERTED PEOPLE* to the local church instead of Christ. Evidence? When they go out of town they don’t attend church services; they act differently at church than away from church; they worship only at church; people know more about the church than they do about Christ; and the pressure to obey comes more from members of the church than out of love for Christ.

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*OUR ENGLISH WORD “LORD”* has an interesting heritage. It was originally two words: “loaf” and “ward,” or loaf-ward. You see, in Old England the ruler was the ward of the loaf, the “Lord,” the supplier of the most basic need for his community—bread. It was our Lord who said, “I am the bread of life.”

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*BOB THAVES, IN HIS “FRANK AND EARNEST”* cartoon strip had a funny one recently. An old man says to Methuselah, “Happy Birthday, Methuselah, how does it feel to be nine hundred years old?” “Just great,” retorted the old gentleman, “except for all the *deja vu*.”



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# Ways That Work

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## God's Fascinating Plan for Teaching *Martin M. Broadwell*

When one really comprehends the uniqueness of God's plan for seeing that His word is proclaimed—accurately and with true intent—one begins to see how grand an idea it actually is! Here is the God of the universe, of all creation, who was and is and will ever be all-powerful, all-wise, all-knowing, saying to one of His creatures: "Go and teach all nations!" Man, with all his weaknesses, shortcomings and lack of wisdom is given charge by the Almighty to be the one to propagate His will and commands. Without special help in the form of infallibility (except in the message itself), or direct intervention in the case of error, or superhuman wisdom in decision making, mankind is expected to teach so that those taught will "be able to teach others also." A fascinating idea, one that earthly wisdom would deem almost humorously naive—but which, as it turns out, is a very workable plan. However, as beautiful as the plan is, it is also an awesome challenge to man, since there is no other "backup" plan, nor alternative. This being so, it behooves those who have the responsibility and challenge to:

1. Do it;
2. Do it as well as we can; and
3. Get better at it, the more we do it.

Number One ("Do it") has been much written about—though never too much, for there is a motivational basis in many Scriptures: "Woe unto me if I preach not" and "Necessity is laid upon me" are but two that give us the guide for our priorities and motivation. Number Two ("Do it as well as we can") is dealt with less, though it is not any less important, for we have grave responsibilities in the use of our talents. Number Three ("Get better at it") is perhaps our most challenging assignment, since in just the act of teaching we may assume we are either good enough, or will get better with practice.

Let us address this last consideration, based upon two premises: First, we will presume that in all things the Bible is our guide. Hence, it is the best teacher-training manual we will ever have, and

can be counted upon to help us, usually with example, in any situation in which we find ourselves. Secondly, contrary to popular thoughts and saying, practice does not make perfect. The only thing practice does for certain is make *permanent*.

With the Bible as our guide for teaching methods, we have only to go to examples where people have taught other people and find our models. If

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***With the Bible as our guide for teaching methods, we have only to go to examples where people have taught other people and find our models. If we're dealing with a touchy subject, where the learner may not take too kindly to our pointing out error or sin, we go to an example like Nathan and David in 2 Samuel 12.***

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we're dealing with a touchy subject, where the learner may not take too kindly to our pointing out error or sin, we go to an example like Nathan and David in 2 Samuel 12. We use truth in palatable forms, ultimately letting the learner discover the error or sin for himself. When David said in verse 13, "I have sinned against Jehovah," he was, in fact, discovering for the first time the true extent of his actions. It wasn't a matter of telling him that adultery was

wrong or that murder was sinful. He knew that already.

There is a great deal of comfort in knowing that the teachers in the Bible faced the same kind of learners with the same kind of learning problems as we face today. When we are frustrated with people who are sincere but in error, we have only to look at Paul's dilemma going into Ephesus after Apollos had taught error. Here was a chance to teach eager listeners, but the challenge was to follow a very eloquent, forceful and no doubt convincing instructor. As we follow Paul's efforts in Acts 19, we see that he used the technique so frequently used by Jesus and the earlier prophets: he began by asking questions to find out what they believed and what they knew. Even when he found that they had no real knowledge of the Holy Spirit, he continued to probe—rather than doing as some of us are prone to do: attack! He began to teach only when he found out where they were, what they believed, and why.

When Philip found himself charged with teaching the Eunuch in Acts 8, he was in an enviable position: the opportunity to teach a sincere, searching individual, who had some good background and an open mind. But even here we learn a valuable lesson from our perfect guide: Find out where the learner is so we can teach from his vantage point, not ours. We have the guide for our personal evangelism again, which is to take the time to ask some questions, get to know the learner's beliefs and knowledge level, even as Christ did with the questioning lawyer in Matthew 21: "What does the law say? How do you read it?"

"God who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" and not only given us the word but by describing the methods of these Bible teachers, He has given us the methods, too. Truly a remarkable and practical plan!

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# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire in his temple" (27:4).

## The One Important Thing in Life

What should be our great aim or desire in life? David speaks of *one thing* that is most important. The Christian must keep his eye on the goal of serving God faithfully and going to heaven. If we divide our aims it will result in distraction and weakness. The man of one pursuit is successful. The "double-minded man" (James 1:7-8) cannot "set [his] mind on things above" (Colossians 3:2). Paul said, "I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14) and Jesus reminded Martha that "one thing is needful" (Luke 10:38-42).

In the King James Version David says, "One thing have I desired of thee." We can be certain of this — no man will serve God unless he wants to. Our hearts must be as the faithful in Hebrews 11:16: "They desire a better country, that is a heavenly;" and like Asaph, who said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee" (Psalm 73:25). David's desire for God took three forms:

**1. Companionship.** "That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life." Is that your desire — to be in the company of God forever? Christians long for the Father's house above, the home of the soul. "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we

groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven" (2 Corinthians 5:1-2). They also enjoy the company of God on the earth (Matthew 18:20; Psalm 122:1).

**2. Consideration.** "To behold the beauty of Jehovah." We do not go to the assemblies of the saints to see and be seen, but rather to stand in awe of the Father and of His Son. We behold His glory, goodness, justice, love and mercy in Jesus Christ. "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us . . . strength and beauty are in his sanctuary" (Psalm 90:17; 96:6, KJV). Some men see no beauty in Jehovah because they are not looking.

Many years ago a teacher walked with his student in the courtyard. The teacher, who had lost his sight early in life, was known as the "Blind Master." As they passed near a large peach tree, the teacher tilted his head in order to miss some low-hanging limbs. The student saw it and was startled. He asked, "How is it, Blind Master, that you saw those limbs?" The Blind Master answered, "To see with the eye is only one sensation. I hear the *wind* sing softly in the tree's branches." The Master continued, "Close your eyes and tell me what you hear. Do you hear your heartbeat? Do you hear the grasshopper at your feet?" The young pupil looked down in astonishment and saw his first grasshopper of the new Spring. "Teacher, how do you hear these things?" the student exclaimed. "Student, how do you *not* hear them?" the Master answered. Many things pass us by because we do not consider. The beauty of Jehovah is one of these.

**3. Cultivation.** "To inquire in his temple." Our visits to the Lord's house should be for the purpose of *inquiring*. The greatest question asked in the New Testament is, "What shall I do?" (Acts 2:37; 16:30; 9:6). It should be asked over and over again by every disciple. What is the will of God? What will you have me to do, Lord? We come into the Lord's presence to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn of Him (John 13:17; Acts 1:1) so that we may do His will.

If you are determined to go to heaven you must make it your goal — your one goal — to company with God both here and hereafter by continuing to behold and inquire of Him.



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# Woman's World

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## Time — A Requirement for Spiritual Growth

Ramona Olson

The devil is working in every generation in various ways to draw us away from God. As mothers and housewives, we may think that we are not affected as others who work outside the home. But we should take inventory of ourselves and the direction in which we are leading our children. Our daily life will reflect whether our affections are set on things above or on things of this world.

What are we communicating to our children and to others in the activities which occupy our time? We are subconsciously, if not consciously, teaching that these things are of great value to us in this life. There are any number of things which may be good within themselves. Crafts or hobbies are very enjoyable and fulfilling, and they may also be financially beneficial. But we can let them become so time-consuming that we neglect our spiritual growth and often take away time from our families.

Sports have become such an important part of our society that they can gain control of our spare time. Being a spectator or a participator may be fine within certain limitations. Some participation is beneficial, and we should take care of our bodies with the goal in mind of serving the Lord better. However, so much of our time can be occupied by sport activities that we fail to nurture and exercise our spiritual senses.

It may help if we stop and analyze our motives in the things that we do. Are we striving for the praise of men in our accomplishments? This can be a motivating factor without our realizing it. Or do we simply enjoy our activities so much that we don't want to sacrifice our time for the Lord? Sometimes we may use this "busyness" as an escape; if our thoughts are occupied, we cannot reflect on the condition of our hearts.

Another element that is working against our spiritual growth is television. As a whole every moral standard of God's word that we are teaching our children is contradicted and torn down in TV programs. Bad language, immodest dress, premarital and extramarital sex, homosexuality, lying,

drugs, alcohol, and violence are condoned on television programs which are being seen by our families. This day-after-day bombardment will affect our children's morals and values (and probably ours also). Would you want your child to be an active participant in what he is watching? If he views something enough, he will probably be a participant, because children are imitators. Even educators who are not spiritually

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***Try putting  
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Bible, or a good  
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teaching. This spiritual  
food will help the  
whole family learn.***

---

minded warn us against the dangers of violent programs and excessive television.

Many have access to good programs which are not on the three major networks. Even these could be a bad influence on our families if they occupy our time to the exclusion of family interaction, study, reading, meditation or prayer. If we allow the television set to be on continuously in our homes, what habits are we teaching our

children? Can we meditate on God's word and communicate with our families with such a noisy distraction?

We cannot be prepared to spend eternity with God by giving Him four hours each week. It is impossible to develop ourselves in any area without spending time and effort. We need to set goals for ourselves to try to study a certain amount of material in a set period of time. In today's modern technology we have more aids to help us learn God's word than in past generations. Tape recorders can be used in many ways. Try putting on a tape of the Bible, or a good sermon, or one of good singing while doing your work. There is a vast amount of material available today on tapes. Usually they are inexpensive, or in some cases, congregations furnish them as part of their teaching. This spiritual food will help the whole family learn as you spend your evenings together or take trips in the car.

Psalms 1 says that the man is blessed who delights in the law of Jehovah and meditates on it day and night. Our struggles to crucify ourselves and put on Christ (Galatians 2:20) will affect every phase of our lives. We will have a different purpose in mind; our love for God and desire to please Him will be the motivating factor. We will diligently teach our children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) as we strive to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). We read in 1 John about our love of the brethren, and this love will result when we seek to please our Heavenly Father. Our concern for others will increase, and we should be eager to share with them the blessings in Christ (Matthew 5:15-16).

We need to examine our hearts and see where our affections really are. Our children probably already know. Do we allow Satan to control our lives and mold our children's character through these seemingly "innocent" things? Let us make sure heaven is our goal in life, and hopefully and prayerfully work toward it each day of our lives.

—1204 Elkton St., Athens, AL 35611





## The Sermon on the Mount

### Radical Surgery

**"A**nd if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out" (Matthew 5:29). Matthew 5:29-30 contains two of the most startling sentences in the Gospels. In words brutally plain Jesus speaks of the harsh alternatives open to a man confronted with total annihilation because of the danger presented by a treasured part of his body. Here the threat lies in the right eye and the right hand. Later, in a different context, Jesus repeats His illustration, adding the "foot" (Matthew 18:8-9; Mark 9:43-47). The language may be shocking but the situation is not far-fetched. In the days of more primitive medicine many a gangrenous limb was cut away by surgeons in order to save the life of the sufferer, and modern medicine will still counsel the same traumatic surgery when a part of the body threatens the life of the whole. Men have even been known to perform this surgery on themselves when an arm or leg, ensnared by machinery, is dragging them to their death. It is a radical step, but eminently sensible.

This passage is the place where those who staunchly affirm their confidence in the *literal* interpretation of all Scripture will have to take a very deep breath. There can be no question that Jesus builds His message on a truth from the world of the flesh, but it is evident from the context that His language has application to the world of the spirit (if the right eye was removed the sinner could still lust just as effectively with his left). In these grim words the true depth of change which the Son of God is demanding finds dramatic expression. In the same vein Jesus spoke of our coming to Him as a crucifixion (Matthew 16:24-25; see Galatians 2:20) and Paul provides a commentary on Matthew 5:29-30 in his words to the Colossians: "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire . . ." (3:5).

Though our Lord is not speaking here of physical mutilation which would be wholly ineffectual against the motions of the heart, we should not presume that the figurative intent of His words makes them any less intensely painful. There are "parts" of us—affections, habits, attitudes, values, relationships—which have become by long cultivation so intimately a part of our personality that their removal will make the actual excision of an eye or hand seem conservative. Most of us have spent a long time learning how to be selfish and lustful. We should not expect the end of these things to come without trauma. Shrieks of anguish may arise from somewhere within us as in penitence we apply the gospel

knife. But some pain is good pain. "For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Peter 4:1). We can choose to avoid this suffering but our cherished lusts will destroy us like some awful gangrene of the soul.

The radical and decisive nature of this renunciation is stressed by Jesus' instruction not only to gouge out or cut off the offending member but to *cast it away*. The separation is to be absolute and final, not gradual. This is a radical solution but it ought to be received with joy instead of horror. What man whose disease has given him the sentence of death without recourse would not rejoice to hear that the sacrifice of one part of his body, however dear, could save his life? Even the detailing of the wrenching pain which would ensue could not rob this delivered man of his sense of relief. The only reason that we do not receive with happiness a message of similar import for our souls is that we have not yet comprehended the full extent of our ultimate jeopardy without it. "What shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

**T**hough Jesus could have spoken these arresting words with good purpose at any time during this section of His discourse He chose to utter them in connection with the temptation to lust and adultery. Why? Would we be wrong to conclude that He did so because kingdom citizens will know no more radical challenge to the purity of their hearts than in the matter of sensual desire? "How are the mighty fallen!" David, who yielded no ground on other battlefields, was felled easily by the subtle lure of another man's wife. Many a mighty man of valor has been reduced to jelly by the same trial. We will be consummate fools if we do not treat this temptation with utmost gravity and walk in its presence with prayerful circumspection. In the face of the Lord's stern warning we continue to marvel at the careless familiarity with which some married disciples treat those of the opposite sex, and the circumstantial pitfalls to which they heedlessly expose themselves. Even while many of the churches are reeling from one celebrated case of adultery to another we seem at times to have learned nothing. The context of this same metaphor as used by the Lord in the latter part of Matthew (18:8-9) and in Mark (9:43-47) suggests that one possible meaning of the offending "eye" and "hand" is *an occasion of stumbling*. If such is the case, we are being charged not only to remove the sinful act (whether physical adultery or adultery of the heart) but any circumstances or relationships which could easily lead to it. Paul puts it plainly: "Flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18). How desperately Christians of this generation need to listen.





## With Bishops and Deacons

### Philippians 1:1

Paul's epistle was addressed "to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." The NASB has "including the overseers and deacons," which does not translate the preposition literally, but does tell the truth, for the overseers and deacons were themselves also saints. The phrase has no Greek article before bishops—hence, "with bishops and deacons." The saints at Philippi were a community, for all the saints in Philippi could be addressed by one letter, with bishops and deacons.

The Greek *diakonos* (deacon) is a servant or minister. It is applied quite generally in the New Testament. Grimm-Thayer says a deacon is "one who, by virtue of the office assigned him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use." But I am beginning to doubt this limitation, since (1) the only passages which mention deacons as a special office (Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3) do not define their service, and (2) the passages where the service of the *diakonos* is specifically defined most often refer to an apostolic or preaching and teaching ministry. (Note, however, the contrasts to "ministry" in the context of Romans 12:7, and the defining word "helper" in Romans 16:1-2.) So perhaps deacons should be explained as special servants or ministers of the church without further qualification. Perhaps Goodspeed hit on the idea when he translated Philippians 1:1 "with superintendents and assistants."

"Bishops" translates the Greek *episkopos*. But the best translation is "overseer" (KJV at Acts 20:28; NASB everywhere but 1 Peter 2:25; and ASV always in the margin), for "overseer" eliminates the touch of officiality and institutionalism later associated with bishops and at the same time brings out the element of function inherent in the word. Grimm-Thayer defines the Greek noun thus: "an overseer, any man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian or superintendent."

The terms "elder" and "bishop" (or "overseer") are used indiscriminately in the New Testament with reference to these functionaries (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5,7). But a third term reveals the most about their work. That is the word "pastor" (or "shepherd") which occurs at Ephesians 4:11. The elders or overseers are charged with shepherding (not just feeding) the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2f). A shepherd leads his flock to pasture; he seeks after the sheep gone astray from the

flock; like David, he protects the flock from danger—the lion and the bear. Study the principal passages on the eldership (such as Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3) and you will not be able to miss the application of all three points to the shepherding work of elders.

For over a quarter of a century I have remembered a discussion of Philippians 1:1 led by James R. Cope. He came into the class as a substitute teacher and asked us college students, "What is the work of an elder?" That is easy, we thought—to oversee the work of the church. But he asked for the Scripture. When one of us suggested 1 Peter 5:1-3, he forced us to notice that it is not the work of the church, but the church itself that is to be overseen by elders. The elders are to shepherd the flock of God.

What is the difference? As I recall, brother Cope never said. He just wanted to make us think. But the point lodged in my mind, and I have come to think there is an important distinction between overseeing the work of the church and overseeing the church. It is the difference between an institutional view of the church and understanding the church as a community of saints. The work of the elders in the first view is to sit as a kind of board of directors over a corporation, making all the business decisions with regard to the work, program and property of the church. But the church is a community of saints and the work of elders is to oversee the saints or to shepherd the flock. The elders are responsible for feeding the flock or leading it to pasture, to be sure; but also for going after the sheep gone astray and for guarding the flock against the wolf in sheep's clothing.

I wonder if anyone would ever have thought of establishing the elders of a church as a board of directors over a great national project if he had first understood the function of elders in the local church. The former is simply the magnification of a misunderstanding of the role of elders in the local church. When the scriptural function of elders is understood, it becomes exceedingly clear that elders could not perform that function anywhere but where they are.

Sewell Hall once told me that a certain man was one of the best elders he had ever known. He explained that this man had never been in a church that had elders, had no role model to learn from, and simply went back to the Scriptures to learn about his work as an elder. Paul Earnhart has the best expression for this approach to scriptural matters—"start with a clean sheet of paper."

3715 S.E. 12th Place, Ocala, FL 32671



# An Open Letter to Subscribers: Plans for 1985

The editors of *Christianity Magazine* met recently and decided to commit ourselves to publishing the paper for another year. We have been encouraged by the enthusiastic support we have received from those who have subscribed to the magazine. We believe it is doing good and for that reason we have determined to continue another year.

The progress of the paper has been good, if not spectacular. We expect to end 1984 with a subscription list of about 4,000. That number has continued to grow each month and we are hopeful that the growth will continue.

The growth of *Christianity Magazine* has not been sufficient, however, to make the paper financially solvent. All of those involved in the magazine have given freely of their time; in addition a sizable cash subsidy has been required. The editors greatly appreciate the assistance of those people who have contributed articles and other work to help us get started.

We solicit your help in 1985. We cannot continue to publish the magazine indefinitely unless we secure sufficient subscriptions to pay its publication costs. Here are some ways you can help:

**1. Resubscribe.** Many of your subscriptions will be due for renewal near the first of the year. We need your prompt attention to renewal. When billed, you will notice that the price for 1985 has been raised to \$15 per year. We feel that the higher price is realistic and it is essential for our survival.

**2. Gift Subscriptions.** Nearly twenty-five percent of the present subscriptions to *Christianity Magazine* were presented as gifts. We hope that many of you will resubscribe for those receiving the gifts (if they will not do so themselves) and that you will consider giving it to others. *All gift subscriptions will remain at the price of \$10 per year.* After your initial subscription you may send as many as you wish for \$10. If you wish, we will notify them of your gift by sending an attractive presentation card.

**3. Church Bundles.** We are also providing a number of churches with bundles of the magazine to be distributed to all members. These are sent directly to their homes. A number of individuals have chosen to do this, too. You may send 25 subs for only \$18.75 per month (this is the cheapest way possible to subscribe). If you would like to know more about the bundle rates, see page 3 and/or contact Bob Hardage at business office address and phone on that page.

**4. New Subscribers.** We have not reached many of the Christians who we believe need to be reading the upbuilding material we are publishing. Many have not heard of the magazine. You are our best avenue to those people. We need your help in reaching them. *Tell a friend they need Christianity Magazine!*

We will keep you informed about our progress and we are looking forward to having you aboard in 1985.

*The Editors*

P. S. Please let us know your change of address well in advance of your move. It is very costly and time-consuming for us when you do not do this. We will appreciate your help.



## **Influence**

To many the dread of sin arises from perceiving that they cannot sin themselves without directly or indirectly involving others; and it would be to them the greatest of satisfactions to be able to believe that they are doing good to those with whom they are brought into contact, and not harm.

This is a feeling worthy of the solemn nature of our earthly existence, and it ought certainly to be one of the guiding principles of life. Yet it is not without its dangers. If allowed too prominent a place among our motives, it would crush the mind with an intolerable weight and cause conduct to appear so responsible that the spring of energy would be broken. It might easily betray us into living so much for effect as to fall into hypocrisy. The healthiest influence is unsought and unconscious. It is not always when we are trying to impress others that we impress them most. They elude the direct efforts which we make, but they are observing us when we are not thinking of it. They detect from an unconscious gesture or chance word the secret we are trying to conceal. They know quite well whether our being is a palace fair or only a shabby structure with a pretentious elevation. They estimate the mass and weight of our character with curious accuracy; and it is this alone that really tells. Our influence is the precise equivalent of our human worth or worthlessness.

A man may strive for influence and miss it. But let him grow within himself — in self-control, in conscientiousness, in purity and submission — and then he will not miss it. Every step of inward progress makes us worth more to the world and to every cause with which we may be identified. The road to influence is simply the highway of duty and loyalty. Let a man press nearer to Christ and open his nature more widely to admit the energy of Christ, and, whether he knows it or not — it is better perhaps if he does not know it — he will certainly be growing in power for God with men, and for men with God. "Abide in Me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me."

—James Stalker, *Imago Christi* (New York), 1889, pages 331-332

## **Ethics in Controversy**

In any exposition of the ethics of controversy at the present day, a prominent place would be given to the duty of treating opponents with consideration. However severely their arguments may be handled, their persons ought to be treated with respect, and they should receive credit for honorable motives.

No rule could be more reasonable. We know but little of our fellow-men at the best, and, when anything inflames us against them, it is easy to be blinded by prejudice to their excellencies. On the other hand, we know so much about ourselves that we may well hesitate to cast stones at others. No man has all the truth, and an opponent may be seeing a side of it which we cannot see. God sometimes gets the whole truth given to the church only by halves of it, held by different minds, meeting at first in conflict. The fire generated by their collision unites them at last in perfect fusion.

—James Stalker, *Imago Christi* (New York), 1889, page 292



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### A Lifetime Investment in Africa

**T**he popular image of a missionary is that of a man camped out in the jungle, fighting off an occasional lion and preaching to the "natives" in their own language. I know only one man whose experiences come even close to that—Foy Short.

It has been many years since Foy encountered a lion; but he does admit to a couple of lion hunts back when lions were a menace to the stock of farming people. He is able to preach in one of the local languages and to converse acceptably in another. And camping out for days and weeks in remote areas has been a common part of his "work of an evangelist" in what was known for years as Rhodesia.

The Lord's church was not planted originally in that part of Africa by an American, nor even by a "preacher" sent out by a church. It was begun by John Sheriff, a stone mason from New Zealand. He was the kind of man who taught everyone who would listen, including his hired workers. Baptizing some of them, he began to teach them to read and write in the evenings after work. When they were able to read the Scriptures for themselves, he sent them at his own expense back to their home countries to preach. This was the beginning of churches of Christ in what is now known as Malawi and Zimbabwe. In response to an appeal from Sheriff, W. N. Short came from the United States in 1921. He brought his family with him, including an infant son, Foy. Rhodesia is really Foy's home.

College days brought Foy to the U.S. again, but by 1947 he was on his way back to Africa with Margaret, his bride. Rhodesia was not her home, but she soon made it that, settling quickly into a faithful companionship in the work as well as in the home.

The younger Shorts concentrated their early efforts toward building up a work among the English speaking people in the cities, but the native language churches were not forgotten. Ever conscious that they had been established and maintained by self-supporting African preachers and that they were independent and autonomous according to God's plan, Foy was careful not to interfere with self-reliance. However, he was always available for preaching, training courses, and endless hours of consultation. He rejoiced to see the number of congregations in the western half of Rhodesia reach sixty.

Then came war! Dangers faced by white farmers have been well publicized but little is known of the intimidation of the black population during that period. There

were those who opposed all religious efforts and issued instructions that no one was to preach or hold services. Those who continued to do so were threatened with beating or worse. Many Christians were beaten, two gospel preachers were killed and several buildings were destroyed. The number of congregations declined to ten, six of which were in cities where they were protected.

During this time a majority of the white population left Rhodesia and nearly all missionaries of any description. Foy and Margaret remained. Unable to travel freely among the churches, Foy kept a printing press busy, sending out literature which for many was the only teaching available. The war continued from 1968 to 1980.

**W**ith the end of the war, African brethren went to work to rebuild. From a low mark of ten, the number of congregations has risen now to twenty-five, once more the work being done primarily by men who support themselves. Foy reports a spirit of great enthusiasm and eagerness to extend the number of congregations even beyond their former strength.

Foy is out camping again. He reports a recent week's meeting with daily classes where attendance was 50-75 and nightly preaching attended by 150-175. In addition, he continues his work among English speaking churches, living and working in Bulawayo and making a 560-mile round trip each month to preach for the church in Gwelo and for the small congregation in Harare (formerly Salisbury).

A simple calculation reveals that Foy is approaching "retirement age" of sixty-five. He was asked if he were thinking of retiring. His reply: "No, there is no way I can. We have given some thought to coming back to this country, but it is a difficult decision. With the churches showing this determination to grow and expand, there is a need for men who can conduct training classes and generally encourage these people. Also, the present leaders in Zimbabwe declare again and again that they are determined to turn it into a Marxist-Leninist state. If they do, the day will come when preachers from over here will not be able to go in and preach. So, the question in my mind is: 'Would it be right for us to leave with that possibility before us, or should we not stay and preach as long as we can?'"

The Shorts' address is P. O. Box 1831, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341





# Rear Views



**Ed Harrell**

## The Art of Praying

I shall never forget the way brother Millen prayed when I was a youngster. He was a little gray-haired man who sat near the front—he must have been retired by the time I knew him because he always seemed free to visit with my dad and talk endlessly about the most minute questions of scriptural teaching. I remember those talks well—though I tuned in and out of them as I rode in the back seat of the car.

But it was his praying that I remember best. When brother Millen prayed, folks, he did it thoroughly. I am certain I do not exaggerate to say that he prayed for fifteen minutes on some occasions—we younger Christians would have attested at the time that it was often more than thirty minutes, rivaling the sermon as the chief activity of the day. I cannot remember what all we prayed about (and I confess that my mind sometimes

wandered), but I can tell you that I felt we had most everything covered when he finished.

There was something else that impressed me about brother Millen's prayers. I felt that he meant it. I know now that you can't measure such things by the tone of the voice or the eloquence of the phrasing, but there was something in those prayers that told a youngster that this brother meant business.

In his last years brother Millen was called on less often. Some thought his prayers had become too long—even though he still managed to get through them crouched like a professional baseball catcher. But a funny thing happened. We still got regular doses of that praying, because my dad caught it from brother Millen.

My dad's praying became something of a legend in his time. He also kneeled and

seemed to empty himself before God as if no one else were present. I have been in quite a few services where people left talking about the prayer rather than the sermon.

Those who knew my dad well will never forget the prayers of his declining years—when his mind had become dim. At every meal (he usually came to the table and ate alone at odd times and with an odd fare) he began by bowing his head and commencing a prayer. It went on and on. He began with Adam and ended in Revelation, thanking God each step of the way. Others finally left the room or went on about their work while he went on praying. Lots of practice had gone into those prayers.

There are some lessons in such recollections. One is that praying sometimes takes awhile. Don't be in too big of a hurry to get through. The

avoidance of vain repetition need not eliminate repetition. I never thought brother Millen and my dad were trying to impress anyone when they repeated themselves; I thought they were being sure that God knew how much they cared about the matter. And the tone of their voices told me that they weren't talking to me anyway, they were talking to Him. And I was glad to say "amen," because I was pretty sure He was getting the message.

\* \*

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

\* \*

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

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## The Continuity of the Faith

**T**he religious world in general has elevated feelings to the place of prominence in religion. Their concept of salvation begins and ends with man's emotion. And while it would be foolish indeed to say that emotion has no relation at all to religion, it should be noted that emotion is a result, not the cause of salvation. Religion produces emotion; emotion does not produce religion. It is a fact that "in the present condition of christendom, men are more governed by prejudice and animal impulse, than be the clear conclusions of a well regulated mind" (*The Christian*, 1837, Vol. 1, No. 1).

The person who has given careful attention to the Bible realizes that God appeals to the mind. The plan of salvation, or the scheme of redemption, is not like joining a club, or being initiated into some fraternal order. It is the appeal of the Divine to His creatures through communication.

The plan of salvation is a process, a set of mental actions or changes which occur in special order. If you bake a cake and the recipe calls for flour, milk, sugar, and eggs, you don't mess up the order by cooking the eggs before you put them in, do you? Even so, salvation starts at the right place and ends up with the right effect. It is a logical, sequential mental action.

Hearing is the means for understanding. Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15). In other words, put to work your inherent powers to understand. Just because some doctrine has a "religious ring" does not mean it is from God. We must give attention to the fidelity of the reproduction, "for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8).

Just as hearing is the means by which we come to understand, understanding is the means by which we believe. Belief is not a "church" word. It is a mental process we use all the time and with which we form constant connections with the world of unseen things. Belief is the ability to put together facts and the testimony given in support of them, and produce from the process a conviction. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1) is not just a definition of faith, but a statement of fact about what it does. "To whom shall we go, Lord? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68) not only praises Jesus, it states the necessity of God's word for salvation. And when Paul says, "so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), he states emphatically that where the word of God has not been heard, there can be no faith. You can readily see what that does to the "wee, small voice" notion regarding salvation.

But the belief of new information produces a result.

When a person believes in Christ he has a feeling of guilt about his sin, what the Bible calls "godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10) or being "pricked" in the heart (Acts 2:36). This sorrow for sin brings about repentance, or the change of a man's will with regard to sin. It is unthinkable that repentance could possibly precede faith, for how can there be the godly sorrow needed to produce it if the potential convert has not yet heard about Jesus? Notice that in Acts 2:36, the Scripture says, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts."

**S**tricken of conscience, deliberate in heart, the man now understands that he is condemned, and is apt to ask the same question as was asked on Pentecost—"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Baptism is the command given by God. Peter's statement shows how the process works. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)" (1 Peter 3:21), or as the New American Standard properly translates, "but an appeal to God for a good conscience." Acts 3:19 says much the same thing. "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." See the process? Baptism occupies the same place in the order of 1 Peter 3:21 that "return" ("turn again," ASV) occupies in Acts 3:19 and the "seasons of refreshing" in Acts 3:19 equals "the appeal to God for a clean conscience" in 1 Peter 3:21. There cannot be any clear conscience, or seasons of refreshing until a man is baptized for the remission of his sins. Compare the emotional outburst by the Ethiopian. When was it? When he believed? No, when he was baptized (Acts 8:39)—or after he had appealed to God for a clean conscience.

The religious world's desultory suggestions regarding salvation only serve to confuse an already confused populace. No wonder people regard religion suspiciously, especially if they have not "had the feeling" or a "better-felt-than-told" experience. The fact is, salvation is produced in the only way it can be—by an appeal by God to man's ability to understand and obey. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). Sure, it speaks of Jesus. It speaks of God's grace, His mercy, His atonement. But without an appeal to the mind of man to believe on Him and obey His commands, there could be no practical application of God's grace, no way to illustrate God's mercy through His Son, no process for salvation. Both the ground of salvation and the conditions which make it practical are products of the word of God. And one would be useless without the other.



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# We Need Each Other

Phil Arnold

Marriage, at best, can be a difficult proposition. No matter how long the courtship nor how mature the couple, the adjustment to one another in your new relationship as marriage partners can be a rather trying experience. The countless number of divorces in our society today is a tribute to the awesome task of making a success of this important commitment. When a couple today says "I do"—the odds are they won't.

Yet, what greater physical relationship is there, and what greater failure could there be than the breaking up of a home? There are many things that can assist in securing a marriage and preventing such a disaster. Lengthy courtships and maturity are vital assets. But even more important is the inclusion of God in the home and the following of His directions in that relationship. When God's word is heeded a mutual love and dependence by both partners will be cultivated. When the husband and wife completely and desperately need each other for life to be complete, love will reign supreme. If this attitude prevails, all can be overcome.

I am not ashamed nor do I feel it is unmanly to admit that I need my wife. I need her to get through each successive day, and I believe that she likewise needs me. That realization—that we both need each other for life to be full and worth living—is the strongest bond for the preservation of a marriage and the making of a happy home. This attitude has allowed me to overlook and adjust to things in my wife which I have felt were lacking. And the same has allowed her to do so with me—perhaps twice as much. Thus through the difficult times when I was unreasonable and she was illogical and both were concerned too much with self, a dissolving of the relationship was never contemplated—because we always knew that no matter what else, we needed each other. If all would have this attitude, divorce would soon become an out-of-date word and an antiquated practice.

This same attitude within the local congregation would prevent much of the "spiritual divorcement" which continually takes place. Any knowledgeable observer must admit that in the church

we can split, divide and factionalize over some of the most ridiculous things. We allow personal desires, feelings, and opinions to segment us from the holy and beautiful relationship God has provided for us in the local congregation, or perhaps we even form our own congregation. Yet, when anything short of conviction of faith causes such action we do injustice to the local church and to ourselves—and we do injury to the cause of Christ which is nothing short of sin.

If we would but have the attitude of mutual dependence, such could often be avoided. Paul said, "That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in

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*There  
is no such  
thing as an  
insignificant  
member in the  
local church.*

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wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:14-16). Again, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). The individual member cannot properly grow and prosper in good works without the attachment to the body found in the local congregation. Likewise, the body cannot hope to develop, succeed and function without

the individual member. Brethren, the truth of the matter is that we need each other. God intended for it to be that way.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-27. Notice again that we need each other. As a member of the body of Christ you need fellowship, edification, comfort, public worship and instruction in the way of Christ. Such things are not found in the church universal but rather in the close, continuing contact of the local congregation. There is no such thing as an insignificant member in the local church, for it cannot fully succeed without each individual member standing in his place, contributing his talents, fulfilling his responsibility. In fact, those members which we may consider as being insignificant may be those who are causing the lampstand of Christ to remain in that local congregation. If we would but maintain the attitude that we need the local congregation and that the local congregation needs each member, we would be able and willing to overlook and compromise (not our faith and convictions but) our personal desires, feeling and opinions for the sake of that relationship.

Divorce from a marriage partner or from the local congregation are equally tragedies to be avoided. Such can only be done by continually teaching and learning what God has said about both relationships. The difference between a good marriage and a bad marriage is not the number of mistakes and difficulties the relationship is called upon to weather, but the attitude that prevails in that relationship. Problems and difficulties will come to both good and bad marriages. The difference is to be found in whether or not there is a prevailing attitude of mutual dependence. The same holds true for the local congregation.

Brethren, I repeat again—we need each other! Let us ever realize that fact for the sake of our relationship and for the sake of our souls! If there is a greater foundation for unity and overcoming personal differences than knowing it is the will of God and our desperate need, I know not what it might be!

2313 S.W. 101st, Oklahoma City, OK 73159





# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Restoring New Testament Christianity (II)

Many early nineteenth century denominations shared to some extent the ideology of the restoration movement. Many frontier Baptist churches held ideas similar to those of the restoration leaders, frequently they were called Churches of Christ, and scores of them ultimately joined the restoration movement with virtually no change in organization or belief. Several other native American churches of the early nineteenth century, such as Cumberland Presbyterian church and the Mormons, had strong restoration motifs in their thought. John Winebrenner led a restoration movement within the German Reformed Church in America beginning in 1825 which resulted in the formation of the Church of God in North America. The leaders of the restoration movement were conscious of these other reformers, but they never viewed them as a part of the amorphous network of churches and individuals that established personal contact with one another in the early nineteenth century.

The American restoration movement began in four widely-scattered centers around the turn of the nineteenth century. The earliest stream was a division in the young American Methodist church led by James O'Kelly in the 1790s. Francis Asbury's appointment as bishop within that church was greeted with democratic indignation by many of the American Methodist preachers. At the first general conference of the church in 1792 O'Kelly introduced a resolution granting the right of appeal to any minister who objected to his assignment by the bishop. When his motion failed, he and a number of preachers from Virginia and North Carolina left the church. Asbury tried to placate the protesters and most rejoined the church, but O'Kelly and about thirty other ministers formed the Republican Methodist church in 1793. In a conference the following year, the new denomination adopted the name Christian church and announced that the Bible would be its only creed. The name for the new group was suggested by Rice Haggard, a Methodist lay preacher and supporter of O'Kelly, who was to take his suggestion west to a second restoration movement a decade later. The new group was strongly congregational, providing that conferences would be strictly advisory.

Although the church's early doctrinal argument with Methodism appeared to be entirely organizational, its independence, according to one Methodist historian, soon left it "so divided and subdivided that it was hard to find two of one opinion." Nonetheless, the Christian movement had an estimated membership of over 6,000 in 1795 and fifteen years later that number had grown to about 20,000.

A second restorationist stream began among New England Baptists at the beginning of the nineteenth century. That movement was associated largely with the work of two young Baptist ministers, Elias Smith and Abner Jones, and began as a protest against the staunch Calvinism of the New England Baptist churches. Shortly after the turn of the century the two men began founding independent Christian churches and continued to do so for over forty years. In 1808, Smith began the first American religious newspaper, the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, a venture which continued uninterrupted until the Christian churches united with the Congregationalists in the twentieth century. One supporter of the Christian movement in New England reported in 1827 that he had found "nearly one hundred companies of free brethren that meet together to worship God in the name of Christ without any sectarian name connected with it, without any sectarian creeds, articles, or confessions, or discipline to illuminate the Scriptures. . . . It is our design to remain free from all human laws, confederations and unscriptural combinations; and to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." By 1830 the independent congregations could be found as far west as Ohio.

\* \* \*

COMMENTARY: This section on early restoration history makes clear once again the wide appeal of the idea of returning to the simplicity of New Testament Christianity. But as the story goes on, the central dilemma of restoration thinking becomes clear—the seeming inability of the reformers to arrive at a common ground of belief. Successful restoration requires more than an announced loyalty to the Scriptures.

(To be continued.)



# Brotherly Back-Stabbing

W. Frank Walton

Jesus Christ taught the world's highest ethics. For example, "You have heard the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell" (Matthew 5:21-22, NASB).

Jesus states evil doesn't begin with the act of murder; it is a bad attitude of heart that cultivates burning anger and nurses ill-will. To "be guilty before the court" means that one is just as guilty for long-lived, brooding hard feelings toward a spiritual brother as one who broke the Old Testament law of murder! The local court of seven judges in each city passed the death sentence (Deuteronomy 16:18). Secondly, to say "Raca" to a brother is a scornful word meaning, "empty-head," "good-for-nothing," or "heretic." Instead of harboring the grudge mentally, we speak it with venom. The "supreme court" is condemnation coming down from the highest Jewish court, the powerful seventy-one-member Sanhedrin. Thirdly, Jesus progresses to one saying, "You fool," meaning, "evil wretch," "vile apostate." This bitter contempt is a hasty, severe judgment of one's spiritual condition. The fault-finder usurps God's place of judgment in an arrogant way. It is wrong if said directly to or *about* a brother. Christ condemns this watchdog mentality as deserving everlasting torment in "fiery hell." It is seen in brothers and sisters in Christ, displaying the bad attitude of bad-mouthing someone with little desire to help solve the problem. Jesus traces the grave consequences of cynical attitudes and unkind expressions short of the act of murder.

## A Lack of True Love

Today, brotherly love is on our "endangered species" list. *Brotherly love was the great, moving strength of the early church* (Acts 2:43-47; 4:35; John 13:35). *Now, it is our greatest weakness!* Have we truly restored New Testament

Christianity? Churches split more over personality conflicts than doctrinal ones. Disgust with brethren is wrong. Even if they are wrong, we shouldn't talk like we hate them. "Knowledge makes arrogant, but *love* edifies. If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:1-2). In Revelation 2:1-6, the "doctrinally sound" church of Ephesus worked, toiled, documented, and exposed false doctrine and nailed the false teachers' hides to the wall. They *rightfully* stood for the truth, but the Lord sharply rebukes them for leaving their *first love*.

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Love is thinking the best of one and seeking *his* highest good. Love penetrates the very depths of our being. Love is an emotion, an attitude springing from the heart as guided by Jesus' example and truth's revelation in the New Testament. Love is optimistic and idealistic. It thinks the best of a person, not the worst; it gives one the benefit of the doubt. Love *obeys* zealously the idealistic will of God with patience and kindness. Love slays the ego and rejoices in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13; John 15:8-14). Love is proof we are Christians. "By this the children of God and the children of the Devil are obvious; anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, *nor the one who does not love his brother.*

We know we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death" (1 John 3:10, 14). If we don't love, we've missed the whole point of Christianity! Jesus lived and died in vain for us. Do we think and talk about other Christians as we would like to be thought of and talked about? Do we treat them as we wish to be treated?

It's a good thing Aquila in Acts 18:24-26 didn't label Apollos a false teacher for preaching John's baptism and spread it all through the brotherhood. They believed Apollos to be sincere enough to accept the truth if he only knew it. Idealistic love caused a careful study together.

## Let Us Love

Our harsh words and critical judgments are in epidemic proportion. God could have looked at sinful man, guilty of grievous faults and repeated offenses, and written him off as not worth saving. We deserve death (Romans 6:23). Praise God, He didn't give us our just end! "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). We might think, "Well, Jesus might have died for them, but I sure wouldn't!" If we don't love, we hate by default (1 John 3:15).

In World War II an American ace gained fame for downing many German fighters. But once he shot down a German fighter, and he saw the pilot eject from the fiery plane. His parachute never opened. He fell to a terrifying death. It finally hit the American that he wasn't just shooting down a plane. He was murdering another human being.

Jesus tells us that the attitude of sitting back and carving our initials on a brother's or sister's back with angry, unkind words is verbal murder (Matthew 5:21-22). They aren't just harmless words or thoughts! The solution is for us to form close relationships and bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:1-2). The church edifies itself in love (Ephesians 4:16). Sin will be corrected as we grow in obedience. **AMEN!**

Route 1, Box 233A, Charlotte, TN 37036



Brent Lewis



# My Brother/My Self

## The Dividing Wall of Prejudice

**L**isten to this notable account found in God's word. "Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:45-46).

As far as we know from history, Nazareth was not a particularly contemptible place. Nathanael, however, probably could not conceive of the Messiah coming from such an insignificant village. Furthermore, he was from Cana, and there may very well have been the rivalry then between close-together small cities that often exists today. But, whatever the explanation, Nathanael was prejudiced and it almost cost him his soul. There is no reason to believe that he was a *bad* man; in fact, the opposite is true (John 1:47). He was merely influenced by his prejudices.

All of us are. Prejudice is a "preconceived judgment or opinion; unreasonable predilection or objection; esp., an opinion or leaning adverse to anything without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge" (Webster). We are all prejudiced—just about different things. I have had some prejudices in the past that I am not proud of. I still have some that I am working on. The Christian must guard against prejudice.

Our title suggests that prejudice is a "wall" or a barrier that stands between me and my brother. Why is this so? What are the results of prejudice in one's life? Prejudice causes one to:

**1. Speak contemptibly of others.** When some Jews got angry at Jesus, they said, "Say not we well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon?" (John 8:48). There was nothing more hated to the Jew than a Samaritan, and these Jews apparently used it here as an epithet, a term of abuse. Since this was a common idea, did this then mean that no Samaritan was worth anything? Prejudice divides because it causes one to generalize and categorize, to view people in a lump rather than as individuals. Such terms as kike, dago, spic, honky, broad, jig, etc., are frequent in our time. We must seriously question, however, whether we can use such terms for people and have the view of them that a Christian ought to have.

**2. Shun associations.** The woman at the well in Samaria was amazed that Jesus would talk to her because (as John explains) "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (John 4:9). Brethren in the New Testament were incensed at Peter because he had gone in and eaten with the Gentiles (Acts 11:3). Prejudice causes one to place certain classes of people "off limits." It may be that they are not the "right" color, or that they do not live in the right part of town, or do not wear the right kind of clothes. We must particularly guard against the notion that the church today is to be made up only of "upper middle class" people.

**3. Think too highly of oneself.** Prejudice places too high an estimate on oneself, something we are warned against in Scripture (Romans 12:3). We are prejudiced when we think that we are "too good" to associate with others—that they are somehow "beneath" us. I read of two officers' wives in the armed services who were having lunch at the Officers' Club. There was a sentry standing guard at a nearby gate within their view. All of a sudden there came a terrible thunderstorm; the soldier was at the mercy of the elements. One of the women said, "Look at that poor soldier out there—he's getting soaked!" The other replied, "Don't worry about him, my dear—he's *only* a private!" We must disdain this attitude.

**4. Reject what is true.** The familiar sign says, "Don't confuse me with the facts. My mind is already made up." This is one of the worst things about prejudice—it always hurts its possessor. In the New Testament, men who didn't believe in the resurrection were unwilling to consider the evidence for it (Acts 17:32); and those who were already religious would not even consider that they might be wrong (Matthew 13:14-17). Prejudice, which sees only what it pleases, cannot see what is plain. It is very difficult for an idea to squeeze itself into a head filled with prejudice.

You separate yourself from others by prejudice. One must be willing to consider all sides. Unfortunately, prejudice runs so deep in some people that they couldn't listen to both sides of a phonograph record. Don't be so narrow-minded that your ears rub together.



# God's Revelation in Nature

Jeffery Kingry

God reveals His eternal will someplace other than in the Bible. The will of God also can be discerned in certain areas in the world around us—in what we commonly call *nature*.

It is a biblical idea: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the heavens declare the work of his hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:1ff).

Paul said that nature's revelation of God is the standard of judgment for those without specific revelation like the Jews possessed, "because that which is known of God is evident among them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes . . . have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (Romans 1:18ff).

True science, the study and arrangement of the reality about us, is actually a way to determine the will of God. There is value to be found in true science in a similar way as there is in Bible study. Both forms of revelation lead us to God.

One of the things we see in nature is that God puts great value in potentialities. Think of the potentiality of a baby, a tender shoot, the newly sprouted acorn, a fuzzy ball of kittens. Nothing is what it is going to be. Even the old oak tree is still a potentiality—it looks forward to the day it will fall and rot into the forest floor to give mulch and nourishment to the next generation of trees. Everything that lives is in a continuum—a continuous, growing relationship to all that is around it.

Jesus saw the potentiality in people. In his own eyes Peter did not see much value in himself. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8). Yet Jesus called him to come and "fish for men." He later called Cephas "Petros," "a Rock." There was not much about Peter that was firm, steadfast, immovable. A Rock? The man who cursed and swore and said he didn't even

know Jesus? This is a rock who always asks the wrong questions and gives mostly wrong answers? Not all wrong. He got one right—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Well done, Peter. *This* is what made Peter a Rock.

Jesus could look at Mary of Magdala anointing Him with spikenard and see beyond the sinner to the sanctified. He could look down from His painful cross and see the church in those who huddled in pain and anguish below Him. He could look at the scribes and Pharisees and say, "Father, forgive" because of what they could become, not what they were. God makes a world of potentiality. The one to come will be no different.

added a little bit at a time, increment by increment, often at great cost to someone that we might be able to enjoy what we now take for granted.

It is an easy thing to look at people in South American jungles, African wastelands, or the crowded dirty streets of an Indian village and remark, "How backward." That attitude is akin to looking at those lost in sin and saying, "This people are accursed." We enjoy the benefits of years and generations of Bible study, added line upon line to the whole that is available to us. On top of that heritage we can study to add our small bit to the growing heritage of those who come after us. When we look at those outside of our realm of privilege, we think,

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**"One of the things we see in nature is that God puts great value in potentialities. Think of the potentiality of a baby, a tender shoot, the newly sprouted acorn, a fuzzy ball of kittens. Nothing is what it is going to be."**

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When men in Aristotle's time looked at the world made and concluded that the basic elements of creation were fire, water, and earth, they were wrong. Their wrongness kept them in ignorance and made their lives more difficult. Today, you can drive your internal combustion car home to your well-insulated house, turn up the thermostat, sit down with the magazine in front of the TV in your polyester bathrobe and fake-wool slippers and eat an orange with your coffee in the middle of January. You probably won't think a thing of it. You will take for granted the light by which you read. We didn't get to where we are today overnight. We are living on the sum of our heritage. It was

"How ignorant." Yet, Jesus saw the potentiality in prostitutes, the publicans, the public sinners. He "came into the world to save that which was lost." The servant is not greater than the master.

In the world, we are all linked together; "no man liveth or dieth unto himself." One mistake the Pharisee made was in attempting to view himself as essentially different in kind and value from the Gentile or the not-so-devout Jew. God did not call us to separate ourselves from men and the world, but from sin and lust. We need to look at what is around us, not as it is, but in what it might become, and in so doing become "partakers of the divine nature."

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## Lessons From A Tired Man

When Jesus sat down on the well curb in Sychar He was a totally exhausted man. His deep fatigue held him virtually motionless (John 4:6). John says that the thirty mile journey from Jerusalem wearied Him but surely He must have been tired before His trek through Samaria began. The months of wrestling with the enthusiastic but unknowing crowds which His signs produced in Judea must have been draining. And His departure for Galilee was occasioned by the malevolent fear His popularity was stirring in the Jewish hierarchy, along with the foreboding news that Herod Antipas had arrested John the Baptist (John 4:1; Mark 4:12). Teaching men on issues critical to eternity is an exhausting business in itself but who among us could fully understand what it is like to be the only one on earth who fully understands the crisis, and to be the only one in heaven or on earth who could do something about it. His disciples were loyal but grievously limited in understanding. There was no human companion with whom to share His burdened thoughts. And so He sat that day beside Jacob's well, alone and spent.

If past records should be allowed to control it would not be difficult to imagine my own response had I been in the Lord's place that day as some strange woman approached the well with her vessel, threatening to break my solitude. "Please don't let this woman be talkative. I'm too tired to utter a word." How many times on a bus or a plane, in a restaurant or a bank, have all of us wished to be left alone. Fortunately, our Savior was not like that. His fatigue was no less deep than our own has been but His concern for lost men and women was deeper still. Immediately it would appear, as the woman drew near, Jesus was already planning how He could reach her. He was no doubt thirsty but His quiet request for a drink had a higher purpose. It was calculated to induce an opening in her heart. Weariness changed nothing. He was still the Shepherd in search of lost sheep. His example serves to make disciples like myself feel ashamed of the times that, having struggled to correct some particularly perplexing and sometimes almost intractable human problems we wander off to hide in our self-pity. We are surely often unworthy of Him.

The Samaritan woman was startled by this strange Jew who was willing to receive a drink from the "unclean" hands of a Samaritan. Perhaps she, too, was hoping to be left alone in the midst of her daily chores. What seems fairly clear is that she was not in any passionate search for the kingdom of God. Her life was a mess in most respects. She had been married five times and was now

living with the sixth "without benefit of clergy." And the Lord knew this before He even spoke to her. We are not very much like Him here either. Usually if we learn that an acquaintance is in a marital tangle we spare ourselves the trouble of even talking to them about the "living water." And if we come on that information in the midst of our efforts to teach we are inclined to close our Bibles and say, "Well, it certainly has been good to talk with you. Maybe we'll see each other around some time." It is altogether true that becoming a Christian can make some heavy demands on the sinner. John had to speak some very hard words to Herod (Mark 6:17-18). But what is it that makes us walk away from some individuals rather than teach them? Is it not a failure of faith and commitment within ourselves? The problem is that we do not really believe that the Lord and heaven are worth everything and that no loss could be too great not to be overwhelmed by the gain in Christ. Who are we to decide who will receive and who will not receive the kingdom? Our task is to preach the word expectantly to all and let come who will.

This woman was not a very "bright prospect" and she was looking for water, not for the Christ—but she was caught unawares, and because her heart was good she abandoned her water pot that day in the joy of a wholly unexpected discovery. There are a lot of unlikely people in this world who are certainly not looking for the kingdom but if there was just someone, somewhere who would care enough to approach them in a kind and concerned way they would fling down everything, take up their cross, and follow.

A few years ago while driving to a Tuesday evening Bible study in Kendall Springs, Kentucky, I asked my companion, the aged gospel preacher Henry Ficklin (nearly ninety and stone-deaf), if he felt like going with me to this class. "Brother Earnhart," he replied with a characteristic twinkle in his eye, "I do a lot of things I don't feel like doing." Our Lord did a lot of things He did not "feel like doing" because He loved men so deperately, and He always found renewed strength in the doing of it. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," He told His amazed disciples when they returned from the village with food and found their once exhausted Master now animated and alive. We, too, are destined to become occasionally weary with our task, but if we can muster the strength to take just one more step toward the lost we will learn what Isaiah meant when he said of God: "He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he giveth strength" (40:29).





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Brent Lewis

### Difficult Bible Passages

**I**t came to me a few months back when I was in Southern California for the funeral of my good friend, Floyd Thompson. Homer Hailey and I stayed in the same room at Bob and Marge Cann's home, and I asked him, "Brother Hailey, what does 1 Corinthians 15:29 mean ('Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead?')?" He looked at me quizzically and said, "I don't know."

Some passages are indeed perplexing. Here was Homer Hailey, some years past eighty, possibly the best Bible scholar of our time, telling me he didn't know what a Bible verse taught. Of course, he *thinks* he knows—just as I think I know. But some Bible passages are extremely puzzling, and one must guard against dogmatism. Brother Hailey was merely exercising such care.

I went on to tell him that I was considering doing a theme issue for *Christianity Magazine* on "Difficult Bible Passages" and he said he thought it would be a good idea, offered some suggestions as to which verses to include, and even volunteered to do one of the articles (well, I may have had to do a little arm-twisting). Anyway, this issue is a result of my idea coupled with brother Hailey's encouragement.

Generally speaking, the Bible is written in clear, understandable terms.

Paul says, "Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17), and, "as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding" (Ephesians 3:3-4). God has communicated with man in intelligible form.

However, Peter said that "our beloved brother Paul . . . according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you . . . wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:15-16). Paul did write some things that are difficult to understand—but the same thing could be said about Peter, or James, or John. And men unfortunately continue to twist and distort some of these to the eternal demise of themselves and others.

This issue is not likely to be one where you will sit down and read through the theme section as you might have done others. This is meat, not milk. But when you are studying the portion of Scripture where these occur, you will have a good source of help on these thorny passages.

The men who wrote in this issue had their work cut out for them. They not only had to try to explain clearly some of the most difficult passages in the New Testament, but they had to do it on a

single page. I did not envy them that task. Some of the articles we had to cut a little bit, but I believe we did no disservice to the material. You will also note that we had to compromise our normal graphic layout on a few in order to "squeeze" it all in.

You will have to decide for yourself what these passages mean. This issue provides some good help. We asked each of the men to summarize positions other than the one they hold—and most did a good job of this. Without a doubt, the most important item in deciphering a difficult passage is to *determine the context* of that passage. This usually provides the key and you will notice how consistently these men have done this very thing.

As I was putting the issue together, I thought of the story I heard when I began preaching some years ago. A fellow said, "I read the book of Romans and decided it was the most difficult book I'd ever read. Then I read Moses Lard's commentary on Romans—and I decided it was the most difficult book I'd ever read!"

We sincerely hope—and believe—that the next few pages will shed the kind of light that will dissipate the clouds.

#### HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE:

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THEME

# DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES

## The Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit:

### Matthew 12:31-32

Robert F. Turner

"WHOSOEVER SHALL SPEAK A WORD against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come" (see Matthew 12:22-37; Mark 3:21-30).

When Jesus cast out a demon, restoring sight and speech to one who had been blind and mute, the people (as a whole) were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David (Messiah)? But when the Pharisees heard (the people's reaction) they said He cast out demons by Beelzebub, prince of demons. *Knowing their thoughts* Jesus presented three arguments which erased all excuse for such a charge. (1) Though wicked, Satan is no fool; and this would pit Satan against Satan. (2) Without affirming or denying the validity of their claims, He asked, "By whom do your children cast them out?" (Why charge me with Satanic power, when lesser works of exorcist Jews are thought to show the power of God?) Then, picking up the "Son of David" theme, (3) "But if I *by the Spirit of God* cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you." The Lord's power over Satan was clearly demonstrated, yet they rejected the Messiah who could give them victory. At this point He issued His solemn warning regarding blasphemy.

There were three classes of people in His presence. (1) Those who accepted His works at face value and leaned toward a logical conclusion—Messiah! (2) Mark records some friends saying "He is beside himself" (alluding to His zealous activities). These were foolish charges, made in ignorance or through lack of a fully developed faith. (3) The Pharisees, who could deny neither His works nor His logic, but for wicked and malicious purposes railed against Him. Note, their slander was prompted through envy, by the praise of others; and Jesus knew their thoughts. Could we, envious of God's work in others, assign that work to Satan?

Robertson and McGarvey think these Pharisees committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in making their "Beelzebub" charges. McKnight thinks they

were being warned that following the resurrection (the ultimate confirmation by the Spirit, Romans 1:5) such charges could not be forgiven. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., thinks the distinction in blasphemy against Jesus and the Spirit relates to time. He broadens blasphemy against the Spirit to include *repudiating the Spirit's testimony in the gospel age*. Compare this view with Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-29; 1 John 5:16. (See *Mission and Medium of the Holy Spirit*, F. E. W. Publications, 1967.)

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***When someone asks, fearfully and concerned, if they may have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, I usually tell them their very concern indicates they have NOT. The act (defamation by verbal declaration) must not be lightly dismissed, but it is more than unseemly words.***

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Jesus is not making a distinction in God the Son and God the Spirit (i.e., you may blaspheme one but not the other). The contrast is between "Son of man" in His earthly work, which some did not understand and in ignorance and unbelief might blaspheme; and in that which some perceived to be of God, but which, for wicked purpose, they deliberately and maliciously defamed. In many ways this is the difference in sin done "unwittingly" and that done "with a high hand" (Numbers 15:22-31). Paul said he was before "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained

mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:13). What he did was no less sin. It was called blasphemy, but it was obviously different from "eternal sin."

Alford says it is not a particular species of sin which is here condemned, but a definite act showing *willful determined opposition* to the present power of the Holy Spirit. Meyer says the impossibility of forgiveness is grounded in the sinner's state of heart, which has become extremely hostile toward God. When someone asks, fearfully and concerned, if they may have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, I usually tell them their very concern indicates they have not. The act (defamation by verbal declaration) must not be lightly dismissed, but it is more than unseemly words. The context couples this with the attitude or source of the sin. In Matthew's account Jesus continues His warning by saying, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (verses 33-37).

Only an "honest and good" heart can bring one to the Lord (Luke 8:11f). Having come, we must serve Him with the heart, mind and spirit (Romans 1:9; 2:29; 7:25). We will "miss the mark at times, and all sin is against God (Luke 15:21), but God forgives the confessing penitent heart (Hebrews 4:12-16). This is acceptance and abiding in God's Spirit. But there is a "flip side." Rejection and blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, although bound to specific conduct in the example set before us, has a wide range of application. It is a fatal "heart disease," to which those with a proud and stubborn heart are most subject. Sinful hearts may resist the work of the Spirit for a time (Acts 7:51), and yet be forgiven (verse 60). But when one, out of a wicked and rebellious heart, assigns the work of God to Satan, knowingly and deliberately rejects every legitimate offer of mercy; treats evil as good, and good as evil—that one separates himself from all hope of forgiveness. He has sinned the "eternal sin" and sealed his destiny in hell.

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# DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES



## Are There Degrees of Punishment? Luke 12:47-48

Hugh DeLong

"THIS PASSAGE CLEARLY TEACHES DEGREES of punishment in hell. The few stripes are also eternal punishment, but the doom of the greater sinner will be terrible. 'Shall cut him asunder' means to kill (v. 46), but hell is itself a living death so that the figurative declarations of the parable must represent degrees of punishment in hell" (R. C. Foster, *Studies in the Life of Christ*, p. 891). Simple enough. But we can also read, "A popular notion is that it teaches degrees of punishment after the judgment. By the process of elimination we know it cannot mean that" (E. M. Zerr, *Bible*

they are to seek first the kingdom of God, verses 31-34. He then taught the principle of watchfulness—"blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching" (verse 37). Peter then asks the question, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" It is in response to this question that we have Jesus' parable. Let me briefly outline this discourse.

1. **The Question:** who is that faithful and wise servant (verse 34)?

2. **The Answer:** the one the Lord finds "so doing" (i.e., being watchful, verses 35-40).

after the judgment rather than the character of the *judgment* itself. Hence, verses 47-48 become a restatement of the punishment of verse 46.

Others understand that the picture in verses 47-48 illustrates the *reason* for such a hard judgment upon the unfaithful servant. To them these verses are to be understood as the principle of "degrees of responsibility" rather than a picture of what hell is like. The main reason for such an interpretation is found at the end of verse 48. Here the sentence begins with "For" and shows Jesus' application of this story. He states: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more." Thus, in answer to Peter's question, Jesus said that it applies to those who hear it. If one has learned, he is then under obligation to practice the teaching. Peter had been taught these things—they are then spoken to Peter. The main point is shown to be the character of the judgment—it is based upon responsibility. Should we go on and press the other incidentals of the parable, thus seeing degrees of punishment in hell? I think not.

My conclusion is that these verses were meant to teach degrees of responsibility and not degrees of punishment in hell. However, I agree with the writer who said "I do not know that it is important that we should have definite and fixed ideas on the question propounded or not" (Sewell, *Questions Answered*, p. 523). "Does this passage teach degrees of punishment in hell? No wise servant should have to learn the lesson by experience. That punishment is too awful for the mind to fully appreciate how terrible it is. The wise person will do all that is necessary to avoid it completely. Hell is prepared for the devil and his angels" (T. R. Applebury, *Studies in Luke*, p. 242).

In fact, I hope that we never have to find out if there are degrees of punishment in hell!

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**"What about verses 47-48? Do they describe the punishment to be received? Or do they describe the basis of the judgment? Here is the crux of the problem. Most people understand that the central thought is the character of the PUNISHMENT received after the judgment rather than the character of the JUDGMENT itself."**

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*Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 168). In short, does this passage teach degrees of punishment in hell or does it not?

In considering any verse one can often find help by studying parallel passages—especially is this true in the gospels. The problem here is that there are no parallel passages. There are other Scriptures that are used to teach degrees of punishment—but at most they would only help establish the possibility of such teaching here. Hence, we are left to consider this passage in its context.

Let us notice the context of these verses. Jesus has taught the disciples that

3. **The Reward:** made ruler over all that the Lord has (verse 44).

4. **The Peril:** that same servant may be evil—not watchful (verse 45).

5. **The Penalty:** "cut asunder," assigned a place with the unbeliever (verse 46).

Up to this point the lesson is easy to understand. What about verses 47-48, though? Do they describe the punishment to be received? Or do they describe the basis of the judgment? Here is the crux of the problem.

Most people understand, as did Foster above, that the central thought is the character of the *punishment* received





## DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES

### What Is the "Whole Creation?" Romans 8:21-23

Homer Hailey

THIS IS ADMITTEDLY ONE OF THE MOST difficult passages in the letter to the Romans, if not the most difficult. The problem revolves around the words *creation* and *whole creation*. Before examining the passage itself it is well to consider the meaning and usage of the word in the New Testament.

#### Creation

The translation *creation* is from the verb *ktizo*, to create, and *ktisis*, that which has been created. The word is employed in at least seven significant connotations:

1. "The beginning of creation," which includes the creation of the entire known universe (Mark 10:6; 13:19; 2 Peter 3:4),

"new creation" (*ktisis*; margin, creation; see also Galatians 6:15). Paul sets forth the concept of a totally new spiritual creation, as unique as that in the beginning (see Ephesians 2:10,15; 4:24; Colossians 3:10).

7. "Ordinances." Peter uses the same word (*ktisis*, creation), when he writes of "every ordinance of man" (1 Peter 2:13), creations of man in the civil realm.

#### Analysis of the Passage

In interpreting the passage one must choose from the above usages the meaning ascribed to "creation" in each verse. This is the point of difficulty, for not all agree which to use.

to vanity" (verse 20) seems to refer either to mankind or to the "whole creation," for the whole creation was tied in with man (see below, verse 22). The Greek word here translated "vanity" is defined as frustration, failure, frailty, futility, disappointing and vainness, for with the introduction of sin, the creation has been hindered from attaining its full purpose (Hebrews 2:5-8). This subjection to vanity was not of creation's will, but of God's. However, God left not man without hope, for through faith in the promises of God there was hope "that the creation itself [the new creation, verse 19] shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (verse 21); it is only to these that the promise of such deliverance is made (1 Corinthians 15).

What is included in "the whole creation [which] groaneth and travaileth until now" (verse 22)? I believe that Paul refers to the creation of Genesis 1 and 2, for when man sinned, God pronounced a curse upon the land which affected man and beast (Genesis 3:17-19; 5:29). In judgments pronounced by Jehovah upon the people, man and land suffered in which "beasts groaned" and herds of cattle were perplexed (Joel 1:15-20; see 2:21-24; Hosea 4:1-3). Jeremiah stresses the same points (21:6; 36:29; 50:3,62), and Ezekiel made similar charges against Israel (14:13,19,21), and against Edom (25:13) and Egypt (29:8-9).

Paul then includes "even we ourselves also," saints who have "the first-fruits of the Spirit" as suffering with the rest; these are not exempt. In hope these wait for their adoption, the redemption of the body at the revelation of Jesus and the sons of God at His second coming (verses 23-25). The "whole creation" which groans in pain is not included in this redemption, only the saints. At this point many commentators err, making Paul say of the "whole creation" what he did not say, for he said nothing that would include animals or plants in the redemption.

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**"What is included in 'the whole creation [which] groaneth and travaileth until now'? I believe that Paul refers to the creation of Genesis 1 & 2 . . . then includes 'even we ourselves also,' saints who have 'the firstfruits of the Spirit' as suffering with the rest; these are not exempt."**

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that is, all that is recorded in Genesis 1 and 2.

2. "All things," visible and invisible, which includes created spirit beings (Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16).

3. Christ's high priesthood of a spiritual order is contrasted with "this creation," as being superior to it (Hebrews 9:11).

4. The "whole creation" or world of intelligent beings, the human family (Mark 16:15-16; Colossians 1:23).

5. The animal creation (1 Timothy 4:3-4), a part of the whole.

6. The spiritual or new creation: Paul's "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17) is a

Paul said in verse 17, "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him." He continues this thought of suffering and glory in verse 18, pointing out that the suffering is not to be compared with the glory to be revealed "to usward"—the suffering sons of God. He continues, verse 19, "For the earnest expectation of the creation," the new creation, for these are the ones who share in an earnest expectation and who wait "for the revealing [unveiling] of the sons of God," at which time their true glory is revealed (verse 18; see also 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

"The creation [which] was subjected



# DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES



## What Is Baptism for the Dead? 1 Corinthians 15:29

Hoyt H. Houchen

"ELSE WHAT SHALL THEY DO THAT ARE baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?" (1 Corinthians 15:29). This verse is one of the most difficult passages in the Bible. Interpretations of this passage are abundant. In fact, one commentator has read forty different positions on this verse. It could well be the most obscure and least understood passage in the Bible. In view of this, we do not pretend to offer in this brief consideration an interpretation that will be acceptable to everyone or that will meet every objection.

### Background of the Text

First Corinthians fifteen is considered to be the great resurrection chapter of the Bible. Paul argues for the resurrection, which was denied by some. "Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (verse 12). He then follows with specific consequences if there is no resurrection (verses 13-19). Resuming at verse twenty, Paul presents the benefits of Christ's resurrection to the Christian (verses 20-23). He then expounds briefly on the present rule of Christ in His kingdom and what will take place at His second coming (verses 24-28).

### The Text

The Greek construction of our text "for the dead" is *huper ton nekron* (the genitive plural). The Greek preposition *huper* in the phrase is translated "on behalf of" (W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of N. T. Words*, Vol. 1, p. 112), "for, in behalf of, for the sake of someone or something" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.*, p. 846), "in the place of, instead of" (J. H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.*, p. 639). Winer states that "the preposition when used with the genitive (as it is here), signifies, in general, *with regard to a matter*" (*A Grammar of the Idiom of the N.T.*, p. 383). So, what is the most plausible meaning of "baptized for (in behalf of, in the place of, instead of, with regard to) the dead?"

### Some Views

Space prohibit us from examining all the views which are taken on our text. We shall only present and examine briefly a few of the most popular views.

There are those who believe that the phrase "for the dead" means "the dead one," and therefore those who are baptized "for" or "in behalf of" Christ. But the pronoun is the genitive plural, while "the dead one" is singular.

Some believe that the word "baptized" in this verse is used in the sense of a washing, cleansing, purifying (Matthew 8:4; Hebrews 9:10). Their idea is that the bodies of the dead were carefully washed and purified when buried, on account of their hope of the resurrection. However, there is no evidence that there was ever such a practice with reference to the resurrection among the Jews or Gentiles.

Others believe that Paul is referring to vicarious baptism, the practice of having some person baptized in the place of one who had died without baptism; but there is no evidence of such a custom in the time of Paul. The Mormons presently practice vicarious baptism. However, the practice is wholly contrary to the Scriptures. The Bible plainly teaches that each man is personally accountable to God for his actions (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). One's final destiny is sealed at death (Luke 16:19-31). Each person is responsible for his own salvation. One cannot believe for another, one cannot repent for another and neither can he be baptized for another.

### Plausible Explanations

There are two explanations which are plausible, each in harmony with the Scriptures. One is that the verse refers to baptism in water for the remission of sins, and if there is no resurrection, what shall they do who are baptized in hope (in behalf of) the resurrection? If there is no resurrection, then baptism would be senseless. "If the dead are not raised at all, then why are they baptized for them?" This second phrase of our verse is interpreted to mean: if the dead are not raised, then why are they baptized

to fit them for the resurrection? Or, if those already dead are not to be raised, then why be baptized in behalf of their future resurrection?

The other plausible view is that the term "baptized" refers to the baptism of suffering. The Bible does speak of baptism in different senses. For example, there is water baptism (Acts 8:36,38), baptism of fire (Matthew 3:11) and the baptism of suffering (Matthew 20:22-23). The idea is that the word "baptized" in our text has reference to being overwhelmed with calamities, trials and sufferings; and that those who endured these agonies did so in the hope of the resurrection or with the expectations that the dead would rise. This position is in conformity with the verses that follow: "Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour? I protest by that glorying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (verses 30-32). See James Macknight's fine comment on verse twenty-nine (*Macknight on the Epistles*, Vol. 2, p. 268).

Either one of these two latter views could be correct. Both are in harmony with scriptural teaching. In consideration of the context, I personally favor the view that Paul is alluding to the baptism of suffering. This is one of those difficult passages where we can eliminate what it is not teaching (e.g., vicarious baptism for the unsaved dead), but it is not so simple to determine what it does mean. We can safely conclude that whatever Paul meant by this question, he was arguing for the resurrection of the dead. Whether Paul is referring to water baptism or the baptism of suffering, either is vain if there is no resurrection. The future resurrection of the dead is a certainty (1 Corinthians 15:51-58). If a measure of insight has been given to this most difficult passage, our brief study has been rewarded.

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# DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES

## The Baptisms of Hebrews 6:1-2

Earl E. Robertson

THE ENDLESS EFFORTS OF GOD'S PROPHETS were so stated that the Jews would understand that their present religious economy would end and all things would become new (John 5:39-40; Acts 10:43; Hebrews 8). A new covenant, a new king, a new priesthood and a new creation—to mention a few. In a very measurable degree these efforts were bitterly rejected. However, to "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12).

The law was added because of transgressions, and would continue till Jesus should come (Galatians 4:19). This law was a schoolmaster to bring those Jews to a condition of development ready for Christ. While we recognize certain limitations of the law (Romans 8:3), we do realize its power to bring those Jews unto Christ, that they might be justified by the faith of Christ (Galatians 3:24). For fifteen hundred years the law was the faithful Jew's theme song, and it was the instrument about which extreme discussion was given to hair-splitting issues, all of which was intended to reveal their faithful adherence to it.

The preponderant evidence within the book of Hebrews makes it obvious that the people for whom it was written had obeyed the faith of Christ. They had been "enlightened," "tasted of the heavenly gift," made "partakers of the Holy Spirit," "tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." They were, however, being deceived and seduced by the leading false teachers to the end that they would renounce and abandon Jesus the Lord, and make a return to the weak and beggarly elements of the law of Moses. In those efforts these Christians had been weakened and confused; they had become dull of hearing and in need of the "milk" of the word rather than the "meat" (Hebrews 5:11-12). Though sufficient time from their conversion to Christ had passed that they might be teachers, they had become the ones in need of being taught. Some repelled the pernicious and deceitful tactics of the

Judaizers "to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:39), while some, in a time of impatience, "drew back" in the losing of reward. This letter is written in persuasion of better things of the Hebrews and things that accompany salvation through Christ (Hebrews 6:9).

Having fully reproved the Hebrews for their immaturity as Christians, the apostle now tells them he will not further discuss the "beginning" (principles) of the word of Christ; but, "having left" (aorist) such first things (a discussion of the basics) they are to seek the goal of full growth! There is to be no effort whatsoever in the laying again of a foundation for this "full growth" objective.

Basic to Judaism and included in this foundation was the *doctrine of baptisms*. This doctrine (teaching) is genitive of the subject and concerns baptisms (plural). Were these baptisms essential in becoming a Christian and growing as a Christian? Did these baptisms have any essential relationship to the baptisms of the Gospels: Holy Spirit baptism, the baptism of Christ, of suffering, of John the baptist or the baptism commanded by Christ for the remission of sins? Various and conflicting positions have been stated attempting an exegesis of of this passage. Lenski says, "All these genetives refer to basic Christian and not to old Jewish teachings" (p. 176). *Pulpit Commentary* agrees, saying, "... there can be no doubt that the doctrine of Christian baptism is in the writer's view, but only with regard to the first simple conception of its meaning, which it had in common with other symbolical *washings*, the significance of which was understood by enlightened Jews (cf. John 3:10)" (p. 158). Cook, Meyer, Conybeare and Howson along with others hold this view. Braun, Reuss and others explain the plural as outward and inward baptism.

It seems to me that the apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, expresses God's will to these Hebrew Christians in the language of the Old Testament. It is only natural that this

terminology would better accommodate their background of religious comprehension and would, therefore, contribute more fully to their understanding and conviction that all such *baptisms* performed by the fathers are practices of the past. These *washings* were numerous among the Jews. Leviticus 15 details various *washings* connected with reproduction; the touching and/or eating certain foods (Leviticus 11); *washings* for uncleanness connected with leprosy (Leviticus 14:1-12; Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-44); the uncleanness connected with death necessitated the ceremonial *washings* of the law (Numbers 19), and proselytism. See I.S.B.E., p. 2469. It appears from passages such as Hebrews 9:10 these Jewish Christians continued to highly esteem the washings enjoined on their fathers by the Mosaic law as being important for Christians, too. Obviously, the discourses of Jesus fully agreed with what Moses and the prophets wrote, but these Jewish Christians *had left* the elementary beginnings when they became Christians. The righteousness of God which they had come to possess was without the law (Romans 3:21), which proves they could continue to "stand" in this grace being acceptable with God (Romans 5:2; Acts 10:35; Ephesians 1:6).

These Christians now stand in need of "milk," for they are babes (Hebrews 5:12). The "milk" of the word, being all they can actually digest, will be sufficient to grow them toward full development. Their continued enthrallment and adherence to the rituals and ceremonialisms of the law would prevent godly growth and eventuate in spiritual death. Undoubtedly, it was extremely difficult for these brethren to abandon the past rituals and "go on unto perfection" (Hebrews 6:1). With the help of God His people can do His will and, by such, ultimately be accepted into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

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# DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES



## Is Apostasy Without Remedy? Hebrews 6:4-6

Ferrell Jenkins

AT FIRST READING, THIS PASSAGE SEEMS to contradict various Scriptures which teach that Christians who sin may be restored (James 5:19-20; Jude 22-23; Galatians 6:1; compare 1 Corinthians 5:1ff with 2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

### Two Questions Involved

Two questions must be answered in the study of Hebrews 6:4-6: (1) Can a Christian fall?, and (2) is it possible for a fallen Christian to be restored? In reading numerous commentaries on this passage, I observed that those who hold to the Calvinistic doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy answer "no" to both questions. Those who hold to the view of the possibility of apostasy answer "yes" to both questions.

The Calvinists deny that a truly converted person can fall. Four statements in this passage, however, show that Christians are under consideration. (1) These individuals had been "once enlightened." They have seen the light and in the past have walked in it (Ephesians 1:18; 5:8; 1 John 1:5,7). The term "once" shows the uniqueness of conversion to Christ; it is something that cannot be repeated. (2) They had tasted of the heavenly gift. They had experienced the salvation which the Lord provides. (3) They had become partakers (sharers) of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Philippians 2:1). (4) They had tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, the Messianic age which was ushered in by the coming of Christ. It is the "age to come" as viewed from the Old Testament perspective. They had enjoyed the spiritual benefits which were brought by Christ.

Apostasy is possible! Verse six states that they have fallen away. This does not describe a Christian who sins, as all do (1 John 1:8,10), but a Christian who apostatizes. Some Calvinists argue that the writer is setting up a hypothetical case, a straw man. F. F. Bruce pointed out that "biblical writers (the writer of Hebrews being no exception) are not given to the setting up of men of straw." The writer of Hebrews had already

warned that it was possible to fall away from the living God, and had given the nation of Israel as proof (Hebrews 3:12-19).

### Impossible to Renew?

The text says it is "impossible to renew" again to repentance those who have fallen away. There are four major approaches to this text.

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***Two questions must be answered in the study of Hebrews 6:4-6: (1) Can a Christian fall?, and (2) is it possible for a fallen Christian to be restored? In reading numerous commentaries on this passage, I observed that those who hold to the Calvinistic doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy answer "no" to both questions.***

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1. No restoration of a Christian who has fallen away. Early writers such as Tertullian held to this view. Calvinistic scholars take this view even though they believe that no true Christian can fall anyway. The use of the word "impossible" in Hebrews adds weight to this view (6:4,18; 10:4; 11:6).

2. The word "difficult" expresses the idea. Most who take this view explain that it is not impossible for God to renew them to repentance, but that it is

impossible for His ministers to do so.

3. It is impossible to renew them *while* they crucify to themselves the Son of God. The ASV marginal note takes this view. The NASB puts *since* in the text and *while* in the margin. This means that they cannot be renewed as long as they crucify Jesus by their conduct.

4. It is impossible to keep on renewing them. The word "renew" is a present infinitive and suggests continual effort. They cannot be restored again and again without eventually being without hope.

### Important Considerations

Two things seem important in the interpretation of this passage. (1) It is dealing with Christians who fall away (commit apostasy, RSV). This is not simply sin of which one readily repents, but complete apostasy from Christ. This is like the willful practice of sin for which no sacrifice remains (Hebrews 10:26-29), or the sin "to death" of 1 John 5:16. With this understanding we can say it is impossible again to renew them. (2) The words "renew" and "again" are important. It is impossible to go on *renewing again* to repentance those who have been *once* enlightened and who continue to crucify the Lord anew. There is no appeal which can be made to them. Neil Lightfoot, in his excellent commentary, *Jesus Christ Today*, sums up the matter beautifully: "Why can he not be? Because he has traveled the road of falling and renewal so much that for him the whole matter is a trifle. His heart has turned cold, his life listless, and his condition is such that he can no longer turn from sin. It is impossible for him to be saved because he is *incapable* of turning to God. He is void of conscience. He has lost his repenting-apparatus" (p. 126).

### Conclusion

We need to be active in restoring Christians who become weak and unfaithful (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20), but we need to warn and be warned that if we go on sinning there comes a point of no return.

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## DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES

### No Place For Change—In Whose Mind?

Melvin D. Curry

#### Hebrews 12:17

WHEN THE TRANSLATIONS OF HEBREWS 12:17 in the King James Version and in the American Standard Version are compared, one is impressed immediately with the obvious difference. The KJV states that Esau "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." But the ASV reads, "He found no place for a change of mind in his father, though he sought it diligently with tears." How can two translations read so differently? And which one is correct? Our purpose will be to answer these two questions as accurately as the text permits.

*eulogian* ["the blessing"] (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 449).

Second, we must determine who failed to repent or change his mind. On the one hand, the translators of the ASV clearly take the position that Isaac's repentance is in view, as indicated by the words they added in italics ("in his father"). Both James Macknight (*Apostolical Epistles*, pp. 570-571) and A. T. Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, V, 438) argue for this position. On the other hand, the translators of the KJV seem to imply that Esau's repentance is in view. F. F. Bruce

him "the blessing," i.e., the double portion of the father's inheritance. Consequently, "the blessing" was pronounced on Jacob who had obtained the birthright. Esau's grievous decision paved the way for God's promise to Abraham to be fulfilled through Jacob instead of Esau. I agree with Robert Milligan that the author of Hebrews uses this example to teach us "that the mistake of Esau, once committed, was committed forever; that no possible change of his mind could in any way effect a change in the mind and purpose of God" (*Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 356). Neil R. Lightfoot puts the matter thusly: "Esau, after committing himself to a bad bargain, could not change its consequences—he found no chance to change it, though he sought to change it with tears" (*Jesus Christ Today*, p. 236). The real heart of the matter is that Esau could not change the consequences of his decision. He "found no place of repentance!" "A place of repentance," as Westcott observes, "is an opportunity for changing a former decision so that the consequences which would have followed from it if persisted in follow no longer" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 409). The tragedy is that Esau's "profane" action was *final* for life; it had eternal consequences.

The example of Esau serves as a warning for all. This fact is clear from the context: "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord: looking carefully lest *there be* any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby the many be defiled; lest *there be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his birthright" (Hebrews 12:14-16). If Christians choose to despise the blessings conferred on them in Christ by turning their back on the Lord, they may lose their eternal, spiritual inheritance. And this would be a much "sorer punishment" than Esau received. Let us beware!

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**"I agree with Robert Milligan that the author of Hebrews uses this example to teach us 'that the mistake of Esau, once committed, was committed forever; that no possible change of his mind could in any way effect a change in the mind and purpose of God.' "**

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First, we must consider the two interpretations as to what Esau "sought . . . with tears." The "it" (*auten*) is taken to refer either to "repentance" (*metanoias*), as in the New English Bible, or to "the blessing" (*eulogian*), as in the margin of the ASV. The latter is more probable in the light of Genesis 27:34,38. There Moses states that Esau specifically wept for the blessing from his father. Furthermore, R. C. H. Lenski claims, although he may be overstating his case, that "there can be no ambiguity in the Greek. The antecedent cannot be the genitive ["repentance"] that is dependent on the other noun ["place"] . . . ; it must be the independent articulated noun *ten*

makes a strong argument for this interpretation (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, p. 368). Of course, some combine the two views, as Edward Fudge does (*Our Man in Heaven*, p. 157), and argue that both Isaac and Esau failed to change the outcome of Esau's decision with respect to the birthright. Indeed, Esau could not change the course of events, and Isaac would not. Thus we are left with a certain amount of ambiguity on this point.

Aside from the above difficulties in interpreting Hebrews 12:17, the main point of the passage seems quite clear. Esau's "profane" action of selling his birthright for an ordinary meal lost for



# DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES



## Why Call for the Elders? James 5:14

Weldon E. Warnock

"IS ANY SICK AMONG YOU? LET HIM CALL for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:14-15).

The preceding verses raise several questions. What is the sickness? Is it physical or spiritual? Why call for the elders? What is the significance of anointing with oil? What is the prayer of faith? On what basis are the sins forgiven of those who are sick? Do these verses apply today? We will endeavor to briefly answer these questions.

### Various Views

Several schools of thought are espoused as to the correct interpretation of these passages.

1. The Catholic position is that James is teaching extreme unction. They tell us that *extreme unction* is a sacrament through which the priest, by prayer and anointing with oil, gives comfort, strength and forgiveness to the soul of the dangerously ill. *Unction* means anointing or rubbing with oil and this anointing is called *extreme* or last.

But James said "call for the elders"—not the "priest." Too, nothing is said about anointing those in preparation of death, but rather anoint those who are sick and the prayer of faith shall save them or make them well. The anointing was toward life, not toward death. Furthermore, the doctrine of *extreme unction* came along centuries after James penned his epistle.

2. Some claim that spiritual sickness is under consideration. But James says of the sick, "if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." The "if" indicates that the sick person may not be guilty of sin. However, the person to be visited by the elders was sick. Hence, the sickness was physical and not spiritual.

3. A very prevalent view is that miraculous healing was the reason for calling the elders. Guy N. Woods wrote: "It seems quite clear from all the facts in the case that the elders contemplated here were miraculously endowed . . . and were thus enabled to participate in

miraculous healing in the manner described" (James, p. 303). Concerning the "anointing" Woods said: "It appears quite clear here that the use of oil was symbolic, and not medicinal; and thus served as a token of the power of God by which healing was accomplished" (p. 301).

4. Another view is that James is referring to ordinary prayer and the use of oil as a medical means or as a custom. H. E. Phillips wrote: "There is nothing in this passage that indicates the need for miraculous powers on the part of elders in performing their duty. The example which James gives points out the fact that the elders of the church were expected to visit those in need and administer to their needs, either physically or spiritually. . . . Oil was normally used for medicine and would not indicate a miracle in the use of it here" (*Scriptural Elders and Deacons*, p. 208).

### Personal Conclusion

Of the four above positions, only the last two have any merit. The first one, *extreme unction*, is totally unscriptural. The second position, *spiritual healing*, is untenable as already shown. Of the latter two, it is difficult, if not impossible, to be absolutely sure which one is correct. However, the weight of the evidence makes Number Four more plausible to me. The reasons for this are:

1. There is nothing in the text that forces an interpretation of miraculous healing. Though there was a miraculous endowment of faith (1 Corinthians 12:9), one has to assume that the "prayer of faith" is that particular gift. The "prayer of faith" could well be the "asking in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:6).

2. It is assumed that elders had the gift of healing. Nowhere is this taught in the Scriptures.

3. The context seems to favor ordinary prayer. Verse 16 states: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James then proceeds to give Elijah as an example of a man whose prayers were answered. If God heard Elijah, He will answer our prayers, even the prayers for the sick (verse 15).

4. The Greek word in verse 14 for

"anointing" is from *aleipho* and it is the word that refers to the common use of oil, while the word *chrío* (anoint) has reference to the sacred and symbolic. This is significant. Oil is used, therefore, by James in the common usage, meaning to "oil the body" or "rubbing the body with oil."

Vine says that *aleipho* is "a general term used for anointing of any kind, whether physical refreshment after washing . . . or of the sick, Mark 6:13; James 5:14, or a dead body, Mark 16:1." He said that *chrío* "is confined to sacred and symbolic anointings." James would have apparently used *chrío* instead of *aleipho* if the oil was only symbolic.

Olive oil was used widely in the biblical world for medicinal purposes (see Isaiah 1:6; Luke 10:34). Josephus relates that Herod was bathed in a vessel full of oil when he thought he was near death (*Ant.* 17,6,5).

"The principle taught here is that the elders should first pray that God will forgive and restore health and strength to the man, and that they should use 'oil,' or supply medical treatment as is necessary to the sick man's recovery. . . . This does not mean the elders are to be physicians, but they must provide either doctors or medicine that is needed" (Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 209). Elders as shepherds of the flock were to minister to the saints as the needs and opportunities arose and today is no exception.

Sins were not (and are not) forgiven or absolved by the elders (verse 15), but if the sick person has committed sins, God will forgive the sins if confession and prayer are offered (verse 16).

5. The purpose of miracles was confirmatory (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4), and not accommodative. To say that elders were called by the sick in order to be miraculously healed changes the revealed purpose of miracles. Miraculous healing would then be accommodative instead of confirmatory.

Admittedly, there are difficulties in the foregoing position, but I feel the evidence tilts the balance toward my conclusion.

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THEME

# DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES

## Do Men Have A Second Chance?

Clinton D. Hamilton 1 Peter 3:18-21; 4:6

WHETHER MEN HAVE A SECOND CHANCE seems to hold a fascination for some religious people. Likewise, the condition of men after death in relation to a supposed second chance receives attention. Passages such as 1 Peter 3:18-21 and 4:6 are cited as evidence for a second chance after death.

These passages have been variously interpreted. Meanings attributed to them are diverse. Some are evidently contradictory. Some also are contradictory to plain statements of other Scriptures. Obviously, some interpretations are dictated by theological dogmas and denominational doctrines concerning the state of the departed spirits and the mission of Jesus Christ. When and why did Christ go and preach to spirits in prison? Will some men have a second chance?

The point at issue in this article is when and where did Christ preach. Did He preach after His death and prior to His resurrection? Did He preach the gospel to people? Were they given a second chance? Did He go to purgatory? If He went to purgatory, what did He accomplish? Did He preach during the life of the departed men who are at the time of Peter's writing in prison? If in prison, what is their state? These questions put before our minds the quandary of the passages.

Explanations of the passages fall into three major thrusts: (1) after His death and in His disembodied state, Christ preached the gospel to disembodied men who were disobedient in the days of Noah; (2) Christ after His death and before His resurrection went to purgatory to assist men in shortening their time in purgatory; (3) Christ preached to men in Noah's day by the spirit by which He was made alive but these men at the time Peter wrote are disembodied and in prison.

My view is according to the third thrust. Christ preached to men during their lives in the days of Noah. These men were then disobedient but are at the time Peter writes disembodied and watched or kept in prison (1 Peter 3:18-21). Men now dead had the gospel preached to them while they lived and

were judged by men as unfit; but now (at Peter's writing) they are dead (1 Peter 4:6). Why do I hold this view?

Any passage must be understood in its context, by the language which expresses it, and in harmony with plain statements of other passages relevant to the same issue. Peter's first letter deals with suffering. The passages under discussion are in this context. Christ, the righteous, died for sinners, the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18). We should suffer for doing right, rather than wrong (verse 17). Christ was put to death in the flesh but was made alive in the spirit (verse 18). This is the same spirit by which He went and preached to spirits in prison (verse 19). These were disobedient when God's patience waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark (verse 20). Christ will judge both the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5). Because of this, the gospel was preached to men while alive but who are now dead (disembodied) that they might be judged by men in the flesh just as Christ was, but that they might live in the spirit according to God (4:6).

The above contextual paraphrase appears accurate for a number of reasons. The language is consistent with this view. *Preached* is from *kerusso*, to declare, herald, proclaim, or publish. What is declared or proclaimed is not in the word itself. That must be determined by the context. Jesus in the spirit preached to "spirits in prison," *en phulake pneumasin*. These are disembodied for so is the meaning of *pneumasin*. These same persons were disobedient when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark.

To argue that Jesus preached the gospel to men in hades after His death is to read into the passage (eisegesis, not exegesis), not exegete it. Made alive by the spirit after His death, Jesus by the same spirit preached. But when? Other passages help us to understand this.

*Euangelizō* means to preach the good news but *kerusso* only means to proclaim or declare. God said His Spirit would not always strive with men but his days upon the earth would be 120 years (Genesis 6:3). Noah was a preacher (*keruka*) of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). Holy men of old spoke, being moved or

borne by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Thus preaching to men who disobeyed his message, Noah continued to prepare the ark that would save him and his family from the flood. This was over a period of 120 years (Genesis 6:3).

At the time Peter wrote his epistle, these people were in prison. *Phulake*, prison, means to be watched or guarded, kept in ward, or caged. Those lost are kept in chains of darkness in hades in which condition they are reserved to the judgment of the great day (see 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The ones under consideration in 1 Peter 3:19 were in such a condition because they were disobedient to Noah's preaching prior to the flood.

In 1 Peter 4:6, men now dead had the gospel preached to them while alive that in life they might be judged according to men in the flesh but made alive according to God in the spirit. All is not lost. As they suffer, they are to remember the example of Christ and take heart. Ultimately they will triumph as He did. The preaching could not be to them after death, for they would not have been judged by men according to the flesh.

Men have no second chance. It is appointed once to die, then comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27). But one appears before Christ in judgment to receive the things done in the body (2 Corinthians 5:10). Since it is according to that done in the body, there is no second chance.

Purgatory, according to Catholic doctrine, is where those go who have a hindrance to full fellowship with God and who need to be purged or purified from those hindrances prior to going to heaven. Those in purgatory may have been forgiven of mortal (breaks fellowship with God) or venial (hinders or impedes but does not break fellowship with God) sins but have not yet paid their temporal (time) payments for these sins, or they may have died guilty of venial sins. Disobedience or incredulity (unbelief) in the Catholic Douay-Rheims version (1 Peter 3:19) is a mortal sin. Consequently, 1 Peter 3:19 cannot refer to purgatory even according to Catholic doctrine because these individuals would be in hell and not purgatory.

It is my conviction that the interpretation defended in this article is consistent with the text, the context, and other passages relevant to the points at issue.

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# DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES



## How Does Judgment Begin First at the House of God? 1 Peter 4:17-18 Fred A. Shewmaker

COMMENTATORS HAVE NOT AGREED UPON the meanings of the various parts of 1 Peter 4:17-18. Please read those verses before proceeding.

Is *the time* "about to take place" (Albert Barnes, *James-Jude*, p. 198) or had it "already begun" (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, p. 512)?

Was the *judgment* to be: "severe trial which would determine character" (Barnes); an "overwhelming demonstration of wrath" (William Hurte, p. 472) or a "universal calamity" (Matthew Henry, Vol. vi., p. 1032)?

Is *the house of God* the: "Jewish temple" (Hurte); "believing Jews" (James Macknight, *Apostolic Epistles*, p. 624); "Jewish Christians living among infidels and idolators" (Henry); the "church, the temple of living stones" (Alford, Vol. iv, p. 379) or "Christians" *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 22, p. 176)?

Does *what shall be the end of them* refer to: "the future world" (Barnes, p. 199); "the doom awaiting" (Guy N. Woods, Vol. vii, p. 119) or "fate" (William Barclay, p. 261).

Does *scarcely saved* mean: "with difficulty (on account of the sharpness of the trial, and his weakness)" (Alford); "it is as much as the righteous can do to be saved" (Henry) or "so as by fire" 1 Corinthians 3:15" (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown).

Was the *ungodly* person: "the proud Pharaonic boaster in his own outside holiness" (Adam Clarke, Vol. vi, p. 866); "the wicked" (B. W. Johnson, Vol. 2, p. 367) or "the impious, scoffers, and blasphemers" (*Pulpit Commentary*).

Were the *sinners* the: "wicked Jews" (Macknight); "profligate transgressor of the laws of God" (Clarke) or "one whose life is devoted to sin" (Woods).

Does *appear* refer to: "at the judgment seat" (Barnes); "shew themselves saved from the divine vengeance" (Macknight) or "How will they stand before their judge? Where can they show their heads?" (Henry).

Various explanations have been given to the events about which Peter wrote:

1. That he wrote shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem about the judg-

ment to be brought against the Jewish temple and the whole Jewish institution connected with it. However, regardless of the danger this would bring to all, the faithful would be delivered (see Hurte).

2. The judgment that Peter writes about is foretold in Matthew 24; it was inflicted upon the Jewish nation; began with Jews who repented and believed on the Son of God (through the things they suffered at the hands of Zealots and possibly other Jewish factions); Christians escaped to Pella, when Cestius Gallus raised his siege of Jerusalem, but

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***The "judgment" Peter writes about (4:17) was the "fiery trial" (4:12) of the faith of Christians "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia," etc. (1:1). If, "as obedient children," they continued a sober and holy manner of life, they would receive grace "at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13-16).***

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hardly before Titus came and destroyed the city, temple, and a million lives, bringing an end to the Jewish state (see Macknight, Clarke and Woods).

3. A fearful calamity or persecution was about to take place which would primarily fall on the church, but the punishment of the wicked would come in the end. That the righteous are "scarcely" saved suggests that it was improbable: (a) God would provide the sacrifice of His Son for man's salvation; (b) man would accept the salvation offered; (c) the saved would be kept

from falling away, and (d) the adversary would be prevented from destroying the kingdom of God. The difficulty of saving the righteous is proof that the wicked will not be saved (Barnes).

4. The judging is by the gospel, which saves some and condemns others, and shall be consummated at the last judgment, when the ungodly shall be doomed and the righteous shall receive salvation. However, the salvation shall be "as by fire"—the righteous having passed through trying chastisements; but "the righteousness of Christ and God's everlasting covenant makes his salvation sure" (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown).

My own conclusions are at variance with each of the preceding explanations. Peter wrote to elect strangers kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, who were in heaviness because of manifold temptations that were trying their faith. He compared these trials to the fire by which gold is tried. By enduring their trials and maintaining their precious faith, at the appearing of Jesus Christ they would receive the end of their faith—the salvation of their souls (1 Peter 1:1-9).

The "judgment" Peter writes about (4:17) was the "fiery trial" (4:12) of the faith of Christians "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia," etc. (1:1). If, "as obedient children," they continued a sober and holy manner of life, they would receive grace "at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13-16). On the other hand, "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (3:12). And, it is better to "suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (3:17).

The contrast between good and evil in 1 Peter indicates that "the end" (4:17) is to be contrasted with "the end" of the faith of the obedient (1:9). Thus, it refers to "the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1:7). If this be true, Paul answered the question in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8: "The Lord Jesus shall . . . in flaming fire take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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# DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES

## The Sin Unto Death 1 John 5:16-17

Clinton D. Hamilton

AMONG REASSURING AND EMPHATIC statements that we can confidently ask anything of God according to His will and He hears us, there is the affirmation, however, that we can ask life for any sinner, except one who sins a sin unto death (1 John 5:14-17). For one who thus sins we are not to pray. What is such a sin? How do we know who sins a sin unto death?

Views expressed as to the meaning of "sin unto death" are numerous and varied. Space does not permit delineating all of the views, even if one were to know all of them. Some explanations that have been advanced are listed as follows: (1) a sin in which one persists unto death, (2) sin against or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, (3) an egregious sin such as murder or idolatry, (4) a sin that entails a disease resulting in physical death, and (5) a sin for which the civil power punishes with death. Some even argue that every sin can be forgiven despite what this passage states.

It is my conviction that the sin unto death is the sin against the Holy Spirit. This sin consists in a heart so hardened as to reject all incontrovertible evidence to affirm that the power by which Jesus did His miracles is of the devil, as is stated by Mark, "He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:30; cf. Matthew 12:32; Luke 12:10). Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is attributing His power to an unclean spirit. His clear, powerful and overwhelmingly convincing testimony to the deity of Jesus Christ is attributed to an unclean spirit in association with Satan or Beelzebub. This sin arises from a hardened, impenetrable heart; it is wicked to the extreme of denying incontrovertible evidence.

One might well inquire why I so affirm. There is a sin unto death for which John says we should not make request. "All unrighteousness is sin," John states (1 John 5:17). *Adikia* is the term from which *unrighteousness* is translated. It means that which does not conform to what God's law requires. The converse of it is "sin is lawlessness," (1 John 3:4). But among sins is one that

entails death for which life will not be granted by God in response to prayer.

The "death," *thanatos*, and the "life," *zoe*, must correspond. One cannot be spiritual and the other physical. It is obvious from the context that spiritual life is under view. Therefore, one's death from which he is delivered in response to prayer is spiritual. In 1 John 5:12, the one who has the Son has life. The one who has not the Son does not have life; he is dead. Evidently, spiritual life, union with God, is life; separation from Him is death (see Isaiah 59:1-2). But there is a sin that separates one from

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Rather it is a specific  
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unto death."*

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God from which one is not brought to life. For the sinner guilty of this sin one is not to pray.

Since John does not in verses 16 and 17 define the sin unto death, it is obvious that the context should make it clear what it is. One who rejects the Son does not have life (1 John 5:12). But elsewhere in the Scripture we are told that every sin can be forgiven except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10). One who commits that sin is in a death (eternal) for which life is not possible. It appears evident that the sin unto death

(eternal) in 1 John 5 is the denying of the incontrovertible evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. This condition of a hardened, impenetrable, and impenitent heart leaves one without the Son and therefore without life. He is eternally dead and for him one is not to pray.

Hebrews probably deals with the same sin in two passages. It is that same condition of obstinate heart resulting in rejection of Christ, even to the crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4-6). A willful sinning in full knowledge of the truth leaves no sacrifice for sins and this sinning, therefore, leaves one in death for which life cannot be granted because one with full knowledge rejects the Son of God in whom only there is life (Hebrews 10:26-27).

This sin is not a general apostate state or condition. Rather it is a specific act which is stated as being "sinning a sin unto death." The act is that of resisting the Holy Spirit whose testimony as to the deity of Jesus is of such a nature that one is without excuse who denies it. He is guilty of an eternal sin. His is a sin unto death (eternal). God does not give life in response to prayer for one who has so sinned.

Two treatments of this difficult passage which one might find helpful and enlightening are by Albert Barnes in his *Notes on the New Testament* (1 John 5:12-13) and by Henry Alford in his *The Greek Testament* (Volume IV, pages 507-512).

In conclusion, one must remember that this passage has presented a problem of interpretation to excellent, devout, and conscientious Bible students and scholars. Accordingly, any position taken will certainly find competent persons opposing it. Also, one should be careful not to be too assertive. Conscious of this caution, I believe the interpretation herein expressed is consistent with the words of the text, the context, and other Scriptures dealing with a sin from which there is no escape.

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# That's Life!



Dee Bowman

*THE CITY OF HOUSTON* recently had an election to see whether or not its citizens would approve homosexuality as an alternate life style. Ridiculous! Romans 1:27 defines homosexual activity as leaving the "natural use of the woman." In other words, homosexuality is against natural law. So how can we vote on whether or not we will accept natural law? Would we vote on the law of gravity?

\* \* \*

*WE ALL PRETTY WELL SHOW* where our interests are by what we talk about. I am disappointed to be in the homes of Christians who know more about baseball than the Bible, more about football than fidelity, more about soap operas than the work of the Lord, more about the PTA than the plan of salvation.

\* \* \*

*WOULDN'T IT BE GOOD* if church trouble could be confined to the church where the trouble is?

\* \* \*

*I HAD SAID A WORD OR TWO* to the assembly about my Dad on the anniversary of his death. One of our fine ladies handed me this after the services. It reminded me of him.

"His thoughts were quiet,  
His words were few  
And never seemed to glisten.  
But he was a joy to all his friends;  
You should have heard him listen."

I thought you might like that.

\* \* \*

*IF YOU WANT TO SERVE THE LORD TODAY*, try these simple little starters: Deliberately set out to make someone happy. Let a cutting remark pass by without replying in kind. Smile in the midst of some difficult situation. Stop the chain of gossip by not repeating what you have heard. Do some good for someone with their

not knowing it. Seek peace.

\* \* \*

*NO ONE EVER LEARNED THE BIBLE* by osmosis; you have to work at it. No one ever made progress in his spiritual life without first making out a plan to achieve it; you have to work at it. No one ever converted anyone to Christ who did not first love him enough to recommend Him; you have to work at it. No one will ever get to heaven by coasting; you have to work at it.

\* \* \*

*MAINTENANCE IS JUST PART OF THE PROGRAM.* There is the daily need to make sure all's in order. To do so the Christian must set a goal toward greater spiritual strength. He must be prepared for adversity and opposition; it will come. He must retain the lively hope which is so vital to his ability to stand firmly. He must gain the strength that comes from associating with those of like precious faith. He must read and study the Scriptures, for they are his best deterrent to temptation. And he must be kind; even if it's hard, it's still the best course. A day at a time, that's how it's done.

\* \* \*

*SOME SIMPLE SUGGESTIONS* for character building:

1. You don't have to be disagreeable to disagree.
2. You can be dissatisfied without being unhappy.
3. A person who doesn't pray often should beware of spiritual erosion.
4. The worship God expects is a heart-involved one.
5. Be careful you don't stand up so straight you fall over backwards.
6. No person can know if he's on the right course who doesn't first know where he is.

\* \* \*

*IT OCCURS TO ME THAT IT IS SELDOM* the interference of great things that precludes our progress, but the trivial pursuit. Our procrastination in handling of the little obstacles is what more often than not causes failure.



# Violent Videos: A Close Look At MTV

Rodney M. Miller

"In the United States today, and indeed in the whole world, one group more than any other forms public opinions, the *media*. The Film Industry, the Television Networks, Newspapers, Periodicals, as well as the people who run these enterprises, have an immense amount of power which is totally disproportionate to their numbers and unhappily, to their moral perception and compassion" (Frankie Schaeffer, *A Time For Anger, The Myth of Neutrality*, p. 26).

The power and influence of the entertainment industry, as seen in juxtaposition to the religious influence, were recently released in the Gallup Poll, telling us that religion is more popular in America today than at any time—but it has little or no effect on the way we live our lives. So, on the one hand, we have the immense power and influence of the media and an eroding influence of morality. While evil is on the increase, morality is on the decrease.

One of the greatest powers of influence on our young people today comes from the media in the form of MTV and the rock music in video form. All too often a parent will ask, "Where did we go wrong in raising our child? After all, we took them to church, and everything." Too often, the answer is that the children were brain-washed by our culture, even in our own homes—and some of us still don't know that it is happening. The ultimate shaper of values, morals, attitudes and behavior isn't by the parents but rather by the media. And cable television's MTV is a monster that is just waiting to devour!

The lead story in the *Ft. Myers News Press* People Section for June 14, 1984, carried this headline: "VIOLENT VIDEOS, MTV's Fare: A Fad or a Corrupter?" Sue MacDonald, in the Gannett News Service article, began like this: "The silhouette highlights a naked woman behind a sheet, struggling in chains. Nearby, a man sharpens a straight-edge razor on a strap. All the while chain-clad, spike-haired rock star, Billy Idol rhapsodizes that he's 'Dancing With Myself.' Leather, studs, and chains

hang from members of the rock group, Judas Priest, as they stand in the middle of a busy highway, dodging and swerving from fast moving cars and motorcycles while they perform 'Head Out To The Highway.'"

Such scenes are beamed into millions of homes daily as part of a new phenomenon: music videos on the Music Television (MTV) Channel.

"And some psychiatrists, psychologists, and teachers are becoming concerned about the underlying themes and possible long-term impact of some videos on young people. *They see them as filled with both subtle and overt themes of violence, indifference, and sexual violence, particularly against women.*"

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*Our youth, in  
whom we are trying to  
instill spiritual values,  
are following in the  
ways of the  
Canaanites.*

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"... MTV is unlike previous teen fads because of the violence," according to Dr. Jerome Singer, professor of psychology and director of the Family Television Research Consultation Center at Yale University. There seems to be a great deal of depiction of violent activity or sadomasochistic activity in the background, or even involving the performer. He says, 'If teens are exposed to violence and it's being done by their idols, it's sort of being sanctioned in a way. I think it presents an unfortunate image for kids because it is repeated over and over again. I think it gives them a false sense of the world.'

Of the one million viewers who tune into MTV in any given hour, 85% are between the ages of 12 and 34. . . . The National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV) has monitored MTV,

a Warner Amex Production, and found that:

- More than 50% featured or strongly suggested violence.
- 35% of the violence was sexual in nature.
- Most of the violence was directed toward women.

An average of eighteen violent or hostile actions occur each hour on MTV, according to the coalition.

Dr. Thomas Radecki, a psychiatrist at the University of Illinois School of Medicine, and chairman of NCTV, said: "Very often it seems like the heroes are the ones who are the most violent. The message is that violence is normal and okay, that hostile sexual relations between men and women are common and acceptable, that heroes are actively engaged in torture and murder of another for fun."

What can we expect from our youth when all they do from the time they come from school is sit and absorb this kind of filth? Can you imagine having the garbage truck come and dump the city's garbage into your living room every hour or two? Some of our homes would not be a fit place to live. So it is with this garbage of the mind. Our youth, in whom we are striving to instill spiritual values, are following in the ways of the Canaanites. Violence, sex, perversion, and music were all a part of the culture that stole the hearts of Israel away from Jehovah for generations. Brethren, the Devil has not even changed his tune. He is still whistling the same song three thousand years later. After all, why change the song when it works so well?

What can we do? First, it may be too late to do much of anything in the homes with teenagers that have been plugged into and tuned into this all of their lives. They are hooked and probably will not give it up. But what we can do is warn and reach for the next generation so that they won't be singing, "I'm On The Highway To Hell," as do those of our day.

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Taken from *The Par St. Anchor*, July, 1984



# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (32:1-2).

## The Right Way To Cover Your Sins

David writes here about the blessing of having one's sins covered. We need to understand that there is a *right way* and a *wrong way* to cover sins. The true covering of sins is something that only God can do (verses 3,5). Notice the three ways we sin against God mentioned here: (1) *transgression*, which signifies passing over the boundary, doing what is prohibited; (2) *sin*, which indicates the missing of the mark, not doing what is commanded; and (3) *iniquity*, suggesting that which is turned out of its proper course, anything morally distorted or perverted (carries the idea of "guilt"). Man commits sin in all of these ways, and such sin stands between him and God (Isaiah 59:1-2). But no matter what form of sin one is caught in, the pardon of it is a blessed experience! This passage does not teach that God *ignores* or takes no notice of man's sin. But when a man is truly *penitent*—and this is the key—then God grants him an official verdict of pardon. This is a forensic act, a judgment from God's throne. The man is still a sinner, but God consents to pardon him.

The solution to properly covering one's sins is found in repentance and confession (verses 3,5). There are wrong ways to cover sin and unfortunately man frequently chooses these instead of God's way. This is described by the wise man when he says, "He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy"

(Proverbs 28:13). Man often chooses to ignore his sin and refuses to confess it. David evidently had this problem at first, for in verse three he says, "I kept silence." The inevitable result of such a course for any man is *guilt*. We cannot successfully "hide" or "cover up" our sin. It must be acknowledged and confessed. Only then will the terrible burden of guilt be removed (verse 3) and only then can we feel, and actually be, blessed (verse 1).

David had a season of impenitence. It is hard to say, "I have sinned"—especially for one in the position of David who had an unblemished reputation in the eyes of the nation for many years. But he says in verse three that the result of his refusal to admit wrong was that his "bones wasted away." There was a withering away of his strength because of the burden of guilt—and it penetrated to the core of his being. It caused him to groan in his heart. Why is it so hard for men to admit sin? What factors are at work in each of our lives that hinder the confession of sins? I want to suggest three:

1. **Pride.** Men cannot bear to think themselves wrong, to feel that they are as mistake-prone and as awful as others. Paul writes that men are "headstrong, puffed up" (2 Timothy 3:4). Many could easily "pray" with the Pharisee, "I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men" (Luke 18:11). Such a person cannot begin to get close to God (James 4:6,8-10).

2. **Self-deception.** Notice that David says that "guile" (insincerity) hinders men from a full confession (verse 2). Some do not have honesty of conscience. James says that some men are self-deceived (1:22). We must want to know the truth about ourselves.

3. **Carelessness, indolence, insensibility.** Some are merely careless; others' senses are dulled by the things of the world. Their consciences have been "seared" (1 Timothy 4:2); they are "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:19); they are plagued with "fatness" (Isaiah 6:10).

The only way to properly cover sins that is consistent with man's nature as God made him—is for him to *confess it*, and let God cover it, pardon it, and remember it no more. All of us need the contrite heart which says, "For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin" (Psalm 38:18).



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# Woman's World

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## What Shall I Do?

Ruth Thompson

The rich young ruler asked Jesus this question. Jesus looked upon him, loved him, and gave him an answer he did not want.

So many times women, good women who are concerned about doing for the Lord, come asking this same question, "What shall I do?" Usually what they mean is, "What does God expect of me, a woman in His church, in order for me to be well-pleasing in His sight and go to heaven?" It is a legitimate question, and it has a scriptural answer. The same Jesus who gave this rich young ruler an answer has also given women their answer.

Adam's rib, to walk alongside him in this life, for companionship, satisfaction, mental stimulation, joy. But keep in mind at all times that his position is "head." Fulfilling your responsibility in this realm requires thought, time, good judgment, submission, and keeping yourself in a proper frame of mind. It is something to work at, and for, and is one of your greatest responsibilities.

2. **Children.** God told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28). The psalmist said, "Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows in the hand of a

3. **Home.** "I desire therefore that the younger widows [women, KJV] marry . . . rule the household" (1 Timothy 5:14). ". . . that they may train the young women to be . . . workers at home" (Titus 2:4-5). Here is another realm that is distinctly set apart for the woman. Primarily it is her responsibility to carry out the household chores such as cooking, housecleaning, seeing that the home is a comfortable, attractive place to which husband, children and friends are drawn by a common bond of love. Nowhere in God's word do we find these household duties laid upon the shoulders of the man of the house. The wife is queen in her home; she reigns supreme, remembering at all times, though, that there is also a king in that home.

4. **Self.** Last, as far as priorities go, is the realm and responsibility a woman has to herself. It is only common sense that a woman devote part of her time to good health habits, proper eating habits, the proper amount of exercise to keep her physical body in the best condition possible. Only if she does can she properly perform her other pressing duties. I can't say enough for a period of time spent *alone*, in the quietness of your home, where you can meditate, relax, study, acquaint yourself with God's precious promises and admonitions for you. Try to arrange a schedule which includes some time for yourself each day. Then once in awhile, if possible, take a little holiday from the regular grind. You will come back refreshed in body and spirit.

Because of the length of the fifth point—woman's responsibility in the church—I would like to continue the thoughts in this article to a later issue of the magazine. Hopefully, you will save this article and re-read it with the subsequent article that will appear three months from now. It will give you an insight into the most-asked question of all: "What can a woman do in the church of the Lord?" Stay tuned.

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**"One of our greatest evils in this present generation is the lack of parental guidance for our children. Too many homes are without this necessity. Too many 'latch-key' children are subject to loneliness or abuse."**

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What does Jesus have to say about women's responsibilities? We find these responsibilities in the fields of (1) church, (2) husband, (3) children, (4) home, and (5) self. I believe I have listed them in the proper order of importance, but I want to discuss them in the following order:

1. **Husband.** "Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, *as unto the Lord*. For the husband is the head of the wife" (Ephesians 5:22-23). "But I permit not a woman to teach, *nor to have dominion over a man*, but to be in quietness" (1 Timothy 2:12). "In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands" (1 Peter 3:1). Women are not hirelings. Woman was made from

mighty man, so are the children of youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3-5). One of our greatest evils in this present generation is the lack of parental guidance for our children. Too many homes are without this great necessity. Too many "latch-key" children are subject to loneliness or abuse. *Your* responsibility, mother, is to see that this does not happen to your child. *Be there!* Love them, discipline them, *teach* them, guard them, guide them. This responsibility is largely yours. It requires a lot of your time and patience. If properly done you have fulfilled this part of your God-given responsibility.



# Mining The Scriptures

## PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

### The Sermon on the Mount

**"W**hosoever shall put away his wife." The subject of divorce can fill the heart of a preacher with dread. More than two thirds of the preachers for America's largest Protestant denomination recently admitted that they had never spoken on the subject. The issue of divorce (and remarriage) touches the lives of men and women intimately and often painfully. Yet those who come to the kingdom must not expect that any part of their lives will escape the influence of the King; nor should they desire it since His commands are not arbitrary (1 John 5:3) but are always for our good (Deuteronomy 6:24). However agonizing this teaching may be to us there is no place for the true disciple to hide from its implications.

In Matthew 5:31-32 Jesus continues His discussion of marriage and the principle of love which He began in verse 27.

"It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement" (5:31). This Pharasaic tradition which the Lord cites is based on a distortion of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the first part of which says, "When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." The meaning of these verses had been hotly disputed among the rabbinical schools. Shammai, insisting on a criminal and legal cause for the divorce, emphasized the words "some unseemly thing," and limited it to adultery. Hillel stressed the words "find no favor in his eyes," and allowed divorce for anything displeasing to the husband. Rabbi Akiba went even further, permitting divorce if a man simply found a more appealing woman.

From other information available to us in the New Testament it is evident that the Pharisees shared the very loose views of Hillel if not worse ones (Matthew 19:3,7) and were far less concerned about the reason for the divorce and its unholy consequences on the victim than for the following of proper forms. Their obsession with legal niceties to the complete disregard of moral principle is again revealed. The Pharisees viewed divorce as a right, and saw the words of Moses as a command (Matthew 19:7) rather than a permissive allowance. By so doing they had wholly misapprehended the law and its purpose.

God's attitude toward divorce had been made abundantly clear in the Old Testament whose canon had virtually closed with the ringing words, "I hate putting away, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel" (Malachi 2:16). Consistent with that divine sentiment the words of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 were intended to put a check on already rampant

divorce, not to introduce and encourage it. Jesus describes the teaching of the law on divorce as a concession to Israel's "hardness of heart" (Matthew 19:8); not surely a "hardness" of stubborn rebellion, which would have been intolerable (Hebrews 3:7-11), but one borne of spiritual backwardness (Mark 6:52). The law worked its restraint on divorce in three ways. It limited divorce to certain causes (Jesus' contrast of His own teaching of divorce for fornication alone with that of the law would indicate that Moses allowed more than one reason for divorce, Matthew 19:7-9). It required that a certificate of divorce be given to the wife (usually in the presence of two witnesses [Matthew 1:19] and containing the words, "Lo thou art free to marry any man"). And it gave a compelling argument against hasty and intemperate action by forbidding the husband to ever again take his divorced companion (once she had remarried) to wife.

"But I say unto you, that everyone that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress" (5:32). In His response to the Pharasaic gloss about divorce Jesus is primarily concerned with principle rather than procedure. Any man who casts out his faithful wife has acted without love and must share in the guilt of her adultery (her remarriage is assumed). The only exception is divorce for fornication which would preclude her husband making her what she had already become. In this context it seems evident that although "fornication" (*porneia*) can cover illicit sexual union both in and out of marriage the Lord uses it here of sin within the marriage covenant rather than before it.

**T**he current disposition of some to justify divorce for any reason if there is no remarriage causes me to stress that the sin Jesus speaks of here rests in divorce, not remarriage. Such a divorce is wrong on three counts. It is wrong because it shows no love for the mate. It is wrong because it could push the divorced mate into a damning relationship. And it is wrong because it could involve another otherwise innocent person in adultery. To this we feel compelled to add that even in cases where fornication has occurred the redemptive love of the kingdom would seem to counsel mercy and reconciliation where possible. Divorce was never a commandment. Love is.

Finally, it is evident that Jesus in His answer to the Pharisees has traveled beyond Deuteronomy, even properly understood, and has stated the law of the kingdom of heaven which rests upon God's will "from the beginning" (Matthew 19:8-9). The law of Moses would have allowed the divorced woman to remarry; the law of the kingdom will not.





## The Memory of You

Philippians 1:3-5

**P**hilippians has been called a "love letter." The entire epistle glows with the tender feeling Paul held for the saints at Philippi. This special feeling bursts forth in the first line after the salutation: "I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you" (1:3).

The memory of them was the basis or ground of thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving was added to memory, so that the former rests upon the latter. But the translation should not be "every remembrance" (KJV), which is then explained as meaning "every time I remember you" (NIV). The Greek article before remembrance requires the translation of the ASV: *all the remembrance*. (Contrast *every supplication* in verse 4 where the article does not appear.) So the point is, Paul's *entire memory* of the Philippian saints caused him to thank God.

I doubt that Paul could have written that line to all the churches he had planted, certain not to the Galatian churches (Galatians 1:6; 3:3; 4:11). What was the character of a church that the whole memory of them caused the apostle to praise God? Read on.

The occasion of the thanksgiving is defined by verse 4: "always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy." The Greek *deesis* is more specific than *proseuche*, the New Testament word for prayer in general, used only of prayer to God. *Deesis* is a request, entreaty or petition; it may apply to a request addressed to a man as well as prayer to God. "In Byzantine Greek it is used of a written supplication (like our *petition*)" (Thayer). R. C. Trench says the distinction is about like that between our prayer and petition (*Synonyms*). The ASV always uses the word supplication for *deesis*. Webster explains supplication as "a humble petition."

Thanksgiving refers to past blessings; supplication deals with present and future needs. Paul's petition for the Philippians is expressed in verses 9-11. Basically it relates to their final approval in the sight of God in the day of Christ. But to this point Paul has said that every time he goes before God to lift up his petition on behalf of the Philippians the memory of them causes him to thank God.

"I thank God," writes Paul, "making my supplication with joy," and with the word joy strikes a keynote of the epistle as I shall point out later. I doubt that verse 5 should be separated from verse 4 by so much as a comma. The preposition at the beginning of verse 5 is *epi*

(lit. upon), and the verse gives the basis or ground upon which Paul lifts up his petition with joy (verse 4) just as in verse 3 his remembrance of the Philippian saints was the ground (upon) of his thanksgiving. The ground of his petition, so joyfully expressed, was: "your fellowship [*eis* toward, expressing aim, object, direction] the gospel from the first day until now."

"From the first day until now" recalls "all my remembrance of you" in verse 3. Paul is unfolding his entire memory of the Philippians, which causes him to thank God.

Fellowship is joint participation, partnership, sharing in common. From the beginning the Philippians were anxious to do what they could for the advance of the gospel in the world, and had been sharers in the work. Paul had not left Macedonia before they began sending to his need (4:15f). But the partnership had started even earlier when Paul's first Philippian convert opened up her home to Paul and his associates (Acts 16:15). And 1:27 and 2:14-16 show that the partnership involved more than merely sending money.

This disposition had continued right up until the present, when the Philippians had sent most recently to Paul's need (2:25-30; 4:10-20). This partnership *eis* the gospel filled Paul's memory of the Philippian saints. His entire memory of them caused him to send up praise to God.

**B**ut why thank God? Why not thank the Philippians? To ask the question should be to answer it. It was God who was at work in these Philippians (verse 6), producing such fruit. From the beginning it had been so. Was it not the Lord who "opened Lydia's heart to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14)? True, it was no "better-felt-than-told," direct influence. (See Acts 8:6 for how the Lord opens hearts to give heed to the gospel.) But the things spoken were "the word of the Lord" (Acts 16:32), including argument, testimony, exhortation and motivation provided by the Lord to open her heart to give heed to that message. (See the sermon in Acts 2 for an example.)

So while the Philippians were working out their own salvation Paul does not forget that they were only cooperating with God who was at work in them "both to will and to work, for his good pleasure" (2:12f). And that is why his whole memory of these great saints causes him to thank God.

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If you missed the early issues, this is the only way to secure them. We have had many requests for Ed Harrell's April issue on "Restoring New Testament Christianity." You can get it only in this bound volume—\$20 postage paid.

---

## **DON'T MISS COMING ISSUES!**

**MAY THEME: "Timely Admonitions"**

**Edited by Dee Bowman**

**ARTICLES: Redeeming the Time—**

*Hiram Hutto*

**How Do I Find the Time?**

*Dale Smelser*

**We Finish Our Years—**

*Gary Henry*

**And More . . .**



# The Habit Most Vile

The greatest physician in the land has warned us that its use is definitely hazardous to our health. In fact, he goes so far as to say that continued use will result in heart disease and interfere with the very breath of life.

Many argue that even though they engage in this disgusting habit and it does them harm, they are not hurting anyone else. Not so! By their example, they are giving approbation to it and cause great harm to others, especially young and impressionable children and others too weak to resist its terrible influence.

It is a habit which reaches out and affects not only the doer but those about him as well. It robs the addict of the company of many who see the good in him but cannot tolerate his habit. Those who refuse to be slave to it cannot enjoy the company of those who persist in it. By insisting on and continuing in this activity, the addict often removes himself from the opportunity to associate with those who are unwilling to expose themselves to such behavior, especially in their own homes.

Those who say they can "take it or leave it" seemingly always return to it even when they try to quit, finding themselves hopelessly addicted and finally totally insensitive to those around them who not only do not care for this type of behavior but who are repulsed by it as well.

Those who do it are the first to admit that they don't want their children to pick up the habit, but they themselves refuse to quit. The evidence of their addiction is usually quite observable wherever they go, and their homes are often full of the empty husks of this stench-filled habit.

This unsocial habit is peculiar only to humans; yet, even though it prevents true sociability, it is often found at most "social" gatherings.

Why would anyone persist in adopting and defending such vile behavior? Yet, millions do. It is big business and entire industries are devoted solely to its manufacture, packaging, advertising, sales and distribution.

What is it? Go back and re-read this essay. Then see if what is written does not describe *the habit most vile: SIN*.

Richard Williams



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### The Kearneys and Murphys in Ireland

**I** may not see a church in Dublin during my lifetime, but I intend to plant the seed that will assure the existence of one some day." This was the commitment that brought Steve and Cora Kearney back home to Ireland in 1976 after leaving their homeland ten years earlier to find employment in South Africa. It was in South Africa that they learned the truth and obeyed the gospel.

Some would say that Steve's statement had a pessimistic ring. Pessimism is somewhat characteristic of the Irish—the cold damp weather and long years of economic depression have contributed to that. But any pessimism in Steve was born of his clear understanding of the great obstacles he faced. Besides the thirst for alcohol which curses the land, there is also the firm commitment to Catholicism. Often described as "more Catholic than the Pope," 95% of Ireland's population adhere to that religion. Only a strong faith in the power of the gospel could have brought Steve to believe that even in the next generation the Lord's church could exist there.

The Kearneys made their decision to return to Ireland without any expectation of support for preaching. He intended to support himself by following his occupation as a window dresser, though this would be less profitable in Ireland than in South Africa. It was mainly through the efforts of Gene Tope that support was obtained from the U.S. Only occasionally have they had to fall back on secular work for funds.

The first converts were from Steve's own family; a sister-in-law and brother. Next was an ex-prisoner who was a great encouragement to them, though he has since fallen away. Others were reached, one by one, including Steve's mother and another brother, and Cora's mother and sister. By early 1977, they had already outgrown their home as a meeting place and they began renting a succession of halls chosen more for location and cost considerations than for appearance or comfort.

In 1980, Kieran and Patti Murphy came from the U.S. with their family to join the work force. Kieran had relatives in Dublin and almost from the day of his conversion he hoped to go to the land of his forefathers to preach Christ. He and Patti had named their children Irish names and came to work with a people whom they already loved. They joined with the Kearneys to make an outstanding team.

Several interesting methods have been used in

Dublin. They have done extensive door-knocking in communities where they live and near the meeting place. They have printed mimeographed papers to be distributed door-to-door each month. A table has been set up in the heart of the city with tracts and signs offering passers-by an opportunity for a personal discussion of Bible topics. Gospel meetings have been held in a rented hotel room downtown as well as in homes in outlying areas. Sunday nights have featured an intensive men's training class which has deepened the knowledge and increased the usefulness of the brethren.

Scriptural discipline has been exercised in all its phases. A recent withdrawal brought the church under considerable attack, even in the newspaper, but it has strengthened rather than weakened their unity and resolve to be faithful to the Lord's instructions.

**I**n the spring of 1983 the church was able to place a 32 x 12 foot prefab building on a recently purchased lot and move into its first "permanent" meeting place. An older building on the property was renovated for classrooms. Already, however, the original prefab has been outgrown and a new one, 24 x 24, has been obtained.

Even more significantly, the Murphys have now purchased a home on the north side of the city, making available a meeting place for a new congregation there. A carload from Dublin are also going once a month to Roscrea to worship with and encourage two converts there.

Let us join with Steve and Cora in giving praise to God that they will not have to wait a generation to see the Lord's church established in Dublin. By His grace, it has been accomplished in less than a decade.

Doubtless there are other great cities of the world which lie still in darkness while some of their native sons and daughters have come into possession of the light elsewhere. Individuals who have been so blessed might well follow the example of the Kearneys and Murphys. "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19).

Steve and Cora Kearney/140, Woodlawn Park Grove/Ballycullen Rd./Firhouse, Dublin 24

Kieran and Patti Murphy/Auburn Cottage/Feltrim, Swords/Co. Dublin

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341





# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## "I Know That My Redeemer Lives"

It is strange how some little things stick in your mind after over four decades of erosion and decay. So it is with my mother's baby grand piano which sat in our living room from the beginning of my memory. She apparently played it pretty well when she was young and I vaguely remember her playing some popular songs from time to time, but she mostly lost interest in later years. My sisters took lessons on the piano, but my father, probably wisely, decided it would be a lost cause to try to civilize me.

Actually, my memories of the piano are as specific as they are sharp. I must have been about thirteen or fourteen; my voice was just beginning to change. I loved to sing a weak and straining bass and had just come to have a little capacity to follow the notes up and down in the songbook. I was absolutely intrigued by those

songs that had little bass runs. Probably my favorite was "I Know that My Redeemer Lives."

There was one little section in that song where the bass goes down in half-steps that I found particularly difficult. One day I asked mother to play it on the piano. She did. I sang it as she played (neither of us was aware at that time that some would raise questions about such a practice). She must have played it twenty times—several of them coming after an appeal for just one more time.

After that, there were many other days when she sat for hours playing and I stood behind learning the bass. I often wonder how many times she played "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." I know I will never sing it without thinking about those occasions. It did not occur to me until many years later how dull and tiring

those sessions must have been. I never adequately thanked her for it before she died.

The point is, parents, that it would be impossible to predict what it is that will stick in the mind of that impressionable child that is entrusted to you. Curious and seemingly insignificant things loom large in each of our lives. Much of the labor and sacrifice that goes into raising a family will be forgotten and lost. But not all of it. I remember a mother who in the midst of her own unending struggle to find deeper spiritual strength spent many tiring hours at the piano.

Growing up was difficult for me—to some extent it must be for everyone. But my youth was dangerous, including trips down roads that could have led to a wasted life and a lost soul. Our lives are such a complicated meshing of experiences that few can look back and say it was this one memory

that changed the course of my life. But, among other memories, my young life was haunted by recurrent thoughts of my singing sessions with mother. I am sure she had no idea how well she was teaching me "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

\* \*

"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42).

\* \*

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4,7).

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# Christianity

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## Finding A Good Mate

**Y**ou likely would have trouble getting them to admit it, but the biggest concern among maturing young persons is finding a good mate. That's normal. Not only normal, but as it should be. Such a decision will have life-long, even eternal implications. Actually, there shouldn't be as much embarrassment about the matter as there is.

What is the criterion for selecting a suitable companion? Is it good looks? Or family background? Or Dun and Bradstreet? Or which school they attended? Far too many of today's marriages are commenced on such flimsy bases as these. Could I ask a question? What's wrong with consulting the Bible? The Bible sets forth helpful principles for this most important choice.

Character should be the first concern in choosing a mate. Character is not where you live, or what you do, or how much you have, but what you are. Spiritual instruction appeals to character (Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 3:1-5). Look for someone who will still "look good" when things are bad—that's character. Character is lasting, and grows stronger with the passing years.

If you are looking for a wife, I suggest you look at the principles set forth in Proverbs 31:10ff. It tells you what the ideal wife should be. Notice the traits:

1. **Virtue** (verse 10). Morally courageous women make the best mates. Moral excellence is necessary to any strong relationship, especially marriage. It is the basis for trust, too (verse 11).

2. **Submission** (verse 12). "She will do him good" is a sure indication of the woman's appreciation of God's order of things (1 Corinthians 11:3).

3. **Industry** (verse 13). A good woman is not afraid to work with her hands. (My mom picked cotton alongside my Dad when they were first married.)

4. **Frugality, economy** (verse 16). A good woman looks after her charge, whether it's the kids or the bank book. Compare verse 27.

5. **Constancy** (verses 17-19). A good mate can keep on when times are tough. And there will be such times! Many of them.

6. **Benevolence** (verse 20). A good woman is touched with feelings about injustices, inequities, problems. She is compassionate, considerate, merciful. That's a pretty woman! Really pretty!

7. **Vision** (verses 21-22). A good woman has feelings for her family's dignity, as well as their physical needs.

She takes care of herself. She is not short-sighted.

8. **Wisdom** (verses 25-26). She has control over her character, as well as her tongue. She is a constant source of encouragement.

9. **Repute** (verses 27-28). She commands respect, even from those who know her best. No woman is a truly good woman who has not the respect of those who are nearest to her.

10. **Reverence** (verse 30). Trust not in her physical grace or beauty; they will fade away. But put your confidence in one who respects God and there'll be an everlasting beauty, charm, grace.

If you can find such a woman, you have indeed found a rare jewel and would do well to capture her for your own, no matter the cost.

If you are a young woman looking for a good mate, please read carefully Ephesians 5:21-33 and notice the characteristics of a good husband.

1. **Self-control** (verse 23). Look for someone who will provide the headship, leadership, provisions so vital to a good marriage and home.

2. **Dedication** (verse 25). No man will make a good husband or father who is not so dedicated that he is willing to be spent for you, and them.

3. **Gentleness** (verse 28). A good man should be so involved with you that "you are part of me" is his philosophy. Remember how Adam said, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23).

4. **Devotion** (verse 31). One who will leave his family for you. Far too many marriages have been torn apart by the failure of one of the mates to really leave home. The Scripture says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh."

5. **Faithfulness** (verse 31). You should find a man who wants to marry you for life, not just try you out. He should be one who sees significance in the phrase "so long as ye both shall live" and "for better, for worse."

Young lady, if you can find a man with these traits, you would do well to make him yours if you can.

A good marriage begins with finding a good mate. It should be done carefully. Parents, help your youngsters. Begin early to teach them the importance of choosing a Christian for a life partner. Youngsters of marriageable age, pray about it. And choose carefully—it's for life, you know.



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# Soundings

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## Program of the Southside Lectures for 1985

THEME: "THE HOME"

### Monday, June 3

- 9:30 AM: The Erosion of the Family  
—Brent Lewis
- 10:30 AM: The Purpose of God in Marriage—Bob Owen
- 7:00 PM: Congregational Singing  
—R. J. Stevens, Directing
- 7:30 PM: In the Beginning, God  
—Sewell Hall
- 8:30 PM: Foundations of the Family: Spiritual Tastes  
—Ed Harrell

### Tuesday, June 4

- 9:30 AM: Foundations of the Family: Respect—Ed Harrell
- 10:30 AM: Song of Solomon I  
—Bob Owen
- 7:00 PM: Congregational Singing  
—R. J. Stevens, Directing
- 7:30 PM: Parents With A Purpose  
—Sewell Hall
- 8:30 PM: What Every Young Person Should Know About Marriage—Brent Lewis

### Wednesday, June 5

- 9:30 AM: Love Suffers Long  
—Sewell Hall
- 10:30 AM: Foundations of the Family: Order—Ed Harrell
- 7:00 PM: Congregational Singing  
—R. J. Stevens, Directing
- 7:30 PM: Three Fathers Who Failed  
—Brent Lewis
- 8:30 PM: Song of Solomon II  
—Bob Owen

### Thursday, June 6

- 9:30 AM: The Home Is A Happy Place—Brent Lewis
- 10:30 AM: Song of Solomon III  
—Bob Owen
- 7:00 PM: Congregational Singing  
—R. J. Stevens, Directing

- 7:30 PM: Homes Built On A Rock  
—Sewell Hall
- 8:30 PM: God's Extended Family  
—Ed Harrell

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## Debate with an atheist

I would like to tell your readers of a debate that took place on the University of Illinois campus Saturday, February 23, 1985. The proposition was: "The existence of God can be rationally proven." The affirmative was taken by Kenny Chumbley, preacher for the church in Rantoul, Illinois; the negative was taken by Jeff Frankel, chairman of the Central Illinois Atheists. I was the moderator for Kenny, who was also assisted by Almon Williams of Florida College.

The debate was an excellent one in several respects. Even trying to be as objective as possible, I think nearly all would agree that Kenny did a far superior job of debating, and Mr. Frankel did not ever really attempt to respond to our main arguments. No Christian who was present felt the least bit uncomfortable about the outcome or the impression that was left with neutral spectators. Every Christian I spoke with thought that the truth had been presented in an outstanding manner.

Also, any agnostic, undecided person, or "weak" Christian had to be favorably impressed with the case for the God of the Bible. I'm sure they left thinking that there was more to God and the resurrection than they had previously thought. In fact, Almon Williams, himself skeptical as a young man, said that this debate would have been more convincing than the Bales-Teller debate.

Even staunch atheists were impressed with several things. They seemed to be impressed with the "rational" approach that was taken by Kenny, the courage of these "new kind" of Christians in defending their faith publicly, and the courtesy and respect with which they were treated. The only disruptions were caused by atheist spec-

tators. I have never seen a debate so free from personalities and "ad hominem" arguments—there were none.

If anyone is interested in cassette tapes and charts, contact me at 2233 Lauren Circle, Brandon, FL 33511. (813) 684-2035. We are also planning to publish a booklet on the basic arguments that we used (they are somewhat unique, if that is possible) in the near future, so send your name if you are interested. The atheists, who are a branch of Madeline Murray O'Hare's group, videotaped the debate, but I think that it can safely be predicted that it will gather dust in the basement of their "archives" for quite awhile.

All in all, much good was done, not by making someone else look bad, but by planting the seeds of truth. I just thought that someone might like to know.

*Michael J. Schmidt*  
Brandon, FL

## Church moves to new location

The church of Christ in Medina, OH, formerly meeting at 6205 Wadsworth Rd., has moved. The facility that we had been renting for the past four years has been sold. We are planning to erect a building of our own as soon as possible, but until such time as this can be achieved, we will be meeting temporarily at 120 N. Elmwood St. This location is not available on Wednesday evenings, at least for the present, so we are having midweek services in other places until we can make more suitable arrangements. Our mailing address remains P. O. Box 313, Medina, OH 44258. For more information, write or call (216) 723-4509 or 725-5614.

*Wayne S. Walker*  
Medina, OH

*We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?*





# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Restoring New Testament Christianity (III)

In the long run the two most important American restorationist movements of the nineteenth century were identified with Barton Warren Stone and Alexander Campbell. Stone was a fifth-generation American. Born in southern Maryland, he migrated with his family to the Virginia-North Carolina border while still a youngster and in 1790 enrolled in an academy operated by David Caldwell, a Presbyterian minister who had been trained in William Tennent's Log College (later Princeton). There he came into contact with the fervent preaching of such Presbyterian leaders of the Great Revival in the West as James McGready, underwent a conversion experience and, after several years of teaching in academies as far south as Georgia, in 1796 he was ordained by the Orange Presbytery of North Carolina. Later that year he settled near Paris, Kentucky, where he became the minister of two congregations, Cane Ridge and Concord.

Stone's religious pilgrimage had taken place entirely in the free religious environment of the post-revolutionary frontier. The Presbyterian ministers who had influenced him most had been fervent supporters of religious revival and had readily confessed admiration for the zeal of their Baptist and Methodist competitors for the affections of the common people. During his stay in Georgia, he had taught in a Methodist academy and had shared the pulpit with Methodist ministers. By the time he had moved to Kentucky, Stone had reservations about Presbyterian theology. At his ordination by the Transylvania Presbytery in 1798 he was asked: "Do you receive and adopt the Confession of Faith, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Bible?" He replied: "I do, as far as I see it consistent with the word of God."

The immediate impetus for Stone's departure from the Presbyterian church was the outbreak of the Great Revival in the West which spread rapidly after 1800

through a series of spontaneous camp meetings. Perhaps the most famous meeting of the revival was held at Cane Ridge in August, 1801, when thousands of westerners flocked to hear the preaching of Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist evangelists. The meetings were marked by enthusiastic and emotional outbursts, but Stone believed that the hundreds of conversions and the ecumenical cooperation of the ministers marked it as the work of God. Just a few months after the close of the Cane Ridge revival, however, one of the Presbyterian ministers who had participated, Robert McNemar, was called in question by the presbytery for teaching doctrines that contradicted the Bible and the Westminster Confession of Faith. In 1803 the Synod of Kentucky suspended five of the leading participants in the revival, including Barton Stone.

The rebellious ministers formed the Springfield Presbytery, still claiming to be Presbyterians, and in 1804 were supported by fifteen congregations, including Cane Ridge and Concord. Less than ten months after forming the presbytery, they dissolved it in one of the more famous documents in restoration history, "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery." An ironic and sometimes caustic attack on the movement's critics, the most succinct item in the "Will" stated: "We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell." Rice Haggard, who had recently joined the movement, suggested that they call themselves Christians (as he had suggested ten years earlier to the Republican Methodists), and another Christian movement was born.



# What's Wrong With Worry?

John Kilgore

"Don't tell me worry doesn't do any good. I know better. The things I worry about don't happen" (Anonymous). Worry has been called the all-American sin. Not that we Americans have a monopoly but that as compared to the rest of the world it seems we should have far less reason. It is a spiritual paradox that in a country so blessed there should be such widespread worry filling our hospitals, giving us ulcers, and robbing us of peace of mind. Thomas Jefferson said it well: "How much have cost us the evils that never happened." Obviously, more "Mammon" is not the answer. In fact, when dominant, it becomes the problem. Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and Mammon. For this reason I say to you do not be anxious" (Matthew 6:24-25).

Jesus stated what very few today are willing to accept. God and "Mammon," Satan's servant, both make totalitarian demands upon us. But only God is honest about saying so. Satan deceives us to believe that we can serve both; for to attempt dual service is really to serve him. Remember the sad unfruitful result of seed which falls among the thorns. Here a genuine disciple ultimately chokes himself to spiritual death by "worries and riches and pleasures of this life" (Luke 8:14). Therefore the whole problem of worry must be seen in the context of whom we have really chosen to be our master.

The original Greek words for "worry" meant "to divide, part, rip, or tear apart"—words describing the effects of worry upon the mind. Therefore the Bible uses the terms "anxieties," "worries," or "cares" to describe those thoughts that divide, part or distract our minds from the main purposes of life, seeking first God's kingdom and His righteousness.

**Wrong Things.** Worry is wrong when it emphasizes the wrong things in life. These things need not be sinful of themselves, just everyday kinds of things allowed a higher priority than they deserve. Jesus never condemned thinking about material things. He taught us to pray about our daily bread (Matthew

6:11), to get a job (Ephesians 4:28) and refuse to feed the lazy who don't think enough about material things to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10). But He did prohibit us the kind of thinking that takes food, drink and clothing—all necessities of life—and turns them into the trinity of cares. He shames us by reminding us that the God who created our body will surely provide food and drink to sustain it and clothing to adorn it. Just look at the birds and the lilies. He cares for

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them. Will He not care for us who are greater? Martin Luther said it is a disgrace when a helpless sparrow has to become our theologian and teacher. Our Father is well aware of His children's needs and has promised His provision that we might go on to higher thoughts of His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:25-34). Let us not be so concerned with food to sustain our bodies for a few hours that we miss Him with words to sustain our souls forever

(Luke 10:38-42).

**Wrong Time.** Worry is also wrong when it concentrates our thoughts on the wrong time—tomorrow—instead of today (Matthew 6:34). Things of tomorrow are never certain and always beyond our ability to act. It is therefore wrong to let tomorrow's potential problems tear us apart today. Tomorrow always belongs to God. We must not steal from Him.

But is it wrong to plan for the future? No, but we must be careful to plan in the right way—"if the Lord wills" (James 4:13-16). Let us make the best plans we can and then forward them to heaven for God's approval. He may change them in any way His wisdom and love dictate. We cannot lose, for we want only what He wills.

In re-focusing our concerns in today, we have discovered Jesus' alternative to worry. Today has enough problems of its own to keep us very busy, and they do not tear us apart because we can do something about them. A disciple is to "take up his cross daily" (Luke 9:23). God will not allow us to be burdened more than we can daily bear.

Paul gives us some practical advice on how to overcome worry (Philippians 4:4-9). First (verse 6), be thankful in prayer as you make your requests known to God. Christians who are thankful for what God has already done for them and who are continuing to depend upon Him (1 Peter 5:6-7) will not worry. Then (verse 8), let your mind dwell on good things. In order to break the vicious cycle of worry we must control what we think. Even when thinking about our problems, let us be solution-oriented. And finally (verse 9), "practice these things;" in other words, go to work. Laziness and worry go hand in hand as the one-talent man demonstrated (Matthew 25:24-30).

Worry is wrong when for the wrong reason we emphasize the wrong things at the wrong time. It's like a rocking chair; it really gets you moving but you go nowhere.

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**Brent Lewis**



# My Brother/My Self

## The Shame of Ingratitude

**"A**nd as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice, glorifying God; and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?" (Luke 17:12-18). It is indeed amazing that people can be so unthoughtful when they receive such great blessings. Of ten people who were healed, only one returned to thank Jesus—and he was a Samaritan, one to whom the Jew would not even give the time of day. The Lord fittingly asked, "Where are the nine?" Are people so uncaring and insensitive that they cannot even say "Thank you?"

Our relationship with our brethren can be greatly enhanced if we will merely take the time to express gratitude. Selfishness often hinders this expression.

**1. Gratitude toward God.** Christians should clothe themselves with the spirit of gratitude toward their heavenly Father. We deserve to die because of our sins (Isaiah 59:1-2; Ezekiel 18:22). But, "while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. . . . God commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6,8). Without the love of God and the sacrifice of Christ we would all be undone. How can our thinking ever be anything less than "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" (1 Corinthians 9:15)? God's commandments are never "grievous" to those who remain grateful for His gift (1 John 5:3).

And even beyond the paramount spiritual blessings are the physical things He gives us to enjoy. Do we thank God enough for the great country we live in? For the beauties of nature that are ours to enjoy? For the blessing of good friends to share life's moments with? For the food that we eat, the clothes that we wear, the houses we live in? For the jobs that allow us to earn our livelihood? Yes, we are abundantly blessed!

**2. Gratitude in the family.** Very seldom do we eat a meal out at a restaurant that my wife does not say to

me—"Thank you for the meal." I do not expect her to say it; it is just her thoughtful way of expressing gratitude. And I do appreciate it. It makes me try to show gratitude to her for other things. Children need to learn to be grateful; this should be part of their maturing. When children never thank their parents for the sacrifices they make; when they never thank their grandparents for favors bestowed—they are being thoughtlessly self-centered.

**3. Gratitude for our brethren.** God exercised His bountiful wisdom when He saw fit to command His people to assemble themselves together. Some of the grandest experiences of my life have been "together" occasions with brethren. I relish the times when we worship. I am grateful for other times of association as a part of the local fellowship. We should never take our brethren for granted, but must constantly show gratitude one toward another.

There is an old Jewish legend concerning the place where the Temple was built. It is the story of two brothers who lived on adjoining farms. One was married, the other was a bachelor. Their farms were of equal size and at harvest time seemed to be equally fruitful. The wheat had been cut and was standing in sheaves in the fields.

The married brother was at home, thinking of his unmarried brother. "He is a lonely person," he thought. "He has not experienced the joy of a wife and children. I think that I will take some of my sheaves and put them in his field tonight. It will give him joy to see such a big harvest on his farm."

It so happened that, at that very moment, the bachelor brother was at home reflecting on his married brother. "My brother has many mouths to feed," he said to himself. "I do not require nearly as much as he does. I'll take some of my sheaves and put them in his field tonight."

The night was dark as each of the brothers began to carry out his plan in secret. But as they made their way toward each other's farm they met face-to-face in the open field. The legend says that at the spot where they met the Temple was built—for on that spot heaven was nearest to earth.

Gratitude for what we have will cause us to seek out our brethren and meet each other at least half way. May it be so.



# Suffering: How To Cope

Mac Timmerman

To say, "Our world is filled with sorrows, with trouble here below" is, to say the least, an understatement. The child of God is faced with persecution for living by his faith (2 Timothy 3:12), as well as pain and suffering resulting from living in an evil world that will test his faith. The question that should ever be before us is not *will* we suffer pain, stress, loss of health and loved ones? But, how does a Christian cope with such? In this article we will examine four items that a Christian has or should be in order to face the trials in this life.

First, the Christian's faith is God-centered and not self-centered. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that his preaching was such that their faith would be in God (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Our faith must be so centered, not only to be acceptable to God, but to face trial. One who strives to encounter life's difficulties alone, trusting only in self, will soon throw his hands up in despair or else drown himself in self-pity. On the other hand, the faith that is God-centered recognizes and believes that God is the God of all comfort. (Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 and notice the number of times Paul says that God comforts.) It is this realization that God will comfort the Christian in hours of stress, trial and pain that enables the child of God to stand. God's answer to Paul's prayer to remove his "thorn in the flesh" was: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 13:9). This is the faith that a Christian has in Christ in the time of affliction. It is not that after baptism we become some sort of a superman and can, in and of ourselves, overcome every trial and solve every problem, but by faith in Christ and the grace of an almighty God, we will. Furthermore, this faith is not that the problem will be removed, but that God through Christ will: (1) help those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:18); (2) provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13); and (3) deliver the godly out of temptation (2 Peter 2:9).

Secondly, the Christian has hope. This hope is not for a better tomorrow here upon this earth. It is desiring and expecting to live in "a city which hath the foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 10:11). This is, and has been in all ages, the hope of the faithful. And, this hope does four things for a Christian: (1) it saves him (Romans 8:24-25); (2) it distinguishes him from the world. When heaven is our goal, all other measures of success, wealth, fame, and power will diminish in importance; (3) it motivates him; and (4) it sustains

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him in trial. Because of "fighting the good fight," the apostle Paul faced death. He faced it unafraid, saying he was "ready." He could so face his greatest trial because he could say "henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day."

Thirdly, the child of God is at peace with God, and can therefore be thankful for what he has. Being at peace with God, he is at peace with himself. Paul facing death could say: "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12). Later

in the same book, he said, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work" (2 Timothy 4:18). These statements were made by a man who truly let the peace of God reign in his heart. As a result of this peace with God he could be thankful; with this attitude he could, even while in a Roman prison, say: "In whatever state I am, therewith to be content." We too often look at external conditions to determine our state of contentment and thankfulness (Philippians 4:11). We need to realize every day "that in him we live, and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). We sometimes pray that "we realize that without God we can be nothing," yet in our lives it is "thank God for this food—only if there is plenty of it and cooked the way I like it." We take so many things for granted. Be thankful for the ability to walk, to work, and to be able by God's grace to rise to see a new day. The person who is not thankful, contented, and at peace with himself, would *not* be if he had everything. Peace and contentment come from within and not from external circumstances.

Finally, the Christian under trial has his brethren. He has those who "weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice" (Romans 12:15). Someone has written, "Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone." All too often this is the case with those of the world. In the face of trial and affliction those of the world face parental rejection, rejection by one's mates and friends. It should be as the Christian faces trial, he will have those who will be standing by as a support system. It is our responsibility to provoke to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). We, as children of God, need each other. We have enough problems from those that are without. We must, as Paul says in Galatians 5:13, "by love serve one another." By doing this it will help others cope with any problem—whether physical, emotional or spiritual.

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## "And The Word Became Flesh"

**W**e believe that the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth are the most sublime of human history, but that is not half sufficient to describe them; because it does not say, as we also believe, that they are absolutely and infallibly true. Even then, adequate though this may be as a description of the teachings of Jesus, it still comes short of making us understand His own personal uniqueness as a teacher.

Unlike every other spiritual mentor in the whole of human history, Jesus was the living personification of all He ever taught. And this was surely not for lack of testing. He did not live an easy, sheltered life. His days were passed amidst a firestorm of hate and opposition (Hebrews 12:3), but the spirit of righteousness and love in Him was never breached (1 Peter 2:23). The tempest that raged about Him was never able to shake His godly peace and equanimity. He did not live a reclusive, secret life. He was a public man who lived and taught among the thronging multitudes of Palestine's cities and villages (John 18:20). Still for all the openness and vulnerability of His life, no one could convict Him of sin (John 8:46). He never uttered a single saying, however hard, that He did not Himself live by it. He was history's one and only perfect human being. He knew all things (John 4:25-26), but He never knew sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Still some today (even of His disciples) have felt that the sinless perfection of Jesus is somehow flawed by His deity. Even though the Scriptures plainly state that His temptations were the same as our own (Hebrews 4:15) we find it difficult to believe that He did not have an advantage over mere men like ourselves. What we must realize is that the immense power at His command as God's Son made His trial more, not less, intense (Matthew 4:3; 26:53). We are locked into our afflictions without recourse. He could have easily escaped, but refused to do so. How marvelous in our eyes is His righteousness, and yet, how humble His spirit.

The lives of other religious teachers when compared with their words serve only to accentuate the greatness of Jesus. Buddha rather ruthlessly abandoned his family when he set out on his pilgrim search for "wisdom." Mohammed made his living during his leaner years robbing caravans between Mecca and Medina. Ghandi,

the seemingly gentle father of Indian pacificism, a vegetarian out of reverence for all animal life, was admittedly abusive of his wife and disposed to petty demands and angry outburst toward his associates.

There have been many noble and lofty sentiments written, but the lives of the authors often fill us with dismay. Our greatest poets have seemed more disposed to depravity than ordinary men (a fact often excused for the sake of the genius which ought to bring them greater, not lesser, accountability). We have always been moved by some lines written by the American poet, Theodore Roethke: "I close my eyes to see, I bleed my bones their marrow to bestow, upon that God who knows what I would know." But the life of the author does not make it easy. The last interview he gave before his death (in 1963) is a long, rambling assortment of impurities and egotism. The words of the poet are cheapened by his life and seem in the light of it to be pretty sentiments contrived thoughtlessly and without commitment.

**T**he disciples of Jesus Christ need never fear that the one to whom they have committed themselves will ever be less than the highest and noblest sentiment He ever spoke. He taught the word of God (John 6:16; 17:8) but He was more than a teacher of Truth. He was the word of God incarnate, the truths of God lived out in the white-hot crucible of human experience. He not only taught us the way but left us an example that we might walk in His steps (1 Peter 2:21-23), the one "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." How could we ever be ashamed of such a teacher? When we have seen Him we have looked upon the radiant splendor of God Himself (John 14:7-9). "And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Because of that we ought never to be the same again. However far by His grace we may come in this life He will always be out ahead, beckoning us to take yet another step. And He will draw us out powerfully, not by word alone, but by the compelling force of His own life and character. What a privilege it is to aspire to such excellencies from such low ground—to grow up "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"—to press on to the mark of "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Dee Bowman

### Time

Time relates to man. And man relates to time. Actually, there is no time for the man who is not here, for his very life has to do with existing in time. Time is that space of existence during which man does what he does. In Ecclesiastes 9:10, Solomon suggests, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going." Work must be done in time. Devices are for the living. And wisdom is for using wise choices with which to make life worth living. So, you see, life is the gift of time and time is the gift of life.

Time is many things to people. It can be a tyrant or a friend. It can be a detriment or a help. It can heal or it can embitter. It can be the great asset or the terrible liability. It is the lover's hope, the scourge of the vindictive. It all depends on how we use it. One thing is certain: we all have to deal with it.

Probation is a period of time. A special period of time. It is used to determine a person's fitness for something. A convict is given a probation when he is allowed time to prove that he is yet capable of good behavior. The Christian lives in a probationary period. During that time he is given the opportunity to prove his faith in God. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little

time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). James closes this section by warning, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin," showing a clear connection between time and obligation.

I want to suggest some things about time—simple things, but things that need to be said over and over again so that we don't let the truthfulness of them slip away.

**Time flies.** I know, that's trite. But it's so. Time waits for no one and while we are looking away, it disappears. And with it goes countless opportunities—opportunities to help our kids grow up like they ought; opportunities to help our neighbors to learn to flee toward God; opportunities to acquaint ourselves with great principles of truth by our intimate and regular association with the word of God. We must walk wisely, "redeeming the time, for the days are evil."

**Time is valuable.** Actually, it's all you've got. No matter what we may possess, if there's no time that possession has no value at all. The problem with the rich man in Luke 16 was not what he had, but rather what he didn't have. He didn't have time. He thought he did, but he really didn't know how late it was. And when he ran out of time, he lost everything. We need to value time highly

enough that we make as good use of it as possible. Like the rich man, we will all finally run out of time. But we can protect ourselves against this plight by making a better use of time than he did.

**Procrastination is the thief of time.** Again, trite, right? Sure, but nonetheless true. We all tend to put off things. Important things. Things like praying, visiting those who need us, being an active part of the local church. I think most of us intend to do these things. We don't oppose them, surely. But we diminish our effectiveness by our procrastination. The same man who said, "Procrastination is the thief of time," Edward Young (1683-1765), also said, "Be wise today, 'tis madness to defer." And it was likewise he who penned these most appropriate words:

"At thirty a man suspects himself  
a fool;  
Knows it at forty, and reforms his  
plan;  
At fifty chides his infamous delay,  
Pushes his prudent purpose to  
resolve;  
In all the magnanimity of thought  
Resolves; and re-resolves; then dies  
the same."

In the following articles I hope we will all find some timely admonitions.

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THEME

# TIMELY ADMONITIONS

Tim Matheny

## "Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow"

IT IS SAD THAT SOME OF THE MOST beautiful art can be used to express unbiblical sentiments. Such is the case with three lovely songs, each of a different style, yet all three expressing the same idea. One is the ballad from television's "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," entitled "There's Always Tomorrow." The next was made popular

tomorrow, but also have some knowledge about what the circumstances will be when it gets here.

The songs express an attitude which reveals a little of the conceit which we humans are so ready to express toward matters which we do not really control at all. James recognized the problem in those to whom he was writing: "Come

masters, we begin to rely on three false assumptions.

First, we rely on a false sense of perspective. Note James' strong injunction against such thinking: "Come now!" The reason is the nerve of men who would say, "Tomorrow I *will* do thus and so." After all, tomorrow is one thing men cannot know about with certainty! Remember Proverbs 27:1: "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." In fact, the only earthly time of which we can speak with certainty is yesterday (as Bildad recognized, but misapplied, in Job 8:9). Today is in flux, tomorrow a mystery. Our lives are anything *but* eternal in perspective.

Second, we rely on a false view of providence. One of the most deadly truisms passed off as Scripture is the old adage, "God helps those that help themselves." It leads to the idea that somehow, if we plan everything out to the last detail, then God will stamp His seal of approval on our plan, and everything will work out our way. Jesus rejected such a view of providence in Matthew 6:26-31.

Finally, in such thinking we rely on a false feeling of pride. James goes on to say in verse 16, "But now ye glory in your vauntings: all such glorying is evil." The word translated "vauntings" in the American Standard Version is found in one other place in the New Testament, 1 John 2:16, where it is translated "vainglory." While word origins often make no difference in understanding New Testament words, it is interesting to notice that this word was originally used to refer to wandering quacks who promised cures which they could not deliver (like the rainmakers who toured the American West). By ignoring that our lives are nothing more than wisps of smoke, we promise what we cannot deliver: tomorrow.

"Will you love me tomorrow?" We would do well to answer with James, "If the Lord wills" (verse 15).

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**"One of the most deadly truisms passed off as Scripture is the old adage, 'God helps those who help themselves.' It leads to the idea that somehow, if we plan everything out to the last detail, then God will stamp His seal of approval on our plan, and everything will work out our way."**

by the Shirelles, asking that musical question, "Will You Love Me Tomorrow?" The most recent of the three is the climactic number from the musical *Annie*, and is simply called "Tomorrow."

The fact that the word "tomorrow" occurs in all three titles is a tip-off to the problem with all three songs. Each, in its own way, expresses a confidence that we are sure that we are not only going to see

now, ye that say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what will be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away' (James 4:13-14).

When we ignore God's control of the future and begin to see ourselves as its



# TIMELY ADMONITIONS



## How Do I Find the Time?

Dale Smelser

"I JUST DON'T HAVE TIME." THAT IS OFTEN the excuse for not praying, studying, teaching, or attending classes and assemblies; it keeps one from spending enough time to know his children and what they are thinking, or for them to know him and learn from his life and instruction things of moral and eternal consequence.

But we rationalize that time spent in pursuit of the wherewithal for more goods, pleasures and status is time spent for family. After all, time is money. That equation seems especially apt in an economy weighted more and more toward sales and service employment. The more time spent selling and dispensing, the more money is made. And to assure a fevered pitch of activity therein, motivational programs make one feel incompetent and unambitious if he is not in the top earning levels of his or her field. Speakers affecting religious authority insinuate God's remunerative rewards for unremitting diligence. Thus with statistical assurance of Divine blessing, one's time is scheduled and organized around his quest for "the good life" for self and family. There isn't time for much else.

When I was asked to write about time management, I swallowed for delay and then bravely, or foolishly, accepted the assignment. How, I thought, does one who is at best only minimally organized (you cannot imagine the mirth this overstatement will occasion in my wife), and who manages only spurts of efficiency, write anything that might be helpful to others about the management of time?

Well, I am a preacher. And I know other preachers. Some are meticulously organized, even computerized. Others have schedules that have the appearance of having been put together in a food mixer.

Of the former, some convert sinners, confirm the brethren, and set godly examples. Others of that group are lacking in influence and what they get across. The cause doesn't prosper. Of the second group, some save the lost, edify the saints, and are a blessing to the

work. Others therein are, well, shall we just say, disastrous.

This is not to say that there is no advantage to carefully organizing one's time and work (this admission will cheer my wife considerably). One will not be as likely to feel the need every six weeks for a refresher course in Crisis Management, and will save enough time in just looking for things (unless he has a wife who can find them for him) to memorize *Keil & Delitzsch*. But I believe that good use of time is more a matter of what one is committed to than of scheduling. One may merely schedule an emphasis that is

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Joshua was the spiritual leader of a nation and commanding general of an invading army, but I know what God expected of him: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night" (Joshua 1:8). Being full of the spirit of wisdom (Deuteronomy 34:9), he evidently managed time for that (Joshua 24:31).

If your job requires extra hours, remember Daniel. He had responsibility for the security of a third of the vast Medo-Persian Empire, yet he regularly

prayed three times a day, and his Godward actions were constant and predictable (Daniel 6:5,10). We have time for what we are committed to.

If time is *misappropriated* by distorted values, it is also *lost* to procrastination. Someone said, "If you want something done, ask a busy man to do it." He doesn't have time to put it off. If it is done it will have to be at the first available moment. Another will think, "I have tomorrow or next week." And on it goes until it is forgotten or seems pointless anymore to do, or more pleasant to ignore than remember. Things *we ought to do* sometimes don't get done, not because we don't have time, but because we put them off and do something *we had rather do*.

This brings us to the sluggard (Proverbs 26:13-16). He, too, has his excuses. But he fancies himself a realist: "There is a lion in the streets," or "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the cloud shall not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4). You can't expect him to work or do under those circumstances.

And why not get started in time to do what he ought? He is not at his best in the mornings, so: "As a door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the sluggard upon his bed." You have to know your limitations. And don't tell him he is just lazy: "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men can render a reason."

Well, given the speed with which we may be in so many places and engage in so many activities, and many having the money to afford it all, *people often do not have time to do all that is available to them*. That means making choices. And those will be made according to one's sense of values. For the man of faith, that is important which God's word says is important. He will manage his time accordingly. If one does not have time for God and family because of his work or recreations, let him just admit that he is worldly. Time use is determined by what is important to us.

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# TIMELY ADMONITIONS

Rick Liggin

## A Time To Speak!

THE INSPIRED WRITER, JAMES, STRONGLY warns us concerning the great potentiality of the tongue to destroy and do evil (James 3:1-14). He tells us that the tongue has the power to defile one's entire body and that it can even alter the course of nature. In comparing it to the beast of the earth which can be tamed, James lets us know that this cannot be accomplished with the tongue; we cannot tame the tongue to the point that we no longer need to keep guard over it. We must constantly exercise control over it; we must learn to "bridle" our tongues. This certainly is a lesson we all need to learn.

There is, however, another side to this issue. Just as the tongue can be a source of destruction and evil, it can also be a source of good. It might be that in our efforts to "bridle" our tongues we overlook the good uses of speech. We forget that "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11); we forget about the "word spoken in due season, how good it is" (Proverbs 15:23). Yes, as the wise preacher reminds us, there is "a time to keep silence," but there is also "a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Yes, we must be "swift to hear, slow to speak" (James 1:19), but there are occasions when we *should* and *must* speak. It may take a great deal of wisdom to recognize these occasions, but we must not overlook them. We must speak up at these times.

One such occasion when we must speak is *whenever* we have the opportunity to preach the gospel. Such opportunities may come in a variety of forms. It may be that someone makes a comment that could lead to a biblical discussion; it may be a question that someone asks us; it may be that our faith is called into question; it may be that error is taught in our presence. All of these occasions provide an opportunity to teach God's word. The faithful Christian must speak up at these times, for this is what our Lord expects us to do (see 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 4:6; Jude 3; etc.). It is shameful to note that many times, due to our lack of

concern, or knowledge, or boldness, or time, we fail to speak on these occasions. What would have been the condition of the Eunuch if Philip had not taken the time to journey from Samaria to the Gaza road (Acts 8:25ff)? What would have become of Apollos if Aquila and Priscilla had not known how to instruct him in "the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:24ff)? What would have been the situation of the world (including us) if the apostles had been too afraid to preach due to the severe persecution (Acts 4:20; 5:41-42)? Too many people are dying daily without hope because God's people are failing to speak when it is "time to speak." Yes, we should be sure to speak with "meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15), having our speech "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6); but we *must* speak on these occasions. Our compassion for our fellow man should move us to boldly preach the gospel to the lost and defend the truth against error.

Then there are also those many occasions when we can offer words of admonition and encouragement to a weak or sinful brother. God's word puts the responsibility to speak up at these times squarely on the shoulders of the faithful. Paul points out that the "spiritual" are obligated to restore the one overtaken in sin (Galatians 6:1). If we consider ourselves to be "spiritual," then this passage obligates us. Consider also these words from Paul's inspired pen: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak" (1 Thessalonians 5:14). The "unruly" are those who are walking out of rank; the "fainthearted" are those who are easily discouraged; and the "weak" are those who are having difficulty doing what is right. (Note: We do not have to wait until one has completely abandoned the Lord before we reach out to help.) Again, the context places the obligation here on faithful "brethren," not just on elders (see 5:12-13). The point is that we have a responsibility to our brethren, particularly to those brethren who need

support. Fulfilling this responsibility necessitates our speaking on these occasions. Yes, we must be sure to approach the brother "in a spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1) and speak words with a view to "edification" (Ephesians 4:29); but we *must* speak. Whenever we observe a brother who is weak or overtaken in sin, we are obligated to speak words of warning, comfort, and edification.

Finally, we might mention those numberless occasions when words of kindness and appreciation are timely. Think about it. When is the last time you looked for an opportunity to say a kind word to some stranger? When is the last time you spoke kindly to a brother in Christ, or told him that you appreciated him? Think with me for a minute. Have you ever noticed that older couple who always makes it to worship services in spite of their infirmities and in spite of the weather? Or what about that young mother who struggles so hard to keep her baby quiet and still get something out of the worship service? When did you last (or did you ever) tell these kinds of people that you appreciate their faithfulness and love for God? Such occasions provide excellent opportunities to speak. Surely we could classify an opportunity like this as "a time to speak."

The point is, brethren, that we have many advantageous opportunities to speak. It is true that there are many abuses of the tongue (we can speak out of turn, or we can speak hurtful words), but we must recognize that a lot of good can be accomplished with the tongue as well. It is important that we work with the words of our mouths to bring about this good. Yes, there is "a time to keep silence"—but there is also "a time to speak." May God grant us the wisdom to recognize when we should speak, the knowledge to know what we should say, and the boldness to speak when it is "a time to speak."

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# TIMELY ADMONITIONS



## How To Handle Distractions

Robert A. Bolton

RECENTLY, JUST AS I WAS SETTLING INTO a peaceful Sunday afternoon siesta, the telephone rang. It was my good friend, Dee Bowman, who had called to ask me to write this article. Perhaps I could have best handled Dee's "distraction" by simply *hanging up without saying a word!* I think he would have gotten the point; but, of course, I didn't. Instead, I chatted with him for a few moments, agreeing to answer his request, and then settled back down in my old "La-Z-Boy" and took up where I left off before the distraction.

Admittedly, not all distractions are of this nature, but all of us face them every day in many ways—distractions that make the attainment of our immediate goals more difficult. Since it is impossible to completely free ourselves from all distractions, if we are to reach our goals, we must learn to handle them effectively. And so, aside from the fact that I am certainly no expert or authority in this field, let me share with you some things that experience has taught.

Distractions fall into two basic categories: external and internal. *External distractions*, those not of our own making, may include: telephone, visitors, noise, environment, uncomfortable conditions, etc. *Internal distractions*, those of our own making, may include: preoccupation, day-dreaming, concern, anxiety, worry, irritation, frustration, tension, stress, hostility, etc. While some distractions may be avoidable, others may be unavoidable. Yet all must be properly handled if we are to succeed in any endeavor. This is true in every area of life—worship, study, service, business, family, society and even recreation. Depending on how we learn to handle them, distractions may prevent success to the degree we desire or have no more impact on our achievement than the proverbial "gnat." Here are a few practical suggestions:

1. **Place yourself in a location, condition, and environment that is as free from distractions as possible.** For example, in worship with brethren, sit near the front of the auditorium where

young mothers with children, or those who enter late, will not distract you. In research and study, shut yourself away from family and friends, things and activities which tend to distract you. It is said of Alexander Campbell that, even though he was accustomed to arising at 4 A.M. each morning to study, meditate, research and write, to accomplish his objectives he provided for himself a "study" which had no windows. Undoubtedly, this contributed to his great knowledge. In the same way, every student should have a definite place where he or she can get away from it all.

2. **Gather your mind!** By that I simply mean instead of day-dreaming, "wool-gathering" or letting your mind wander, learn to concentrate on the matter at hand. This may be difficult, but it can be done. Focus your complete attention on your task. This is much easier to do if what you are doing is interesting to you. Have you ever been so involved in watching a football game on TV that you didn't hear your wife say, "Aren't you listening to me?" A basketball player at the foul line, with a hostile crowd waving and shouting, must gather his mind and concentrate if he is to make that free throw that may well win the game. This ability takes great self-discipline, but it is necessary if we are to accomplish our objectives.

3. **Schedule your time to allow for some flexibility.** Plan the most appropriate times to do your work to help insure success in your immediate project. For example: keep regular hours for research, study, meditation, etc., and let it be known that you are not to be disturbed during this time. If people know you are "busy" at these times but that they are free to call or visit at other hours, they will respect your wishes. As an example, you may want to use your morning hours for research and study, your afternoons for personal business, visitation and recreation, and your evenings to continue either of these or for family and social activities. Even then, on occasion your schedule may have to be changed, but still try to

devote X number of hours each day to the "weightier matters." The inevitable distractions may retard your progress temporarily, but do not let them prevent you from reaching your daily objectives.

4. **Learn to say "No!" or "Can what you have to say wait for half an hour?"** Certainly such statements should be made in a polite and non-offensive manner, but it is absolutely imperative that we bring ourselves to say such things or we will constantly be "distracted by distractions." As a case in point, most of us are pleased to permit others to use our books, library or office to enhance their own knowledge, yet the mere presence of another may be distracting to us when we are engaged in concentrated study of our own. Thus, we should suggest to others that they are free to use our possessions and facilities at times when we are not deeply involved in some important field of study ourselves. Such procedure will make for fewer distractions in our work.

5. **Learn to relax!** It doesn't take long for one who is deeply engrossed in an important subject to feel tiredness, tension and stress, which are internal distractions themselves. Under such conditions, external distractions may result in irritability, frustration and even hostility. Whereas, if one is relaxed and not fatigued or tense, such distractions may seem only minor. Therefore, we should occasionally try to relax our muscles, eyes, etc., by doing such simple things as standing up, stretching, walking, exercising, eating, napping, practicing some skill briefly, or going out for a "cup." All such things, which may become distractions themselves if engaged in too much, will tend to lessen the impact of distractions when they come.

Certainly there are other ways to handle distractions, but I'm out of space. So, now that I have taken care of this distraction, I think I'll try to get back to the important business at hand. "What time did you say we were going to tee off, Ed?"

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THEME

# TIMELY ADMONITIONS

## "In Season—Out of Season"

Dudley Ross Spears

FROM THE WORST POSSIBLE SITUATION, an aged man wrote to his young friend and brother words that carried more than timely advice—they conveyed the most important challenge ever given to anyone. "Preach the word." The words came from the veteran apostle Paul, then in prison in Rome. They were among the last this great writer, preacher, and man of God ever put into permanent form. No doubt, thoughts of many memories of fun and fear flooded the old man's heart as he thought of young Timothy, but there was hardly time for reminiscing. The times demanded a solemn charge. Timothy was to be "urgent, in season and out of season" in preaching the word (2 Timothy 4:2).

From then to now, the urgency of preaching has not diminished. With every new generation, comes the continued demand for the same message, the same purpose and the same need to take it seriously. The idea in the words "in season—out of season" tells all mankind just how important both the work of preaching and the message preached really are. Another rendering of the passage sheds some light on the meaning. The *New King James Version* reads: "Be ready in season and out of season." Men and women who have served in the military establishment know the term "stand-by." The idea of being urgent "in season" is illustrated well by a soldier told to stand by his communication device for an important message. When the message does not come, the soldier who begins trying to speed up the process is standing by "out of season."

The man of God must be ready for the opportunity to preach the word. But, when none exists, he must try to make the opportunity. Some men wait patiently for specific hunting and fishing seasons. Sports fans wait for the season for their favorite athletic events. There is, however, no "open" and "closed" season for preaching the word. If the man of God finds that the season seems "closed," he tries to open it. This is urgency "in and out of season."

Several years ago, the author of the *Annual Lesson Commentary*, published by the Gospel Advocate Company made the following good comments on the verse: "This means that we are to preach at all times, whether convenient or not, whether we have a good opportunity or not. Men who are satisfied to confine their preaching to public gatherings do not have the salvation of lost souls at heart. Men who preach only when they are paid to do so do not love the lost" (November 5, 1950, p. 274).

It isn't that Paul knew nothing about urgency in preaching from personal experience. He was informed from the first that his work was hard, demanding, often extremely dangerous—but it was what he had to do. It didn't take Paul long to realize that the reward for his work was hardship, alienation, physical discomfort, and much more. When he asked Jesus what the Lord would have him do, the Lord replied, "Go into the city and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:6). It was not an option with Paul—it was a "must" matter. Before he was baptized, he was informed he was to be a witness for Christ to all men (Acts 22:15). Then he was told to be baptized. He knew that it involved a rather unpleasant task for a Jew, for he was told he was being sent to Gentiles with the gospel (Acts 22:21). Whether it was convenient or safe, comfortable or rewarding, or just the opposite, Paul set the pattern for being urgent in and out of season. This is what he charged Timothy with.

Why do men of God need to be so feverish about the work? Because the work is the single means by which God said He offers salvation to the lost (1 Corinthians 1:21). There is no time, then, for men of God to take it easy. It is not difficult for some to sit in a comfortable office surrounded with the latest gadgets and conveniences and lose sight of the desperate need of lost people very near the building. Canned sermons, promotional activities, brotherhood regulatories and a dozen other things often become the hallmark of a preacher

today. But it was not so with Paul, and he would not have it that way now. Then, there is the temptation to use all our gadgetry and personal time in ways that tell the world around us that we have a pretty good thing going and, though the routine may be a bit repetitious, it is really not a very serious matter. Preachers, after all, are expected to say certain things, are they not? Preachers are supposed to let men and women know of Christ and salvation, are they not? It can all become very routine and nothing can kill the urgency deader than that.

There is a way to be urgent and that will surface in the preaching of any man of God who takes this seriously. The word is *conviction*. Is there anything much more impressive and moving than a man who acts out of conviction that he is right and others need to know it? It was said that Charles Haddon Spurgeon held a certain Unitarian preacher in great admiration and often spoke about it. He was asked, "Why are you so much in admiration of him? He denies the deity of Christ. You don't believe what he preaches, do you?" To which Spurgeon is reported to have replied, "No—but he sure does!" No sympathy should ever be given to error, but it is sometimes difficult not to give an ear to a man who believes totally in what he is saying. Most people can tell the difference.

I am told that the motto of the great State of South Carolina is "Animus Opibusque Parati," which in Kentucky means, "Prepared in mind and resources." It suggests readiness to give life and property. It is a good motto for men of God who are convicted in what they preach and why they are preaching it. It causes them to take each opportunity to spread the word. Have you ever tried to type "spread" and think the word "preach?" It comes out, "spreach." Those who are urgent in and out of season are the ones who both spread and preach the word.

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# TIMELY ADMONITIONS



## I Don't Have Time

Earl Schultz

SINCE WE ARE DISCIPLES OF THE LORD, WE have much work to accomplish in His service. We were created for good works and God has ordained that we should walk in them. These good works will glorify our God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. However, many disciples of the Lord fail to find time to do those things which please and glorify Him. It is not uncommon to hear someone say, "I don't have time."

If they had said they did not have enough money, talent or ability, we might believe them—but we cannot believe what is not true. And it is not true that we "don't have time." We do have time. In fact, everyone has the same amount of time, namely, twenty-four hours each day. No one has been given more time and no one has been given less time. If anyone has time, then we all have time.

The problem of having time is not a "time" problem at all. It is a mind problem. 1 Peter 4:1-2 teaches us to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ and to live the time we have according to the will of God. The mind of Christ is apparent to all who know Him, for He said: "I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father" (John 5:30). And again He said: "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38).

If we do not have time to do the will of the Father it is because we do not seek to do the will of the Father. The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches have consumed our lives and we are not honest enough to admit it. To say that we don't have time is a feeble attempt to justify our worldliness and selfishness. God is not impressed with our excuses.

What should we do if we have been making this feeble excuse regarding time? We should repent of this evil and pray to God for forgiveness, remembering that He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We should also bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. If this sounds too easy, rest assured that it is

not.

To truly repent of this sin will require an honest investigation of ourselves. This investigation will uncover a multitude of sin and error. We will be shocked to discover that our lack of time was only one of many symptoms that resulted from an evil and hardened heart. The realization of the fact that we

in us a clean heart and to renew in us a right spirit. It is here that we will ask for a restoration of the joy of salvation. It is in this baptism of sorrow that we will learn about the mind of Christ, and say with Him, "Father, not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

Now with a clean heart and a new spirit, we will be able to do the Father's

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**"If we do not have time to do the will of the Father it is because we do not seek to do the will of the Father. The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches have consumed our lives and we are not honest enough to admit it. To say that we don't have time is a feeble attempt to justify worldliness and selfishness."**

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have been very far away from God and that we have been deeply deceived will produce a sorrow that will drive us to our knees.

It is here that we will acknowledge our transgressions. It is here that we will cry out for God's mercy and lovingkindness. It is here that we will ask God to create

will and bring glory and honor to Him and His Son. Every relationship in life will be new. Opportunities will abound. Everyone will see the change in us. And we will never again have to say those horrible, sinful words, "I don't have time."

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THEME

# TIMELY ADMONITIONS

Russ Bowman

## Time and Eternity: An Apostle's Perspective

TIME IS AN AWESOME CONCEPT AND I suppose that we will never quite grasp a full understanding of it. It is a measurement by which we relate events one to another in an effort to structure life. In fact, the concept of time is so intertwined in our lives that we seldom give it much serious thought. Aside from the fear of being late for work or early for a party, we just don't "take the time" to dwell on it. However, in spite of our obvious lack of mental consideration of time, we still live our lives in accordance with some view of it.

One Indian tribe sees time as a force which moves around man who remains stationary and who comes into contact with the events of living by the movements of those events. In our society, we also see people living their lives according to some relationship with time. Some folks live in the past, constantly reminding us of how things "used to be" or how good or successful they were "back then." Then there are those who try to live in a continuous state of future. To this group, every tomorrow holds that rainbow with a pot of gold at the end, and so today is of little significance. Finally, there are some who live only for the moment. The "go-for-the-gusto" group who attribute no significance to the past and have few, if any, hopes or ambitions for the future. I suppose that one might find some merit in all of these.

However, to the Christian, time should be more significant and should be considered with serious thought. Paul, in Philippians 3:13-15, gives us a good example of how he dealt with time, and how we should view it. He deals with time as it relates to eternity. Finite versus infinite. And, in doing so, he comments on all of the aforementioned philosophies concerning the proper way to view this business of time.

Paul first de-emphasizes the past. According to the inspired writer, the primary action one must take in his effort to be perfect (or attain true fellowship with Christ in heaven) is that of "forgetting those things which are behind." In characteristic style, Paul uses

the language of the athlete to make his point. In a race, those places which you have passed are now behind. They are no longer of any value to the race. The past just doesn't matter with regard to how you live your life today. Also, it is important to note that Paul's statement is not restricted. He doesn't say "forgetting the bad things," nor does he say

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***Paul first de-emphasizes the past . . . "forgetting those things which are behind." In characteristic style, Paul uses the language of the athlete to make his point. In a race, those places which you have passed are now behind. They are no longer of any value to the race. The past just doesn't matter with regard to how you live your life today . . . If Paul could put away the past, why can't we?***

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"forgetting the good things." He says "forgetting the past." Neither past failures nor successes should determine how we live today, and if Paul could put away the past, with his impressive history of both success and failure for the Lord, why can't we?

Also, notice the term Paul uses for proper dealing with the past: forgetting. This does not simply mean to disregard

or de-emphasize, as in a willful action. Have you ever *tried* to forget something? That's the best way to remember it! We forget out of neglect due to preoccupation. If we are concentrating on present or future events, we forget the former things from simple neglect, because their significance is "in the past" and can do little to alter the present. No matter what our past, it cannot affect our future unless we dwell on it.

This brings us to Paul's next concept—the future. Once again we see the runner as Paul describes his "reaching forth unto those things which are before." Notice Paul doesn't dwell in the future, as we are prone to do at times, but simply uses the future as a goal. The marathon runner looks to the finish line as motivation to persevere through the present mile. In like manner, Paul sees the eternal end of this life and uses it as a driving force to endure the hardships of the day. Consider his appeal in Hebrews 12:2 to "look to Jesus" who waits at the finish of the race. We are to follow that example and learn to "reach forth" for the prize. We seldom quit trying if we realize that the golden ring is ours with just a little more "reach."

Also, it seems significant to me that Paul does not wait for the future with an apathetic hope, but is active in his reaching. He sees the rainbows of tomorrow but realizes that in order to cross them, he must work today. Thus, we have the conclusion of his statement—"I press toward the mark." This great apostle does not rest on his laurels, nor does he wait on his dreams. Instead, he works daily to accomplish what he can, while he can. He isn't just living for today, either. He's living for tomorrow by forgetting yesterday and efficiently exploiting today. Unlike our counterparts who "only go around once in life," Paul is making provision for the better life, one which he knows will follow. His time is important only as it relates to his eternity.

"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

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# TIMELY ADMONITIONS



## Redeeming the Time

Hiram Hutto

WHAT DID PAUL MEAN BY HIS EXHORTATION "redeeming the time" (Ephesians 5:16), and why did he give it? The answer to the last question is clearly given: "because the days are evil" (verse 16). No doubt, there are many kinds of evil (false doctrine, corruption of church worship and organization, etc.), but the context of this exhortation evidently is discussing *moral* evil: fornication, obscene language, suggestive jokes, greed, and some things "it is a shame even to speak of" (verses 3-12). After all, they are children of light and as such should walk in the light with its fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truth. Clearly then, they must abstain from the evils which are mentioned, but more than that, they should also rebuke them (verse 11). To fail in these responsibilities will bring the wrath of God upon those who so fail (verse 6). Life is serious and the stakes are high. We must watch each step we take. Thus the exhortation, "Look therefore *carefully* how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise" (verse 15).

Children of God should not walk as fools (who "rush in where angels fear to tread"), but should walk *wisely*. It is in this context of walking wisely that the exhortation "redeeming the time" is given. But what is time? To some people, time is merely those moments between birth and death. It has no ultimate meaning, no real lasting meaning. But to that person who would walk "wisely," time is more than moments. It is for a purpose. It is a period of preparation. It is opportunity to fulfill that purpose. Once a person has decided what life is really all about (its purpose), he ought to use his time to that end. He thereby redeems it. Our context gives the purpose of children of God. They are to be "imitators of God" (5:1). Thus, they are to be like God, and consequently can have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather must reprove them. It is their aim to glorify God and abstain from every form of evil. That is their purpose and they should use every opportunity (redeeming the time) to that end.

What are some specific ways that the Christian may "redeem the time?" Perhaps our passage suggests at least three:

1. **Understanding the will of God** (verse 17). Since our walk is to be "wise" and not foolish, surely it is not accidental that the next verse says, "Be not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (5:17). If we are to imitate God and abstain from evil, we must know what He wants of us. It will take time to learn this; time to study; time to think; time to meditate. Time to plan how to apply this word when the evil one tempts us. David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). Who does not know

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*To that  
person who would  
walk "wisely," time is  
more than moments. It  
is for a purpose. It is a  
period of preparation.  
It is opportunity to  
fulfill that purpose.*

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how Jesus resisted the devil by His knowledge and proper application of the word and will of God. For us to do the same, we will need to use every opportunity that we have to study and learn God's word and then use some more opportunities to think about how that word will be applied. We will surely need to redeem the time.

2. **Worship** (verses 18-19). For many people time spent in worship is wasted time. Even some of those who are present have their minds on other things. Well, why worship anyway? It certainly is not because God needs X number of songs of praise, and the right procedure in prayers. If that were the purpose, we could just hire a choir to sing and somebody to pray for us. The real benefit is

for the worshippers. We need the "teaching and admonishing" that comes from "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." Being together with God's people and receiving that teaching and admonishing can fortify us against the wiles of the devil. Time spent in praising God can remind us what our real position in life is, a creature who is dependent on a Creator who truly cares for us. If we are wise (as verse 15 says) time spent in worshipping God is not wasting time, it is redeeming the time in one of the finest ways.

3. **Prayer** (verse 20). If we are going to "walk wisely" (5:20), where will that wisdom come from? Certainly not from ourselves (Jeremiah 10:23). Remember, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5). Perhaps it is instructive that this passage in James is immediately preceded by instructions that deal with temptations (and so does Ephesians 5:15-16). We are going to be tempted, and it will take wisdom to be able to resist. Do you lack that wisdom needed to know how to deal with temptations? Spend some time in prayer. Use opportunities to pray. Redeem the time. After all, "we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but one that hath in all points been tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help us in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Life (time) is too short to be little. We had better use "every flying minute" to be imitators of God and abstain from every form of evil, "redeeming the time because the days are evil." In the words of the hymn,

Take time to be holy, Speak oft with  
thy Lord  
Abide in Him always, And feed on  
His word  
Make friends of God's children;  
Help those who are weak  
Forgetting in nothing His blessings  
to seek."

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# TIMELY ADMONITIONS

## The Evil Days

Harold E. Turner

SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT AGE IS JUST A state of mind. Someone is wrong. Age pertains to the passing of time and, try as we might, we cannot escape the ravages of time upon the human body.

Paul himself said, "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

We live in a time of wonders in medical science and have many advantages because of this enlightened age. We hear of liver transplants, bypass surgery, artificial hearts, laser beam

Checked your profile lately?

But, in spite of all our efforts to last forever, we still have the friendly little undertaker living around the corner—and doing very well, I might add.

The cold, hard fact is—if we hang around long enough, we're going to age and eventually enter into what Ecclesiastes 12 calls the "evil days." It cannot be denied, and it cannot be avoided.

This article will not be a break-down of all the descriptive phrases found in this section describing the dissipation of the human frame; rather, we just want

when health is failing and the quality of life, therefore (viewed from a purely physical "life-under-the-sun" standpoint), is not what it has been in the days of youth.

The two phrases have nothing to do with moral considerations. The days are not "evil" because our *deeds* are evil, and the days are not in "darkness" because we walk in darkness (Ephesians 5 style). They are evil, dark days because of the physical condition of a man who has been hanging around long enough to experience old age.

The days of youth of Ecclesiastes 12:1 are not restricted to the teenage years, they are the years leading up to the evil days just described.

We are called upon to remember our Creator in our youth before the evil days set in for obvious reasons. If we enter into these "evil" times aside from the peace available through proper provision for the spirit (see 12:7), then we have evil days. We take an undesirable and compound it ten-fold.

On the other hand, if we can apply 12:13 to our lives and bring about and sustain a good relationship with our Creator, we can "rejoice in them all" (11:8). We haven't corrected the physical deficiencies—we have created a frame of mind that can bear the "evil days" and look forward with anticipation to better things.

None of this is designed to create an attitude of despair; all of it is provided to impress upon our minds the reality of our condition and the fact that a sloppy or indifferent drifting through life will drift us right into a much sadder state of affairs than we need bring upon ourselves.

We have seen both categories of men. We have witnessed men enter into the evil days; and we have seen old men rejoicing. How much better is the latter.

That fact that health is gone doesn't necessarily mean the spirit is dampened. Should we live so long, let's resolve now that we will rejoice in the midst of dark times.

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**"The 'evil days' in Chapter 12 are references to the time in life when health is failing and the quality of life, viewed from the physical standpoint, is not what it was in the days of youth."**

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surgery, etc. We see vast modern medical centers and hospitals in every city of any size in the United States. We have medi-care, medi-pak and medi-every other kind of supplemental insurance conceivable.

We are encouraged to take our vitamins, watch our weight, exercise to the exact needed amount, take our annual physicals and avoid excess stress.

We can get tummy tucks, face lifts, nose jobs, and they even make plastic chins now, in case yours is somewhat saggy or otherwise unsatisfactory.

to make some observations about these "days of darkness."

Chapter 12 should always be studied in view of a close look at the closing remarks of Chapter 11. Especially should careful attention be given to 11:8 which reads, "Yea, if a man live many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that comes shall be vanity."

The "days of darkness" in Chapter 11 equate with the "evil days" of Chapter 12 and are references to the time in life



# TIMELY ADMONITIONS



## We Finish Our Years

Gary Henry

"TIME IS SOMETHING WE AIN'T GOT nothing but," said the wag. The quip may be truer than it is grammatical. Time is, after all, the stuff of life—to waste it is to waste life itself. Most of us are plagued with bad time-use habits. Nearly every day we dribble away minutes and hours that might have been put to truly valuable use. We need frequent, pointed reminders to employ our time wisely.

Among the many scriptural admonitions about time, Psalm 90 arrests our attention. Tradition identifies Moses as the author of Psalm 90, and if Moses did write it, it is all the more interesting. Moses' life-span exceeded most of ours—he lived to one hundred and twenty. But, he spent the first forty of his years as a fugitive sojourner, and the last forty leading rebellious Israel through a torturous wilderness toward a promised land he never got to enjoy. Moses' life was relatively long, but considerably troublesome. It is not implausible that Moses was indeed the man whom God inspired to say, "We finish our years like a sigh" (Psalm 90:9).

The Bible has hardly begun before it tells us "all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died" (Genesis 5:5). This father of the human race survived nearly a thousand years. Even so, the inevitable came: "and he died." Not one son of Adam since then has lived without expecting to die. Compared to one another, the lives of some have been longer, some shorter. Some have been more pleasant, some more bitter. But, without exception, all have been affected by the stark reality that life, quite simply and finally, must come to an end. Moses knew what it is human to know: "The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10).

But knowing and taking account of are not the same thing. Even a child can be taught to "know" much that he cannot understand or see the significance of.

Similarly, the need of a human being is not just to *know* that life is fleeting, that it is liable to be cut short unexpectedly, that it will certainly end, and that it determines one's eternal destiny. His need is to *contemplate the importance* of these truths. Moses prays, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). Wisdom is the product of sober reflection upon the inescapable fact of death. The man

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He simply MUST resist  
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ively. He understands  
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for something that will  
outlast it, and he  
ought to refuse to  
dissipate life worth-  
lessly. He ought to  
make each day  
"count" for  
eternity.***

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who "numbers his days" meditates on death—its unavoidability, its finality, its meaning. However disagreeable the process may be, a human being must, for his own good, learn the full story about his own perishability. A man is wiser, like David, for wanting to know the melancholy truth: "Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am" (Psalm 39:4). Virtually everyone

knows he will die—the person who has paused to let that sink in is the one who will do something about it.

And what will a person do? More to the point, what will a Christian do who has numbered his days? The gist of it is this: he will develop the discipline to invest the time of his life in eternal pursuits. That discipline will be the fruit of his determination to make life worthwhile, and that determination will, in turn, be the fruit of his dedication to God. Dedication, determination, discipline—without these, the Christian is apt to squander his time. And Satan would like nothing more. If he can distract attention away from life's end and eternity's beginning, he can interest a man in lots of inconsequential activities. But the Christian cannot afford to meander through life, wasting time on trivia. He simply *must* resist that temptation decisively. He understands that the only wise expenditure of life is for something that will outlast it, and he ought to refuse to dissipate life worthlessly. He ought to make each day "count" for eternity.

There is in truth not a day which cannot be made to count. We have been urged: "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is *not in vain* in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). The child of God lives in the conviction that there is for him no such thing as an unimportant day. "Today" does matter, because a life is equal to the sum total of *daily* deeds. For better or worse, what we *will* be ever afterward is partly made up of what we do *today*. So we have to, as Rudyard Kipling put it, "fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run." We have to live for God in the days of our lives, so that in the end such a fine thing may be said of us as was said of David: "After he had served his own generation by the will of God, [he] fell asleep" (Acts 13:36). There is no grander way to finish our years than by serving our own generation by the will of God.

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# TIMELY ADMONITIONS

Pat Jones

## Harvest Time

"WHILE THE EARTH REMAINS, SEED TIME and harvest shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). When my second grade teacher claimed that peas sown made more peas, I tested her "theory." Without so much as a mini-tractor, a crop grew, allowing a suburb kid to grasp the concept of harvest time. Scripture abounds with literal and metaphorical "harvest" references. Of special interest are the figurative ones in which seed—the Word—is sown hoping for fertile hearts of obedient faith where it can grow spiritual fruit (Matthew 13; 1 Peter 1:23; Galatians 5:22). Such imagery has *current* and *future* applications:

**CURRENT HARVEST TIME** is described in John 4:35: "Say not ye, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest." On the Texas Gulf Coast where the first freeze often arrives late, gardeners may reap from a spring planting and on the same day begin sowing a fall garden. God's evangelistic season provides constant opportunity to sow teaching and reap prospects. Those we reach often had seeds planted in their hearts years earlier by others. Jesus explained, "One sows and another reaps. I send you forth to reap that for which . . . others have labored and you entered into their labor" (John 4:37-38). Even if today's sowing reaps no visible result, be encouraged that your effort may contribute to a harvest ahead when "he who sows and he who reaps rejoice together" (verse 36). Sowing truth always fulfills part of God's will (Isaiah 55:11).

With potential for a plentiful harvest, why are workers few (Matthew 9:37)? Many fear a difficult harvest (few studies, less baptisms, rejection), so they choose not to get involved. But Ecclesiastes 11:4 warns, "He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap." It takes Paul's optimism to see a "wide door of effective service opened" amidst "many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:9).

**FUTURE HARVEST TIME** indicates

latter results and consequences, especially those of the Judgment Day. "Glean" these truths about the harvest time to come:

**Future harvest time will be inspection time.** Isaiah 5:1-6 tells of God's "vineyard on a fertile hill. He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He expected it to produce good grapes," but on inspection found "it produced only wild ones." In disappointment, God asked, "What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done?" With its blessings removed, the vineyard was "laid waste." But Jesus tells of a different harvest: "I am the vine and you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit. By this is My Father glorified that you bear much fruit . . . if you keep My commandments" (John

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### Scripture abounds with literal and metaphorical "harvest" references.

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15:1-10). At inspection time, will God be disappointed or glorified by the fruit you bore?

Caution: "this world" inspections are deceptive. Hypocrite "tares" posing as righteous "wheat" may fool some, but harvest makes the difference obvious (Matthew 13). Others assume when people-causes do not fair well by worldly standards, that it is some providential indication of God's disfavor. Eliphaz said Job was reaping what he had sown (Job 4:8). God showed Job's suffering to be His faith-proving tool, not a verdict of displeasure. Eliphaz, by the way, did not pass inspection (42:7). God's examination will declare the whole story at harvest time.

**Future harvest time will produce more than expected.** As one seed bears much fruit, a similar spiritual truth is seen:

"He who supplies seed to the sower . . . will multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness" (2 Corinthians 9:10). "Give and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over" (Luke 6:38). "You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many" (Matthew 25:21). "Momentary light affliction is producing an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17). You can't outgive God. Conversely, when man sows iniquity, his seed bears fruit at harvest he never bargained for. "They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7). Can a fleshly life somehow reap a heavenly reward? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. He that sows to his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6:7-8).

**Future harvest time will be successful only for the steadfast.** A discouraged laborer who wonders if harvest will ever come must not "grow weary in well doing," but take courage that "in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

**Future harvest time will be too late to sow new seed.** Corrupt Judah was certain God would not let His city be destroyed, but no "balm" existed for unrepentant hearts and destruction came. With deep remorse that generation faced the reality that they would not go home: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion" (Psalms 137:1). If a seventy-year exile evoked such lamentation, how much more will eternal hell cause people to join Judah in the haunting dirge, "Harvest is past, summer is ended and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20). Regrets over seed they have sown come much too late. In such a plight, what would you wish to change? Today—before harvest passes—sow seeds of repentance. "He that goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalms 126:6).

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# That's Life!

Dee Bowman



*MY BROTHER LOWELL IS A BUILDER.* A good one. Recently I accompanied him to a job site. While he was working with one of his subcontractors, I watched a brick layer at work. Fascinating! As I watched it suddenly occurred to me that all the bricks were not even like I thought they were. They look so straight in the wall. But they're not. Some are shorter, some thicker, some have rough ends, some smoother. How can the wall look so even? It's the mortar. The mortar makes it all even out.

Paul said, "above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:14). And that's how all the stones which are "built up a spiritual house" fit into the wall!

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* "I am in Nashville, ready to depart for home. I must stop in Dallas enroute. I profited from the week just past, even though it was uncomfortable in some ways. The profit always comes from the plain folks—those who love more than they fuss and fight. They don't have names that everyone recognizes, but how special they are! Dedicated, sincere, unostentatious, humble. I love them most of all, I think. They make no claims to fame, but they demand preaching that will help them get to heaven. I think they have a heart-involvement not possible for the proud, arrogant, and self-righteous. They just have a simple trust in God. I like that. A lot.

One such person is Rex Bartley. He drove me to the airport this morning. As we shook hands at the terminal curbside, his eyes filled with tears as he thanked me for preaching God's word. May God increase his tribe."

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*ED HARRELL HAS A NEW SUIT.* It's one of those professor-looking, two piece jobs—khaki pants and a polo shirt.

\* \* \*

*NOBODY CAN DO EVERYTHING.* And anybody can do nothing. But there are some things anybody can do:

I can encourage someone with a kind remark.

I can do my part.

I can start today.

\* \* \*

*HERB CAEN*, a writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle* has a good point when he says, "A man begins cutting his wisdom teeth the first time he bites off more than he can chew."

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*RUSS AND I WERE TALKING AWHILE BACK.* We made a little gem of wisdom. "There is no greater joy than to see your offspring spring off." We both agreed. But for different reasons.

\* \* \*

*THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT* concerns itself basically with two things: attitude and conduct. When a man has so controlled himself that he has mastered these two things, he is a mature Christian. Until then he must work, work, work. Excuse me, please—I have to get back to work.



# By Bread Alone

Robert H. Farish

The devil launched his attack on Jesus with words which challenged the fact of Jesus' deity and appealed to the hunger of His humanity. The devil said, "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Matthew 4:3). Jesus answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). There was no need for Jesus to prove His deity to the devil, so Jesus in His response put the hunger of His humanity in proper perspective with the words, "Man shall not live by bread alone."

The phrase, "by bread alone," recognizes the fact that "man" is more than physical. Man is a composite being, composed of both "body and soul," and thus cannot "live" by physical food alone. The physical or "outward man" does live on material bread and for such food, hungers. But the soul, the inward man, is not nourished by such food.

The danger of allowing the desires of the outward man to gain the ascendancy, by failure to recognize the nature and needs of the "inward man" is constantly threatening each creature that is "in the image of God." Many warnings of this danger are found in the Bible. Jesus reminded the devil of the truth that "Man shall not live by bread alone." Then in His sermon on the mountain, He elaborated in greater detail. "Therefore I say unto you, be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food?" (Matthew 6:24-25). Jesus urges men to give priority to the things of the soul. "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Consider this also: "For what shall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world, and forfeit his life [soul]? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life [soul]?" (Matthew 16:26). Note also Jesus' words, "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). The limitations of space prevent detailed examination of

these and many other relevant passages, but I urge you to study carefully Paul's discussion of the "inward man" and the "outward man" (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8). In this place, the afflictions which are suffered by that part of man which lives by "bread" are called light and temporal, in contrast to the unseen, eternal weight of glory which awaits all who "walk by faith."

Jesus, in His reply to the devil, not only points out that "bread" alone provides an inadequate diet, but also gives the additional essential soul nutrients.

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***Physical  
hunger is a  
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Jesus encouraged men  
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... The "whole man"  
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"bread alone."***

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Man shall not *live* by bread alone, *but* by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. This same truth is expressed by Solomon in these words: "Let us hear the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The word "duty" in this passage is supplied by the translators; hence, I have left it out of the quotation. The *whole* of man is amply supplied when he fears God and keeps God's commandments.

Physical hunger is a characteristic of the healthy body; likewise, soul hunger

characterizes the healthy soul. Jesus encouraged men to cultivate such desire in these words: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). W. E. Vine defines "righteousness" as "whatever conforms to the revealed will of God." The "whole man" hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and not just for "bread alone."

It should be noted that "bread" is not prohibited as food for physical man. The Bible nowhere denies the need for concern for our "daily bread." The person who can, but will not, work for his daily bread can find no comfort in our Lord's order to "work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (John 6:27). The Lord here is stating, in different words, the principles which He stated in response to the devil's temptation. This statement requires men to give priority to "the bread of life" (John 6:34). When one gives priority to physical needs, he is attempting to live by bread alone. Man must "work not [only] for the food that perisheth but [also] for that which abideth unto eternal life."

Paul emphatically affirms his right to partake of physical nourishment in his rhetorical question, "Have we not the right to eat and to drink?" (1 Corinthians 9:4). But no faithful child of God, who is physically able to provide for himself, has the right to "eat and drink" at the expense of others. Paul cites his behavior as an example: "Neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand . . . not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an example unto you . . . for even when we were with you, this we commanded you, if any will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:8-10).

The child of God is to *work* for his daily bread; *pray* for his daily bread—but always to be aware that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Failure to observe God's priorities leads down the broad way to soul destruction.

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# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"I will bless Jehovah at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in Jehovah: the meek shall hear thereof, and be glad. Oh magnify Jehovah with me, and let us exalt his name together" (34:1-3).

## What It Means to Magnify the Lord

**W**e are told in this great psalm what one who magnifies the Lord will do and when he will do it. The Christian must never forget that his aim in life is lofty and sublime. He seeks, as Paul did, to magnify Christ in his life (Philippians 1:20). Just what is it that such a disciple will do?

**1. He will bless and praise God (verse 1).** "I will bless Jehovah at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." Too often we heap praise on undeserving men and neglect the praise of the Almighty. Let us never become so enamored with the rich and powerful of this world that we are unimpressed with God. He alone is the proper object of our praise, and among His creatures we have the unparalleled privilege of offering Him praise. We are assured that He accepts it, for He says, "whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me" (Psalm 50:23).

**2. He will do this "at all times" or "continually" (verse 1).** It is easy to become forgetful. We have a perpetual duty to God to praise Him for His mercy and kindness. The Christian fully recognizes that "It is of Jehovah's lovingkindnesses that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). If we will cultivate an awareness that His

mercies are "new every morning," it will be hard not to magnify Him. We must habitually develop a thankful spirit under every circumstance, in every situation; before, in and after trials; in bright days of happiness and somber nights of sorrow. Our God can bring sunshine into the darkest nights. In the same way that Paul and Silas praised God in prison (Acts 16:23-25), that Job blessed His name amidst tragic personal loss (Job 1:20-21), and the beaten disciples rejoiced in their suffering for His name (Acts 5:40-41)—so can we "bless Him at all times." We have abiding reasons for blessing God even in the face of sorrows and trials. If we will think upon them and enumerate them, the scale by which we weigh God's mercies will grow heavy, and the scale by which we weigh our difficulties will grow light.

**3. He will boast in Jehovah (verse 2).** "My soul shall make her boast in Jehovah." Man's boasting is usually in himself (Luke 18:9-14). The Christian will fail to magnify God by mundane, arrogant self-boasting. God says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah" (Jeremiah 9:23-24). Yes, our boasting must be in Jehovah. Perhaps the greatest boast in all of Scripture was made by Paul, and can be echoed by every disciple today—"I can do all things!" (Philippians 4:13). But even this boast takes on humility when he adds, as I must—"in Him that strengtheneth me." (See 1 Corinthians 15:10; Psalm 44:8).

Finally, notice in verse two the result of magnifying God in one's life. "The meek [humble] shall hear thereof and be glad." If you will praise God in all the circumstances of life and boast only in Him, you can be a significant influence on others for good. "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). It is true that all men will not be constrained by your example. But the "meek"—those who have been brought low in their own esteem because of life's adversities—will sit up and take notice of what such a person does.

Would you magnify God in your life? Put this psalm into practice: praise God at all times, boast only in Him, and good results are sure to follow.



# Origin of the Church in Toronto

Edgar McFadden

James Beaty, Senior, was born on September 1, 1798, in Killashandra, County Cavan, Ireland. He arrived in Toronto, then known as York, on Saturday, March 17, 1818. The total white population at that time was about five hundred inhabitants. At the time of his arrival there was four feet of snow on the ground although no snow had fallen until the tenth of March of that year.

Shortly after his arrival James Beaty married Sarah Armstrong. She died in 1829 and he never remarried. He evidently held strong religious convictions before her death, as he opposed the christening of his son and daughter. When Sarah took the two children to the clergyman to be christened, she related her husband's objections to him. The clergyman sent for James. After they discussed the matter, the clergyman said, "James, you have been in bad company." James replied, "If I have, it was Christ and His apostles."

James Beaty was brought up in the Presbyterian church. After arriving in Canada, along with Peter Rutherford, William McMaster, and others he met with Alex Stewart, a Scotch Baptist preacher, for some time. Stewart was a Calvinist and finally there was a rupture among them on Calvinism. Beaty and Rutherford left and began to study the teachings of the New Testament for themselves, finally accepting Christianity as their sole guide in life.

The teachings of Christ as revealed in the New Testament were presented by James Beaty at a meeting in a Presbyterian Church on Duchess Street. He was joined by a young man named John Bennett, a hatter, who had been impressed by the views announced. They were soon joined by another man named Shanklin. Mr. Beaty was baptized by being immersed in Lake Ontario (Acts 22:16). Although the exact year is not known, it is generally thought to have been sometime between 1820 and 1825. He was the first Disciple in Toronto.

Beaty, Bennett, and Shanklin were afterwards joined by James Armstrong, a Yonge Street saddler, who also came

out of the Presbyterian Church. They met for some time in the home of James Armstrong to break bread (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). James Leslie and Joseph Leslie, ex-postmaster, also identified themselves with the movement until a gathering of fourteen or sixteen regularly assembled at Armstrong's house. In-

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***A lot was purchased in 1840 at the southeast corner of Shuter and Victoria Streets. This was private property owned by James Beaty. Two framed houses also owned by him were moved onto the premises whereby a meeting house was established for the Disciples of Christ. It was devoted to the church's use for free and was indeed kept lighted, warmed, cleaned and maintained in good order for many years.***

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cluded in this number were William McMaster, Neil C. Love, and William Elliott. George Barclay of Pickering had broken his connection with the Baptists and met with them in Toronto as often as was convenient. This occurred about the year 1836. In 1842 Thomas C. Scott arrived from Scotland, settled, and

worshipped with them. He was a member of a Church of Disciples in Scotland. Then, in 1844, Robert Beaty, a nephew of James Beaty, Senior, was baptized and he was united with the brethren.

Finally a lot was purchased in 1840 at the southeast corner of Shuter and Victoria Streets. This was private property owned by James Beaty. Two framed houses also owned by him were moved onto the premises whereby a meeting house was established for the Disciples of Christ. It was devoted to the church's use for free and was indeed kept lighted, warmed, cleaned, and maintained in good order for many years. Meetings were held there until about 1862 and then a red brick, one-story building was erected by him near the frame houses. There was an inscription: "If Ye Continue In My Word, Then Are Ye My Disciples Indeed" (John 8:31) carved in stone over the doorway. Eventually, owing to various disputes and difficulties, both lot and building were lost in 1876.

When the Disciples of Christ gave up their meeting house in 1876 on Shuter and Victoria Streets, they subsequently divided into two bodies. James Beaty, a man of strong convictions, was able to lead away the brethren who preferred not to worship with the aid of musical instruments. Among the casualties of the Beaty controversy was William McMaster who joined the Baptists. He later became the Honorable Senator McMaster and founder of McMaster University in Hamilton.

Mr. Beaty was a serious student of the Bible and never ceased to read it with zealous interest. He busied himself in preaching and in organizing churches and thereby left behind him evidences of Christian activity in the circles where he moved. It was largely owing to his efforts that the Disciples of Christ (later Church of Christ) became a significant body and rapidly grew in numbers. He died at his Parkdale residence in Toronto in his ninety-fourth year.

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# Mining The Scriptures

## PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

### The Sermon on the Mount

#### Not Oaths, But Truth

**I**n Matthew 5:33-37 Jesus presents the fourth of His six antitheses which contrast Pharasaic perversions of the law with the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven. The exact words of the traditional teaching which Jesus cites (verse 33) are not found anywhere in the Old Testament but were fashioned from statements like that of Leviticus 19:12: "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, and profane the name of thy God" (see Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 6:11; Numbers 30:2).

The law's approach to oaths was similar to its approach to divorce. The Mosaic covenant did not ordain divorce but sought to regulate and restrain what was already prevalent. Correspondingly, the law did not originate oaths or command Israel to swear but directed that any oaths taken should be by the name of God (Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20) and must not be false (Leviticus 19:12; Zechariah 8:17; Malachi 3:5). But these restrictions were never intended to be understood as permission to lie when not under oath. God's hatred of all lies is made abundantly clear in the Old Testament (Proverbs 6:17; 12:22).

Unfortunately, the Pharisees, instead of finding in God's regulations concerning swearing an appeal for constant truthfulness, saw rather a loophole for deceit. The thrust of their tradition was: "Don't perjure yourself when the name of God is involved." "Unto the Lord" was the operative phrase of their perversion. To facilitate their dishonesty the Pharisees made sophistic distinctions between binding and non-binding oaths (Matthew 23:16-22). These hypocrites had a fine concern to avoid perjury (as they defined it) but no commitment to honesty, truthfulness and neighbor love.

It is one of the tragedies of this section of the sermon that it has been reduced to little more than a battleground over the permissibility of judicial oaths. The evil which Jesus attacks in His prohibition of swearing (verse 34) is not oaths, but deception. He sweeps away the vain oaths of the Pharisees with their deceitful subtleties by observing that there is nothing by which they might swear (heaven, earth, Jerusalem, their own head) which was not at last tied directly to God and His power (verses 34-36; 23:16-22). The Lord is simply stressing the essential truth that every word we utter is "before God" and subject to divine judgment (Matthew 12:36-37). A simple emphatic "yes" or "no" puts men under no less obligation to tell the truth and honor their promises than the most stringent oath. Oaths were never intended to heighten the swearer's obligation to tell the truth (that existed already) but to give greater assurance to those who received them (Hebrews 6:13-18).

What are the practical lessons to learn from all this? Some have seen here a stern warning against profanity. A good lesson on that subject would certainly be in order. We are without question a blasphemous generation. Jaded with small blasphemies and seeking bigger ones, we treat with urbane amusement the sacrilegious savaging of words like God, Christ, heaven, hell, salvation and damnation. Our mindless uttering of holy names has cost us our sense of reverence and with it our sense of humanity. But profanity is not our Lord's primary concern here. His concern is honesty—total, absolute honesty.

What we owe our brother and our neighbor is truth in all our words or no words at all. There are many temptations to lie and be faithless. Hatred, guilt and covetousness move us to stretch the truth until it snaps. Selfishness or lust entreats us to break the solemn vows of marriage. Thoughtlessness prompts us to forget as unimportant the day-to-day promises we make to others. Some Christians have lied away their integrity by unfounded accusations and unsupported claims. Others have promised away their honor with unkept commitments. Such behavior is unacceptable in a kingdom citizen. We serve a God who cannot lie (Titus 2:1) and must bring to His service a transparent honesty and truthfulness (Colossians 3:9; Ephesians 4:15,25).

**B**ut we must not close this study without dealing with an obvious and unresolved question. Does not Jesus by the words, "Swear not at all" prohibit the taking of any kind of oath? There has long been in my heart a ready reception for such a conclusion, but the broad context of the New Testament raises some serious questions about it. We are not so much troubled by the realization that God (Acts 2:30; Hebrews 6:17; 7:20-21), His Son (Matthew 26:63-64) and His angels (Revelation 10:5-6) have sworn oaths, as we are by the fact that the epistles of Paul are fairly sprinkled with oath-like expressions we can explain no other way (Romans 1:9; 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:23; 11:31; Galatians 1:20; Philippians 1:8; et. al.).

How can we reconcile Paul's clear practice with Jesus' prohibition? First, we believe, by recognizing that some apparently absolute statements turn out not to be when the whole of Scripture is to be considered (Mark 10:11-12 and Matthew 19:9; Matthew 5:42 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10). And then by realizing that Jesus is treating in this context the lying oaths of the Pharisees and not the solemn oaths of those who would tell the truth under any circumstances but find that at times others are in need of special assurance. Each Christian must weigh this matter carefully, remembering that he is not compelled to swear, but that he is always compelled to speak the truth.





## God's Work In You

### Philippians 1:6

**T**he little group of friends in Christ had met in a home and considered the challenge to take seriously the call of Jesus to come and die, deny self, bear a cross and surrender all for Him. I was not prepared for the tearful reaction of a dear young sister, relatively new in the Lord but so serious about her life in Christ from the beginning: "I just can't do that. I read about Paul and others like him, and realize that I am just not going to make it. I can't be like that." But our object was to live in Philippians for a month, learning to think like Paul. And the next day my young sister began, and found the encouragement she needed at Philippians 1:6.

The participle at the beginning ("being confident") closely relates to the whole content of verses 3-5. I doubt there is much use debating whether it is exclusively connected grammatically with either "I thank my God" (verse 3) or "making my supplication with joy" (verse 4). Both take place at the same time, verse four stating the occasion of the thanksgiving mentioned in verse three. Paul thanks God on the basis of his whole remembrance of the Philippian saints and lifts up his petition for them, "being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in [them] will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (verse 6)—i.e., having this confidence as he prays.

God is the one who "began a good work" in them (see 2:12f). A special divine providence had called Paul and his company to preach the gospel in Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). With the power of the testimony, argumentation and motivation in "the word of the Lord" (verse 32), the Lord had opened Lydia's heart "to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul" (verse 14). Thus the good work began.

Paul started his letter by speaking of his thanksgiving to God which grew out of his whole memory of the Philippians—predominantly their "fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now" (verse 5). But now we understand why Paul's entire remembrance of *them* caused him to thank *God*. It was God at work in these Philippians, producing such fruit; and God was to be praised.

But verse six is not just connected with the thanksgiving for the past; it connects as well with the supplication on their behalf for present and future blessing. Before he is done Paul will be specific (in verses 9-11) about his petition on behalf of the Philippians. Basically it was a prayer for their final salvation. Paul offered this petition

with confidence that God did not begin a good work in them simply to abandon it; but rather, that he would continue working to bring it on to its end and finish it "until the day of Jesus Christ" when it would be perfected indeed (see verses 9-11; Colossians 1:22).

No wonder my young sister received courage from verse six. Paul had taught her to realize that God had only just begun a good work in her; that He had no intention of abandoning that work, but meant to continue His work in her until it was finished; that she need only cooperate with the work God was doing in her. What significance and excitement that concept sheds upon the life of a disciple! God has chosen me; He is at work in me; He has destined me for great things here and hereafter.

**B**ut while verse six gives courage, a perversion of it might lead to a careless presumption. Paul's confidence concerning the final salvation of certain Christians cannot be stretched to cover everyone who has once been saved. The work of God in persons can be overthrown (Romans 14:20). Paul certainly did not write with such confidence to the Galatians who had also "begun in the Spirit" but later were trying to be "perfected in the flesh" (3:3); who had been saved by grace (1:6; 5:1), but later were toying with a position that represented an abandonment of grace (5:2-4). See Galatians 1:6, 3:1-3 and 4:11 for Paul's fears.

Verse seven rules out such misunderstanding. It provides Paul's *justification* of the confidence expressed in verse six—the reason "it is right to be thus minded on behalf of" the Philippians. But "because I have you in my heart" is not the complete statement of that reason. Paul's confidence was not based upon a mushy, blind love. He tells the way in which he had them in his heart: "I have you in my heart, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all being partakers with me of grace" (literally translated). Consult Philippians 1:5, 29f., 2:25-30 and 4:10-20 for elaboration of this sharing of grace.

They being such as they were, Paul expressed confidence that God's work in them would be finished. God had also begun a good work in the Galatians (3:3). But they were deserting the one who called them in the grace of Christ (1:6) and Paul wrote, "I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain" (4:11).

(To be continued.)

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# Life Without Prayer

David Crawford

If there was ever a subject that was inherently positive, it would have to be prayer. No matter what angle you take, if properly approached, prayer is a beautiful thing. Unfortunately, it is perceived by many as a thing of ancient beauty to be admired and appreciated but not embraced and engaged in. After all, who could have a prayer life like the Psalmists, Elijah, or Jesus? Isn't this kind of prayer activity a mark of the elite type of disciple? Can't you and I, whose missions pale in comparison to biblical heroes, be satisfied with dinner and bedtime prayers? Obviously not. The mission brought to bear on each and every child of God is in many ways parallel to that of Jesus or Paul or any other hero of faith. And one such similarity is seen in the fact that none of us can carry on, much less carry out, our mission without the Father's aid. It appears superfluous to add that, though part of our heavenly help comes via the word (God's communication to us), the other and equally significant part is via prayer (our communication to God).

Perhaps we could do something negative to bring about something positive. A sort of spiritual reverse psychology might stimulate an increase in our estimation of, thus our participation in, prayer. What would life be without prayer? "Perish the thought," you say. Well, not just yet. It has been said that you don't appreciate the water 'til the well runs dry—so let's drain it for a moment and see what happens.

Quite simply, *without prayer the Christian would be a nervous wreck*. Anxious worry would seep into our minds, root into our hearts, and eventually sink our souls when these various cares reach flood stage. Such will not take long without the protection of prayer. I'm afraid that discouragement, depression, and despair would become the order of the day. And what Christian can function as the bundle of spiritual energy that he is supposed to be, when in reality, he is no more than a bundle of nerves? The fierce and gnawing anxiety that strikes the prayerless is like a cancer that permeates the spiritual body and destroys the cells and organs of soul

health and vigor. With prayer, though, there is therapy. This spiritual therapy is available to all children of God, free of charge. To all who have been bent and bruised by sin and grief, sessions are available—at your call. Peter urges that we "get it off our chest" and onto one of greater strength when he prescribes, "Casting all your care on Him for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). The results are not overwhelming (that best describes the initial problems), just tranquil (Philippians 4:6-7). Without

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children of God, free  
of charge.***

---

prayer, life would get on your nerves, literally. Always remember, prayer is a source of peace.

Without prayer we would not only be bundles of nerves, *but masses of weakness as well*. It shouldn't come as a surprise to those who don't pray often that their level of spiritual might is low if measurable at all. Is it any wonder that the prayerless don't feel and experience the power the Bible promises and makes available? Paul told the Ephesians that the same power that raised Christ from

the dead was at hand to work on/in them (1:18). He expanded on this idea by telling them a bit later that there is so much power available that we can't even imagine its limits (3:20). Why don't we experience it? We haven't tapped into this vast reservoir of energy yet, at least many haven't. It has always been through prayer that the godly have found the strength and vigor to maintain faithfulness in the midst of perverse and pressuring generations. Paul says that the word of God is spiritual dynamite. In Romans 1:16 he employs the Greek word *dunamis* from which we get our English word *dynamite*. If then, to address the word of God is to confront spiritual dynamite, to address God Almighty in prayer is to light the fuse! When weakness threatens, keep in mind that prayer is a source of power.

One final thought that might catch many others is that *without prayer what deprived Christians we would be*. As James says, "yet you do not have because you do not ask" (4:1). Life without prayer will not produce anything except deprived Christians. Certainly God blesses all men through various channels (Matthew 5:8; John 3:16), but life's most significant blessings are the exclusive rights of praying Christians. As God's children we must realize that prayer is connection between the person and the promise. There are almost innumerable blessings at our fingertips, so close and yet so far from the prayerless. We are willfully starving ourselves of individual and congregational blessings that are critical to our mission and happiness. Let us be sure that we never blame God for our often-experienced spiritual poverty. Prayer is a source of provision.

Can't we see that life without prayer would be no life at all? Devoid of the peace, power, and provision that God showers upon the prayerful, we would be spiritual vegetables, eeking out a miserable existence in a harsh and merciless environment. Now, let us perish the thought of life without prayer, and behave as though we cannot live without it—because we can't.

1717 Lexington, Deer Park, TX 77536



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### Father and Son in South America

In 1963, most American Christians interested in foreign evangelism were concerned with Europe, Africa and, to some extent, Asia. Those looking south seldom saw beyond Mexico. Phillip Morgan, a school teacher who had majored in Spanish and had spent some time assisting churches along the Texas-Mexican border, was one of the few exceptions. He saw the need for evangelizing South America and determined to go with his family of six to that continent. Included in his family was his six year old son, Mark.

In Santiago, Chile, Morgan met Roberto Perez. Though converted only one year earlier, Perez proved to be an effective co-worker and other converts showed an evangelistic disposition to begin new congregations in new areas. Morgan encouraged this, eager that the work should be rooted in the local culture rather than having the appearance of being a North American transplant. Six years later, when forced by family circumstances to return to the United States, he left five congregations and the seed planted for the work in Argentina.

Since 1969, Phillip Morgan has made periodic preaching trips back to South America, returning at eighteen month intervals. In the early seventies young Mark began accompanying other preachers on tours of Mexico and later went with his father on a preaching tour of Europe.

By 1977, Mark was ready to return to Chile as an evangelist in his own right. He found it exciting and challenging to return to the scenes of his childhood to help carry on the work in which his father had had so large a part. Since returning, Mark has worked in Santiago, Valparaiso, Quillota and, for the past three years, in Valdivia.

Those three years in Valdivia have seen the membership double from a nucleus of 13 to its present 27. A full program of activity accounts for this: gospel meetings, visitation and personal work programs, a radio program and correspondence course. Much effort has also gone into edification of the members through a lectureship, women's Bible studies, young people's classes, a special training program for two young evangelists and a concentrated effort to upgrade the Sunday Bible school

program. Mark is quick to give credit to others for their part in the work, especially to Raul Caro who is supported along with Mark for work in the gospel. Mark calls him the best personal worker he has ever known.

Young Morgan is very optimistic for the future growth of the church in South America, particularly Chile. As a result of radio programs and correspondence courses, they know of Christians in every major city in southern Chile. Two additional radio programs planned for the near future should result in further contacts. He and Raul hope to go to each city to spend a year establishing a functioning congregation of at least 10 to 15 members.

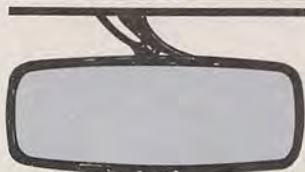
Some North American brethren wonder about the wisdom of this approach. "What can you do," they ask, "with all those scattered churches of 10 or 15 members?" Mark's answer is: "You can do a lot more with that than you can with a congregation of 300 in the capital city with most of them doing more than warming a seat."

Mark is not thinking of short-term work. He has married an intelligent and talented Chilean wife who has proved to be a great help to him. They plan to make South America their home for many years to come. Besides the 15 congregations in Chile, Mark reports contact with 10 in Argentina, 9 in Colombia and 1 in Venezuela. When he feels no longer needed in Chile, he hopes to move on to one of those countries or, perhaps, to one where the Lord's church is not known to exist at all.

Considering the few years and few workers that have been involved, the growth of these churches in South America has been encouraging. But remembering the fact that the population of that continent is half again that of the United States, we should be ashamed that we have done so little. Spanish is spoken in most of its countries and Spanish is one of the easiest of "foreign" languages to learn. Where is another Phillip Morgan who will accept for himself and for his family the challenge of another South American country? The continent still lies largely in darkness, desperately needing more dedicated "lights in the world."

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341





# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## Fame

I frequently travel the serpentine road from Fayetteville, Arkansas to Tulsa, Oklahoma in search of an airport. It is, by and large, poor country, strewn with cowboys, Indians and pickup trucks. The land sometimes boasts a wild beauty but it frequently turns parched and hot and its inhabitants seem ungainly rejects from Marlboro commercials.

The winding road passes through a series of shriveled little towns that could easily serve as sets for Wild West movies. They have fitting names—Siloam Springs, Flint, Locust Grove, Kansas, Chouteau. I am sure they are wonderful places to live, and I frequently stop for a hearty meal, but they would make the average city slicker lock the doors to his Cadillac and step on the accelerator.

There must be a competitive spirit in these little towns;

at least each exhibits an intriguing local pride. As one enters each of the villages, he is greeted by a sign announcing its claim to fame. One is the hometown of a rather obscure major league baseball player. Another sports a sign: "Home of Johnny Ray." Try that out on your teenager. Besides, Johnny Ray probably hasn't been to Oklahoma since Will Rogers died. Locust Grove is the home of Willard Stone. You know Willard. He's the weatherman on the Today Show. I think.

Fame is relative, folks, and frivolous. Which is why the Scriptures say "to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly; according as God hath dealt to each man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

Preachers may be particularly susceptible to the allure of fame. I've seen breasts swell at

the suggestion that a sermon was the best ever preached in Rock Bottom Hollow. In the 1950s Oral Roberts posted a sign on the road leading into Tulsa announcing that that city was the home of Oral Roberts; embarrassed citizens demanded that it be taken down. I have known others who came perilously close to broadcasting similar advertisements. And there are also song leaders who glory in being the best in the county and ladies who cook the meanest pies in their environs.

It is a blessing to be talented so long as our gift does not become a feeble claim to fame. Each person can only be the best that his or her ability allows. We should thank God for whatever talent we have and use it to His glory. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that

God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:11).

Besides, you may end up looking slightly ridiculous if you take your fame too seriously. It is surely true that the cure for false pride is to think soberly about ourselves. If you look close enough, you will find plenty to keep you humble. But I suggest that a little sense of humor is also useful. Everyone who struts across life's stage is a comedy act to a part of the audience. Can you imagine how all of mankind's posturing and preening looks from heaven? The ultimate end of human pride is too tragic to laugh at, but it must be hard for the heavenly hosts to overlook the supreme ludicrousness of the human burlesque.

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## Watch Your Step

**T**here are so many things we take for granted. Take walking for instance. It's something most of us do every day, something on which we constantly rely. And yet how often do we stop and thank God for the ability? Oh, there are some courageous folks who face life, and rather well, without this simple ability; but it is done at great inconvenience and sometimes in intense pain. When you stop to think about it, walking is really something.

Walking is nice. You can see more of life when you walk. Walking is good for you. Doctors say it is one of the purest forms of exercise. It is the simplest, most efficient form of locomotion. Automobiles and airplanes can take you around the country, and in a hurry; but they can't take you across the room, or up the stairs, or out of doors to the garden.

To walk is to proceed a step at a time. Skipping is not walking. Nor is running walking. Skipping means leaving out a step or so; running is going at a rate faster than just walking. You're less likely to stumble or fall when you're walking than when you're skipping or running.

The Bible uses the term *walk* as a means to describe the whole round of activities in a person's life. His walk is how he goes. It implies a combination of the attitude, planning, and actions of a man's life. In Genesis 5:24, the Scripture says: "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." The Hebrew writer defines Enoch's walk, saying, "for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (11:5). To walk with God is to please God.

**We are to walk in love (Ephesians 5:2).** The pattern for such conduct has been made by Jesus. We are to walk in His steps, emulate His conduct. He gave in love; so must we if we are to walk in Him (see Romans 12:1-2). Love is caring, empathetically projecting oneself into the lives of others with a view toward being of service to them. And how is all this done? By walking in love—a step at a time.

**We should walk in light (5:6-14).** A person is apt to fall if he doesn't watch where he's going. It's amazing how many people stumble through life because they stubbornly refuse to come to God's light (see 2 Corinthians 4:1-6). Light is such a help. Things look different when you hold them up to the light. Light guides, illuminates. It even purifies.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." By following the light, not veering, letting it guide us, we can make it through—one step at a time.

**We should walk wisely (5:15-20).** The term "circumspectly" is used in the King James Version. The word is appropriate, for it means to be watchful on all sides; to be wise or prudent. This kind of cautious stepping is necessary, for the Christian must cross rough terrain, swollen streams, steep mountains, and be constantly exposed to danger before he reaches his destination. "Watch your step!" is good advice.

In this same connection, there must be a constancy about our progress, or "redeeming the time" (verse 17). We redeem the time when we make wise use of it. Otherwise this "opportune and seasonable time" (Thayer) is spent going the wrong way. And going the wrong way takes away our devotion, robs us of our fidelity to God, and spoils our view of heaven. A wise walk is one that cautiously, but constantly, proceeds toward God—a step at a time.

Notice that I have included the little phrase "a step at a time" in all three of the walks. Just as all walking is done a step at a time, all living is done a day at a time. We shouldn't try to run ahead, borrowing trouble from tomorrow. Becoming anxious about tomorrow won't help a thing. We need to learn to take life a day at a time, walking in the love of Christ every day of our lives, using God's word to help light our pathway, and constantly seeking to please God in all that we do.

"One step at a time, dear Savior . . ."



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# CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE

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Joel D. Todino, M.D.

*Dr. Joel Todino is a distinguished physician who teaches and practices medicine in Rome, Georgia. He wrote this to me about his life: "Baptized in 1971, still a struggling babe, but working hard at it. Plan to retire from medicine at age 55 to do preaching, teaching, and maybe foreign evangelistic work. Currently studying Spanish to that end."*

\* \*

As a practicing physician in a moderate-sized Southern community, I am frequently asked to help people in a number of ways. Mainly, of course, it is with a large variety of health problems. But, it has been proven beyond all doubt that between forty and sixty percent of "medical" illnesses are either caused, or aggravated by, emotional stress. I'd like to share with the readers some of the techniques I use, which are not only helpful to my patients, but also to my own life.

Most doctors are "too busy" to spend much time talking to people. I decided a long time ago that I could not live with my own conscience if I merely treated people's symptoms. So I see fewer people, spend more time, and charge more each visit (that part at least fits with the stereotype!). But it does give me an opportunity to analyze symptoms more thoroughly and to meld my medical training with my Bible study.

When you boil down *all* the various reasons that people may be emotionally stressed, they can be: worry, fear, doubt, and guilt. The really interesting thing is that it has taken "medical science" many years to recognize these, and yet the principles are very clearly taught in the Bible. Psychologists have studied for years to come up with tests of psychological function and, when all is said and done, and the volumes of books have been read and studied, they still point out these same four basic problems which destroy happiness, contentment and peace of mind. I can't get "lazy" on my Scriptures because I need them just about every day.

For example, not too long ago I saw a man suffering with headaches and stomach trouble. It would have been easy to write two prescriptions—one

for headache and one for ulcers—ten minutes, twenty bucks, next case! I'm too curious for that, and discovered the basic causes of his distress (the details are not pertinent here). Typically, I tell the patient, "We have several choices. You can go on suffering, I can treat the symptoms, I can send you to a psychiatrist, or you can study a tried-and-true method of help based upon what God has revealed to us." I'm not sure of percentages, but I think that at least one-half of the people choose number four.

Then I tell them about guilt, fear, doubt and worry and "plant the seed."

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***I tell a patient, "We have several choices. You can go on suffering, I can treat the symptoms, I can send you to a psychiatrist, or you can study a tried-and-true method based on what God says."***

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Sometimes it sprouts and grows, and helps the patient, sometimes not. But the patient is usually, at least, thinking and gaining insight.

Look at the Bible for yourself. Isaiah 48:22 and 57:19-21 reveal that "there is no peace unto the wicked." The example of Judas' guilt is classical, leading to suicide. Even a modern (1960) psychiatrist, Dr. DeMoures, stated, "The patient's problems are moral, not medical. He suffers from *real* guilt, not guilt feelings. He is not a victim of his own conscience, but a violator of it."

Worry literally means "to strangle."

Is it any wonder that people have choking spells, chest pain, shortness of breath, difficulty swallowing or other similar symptoms? The Bible tells us that worry chokes the word (Matthew 13:7,22), deceives and distracts (Luke 21:34), obstructs (Luke 14:18-20), hinders work (2 Timothy 2:4) and is a sign of unbelief (Matthew 6:25-32).

Fear is a consequence of disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:66). It can lead to a sense of defeat (Numbers 13:30-33) and even paralysis (Matthew 28:4).

Doubt means to waver or fluctuate, or to be uncertain, and James tells us that it is a sign of spiritual instability (James 1:6-8).

Now, the good part. All of this can be cured! Better than heart trouble, diabetes, cancer or many other *real* medical killers. "How is it done?" you ask. Christianity applied. That's right. Put it to work! Ed Harrell hasn't given me enough room here to spoon-feed you on this. I'll tell you where to look and then you're on your own. The three things you need to apply Christianity are *faith*, *prayer*, and *working for God*. The following Scriptures point out how *faith* brings us peace, rest, freedom from the guilt of sin, and assurances that wipe worry away—Romans 5:1; Matthew 11:28; Acts 22:16 and 3:19; 2 Peter 1:4; and Hebrews 8:12. Then we see that *prayer* can help us achieve spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3), assures us of receiving them (1 John 3:22), helps us overcome anxiety (1 Peter 5:7) and also brings us peace, even if we don't understand it (Philippians 4:6). Finally, there is the joy of *working for God*—Ephesians 6:6-8 clearly gives us an idea of the value of this service, even to the point of denying ourselves (Luke 9:23 and Galatians 2:20).

Do you fear? Read Mark 4:40. Do you doubt? Read Matthew 14:31. Are you anxious? Read Matthew 6:30-31. John tells us that our hearts are not to be troubled and we are not to fear (John 14:27).

The knowledge I've gained in helping others has helped me and my family and, with God's help, will continue to guide us in the right path.

11 John Maddox Dr., Rome, GA 30161





# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Restoring New Testament Christianity (IV)

*HEADNOTE: In previous articles I discussed the wide variety of nineteenth century religious reforms seeking to restore New Testament Christianity. This section of my article deals with the early efforts of Thomas Campbell and his son, Alexander. To tell their story is to celebrate the courage of those willing to cut loose the anchor of inherited tradition and set out with no loyalty save to God and His word.*

\* \* \*

In 1804, Thomas Campbell was a minister in the strict Anti-Burgher, Seceder Presbyterian church in Ulster, having just moved his family to Rich Hill where he both preached and conducted an academy. A student at the University of Glasgow from 1783 to 1786, Campbell was a man of irenic nature and independent thought; during his years in northern Ireland he developed a distaste for sectarian bickering and a personal acquaintance with such Scottish independents as James Haldane. In 1807, Campbell decided to become part of the exodus of settlers who were leaving Ulster for America, going ahead to select a place to live before being joined by his family two years later.

Upon his arrival in America, Campbell presented his credentials to the synod which was meeting in Philadelphia, requested assignment to the Chartiers Presbytery which included Washington, Pennsylvania, where many of his acquaintances had settled, and was immediately accepted by the Seceder church there as its preacher. Campbell was distressed by the sectarian division he found in the area, particularly by the treatment his church accorded to the scattered settlers whose denominations had established no presence in the area. When Campbell conducted a communion service allowing all Presbyterians in the community to participate just five months after he arrived in America, he was charged by the presbytery with heresy. After months of charges and

appeals, Campbell was formally suspended by the Associate Synod in May 1809.

Immediately after his troubles with the synod, Campbell and a few of his friends in Washington began meeting as a "Christian Association." In an address before the first meeting Campbell summed up the basis of their association: "That rule, my highly respected hearers, is this, that where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." In the fall of 1809 the association published a fifty-six page booklet, written by Campbell, entitled, *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*. The booklet decried creeds and ecclesiastical authority and appealed to the New Testament as the sole religious guide. It was also a fervent appeal for Christian union. Perhaps the most famous single sentence in the booklet affirmed "that the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and give obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and none else, as none else can be truly and properly called christians."

While he was in the midst of writing the *Declaration and Address*, Thomas Campbell's family arrived in America. When the family was reunited, Campbell learned that his twenty-one year old son, Alexander, had studied for a semester in Glasgow while waiting to depart for America and had fallen under the influence of Greville Ewing, a disciple of the Haldanes. Alexander excitedly read the booklet written by his father and pronounced himself heartily in sympathy with its content. While Thomas Campbell remained the leader of the small group of dissidents for several years, when an independent congregation, the Brush Run Church, was formally organized in 1812, Alexander was selected as its preacher and he quickly became the spokesman and moving force behind a widening movement.



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# CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE

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J. E. I'Anson

*Jim I'Anson died December 29, 1984. His wife, Pert, still lives in their home in Pasadena. He was a giant of a man; he had primary responsibility for several of the NASA space launches from Houston. But, as he wrote to me shortly before he died, the only things that mattered about his life were his wife, two daughters, four grandchildren, the fact that he became a child of God at age 25, and that he was a bishop of the Southside church in Pasadena, Texas. Read his article without tears if you can.*

\*   \*   \*

God has given us all that pertains to life and godliness through knowledge of Him (2 Peter 1:3-5). He has revealed Himself to us that we may know Him and know how to serve Him. To serve Him means to live in consonance with Scripture. From Scripture we have confidence in Him, and confidence in ourselves in the decisions we make in our service to Him.

That God gave us His best is obvious; that we have been His first consideration toward salvation is clear; that He should be first in our lives is incontrovertible. Because He has loved me, what I am requires that I serve Him above all. I assume that if I guide my life by His word He will know that He is above all else in my life. To do this I keep trying to master His word so that every thought and action is predicated upon it. I asked myself if what I intended to do was what God would have me to do. I tried to make sure it was. If I didn't know I tried to find what I should do. Most often I found the answer. I tried to remember so that faced with the same kind of problem again I would know what to do. When I could find no answer that fit, I tried not to force a fit but did the best I could, knowing that I had failed to see what I should. What I have done is to put my complete confidence in God's word to guide me through every event in my life and to accept with meekness the outcome. I find now that with practice I have less trouble with finding the way to go. As my learning curve has risen I find that my evaluation function has become almost instinctive.

The above is applicable to every facet

of our lives. It is an easy thing to be a Christian before our brothers. A great proving of our faith will come in the way we live before the world. We who are Christians should realize that we are a "different breed of cat" than the denominational Christian from whom the world draws its impressions of Christianity. We must be very careful not to flaunt being a Christian in their face. That, coupled with their experience with the hypocrisy evidenced by many so-called Christians, will erect a barrier almost impossible to break down were we to be taken in sin before them.

Our choice has been made: Christians are the people whom we choose as our closest companions, but Jesus accompanied with publicans and sinners. If He loved man so much that He gave

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***What I have  
done is to put my  
complete confidence  
in God's word to  
guide me through  
every event in life.***

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Himself that those who obey Him might be saved, how could we do else but love them and teach them?

My wife and I have invited our friends and neighbors to all meetings and services of our congregation. We have been sounding boards for their problems and have showed them that our life decisions are based on biblical tenets. We have counseled, taught and preached all in the context of our Lord's teachings. We live calmly before them, with equanimity, with hope, with confidence. We pray for their souls, but do not wrap ourselves in self-righteousness supposing we are better than they. We have showed them we *will* serve God, that we *know* how, and that we will so long as we shall live. We have showed them that we live for the day, trying to make it count for the

Lord. We have helped them raise their children, been there in births and marriages, and have sustained them in death. We have loved them, prayed with them, rejoiced with them, wept with them and sorrowed with them. We have given ourselves to them and have been glad to take what they would give. We are their friends; we can be counted on. We are pleased to do as we can for we love them deeply. Who knows but what we may be the only thing of Christianity they shall ever see.

As we live out our lives we experience things that affect us so deeply about our Lord that we are constrained to intensify our efforts to serve Him. For me the experience that has set my course has been to understand as fully as I can the nuances of Philippians 2:5-8. That fact that Jesus died for me, I understand. That He was and is the Son of God I comprehend. And, I know that He is the ransom for many, a propitiation toward God, that He is the author of salvation. I understand that I must depend upon the innocent to justify the guilty. This passage tells me *why* He did these things; it allows me to look into His heart and imply from that looking that He loved me, that He loves me, that He suffered all for me, that I am of unspeakable value to Him. To be God—in the form of God—is more grand and noble than any concept I may have. But to go from the form of God to the form of a servant, to be found in the likeness of a man, and in fashion as a man, to empty Himself, bespeaks a humility that I can translate into a love the magnitude of which is a function of and directly proportional to the difference between God and man. I think that difference approaches infinity as a limit, hence He loves me infinitely. I will ever attempt to love Him to the same measure. I now *know* Him and I now *understand* Him within my limitations. I do not want Him to be ashamed of me, to weep over me, to sorrow over me; all I want is His happiness with respect to me. The experience of coming to know my Lord has been the thrill of my life. He has done me no ill and I pray I shall do none to Him.

3524 Edgefield Dr., Pasadena, TX 77503



Brent Lewis



# My Brother/My Self

## The Tragedy of Gossip

**Y**ou never treat your brother worse than when you gossip about him. Though it was many years ago that God instructed Israel, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people," it is nevertheless still good advice. More than that the New Testament teaches Christians to refrain from this practice (Romans 1:29-30; 1 Timothy 5:13). Yet, in far too many places today brethren are estranged and distant from one another because of "wraths, factions, backbitings, whisperings" (2 Corinthians 12:20). My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

At the root of gossip there is always pride or jealousy or hatred. Some people gossip to gain attention; it makes them feel important. Others are just plain mean and they do it to intentionally hurt another. David said, "All that hate me whisper together against me; against me do they devise my hurt" (Psalm 41:7). The wise man said, "He that hideth hatred is of lying lips; and he that uttereth slander is a fool" (Proverbs 10:18).

Any fool ends up hurting himself. So it is with the gossiping fool. Though he may do an untold amount of harm to other people, the fruit of his activity is perhaps best observed in his life. *First, he makes himself miserable.* "The north wind bringeth forth rain; so doth a backbiting tongue an angry countenance" (Proverbs 25:23). The gossip has a bitter, sour disposition. And why shouldn't he? He is spewing out venom all the time. It is hard to be joyful and at peace with oneself when one is sullen, resentful and rabidly spreading lies. *Secondly, he cuts himself off from others.* God says, "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets; therefore company not with him that openeth wide his lips" (Proverbs 20:19). And who would want to? Have you ever been around a person who had nothing good to say about others—and you wondered what they said about you when you weren't around? Would you like to tell that person something in confidence? No, "A perverse man scattereth abroad strife; and a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Proverbs 16:28). *Thirdly, he separates himself from God.* "Jehovah, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh

uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart; he that slandereth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his friend, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor" (Psalm 15:1-3).

To her shame the church has often neglected to discipline the gossip. When gossip is heard by church leaders it should be traced to its source, and if the gossip does not repent and stop, he should be severed from the fellowship of the saints. God says, "For lack of wood the fire goeth out; and where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth. As coals are to hot embers, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to inflame strife. The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts" (Proverbs 26:20-22).

**L**et each disciple determine that he will not only refuse to gossip, but he will refuse to listen to one who does. Great good will come to the Lord's cause by such determination on the part of every saint. Our actions as disciples either build up or tear down the kingdom. Which is it with you?

\* \* \*

I watched them tear a building down  
A gang of men in a busy town  
With a ho-heave-ho and a lusty yell,  
They swung a beam and the side wall fell.  
I asked the foreman, "Are these men skilled,  
And men you'd hire if you had to build?"  
He gave a laugh and said, "No, indeed.  
Just common labor is all I need.  
I can easily wreck in a day or two  
What builders have taken a year to do."

I thought to myself as I went my way,  
"Which of these roles have I tried to play?  
Am I a builder who works with care,  
Measuring life with the rules and square;  
Am I shaping my deeds to a well-made plan,  
Patiently doing the best I can,  
Or am I a wrecker who walks the town,  
Content with the labor of tearing down?"



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# CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE

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*Marilyn Harrell Hardage*

*Marilyn Harrell Hardage is my sister. Her husband, Bob Hardage, is an elder of the Southside church in Jacksonville, Florida. Since her children left home, her chief vocation has been doing the Lord's work. Her daily routine has been to go to the church building to study, to teach, and to work. A generation of younger women around the country offer repeated testimonies to the worth of her labors.*

\* \*

Long years ago I sat on a lovely, lonely beach watching my children build sand castles on the edge of that vast, beautiful, powerful ocean that had been made by the Creator. A friend and I were discussing life and beauty and the Scriptures. My heart was full of the glory of God. How wonderful to praise Him amidst such grandeur in peace and ease. "I think I won't study the Scriptures quite so much anymore; they make so many demands." My remark was made lightly; but I was suddenly half conscious that I was facing within myself a moment of decision.

At times we all remember how much we owe to others who have helped us in remarkable ways. I know the truth because an aunt had taken me to "church" with her. There I had begun to absorb the word of God as it spoke of salvation, life, eternity. The excitement of pure Christianity, the challenge it offered, the promises it made were very vivid to me. I began to understand that Jesus was making awesome demands on my time and my person. He didn't seem to be playing. He seemed to be calling me to a real work which would change my life.

Today I thank God for His word; the commandments that enlighten our eyes; the precepts that direct our steps; the revealed love that gives us life indeed. The world with Christ in it is a different place from the world without Him. It is different to God. It is different to me.

I am a housewife, a maker of a home. So many women are sensitive today to the implied lack of accomplishment and fulfillment in such a position. I have found it a role with unique opportunity for the service of God. Life is forever

changing. My relationships with others must grow and diminish. The needs and wants of those around me wax and wane. Yet there is a constancy of demand and expectation.

From that day of bright sunshine on the beach I knew that I must use my life not in regard to self, husband, child, parent—but to the Lord. I knew that to follow Him meant something real and high and that it might prove costly.

It is exceedingly difficult to wrestle with my conscience as I think these thoughts. I know too well my failures

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***The way you  
take up your  
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is open to you.***

---

and excesses. I would not commend myself to you if I dared. We all stand by His grace and forgiveness and He alone is the judge.

In speaking of the judgment Jesus said He would be pleased with those who in faith had fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, taken in the stranger, clothed the naked, visited those who were sick or in prison. Earlier He had said, "Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven;" "He that doth not take up his cross and

follow me is not worthy of me;" "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven;" "Whosoever would be great among you shall be your servant." And in the upper room He prayed for me and for all who believe through His word.

With fascination I read of the dedication not only of the great ones but of the unnamed men and women who chose to follow the Son of God. In Acts and the Epistles I hear the story of those who, becoming Christians, set themselves to walk worthily of the calling. They were ready to teach the gospel; set for its defense; willing to endure buffeting, reviling, even persecution. I, too, wanted to walk this way.

How do I do this? How do I reach others? These were my questions to my beloved brother, Harold Dowdy. "You get in the car, you drive across town, you park and walk up the steps, you make your hand into a fist and knock on the door." I waited for the words that were going to inspire me; but that was all he had to say. I offered my reasons and excuses but that was all he had to say.

He had told me the truth. The way you study is turn off the TV, find a quiet place and get out your Bible. The way you pray is arise early or stay up late and enter the closet of your heart. The way you visit the sick is order your life so that you have concern and time. The way you feed the hungry is take money that otherwise would have been used on self and give it to those in need. The way you confess His name is go to a friend or neighbor and tell them of the Lord and His church. The way you take up your cross is learn your everyday God-given obligations and do them. The way you become great is humbly serving in whatever capacity is open to you.

I love Him who first loved me. To be with Him in that place He has prepared is my goal. Whatever may be the age, stage or circumstance of your life it will help in overcoming the world to clearly set your goal. Keep your eyes on Him He cares for you.

1441 Parental Home Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32216





## Being A Christian: The Wedding and the Marriage

**W**e are on solid biblical ground when we suggest that becoming a Christian is very much like marriage. Paul made good use of this meaningful analogy (2 Corinthians 11:2-3; Ephesians 5:22-33) and had behind him the rich imagery of the Old Testament prophets (Hosea 2:19-20; Isaiah 62:4-5; Jeremiah 3:14).

When we are single, unmarried, we are free of responsibility and commitment to another. Our time is our own. Everything turns on the simple question of what we want for ourselves. Even so there is something bittersweet about that exhilarating "freedom." It is also, we note, a freedom to be alone, unloved and unfulfilled.

Then we meet someone who makes our single freedom lose all its appeal. We realize that marriage will be costly to our independence. It will now be "we" instead of "me." We will have to take into consideration the needs of our new-found partner in every decision. But, we say, it's worth it! So we gladly renounce our old freedom for a higher one—the freedom to love and be loved in return, to have a companion who cares and shares life intimately with us. We, therefore, commit ourselves "to love and to cherish 'til death do us part." In a sense we lose our life to gain it.

When we live our lives without any commitment to God we are free to do what we please without concern for His wishes (Romans 6:20). There are no agonizing moral and spiritual decisions to make. We travel the open road of our own desires and whims. There are no entangling promises to honor. But even while the wind of freedom is blowing tantalizingly through our hair, there is a disquieting sense of guilt which hovers around so many of our free-wheeling ways. Our self-serving concerns, once so attractive, become gradually tinged with emptiness and loneliness. The things we feel "free" to do seem less and less worth doing and the further down the road we go the more death haunts the future (Romans 6:21).

Then we come to know of God in His Son—a chance reading of the Bible, a conversation with some concerned Christian—and the formless guilt in us turns specific and deep. The vague sense of emptiness becomes a yawning chasm. The love of God manages to make our free-and-easy ways seem more like slavery—a pointless freedom to self-destruct, to live life against the grain, to drive through the stumps and the thicket instead of on the road. The liberty to live with guilt, alienation and hopelessness loses its appeal and we respond longingly to the selfless love of Christ for us. As in a marriage vow, we who have so long said "No" to Him, now gladly say, "I will." We lose our lives to gain them back again

remarkably transformed (Matthew 16:25). We give up our freedom to be what we please to be to gain the freedom to be what we need to be—what God in His mercy and wisdom planned that we should be.

All this comes about because we finally realize that every man must be a servant of something (Romans 6:16). Everyone who refuses to serve Jesus Christ is not thereby free. He is destined instead to become a slave to his own pride and insatiable passions. Long after the "season of pleasure" (Hebrews 11:25) has ended mindless lusts and stubborn self-will will keep him in bondage to a grinding necessity. The addiction to sin will continue even when one knows it is destroying him. So we begin by luxuriating in our freedom to sin and end up longing for the freedom to be good. It is that possibility of the freedom of righteousness and the true life it promises which draws us to the Son of God (Romans 6:23).

**J**ust as *becoming* a Christian is very much like getting married, so *being* a Christian parallels the ongoing marriage relationship. The commitments of the wedding last only a moment but working them out takes a lifetime. The joy of that first moment will be tested by problems which will come to try the depth of your commitment to one another.

One of those problems may be *doubt*. You won't be together 24 hours a day. How do you know your mate will be faithful and keep on loving you? Basically, because he or she *promised* to do so. Marriage is a relationship built on trust. When doubts about your partner's faithfulness begin to arise out of nowhere, the relationship will soon begin to unravel.

Doubts will also arise in the new Christian's mind about his relationship with God. Satan will be urgent in feeding every uncertainty ("Hath God said . . .? Genesis 3:1). "How do you know the Lord loves you?" "What makes you think the Son of God would want the likes of you?" "What makes you think you're a Christian?" The answer is simple—because He promised! He said He loved and died for all men (John 3:16; Hebrews 2:9) and that all who truly believed in Him and sealed that faith in baptism would be saved (Mark 16:16) and united with Him (Romans 6:3-5; 7:4). Moreover, He said that He would *never* forsake those who came to Him (John 6:39; Hebrews 13:5) and would *always* be the same (Hebrews 13:8). When we doubt, all we have to do is look at our "marriage license." The One who cannot lie promised (Titus 1:2) and the seal on the marriage covenant is *His own blood!* (Hebrews 9:17-18).





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Ed Harrell

### Baptism

**B**aptism has been practiced by Christians throughout history. It was commissioned by Jesus, taught by the apostles, and repeatedly described in the historical sections of the New Testament. In the tragically divisive history of Christianity, few have questioned the supreme importance of the act of baptism.

And yet, baptism is central to the most visible rift in modern religious history—the Protestant-Catholic confrontation. At the heart of the Protestant revolution was the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification by works. Among the sacramental acts through which Catholics believed men could merit salvation was baptism. Revolting against a theology which placed salvation in the hands of an institutional and corrupt church and based it on man's meritorious actions, Protestants fled to the concept of justification by faith only. While Protestants did not renounce

baptism, they made its meaning purely symbolic—and in the process made its practice irrelevant.

The meaning of baptism thus lies at the heart of some of the most fundamental religious controversies in history. Furthermore, probing the meaning of New Testament baptism inevitably raises other questions, such as its proper subjects and its proper mode.

While we are conscious of the historical debates which have swirled around baptism, it is not our intent that these articles become a part of that argument. Rather, they are an effort to return to the source and determine what baptism meant in New Testament days. Of course, our common view will become clear by the time you read the series—it is neither Catholic nor Protestant (though I feel distinctly closer to Rome than to Geneva on the question). Peter said that baptism is not a mystical, sacramental act, but at the same time he

said it saves us: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

I know that all of us are captured by history and can never completely escape our experiences. But the point is that we are not so much concerned about Calvin's view of baptism as we are Paul's. And we are interested not in what is done in Rome, but what was practiced in Jerusalem and Philippi.

As you read the pages that follow, you may realize that you have not been baptized as people were in New Testament days. We urge you to act. Any one of the writers in this paper would be happy to help you or to find someone near you who would study with you and baptize you into Christ.

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# BAPTISM

Hiram Hutto

## The Meaning of the Word Baptism

WITHOUT DOUBT, MAN'S GREATEST blessing came with the death (and subsequent resurrection) of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for our sins. Hence, it is called "the gospel," the "good news." But before it can be good news *for me*, I need to hear about it and to hear that I can share in it. To facilitate that, Jesus chose twelve men (the apostles) to go preach this gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-16). Similarly, He told them that in addition to teaching every creature, they were to "baptize" them (Matthew 28:18-20). But, just what did He mean for these apostles to do when they "baptized" someone? What *act* did he mean for them to perform? What is baptism, anyway? While a study of the original language in which this command was given may be fascinating, a person does not need to know Greek to learn the answer to that question. But to answer it *scripturally*, he will need to consider the Scriptures, the Bible.

First of all, let it be noted that in the Scriptures, baptism takes place in water. In Acts 8, the record tells about a man being taught about Jesus, and when they came to a certain water, he said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). After hearing about Jesus, the sight of water caused him to inquire about baptism. In Acts 10:48, Peter asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" It ought not to surprise us that the apostle Peter connected baptism and water. The apostles (those whom Jesus told to "baptize") had already observed John as he baptized *in water* (John 1:35; Acts 1:21-22). In fact, the Bible states on one occasion that John baptized in Aenon near to Salim, because there was *much water* there (John 3:23). The Bible is clear: baptism takes place in water.

Furthermore, in scriptural baptism, there is a going down into the water (Acts 8:38), where the person is baptized, and then a coming up out of the water (Acts 8:39). In harmony with this, the Bible tells us that "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway *out of the water*" (Matthew 3:16). What

action does that suggest to you?

But we are not left to mere supposition or to suggestions. The Bible plainly says that baptism is a burial. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein ye are also risen with him through the faith in the operation of God" (Colossians 2:12). *Baptism is a burial and a raising.* Again, the Bible says, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Not only do these Scriptures tell us that baptism is a burial and

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raising, *there are no Scriptures that teach that it is anything else.* While the Bible is clear that we are buried in baptism, there is nothing that hints that we are sprinkled in baptism.

In perfect harmony with the understanding that baptism is a burial, we learn that people who were to be baptized went somewhere to be baptized (see Acts 16:33). And when Saul of Tarsus was to be baptized, he was told to "Arise, and be baptized" (Acts 22:16). If baptism had been sprinkling of water on a person, there would have been no need for him to "Arise."

In spite of the fact that the Bible says

that baptism is a burial, and no Scriptures teach that sprinkling is baptism, many churches practice the sprinkling or pouring of water on a person and call that baptism. To those who do so, I pose this question: *Please give a Scripture that shows where God ever commanded unmixed water to be sprinkled on anybody or anything as a religious rite to Him in any age of the world.* I know of no such Scripture, and though I have asked that question before, I have never been supplied with a Scripture.

"But," it is asked, "does not the dictionary define baptism to include sprinkling and pouring?" Indeed, it does. However, it should be pointed out that dictionaries define words as they are used at the time the dictionary is published, and because many people now use sprinkling for baptism, the dictionary so defines it. But a good dictionary will show what a particular word originally meant. For example, the dictionary before me (Merriam-Webster) states that *baptize* is from the Greek word that means to dip in water. So while people *currently* may use the word to mean sprinkle, it did not originally mean that, and the passages we have noted show that it did not mean anything but a burial and raising in the New Testament.

As already noted, a person does not need to know Greek to learn what the word *baptize* means. However, we ought to be grateful that there are those who are willing to use their abilities to translate the original language for the rest of us. If time and space permitted, it could be easily demonstrated that such scholars define the word *baptize* to mean to dip, to plunge, or some such similar words. And with this the Bible is in complete agreement.

Baptism, then, takes place in water (Acts 8:36-39). It is the burying in water of the person being baptized, and the raising of that person from the water (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). Anything less or other than this is not Bible baptism.

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# BAPTISM



## Baptism in Early Church History

Bob Crawley

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AS ORIGINALLY preached by His apostles is written in the New Testament Scriptures. While it is profound in its divinity, it is simple and clear in what it requires of those who would be saved by it. This gospel also produces and governs the church of Christ. The study of church history, sadly, is a study in apostasy from the simple purity of the divine plan. Even while the apostles lived, and more rapidly after their deaths, changes were under way that affected not only the concept and structure of the church but altered nearly every aspect of the doctrine of the apostles. We shall observe, briefly, how these changes affected the concept and practice of the ordinance of baptism within two centuries of the apostolic age.

Baptism is very fully described and explained in the Scriptures, yet by the middle of the third century nearly every aspect of it—its action, purpose, subjects, and administrators—had become the occasion of false teaching, practice and controversy. It is reassuring to note that the earlier post-biblical references to baptism treat it more nearly as we find it in the Scriptures. In the *Epistle of Barnabas* (an anonymous work from about A.D. 100), Chap. XI, the action, purpose and effect of baptism are described: "Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down in the water." A few lines further along he says, "we indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement, but come up, bearing fruit in our heart."

A generation later, in the writing of Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165) are several interesting references to baptism. In his *First Apology*, Chap. LXI, he describes baptism as the fulfillment of John 3:5: "They are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated . . . For Christ also said, Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Justin again argues the purpose of baptism in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chap. XIV, that it cleanses from the stain of

sin. ". . . as Isaiah cries, we have believed, and testify that that very baptism which he announced is alone able to purify those who have repented."

Another generation later, Tertullian (A.D. 145-220), known for his unorthodoxy on several points, had occasion to write about baptism. He discusses, in *De Corona*, Chap. III, how traditions may depart from ancient practice. "To deal with this matter briefly, I shall

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begin with baptism. When we are going into the water, but a little before, in the presence of the congregation and under the hand of the president we solemnly profess that we disown the devil. . . . Hereupon we are thrice immersed, making a somewhat ampler pledge than the Lord has appointed in the gospel." While admitting to the practice of trine immersion, he recognized that it exceeded the teaching of Scripture. Tertullian also writes of another

addition to baptism as he describes the performance of the rite (*Treatise on Baptism*, Chap. II), "a man is dipped in water, and amid the utterance of some few words, is sprinkled, and then rises again." The subject, he said, was sprinkled in addition to being dipped—another addition to the "demands of Scripture." Thus are apostasies born!

Let it be said for Tertullian that he argues at length for the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins. He also writes passionately in behalf of the genuineness of the repentance which must accompany baptism.

Each departure from the Scriptures leads rapidly to many more. To demonstrate this we need look only a generation further to the writings of Cyprian (A.D. 200-258). By Cyprian's time the concept of the church had developed into that of a catholic hierarchy. It was the general feeling that the church was the formulator of divine truth and the custodian of such ordinances as baptism and the Lord's supper. Cyprian wrote in the following language (*Epistle LXIX*, Chap. 1), "It is required, then, that the water should first be cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it may wash away by its baptism the sins of the man who is baptized."

When the question arose whether baptism should not be allowed for infants under the age of eight days, Cyprian wrote to Fidus (*Epistle LVIII*, Chap. 2), "But in respect of the case of infants, which you say ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, . . . so that you think that one who is just born should not be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day, we all thought very differently in our council."

In the history of baptism in the early church we see demonstrated the principle that one's attitude toward the Scriptures as authority affects, not only his concept of the nature and organization of the church, but ultimately determines his view of the practice and validity of other things, including baptism.

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# BAPTISM

## The Subject of New Testament Baptism

Bill Hall

WHO CAN BE BAPTIZED? THE IMPORTANCE of that question suddenly appears in the Scriptures in the nineteenth chapter of Acts. There one reads of twelve men who had been previously baptized (immersed), but who had to be "re-baptized" because they had not been proper subjects at the time of their baptism. Or, to use Bible terminology, they had to be "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (verses 1-7). Millions in the world today are in the same position as were those twelve in Ephesus. They have been "baptized," but now need to be "baptized in the name of the Lord

Infants are not subjects of Bible baptism. They are incapable of the action mentioned above. Three major differences exist between infant baptism and Bible baptism. Infant baptism finds the subject passive throughout ("She did beautifully," a grandmother told us in regards to her grandchild's baptism, "she slept all the way through it"), while Bible baptism finds the subject actively submitting to the will of Christ. Infant baptism is based upon the decision of someone other than the subject, while in Bible baptism one is acting upon his own

His goal must be *their salvation*, not his own pride and satisfaction in seeing his children "baptized into the church." In determining when children become accountable one should consider the prerequisites for acceptable baptism listed above. These should provide useful guidelines. We fear that many a child has been baptized with his parents' encouragement who was incapable of mature resolution or acceptance of responsibility for his conduct.

Those who would merely please others in being baptized are not subjects of Bible baptism. A husband or wife might be baptized to please his companion; or a child to please his parents. A boy might be baptized because the girl of his dreams would not marry him unless he were; or a girl because a boy would not marry her otherwise. All who have been baptized under such conditions need to be "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Those who are unwilling to forsake their sins are not subjects of Bible baptism. Occasionally we hear of one's being baptized only to go out immediately to curse, swear, drink, commit adultery, or engage in some other sin. He engages in the sin, not because he is uninformed or overtaken by temptation, but because he never intended to change his life in the first place. Any such baptism is worthless.

In short, only those who are prepared to forsake their sins and to pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ, allowing Him to become the sole ruler of their heart and life, are ready for baptism.

If we seem to be negative in this article, we are so only because of our concern for the souls of men and women. Indeed, "many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Let each look back on his own baptism and determine whether or not he was truly a proper subject of baptism. If not, let him then follow the example of the twelve in Ephesus. Only proper subjects can be truly "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

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**"A boy might be baptized because the girl of his dreams would not marry him unless he were; or a girl because a boy would not marry her otherwise. All who have been baptized under such conditions need to be 'baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.'"**

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Jesus" because they were not proper subjects when they were baptized. Many readers of this paper could be among them.

For one to be baptized acceptably, he must: (1) be taught the gospel; (2) believe; (3) recognize himself as a sinner in need of salvation; (4) be capable of accepting full responsibility for his own decisions and conduct; (5) repent with a firm resolution to live his life in obedience to Christ, and (6) confess Christ before men (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38; Romans 10:10). Baptism without these preceding steps is invalid and vain.

mature decision. Bible baptism is for one who is in sin, while infants are born into the world without sin (Ezekiel 18:20; Mark 10:14). The Bible never speaks of infants being baptized, but, rather, "they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). It is so important that one's religious convictions and practices be based upon the word of God rather than upon human tradition. The person who was baptized as an infant needs to be "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Young children who are not yet accountable before God are not subjects of Bible baptism. One should be cautious in encouraging children to be baptized.



# BAPTISM



## The Purpose of Baptism

Don Wilson

**WHY SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?**  
What is the purpose of baptism, as taught in the gospel? We hear from some that baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace, and that baptism is a symbol that one has already partaken of the benefits of God's gift of His Son upon the cross, and that baptism is not essential to salvation. We are told that baptism is a work, therefore specifically excluded from having any part in God's plan to save man. But what does the Bible teach?

Although baptism is performed by

inthians 12:13). As Israel was "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2), so baptism is the initiatory rite into the church of Christ. Christ is at work: "that He might sanctify her [the church] having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:26). Thus, we are affirming our faith, trust and dependency on Christ, "calling on the name of the Lord," when we are baptized to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16).

By grace through faith is God's way to make men right with Himself, not on the

our own death to sin. We "become united with Him in the likeness of His death;" "our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." We were "resurrected" to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-11; Colossians 2:11-14). The condemnation of all men in Adam, and the justification to all men in Christ are both conditional (Romans 5:18-19).

We put off the old man and "put on Christ," becoming "children of God by faith" when we were "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). And this is how we come to "belong to Christ" (Galatians 3:29). To be "of Christ," that is, to belong to Christ, to be a member of His group, it was necessary to be baptized in His name (1 Corinthians 1:12-13).

Obedience in baptism is "an appeal to God for a clear conscience." Corresponding to the ark saving Noah and his family during the time of the great flood, "baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:20-21). Of course, God is the One who does the saving, but the ark—and baptism—are the conditions. Baptism is associated with the "washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" which is equivalent to "being justified by His grace" (Titus 3:3-7).

The richness of the lovingkindness and mercy of God is manifested toward us in the gift of His Son to bear our sins upon the cruel, obscene cross. Jesus paid our debt of sin, His sacrifice is the basis of our forgiveness. On His way to heaven's throne, He commissioned His apostles to proclaim the good news to every creature in all the world. "He who has believed and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). The book of Acts is the historical record of their carrying out this great commission to that generation. Those who truly received the good news to their hearts were baptized (Acts 2:41). Thank God for His grace which made possible for us to "be baptized for the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38).

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man, God is also doing a work in baptism. When we are "buried with Christ in baptism" we are "circumcised with a circumcision made without hands," sharing in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. "He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having cancelled out the certificate of debt." Therefore, we had "faith in the working of God" when we were baptized (Colossians 2:11-14).

Christ is also at work when we are baptized. Embraced by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body (1 Cor-

*basis* or *grounds* of man's meritorious works, but *conditioned* on living, active, submissive faith (Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-7; James 2:14-26), which includes baptism "for the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

We identify ourselves with the first Adam through personally following in his steps of disobedience, and bringing upon ourselves the penalty of spiritual death (Romans 5:12). We identify ourselves with the second Adam, Christ, when we are baptized into Christ, baptized into His death, thus baptized into





# BAPTISM

## Baptism As A New Birth

Tommy Poarch

ALL HAVE SINNED AND COME SHORT OF THE glory of God. Nothing short of a regenerated life can save the sinner who is hopelessly lost in his trespasses and sins (Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1). The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news because "God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:4-6).

How does this regeneration take place? New life is given by means of a new birth. Fundamental information on the new birth is found in John chapter three. Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (verse 3). He further explained the new birth when He said, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (verse 5).

The new birth is "of water." Being born of water is also described as a washing of regeneration. "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds we have done in righteousness but according to His mercy, by the *washing of regeneration* and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The only biblical teaching that can be described as a washing of regeneration is that of water baptism. *Regeneration* is defined as: "new birth, reproduction, the production of a new life consecrated to God, a radical change for the better, (effected in baptism . . .): Titus 3:5" *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Joseph Henry Thayer, page 474).

The new birth is of "the Spirit." "It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). The words of Christ, revealed to us by the spirit, give life and sustain life. One is born again "through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23).

Any birth involves a begetting and a delivery. The word of God, the seed of

His kingdom, is planted in the heart of a sinner (Luke 8:11; James 1:18; 1 Corinthians 4:15). If the seed finds a good heart to lodge in, the one who has received the word of God will desire to immediately be born of water in order to enter the kingdom of God. Delivery of a new life occurs when a believer is baptized into Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-7).

please his Father in Christ Jesus. When God gives new life, He desires His new creatures to be like Him—holy. Our Savior died in order that it might be possible for many sons to be brought to glory and sanctification through a new birth and a new life in Jesus. "Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the

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**"Fundamental information on the new birth is found in John chapter three. . . . The new birth is 'of water.' Being born of water is also described as a washing of regeneration in Titus 3:5. The only biblical teaching that can be described as a washing of regeneration is that of water baptism."**

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Let Christ's words in Mark 16:16 supply the basis for a summation of our thoughts. "He that believeth [the Spirit's teaching of regeneration—1 Peter 1:23] and is baptized [the washing of regeneration—Titus 3:5] shall be saved [having received new life through a new birth]."

The one who is born into the family of God must desire with all his heart to

*washing of water by the word*, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:25-26).

You must not neglect being born again. It is not an optional matter, for "you must be born again" (John 3:7).

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# BAPTISM



## Baptism into the Body

Wilson Copeland

IN FIRST CORINTHIANS 12:12-13 PAUL wrote, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were made to drink of one Spirit." The New Testament Scriptures clearly outline the purpose or design of baptism, including this statement by Paul that we were baptized into one body. Other passages show that in baptism one's sins are washed away (Acts 22:16), one's sins are remitted (Acts 2:38), one is saved (1 Peter 3:21), and one becomes a child of God and puts on Christ (Galatians 3:26-27). In and of itself baptism does not save anyone. God does the saving by reconciling sinners to Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). Jesus made this salvation possible through the shedding of His blood (Matthew 26:28). The Spirit of God revealed the mind of God so that mankind would be able to know the conditions that must be met in order to be saved (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). Baptism must be an act of faith preceded by repentance and confession (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9-10). While others in this special section will discuss these aspects of baptism in much greater detail, this discussion will address the important subject of *baptism into the body*.

The context of the verses in 1 Corinthians noted above reveals a problem at Corinth concerning the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Envy and jealousy existed among the members at Corinth, and Paul uses the illustration of the physical body for the purpose of showing the unity and love that should exist among God's people. In the midst of this discussion are the verses which bear on the subject of baptism into the one body. Paul is teaching that there is just *one* spiritual body. As in Ephesians 4:4, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." There is only *one body*, just as there is

only one God, Spirit, Lord, baptism, faith and hope. Paul stated that we were "all baptized into one body," but it must be noted that this baptism *also* puts us into the "church."

**Believers are added to the church.** When one is baptized for the remission of sins, he not only becomes a member of the one body, but he is added to that group of saved individuals which is identified in the New Testament as the "church." This word, "church" (Greek, *ekklesia*) literally means "the called out." It is sufficient to note here that through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14) we have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9-10). In times

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***There is  
only one church  
or body of Christ.  
Apart from His  
church, or body, there  
is no salvation. In this  
way salvation and  
church membership  
become synonymous.***

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past we were not His people, but now we can be called the people of God. The church in its most basic sense is people, the people of God.

In Acts chapter 2, after the first gospel sermon was preached, Luke records that those who received Peter's words were baptized, "And there were added unto them in that day about 3,000 souls" (verse 41). Verse 47 tells *Who* did the adding. "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." Although the word "church" is not found in these verses, there is little doubt about what is under consideration. It is the same group of individuals which later "feared" and was "persecuted" (Acts 5:11; 8:1). It was the Lord's church in Jeru-

salem. Therefore, this example teaches us that when one obeys the gospel message (as these who were instructed by Peter), he is added by the Lord to the saved, His church. One does not "join" the Lord's church. Men may join human institutions with various names, creeds, etc., by fulfilling the human membership requirements outlined by such denominations. However, to be a part of the Lord's church, the *Lord* must do the adding. This will happen when the conditions outlined in the Scriptures are obeyed.

**The Body is the Church.** It has been our purpose to carefully show that baptism not only remits sins, but when one is baptized he is added to the Lord's church and becomes a member of the body. Some might ask, "Are the church and the body two separate and distinct things that I become a part of when I am baptized?" Paul answers this question with passages in Ephesians and Colossians. "And He is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18). "And he put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23). Therefore there is but one body, which is His church. This spiritual body is the church that existed in the mind of God from the beginning (Ephesians 3:10-11). It is the church which Jesus promised to build (Matthew 16:18). It is the church which Jesus purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28), the body of which He is the Savior (Ephesians 5:23), and the body where He brought Jew and Gentile together (Ephesians 2:16). There is only one church or body of Christ. Apart from His church, or body, there is no salvation. In this way *salvation and church membership* become synonymous. In baptism my sins are washed away. Thus being obedient to the gospel I am added to the Lord's church, the church of Christ (Romans 16:16), that is, the church belonging to Christ. This is the baptism into the one body.

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# BAPTISM

Mark White

JOHN THE BAPTIZER PROBABLY IMMERSSED thousands of people during his ministry of preaching "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). All of Judea and those of Jerusalem went out to be baptized by him in the river Jordan, Mark's account states (1:5). Thus, John the baptist was the first messenger from God to break the silence of some four hundred years since Malachi. His appearance and his remarkable message attracted the attention of the Jewish people, and his preaching was heard by rather large audiences in spite of the remote wilderness areas where most of his preaching was done. He made such an impression on some that they "reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not" (Luke 3:15). Yet, John's sense of truth and humility caused him to say, "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him" (John 3:28).

I doubt that John knew the names and backgrounds of the greater number of those he baptized. He knew only that they were sinners in need of repentance before being able to receive the Kingdom. But there was one out of the multitude whom John would never forget baptizing. That one was Jesus of Nazareth to most, but to John the baptist He was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). John said that he did not know Jesus (John 1:33), but they were relatives (Luke 1:36), and he must have been acquainted with Him. Barclay says that what John declared was not that he did not know *who* Jesus was, but that he did not know *what* Jesus was. But he was soon to find out.

Is there any amazement at John the baptist's hesitation to baptize Jesus? Would we all not have reacted similarly? Both John and Jesus recognized this request for baptism was an exceptional case. Jesus certainly could not *confess* His sins, as others submitting to John's baptism did, for He had no sin. He obviously did not need the *remission* of sins that accompanied the baptism of John (Mark 1:4). Yet, there were three

good reasons why Jesus was baptized.

"To fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Jesus felt it was necessary to obey His Father's will. Even Jesus "learned obedience" (Hebrews 5:8-9). He was baptized in spite of His unique circumstances. Superficially, it appears that if Jesus needed baptism in the same

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*As a son,  
it must have  
thrilled Jesus' heart to  
know he had  
pleased His Father.  
For us, Scripture does  
not teach that we  
should expect the same  
thunderous approval  
from heaven of our  
sonship to God, but we  
can know that He is  
our Father and we are  
His children. If Jesus  
felt it was necessary to  
obey the Father's will,  
surely none of us  
are exempt.*

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manner as did all others, then He would not be qualified to be our Savior. However, when we look a bit deeper we understand that if Jesus had not submitted to the command, then He would not be the example of obedience to God in all things that He teaches His disciples to be! Later, Jesus Himself gave a command that believers should be bap-

tized (Mark 16:16). He did not ask believers to do something He was unwilling to do. What good master would require more of his servants than he himself was willing to obey? Jesus "fulfills all righteousness" by being baptized because it was God's will.

To begin His "Spirit-filled" ministry. The baptism of Jesus marked the beginning of His public ministry. To John the baptist, the appearance of the Spirit upon Jesus was a sign that Christ would baptize with something more than water. Jesus was being baptized in the Jordan by John; but He was also being overwhelmed by the Spirit (John 1:33). Jesus was conscious of His anointing by the Holy Spirit for the beginning of his public work, for after His baptism He preached His first sermon at Nazareth using Isaiah 61:1 as a text, where the prophet said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek."

To be acknowledged as the Son of God. Immediately after His immersion, God said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). To be acknowledged as one of God's children is the ultimate need of all who seek heaven. As a Son, it must have thrilled Jesus' heart to know He had pleased His Father. For us, Scripture does not teach that we should expect the same thunderous approval from heaven of our sonship to God, but we can know that He is our Father and we are His children (Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:26-29; 1 John 2:3; 3:2).

If Jesus felt it was necessary to obey the Father's will, surely none of us are exempt. If we would walk in the Spirit, and have Him as a witness that we are sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, we will do what Jesus did and commanded. To claim to be a son of God apart from being baptized for the remission of sins is foolish. And, I would have serious doubts about my own salvation if I claimed to follow Jesus, but only to the *banks* of the river Jordan.

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# BAPTISM



## Baptism on Pentecost

Berry Kercheville

THE DAY OF PENTECOST AS RECORDED IN Acts two was a critical time in God's scheme of redemption through the ages. It was a time of beginnings. The same gospel that would be preached this day in Jerusalem would soon be preached all over the world (Luke 24:47). On this very special day, "there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven" (verse 5). God knew that whatever would be preached on this day would be universally applicable to all people. Peter and the other apostles were not preaching a gospel that was only to the Jews since they preached that the message was "to all that are afar off" (verse 39). And the message was not to be only for that time since it was to "even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (verse 39). Therefore whatever Peter preached was necessary to salvation on this day, is just as much what we need to do to be saved today.

This chapter opens with the Holy Spirit falling on the apostles. We are therefore first struck with the fact that the preaching of Peter was by the inspiration of God. It is for this reason that Peter is able to say, "hearken to my words" (verse 14), and "ye men of Israel, hear these words" (verse 22). Peter's words were revealed from God and therefore were God's words.

It is important to see what Peter is trying to do in his sermon. He first quotes the prophecy of Joel which foretold a new era in the revelation of God's word. This, he proclaimed, was now being fulfilled. Note especially verse 21: "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." It is from this verse that Peter keys the rest of his sermon. Peter's first task is to show that Jesus of Nazareth is "the Lord." If a person must call on the name of the Lord to be saved, then one must know who the Lord is. Peter therefore proves conclusively that Jesus is the Lord on the basis of His miracles, fulfilling prophecy, and the witness of the apostles of His resurrection. In looking at verse 36 we see that Peter has proven his point: "Let all the

house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ."

Now we know who the Lord is, but what is meant by, "call on the name of the Lord"? In fact, this is exactly what Peter's audience wanted to know. Their question was, "What shall we do?" That is, we now understand who the Lord is, but what do we do to call on His name? Peter's answer is clear. If one believes

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who the Lord is then the next step is to "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (verse 38). What does a person do to be saved? He must call on the name of the Lord. But how is that done? By understanding and believing that Jesus is the Lord and by repenting and being baptized in His name (by His authority). Notice the parallel between verse 21 and verses 38-39. Peter affirms that the

"whosoever" in verse 21 is Jew and Gentile in verse 39. He shows that "in the name of the Lord" is specifically "in the name of Jesus Christ." He explains "call on the name of" as "repent and be baptized in the name of." And he concludes that "shall be saved" is the equivalent of "for the remission of sins." With the whole of Peter's sermon before us, it is impossible to conclude that salvation could be obtained without belief, repentance and baptism. If salvation can be obtained without these actions, then why did Peter by inspiration command it?

Now notice verse 41: "they that gladly received his word were baptized." How was it that these people obtained the "remission of sins"? Is there any record that the Holy Spirit miraculously saved them or that they received some sort of better-felt-than-told "salvation experience"? Not at all. The Holy Spirit did His work through the words preached by Peter. When the individuals that heard those words "gladly received" them, they obeyed by being baptized. The Holy Spirit does not bring people to salvation by an inward call, but by words revealed through the "apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 3:5). In fact, Peter exhorted them in verse 40 to "save yourselves from this untoward generation." If salvation came from some direct influence of the Holy Spirit, then Peter's exhortation would be meaningless. Instead, there was something that needed to be done to be saved, and Peter exhorted them to do it. Three thousand responded to that exhortation by being baptized.

Notice finally that those who were being baptized were added to the church (the body of the saved), and this adding was done by the Lord (verse 41,47). So if we want the Lord to add us to that saved number, we will do as these three thousand souls did: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

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THEME

# BAPTISM

## Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch

Roger Shouse

THE STORY OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH IS a lesson that should touch all of our hearts. It is an account of the true joys of salvation. We all want to be happy. In fact, it is somewhat amusing to watch the lengths men will go to just to be happy. We spend enormous amounts of money, travel great distances, and put our poor bodies through all kinds of pain in the name of fun and games. Ironically, after we have done all these things, we find ourselves having to do them all over again to remain happy. A great vacation, a touching movie, an exciting ballgame or a sentimental song bring momentary happiness, but it simply does not last. True happiness is not dependent upon where you are, or even what you have, but rather who you are. It is this inward peace and joy that the Ethiopian experienced as he obeyed the Lord in baptism.

The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch is found in Acts 8:26-40. Luke tells us in Acts 8 that the preacher Philip had been preaching and baptizing in Samaria (verse 12). Philip was told by the angel of the Lord to go to the road which leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. The distance between these two cities was about fifty miles. This roadway led through some very rich and fertile valleys. Our English Bibles refer to this road as "desert," not because it was an arid climate, but rather due to the fact that it was desolate of people, or unpopulated.

We are not told very much about the life of the Ethiopian. We know that he was in a position of great authority, being in charge of the Queen's treasury. He was a worshipper of God. Luke informs us that the eunuch was returning from Jerusalem where he had gone to worship. Scholars are divided as to whether the Ethiopian was a Jew or a Gentile. We are not told the race nor the name of the eunuch. What we can gather from the text, however, is a stirring example of how one becomes a Christian. Three main events took place in this conversion.

1. The eunuch heard Jesus (verse 35).

The Ethiopian did not understand who was being discussed in the section of Scripture he was reading (verses 30-34). Philip began from this passage, which was Isaiah 53:7-8, and preached Jesus. Not only did the Ethiopian hear how Jesus fulfilled prophecy (see also Luke 24:27; Acts 2:25-31), but he also learned that Jesus suffered and died for the sins of others. This portion of Isaiah deals with the suffering lamb of God. Hearing "Jesus" involves believing that Jesus is the savior of the world (John 3:16). Faith comes, Paul says in Romans, by hearing the word of God (10:17).

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*A common inquiry that arises when studying Acts 8 is, "What connection does baptism have with the preaching of Jesus?"*

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2. The eunuch obeyed Jesus (verses 37-38). A common inquiry that arises when studying Acts 8 is, "What connection does baptism have with the preaching of Jesus?" Jesus commanded baptism (Matthew 28:19). It was the mission of Jesus to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Baptism is a part of God's divine plan of salvation (Mark 16:16). It is impossible to separate the words of Jesus from the life of Jesus (Mark 8:38). Jesus not only taught the truth, He is the truth (John 14:6). We must abide therefore in the doctrine of Christ to have Christ (2 John 9). The eunuch was baptized because it is a part of hearing Jesus and it is necessary for salvation. Even though the eunuch had just been to worship God, and was reading the word of God, there was a need for him to be baptized. Peter preached that baptism was "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). In his first epistle, this apostle wrote that baptism "doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21).

Luke, in great detail, described the eunuch's baptism. The eunuch "went down into the water" (verse 38) and "they were come up out of the water" (verse 39). The Greek word for baptism means to plunge, dip, to immerse. Paul in Romans 6:3-5 states that baptism is like the death of Jesus. Baptism is a burial or immersion, as Christ was buried into the tomb. Baptism is a bringing up out of the water as Christ was resurrected from the dead. The eunuch was buried in water and he was resurrected anew, cleansed, or simply "born again" (John 3:5).

3. The eunuch rejoiced in Jesus (verse 39). This joy came because the eunuch was now a child of God, a Christian. Luke recorded in Acts 2 that those who had been baptized were added to the church, or the saved (Acts 2:47). The eunuch had obeyed the Lord by hearing the words of Christ (Romans 1:16), confessing his faith (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10), and by removing his sins by being buried in the waters of baptism (Acts 22:16). He was now saved. This rejoicing was a result of his obedience to the Lord. The Psalmist wrote, "I have trusted in Thy lovingkindness; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation" (13:5). What joy it is to know that you belong to God. We can experience this joy by obeying the Lord as the eunuch did and letting Christ be the Lord of our lives (1 Peter 3:15). Paul wrote, while in prison, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). It was also Paul who said, "for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11). With God as our rock and salvation, our hopes, our strengths, and even our happiness will not be determined by the fleeting moments of today but by the lasting joys of looking toward heaven.

Don't let the passing pleasures of today stand between you and the great salvation in Christ Jesus. You, too, can be a child of the King as the Ethiopian became, many, many years ago on that lonely road to Gaza.

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# BAPTISM



## Baptism of the Philippian Jailer

Morris D. Norman

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN THE RIGHT place at the right time and received something fabulous? This was the case of the Philippian jailer. He was in the right place (where Paul and Silas were) at the right time (during their imprisonment) to receive something fabulous (his salvation). Events had begun months before that culminated that night in that Philippian prison. Paul's determination to preach the gospel set the stage and God's intervention made it a reality. Back in Antioch, Paul and Silas set out to visit the churches of Pisidia. This being done, they attempted to go to Asia and Bithynia, but the Spirit forbade them. As a result of a vision in Troas, they made their way to Philippi. Having found and converted Lydia, they were going about the business of the kingdom when it became necessary to cast a spirit of divination from a damsel. The enemies of the cross had Paul and Silas beaten and put in the jailer's charge. As they expressed their joy in Christ, an earthquake opened the jail doors. All of this was circumstantial to the conversion of the jailer (Acts 16:25-34).

What is the point? "All things are of God." God can accomplish His purposes in honest hearts through His zealous servants despite all the efforts of the enemies of righteousness. He can do it in the most unusual places and under the most unusual conditions. He has supplied the means—now He needs those zealous servants who will take advantage of the opportunities. The baptism of the jailer is not unlike any other that accomplishes God's purposes. The circumstances that brought it about may differ but the constituent elements are the same.

The baptism of the jailer resulted from gospel preaching. "And they spake the word of the Lord unto him." Miracles had been performed but hearts are changed by the power of the gospel, not miracles. Revealed truth is to convict the sinner of sin, righteousness and judgment. It is the word, the seed of the kingdom, that must be planted in the good and honest heart before men can

bring forth fruit unto God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The baptism of the jailer was preceded by faith. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." When the gospel is preached, those who believe and are baptized will be saved; the Lord said so. We cannot please God without faith. Eternal life can only be obtained by those who believe.

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The baptism of the jailer came out of a changed heart. He had slept while these beaten, bleeding preachers sang their praise of the Redeemer; he seemingly cared nothing for it. Now he takes them out and washes their stripes, evidence of a change. This change of heart (the Bible calls it repentance) comes about by faith in Christ. It is a repentance brought about by godly sorrow. The heart had been tendered by the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep.

One who had been among the enemy is now being gracious to those who had acquainted him with the grace of God.

The baptism of the jailer was associated with his salvation. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? . . . Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved . . . and they spake unto him the word of the Lord . . . and he . . . was baptized, he and all his, straightway." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Faith and repentance are now manifested in action, in obedience to the Lord's commands. God saves, but He saves the obedient believer. How did he know to be baptized? Of necessity, it was a part of the word of the Lord spoken by Paul.

The baptism of the jailer resulted in joy. They "rejoiced greatly . . . having believed in God." Rejoicing in the Lord comes because we know that we are righteous by faith. "Being therefore justified by faith . . . we rejoice in the hope of glory." Whatever our lot in this life, the only thing that really counts, that has priority over all else, is our relationship with the Lord. When sinners stand just before God, there is reason for rejoicing. The eunuch "went on his way rejoicing" after he had been baptized. In the past there was no hope; now hope is embraced. Where there was condemnation, now there is reconciliation.

All the constituent elements are there in the conversion of the Philippian jailer; the same elements that were present in all other conversions recorded by the Holy Spirit. The circumstances leading to the conversions may have varied, but those things that change the man from a sinner to a Christian are always the same. The power of the preached word produces faith in the good and honest heart, a heart changed by godly sorrow, resulting in obedient response and the joy of salvation. God has provided the means; now we can all have a part in the process of salvation. God's servants can preach and the honest-hearted sinner can respond—and then God will save.

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## BAPTISM

### Miraculous Salvation and the Baptism of Saul

Russ Bowman

"AND NOW WHY TARRIEST THOU? ARISE, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." These may very well have been the most important words that the apostle Paul ever heard. They provided for him the solution to a problem which he had encountered while on the way to Damascus. As a devout follower of the Law, he was traveling to this place in an effort to defend his faith against a new and powerful threat to Judaism—

of one who supposed himself a devout follower of God into a Christian. Today, the world is filled with Sauls—people who are sincere worshippers of the Lord, but still not true Christians. I believe that the baptism of Saul is the key to educating the world in the only right and true path to salvation.

Without attempting to subtract from the miraculous events which surrounded Saul's conversion (Acts 9, 22, 26) I want to stress the fact that the act of baptism

still a lost sinner. He was the true recipient of a miraculous visit from the Son of God, and yet he still had to be taught by a man the means of securing his salvation.

This event in the life of Paul has so much application today that the omniscience of God becomes more evident with each reading. In our age of charismatic religion, salvation is attainable by feeling and emotion and the miraculous works of God, according to the "religious leaders" of our day. If that's true today, why wasn't it true in 36 A.D. when Saul witnessed a true instance of divine revelation? People today can see a cloud shaped like a cross, receive an electric shock from a hair dryer, or have a dream about a peaceful landscape and think that they have been visited by the Lord and He has saved their souls (hallelujah!). Saul actually did see Christ, but He didn't save his soul nor forgive his sins until Saul had repented and been baptized. Are we so vain as to think we are more special than Paul? What does it take to convince people that baptism is essential to salvation?

Ananias asked the persecutor-turned-believer the most pointed question of his life. He knew that Saul believed in Jesus and His position as the Son of God. He realized that Saul had received a miraculous visit, had been confronted with his error, and had repented in prayer (Acts 9:11). But he also realized that this "chosen vessel" was in need of salvation, for he knew not the way. He did not tell Saul to "open his heart and accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior" in order to receive salvation. Nor did Ananias tell him that Christ had forgiven him of his sins and saved him on the road to Damascus. Instead, Ananias asked him the question which would provide for Saul the means by which he would enter into a true union with God.

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

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**"Saul actually did see Christ, but He didn't save his soul nor forgive his sins until Saul had repented and been baptized. Are we so vain as to think we are more special than Paul? What does it take to convince people that baptism is essential to salvation?"**

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Christianity. Isn't it odd that in the space of a few moments, that which was originally his greatest threat became his only hope?

The conversion of the "Hebrew of Hebrews" is a fascinating study in the power of the Lord to turn even the most adamant adversary into the most influential disciple. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is amazing because it illustrates not simply the transformation of a sinner to a saint, but more the metamorphosis

was the key to his salvation. We are constantly awed and entranced when we consider the wonderful way in which Saul was introduced to Jesus and His will. However, in spite of the marvelous revelation of Christ to Saul, he did not at that time achieve an acceptable status in the eyes of the Lord. As he arose from the dusty road to Damascus, he opened his eyes to find himself a blind believer, the only man to have seen and spoken with Christ after His ascension, and yet



# That's Life!



Dee Bowman

*SOMETIME AROUND 1809*, while awaiting a ship to take him from Glasgow to America, Alexander Campbell made the following entry into his journal: "A man may enter a garden for three purposes: First, to learn the art of gardening; second, for pleasure; third, to gather fruit. So may a man read the Bible for three things: First, to learn to read it or dispute about it; second, read the historical parts for pleasure; third, to gather fruit; this last is the true way." Hmmm—worth remembering.

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*A RECENT MOVIE STARRING GEORGE BURNS* is so blasphemous that I cannot conscientiously say its title.

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*IT IS MY CONSIDERED AND CAREFUL OPINION* that the movement known as "The Women's Liberation Movement" is easily the most carefully devised, ingeniously promoted, and cunningly developed plan the Devil has concocted since the terrible sin in the Garden of Paradise. I strongly suggest that it may be the most serious threat to Christianity in existence today. It has within it the potential for completely reshaping the home as God gave it. It can retard the function of the family unit; demean the place of the husband in God's arrangement of things; encourage an even more permissive and promiscuous society. It is a deterrent to peace, a blatant disregard for authority, a sinful mismanagement of God's system of order, and a bar to heaven to all who fall victim to its tenacious tentacles.

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*ERMA BOMBECK SAID IT.* I like it. "I see children as kites. You spend a lifetime trying to get them off the ground. You run with them until you're both breathless . . . they crash . . . they hit the rooftop . . . you patch and comfort, adjust and teach. You watch them lifted by the

wind and assure them that someday they'll fly. Finally they are airborne: they need more string and you keep letting it out. But with each twist of the ball of twine, there is a sadness which goes with joy. The kite becomes more distant, and you know it won't be long before that beautiful creature will snap the lifeline that binds you together and will soar as it's meant to soar, free and alone. Only then do you know that you did your job."

\* \* \*

*AFTER A HARD LESSON WHICH INCLUDED A POINT ON PORNOGRAPHY*, an old lady approached me and said, "I'll tell you one thing, Preacher, my kids won't every get on to that stuff. We ain't even got a pornograph to play it on!" Apocryphal, but effective.

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*I SO ADMIRE SEVERAL THINGS ABOUT DAVID.* But I think his sense of fairness is the most outstanding of his traits. When he plundered the nations which bordered Israel, he brought the booty gained by the enterprise to the poor and needy. When he had opportunity to kill Saul after the king had tried repeatedly to kill him, he would not do so, because he viewed Saul as "the Lord's anointed." And when Nathan came to him and related the story of the rich man who had taken the one little lamb from his poor neighbor and prepared it for his table, his sense of fairness was kindled and he wanted immediate justice. And when the parable was applied to him by God's prophet, David's sense of fairness led him to say, "I have sinned."

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*THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE:* Try going as long as you can without saying one bad thing about anybody. You'll feel better about yourself. So will everyone else.



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# Youth Forum

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## Lisa

Lee Harrell

It has been said that the greatest thrill in life is the birth of a child. I have no children, but I wonder if even a baby could compare with the elation that resulted from the baptism of one of my best friends.

able, except that my being a Christian was an unspoken barrier.

Even though we did not do it often, Lisa was the one person with whom I could talk about religion. Gradually, she began attending church with me and

go to college at Florida College, I left thinking that when I returned my old friends and I would have nothing in common. That thought, which in many ways has come true, left me feeling empty and alone.

One morning at about 6:45 someone knocked on my door and told me my mother was on the phone. I immediately thought that something was wrong. When mother told me that Lisa had been baptized, I just stood there and cried. I wasn't sure if I was crying because of joy for her or sorrow because I was so far away and removed from it all—probably both.

With one act of faith Lisa had not only removed the barrier from between us, but she had also renewed my faith. The students at F.C. have a term, "line-walker," to describe one who does not stray too far from the truth but has little relish for it. I knew I had not always been a good example for Lisa, but I intended never to let her down again. Lisa's decision was a turning point in my life too.

I realize now that I need to be stronger than ever, not only for me, but for Lisa. I rejoice for the part I played in her obeying the gospel; I am resolved not to play a part in her stumbling. The life of a Christian is not always an easy one. It is especially hard for younger Christians; the way becomes foggy and their vision is easily blurred. We must all remember that we never know where our influence may be crucially needed.

Lisa went forward to be baptized while Dee Bowman was holding a meeting in Fayetteville. He later told me how proud everyone in the congregation was of her. But I was sure the most thrilled person of all was in Florida that night.

Lisa and I used to joke about being sisters. Now we really are sisters—in Christ. "For he that does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35).

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**"One morning at about 6:45 someone knocked on my door and told me my mother was on the phone. I immediately thought that something was wrong. When mother told me that Lisa had been baptized, I just stood there and cried. I wasn't sure if I was crying because of joy for her or sorrow because I was so far away—probably both."**

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Lisa and I had been through three years of high school and numerous ridiculous escapades together. We had shared everything from the birth of my first niece to the serious heart attack of her father. The two of us were inseparable,

then, later, she came on her own. I watched her study and could see her grow. As Lisa learned more, we began to have more discussions about the true meaning of Christianity.

When I left Fayetteville, and Lisa, to



# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Oh taste and see that Jehovah is good . . . for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek Jehovah shall not want any good thing" (34:8-10).

## The Christian's Appeal to the World

**A**s a member of a local racquetball club in Melbourne I have many occasions to overhear locker room conversation. It is often crude and offensive, consisting of macho men trying to impress their peers with how drunk they got over the weekend, how many women they are chasing and what exotic spot they have planned for their next vacation. Life to them is a series of carnal exploits. But do these things satisfy or give life meaning? They do not.

It is true that "the young lions do lack and suffer hunger" (no real satisfaction, verse 10). On the other hand the Christian knows God and thus knows what life is all about. He does "not want any good thing." It is his calling to try to attract men to the gospel of Christ. We cannot force men to obey, so the appeal to men must be "Oh, taste and see." This implies that the goodness of God can only be known by experience. Each man, says the psalmist, should put God and His truth to the test—"oh, taste and see."

Christianity tells the world that "the Lord is good" (verse 8). He is the answer to life's greatest questions. But how is man to *know* this? Not just by hearing about it, but by trying it for himself. The best way to find out whether anything is any good is to try it. I fear that in the same way that a child does not like a certain vegetable because he has never tasted it, so many people do not care for the Lord's way.

This "taste and see" approach is not limited to the psalmist in Scripture. Peter used it when he wrote to the elect and said "if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Peter 2:2-3). When Philip told Nathanael that he had found the Messiah and Nathanael expressed doubt, Philip urged him to "Come and see" (John 1:45-46). And the woman at the well in Samaria was so impressed with Jesus that she returned to the city, entreating others to "Come see a man who told me all things I ever did" (John 4:29). It is axiomatic that if men would see, they must taste; and if they taste, they will see.

*God's goodness in pardoning sins* can only be "seen" by one who has experienced it. Thus, we find the man from Ethiopia who obeyed the gospel "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). And the jailer at Philippi, after learning what God wanted him to do, and doing it, "rejoiced greatly with all his house, having believed in God" (Acts 16:33-34). *God's goodness in answering prayer* can only be known by those who pray. In this same psalm, David says, "This poor man cried, and Jehovah heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (verse 6). What a blessing it is to pray to a God who hears and can save! *The goodness of God in making His will known* can only be tasted by those who read and study the Bible: "How sweet are thy words unto my mouth. . . . The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psalm 119:104, 72).

**E**xperience has no surer lesson than this: "The Lord is good." The Bible is a storehouse of incidents and statements of those who have proven this for themselves—from David in the Old Testament who said, "I love Jehovah, because he heareth my voice and my supplications" (Psalm 116:1) to Paul in the New who says, "I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed to him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

The experiences of Christians throughout the ages confirm this testimony. Just because one today has not had this experience is no ground for his questioning the reality of it. Truth is truth whether believed or not. The earth was round before Copernicus was born, and still would be if all men believed it to be flat. But personal experience will bring about unquestionable certainty (John 9:25). Our appeal to the world is: "Come and see."



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# CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE

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Martin M. Broadwell

*Martin Broadwell is President and General Manager of The Center for Management Services, Inc., of Decatur, Georgia. He has been a training consultant to businesses around the world. Martin has also shared his skills with scores of churches around the world, in addition to teaching in his home congregation at Embry Hills in Atlanta. His weekend series on teaching has revitalized the class program in many congregations.*

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## Introduction

To many, my life is either hectic, busy, exciting, trying, or at least unusual—depending upon one's viewpoint. Basically, I am a writer and lecturer in the fields of supervision, management and training (the buzz words in the trade are "Human Resources Management and Development"). For nearly thirty-five years I've been involved in either supervising people or training people how to train supervisors. My work takes me to all parts of the country, and much of the world, having worked and traveled in all fifty states and over forty countries. More importantly, I've been a Christian for more than forty years. Of all the things I could have chosen to help me in my field of work, nothing has been more compatible than Christianity.

## Changing Times in Education

When I became Director of Training for one of the country's largest corporations, my first assignment was to develop a "train-the-trainer" program using the *new* approaches to education that were coming into being in the early 60's. The universities were doing much research with rats and pigeons (and Sophomores). The results were a number of new approaches to getting more productive learning done in the classrooms. As I listened at the feet of many research scholars, and began to implement the ideas, I found they worked, and I felt myself a part of a new and exciting world of discovery. The problem was that something kept haunting me, telling me this wasn't as new as I had been led to believe. I remember the moment well when it dawned on me that this new "methodology" was simply a

replay of teaching methods used by God's people since the beginning of time. God had "at sundry times and in divers manners spoken in times past unto the fathers by the prophets" and had "in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." The simple truth: God gives us a guide in *methodology* as well as in message. Since that dawning day, the Bible has served as my reference book for how to treat, as well as train, people. It has served as my standard for checking the accuracy of all theories and principles and rules developed by the scholars for people relationships.

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***My system  
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Having tested the idea of trusting in the Bible to give me a standard for how to teach, both one-on-one and in groups, I gradually realized that not only is there a pattern of perfect teaching principles throughout the Bible, the word of God, but there is that same help and guide for such things as boss-subordinate relationships, and interpersonal relationships of all kinds.

My first clue should have been the time I read in a standard book of management that the "best example we have of ideal management is found in the 18th Chapter of Exodus" (where Moses set up a staff, then organized the people into groups of tens, fifties, and hundreds, etc., a system now called by management experts, "Management by Exception"). Now, when there is a new

textbook out, with a "new approach" to dealing with people, I simply go back to the Bible, check the book out against Jesus' teaching, or use Ecclesiastes or Proverbs to see if the "theory" of man fits the word of God. There are no subjects I teach on, be it "discipline" or "communication" or "handling people," that I cannot find help from reading what God gave us thousands of years ago. My system is simple: If man's research fits God's principles, I accept it; if it doesn't, I either cast it aside or speak out (with total confidence) against it. Perhaps the most thrilling thing of all is that I have no doubt that what I'm doing will work in Hong Kong or Egypt or Nepal or Germany or India or Mexico. God's principles are not only for all times, they're for all people!

## Personal Application

It would be improper to close without a testimony of how all this fits into my personal life. The most obvious thing is that since these principles apply so universally to the people I teach, they certainly give me confidence that I have the perfect guide for my own life. My jobs have been good to me and for me, but Christianity has made it all work out well. Being a Christian has *never* worked a hardship for me. I have confidence because I know that I have a perfect guide. I have no problem letting people know I don't drink, or that I have religious convictions or that there are things I don't approve of. Because the Bible has given me the research references that are irrefutable, my reputation as an "expert" simply is enhanced by my life style. It's assuring to see soft drinks served instead of liquor, language toned down, and actions cleaned up when I'm around. I wait for that inevitable question, "Are you a Christian or something? We've never seen anyone speak with such clarity and authority, without using foul language and dirty stories to make a point!" I wish often that I were more trusting in God's direction; I'm sure, though, that I'm a lot better than I would have been if I hadn't discovered God's tremendous resource and research library!

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# Mining The Scriptures

## PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

### The Sermon on the Mount

#### An Idea Whose Time Has Not Come

If Jesus was attempting to formulate ethical principles which would catch the spirit of His age He certainly was a failure. His teachings were alien and untimely and stirred animosity even in the nation of Israel. But the Son of God had always known that "the time" for His teaching would never come in history. As He once said to His then unbelieving brothers: "My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil" (John 7:6-7).

The ethical teachings of Jesus are no less alien to our own age, and there is no more radical expression of kingdom righteousness than in the last two of His six great contrasts between the distortions of the Pharisees and the will of God (Matthew 5:38-48). These words have stirred more controversy than all the rest of the sermon put together and many efforts to explain them have only served to explain them away and strip them of all force. Perhaps it would be helpful as an introduction to Jesus' teaching on the love of one's enemies to look at some of the controversy that has surrounded them.

There has been wide disagreement over how broad an application ought to be made to the principle of neighbor love. Some have said that it applies only to "personal" relationships and others have contended that it must apply to every facet of the Christian's life. In support of the more dominant view that narrows application to "one-and-one" neighbor relations Carl F. H. Henry has written the following: "In Christian businessmen's circles it is often said that the Sermon on the Mount is the superlative code of ethics for success in business. But the fact is that a big business man who conducts his trade by the ethics of the Sermon—giving two garments when one is asked free, not resisting violence—would soon find himself hopelessly in debt or completely out of business . . . A nation which runs its affairs by the law of neighbor relations—acting only on the principle of unrequited love, giving twice as much as its enemies demand, and committed to non-resistance of aggressions against it—is in process of national suicide" (*Christian Personal Ethics*, pp. 322-323).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer gives expression to the opposing view in his little book *The Cost of Discipleship*: "This saying of Jesus removes the Church from the sphere of politics and law. The Church is not to be a national community like the old Israel, but a community of believers without political or national ties. The Old Israel has been both—the chosen people of God and a national community, and it was therefore His will that they should meet force with force. But with the church it is different:

it has abandoned political and national status, and therefore it must patiently endure aggression. . . . But this distinction between person and office is wholly alien to the teaching of Jesus. He addresses His disciples as men who have left all to follow Him, and the precept of non-violence applies equally to private life and official duty. He is the Lord of life, and demands undivided allegiance. Furthermore, when it comes to practice, this distinction raises insoluble difficulties. Am I ever acting only as a private person or only in an official capacity? . . . Am I not always an individual, face to face with Jesus, even in the performance of my official duties?" (pp. 121-124).

Does the principle of love apply to every aspect of the Christian's dealings with others or is it limited to certain personal dealings only? This is a question that has been raised again and again over the centuries and it is the one that the citizen of the kingdom must wrestle with and decide. There is no place of refuge from this very practical issue.

Questions have also been raised over whether the Christian is forbidden all right of self-defense in personal relationships or if he is required to submit to evil only when attacked or mistreated for the gospel's sake. Martin Luther had some interesting comments on this issue in his *Table Talks*: "If anyone breaks into my home, tries to do violence to my family or to myself or to cause harm, I am bound to defend myself and them in my capacity as master of the house and a head of the family. If brigands or murderers have tried to harm me or do me wrongful violence I should have defended myself and resisted them in the name of the prince whose subject I am. . . . I must help the prince to purge his country of bad subjects. And if I have the strength to cut this bandit's throat, it is my duty to take the knife to him. . . . But if I am attacked on account of the divine word, in my capacity as a preacher, then I must endure it and leave God to punish him and avenge me."

All this should help us see that we have some difficult questions to wrestle with in our effort to understand the true demand of kingdom righteousness. And while we struggle earnestly to understand and apply these challenging teachings we must constantly guard ourselves against the temptation to simply rationalize away anything that seems burdensome and unappealing. We cannot discount our Lord's teachings merely because they seem revolutionary. Clearly there has never been a teacher in human history more at odds with everything men in their wisdom have thought to be right than Jesus of Nazareth.





## Ground of Confidence

Philippians 1:7-8

Paul prayed for the Philippians with confidence, says he in verse 6, "that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." But as I argued last time, this confidence that Paul felt with regard to specific disciples should not be turned into an assertion that God will invariably finish any work He has begun in any individual, so that apostasy is impossible. God wants to bring any work he starts in a person to its end, of course, but the work of God in a person may be frustrated (see Romans 14:20), not because of any lack of strength or will in God, but due to the failure of the person to cooperate with what God endeavors to do in him. Observe how Paul brings both factors together in Philippians 2:12f.

Verse 7 is Paul's *justification* of the confidence expressed in verse 6 about the Philippians: "even as it is right for me to think this thing on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel ye all being partakers with me of grace" (literal translation).

*It is right*, says Paul, for me to be confident about your final salvation—i.e., it is what ought to be; it would be wrong not to hold this confidence—*because I have you in my heart*. This rendering, rather than the marginal alternative *ye have me in your heart*, is correct. The confirmation of verse 7 given in verse 8 would seem to be conclusive on this point.

A close parallel is found at 2 Corinthians 7:3 (see 6:11-13): "ye are in our hearts to die together and live together." So also the Philippians. They were in his heart, indeed a part of himself. It would be wrong not to hold the confidence with regard to them expressed in verse 6.

But it is not merely Paul's love for them that justifies his confidence in their final salvation. Rather it is because they are in his heart as being (Greek participle) partakers with him of grace. They had joined with him in the work of the gospel from the first day and right up until the present (verse 5). They had most recently been his partners in affliction and in his defense and proof of the gospel at Rome (see 2:25-30; 4:10-20, esp. v. 14), but also were experiencing "the same conflict" at home (1:29-30), in all of which they were sharers in grace.

*Bonds* refers to Paul's situation and *the defence and confirmation of the gospel* to his employment in that situation. The Greek *apologia* ("verbal defence, speech in defence," Grimm-Thayer) is negative—the answer to any charges against the gospel. *Confirmation of the gospel* is

the positive side, and refers to the establishment of the gospel by the presentation of evidence demonstrating its truth. The coupling of *defence and confirmation* with *bonds* makes it most likely that special reference is made to Paul's upcoming trial before Caesar, which was not merely a defense of himself, but more importantly, a defense of the gospel (see verse 16).

Further, the connection of *ye all being partakers with me of grace* with *in my bonds*, etc. would seem to indicate a special reference to the grace which was Paul's in his present opportunity. Compare verse 29, where the Greek verb for *granted* indicates a gift of grace: "to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf."

Under the circumstances many people would have been glad to put as much distance as possible between themselves and Paul (see 2 Timothy 1:8, 15-18). Not these Philippians. They clung to him in the closest possible manner and became sharers with him of "the grace" (lit. tr.). As such persons they were in his heart—as it were, part of himself. That is what made it right for him to hold such confidence in their final salvation.

Verse 8 then provides confirmation of Paul's expression of feeling toward them: "For God [who knows the heart] is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus." 1 Peter 2:2 speaks of the desire or longing for spiritual milk. But here the object of the longing is *you all*—hence, "how I want you and long for you;" in effect, how much I care for you.

KJV translates literally, "in the bowels of Christ Jesus." The Greek is "literally *inward parts, entrails*" (Arndt & Gingrich) and so used in Acts 1:18; "properly the nobler viscera, the heart, lungs, liver, etc., as distinguished from the lower viscera, the intestines" (J. B. Lightfoot on Philippians 1:8); "figuratively, of the seat of the emotions, in our usage *heart*" (Arndt & Gingrich).

Paul speaks out of the consciousness of union with Christ Jesus (see Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:5). What I feel for you, says Paul, is such emotion as might be found in the heart of Christ Jesus. It is the result of His indwelling, the feeling inspired by Him. But what a powerful expression of that idea! Paul's longing, wrote H. A. W. Meyer, was "as if the inward parts of Christ were moved in him, as if Christ's heart throbbed in him for his Philippians." Is not this the emotion which the Lord's preachers must learn to feel toward His people?

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# CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE

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Bob Andrews

*Bob Andrews is a wealthy and celebrated businessman. He and his wife, Terry, are internationally famous. Bob is the son of my much loved friends, Paul and Doris Andrews. I remember sitting in their home brooding over what might become of their talented youngster. Paul lived to rejoice in his son's success, but sweetest for all of us has been the firmness of his faith in the midst of his success.*

\* \*

I count it a privilege to share a few thoughts with you concerning the Chris-

1970, the priorities that we verbalized to each other were simple and straightforward: God, Family, Country, Business, and Social. I know this sounds overly simplistic, but to us in 1970 it sounded like a great way to keep our direction. I must add that it sounds just as good to me in 1985. As our business grew and the demands on our time grew, it was this set of priorities that balanced us. Giant ocean liners use gyroscopic stabilizers to reduce their pitch and roll in an angry sea. Our stabilizer has always been Christianity first and everything else secondary.

ethics, morals and priorities that a certain group of people will be impressed. These people are then teachable. So, my point is this: from business success comes credibility and from this positive posture we can convince and convert others.

Maintaining proper spirituality and being in our business has not been a major problem for several reasons. Christians live in the world but aren't of the world, so this requires constant fortification of our minds to reject the very appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22). We choose to associate with business people of good character. This lessens the temptation factor, because these friends, although not Christians, respect us.

Another tremendous aid has been "counting the cost" (Luke 14:28). There is so much to gain and so much to lose. Living in sin is really a poor option. Christ demands and deserves our very best. Friends and even strangers watch us to see if we will falter. None of us can afford to fail. There's just too much at stake. Christians are leaders and influence centers.

There are many other points to make here, but I'll conclude with just one more. Business success, family success and certainly spiritual success have much in common. Here are five things I'm sure each one of us must do in order to move in the direction of the most important of all successes—being a Christian.

1. Make unusual commitments.
2. Practice positive expectations.
3. Involve yourself in possibility thinking instead of probability thinking.
4. Develop tenacity.
5. Dedicate yourself to Christ on a very personal level.

I have been blessed as promised in Matthew 6:33, and now am required to give more than ever (Luke 12:48). We live in a time of exceptional opportunity to accomplish the Lord's work. With humble and enthusiastic hearts, all working together, the future of Christianity in our time is brighter than ever.

722 E. Fletcher, Tampa, FL 33612

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***"Maintaining proper spirituality and being in our business has not been a major problem . . . Christ demands and deserves our very best. Friends and even strangers watch us to see if we will falter. None of us can afford to fail. There's just too much at stake. Christians are leaders and influence centers."***

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tian life. It is my prayer in writing this that someone will be lifted up as so many have touched my life in a positive way.

When I was a senior in college (for the third year) and met my wife, Terry, I really never dreamed that we would someday own and operate a large, successful business. I did, however, know that I would always live for Christ. Paul and Doris, my parents, did a special job of instilling lasting memories of the thrill of obedience and the shame of sin. So, when Terry (a new Christian then) and I started our marriage and our Amway business in

My commission in Mark 16 and Matthew 28 is to teach and convert others. This means I've got to find someone who will listen to the sweet story of Jesus and then explain it in such a way that it appeals to them. The business arena offers a unique opportunity to accomplish this Christian duty. We begin by obeying the Lord's commandments in the sermon on the mount. We are the salt—we save. We are lights—we show the way. The brighter our light, the more attention we draw and the greater our influence. My experience in business has been that if we never compromise our Christian



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### Teaching For Eternity

Yesterday's "angry young man" has given way to today's angry young woman, especially among the ranks of the unmarried. Victims of job, economic, and social discrimination, many feel discriminated against in religion. If they are not permitted to preach or to participate in business meetings, some feel that they are being denied the opportunity for maximum success and respect.

An older generation, however, though more restricted, did not suffer such discontent. Forming legitimate practical relationships with one another, they compensated for the lack of relations with others. Dedicating themselves fully to what they could do, they were too busy to complain about what they could not do. The result has often been, in their sunset years, a unique place of affection and honor.

Take Beulah Sparks and Lucy Glass for example. They lived together for seventeen years, following their profession, serving the Lord and caring for one another. They would be together still except that a loving niece urged Beulah, now 85 years old, to come live with her. Meanwhile, Christian friends vie for the privilege of caring for Lucy who is some younger. The favorite kindness they can render is to drive with her the 75 miles to see Beulah, and the privilege of sharing in the joy of their reunion is sufficient within itself to justify the trip.

These godly women have been the objects not only of affection, but of profound respect. Gospel preachers have sought their views on difficult points of doctrine; elders have asked their counsel in matters of policy and discipline; parents have valued their advice on the rearing of children; and teenagers, whom no one else could seem to touch, have been moved to tears and repentance by their admonitions. Few women have had more influence in their community.

Where has this prestige been attained? Not behind an executive's desk; not behind a judge's bench; certainly not in the pulpit. It has been attained as Christians quietly visiting the sick, sharing food with the needy and encouragement with the weak, supporting from their meager income the preaching of the gospel all over the world, and, above all, by teaching.

Teaching was their profession. They taught where you would think they would have the least influence: first and second grades. But their impact on those little minds will never be forgotten. Lucy taught for 22 years and Beulah for 10 in the elementary department of David

Lipscomb College. In 1958 they moved to Athens, Alabama to teach in the private school there. Word of their effectiveness spread quickly and soon one of the first things a new parent wanted to do was to get the infant's name on the waiting list for Miss Glass's first grade.

Good teaching was not an accident for them. Though they had taught the material many times, they made careful preparation for each day's instruction. The goal for the children was far beyond mere proficiency in the three R's. It involved life and, beyond that, eternity. Art training was making cards for the sick and shut-ins. Courtesy was encouraged above all other skills. Bible classes required memorizing of verses that the students would carry with them to their graves.

Every child was special to Miss Glass and Miss Sparks and each one felt it. Nothing was so rewarding as a star at the end of the day and nothing so devastating as a "bad mark." This reluctance to disappoint these two special teachers has carried through to later life and accounts for the influence of the teachers over former students in later years.

Retirement came for neither of these women at the customary age of 65. It came only when they felt that the children were not getting what they deserved from their classes. And it came in each instance with a great outpouring of affection from a grateful community.

Those who feel denied an opportunity for greatness because they are denied some "position" in the church need to read again what Jesus did and said when the disciples were disputing about greatness. "And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me' (Mark 9:35-37).

When I read those words, I see sixty little children lined up to go out of adjoining classrooms at 2:55 in the afternoon. Loving teachers put their arms around them one by one and send them on their way, each knowing Jesus better for what he or she has seen and heard in the classroom during the day. Such teachers, my dear friends, are "lights in the world" and "great in the kingdom of heaven."

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# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## "You Let Us Down, Joe"

In March, former New York Yankee baseball player Joe Pepitone was charged with the illegal possession of a gun and drugs, a charge he denied. But his arrest was widely broadcast, including a segment on the national television news. The film report showed the handcuffed Pepitone being escorted by police officers. There was a crowd milling around and a voice from off the screen shouted, "You let us down, Joe."

It was a scene strikingly reminiscent of the story of "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, star Chicago White Sox outfielder in the 1920s. Jackson was a central figure in the infamous "Blackstocking" scandal in which a number of players were expelled from baseball after being accused of throwing World Series games. Jackson had been a folk hero, loaded with talent and personality. As

he was ushered into his trial through a hushed crowd of fans, a small boy with tears in his eyes pitifully implored: "Say it ain't so, Joe, say it ain't so."

Surely all of us have had similarly degrading moments in our lives, though perhaps none so public. I let my parents down when I was young; I know I did and it pains me to think of it. I have let my family down; they have seen me angry and unreasoning; I have often asked more of them than I gave of myself. I have let my brethren down too often, looking away when I saw their needs.

But, more important, consider God and how He views His children. I know He follows my life with anticipation, that He trusts me and counts on me. I feel I have made Him a proud parent on some occasions. I think some-

times He could ask the heavenly hosts, "Hast thou considered my servant Ed?" Too often, however, there are those mortifying moments when, in the presence of the hushed audience of eternity, I hear him say, "You let us down, Ed."

Never doubt that sin has in it the seeds of pain. It will bring the haughty low. Think of Peter's agony when after one of his denials Jesus looked at him with eyes that said, "You let me down, Peter."

To recognize that sin leads to remorse is important, but even more crucial is to embrace forgiveness and regeneration. Pepitone and Jackson could rebuild their lives. My parents forgave me and others have done the same since. I try harder all the time not to let them down. I wonder if Peter and Jesus, after the Lord's resurrection, discussed the apostle's denials. There would

have been no need for it. Peter would never forget that he had let his Lord down. And Jesus knew that his friend was back on track. He taught men to forget their ignominious pasts and to set their hopes on the future.

The key, of course, is forgiveness. Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, was instructed: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). After that, let us fervently strive to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1).

\* \*

"Injustice is relatively easy to bear, it is justice that hurts."

—H. L. Mencken

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## Difficulty of Proper Evaluation

Value is sometimes determined by what a thing will bring on the market, or what the economists call "the conversion factor." Sometimes value is measured by how rare the commodity is (if there aren't many more like it, chances are it is valuable, regardless of what it is). What a thing cost originally is sometimes the determining factor as to its present worth. And we often place value on things because of our sentimental attachment to them. I have a knife which I prize highly, but which would be of little worth to anyone else.

But we have a way of fouling up our sense of values. We sometimes assign importance to people, things, events, that, given objective scrutiny, are actually not worth much. *Time* has a way of affecting our sense of values. Things we once thought to be of considerable value often are diminished by the passing of time. *Prejudices* can color our sense of values, sometimes resulting in poor choices. And it's easy to allow *situations* and *circumstances* to dictate to us what is valuable and what is not.

What all that says is that we should be careful how we arrange our list of values, and give careful consideration to make sure that what we have valued so highly has legitimate reason for its place in our priorities.

Misplaced values can cause us lots of trouble. When we don't take seriously how important our health is, for instance, we can cause ourselves all manner of difficulties. Smoking is a case in point. The person who smokes has not placed a proper value on his health, because it is a proven fact that smoking is hazardous to your health. This same disregard can cause great spiritual problems as well.

There is a terribly strong tendency to rank physical things, especially those things we consider to be pleasurable, right up with the truly important spiritual matters of life. It is an unworthy comparison. How is it that we can compare heaven to the temporary and impermanent things of this life? How can we rate being in fellowship with the Father with being popular? Or having friends of the world with the blessings and true brotherhood in Christ? Fact is, there is no comparison.

We have a tendency to undervalue the simpler joys of life. We tend to take them for granted just because they are not big, boisterous, or flashy. How sad to devalue something just because it's little. Who can measure the value of a beautiful sunset, watching a leaf float down a sparkling, laughing summer stream, or a rabbit as it hops across a mantle of newly fallen snow? Who can place a worth on a baby's first step, that special moment when you found out you were the one, or the memory of the times when, with little more than love and dedication, you made it through a difficult time? Or who, with dollars and cents, can measure the joy of just being at peace with yourself?

But most of all, we mismeasure people. We pedestalize, aggrandize, elevate those whom we consider to be special based mostly on some arbitrary criterion of judgment. Sometimes it is because they are rich, or famous, or have special physical beauty, or unique talent. All these things are fine and may deserve some recognition, but most of the time not as much as we give them.

Actually, you can't measure the worth of man by his standing in the community, by his physical characteristics, or his bank balance, or even by the way most people measure him. The true way to measure the worth of a man is by his character. If he has character, he is special, no matter who he is or where he came from. In point of fact, many times character shows, not in the acquisition of things, or having people's praises, or even in good health, but when health, or wealth, or reputation has been lost.

How do you build such an important thing? Well, it's not easy. But most things that are really worth anything aren't. First, you have to decide who you will serve. Real character comes from serving God. Secondly, you have to know yourself, really come to grips with who you are and how you relate to life. You have to fix your aim firmly on heaven, not on things on the earth. And finally, you have to change banks. That's right, change banks. Learn to lay up things in heaven, to store up better possessions.

It may be hard, but it's worth it.



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## Christianity Magazine

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# Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 663 Denise Drive, Melbourne, FL 32935

## Our sincere apology

In the February, 1985 issue of *Christianity Magazine* there was an error in the article, "A Lady Looks At the Psalms" (p. 30). A line was left out which made Donna Keith say exactly the opposite of what she really said. The last sentence under point two (third column) should read: "Total commitment to God will prevent our becoming so involved with this life that we have no time to be involved in preparing for the next life."

We sincerely apologize to sister Keith for this error.

—Brent Lewis

## "Higher" criticism

Dear Ed:

Your "Rear Views" article in the Feb., 1985 issue of *Christianity Magazine* caught my attention. I think it's a mistake to classify Yankees with the others in the article's subtitle. Yankees (my kinsmen in the flesh) are "strange," but by no means "exotic." May I put forth as evidence Silent Calvin Coolidge. However, I'm hoping to change even "strange" Yankees into a "peculiar people."

—Keith Clayton  
Bristol, VT

## Questioning an illustration

In the April, 1985 issue of *Christianity Magazine*, W. Frank Walton in his otherwise excellent article titled "Brotherly Back-Stabbing" used an illustration about an American pilot in WW 2 shooting down a German pilot. He said after the encounter the American realized he had "murdered another human being." This use of the word "murder" is what I object to. There is a vast difference between murder and killing. Murder is always a sin. Killing may or may not be a sin. If what the American did is murder, then every soldier who fired a shot in WW 2, Korea, or Vietnam is guilty of attempted murder! If what the American did

is murder then all those who gave the orders from the President of the United States right on down are equally guilty of murder. As a matter of fact, if killing an enemy in battle is murder then God Himself is a murderer since He ordered Saul to "utterly destroy" the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15). I was a fighter pilot in the Vietnam War and I remember that my wingman and I were credited with killing over 50 Viet Cong on one mission alone. Although I have felt remorse over this killing I have never believed that I was a murderer nor have I ever felt the need to repent of these acts. Is it brother Walton's contention that I and thousands of others who killed in war are guilty of murder?

—Bill Geren  
Fayetteville, AR

## On women's participation in business meetings

Thanks to you and the others for your work on the magazine. It has generally been very helpful to me.

In the March issue, a sister wrote asking if any scriptural principle prohibits all members from meeting for discussion of congregational business, and she pointed out that many times the women feel "left out" regarding the work of the church. We have recently considered this in our congregation, and I would like to comment briefly on it.

I presume that there is some line of reasoning which is used to establish authority for a "men's business meeting," but I certainly know of no scriptural examples where such was employed. Perhaps to most people this comes under generic authority, reasoning that we have no instruction "in the absence of elders" how to conduct the business of the church. However, we can read of several instances when the whole church met together to consider a congregational matter. The best example that I know of is in Acts 6, where the multitude was called together to consider the problem of the neglect of widows. Other examples, though not strictly parallel to

Acts 6, are in Acts 14:27 and 15:30. In the former, the church met to hear from Paul and Barnabas, *who had been sent out by the church*. In the latter, the church met to hear (and act on) the letter from Jerusalem concerning the problem which had arisen in the Antioch congregation.

Are we on shaky ground to imitate the brethren in Jerusalem and meet together as a congregation to consider a problem and what the words of the apostles (Scriptures) have to say about it? How have we reached the point that one who suggests that we should meet as a congregation to consider matters is viewed as unsound?

I would be happy to hear of comments in response to the above, and have a chance to reply.

—Larry Walker  
Oxford, MS

[Ed. Note: We have several other responses to this matter that we will carry in future "Soundings" columns.]

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*We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?*

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# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Restoring New Testament Christianity (V)

The two decades after Thomas Campbell and his son, Alexander, left the Presbyterian church in 1809, were years of study and transition. Alexander Campbell first, and later his father, became convinced that New Testament baptism was immersion and in 1812 they asked a Baptist minister to baptize them. This decision opened to them a new circle of acquaintances among the Baptist churches of the region. The Brush Run Church was invited to join the Redstone Baptist Association and did so in 1815, although some of its members had serious reservations about the union. The congregation submitted a long statement of its beliefs when it applied for membership. The union was never regarded as perfect by either side and the Campbells continued to view themselves as reformers.

Alexander Campbell's influence grew slowly; by 1820 he had earned a reputation as one of the most skilled religious debaters in the West. In 1820 he debated Presbyterian minister John Walker in Mt. Pleasant, Ohio, on the question of the proper subjects and means of baptism. During the next twenty-three years, Campbell conducted four additional debates (including a discussion with renowned freethinker Robert Owen and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cincinnati, John Purcell), ending with a two-week discussion with Presbyterian minister Nathan L. Rice in Lexington, Kentucky in 1843 which was moderated by Henry Clay. All of the debates were published and they not only broadened Campbell's influence, they also led many to regard him as the foremost defender of Christianity against atheism and of Protestantism against Catholicism, although he considered himself neither.

More important in spreading Campbell's influence was his decision to begin publishing a monthly magazine in 1823, *The Christian Baptist*. The paper was barbed and iconoclastic; its attacks on ecclesiastical institutions caused Campbell to be identified with the growing Baptist

anti-mission movement. It greatly expanded Campbell's visibility among Baptist churches in the West and the South until his relationship with the Baptists was formally ended in 1830—as was *The Christian Baptist*. By that date Baptist associations had either expelled most of the “reforming” churches or, as in the case of the Mahoning Association in Ohio where the reformers were in a majority, disbanded. By 1830 the restoration movement associated with the Campbells was growing rapidly and claimed about 12,000 people.

Another preacher who made major early contributions to the restoration movement was Walter Scott. Scott, also a Presbyterian minister, attended the University of Edinburgh before migrating to America in 1818. Already influenced by Scottish independent ideas, in 1821 he met Alexander Campbell and became his companion and supporter. As the two young men struggled to find a formula for the restoration of New Testament Christianity, Scott began preaching the “plan of salvation”—a five-finger summary of the gospel which included believing, repenting, and being baptized to receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Scott became the movement's first highly successful evangelist, attracting hundreds of new converts in the late 1820s in the Western Reserve area of Ohio.

\* \* \*

COMMENT: These were heady days for the restorers. They had set their course to follow New Testament patterns and they discovered and accepted new insights with relish. The young Campbell was bold and fearless, ever ready to challenge corrupt religious institutions and their guardians. But he was also open and gentle with anyone whom he believed had embarked on the same journey of faith that he had begun. It is this restoration spirit which must be rekindled in each generation.



# Confusing the Necessary and the Incidental

Jeffery Kingry

Martha had a house full. Have you ever seen it before? It was after the morning worship and all the brethren and visitors were gathered for dinner at Martha's house. The living room is filled as the visiting Preacher carries on explaining the fascinating sermon he gave that morning. There is Mary, idly drying a dish, leaning on the door jamb, listening to the Preacher. That is the driest dish in the house. Slowly, as she is wrapped up in his words, she comes closer and closer, till she sits down at His feet in the crowded room.

Martha is in a hurry. The food is getting cold as she scurries around getting everything ready for the meal. She hisses a few times from the door at Mary, who is oblivious to anything except the Preacher's words. She may glance once or twice nervously at her sister and smile, but she doesn't move. This is just too good to miss.

Finally, driven to distraction that she is the only one left to get dinner on the table, the resentment bubbles up. "Why should I be the one to do all the work while everyone else sits in the front room having a good time?" she thinks to herself. She takes her anger to the other room.

"Preacher? I would think that you would want to have something to eat this afternoon! Would you tell Miss Priss there to come in here and give me a hand?"

You may not have seen it quite that way, but you have probably felt the emotions of Mary or Martha at one time or another. Jesus' response to the original Martha was a loving rejoinder, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, actually only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41ff). It really didn't count, in the total scheme of things, whether or not anyone ate that day. Some things really don't matter all that much.

There are so many conflicts that rage among the brethren from time to time. They may seem very important at the

time. I recall as a younger preacher it was *very* important to me that brethren not use the word "Christian" as an adjective, or (God forbid) they should capitalize the word "church." There is a principle involved, but assuming that a brother knows that God doesn't sanctify anything but a baptized believer or that the church is not a denomination,

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***We sometimes make a mistake in thinking that everything is of equal importance. There are "weightier matters of the law." Everything has SOME value, yes; but it is a question of balance.***

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it is not really all that important that he say it "my way." Only one thing is really necessary—that they understand the truth.

We sometimes make a mistake in thinking that everything is of equal importance. There are "weightier matters of the law." Everything has *some* value, yes; but it is a question of balance. I recall a lesson I gave once in a con-

gregation made up mostly of "liberal" brethren. I tried to set forth some of the attitudes brethren in disagreement must show in the controversy. I really "waxed elephant" on it. After our study, as the brethren dutifully filed out and averted their eyes as they shook hands, one white-haired lady left a bruise on my chest with a pointed finger.

"You call yourself a preacher! I never heard anything so outrageous!"

I drew together my reserves of patience and self-control to ask her what offended her. Brethren used the opportunity to scuttle past and get out of the building. With absolute accuracy the grandmother bearded the dreaded anti before them all.

"You said that Jesus was sold for *seven* pieces of silver! Ha! Even my grandchildren know that it was *thirty* pieces of silver!"

I mean, if you can't trust a preacher to get the change counted right, you can't trust the fool to get anything else right, can you?

Have you ever been in a business meeting where brethren debated whether to send a preacher working in some sun-forsaken foreign country \$100 or \$125 a month? I've been places where they argued whether or not to support him at all. Have you ever observed elders who were about to discipline a wayward member more interested in "doing it right" than in "doing the right thing?" The conflict of efficiency over effectiveness is a long one. Only one thing is needful.

When I was a younger preacher I thought it was my God-given responsibility to "settle" every argument that arose among the brethren. But, you know, the Lord tells the preacher to "avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness" (2 Timothy 2:16). The Christian needs to be solemnly charged in the presence of God not to get involved in fights over words, which are fruitless and pointless, and discourage everyone involved. It's not worth it. It is a little thing.

P. O. Box 26, Milton, VT 05468

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Brent Lewis



# My Brother/My Self

## Facing Failure

**N**o one is ever as successful as he seems. If we only knew the whole tale, many modern "success stories" would be seen as miserable flops. But such observations cause us to inquire about the *standard* for determining success or failure. Men's standards are shallow and ephemeral; they usually have something to do with fame or fortune. God's standards are different.

There is a "successful" man described in Luke 12:16-21, but I certainly do not want to be like him. He had more gold, grain and goods than most men will have in a lifetime, but he was a failure if there ever was one. The reason he was a failure is that God said he was. In fact, He called him a fool. I don't know many fools who are successes—do you?

It is hard to tell by the world's standards who is successful and who is not. What seems to be is not always what really is. In Job 4:1-7, for example, Eliphaz decided that Job was through, that he had "had it." But Job's life was not over, and though he suffered terrible loss he was yet to be greatly blessed (Job 42:10-17). Often it is so with us.

To be sure, we all have to face a certain amount of failure in life, but how we react to it is most important. Judas handled failure tragically by taking his own life (Matthew 27:5). David, on the other hand, sinned grievously against God, but he put his failure behind him by repenting and starting over (2 Samuel 12:13,20). Paul was able to dismiss his ignominious past and look to the future, as he said, by "forgetting those things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before" (Philippians 3:13). We would all do well to imitate him.

Each of us must suffer setbacks in this life—disappointments, unfulfilled potential, unrealized

dreams. Often the things that we have our hearts set on are not all that important anyway. But we need to see success as God sees it, not as the world judges. We live in a society that is enamored with success, but what they have to have to be successful is not what the Christian is after. Paul's "failure" was really *success* when he said, "Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8). Paul had come to see things as God sees them.

**W**as Noah a success or a failure? The people of his time would have undoubtedly said he was a failure, but when "every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground . . . and Noah only was left, and they that were with him in the ark" (Genesis 7:23)—surely their conclusion changed. In the same way, no man is a failure today who "fears God and keeps his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Let me tell you about supreme failure. "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). We may lose a lot of things in this life and their loss may be vexing and troublesome. We may lose a lot of money; we may not get the job promotion we wanted; we may have to live with failing health. Sometimes these can be regained. But even if they are not, none can be remotely compared to the loss of one's soul. That is ultimate loss, for it is final and irrevocable.

May God help each one of us to cope with the inconsequential failures of this earthly existence—and never to know the loss that spells failure indeed!



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# Woman's World

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## Woman — An Exalted Creature "What Shall I Do?"

Ruth Thompson

In our last article [*Christianity Magazine*, April, 1985, p. 26], we began a discussion of women's responsibilities toward husband, children, home, self and the church. We considered the question, "What shall I do?" as asked by the rich young ruler. Jesus gave him an answer that he did not like, so he went away sorrowful. Jesus has also given women an answer to their question. Hopefully you will accept His answer and not go away sorrowful. We talked about women's responsibilities in the first four realms, but left the question of "What can women do in the work of the church?" until last because of the length of the material. We plan to cover that phase of responsibility in this article.

5. **Church.** Of utmost importance is our responsibility to God in our worship and work. What has He designated for us (women) to do? This seems to be the realm in which we always have the most questions. Women want to know what they can do in the "public" work of the church. We think of church "work" as falling in the areas of work and worship. Included in these general categories are the works of preaching, edifying, and caring for the needy saints.

When we assemble for worship, we have public preaching, we sing hymns of praise, we give of our means, we partake of the Lord's Supper, and we pray. In God's word we have no example of a woman publicly proclaiming God's word, nor do we have any example of a woman being selected as an elder or an apostle. But she does participate in singing (by which means she also teaches); she does give of her means, since she and her husband have purposed together; she partakes of the Lord's Supper, along with all other Christians; and she prays, not publicly, but in that she gives attendance to the prayer being offered, and makes that prayer hers also.

**Edification.** In this field of the work of the church, we have several examples of women participating, not only with God's approval, but by His command. Sometimes the women taught men. Huldah, the prophetess, taught God's

word, not only to men but to the high priest, Hilkiah, and the scribe, Shaphan, and others (2 Kings 22:12-20). Deborah, the prophetess, judged Israel in the time of the judges, and was a tower of strength to the commander of God's army, Barak, who refused to go into battle unless she was at his side. In this instance, however, she did not exercise dominion over him by taking her place with him. The story is found in Judges 4:4-9. In the New Testament, Anna, a prophetess in the temple at Jerusalem, preached Jesus to all them "that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:36-38). Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, "expounded unto [Apollos] the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:24-27). Philip's daughters prophesied (Acts 21:8-10), Euodia and Syntyche labored with Paul in the gospel (Philip-

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***Her obligation is  
to perform. If she  
does, her life will be  
filled with "doing."***

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pian 4:2-3), and the teaching done by Eunice and Lois contributed much to Timothy's background in the Scriptures. I do not get the impression that these good women merely "kept the preacher;" rather, it seems that they had a definite and real place in helping Paul spread the good news of the Kingdom. (As a side note, all Christians are "in the church" when at home or at work, as well as "in the building.")

Women not only *may* teach, they have a God-given duty to teach. The older women are commanded to teach the younger (Titus 2:1-5). This could be one at a time, in their homes, teaching their own children, or teaching in a classroom situation. Women also teach in public worship when they sing (Colossians 3:16).

**Benevolence.** The church has certain

obligations laid upon it in the area of benevolence. It is commanded to care for its needy, and we not only have examples of the church helping the needy, as in Acts 6, but also in helping other congregations in dire circumstances, such as the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30), and again the church in Jerusalem for which a contribution from other churches was being gathered (1 Corinthians 16:1-3). The examples in Scripture reveal only saints being helped from the church treasury. How this is carried out is left to the discretion of the leaders as long as it is done within the framework of the local congregation. Women are ideally suited for this work. They can go into a home and care for the sick, clean, or cook much better than a man. They can usually find out more about existing conditions in a few moments than a man could.

There are also ways in which we can individually care for any needy person as this comes to our attention.

If a woman faithfully engages herself in the five areas of responsibility we have mentioned, she will not have to wonder, "What shall I do?" Jesus has given her the answer. Her obligation now is to perform. If she does, her life will be filled with "doing."

But someone wants to know, "What can I do best?" Like anything else, this is soon determined by trial and error. First, prepare yourself by studying God's word. Most of your questions will take care of themselves. Attend classes, study, ask questions, contribute answers, show an interest in things spiritual; you will be used in time. You may be an excellent teacher. If so, pursue it.

Visit the sick, remember the shut-ins, help people in need, keep alert, listen for opportunities. Soon you will be busier than you had hoped for. Once you have found your greatest interest, grow in it, and don't let anybody "put you down" for not doing just what they are doing. You know your strong points better than anyone else.

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429 Eastside Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92701





## Beware of Hypothetical Questions

**T**he last week of the Lord's life was packed with activity but perhaps no more so than the other weeks of his three plus years of public teaching. What makes that week seem so charged with movement is the gospel writers' more intensified moment-by-moment reporting of events as the great drama of Jesus' time in the flesh drew to a close. This is especially true of the Tuesday before He died.

On Sunday He had made His way into Jerusalem through an exultant and expectant multitude. On Monday He had infuriated the city fathers by driving out the thieving merchants from the Temple court. On Tuesday they were all waiting for Him. For some time there hadn't been any question in the mind of the Jewish establishment that they were going to kill Jesus; the only thing left was the working out of the details. They had no plans on that Tuesday morning to risk a tumult by taking His life openly in the midst of the Passover feast (Judas had not yet offered himself as a "finger man") but they needed desperately to discredit Jesus before the masses who were still entranced with Him.

They came at him in waves that day, hoping for a breakthrough. The elders of the people interrupted His teaching in the Temple with a demand that He justify His high-handed treatment of the Temple merchants on the preceding day (Matthew 21:23-27). He had given His authority—"It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13) but they were not concerned with divine authority; what they wanted was a civil warrant. Jesus answered them in their hypocrisy and embarrassed them over their difficulty in dealing with John the Baptist. There really is no sense in answering people's questions when they are going to kill you no matter what you say.

Next came the Pharisees who, incredibly enough, were willing to join league with their arch enemies the Herodians in order to put Jesus in a bind over the question of paying taxes to their Roman overlords. The Herodians, devoted to the Edomite kings who ruled by the power of Rome, thought it a civic duty. The Pharisees, much disturbed by the corrupting influence of these Gentile invaders, thought it a virtual sin. They had framed a question calculated to embarrass Him no matter how He answered, but Jesus simply turned their carefully prepared dilemma back upon them and left them to consider whether if they had been more concerned with what they owed to God their responsibility to Caesar might have been easily resolved (Matthew 22:15-22).

Finally, undeterred by the failure of their fellows, the Sadducees came to try their hand at pressing the Lord into an embarrassed silence (Matthew 22:23-33). Like the Pharisees they had a sectarian axe to grind (they did not

believe in spirits or a resurrection, Acts 23:8). Also, like the Pharisees and the elders of the nation, theirs was not an invitation to settle issues by a serious study of the Scripture. The Sadducees had a question to ask about a woman who had been widowed seven times. Their case stretches credulity to the breaking point but perhaps I have a suspicious mind. Seven brothers were supposed to have successfully married the same woman according to the demands of the Levirate law (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). Seven times they left her a childless widow. The vital question which concerned them was: "Whose wife will she be in the resurrection?" The Sadducees felt they had raised an insoluble problem for anyone who believed in spirits or a resurrection. Their point was that any position that created such intractable difficulties could not possibly be so.

**J**esus punctures their smugness by exposing a dual blunder and adding a revelation of His own. They had erred because they did not know either God's word or His power (Matthew 22:29). Their problem could have been easily solved, He said, if they had just read the Scripture and trusted God's power to resolve any difficulty. He holds them accountable for their failure to draw the necessary inference from Exodus 3:6 that if God spoke of being the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob long after they were dead there must be life after death since "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (22:31-32). We have heard quite enough in our day of men only being responsible to understand explicit statements of Scripture. Jesus has clearly indicated otherwise.

Hypothetical cases continue to be raised today in the same left-handed approach which argues that if a difficult problem can be raised about a certain position it is somehow disproved. What Jesus said to the Sadducees still applies. It doesn't matter how many difficulties can be raised about certain propositions; if that is what the Bible clearly teaches, not even a thousand troublesome hypotheses will alter a word of it. We may be troubled by the case of a man who dies just before he can be baptized but it will effect no change in the clear statements of Scripture which make baptism necessary to salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27). Every spiritual question needs to be settled by going back and reading what the Scripture says. If, after careful study, we have determined what the Bible has to say on a subject and we are still left with some perplexing questions, Jesus would counsel us to trust in God's power and wisdom to work out all such problems with righteousness and equity. Perhaps even we, like the Sadducees, are at times troubled about supposed problems which, did we but know it, do not even exist (Matthew 22:30).





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Brent Lewis

### The Battle For Our Minds

**A** fierce battle is going on in our world, a struggle for the minds of men. The attack is not always a frontal assault, either. It is often indirect, subtle, clandestine. The world is trying to wear away our reserves.

By such veiled terms as "alternate lifestyles," "human rights," "situation ethics," "behavior modification," "scientific," and "unfulfilling," they would sway our minds to accept the unacceptable. They are telling us that: "Man is the measure of all things;" "evil spelled backwards is LIVE!;" children should rebel against their parents; homosexuality is inborn; if it feels good, do it; pornography serves a need in the lives of many people; premarital sex for teenagers (and others) is okay. All of these things, and more, you will find documented in the pages that follow. What is the intent of these messages? One of our writers aptly observes, "The aim is to desensitize us, make us tolerant, accepting and, eventually, to gain our participation."

Satan, as the god of this world, is constantly seeking to "blind the minds" of all men (2 Corinthians 4:4). Every one

of us is being stalked by the devil; he wants to devour us (1 Peter 5:8). Paul alerts us to the danger: "I fear . . . as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). It can happen to any one of us, and it is happening to many disciples. The devil and his world are chipping away at our spirituality. An inch here and a foot there and finally he has us right where he wants us.

The devil has a lot of help. High-sounding arguments are made by the "learned" in our culture that make black seem white, and vice-versa. But God warns us of those who use "philosophy and vain deceit" (Colossians 2:8) and of those who "call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20).

God is also interested in our minds. "I will put my laws into their minds, and on their heart also will I write them" (Hebrews 8:10). The devil wants to control your mind (John 13:2); so does God. But neither can control it unless you let him. Each one of us has the ultimate power—the power of choice.

You either choose to "mind earthly things" (Philippians 4:19) or to "set your mind on the things that are above" (Colossians 3:2).

There are many "isms" in our time which threaten the spiritual lifeblood of the Christian: humanism, scientism, relativism, secularism, etc. I would like to think that these could all be defeated and that they would disappear from human experience. I share the sentiments of the country preacher who was asked, "What do you think about all these 'isms'?" He said, "I wish they was 'wasms'." So do I. But that is not likely to happen.

To be forewarned, however, is to be forearmed. Read the ensuing essays and observe the insidious advance that is being made against ourselves and our children. Then be "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23) and determine that you will allow no infiltration of the enemy. (And watch for next month's issue, which will expand on the militancy needed by every Christian.)

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# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS

Rod Amonett

## The Disciple's Life: A Battleground

"AM I DR. JEKYLL, OR AM I THE EVIL MR. HYDE? What force is it that truly controls my life?"

The foregoing figure may seem quite severe, and, no doubt, some will mock the idea of a Christian suffering an identity crisis—yet, surely, every true disciple has experienced this tug of war. Christians have all felt the wonderful joy of walking in the light; but we also know of the lost skirmishes and bitter tears that admit self-betrayal. Even the apostle Paul underwent this struggle and he spoke painfully of that persistent inclination to do evil despite his determination to do good. "For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate . . . for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish" (Romans 7:15, 18b-19).

Like the apostle, time and again we have marched forward, confident and determined to show ourselves a faithful servant, but sooner or later we are brought to bended knee again, humbly seeking God's mercy and asking for greater strength.

Our disappointing failures are not so mysterious as they might seem. They are a sad reminder that man's conflict with evil does not end when he is baptized. We remember that the Scriptures teach us that God has not only determined to save us but to change us as well, intending to transform us into the image of His Son. (Read Romans 12:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18.) There is, however, a powerful force that resists that metamorphosis. It battles against our heart's resolve to obey God. "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:22-24). The apostle's words may seem to reflect a

hopeless dilemma, but "Thanks be to God" the battle is not lost. He can help us in our struggle and show us the way to victory.

The Christian's efforts in this matter will be greatly helped if we realize that this battle between flesh and spirit is for the control of our minds. When one of these forces begins to dominate our thinking and our heart's affection, then it will unceasingly labor to evict the power that opposes it. One's life then becomes controlled by the influence that rules his mind. It is thus no mystery why

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***Hasn't Satan  
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Wasn't he first  
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to deceive man.***

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some lives reflect the carnality of this world and others spirituality. One is fleshly because his mind is filled with concern and consideration for the things of the flesh. The spiritual man has filled his heart with the things of God. "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:5). The mind of the fleshly man staunchly resists the Lord's efforts to show him a better way. It is diametrically opposed to what God wants and

such a disposition will never submit itself to the Lord's guidance "because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8).

Hasn't Satan always known that he could control our lives if first he can conquer our minds? Wasn't he first victorious by enticing mother Eve to believe a lie and view the forbidden fruit with the eye (disposition) of the flesh? From that day on he has cunningly worked through the weaknesses of the flesh to deceive man. His schemes to subvert man's thinking have been most successful.

The Gentiles had fallen prey to Satan. "Walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness" (Ephesians 4:17b-19, emphasis mine, R.A.).

The Christian's behavior will be quite different. He has learned of Christ and "been taught in him" (Ephesians 4:20-21). He has been "renewed in the spirit of" his "mind" (Ephesians 4:23). He is happily obedient to the Lord, for God has been allowed to place His laws upon his heart and His precepts on his mind (Hebrews 10:16).

Brother, or sister in Christ, do not grow discouraged because this battle between flesh and spirit rages within you. Wisdom dictates that you cannot pretend that the pull of the flesh is not strong. Remember, however, that if you will let the power of Christ take control of your mind, then your life will truly become His (see Philippians 4:13). The Christian knows what lies in the balance. "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

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# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS



## The Threat of Humanism

Allan Turner

IT HAD ITS BEGINNING IN THE "GARDEN eastward in Eden" (Genesis 3:5-6). It was defined by Protagoras of Ceus, a Greek Sophist philosopher in this way: "Man is the measure of all things." Currently, it is best expressed by the document entitled *Human Manifesto II*, which says: "We believe . . . that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species . . . As nontheists, we begin with humans, not God, nature, not deity . . . No deity will save us; we must save ourselves."

The "it" of the first paragraph is Humanism, a philosophy that lures man into thinking he can be his own god. The humanists say: "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanctions" (*Ibid.*). Of course, the Bible says, "It is not within man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Humanism, instead of fulfilling its whispered promise of exaltation, is the mechanism Satan has used through the ages to degrade and imprison mankind.

If one were to read *Humanist Manifesto II*, it would be apparent that many of the changes currently taking place in our society are the very changes advocated by humanists in that document. Furthermore, honesty should force us to realize that not only does humanistic ideology permeate our society, but it has effected changes in our own souls. Who among us would be so naive as to claim he had been left unscathed by the unholy trinity of hedonism, materialism, and humanism? All of us have, unfortunately, drunk much too deeply from the humanist's well. The influence of this damnable doctrine in our lives stands today as the most serious issue confronting mankind in general, and the church of Jesus Christ in particular.

In the United States, the American Humanist Association, a non-profit, religious organization, is the largest—

but not the only—group representing humanist philosophy. In addition to having their own meetings, their own clergy and high priests, their own creed, and their own plan for humanity, humanists are militantly evangelical. Those who worship at its totems, espouse its doctrines, sell its amulets, and preach its lies have made clear their intentions of destroying Christianity, and making disciples of our children. John Dunphy, a humanist, writing recently in a publication of the American Humanist Association, said: "I am convinced that the battle for humankind's future must be waged and

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won in the public school classroom by the teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselitizers of a new faith. . . . These teachers must embody the same selfless dedication as the most rabid fundamentalist preachers, for they will be ministers of another sort, utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to convey humanist values in whatever subject they teach, regardless of the educational level—preschool day care or large state university. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new [sic] faith of humanism,

resplendent in its promise of a world in which the never-realized Christian ideal of 'love thy neighbor' will finally be achieved. It will undoubtedly be a long, arduous, painful struggle replete with much sorrow and many tears, but humanism will emerge triumphant. It must if the family of humankind is to survive" ("A Religion for a New Age," *The Humanist Magazine*, January/February, 1983, p. 26).

As one can see, humanists have targeted the children of this generation to be the first totally "humanized" American society. From its very beginning, humanists have used the National Education Association and its now 1.4 million teachers to indoctrinate our children with the various credos of Humanism. In a book published by the NEA's Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development titled, *To Nurture Humaneness*, under the subtitle, "Technology and the Decline of Organized Religion," the humanistic message of this organization is made very plain: "If schools are to move toward humanism, then humanism must become important to all of us, students, teachers, administrators, and the general public."

My friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ, we must not be lulled into denying the threat of Humanism. The humanists have already gained far too many victories. Many of these have been as a result of our willingness to retreat. Society has been secularized because we have allowed it. We have allowed it because we thought our faith was simply a private pill to be swallowed. But, far from a private pill to be swallowed, our Lord teaches us in His word that our faith is a prescribed regimen to be lived out in every facet of our lives.

Fellow soldiers, as we awake from slumber, let us realize: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:12).

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THEME

# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS

Guy Warner

## Media Manipulation

A 1976 EPISODE OF "THE NANCY WALKER Show" revealed what is perhaps the current state of much of American television. Nancy, obviously a "liberated" woman, offered her husband a marijuana cigarette. When he protested that it was "evil," she urged him to accept it anyway. After all, she replied, "evil" spelled backwards is "live."

It was that same year that Wilson Bryan Key, a psychologist, published the second of his books on the media's use of subliminal messages. He entitled it *Media Sexploitation*.

values have come to stand out in bold relief in contrast to those of the Christian.

Today's media represent, more now than ever before, a battle for the minds of men. Unknowingly, media men are in actuality doing the bidding of Satan himself. As John put it: "The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19, New King James). The devil is using, for instance, the Norman Lear of television to achieve his ends. Lear (more appropriately spelled "Leer") has been called the "potentate of prime

timony comes from the non-Christian as well as the Christian. A study done by the National Institute of Mental Health determined that a majority of adults and a high percentage of children use television to learn how to handle specific life problems. Unfortunately television's answers include drugs, alcohol, sexual affairs, etc. That means that even Christians are tempted to solve problems the way they are solved on "Dallas," "Falcon Crest," etc. Might this be reflected in what is happening in many of our homes?

Satan has made equally good use of the music to which our children are listening, perhaps at the very moment you are reading this. An editorial in last December's *Billboard* magazine shows that some in the music industry itself are concerned about current themes of murder, deviant sex, rape, and mutilation. Evidently they were unconcerned when music themes were "innocent," such as fornication, adultery, rebellion and anti-establishment. Now that the chickens have come home to roost, however, and rock music is being pushed to its logical immoral ends, the industry is having second thoughts. The late Jimi Hendrix (isn't it interesting how many rock stars soon become "lates"?) said people can be hypnotized through music and "when you get people at the weakest point you can preach into the subconscious what we want to say." One of the many rock groups doing just that is an all-male one called "Twisted Sister" (if you could see them you would understand the significance of their name). They do a rock video entitled "We're Not Gonna Take It" which encourages the rebellion of children against their parents. Other groups freely promote nudity, lesbianism, and other perversions.

How gleeful Satan must be to have the modern media to control the thinking and values of nations such as ours—to be able to drag God's human images through the filth of sin!

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**"No television program type has done more damage to American values and morals than the soap opera. Originally an innocuous diversion for women, it is among the worst of the medium's moral offenders."**

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Both of these examples point to goals which are common to all media. Consciously or unconsciously, they are out to dominate our attention and thinking for monetary, moral and ideological ends. That all adds up to mind manipulation. Although that sounds sinister, it is and is not. The American media are profit oriented. They have to be because that is the way we have it set up in America. However, as our nation's values have changed, those of the Christian and his counterpart in the world have grown farther apart. Worldly

time" and has been partially responsible for the popularizing of themes such as feminism, sexual deviancy, prostitution, anti-Americanism, anti-governmentism and anti-familyism. He has done it through his shows "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman," "Soap," "All in the Family," etc.

However, no television program type has done more damage to American values and morals than the soap opera. Originally an innocuous diversion for women, it is among the worst of the medium's moral offenders. This tes-



# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS



THEME

## Gay Rights

Jerry Fite

HOMOSEXUALS SHOUTING FOR GAY rights are marching to procure more than free access to housing and jobs. They want society to regard homosexuality as an acceptable life style. Economics is not the issue. As the editor of *The Nature*, a homosexual weekly, put it on December 2, 1984, "If our defense of our civil rights is tied to the notion that we as a group are economically downcast, then our movement is tied to a lie." The way to peaceful coexistence is bumpy, but the obstacles to accepting homosexuality are surely being removed.

One way to create a tolerant atmosphere for the homosexual is to convince the public of the hypothesis that homosexuality is inborn. A recent Kinsey report concludes that homosexuality has a genetic cause. If one emphasizes this to the neglect of extant studies which have reached other conclusions, society will become convinced that a homosexual cannot help his condition. A 1983 *Los Angeles Times* survey polled 1,653 people and found that thirty-two percent of those who believed that homosexuality is inborn were "negative" in their sympathy for the gays—while fifty-seven percent were negative of those who saw homosexuality as the result of upbringing or some other reason. So, beware! Subtle tactics are making the homosexual movement more palatable. Sexual preference in the seventies is being replaced by sexual orientation in the eighties.

Of course, once people are convinced that homosexuality is no more a choice than choosing one's skin color, its acceptability as an ethnic group will gain strength. Since society feels awkward in denying a "minority group's" rights, the political arena has become a powerful forum for the eleven to twenty-three million who comprise the gay community. The Democratic Party in 1980 and 1984 openly courted the homosexual vote. Virginia Apuzzo, executive director of the National Gay Task Force, is also a member of the Democratic Platform Committee. The 1984 platform

pledged to end restrictions against homosexuals in military employment and immigration law. The gay lobbyists' power is also being felt in other areas as well. Labor leaders such as the AFL-CIO president have vowed to support gay civil rights. In 1973, the gay community persuaded the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from their *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders*. Look out! The homosexuals are turning the heads of major political leaders, joining hands with big labor, and are being told by professionals that they are no longer mentally ill.

Though setbacks to gay rights have occurred through referendums in Dade County, Florida and Houston, Texas, the movement to "decriminalize" homo-

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sexuality is gaining steam. The legal precedence being set in our courts is aiding the movement. A district court in Virginia recently ruled that a homosexual could not be denied his petition for naturalization, despite law to the contrary, because his homosexual practice involved consenting adults. Such homosexual activity has now been "decriminalized" in twenty-one states. This spring, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Gay Student Services could meet and advertise on the campus of Texas A&M University based upon "free speech rights." According to Lesbian Rights Project lawyer Roberta Achtenberg, companies are being advised to carefully consider the homosexual when making high level advancement policy in order to avoid lawsuits.

Pacific Bell is currently trying to settle a bias suit in which a promise is likely to be made to give managers "gay sensitivity training courses." Homosexuality is not only being made legal, it is helping to form corporate policy.

Gay rights is also chipping away at the homosexual's most formidable foe—the religious community. If one can cause religious people to believe that the sin in Sodom and Romans chapter one was not homosexuality, but a murderous spirit, and pagan idolatry—then religious people will soon tell others that God has never condemned homosexuality. Awake a sense of compassion by erroneously teaching that God's mercy is extended unconditionally, and they will accept the homosexual unconditionally. Charles W. Larsen, minister of the 540-member Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection in Houston, advises his mostly gay church "to accept themselves as God made them." Today, religious teaching combined with non-condemning sex education courses in the schools is successfully creating a much more tolerant society for the homosexual.

As homosexuals come out of the closet and show the world that they do not all prance around with limp wrists, but are efficient workers and good neighbors, many people will become at least indifferent, if not totally tolerant of their sexual practice.

Arrayed against all of this is what God says. Homosexuality continues to be abominable and unseemly before the eyes of Him who created and loves us (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:27). Political, legal, economic and religious pressures on this issue may prove to be too great to turn our society in the direction of God's righteousness. But we who are Christians must never be so caught up in the rhetoric that we forget that the homosexual is the one who stands in need of conversion—not God, nor a society that may yet seek to rely on infallible truths of God's word to help establish social policy.

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# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS

## Situation Ethics

Bill Moseley

A SOCIETY GONE BERSERK! MUST ANY right thinking person be convinced that this is what we are being forced to live in? Why? Much of the blame must be placed squarely at the feet of those who have propagated what is called "Situation Ethics," or as some prefer, the "New Morality." But "ethics" and "morals" are not necessarily synonymous. "Moral" implies conformity with the generally accepted standards of goodness or rightness . . . *ethical* implies conformity with an elaborated, ideal code of moral principles" (Webster's *New World Dictionary*). In other words, "morals" are what people *do*; "ethics" are what people

saying? The same thing we are treated to today: "Do your own thing; if it feels good, do it." The philosophy was later revived by such men as the seventeenth century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, and more familiar to us, men such as Joseph Fletcher. Situation ethics is nothing more than a rebellion against the guidelines by which God intended men to live. It is a part of the humanistic monster which makes man the center of all things rather than God; and when men think like this, they ultimately will only think of self and not others. This in turn will lead them to do what they want in complete disregard to others. Its

truth' and 'one should respect life'] are at most only maxims, never rules. For the situationist, there are no rules—none at all" (Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, p. 124). But their concept of love is so muddled and confusing that one would hardly recognize it as such. Carl Henry, a former editor of *Christianity Today* said that "love" is a word batted to and fro like a shuttlecock in Fletcher's *Situation Ethics* (*Christianity Today*, Dec. 22, 1967, p. 25).

Have you ever tried to talk to a situationist about God? About living his life in harmony with the principles of God? Here is what you will probably get: "Don't try to cram religion down my throat. That's not my thing." But, wait—what if "trying to cram religion down his throat is *my* thing? Do you suppose the situationist might complain any if someone stole his car? Why should he, since "for the situationist there are no rules—none at all?" Besides, what if stealing his car is the thief's "thing?" Where is the rule that says the sticky-fingered thief *should not* steal his car? "Oh," he complains, "that hurts me." Big deal—it probably makes the thief feel good that he got away with it, and after all, "if it feels good, do it."

How can men live safely and sanely in such an atmosphere? No wonder our society is in the muddled mess it is. When men are subjected to such contradictory values and "ethics" as those espoused by these blatant humanists, there is no way any society can function to its full potential and ideal. God does have absolutes; He does have an ethical standard, and if men would conform to it their lives would be happier. But so long as men consider themselves "free" to do anything they please, ignoring the guidelines God designed for their well-being, our society will continue to run amok in a wild frenzy to the good of none. Only when men learn what real freedom is and then begin to practice it, will they learn to function together in the most beneficial way.

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## "Situation ethics is nothing more than a rebellion against the guidelines by which God intended men to live. It is a part of the humanistic monster."

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ought to do—there is a big difference.

Moreover, the philosophy is not "new" at all. Paul ran into it in his confrontation with the Epicureans (Acts 17). Epicurus lived in the fourth century B.C., and is considered one of the "founding fathers" of a system commonly known as "egoistic hedonism." He once said: "Wherefore we call pleasure the Alpha and Omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge every good thing" (*Letter to Manaeceus*). What was he

adherents try to soften these conclusions by saying: "Man can only do what he wants so long as it does not harm others." But seldom is such the case. When "every man does that which is right in his own eyes," somebody is going to get hurt. But the "New Moralism" doesn't really consider this—unless and until he is the one that gets hurt!

But why should he complain if he gets hurt when his philosophy contains such statements as: "The commandment [love] is a normative ideal, it is not an operational directive. All else, all other generalities [e.g., 'one should tell the



# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS



## Sex Education in the Schools

James W. Ward

SEXUALITY IS A GIFT FROM GOD. IT IS TO be enjoyed within marriage, which "is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled." To realize the rich potential of this gift, young people should receive sex education primarily from loving parents. However, the task has been assumed by public education and much of what is taught is unacceptable to Christians for these basic reasons: (1) it promotes situation ethics, and (2) it often causes fornication. Though we could pile up references, we will use only a few for each point.

Leaders in sex education believe in situation ethics. William Cole wrote, "There just aren't any rules, you do whatever strikes your fancy." Mary Calderone, discussing whether premarital sex is wrong, told students at Blair Academy, "Nobody from on high determines this. You determine it." Albert Ellis told a meeting of sex educators that "having a (bleep) good time on earth" beats "getting into heaven and getting on the right hand of God." L. A. Kirkendall wrote that "human beings should have the right to express their sexual desires and enter into relationships as they see fit." These leaders are mainly associated with such groups as the Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA). A SIECUS handbook says, "Several school systems have already dealt with the moral issue by adopting the latter point of view" (i.e., "behavior may vary from one situation to another," J.W.). This moral code leads these educators to cross biblical morality on many issues.

**Premarital sex:** "Relax about loving. Sex is fun, and joyful, and courting is fun, and joyful, and it comes in all types and styles, all of which are OK. Do what gives pleasure and ask for what gives pleasure. Don't rob yourself of joy by focusing on old-fashioned ideas about what's 'normal' or 'nice.' Just communicate and enjoy" (PPFA publication).

**Pornography:** "It is the position of SIECUS that: The use of explicit sexual materials (sometimes referred to as

pornography) can serve a variety of important needs in the lives of countless individuals" (Position Statements).

**Homosexuality:** "Being a homosexual does not mean that a man or woman carries out strange practices. For homosexuals, lovemaking is as normal as it is for heterosexuals" (PPFA publication).

**Abortion:** SIECUS Study Guide #14 states, "Abortion is an alternative which the counselor must present to every unwillingly pregnant, young, single

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girl." Textbooks often note that such a girl "does not need an OK from her parents" to receive an abortion.

As for point two, that sex education often causes fornication, a manual for Michigan sex educators said that their primary aim is "to make sex a more rewarding part of people's lives—to make sex education impart competence and not necessarily restraint." Many textbooks contain graphic descriptions of both heterosexual and homosexual

acts, often with drawings and photographs. Some sex education movies depict nudity and intercourse set to rock music. Other films show homosexual couples kissing, embracing, and holding hands. Only fools would deny that this stimulates young people to engage in sexual activity. Furthermore, even grade school children are sometimes presented very explicit material on sexual acts such as oral and anal sex. Psychologist Rhonda L. Lorand wrote, "We have since learned that it is harmful to force sexual preoccupation on children of the elementary school grades . . . [it] is very likely to result in sexual difficulties in adulthood, and it can lead to disturbed behavior in childhood."

Has sex education cut down on premarital sex, venereal disease, abortion and other related problems as advocates have claimed it would? Dr. Robert Kistner, a developer of oral contraceptives, said, "About ten years ago I declared that the pill would not lead to promiscuity. Well, I was wrong." After the first seven years of compulsory sex education in Denmark a study showed the following increases: assault rape—300%; V.D. (ages 15-20)—250%; V.D. (ages 15 down)—400%; abortions—500%; illegitimate pregnancies—200%; and divorce—200%. For Christians, even if sex education did lessen all of these problems except the incidence of pre- or extramarital sex, it would still be unacceptable, for it encourages such activity, which violates biblical morality.

Health educator Joanne Lewis said in a speech in 1982, "After studying 80 civilizations covering a period of 4,000 years, Dr. J. D. Unwin, British historian and scholar, concluded that sexually promiscuous societies decay while sexually disciplined societies enjoy creative development."

What is worse, sexual sin destroys souls, for, to finish our beginning quote from Hebrews 13:4, "fornicators and adulterers God will judge."

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# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS

Ward E. Ellsworth

## Values Clarification

ALTHOUGH THE CONCEPT OF CHANGING values goes back in Humanism at least to John Dewey, "Father of Progressive Education," and the term "Values Clarification" was first used by Louis Rath, one of Dewey's disciples, Sidney Simon is known as the "Father" of Values Clarification.

Values Clarification has sailed under a variety of flags. It has been called Situation Ethics, Character Education, Behavior Modification, Citizenship Education, Moral Education, Moral Development, Death Education, Sex Education, Mastery Learning, Moral Reasoning, Decision Making, Higher Order Critical Thinking, and Humanism.

As far as Values Clarification in public institutions is concerned, we can readily accept Sidney Simon's own definition: a method for teachers to "change the values of children without getting caught" (*Weep for Your Children*, Murray Norris). It would be totally incorrect to say that efforts to change values are limited to young people in the public schools. In reality, this attack by Satan is aimed at *all of us*, and has been launched on multiple fronts.

It is not by accident that we are bombarded by foul language, pornography, materialism, violence, and every brand of fornication, including all kinds of sexual perversion in movies, on TV, in books, magazines, plays, rock and country music, and in advertising. The aim is to desensitize us, make us tolerant, accepting and, eventually, to gain our participation.

Unfortunately many "faithful" Christians welcome this effort with open eyes, ears, and arms, and allow their children to drink from the same sewers. They appear to be ignorant, perhaps willfully, of Paul's admonition in Philippians 4:8 and his charge to fathers in Ephesians 6:4. No wonder the old "Lion" is growing fat by devouring so many wandering sheep!

However, one of the most devastating attacks is being made through our public schools, on innocent children who

### One of the most devastating attacks is being made on innocent public school children

cannot be expected to recognize the danger that threatens their souls. It is incredibly subtle; Satan's servants *do* appear as angels of light, just like their spiritual "Daddy."

Values Clarification might or might not be listed as a course of study, but it has intruded into *every* aspect of school curriculum. Its strategies are applied in Math, English, Death Education (taught by those who have not died), Parent Effectiveness Training (PET, often taught by those who have not parented), Health, Sex Education, Home Economics, Family Living, and on and on *ad nauseum*.

In fact, ECOS (Educational Community Opportunity for Stewardship) is a process by which local school system personnel are trained to "infuse" intruder concepts into existing curriculum.

How could they get this stuff into the schools? Simon said, "I always 'bootlegged' the values stuff under other titles . . . I was assigned to teach Social Studies in the Elementary School and I taught Values Clarification. I was assigned Current Trends in American Education and I taught my trend" (*Weep for Your Children*, p. 9). Now it comes in by use of "Valuing Strategies" by Simon or patterned after Simon. These "strategies" are used to cause children to question their own values and change to conform to the group values of their peers. Specifically, these strategies would include the following examples:

- Survival games, such as the "Lifeboat" and "Bomb Shelter" games, where kids must decide who survives.
- Role-playing a pregnant teen who must tell her parents, a homosexual who must tell his/her parents, or some other "out-of-character"

situation.

- Answer value questions, such as "What reasons would motivate you to commit suicide?" (Five were given, from which the student was to choose.)
- Write a suicide note.
- Given a list of ten ways to die, list from most to least preferred. Or, if you were terminally ill, what would you like done. (Two of five were "mercy" killing.)
- Values questionnaires, which included religious and other areas of private life.
- At what age do you think it would be O.K. to: (list includes sex, pregnancy, smoking pot, drinking, etc.).
- Divide into small groups, give words such as (sex parts and functions). See how many synonyms you can list in five minutes. Form couples and use as many of those words in conversation as you can in five minutes.

*Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies* by Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum and *Child Abuse in the Classroom*, edited by Phyllis Schlafly, are excellent sources for further reading on such strategies.

The worst part of values clarification is the fact that it is done within a context of *no absolutes*. To claim values as one's own, they insist that one *must choose freely* from alternatives, cherish and publicly defend the choice, and put it into action *repeatedly*. "No right, no wrong," is emphasized over and over!

The Christian *cannot* reconcile that to the God of *absolutes*. His word (John 17:17 and Psalm 119:89), His morality (Galatians 5:19-20, Ephesians 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5-8; Romans 1:24-32; Ephesians 4:28), and His standards are, in every case and respect, *absolute*.

If we cannot homeschool or otherwise remove our children from these "change agents" in the schools, we must teach our children in both word and deed God's absolutes—including the Judgment!

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# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS



## The Teaching of Evolution

Clarence R. Johnson

THERE ARE MANY EVOLUTIONARY theories, but I've never heard one that did not conflict with God's word: "And God spoke all these words . . . For in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day" (Exodus 20:1,11). I believe God. The Bible recognizes that there have been changes within certain definite limits. All humans from the Pygmy to the giant—red, yellow, black, brown, white—have descended from Adam. Some creationists refer to these changes as "special evolution." Certainly we recognize such change, but we deny that fish and birds, snakes and horses, men and monkeys all have a common ancestor.

It is not our purpose in this article to examine the evolutionary theories, but rather to examine some of their evil fruits. These godless theories constantly bombard us via *Reader's Digest*, *Time Magazine*, *National Geographic*, our daily newspapers, and even *Little Golden Books*. They blare from our radios, TVs and movies. And they probably affect our thinking more than we realize.

### Un-scientific Scientists

Robert Clark and James Bales in *Why Scientists Accept Evolution* show that "the eminent evolutionists of the 19th century accepted evolution because of their anti-supernatural bias, and not because of the weight of scientific evidence." They explain that modern scientists continue to accept evolution "because it was already accepted by others who went on before them and under whose direction they obtained their education." Today most scientists and laymen alike accept evolution because "certain men who were supposed to know accepted it" before them. Many scientists sincerely believe in evolution, but they know that it has not been proven scientifically, nor can it be.

### Religious Infidels

Perhaps it is in the realm of theology that evolution has had its most obvious impact. Modern theologians have sat at the feet of evolutionists in the univer-

sities and seminaries and accepted such theories rather than leave themselves open to the charge of being "unscientific." These theologians fully understood the non-supernatural implications of evolutionary theories and consistently proceeded to deny other supernatural aspects of Christianity such as the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus,

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and liberty.***

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His bodily resurrection, the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, etc. Their preaching and teaching in mainline Protestant churches, seminaries and religious colleges has produced a bumper crop of religious infidels.

### Inhumane Humanity

As our educators, philosophers, psychologists and molders of public

opinion have constantly drilled into our minds that we are refined apes rather than creatures made in God's image, our moral values have declined accordingly. When we do not value our fellow man as a creature bearing the Divine image, we cease to properly respect the sanctity of human life and liberty and crime rates rise as a direct consequence.

Sexual promiscuity is another direct effect of evolutionary doctrines. Teach an entire generation that they are nothing more than mere animals and you can be assured they will behave accordingly.

In addition to a reduction in moral scruples, evolutionary teaching has had a second impact on the abortion question. Formerly some evolutionists taught, and some high school textbooks still reflect the influence of a recapitulation theory. Drawings depict the development of the human fetus by stages through which the human race supposedly passed in developing from amoeba to man, leaving students to falsely conclude that a human fetus can be destroyed in the early stages of pregnancy with no more seriousness than killing a fish or a bird. The drawings are highly inaccurate and the implications based on them are false to the core.

### Eternal Consequences

And so we see that the effects of evolutionary thinking are indeed far-reaching, but we would be remiss in our duty if we did not also note that the theory of evolution will have eternal consequences.

It has been the reason that many have turned their backs upon the word of God and made shipwreck of their faith. It has caused many to turn their eyes from God and look to brute beasts as the explanation of human existence. It preaches that we are mere animals with no destiny beyond the grave. Thus evolution would rob us of our faith, our heritage, and our destiny as children of God and leave us totally unprepared for the day of judgment.

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# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS

Virgil Faïres

## Sex In Advertising

IF YOU'LL BATHE WITH THE RIGHT SOAP, wash your hair with the right shampoo, use the right cologne, wear the right clothes, drive the right car, and then use the right breath mints, being accepted by the opposite sex is a matter of inevitability. At least that's what those of the "commercial-making world" would like for you to think.

What I've just described is a typical portrayal in the world of advertising. I don't know whether or not you've noticed, but it seems as if every commercial, advertisement, or sales pitch makes it their primary objective to establish a connection between what they're selling and sex. They want you to believe that if you use their product, then those you wish to attract will be clamoring at your feet.

Why endeavor to establish such a connection? Well, I'm no advertising genius, but to me their approach is obvious. By establishing a connection between sex and their product, they appeal to a desire common to man.

All of us have a sexual appetite, and all of us want to be accepted by those of the opposite sex. You might say it is a subtle appeal to the human ego; and of course, the greatest feather in the "hat of acceptability" is to be considered desirable by members of the opposite sex.

Believe it or not, there's somewhat of a biblicalness to their approach. I remember not very long ago, watching an episode of "Candid Camera." In this particular show, people were asked to try two glasses of soda pop, and then tell which was the best and why.

Just as there is a catch to everything Candid Camera does, this was no exception. The catch was they filled both glasses with the same drink. The humor came when all who participated in the "taste test" felt one did indeed taste better than the other. How were they able to pull off such a trick? Very simple—they knew the kind of reaction received would be determined by the perspective they developed. People went into that situation expecting to find the

better cola.

Outlook determines outcome, and they were able to control the outcome through the outlook or perspective they developed. That's what those in the world of advertising know and do so well. The outcome they're after is to sell their product; and the outlook they develop to secure the desired result is: "If you buy our product, then you'll get the girl."

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The sense in which this is biblical is that the Scriptures do teach that outlook determines outcome. A case in point is James 1:1-12. In verse 12 you find the necessary outcome: in order to receive the crown of life, we must endure. But the outcome of verse 12 cannot be experienced apart from the outlook of verses 2-4. Being able to see our trials and tribulations as an opportunity to

develop patience is essential to overcoming those difficulties.

Man, in his efforts to sell anything from a breath mint to a new car, has profaned what God intends to be holy. The intimacy between a man and a woman originated with God (Genesis 2:24) and it is a beautiful and sacred thing when enjoyed in the manner God intended—the bond of marriage (Hebrews 13:4).

In fact, what man has done to the sacredness of the relationship that is to exist only between a husband and his wife reminds me of what man has done to other sacred things. When Jesus walked into the temple, He found those of His day doing to the temple what men of our day have done to the intimacy between man and woman. Jesus said, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." The tendency to make money by profaning what is intended to be holy seems to be characteristic of men in all ages.

Folks, we are what we assimilate, mentally as well as physically; and because those in the field of advertising have chosen to use the beauty of sexual intimacy as a merchandising element to sell their products, they have contributed to the moral decline of our society. As I see it, if we want to change the outcome they have precipitated, then we must do our best to change the outlook they have developed. Accomplishing that on a nationwide scale is probably nothing more than wishful thinking, but it can be done on a family-wide scale. We, as parents, need to instill within our children clear insights about sexual intimacy because if we don't, they will be negatively influenced by the distorted image of those in the advertising world.

Let's develop in our children the kind of outlook that sees that the beauty of sexual intimacy is conditional and that intended beauty turns to ugliness whenever those conditions are not present. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

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# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS



## The Women's Liberation Movement

M. Thaxter Dickey

I SYMPATHIZE WITH YOUNG WOMEN WHO are being lured from their proper roles by a movement which promises to liberate them. The issues are complex, and no woman is to be condemned merely because her life differs from her mother's. But God does have a plan for women. He inaugurated it at creation (Genesis 2:18) and put the woman in the center of the home.

The Women's Liberation Movement devalues this role. It tells women that being a homemaker in subjection to a husband is demeaning. This conclusion is the result of materialism. A spiritual woman, placing greater value on souls than on possessions and career, derives great satisfaction in such service. And even with only this life in view, it is obvious that no one wants a competitor when they marry. No marriage survives when the mates are rivals.

Further, homemakers are told that their work is boring and repetitive. Almost all jobs are—that's why they pay people to perform them. But, in fact, running a household well requires a greater variety of skills and abilities and provides more freedom than most jobs. The danger is that being told your work is boring can make it so.

The Women's Liberation Movement condemns most women to a life of dissatisfaction by falsely presenting them with a choice between only two alternatives: a slave chained to the stove, hearing nothing but children's voices and thus wasting one's mind; or a brilliant career woman, admired and fulfilled. Choices are never so clear. Indeed, proper child care is a stimulating and rewarding career as many professionals have indicated by devoting their lives to it. And the career woman not only faces boring, repetitive work, but may also experience a childless and unfulfilled old age.

There are both personal and social dangers as women enter the present-day work place. Traditionally women have lived longer than men and with fewer signs of stress. But this pattern is now changing as women adopt men's roles.

Some libbers have adopted an illogical view of female superiority. Their hands are clean, they say, of starting wars and if they were in charge there would be no wars. The evidence is, however, that the more male roles women adopt the more like men they become. And the human race can ill afford to lose the gentle influence of the feminine role. Without it we would be cruel and savage. And women are more suited to that gentle role than are men. By God's design they are the bearers of children and the nurses of infants.

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***Current attitudes must not control our understanding of Scripture, but neither should the attitudes of a past generation. It is just as wrong to elevate 1955 American lifestyles to the status of Scripture as to allow present values to distort our biblical picture of woman's role.***

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But the women's liberation movement minimizes these differences. Though woman may not be less capable than man, we cannot afford to forget that she is different. She is generally less suited to a leadership role (Genesis 3:16). And, though the Bible records exceptions, like Deborah, God has ordained a chain of command (1 Corinthians 11:3,7-12) based on these differences. These diversities produce an invaluable tension and partnership—one that is not only pleasant but is also necessary for the survival of the family.

Worst of all, this attitude of liberating women from child care hints that children are not valuable—certainly that they are not as important as a career or self-fulfillment. With child abuse already on the increase we cannot afford another voice demeaning our children, no matter how subtle and unintentional.

Current attitudes must not control our understanding of Scripture, but neither should the attitudes of a past generation. It is just as wrong to elevate 1955 American lifestyles to the status of Scripture as to allow present values to distort our biblical picture of the woman's role.

The Bible picture of the woman's role is clear. It teaches woman's equal access to salvation (Galatians 3:28). But it also emphasizes her subjection in the home and in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Timothy 2:12-15; Titus 2:4-5). However, it does not teach certain things that some have supposed. It does not teach that women are inferior. God created woman to be a help meet for man. And when God creates a helper He creates someone who can get the job done. Nor does the Bible teach a double standard. Women who, out of some outraged sense of fairness, have demanded the sexual freedoms of immoral men have done themselves a disservice. The Bible demands equally strict standards of men and women. Feminists' choice to rectify an unfair double standard with equal promiscuity for all indicates the worldly and godless heart of the movement.

The emotional resources wasted in the fight for equality demonstrates the wisdom of God's plan for a leader between the sexes. He settled the issue for us in the beginning so that we could devote our united energies to greater accomplishments than family squabbles.

This is not to blame women for all the woes of the family. Men are as much or more at fault. Before women can fill their proper roles, men must first take up their priestly roles in the family—themselves subject to God.

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# THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS

## You Can Win the Battle!

Kenny Chumbley

IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR that people in our time are marching to the beat of different drummers. The contemporary scene reveals a host of "isms" which continue to expand the beachhead they have established in the consciousness of our age. Humanism shows no abatement in declaring that "man is the measure of all things." Secularism continues to deny biblical values. And pluralism is making it increasingly easy for people to grant plausibility to everything and certainty to nothing. To believe that Jesus alone is "the way, the truth, and the life" is to be looked upon as a poor, lost sheep who needs to be brought into the fold of enlightened thought. We are told it's all right to classify Christ with the multitude of masters, or to group Him with the gurus, but for goodness sake don't exalt Him as supreme. His teachings have worth only to the extent that they can be brought in line with modern wisdom.

The consequences of such thinking are inevitable: ambiguity is praised, logic is victimized, and "truth is fallen in the streets." While the situation is clearly serious, a proper perspective on the problem demands that we keep two things in mind. First, the present threat isn't new; and second, the present threat isn't unconquerable. Error has always challenged and endangered the soul. And though the outcome of the struggle may at times be in doubt, the potential for victory must never be questioned. The battle for the mind is perilous, but not hopeless. And with God's assurance that in the life of faith lies the key to victory (1 John 5:4), we need only be concerned with the particulars of the attack. How shall we order the battle? Where shall we marshal our forces? Let us hear Paul on the matter.

The late bibliographer Wilbur M. Smith once lamented, "In St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Church at Corinth there is to be found an exhortation which seemingly has almost dropped out of sight, certainly out of consideration on the part of contemporary Chris-

tianity." He was speaking of 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Take the time to read it carefully, for here is a passage which reveals what spiritual warfare is all about. While contextually constituting a part of Paul's apostolic *apologia*, its utility for our discussion lies in the identification of the two factors most essential to fighting and winning the good fight: our armament and our aim.

### The Armament

"The weapons of our warfare . . . are mighty through God." The only feasible starting point for spiritual advance is in realizing where our strength lies. Our power is not in our prowess; our might is not in our wisdom. The battle for the mind (see Galatians 5:16-26) is to be

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fought, and won, with the weaponry which God supplies. "By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left" (2 Corinthians 6:6-7). The world looks at such tactics and laughs (1 Corinthians 4:10). But men and women of God, trusting in such tactics, have "out of weakness been made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Hebrews 11:34). God's armaments alone are mighty enough to crucify the flesh and resist the devil. And we make no greater mistake than when, through neglect, we lay

them aside. A failure to study, pray, and live righteously is tantamount to spiritual disarmament. If we are to emerge victorious in the war for our soul, it must be through a resolute reliance upon the weapons empowered by God.

### The Aim

"Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The "mind" will always be the battleground between heaven and hell for it is the "mind" which makes us men and not mosquitoes. Through a variety of ploys (Ephesians 6:11), the "god of this world" erects mental walls of resistance which keep men from the truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Our task, therefore, is to take the gospel and attack each mind, infusing it with the "mind of Christ" (Philippians 2:5). Every stronghold of error must fall; every vain imagination must be toppled; and every thought be chained to the chariot of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14). Only when God's truth has penetrated the mind will service be genuine and obedience be lasting.

A final note. "Warfare" (10:4) could also be translated "campaign." The good fight is not a single skirmish fought and won; it is an on-going battle which must be fought and won daily. The true "campaign for Christ" takes place in the life of the individual, when he sets his sights on heaven, and, by the power of God, presses toward that mark.

Just before they sailed out to engage the Persian fleet in the narrow waters around Salamis, the Greek leaders told their men, "When we join battle with the Persians, before all else remember freedom." My friend, when joining battle with the forces of darkness, before all else remember that our most powerful weapon in a secularistic world is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Through a reliance on this sword the battle for the mind can be won. And when it is won, we should remember the words which Themistocles uttered as he watched the Persian armada depart: "It is not we who have done this."

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# That's Life!



Dee Bowman

*CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE*, to my mind, has a rather simple purpose. It should not be viewed as a brotherhood voice, nor as a spokesman for some sort or kind of movement. It is simply an effort to give people some little something that will help in their flight toward God.

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* "This morning I was thinking this: Obedience may be seen as the cooperation between the will of man and the grace of God. Only when man subordinates his will to the will of God can grace become effective. Otherwise grace is only God's disposition of favor toward man, nothing more."

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*IF YOU EVER HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY* to visit the church in Centerville, Texas, by all means do it. It's really a good church. Centerville is about halfway between Houston and Dallas. It is a beautiful area and the people in the church there are about the most friendly you'll ever meet. And for its size, it has the most good cooks of about any place I know. And you just as well expect to be invited for lunch if you stop.

\* \* \*

*WALTON WEAVER IS A FINE PERSON.* And has a fine family, too. He lives and works in Jackson, Mississippi. In addition to his evangelistic duties and his work as an elder for the Lord's people in Jackson, plus holding several meetings a year, he seeks to publish not one, but two papers. They are both well done and well worth the reading. Write him about them at TAM Publications, P. O. Box 10730, Jackson, Mississippi 32909.

\* \* \*

*GOODNESS, NOT SUCCESS*, should be our prime concern.

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*I AM BECOMING MORE AND MORE* disinclined to pay much attention to what "they" say until such a time as someone identifies who "they" are.

\* \* \*

*MAY GOD GRANT ME THE COURAGE* to say what needs to be said; the love of heart to say it kindly; the constancy to say it as long as it needs to be said; and the wisdom to know when I have said enough.

\* \* \*

*THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE:* Take a special interest in some older person. Take a small gift and visit them. Express your appreciation for their faithfulness. Ask them about how to live faithfully.

\* \* \*

*"MAN IS THE ONLY ANIMAL* that blushes. Or needs to." —Mark Twain

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*AUTHORITY IS AT THE BASE OF EVERYTHING.* And any satisfactory authority must do at least three things in order to be effective. (1) It must satisfy the reason, in order that we might understand. (2) It must move the heart, so that we feel the need to act. (3) It must energize the will, so as to produce obedience.

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*HARRY PICKUP, JR. CONCERNING THE SOCIAL GOSPEL:* "It thinks of sin in terms of unrighteousness, leaving out ungodliness. Salvation has to do with making men right with each other rather than right with God."



# The Dangers of "Conservatism"

David Holder

I, like most of you who are reading this, am considered to be a "conservative" or a "fundamentalist" by many in the religious world because of my convictions that Jesus, as the Son of God, was an actual historical figure and that the Bible is the inspired and infallible word of God. I am also considered to be a "conservative" or even an "anti" by some of my own brethren because of my views concerning the social gospel, institutionalism, and the sponsoring church arrangement.

I accept the "conservative" designation without shame or hesitation in the sense that the word implies moderation, prudence, and caution. I prefer to be considered just a Christian and biblical in my views, but this appears to be only a remote possibility. We are given to categorizing and labeling, and I see little chance for that to change. This article, however, is not to defend "conservatism" or to condemn "liberalism." It is to point out the dangers of what has come to be called the conservative viewpoint. Those of us who approach the Bible from this standpoint need to be aware of the dangers involved.

1. **Legalism.** A "conservative" would, of course, emphasize strict adherence to God's law. I believe this is right simply because God's way is too important to be trifled with. The danger, however, is in right doctrine becoming an end in itself. Knowing and believing all the right doctrines are exercises in futility unless the adherents also live by those right doctrines. "Biblical authority" is no substitute for biblical activity. When maintaining right doctrine becomes an end in itself, "conservatism" has taken a wrong and dangerous turn.

2. **Nonproductivity.** The conservative's "moderation, prudence and caution" have a tendency to develop into nonproductivity. "Conservatives" place heavy emphasis on what is *not* to be done and on the *way* things are to be done. I am not depreciating this emphasis. I am simply stating what we should be aware of about ourselves. The problem we face is that we are too heavy on what is not to be done and on the way things are to be done, and far too light on the actual doing of what needs to be done. We satisfy ourselves with maintaining the "biblical pattern," but

never get around to doing what the pattern calls for. In short, we end up opposing most everything and doing nothing.

3. **Selectivity.** What I mean by "selectivity" is that we tend to rally around certain selected matters to the neglect of other matters that are equally important and essential. We get the idea that the "conservative" viewpoint on certain issues is the essence of Christianity. We spend our time and efforts maintaining the "conservative cause" and we forget about the "biblical cause." After all, what difference does it make if the local church does not support human institutions from its treasury if its members are worldly minded? And what difference does it make if we are not involved in the sponsoring church arrangement for doing evangelism if we do not accept the responsibility of personal evangelism? Who are we to select the matters that we will adhere to strictly? Man must live by *every* word that comes from God (Matthew 4:4; see 23:23).

4. **Negativism.** Conservatism breeds negativism if we are not extremely careful. The "conservative" gets the idea that all changes are "liberal" and thus becomes reluctant to change. This reluctance soon develops into resistance. One begins to see "liberalism" at every turn. Anything new or different is immediately suspect. And all this results in the "Why change?," "It won't do any good," and "It won't work" mentality. Negativism of this sort never results in progress.

5. **Traditionalism.** Closely associated with negativism is traditionalism. The "conservative" typically places emphasis on what has always been believed and done. Traditional definitions and procedures are viewed as adequate and in no need of review or change. The danger involved is that tradition is often elevated to the level of doctrine. "What we have always done" and "the position we have always taken" becomes more important than what the Bible commands and allows. When we fail to make a distinction between tradition and doctrine, trouble is on the horizon.

6. **Self-righteousness.** All of us who have deep convictions inevitably identify our *selves* with our *convictions*. When, however, we begin to use ourselves and the way we do things as the standard by

which to measure others, we are treading on dangerous and sinful ground. Jesus clashed with the Pharisees on a number of occasions over this very point. When we label others "liberal" because they do not do everything our "conservative" way, we have become self-righteous. Every position and every practice must stand or fall on its own merits or demerits as it is compared to biblical teaching. God's word must be the standard by which we measure everything—including ourselves!

7. **Division.** Historically, conservatism often culminates in division. "Conservatives," by nature, are not very tolerant. The "conservative's" outlook leaves little or no room for compromise. And, in fact, when it comes to biblical principles and procedures, there is no room for toleration or compromise. Our problem, however, is that we allow our unwillingness to tolerate and compromise in matters of biblical doctrine to spill over into the area of human opinion. We tend to demand that everybody else have our viewpoint, attitude, and opinion. If such is not forthcoming, we seem perfectly willing to divide and surround ourselves with those who see things just like we do. "Conservatives" find it easier to divide over rather than resolve differences. Some draw their circle so small that there is only room for themselves and *maybe* a few others. Let's face it, many "conservative" churches are fragmenting themselves to death. The seed from which these churches sprang may have been good seed, but somewhere along the line they have taken a wrong, dangerous, and destructive turn.

If some people call our reverence for and adherence to the Bible "conservative" or even "anti," then so be it. We should maintain such reverence and adherence without shame or hesitation. But we must, at the same time, face up to the dangers involved and avoid them at all cost. We are not, after all, called to follow the "conservative cause." We are called rather to follow "Christ's cause." If we lose sight of this, we have lost sight of the only thing that will keep us moving in the right direction and finally save our souls.

111 Oak Ave., Dickson, TN 37055



# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"I will give thee thanks in the great assembly: I will praise thee among much people. . . . And my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long" (35:18,28).

## Praising God — In and Out of the Assembly

God expects something out of each one of His children. He calls for us to "give thanks to God in the assembly" (verse 18). Paul says, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15). We should never tire of praising God for His abundant bestowal of blessings. Each Christian should eagerly anticipate gathering with the saints in public worship where the primary business is "giving of thanks" to God (1 Corinthians 14:16-17).

Our songs are praise to God. When we blend our voices and our hearts together, we have no doubt that God is being praised. "Hallelujah, praise Jehovah! Let the heavens praise His name," we sing. Our comments and participation in the Bible classes serve to extol Him, showing that we care about what He says in His word. Our prayers are acts of faith, affirming our belief that He hears and cares. God is honored when we hallow His name in prayer. Remembering His Son by eating the Lord's Supper praises God; He is celebrated as we remember the Lord's death on our behalf. And certainly God is adored when we give to Him a portion of what He has given us. In these ways, and more, we "give thanks to God in the assembly."

We must never forget that God is due this thanks. To withhold it will bring not only His displeasure, but our own condemnation (Romans 1:21). The King James Ver-

sion translates Hebrews 13:15: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." Nothing can surpass the adulation of His creatures who come together, "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in [their hearts] to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of [their] Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father" (Ephesians 5:19-20). Such "praise in the assembly" approaches the scene described by John in the Revelation: "And . . . the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever" (Revelation 4:9).

But a second thing that God requires of His disciples is that we "praise him among much people" (verse 18) and that we "talk of his righteousness and praise all the day long" (verse 28). Perhaps we do a better job of the former than of the latter. God expects me, however, to glorify Him in my daily life among friends and enemies. How do I do this? I do it in the simple activities of each day. Augustine commented upon this passage: "I will suggest a remedy whereby thou mayest praise God all the day long if thou wilt. Whatever thou dost, do well, and thou hast praised God. When thou singest a hymn, thou praisest God, but what doth thy tongue, unless thy heart also praise him? Hast thou ceased from singing hymns, and departed that thou mayest refresh thyself? Be not drunken, and thou hast praised God. Dost thou go away to sleep? Rise not to do evil, and thou hast praised God. Dost thou transact business? Do no wrong, and thou hast praised God. Dost thou till thy field? Raise not strife, and thou hast praised God. In the innocency of thy works prepare thyself to praise God all the day long."

God is honored by me when I do what is taught in Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." I praise and glorify God when I suffer as a Christian (1 Peter 4:15-16), even if only verbal abuse; when Christ is magnified in my life (Philippians 1:20); and when I contribute my part to the great body of the redeemed, the church (Ephesians 3:20-21). Let me be determined that in my life God will have what he seeks: personal praise, public praise, and perpetual praise.



# "What?"

Richard Williams

*"And Jesus said unto them, 'Who do you say that I am?' And they replied, you are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the kenosis in which we find the ultimate meaning of our interpersonal relationship.' And Jesus said, 'What?'"*

—Graffiti found on a wall  
at St. John's University

\* \*

others.

After listening to a modern religious "expert" expound from the pulpit the various religious jargons, human philosophies and social comments which are so popular today, it is not difficult to imagine the perplexity of a first century saint, used to the pure and uncomplicated gospel, shaking his head and saying, "What?"

Most religionists of today, professing themselves to be wise, have become

again" is a special experience separate and apart from the baptism of Acts 2:38, that new or "updated" revelation is needed in these "changing times," that a man can "live right" and therefore "be right"—then he has changed the gospel of Christ and teaches error which leads to destruction.

Equally wrong and just as deadly is the "pulpit pontificator" who disguises his lack of knowledge or conviction (or both) behind highly educated and esoteric language which makes the message sound impressive but does nothing to feed the soul or edify the listener.

Do not misunderstand. Education and study is imperative in the growth of a Christian. Paul instructed Timothy to study, and in the same letter said *what* Timothy was to study: "All scripture . . . is profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16). Paul also warned Timothy to avoid useless and ungodly language because it leads to increased ungodliness (2 Timothy 2:16).

Paul further observed that because Hymenaeus and Philetus engaged in such they erred in the truth and taught false doctrine (2 Timothy 2:17-18).

There is nothing wrong in the study of subjects other than Scripture in an effort to increase one's knowledge about the word of God. A study of Greek and Roman history, of Jewish history and religion, of Greek and Hebrew languages and even other religions is not wrong.

What is wrong, however, is when one's secondary studies become more consuming and important than the primary study, the word of God. Then one needs to stop and return to the gospel before he becomes caught in a snare as were Hymenaeus and Philetus.

Let each of us, like Paul, be ever ready and able to teach the gospel in a clear and easily understood manner and not with highly skillful language which nullifies the cross of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:17).

204 Fillmore, Taft, CA 93268

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**"After listening to a modern religious 'expert' expound from the pulpit . . . today, it is not difficult to imagine the perplexity of a first century saint, used to the pure and uncomplicated gospel, shaking his head and saying, 'What?' "**

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One of the greatest difficulties in religion today is the self-imposed barrier of communication man has placed between himself and the uncomplicated gospel of Christ.

The above graffiti illustrates the frustration and confusion of many who enter the various colleges and universities and pursue courses designed to turn out "learned scholars of the cloth."

They, in turn, teach and confuse

fools (Romans 1:22) and have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made after corruptible man. Does this sound like a harsh accusation? Indeed it is—and it is meant to be!

When one teaches that denominationalism is not the same thing as division, that there are many "paths" to God, that all churches are working in their own way toward the same salvation, that faith only is all one needs for a "personal relationship" with God, that being "born



# And Then Some...



**Brent Lewis**

## Heavy, brother Hailey . . . heavy

When Floyd Thompson died last year, Ruth asked Homer Hailey, their long-time friend, to preach the funeral service.

Some time later, she asked Homer if there was anything of Floyd's such as a book in his library, or anything that he might want as a memento.

Brother Hailey thought for a little bit and said, "Well, there is one thing. Do you suppose I could have his Homer and Jethro records?"

Guess who is now the proud owner of these classic recordings! (If you are a young person, you'll have to ask your parents who Homer and Jethro were.)

## Understanding the hurt

Once a man saw his own dog hit by a car and severely injured. Rushing to the aid of his beloved pet, he was badly bitten by the animal. A neighbor said, "If that were my dog and it bit me that way I'd kill it." The man replied, "I'd probably kill it too if it were your dog, but it isn't yours; it's mine and I understand why it bit me."

Just so, there are those who hurt, and as a consequence they lash out, biting and hurting others. It may not be Christian action, but it is human. Those of knowledge and love understand that sometimes it is necessary to get hurt in order to help others.

Maybe we have all had some experiences of people figuratively biting or kicking or lashing out at those trying to help them. No, it is not a good feeling, getting hurt trying to help someone else. But the rewards are really great as we

see one recover.

We may even have to say, "Your doctor may not care . . . or your lawyer . . . or companion . . . your boss . . . your customer . . . your so-called friends . . . *but I care!*" Can we stand the hurt enough to help someone who is hurting—maybe critically?

—Paul Brock

## The riches of preaching

It is certainly true that a preacher is not likely to get rich while preaching the gospel. But most preachers are very rich—in relationships, experiences and countless associations.

One of the blessings of doing local work is in the great people you meet and become closely associated with. It was my good fortune to work with the 62nd & Indiana church in Lubbock, Texas, for three years, ending last fall with my move to Melbourne, Florida.

There are many fond memories of that work which I will forever treasure in my mind. But none of them will surpass the great privilege that I had to get to know and love D.C. (Clarence) and Elsie Bowman. Brother Bowman went to his eternal reward in January, 1984, and I miss him terribly. He was an unassuming "country boy" who never had much formal education but was wise even beyond his many years. He had a dignity about him that everyone sensed and I've never seen a man that was more respected by those who knew him.

I was always delighted to see him raise his hand in a Bible class, because he was a true student of the word and always had something valuable to say.

He will never know how much he helped and encouraged me as a friend and brother. He had every reason to be proud, as he was, of his sons, Dee and Jay, who preach the gospel that he loved so well; and Lowell, who now serves the 62nd & Indiana church as an elder.

Elsie visited us in Florida a few months ago, and we loved getting to see her. People like the Bowmans are one of the greatest rewards of preaching.

## Not wanting the Lord to know

William Allen White, the famed Editor of the Emporia Gazette, was a staunch member of the Democratic Party. On one occasion, however, he found himself attending a *Republican Party* convention as a political reporter.

At the opening session, the presiding officer saw Mr. White in the audience and asked him if he would give an invocation. William Allen White replied, "No, I will not pray in this place for two reasons. First of all, I am not trained in the fine art of public prayer. Secondly, I don't want the Lord to know that I am here."

Sometimes, as Christians, we find ourselves in places where we wouldn't want the Lord to see us—but, of course, He does. Our growth as Christians may well be measured by how we reduce the areas of our lives in which we are trying to hide from the Lord.

## When life doesn't make sense

Over the entrance of the campus library at a university, the following sign appeared: "Due to

reorganization, the basement will be on the second floor, one half of the second floor will be on the first floor, but one half will remain on the second. We suggest you ask for help."

Unfortunately, life is often like that. The pieces just do not fit together. So little makes sense. The best thing to do is ask for God's help.

## Good definition of a preacher

A speech teacher was asked by a young man what it would take to become a good preacher. She said, "Fill your mouth with marbles and practice speaking. Take the marbles out of your mouth one by one; when you lose all your marbles, then you'll be a preacher."

## The course of least resistance

We are told that it is but sixty-five miles in a straight line from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, but that it is two hundred miles by the course of the Jordan River which has innumerable curves. Someone has remarked that "rivers and men are crooked by following the line of least resistance." Certainly that is the way the Jordan became a crooked, winding river. It is nature's way with most streams. And it is true that human beings become crooked morally by following the line of least resistance.

—John Clark

**NOTE:** Paul Earnhart's regular column will appear here next month.





## "Finish Then Thy New Creation"

### Philippians 1:9-11

Paul's prayers for the churches are extremely valuable for their emphasis on the really important things to be sought of God. This one is connected with Paul's expression of praise to God for His work in the Philippian saints (verses 3-8). Having previously mentioned his supplication to God on behalf of the Philippians (verse 4), now Paul is specific about what he seeks for them (verses 9-11).

Paul's prayer had in view "the day of Christ" (verse 10). He made his supplication with confidence, the Philippians being such as they were, that God would perfect the work He had begun in them "until the day of Jesus Christ" (verses 3-6). But the prayer itself was at bottom a petition that God would finish His work in them. The content of the prayer clarifies what this involves and mainly the development in the Philippians that is contemplated.

Unlike Paul's wish for another Macedonian church (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13; see 4:9-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3), this prayer was not for an increase in love absolutely, but for the growth of love in certain particulars: "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment" (verse 9).

The Greek *epignosis* is knowledge that is full and thorough (see the related verb in 1 Corinthians 13:12). The lexicons use the words perception, cognition, discernment (Grimm-Thayer), insight and experience (Arndt-Gingrich) to explain *aisthesis*. The related noun *aistheterion* occurs in Hebrews 5:14 ("senses").

Knowledge without love can be destructive (see 1 Corinthians 8:1). But love that does not develop in knowledge and discernment is a weak, unregulated sentimentality that does more harm than good. To be effective, love must be guided by knowledge and moral insight.

The *aim* (verse 10a) of a love abounding in knowledge and insight is *to test the things that differ* (see ASV margin). *Dokimazo* is commonly used for testing metals (Proverbs 8:10; 17:3; 27:21; Zechariah 13:9 in Greek OT); *diaphero* appears in Galatians 2:6 in a line which means "it 'matters nothing' (G-T) or 'makes no difference' (A-G) to me."

This rendering no doubt implies "so ye may approve the things that are excellent" (ASV text based on secondary meanings), but may include more. The main point, I think, is that a love abounding in knowledge and insight enables one to be discriminating—able to distinguish between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22), but also to make important distinctions between the essentials and the morally indifferent (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8; 10:23-11:1). Then consider important distinctions brought out in Philippians itself—motive and message in preaching (1:15-18); things that stand out as of superior worth (3:7-11); models to be imitated (3:17-19); things worthy of consideration (4:8).

So many things call for discrimination! Love cannot be a syrupy, unregulated sentimentality. It must be characterized by knowledge and insight enabling a disciple to be discriminating. But this quality has a purpose, too: "that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ;" etc. Ultimately, then, Paul's prayer contemplates the preparation of the Philippian saints for the day of judgment. It is a prayer that God will complete His work in them.

*Sincere* implies freedom from falseness. The experts debate whether *void of offence* is passive ("undamaged, blameless," A-G) or active as in 1 Corinthians 10:32 (without giving offence). But do not worry. The prayer is for love with certain characteristics and with this final purpose. If one has this kind of love he will not be lacking in the day of Christ.

The positive side is "being filled with the fruit of righteousness." This fruit is produced in persons by Jesus Christ and aims at "the glory and praise of God" (verse 11). And so again we see that Paul has been thinking of the work of God in human beings. That is why he prayed to God that their love may abound, etc. When once we stand before the judge, "filled with the fruit of righteousness," God's work in us will be finished. His handiwork will be duly acknowledged as the new world resounds with praise for the Creator who has accomplished such marvels in the redeemed.

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**AUGUST THEME: "Onward, Christian Soldiers"**

**Edited by Dee Bowman**

### **ARTICLES:**

**Fight: The Battleground—***Warren Berkley*

**Am I A Soldier of the Cross?—***Jack Smith*

**Victory In Jesus—***Robert F. Turner*

**Sacrifice: Key to Victory—***John Clark*

**And More . . .**



# What Is Sin?

*Dusty Owens*

Most everyone has some idea of what constitutes "sin" in the sight of God. People might differ in their opinions about some sins, but be in agreement concerning most. Like always, we should study this question in light of what the Bible says about it. We might be surprised at what we find.

The Bible is not a book of definitions nor a dictionary of words, yet we can come to understand God's thinking on any subject, including "sin." He has revealed Himself with reference to sin, and, while no formal definition is given,

revealed "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3), and made it possible through the Scriptures "that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). The person who lives contrary to these "things" furnished in the Scriptures, lives a life of sin.

This includes the person who has a contempt for God and expresses this with his indifferent attitude toward spiritual things. He may not say that he dislikes God, but he shows this by ignoring His will. By doing this, he will

Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17). This means by His authority (Matthew 28:18).

2. Sin is violation of conscience. "But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Here Paul is talking about eating meats that have been sacrificed to idols. One Christian may eat without violating his conscience because he attaches no religious significance to the meat. Another Christian is not clear on the teaching and eats, "doubting;" that is, he eats with a troubled conscience. Paul says that man sins. It is a sin of the violation of the conscience. We must have complete trust and confidence (faith) in everything we do. Without this kind of faith "it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Can we sin this way today? Yes. We may not have to contend with the same problem involving food sacrificed to idols, but we still must be sure that everything we do is pleasing to God. We could violate our conscience over many other matters and be guilty of this sin.

3. The sin of omission. "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Whereas the sin of conscience stems from a doubtful mind, the sin of omission comes from pure neglect. The person knows better. He knows what the will of God is but refuses to do it.

James uses this principle in connection with leaving God out of our future plans (verses 13-15). If one knows that he should formulate his future plans around serving God and refuses to do so, then he is guilty of the sin of omission.

The principle should not be restricted to this one possibility. Anytime we know to do right in a given situation and we do that which is contrary, or if we do nothing, then we are guilty of this sin. Even in secular matters one is held responsible, especially if he knows right from wrong.

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## "God has revealed Himself with reference to sin, and, while no formal definition is given, we can know what He says sin is and what His attitude is toward it."

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we can know what He says sin is and what His attitude is toward it. His standard of judgment is correct, and any deviation from it on our part would be wrong. If we would see things as God sees them, then we must learn to think His thoughts after Him. We can do this only by turning to the Scriptures for His answers.

1. Sin is lawlessness. "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Here, John is telling us that the habitual practice of that which is not approved and/or prescribed by God is sin. God has

continuously do sin. Therefore, he is outside of God's law; hence, practices lawlessness. One who operates outside of God's accepted realm is called a "sinner."

Another word for lawlessness is "iniquity." Jesus used this word in connection with His judgment of religious error (Matthew 7:21-23). He rejected those who "worked iniquity." They were doing "many wonderful works" (verse 22), but not according to law; therefore, Jesus rejected them. Paul said, "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### A Statement of Purpose

**I**t has never been the purpose of this page to glorify men or women. Instead, its purpose has been to tell how some dedicated Christians around the world are glorifying God. Most of those featured have been embarrassed rather than flattered by the attention they have been given. Only humble and modest servants of God are worthy to be included for they alone reflect the true light. Pride and self-assertiveness are "bushels" which conceal the light.

The source of all light is "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). His light is radiated to the world by Jesus Christ who is "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3). "That was the true light which gives light to every man who comes into the world" (John 1:9).

Some lamps are designed so that the light inside will enhance and draw attention to the beauty of the globe. Others have a globe that is as transparent as possible so that the maximum light will be emitted from within. Christians must be the latter kind of lamp, drawing as little attention as possible to self so that Christ may be seen in all His glory as He lives within them.

Surely this is what Paul was saying in 2 Corinthians 4:5. "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." This accounts for Paul's approach in Corinth: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (2 Corinthians 2:1-5).

For some years now, an increasing emphasis on preachers has been noticeable. Advertisements of meetings not only praise the preacher's ability as a speaker, but often feature a resume of his many accomplishments. More recently it has been disturbing to see an excessive amount of flattery become a part of the announcements before and after sermons. Even in prayers, during meetings especially, more is sometimes

said in praise of the preacher than in praise of God.

It is doubtful that any of this is effective in bringing sincere, honest truth-seekers to our meetings or in impressing them once they are there. Such people have been exposed for so long to Madison Avenue type advertising hype that they are pretty well immune to it. They have already heard preachers with more degrees, more books and more "chief seats" to their credit than any man we could offer. What they are looking for is Jesus. For them, our advertising dollars would be better spent in assuring them that Jesus Christ, born of a virgin and raised from the dead, will be preached by whomever.

**T**his is not to apologize, however, for this series of articles. There is clear precedent in Scripture for what we are trying to accomplish. First, we wish to let readers know of gospel work being done in various parts of the world. Second, we wish to introduce some of the men and women who have undertaken this work.

When Paul and Barnabas returned from their first tour, they gathered the church together and "reported all that God had done with them" (Acts 14:27). Enroute to Jerusalem, they passed "through Phoenicia and Samaria describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren" (Acts 15:3). Many Christians know more about the politics, economy, geography, etc. of the various nations than they know about the Lord's church in those nations. Some are naive enough to suppose that there are faithful churches in every major city of the world, while others do not realize that such churches exist outside the United States. All need to be informed.

Examples have always been useful. Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan, not to glorify the man, but to show the meaning of neighborliness. He added to the story, "Go and do likewise." We would like to hope that these reports of modern disciples who in some instances have even "risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" might encourage some of our readers to "go and do likewise."

Lives of great men all remind us,  
We can make our lives sublime;  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sand of time.

—Longfellow

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# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## Tell It To the Judge

Columnist Sydney J. Harris recently wrote an essay on "The Shifting Concept of God." Fed up with the shenanigans of television evangelists, he wrote, "If there is a Supreme Plan for mankind, it is surely beyond our comprehension. You can quote the Bible nine ways to Sunday, and each sect will come up with a different version of God's will. . . . Only God knows what the answer is, and He is only hinting, not telling, no matter what is preached on Sunday mornings." History provides Mr. Harris with lots of ammunition about the sorry mess humans have made in dealing with revelation (including, indeed starring, the television evangelists), but the two basic premises of his article just won't float. And yet, less succinctly stated, Harris's assumptions are shared by a majority of religious people in America.

First, I challenge the asser-

tion that God is "only hinting, not telling" about the spiritual significance of life. The Bible clearly claims the contrary. The gospel of Jesus Christ might be "foolishness" to some and a "stumblingblock" to others, but to those who are "called" it is the "power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:22). If Mr. Harris looks carefully in the Bible, he will find a lot more than "hints"—though he still might not be inclined to believe what he finds.

More perplexing and yet pervasive in our society, is Harris's second assumption—the Bible can be used to prove anything, and nothing. I know the Bible is cited to prove almost everything, but does that mean that it has no validity, that it is incapable of communicating ideas which can be shared by men's objective senses?

Such logic would be declared nonsense in other areas of life;

it would undermine the fundamental base for social order. Students in my history classes would not have the brass to tell me that there can be no common shared understanding based on the evidence of the past. In truth, the facts are there to be viewed in common. We can interpret them differently, but it is foolish to argue that there is not a shared basis for those interpretations.

Athletes playing a game only rarely argue about the interpretation of a rule. They know the rules; that is why we can have orderly games. There may be fuzzy areas, and we can go berserk about the misapplication of a rule, but is anyone prepared to argue that you can quote the rules "nine ways to Sunday" and every referee will be calling a different game?

Society itself is the best argument against such nonsense. We survive as communities based on law. Our statutes are

admittedly created in confusion and eminently imperfect—but they work. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, and misinterpretation will not keep you out of jail. What will Mr. Harris say if he is arrested for violating the law? "You can argue the legal code nine ways to Sunday and everybody has a right to do as he pleases." Tell it to the judge.

I confess that the Bible deals with abstract and difficult topics where our minds grope and our private perceptions differ. But read the book, folks. Most of it is history, and statements of fact, and commandments (laws). Will you argue that such a revelation leaves everyone free to do as he pleases? Tell it to the Judge. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

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## "And Shall I Fear To Own His Cause?"

**H**ow do you feel when someone asks why you partake of the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day? Are you ever embarrassed? How about immersion in water for baptism? Does it ever bother you to tell someone why we bury people in water instead of sprinkling or pouring water on them? How about instrumental music? Are you ever somewhat ashamed when some acquaintance comes to our services and questions why we have no instruments of music in our worship?

Now, before you answer these questions, have a little talk with yourself about your own honesty. Be sure that you are not just excusing yourself out of mere self-preservation. It's easy to do that, you know.

Now that you've thought that over, how about it? Don't you think there *have* been times when you were just a little embarrassed about why we do what we do—about being a little different than everyone else? I have had such times, I'll tell you that.

We need to quit being embarrassed about who we are and why we are different. If we are right, then let's stand up and say so! If it's right to partake of the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day, then what do we have to be ashamed of? If we are acting scripturally when we baptize someone for the remission of sins, let's just point that out in the Scriptures and not be timid about it. How can we be ashamed if we are right?

Now, take just a few minutes and consider the matter of instrumental music. I want to set forth a principle from the Bible. It is a simple one, but powerful in its implications. The principle is this: It is wrong to offer to God in worship that which He did not authorize. Ponder that for a few minutes.

In Matthew 15:9, Jesus said, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Here the Lord said that not everything extended to Him as worship had His approval, right? In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that

doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." He concludes (verses 22-23) by saying that not everything done in His name has His approval.

In Leviticus 10:1-2, there is the story of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, who offered "strange" fire as worship to the Lord. What made the fire "strange," may I ask? It was fire which God had not authorized and to offer it was presumptive. In 1 Samuel 15, there is the story of King Saul who brought back animals from his battle with the Amalekites which he offered in sacrifice to the Lord. His actions were presumptive and he was resultantly refused as king for what the Scriptures call "rebellion" and "rejection of the word of the Lord" (see 1 Samuel 15:23). The principle is vividly illustrated in these two stories. Hear it again: It is wrong to offer as worship to God that which He did not authorize.

**O**nly nine times is music even mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:26; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13) and in every instance the music mentioned is singing. Not one time is playing an instrument mentioned. "But," someone says, "it doesn't say *not* to play along with the singing." No, it doesn't. And neither did the Lord say to Nadab and Abihu, "Don't use any other fire." You see, when one kind of fire was authorized then all other kinds were left unapproved. When God told Noah what kind of wood to use for the building of the ark, He authorized only that kind. And that left all other kinds without His approval. When singing is authorized, all other kinds of music are left unapproved.

I am not ashamed of what I believe about instrumental music. Are you? It is right, logical and scriptural. Let's shout for all the world to hear that we believe in God and that we believe He instructed us about what is acceptable to Him in worship (see John 4:24) and that we intend to do what He has said to the best of our ability.



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# Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 663 Denise Drive, Melbourne, FL 32935

## An alternate conclusion on "The Sin Unto Death"

In Clinton Hamilton's article titled "The Sin Unto Death" [April, 1985, p. 22], he said: "It is my conviction that the sin unto death is the sin against the Holy Spirit." The sin unto death? The sin against the Holy Spirit? It is my conviction that there are "no such animals." Further, I believe that such unwarranted expressions have added to the confusion on these matters and prevented many from reaching correct conclusions.

THE sin against the Holy Spirit? Bosh! Every sin in the entire Satanic list is against the Holy Spirit, just as every sin is against God and Jesus Christ. To be sure, there is "The Sin of Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10). Had it been stated that way through the years, much of the confusion which now enshrouds the subject would never have existed.

The sin unto death? Every sin a brother might commit will be unto death if he refuses to confess it, repent of it, and pray for forgiveness! Why, then, state it in such a way as to cause people to think there is one specific, particular sin that will never be forgiven, regardless of what one does and what others do for him? Unless I am wholly mistaken, Jesus never used the expression "the sin against the Holy Spirit," nor did John use the expression "the sin unto death." Are we to think "a sin not unto death" is one specific, particular sin that all brethren can freely and repeatedly commit as long as prayed for? If "a sin unto death" is specific, why is not "a sin not unto death" likewise specific? It seems to me that consistency would so demand. Since Clinton has written and your paper has carried an article on "The Sin Unto Death," it would be interesting to see one from the same writer in the same medium on "The Sin Not Unto Death." I believe that "a sin not unto death" is the very reverse of "a sin unto death" and vice versa!

Clinton is a friend of long-standing and a good student of the Word and I have high regard for him; but, being human, as we all are, it seems to me that he missed it in his article.

Tommy L. McClure  
Antioch, CA

## More on women and business meetings

I have no article on the subject, but would like to lend some support to "a sister in the Pacific Northwest" [Soundings, March, 1985, p. 5] with regard to women and the business meetings.

I not only think women should be permitted to attend business meetings, but would like to request the scriptural basis for a business meeting that excludes them. Is not the scriptural basis for a business meeting that it is not a separate organization but only the church itself conducting its business? Then what of a meeting in which some of the members are excluded? Is that not something other than the church?

Women should, of course, conduct themselves in a business meeting as the New Testament teaches them to do in any other meeting of the church. That should eliminate the understandable and quite justified feeling that "women are not part of the work of the church" without women taking over the leadership of the church in a scripturally inappropriate manner.

L. A. Mott, Jr.  
Ocala, FL

## And more on the same subject . . .

In response to your request to hear from readers concerning meetings of members (in the letter from a sister in the Pacific Northwest), I would like to suggest the following.

The Bible authorizes elders to oversee the church, but nowhere does it specify that "men's business meetings" should discuss and decide issues confronting the church. In the absence of elders, the church as a whole is responsible for the actions taken according to Acts 6:1-6 (especially verse 2 where it states that the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples together to resolve the problem).

Rather than a scriptural reason that all members can't meet, I believe the Bible teaches that all members should meet in order to fulfill their duties to each other, to the church as a whole, and to God. The congregation which currently meets at Carr Mill Mall in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, has

followed this Bible example and has been pleased with the active participation by all of our members in the decision-making process. I commend the example in Acts 6 to your study and application.

Angela Lumpkin  
Chapel Hill, NC

## Some observations about sinners

I wish to commend you on the work you are doing through *Christianity Magazine*.

I've just recently received my issue of March, 1985. For some reason, I received it after the April and May issues. There were two things in that issue that prompted me to write.

A sister in the Pacific Northwest asked why some brethren pray thus, "We are weak and sinful" or "We are sinners." I believe the solution to her problem is merely one of definition.

One might believe that a sinner is one who is outside of Christ and practicing sin, while another's definition would be simply anyone who sins. For example, someone who is singing is a singer (though I know some who sing that claim they are not singers). Someone who preaches is a preacher. Someone who teaches is a teacher. None of these is necessarily on a regular basis, but yet they are called what they do. If we sin, then we are a sinner (1 John 1:7-10). The difference between a Christian "sinner" and an outside "sinner" is that "we" have the privilege of forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

Let's not flatter ourselves by saying we are not sinners, though we sin. "A rose by any other name . . ."

Linda L. Myers  
New London, WI

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**We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?**

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# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Restoring New Testament Christianity (VI)

*(This series is a revised version of an article prepared for the forthcoming Encyclopedia of Religion in America.)*

\* \* \*

Most of the early American restorationist groups had some knowledge of one another, but their geographical separation limited their contacts. While the Stone and Campbell movements were still in their early stages, however, the Christian groups of New England and North Carolina effected a loose union. In the 1830s the churches organized a General Conference united around two convictions—a belief in total independence of the local congregation and a respect for diversity of belief. In New England the churches continued the Baptist tradition of baptism by immersion while in the South and Midwest both sprinkling and immersion were practiced. This loose fellowship of churches, generally called the Christian Connection church in the nineteenth century, grew slowly and counted about 100,000 members by 1900.

More auspicious was the union of the Stone and Campbell movements in the early 1830s. Those two movements were flourishing in the states of the Upper South and the Midwest in the 1820s and they increasingly found themselves to be friendly competitors. Campbell toured Kentucky in 1824 and met Stone and other leaders of the Christian movement; they recognized the general similarities between their pleas. Once the Campbell "reformers" began more and more to distance themselves from the Baptists, leaders in both groups began exploring the possibilities of uniting their efforts. Both groups advocated restoring primitive Christianity on the basis of New Testament authority and a hope for Christian union. They also found that many of their specific practices were similar. Both were congregational in organization, rejected creeds and non-Biblical titles and names, and insisted on liberty of opinion in all matters not scripturally bound. The Stone movement had long used the name Christian as a designation; once Campbell severed all connections with the Baptists, he favored the

name Disciples of Christ. While the issue of designation was the cause of some friction, it was not a serious obstacle to union. Local churches in both movements were often called Church of Christ.

There were several fairly serious differences which required patience and compromise. While immersion was widely practiced in the Christian movement, it was not universal nor required as in the Disciples movement, nor had Stone and other Christian leaders arrived at the conclusion of Scott and Campbell that baptism preceded the remission of sins—though most seemed open to the idea. There probably continued to be some diversity within the movement on those questions for a generation, although the Disciples' view of baptism soon came to be the dominant (and distinctive) one within the church. The Disciples also represented a more rationalistic approach to Christianity and conversion than did the Christians, many of whom, in common with Barton Stone, had begun their religious experiences amid the great enthusiasm of the Great Revival in the West. In general, the united church again drifted toward the Disciples' rejection of revivalism and crisis conversion. Finally, from the beginning of the Brush Run Church, the Campbells had followed the Haldanian practice of the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. By 1830 Stone had also reached the conclusion that such was the apostolic practice, but it had taken him many years to reach that conclusion, and he insisted that liberty should be allowed to each local church. Once again, in the long run, the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper not only became the common practice of the movement, it became one of its distinctive marks.

\* \* \*

**NOTE:** The search for New Testament patterns was, and is, a difficult quest. Few of the early restoration leaders escaped completely from their denominational backgrounds. But those who had a firm grasp on the principle of restoration pressed on toward a unity based on the New Testament.



# What Is "The Church"?

Robert F. Turner

A simple question should have a simple answer, and this one has. "The church is God's people. The word "church" is a derivative of *kyriakon*, a compound word meaning *Lord's house*. In the New Testament this would refer to the Lord's "household" or people, for only via metaphor did it refer to the Lord's dwelling place. The Greek *ekklesia* means "called out," and was applied in earlier secular Greek to people "called together" for political or other purposes—something like our "town council." Applied to the people of God in Christ, we tend to think of their being "called" by the gospel, which is true; although the concept of "gospel" is not inherent in the word. Webster says, "The collective body of Christians; all who are identified with Christ as his sincere followers;" and that is a surprisingly good definition coming from a secular source. First and basic advice—think *people* when you say "church."

"Church" is in many ways like "herd" or "flock" or "covey;" it is a collective noun. It gathers or considers as one its units. One cow does not make a "herd," but many cattle are considered as one when called a "herd." The rancher can vaccinate his herd, only by vaccinating his cattle. "Herd" is not something apart from the cattle: it is the cattle. "Church" is not something apart from the saints. Christ bought the church by dying on the cross for any and all who would come to Him for remission of sins (Acts 20:28). He paid the price for people—Sam, Ann, Ian, Ned, Tom, Sue. He cleanses the church by cleansing these people "by washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26). We "put on Christ" in obedient faith (Galatians 3:26-27); and are "added to them" who have before obeyed the Lord (ASV footnote says, added "together," Acts 2:47). The King James Version "added to the church" means "added to the saints"—period.

Because "the church" is the Lord's (approved people), "church" may have a *qualitative* sense—the Lord's people in contrast to Satan's people; or, the church versus the world. "Great fear came upon the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11);

upon the saints and upon some who were not saints. This is also an example of "church" in the *distributive* sense—*saints considered individually*. It was people who feared (Sam was afraid, Ann was afraid, etc.); there is no reference to an institution that was afraid. In Acts 9:31, "Then had the church rest . . ." Robertson says the singular is undoubtedly the true reading here; and "Luke either regards the disciples in Palestine as still members of one great church in Jerusalem . . . or . . . in a geographical or collective sense covering all of Pal-

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estine." I do not believe the Scriptures will justify the first alternative, and the second could best be understood by considering "church" distributively—the saints in Palestine, as we may speak of the "church in Texas."

The church consists of people who sustain an acceptable *relationship* with God through Christ; and this relationship is described by different figures. The saints are likened unto citizens in a kingdom, with Christ as King. They are likened unto children in a family, with Christ as the elder brother; to

members of a body, with Christ the head; to branches, growing on Christ the vine; to lively stones, built upon Christ the foundation; etc. The kingdom figure emphasizes the "rule" of Christ; the family figure emphasizes God-family characteristics; the body, unity (1 Corinthians 12), or preeminence of the head (Ephesians 1:22-23); branches must abide and bear fruit; and God dwells in the house built upon Christ. In all of these figures (there are fifteen or more) *the unit is an individual Christian*. "The church" is a brotherhood, not a "churchhood." It is made up of individual saints, not of congregations. We come to Christ as individuals, are individually responsible for worship and service, and will be judged as individuals (Romans 14:12; Revelation 3:4-5).

The divine plan calls for our working with other saints, and to this end gives instructions for local church organization, worship and work. The word "church" is applied to this "team" of saints, and because they worship and work together (via a common treasury and overseers) they often provide a fixed place of meeting and become identified with that location. Saints who covenant together to work as a team should develop close ties with one another, and they do become an organized entity. Each member owes and accepts obligations to the "team," and gives up some independence in so doing. But our first allegiance must remain with God! We must learn, and teach new converts, to be faithful to the Lord rather than to "the church." If the local church is what it should be, and we are faithful to the *Lord*, we will be a credit to that local church (Acts 11:20-24).

Obviously so great a subject could not be discussed in detail here; and to save space I have limited scriptural references—especially where the point is fairly well established in the thinking of prospective readers. But this is an ever-new subject, and its importance will continue. Give it prayerful and unbiased attention. The "church" is *glorious* because it is the culmination of God's plan to save all who will come to Him through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3).

1608 Sherrard St., Burnet, TX 78611



**Brent Lewis**



# My Brother/My Self

## Forgiving A Brother

Jesus spoke often of the need of His disciples to forgive their brother. He told a parable in Matthew 18:23-35 about a man who owed an enormous debt but was unable to pay. The man that he owed was about ready to throw him into prison, but the debtor begged for and received the man's compassion and forgiveness of the debt. The one forgiven, however, went out and found one who owed him a comparatively small sum. He took him by the throat, demanding payment, and finally had him thrown into prison. When the original creditor heard of his debtor's harsh action, he rescinded his forgiveness and called for payment. Jesus ended His story with these words: "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts" (18:35).

Those who fail to forgive others sin against themselves, against their fellows, and against God. When our hearts are not open to others we are less than what God intends for us to be. Jesus said, "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them" (Matthew 6:12). When I refuse to forgive another I destroy the bridge over which I must one day pass. The Lord said, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Matthew 7:2).

Forgiveness is a matter of showing mercy. All of us need mercy for we live such imperfect lives! If we stood before God on the basis of justice alone, no one of us would stand a chance. We must never forget this. Every one of us has been forgiven a great debt by God—the debt of our sins. This is by far a greater debt than we will ever forgive of any other human. Thus Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). When He uttered a prayer of example, He said, "For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14). Clearly our failure to forgive others is an effrontery to God. James adds that "judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy" (James 2:13).

The spirit of forgiveness is a companion of gratitude and thankfulness. When one is grateful for all the blessings of life, it becomes easier to overlook others' faults

and life's inequities. We can forgive great transgressions in others if our hearts are right. Joseph forgave his brethren of the heinous deed of selling him into slavery (Genesis 50:15-21); Stephen absolved those who stoned him to death (Acts 7:60), as did Jesus those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34); Paul pardoned those who forsook him in his time of trial (2 Timothy 4:16). Unlimited forgiveness is commanded of each of us (Matthew 18:21-22).

Allan Knight Chalmers in his book, *High Wind At Noon*, tells the story of Peer Holm who was a world-famous engineer. He built great bridges, railroads and tunnels in many parts of the world; he gained wealth and fame, but later came to failure, poverty, and sickness. He returned to the little village where he was born and, together with his wife and little girl, eked out a meager living.

Peer Holm had a neighbor who owned a fierce dog. Peer warned him that the dog was dangerous, but the neighbor contemptuously replied, "Hold your tongue, you cursed pauper!" One day Peer Holm came home to find the dog at the throat of his little girl. He pulled the dog off, but the dog's teeth had gone too deeply and the little girl was dead.

The sheriff shot the dog, and the neighbors became bitter against his owner. In fact, when sowing time came they refused to sell him any grain. His fields were plowed but bare. He could neither beg, borrow, nor buy seed. Whenever he walked down the road, the people of the village sneered at him. But not Peer Holm. He could not sleep at night for thinking of his neighbor.

Very early one morning he arose, went to his shed, and got his last half bushel of barley. He climbed the fence and sowed his neighbor's field. The fields themselves told the story. When the seeds came up, it was revealed what Peer had done, because part of his own field remained bare while the field of his neighbor was green.

It is never easy to forgive, but God requires it—and the salvation of our souls depend on it. Let us never be guilty of withholding forgiveness from a neighbor or a brother.



# The Christian and His Leisure Time

*Martin Pickup*

"Go then, eat your bread in happiness, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works. Let your clothes be white all the time, and let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life . . . for this is your reward in life, and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 9:7-9).

Leisure activities are recognized by God as a necessary part of life. It is not wrong to enjoy the legitimate pleasures this world has to offer. Recreation is important for our physical as well as mental well-being. All work and no play didn't do young Jack much good; nor will it you and me.

Still, even an inherently good thing such as leisure time can become a problem if we are not prudent about it. We must be careful not to misuse our free time.

Did I say *free* time? Perhaps we first need to remember that as a Christian we have no time where we are absolutely free to do whatever we wish. The apostle said, "Or do you not know . . . that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). We have been purchased "with precious blood, as of a lamb, unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19). God's servants never get time off. He demands active devotion every hour of every day. We must realize that our leisure time is not really ours—it is the Lord's. The Lord doesn't mind when you play golf; only don't forget that you're doing it on His time.

This being the case, we have no right to engage in any activity that would shame our Lord. We were redeemed by Christ for a special function, and we must never lose sight of what it is. "We are . . . created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). As God's holy people we were "set apart" for righteousness (Ephesians 1:4). People called out of darkness for so noble a purpose scorn their vocation when they use leisure time

for sinful activities.

Even when one selects a morally good pastime, he must remember that he is a Christian, and at all times act as a Christian. There is a potential problem inherent in sports activities, parties or any other kind of recreation—the tendency to get so caught up in the activity that we forget who we are, and act in a manner unbecoming of a servant of Christ. Leisure time should be

their wives and children for the sake of their favorite hobby? For many, leisure time means working overtime at the office. Here again, if not careful, family could be relegated to second place. (A nicer car or a bigger house is a poor substitute for a happy home.) Or what if our fun and games take precedence over church services and other spiritual pursuits? The lifestyle of some Christians gives the impression that worship-

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**"Leisure time should be a diversion from the pressures and problems of life, not a diversion from the Lord. My relationship to Christ ought to affect the way I play tennis. It won't make me a better player, but it should make me a better person when I play."**

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a diversion from the pressures and problems of life, not a diversion from the Lord. My relationship to Christ ought to affect the way I play tennis, for instance. It won't make me a better player, but it should make me a better person when I play.

I wonder how pleased the Lord is when we allow leisure activities to take precedence over more important duties. How many husbands and fathers neglect

ing God is their hobby.

A wise old king gave the simplest and best advice for making sure we use our leisure time properly: "Follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things" (Ecclesiastes 11:8). Yes, let us enjoy our leisure time—only let us not enjoy it thoughtlessly.

606 Martin St., Raymore, MO 64083





## Searching for the Spiritual Center of Gravity

Every word of God has "weight" simply because it is the word of God (Proverbs 30:5-6). The least command must be treated with reverence (Matthew 5:19-20) because it is an expression of divine wisdom and holiness. In choosing to reject God's word in the smallest way we manifest a willingness to resist *every* word from Heaven that does not suit us. All other *apparent* obedience is sullied by this one act of rebellion (James 2:10-11).

Yet, if all God's word has weight, we must be able to see that some matters of which the Scriptures treat are "weightier" than others. For this we have the Lord's own words. In His scathing denunciation of the Pharisees He observed that they tithed mint, anise and cummin but had "left undone the *weightier matters* of the law, justice, and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23). Luke, in his account, adds to these "weightier" matters "the love of God" (11:42).

What are we to make of this? Certainly not that Jesus was contemptuous of the Pharisees' scrupulous tithing of tiny seeds ("this ye ought to have done"). It was the Pharisees' neglect of great principles while occupied with small details that dismayed the Lord. He pictures them in the ridiculous position of a man straining gnats from his wine in order to avoid eating unclean meat while happily swallowing a monstrous impurity, the camel. There is no question but that our Savior had a sense of humor.

But do we understand why tithing, though necessary under the law, was not so weighty as justice, mercy, faith and the love of God? These four great fundamental principles stood as motives for all behavior and were positioned at the end of the process which God was working in the character of His people (Micah 6:8). Tithing was merely one of the means to that end. The Pharisees met their tithing obligations but little else. The man of faith and the love of God would have cared not only for that responsibility but for everything else that Jehovah had commanded.

This principle of *weightiness* can be applied helpfully to the whole structure of the scheme of redemption. There are many factors to which salvation is ascribed in the New Testament: God's grace (Titus 2:11); divine mercy (Titus 3:5); the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:2); faith

(Ephesians 2:8); repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10); confession of faith (Romans 10:9-10); baptism (1 Peter 3:21); hope (Romans 8:24); endurance (Matthew 24:13); et. al. All of these elements form a composite whole. But while they are all equally necessary they are not all equally important. To argue that since God's grace and man's faith are essential to human redemption they are of equal significance is to argue fallaciously. It is equally erroneous to suggest that making any human element necessary to redemption in Christ is a denial of salvation by grace and an affirmation of salvation by human merit.

A practical illustration may help. If a man is drowning in a lake and grasps a rope thrown to him by a concerned passerby who pulls him to safety, there are two things he will *not* do when he has collected himself. He will not fall to kissing the rope and exulting in its greatness. He will also not begin to congratulate himself on the remarkable way he got hold of the line and the steely grip in which he held it. The fact that these two things played an essential part in his deliverance notwithstanding, he will pour out his gratitude on the man who took pity on his helpless estate. Clearly, all the elements in this man's narrow escape from death were essential but they are not all equally important.

The same is true of salvation from sin. All the elements both human and divine are necessary but it takes no special powers to see that all the real weight lies with the divine side. If God had not had mercy upon us even when we hardly knew we needed it (Romans 5:8) where would all our believing and repenting and being baptized get us? For a man to feel some sense of special worth because he has had the good sense to accept the unmerited gift of God in Christ reminds me of the story (apocryphal) of the mouse who crossed a bridge in the company of an elephant. When the crossing was completed the mouse looked up confidently at his immense companion and crowed, "We sure did shake that thing, didn't we, big boy!" The inadequacy of this illustration is in the fact that we did not contribute even the weight of a mouse to our salvation. The center of gravity in God's great rescue operation is in the cross of Christ. Truly we may say with confidence: "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (2 Corinthians 10:17).





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Dee Bowman

### Basic Training

**I**n 1914, Lord Kitchener (1850-1916), in a message to the soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force, said: "You are ordered abroad as a soldier of the King to help our French comrades against the invasion of a common enemy. You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience. Remember that the honour of the British Army depends on your individual conduct. It will be your duty not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness under fire but also to maintain the most friendly relations with those whom you are helping in this struggle." I believe this charge to give one of the finest definitions of the soldier. It points out simply, but forcefully, that a soldier is to be courageous, enthusiastic, patient, disciplined, exemplary in conduct.

**The soldier of Christ must be courageous.** In 1 Corinthians 16:13, Paul gave good advice to the soldier of the Lord. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong." Watching, standing, staying, all take courage—the mental toughness to stand in the face of adversity or danger.

**The soldier of Christ must be**

**enthusiastic.** The good soldier believes in the cause for which he fights. What better cause than the cause of Christ? It is the superior cause, the noble conflict. Paul says of his soldiering, "For the which cause I suffer these things: nevertheless, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). Our enthusiasm is built on our confident decision about our leader.

**The soldier of Christ must be patient.** The good soldier must persevere. He must have so prepared himself that no danger is too great, no hardship too harsh to push him away from his abiding confidence in Christ's cause. So intense are his feelings of confidence that he will suffer willingly, the view of the reward being always before his face. Paul said, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

**The soldier of Christ must be disciplined.** No war can be won by flabby and unkempt, ragtag soldiers. There must be sharpness, crispness,

complete order. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:3-4). The good soldier is the disciplined one.

**The soldier of Christ must lead an exemplary life.** The good soldier is separated from civilian affairs (see again 2 Timothy 2:3-4). He must show those round about his courage, his dedication, his willingness to suffer for the cause. Paul waged the noble conflict, kept the calling; and in doing so he became the example of good soldiering. He said, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness . . . and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

In the pages just ahead you will hear the sound of the call to arms, the rattling sabres, the clamping feet, the crossing of the swords, the sounds of battle. For these pages speak of war—combat with the forces of evil. Let us rise up and fight, for our God will give us the victory.

#### HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE:

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# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

Warren E. Berkley

## Fight: The Battleground

THERE IS OPPORTUNITY TO DO GOOD, BUT there is also temptation to do evil. This is man's constant predicament. If you are a soldier of Christ this is your predicament too. However, you are equipped and motivated to do good and resist evil (Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 John 3:1-3). This, the soldier of Christ must do on many fronts.

In an ultimate sense, *the mind is the immediate battleground*. The enemy will use his cunning resources in an effort to change your mind and lead you to desert your Master. Satan will employ his subtle means to try and darken the understanding and harden the heart, so that you will give yourself over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness and greediness (Ephesians 4:17-19). Whatever his weapon or approach, his aim is to reach and corrupt the mind—so that from it will proceed “evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies,” and such like (Matthew 15:19-20). The enemy wants to infiltrate the mind to plant arguments, excuses and desires which are counter to God's will and will give rise to overt disobedience (2 Corinthians 10:5-6).

Therefore, let us “present our bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God,” which is our reasonable service. “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1-2). As soldiers of Christ, we must guard the mind, for out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23; Philippians 4:8; 2 John 8).

Though the mind is the immediate battleground, there is another practical perspective that warrants attention. I'll call these . . .

### The Battlegrounds of Our Time

**Places of employment and labor.** In many business offices, plants and work places, the conversation expresses a carnal, worldly approach to life. The atmosphere is often filled with sordid, adulterous affairs, the smell of intox-

icants, unprincipled suggestions and invitations, vulgar language, and all manner of harassing distractions. Satan will try to use all this to weaken and destroy the soldier of Christ.

**Places of commerce and trade.** Satan approaches in those places where business transactions occur. He sets up the temptations to gain profit through

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dishonest means. He encourages the withholding of needed information in order to “close the sale.” He suggests it's all right to oppress the poor or to take advantage of the rich or cheat on your taxes. As we march into these battlegrounds, let us remember: “Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich” (Proverbs 28:6).

**Places of fun and recreation.** There are still a few places where Christians can go to relax, have fun and re-create mind and body. But there is still the pressure to get all wrapped up and entangled in carnal things; the temptation to mis-arrange priorities to suit frivolous desires (2 Timothy 2:4; 1 Timothy 4:8).

**The secular campus and classroom.** On the Lord's Day, the young Christian may hear that man was made in the image of God—only to hear an “educator” say, a day later, that man is the product of physical/biological forces working by blind impulse or mere whimsy! In many “intellectual, academic” circles, it is unfashionable to make clear distinctions between religious truth and error, between moral right and wrong. So, there is subtle pressure to abandon your commitment to God's word for fear of being socially obsolete. How do you deal with this? Faith is the victory (1 John 5:4-5; Romans 10:10; Hebrews 11:1).

### Where Can We Go?

Where can we go, and say, “The war isn't here?” Is there some place of absolute isolation from temptation? No. Not even “home, sweet home” or the place where saints assemble in Christ's name! Regardless of how clever we are, how experienced, how educated, how wise in the Scriptures—we *walk from one battleground to another all the time*. This is our constant predicament.

So, let us look all around and rally to the point of attack (Nehemiah 4:15-20); let us walk circumspectly (Ephesians 5:15; 1 Peter 5:8). Remember that you can bear any temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13; James 4:7).

What great and good thing was ever done without conflict and the exertion of effort? Wheat doesn't grow without planting and plowing; money is not earned without care, attention and labor. And heaven, above all, is not to be reached without the cross and the battle. **ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS!**

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# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS



## Am I A Soldier of the Cross?

Jack Smith

THE TITLE OF THIS ARTICLE REALLY includes two questions and an emphasis. Am I a soldier of the cross? As we contemplate enlisting in this volunteer army we ought to take note of the seriousness of our endeavor. It includes a lifetime of service (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8), and as we grow to realize more and more what is expected of us, we are even forbidden to look back with regret to the ease of civilian life. The Lord says that "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Let us look at the difficulties of being a soldier of the cross, and then at the help the Lord provides.

One of the first problems we encounter in being a soldier is our susceptibility to being side-tracked. Paul warns Timothy that, "No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4), and yet we allow so many things to distract us. What about my family, my job, my vacation, hunting season, fishing, football, etc. Each may be good in its own way, but when they lead us from the Lord we have failed. All Christians are front line soldiers, and should be vigilant at all times.

Another problem is mentioned in verse three of Paul's exhortation to Timothy, and it is the warning that we must "suffer hardship." In every chapter in Second Timothy we find a warning about suffering. It is part of our life, or should be: "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (3:12). Suffering is not something we seek, but if we're the kind of people God describes as "peculiar" we will encounter it. This suffering is made more difficult when we understand that it is to be borne cheerfully (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:14). God will not have grumbling, murmuring soldiers.

A third difficulty we encounter is remembering that we are soldiers of the cross. Many times in the heat of the battle we can be filled with the "blood-lust," the desire to "get" the enemy, to

destroy no matter what the cost. Soldiers of the cross are concerned with defending the faith once delivered—not private opinions, desires, or causes. We need also to remember that if we "win" the argument, but lose the soul it is not a resounding victory (see 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Ephesians 4:15).

The last of the difficulties we'll con-

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sider is that of anonymity. It's so easy to get lost in an "army." Remember the calisthenics in P.E. class? How many didn't skip a push-up or two because the coach couldn't see everyone? Though we are only one, and there may be hundreds or thousands around us, the strength of an army is that "every man stands in his place." Paul says that the church grows and is strengthened "through that which

every joint supplieth" (Ephesians 4:16). Perhaps we need to think of ourselves as sentries on duty. If we see a soul in need, a truth being assailed, we must be ready and anxious to act.

Our vision is terribly out of focus if we look only at the problems without being aware of the assistance offered by the Lord. A well-trained, dedicated army is at a loss without adequate leadership, and our leadership is far more than adequate. We need to understand that we are not being sent into a hopeless battle, but are being led by one who is worthy of our confidence, and through Him we will be "more than conquerors." In the gospels we learn of the experience of the Lord in defeating temptation and the tempter. We see Him dealing with false teaching and false teachers. We see Him leading us in life, through death, and into heaven. In the area of ability and experience our Lord has no peer.

We need also to be aware of His concern for us. Our physical welfare should never be cause for anxiety if we are seeking first His kingdom (Matthew 6:33). Our spiritual welfare is also provided for by one who knows well the weakness of humankind (Hebrews 4:15f). We need to be convinced of the perfection of His plan for the organization of His army, His ability to carry this army through battle to victory, and then to rule over a kingdom of peace. As we learn to trust Him implicitly we improve our ability to serve in the greatest cause every known.

Am I a soldier of the cross? Arm yourself with truth, courage and the determination to stand with the King. Show your concern for the cause by living righteously, serving selflessly, ever manifesting your conviction that the Master's way is far superior to any that man could devise. Remember His encouragement: "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

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# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

Ferrell Jenkins

CHRISTIANS ARE INVOLVED IN A LIFE AND death struggle for existence. We have the most formidable adversary the world has ever known. He is "more powerful than a locomotive!" Indeed, more powerful than all the nuclear weapons of the world. He seeks nothing less than our complete submission to him. Our adversary is the devil. Peter described the devil as prowling about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). In this article we wish to identify this adversary in such a way that we will not fail to recognize him at any time.

## The Adversary Identified

The two most common names of our adversary are "devil" and "satan." The name "Satan" is translated from the Hebrew word *shn*, which means *adversary*. Satan is personally identified with the devil in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2. The Hebrew word is transliterated as *satan* in a few places in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint), but is most often rendered *diabolos*. The Latin Vulgate usually rendered it *diabolus*. In the Greek New Testament we have *satan* 36 (or 37) times and *diabolos* 38 times. There is no material difference in the terms.

The devil is also identified in several other ways which reveal his malicious character. He is called Abaddon (Hebrew) and Apollyon (Greek), each meaning destroyer (Revelation 9:11). He is the serpent of old (see Genesis 3); the great dragon; the deceiver of the whole world; the accuser of our brethren (Revelation 12:9-10). Jesus used the term Beelzebul, the ruler of demons, as a synonym for Satan (Matthew 12:24ff). Paul called the devil Belial (Greek, *Beliar*, 2 Corinthians 6:15). He is an enemy (Matthew 13:28,39); the evil one (Matthew 13:19,38); the father of lies and a murderer (John 8:44). He is the prince of the powers of the air (Ephesians 2:2); the tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5); the evil one (1 John 5:19). With names like these who can doubt the intention of our adversary?

## Fight: The Adversary

### The Origin of Satan

Satan apparently is a created being. He is a super-human being, but not co-equal with God. Since Jesus is said to have created all things (Colossians 1:16-17), we conclude that the fall of the devil must have come at some point after his creation and prior to the appearance to Eve in the Garden of Eden.

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### Satan's Power and Limitation

There is no doubt that Satan is a spiritual being of great power (Job 1,2; Jude 9), ruling over a powerful kingdom of evil (Matthew 12:26), and has other spirit beings, "his angels," who serve him (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7). He directs an organized host of wicked spirits (Ephesians 6:12), and rules the domain or realm of darkness (Colossians 1:13). No wonder he is called the god or prince of this world.

Satan gained the power over death and holds men in this fear (Hebrews 2:14-15). He is a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Through the sin of Eve and Adam he brought death upon

the human race (Genesis 2:17; 3:4). His power is limited and we are assured of his ultimate defeat (Job 1:10-12; Matthew 12:29; Revelation 20:10).

### Subordinate Adversaries

Our adversary is Satan, but most men probably would not recognize him if he showed up. In fact he disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). His servants or "angels" may not always be easily detected. Let us now look at some of the agents used by him to accomplish the destruction of Christians.

1. The world. The word *world* is used in three ways in the New Testament. It is used of the created universe, of humanity, and of evil forces which stand opposed to Christ. It is in this last sense that we can say that Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). This "world" consists of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life (1 John 2:15-16). The world is our adversary (John 17:14).

2. The flesh. This may be another way of describing the world. The catalog in Galatians 5:19-21 shows us that the works of the flesh include physical sins like immorality (fornication) and sensuality; it also includes sins of the mind and attitude like jealousy, outbursts of anger, and envyings. One passage that caught my eye was 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. Paul says that husbands and wives should fulfill their marital (sexual) duties to each other. To deprive one another, he says, may allow Satan to "tempt you because of your lack of self-control." The old tempter never misses a chance!

3. Political and Religious Leaders. Satan sends political and religious leaders who will do his bidding. Through them he performs powers, signs, false wonders to deceive (Revelation 12:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11).

### Conclusion

The concept of a real devil is unacceptable to many modern minds, but the word of God assures us that he is a real being. Let us never forget that he is our adversary!

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# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS



## Personal Battles

*Irvin Himmel*

ALTHOUGH CHRISTIANS MUST FIGHT THE devil on many fronts, the truly decisive battles are fought on the personal level.

One who has been an alcoholic must wage a day-to-day campaign against strong drink. A person who has grown accustomed to telling lies must wage a relentless fight to be truthful in all circumstances. One who has made it a habit to gratify his sexual appetite in unlawful relationships must declare all-out war on his own lusts.

Every individual has his particular weaknesses and sinful inclinations that he must struggle to overcome. No matter what encouragement and assistance may come from fellow soldiers, each combatant has his own personal war against wickedness.

The flesh and the spirit pull in different directions. So often, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Paul told Christians, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God . . ." (Romans 6:12-13).

So many times the pressures of the world gain mastery over our minds and sin results. "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19). What we hate we sometimes do, and what ought to be done is left undone, all because we let the devil win an encounter between flesh and spirit.

Paul fought a continuing battle to keep his body under control, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27). The flesh is not inherently evil but its members must be kept under control. There is more about this conflict in Galatians 5:16-26. It is a personal battle that everyone must fight.

Impressive battles against Satan have been won on one level, only to be lost on a personal level. For example, I can think of numerous gospel preachers who have stood shoulder-to-shoulder in a

valiant fight to keep innovations out of the churches. Many congregations have remained scriptural in work and worship due to the courageous efforts of these fighting men. But in time many of these same preachers have suffered defeat on the personal level. Some have allowed the love of money to turn them from gospel work to secular work. Some have become bitter over unpleasant experiences and have lost their influence for good. There are cases in which preachers have left their wives, allowing immoral-

When Paul enumerated works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21, he did not overlook sins of disposition. Here is the area in which the devil has gained the victory after suffering defeat on other fronts.

Brethren, all of us need to be deeply concerned about the personal war that we are waging against sin. We must get rid of arrogance and be humble. We must eliminate hatred of others and show genuine love. We must do more praying. We must show patience and

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**"Every individual has his particular weaknesses and sinful inclinations that he must struggle to overcome. No matter what encouragement and assistance may come from fellow soldiers, each combatant has his own personal war against wickedness."**

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ity to wreck their homes and work. Others have been swayed by the desire to make a name for themselves.

In the local church the devil has been soundly whipped in a lot of instances when attempts were made to bring in unscriptural practices. But brethren have lost to the devil by failing to resist him on the personal level. They have allowed envy, hatred, strife, and a spirit of factionalism to reign in their hearts. Church splits have occurred time and again, not over doctrinal differences, but over personal differences.

understanding. We must keep our hearts pure. We must give due attention to our own families. We must put off envy, gossip, and petty quarreling. We must learn kindness and gentleness.

Let us continue fighting for doctrinal purity, for the simplicity of the apostolic order, and for the authority of Christ. Let us keep pressing the battle against premillennialism, institutionalism, modernism, denominationalism, etc. But let us give more attention to the kind of personal battle we are waging.

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# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

Wilson Adams

## Fight: The Assignment

IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THE GREAT Commander has issued the Christian his marching orders. They are clear, concise and militarily to the point. We are to *stand firm* in the Cause; we are to *hold fast* our conviction; we are to be *steadfast* and *unmovable*, bravely, and with determinant courage, holding the line against forces that oppose.

And why? Because the Christian is a soldier, but not just any soldier—he is a soldier of the King. As a result, we must press on in battle. We must contend. We must fight. We dare not retreat. We have no choice but to proudly rise up the ensign fair and march under the banner of the Cross till such a time as our faith produces victory. We must not fail.

Few passages outline our marching orders any better than Ephesians 6:10-11. "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

1. We are to be "strong." There is no place for the fainthearted and weak-kneed soldier in God's army. Rather, we are to be filled with the strength of His might. We are to exhibit courage. Bravery, valor and fearlessness are the medals that adorn those who march with Jesus.

2. We are to wear the "full armor." Every Christian has a specific and individually crafted coat of armor that no one else can wear. However, the problem all too often is that we're not wearing our armor. It sits collecting dust and is rusting away in the cares of the world. Fellow Soldiers, there are battles to be fought and victories to be won but they can never be fought or won unless and until we put on the armor and adorn ourselves for battle.

3. We are to "stand firm." The orders are plain: "Go, find the enemy and stand firm!" But do you know what we often do? We stand firm until the enemy finds us and then we go! We must understand that our enemy is a coward. "Resist the devil," said James, "and he will flee from

you." There you have it: (1) Be strong; (2) Wear the armor; and (3) Stand firm.

Yet may I suggest that all of the above is simpler to preach than to practice? When temptation arises, it's so easy to surrender. When discouragement sets in, it's easy to become battle fatigued. When opposition to truth rears its ugly head and blocks our path, it's far more pleasant to look the other way than it is to swing the sword and fight. And, yet, we must come to understand the serious-

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ness of the conflict. We can't afford to give in to sin. We can't afford to lay down for the devil. We can't afford to raise the white flag of compromise and join ranks with the very one who stands opposed to all that is good and godly. Our eternal destiny and the destiny of others hangs in the balance. We must fight on!

And may I be allowed to say a word to my fellow preaching comrades who have devoted their lives to standing in

the breeches on the front lines of battle? Fellows, we must overcome our timidity, we must stand up strong against sin and we must never be hesitant to take the Spirit's sword and swing it with force against all who oppose the truth of God.

I'm convinced that every preacher needs to commit 2 Timothy 4:1-5 to memory. Go ahead and look at it. (And while you're at it, take a peek at Ephesians 5:11 too!) It's a command, my brother, a solemn charge, a divine decree to preach the word and to stand armed for battle.

I'm afraid that some of us have become so enamored with the *Positive Christianity Syndrome* that we are fearful of drawing the Sword from the sheath lest we be accused of being overly "negative." Please do not misinterpret my intentions. We need positive preaching. We need edifying, uplifting and upbuilding lessons. We need to understand the principle that if we commend more we would have to condemn less. All of that is true. But it is also true that we need so desperately to speak out against sin—and to be *specific* about what sin is and what sin will do. Let's not be afraid from time to time to put some teeth into our preaching and writing. Let us not be caught up in the ambiguities and euphemisms of our day which call such things as drunkenness a disease and homosexuality an alternative lifestyle. They are biblically listed as *sins* and should be so stated with clarity. Let us refrain from letting our emotions alter God's holy marriage law whereby the exception turns into the rule and the rule the exception. Let us preach that fornication and adultery are sinful, that immodesty is wrong and that God hates our putting away. Let us never be fearful of swinging the Sword and taking on the devil while marching with Jesus to victory.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course." Brothers and Sisters—let us fight on and march on to victory. That's the assignment and we dare not fail.

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# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

## "Victory in Jesus"

Robert F. Turner

RESPECTING VICTORY OVER PHYSICAL hardships Paul wrote, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). He concluded a magnificent section of the Roman letter with, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37f). Of final victory over sin and death he wrote, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). As most of our readers know, these are but a fraction of the scriptural attestations to victory in Jesus.

The words, "Victory in Jesus," are readily accepted by all brethren. They are freely and honestly spoken, and we must assume "believed" by all. Yet, they can easily be empty words, negated by much of our writing and preaching. In our zeal to tell others what *they must do* to be saved, the actions of the lost may overshadow the *role of the Savior*. We may appear to exalt man's coming to Christ above the Christ who gives meaning to that coming. Erroneous doctrines of "unconditional election" and "faith only" have necessitated emphasis upon conditions of pardon—the need for obedience. We are painfully aware of the need to "fight the good fight," meet "soldier responsibilities," and "overcome" in our personal battles with Satan. But we must never forget: *Victory in Jesus is a gift of God*, neither merited nor bought by man.

This victory is according to an "eternal purpose" which God the Father purposed in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:11), "before the foundation of the world" (1:4). Foreknowing that man would sin, *God's plan of salvation was to give mankind a Savior, the very Son of God, who would pay the penalty for sin*. All agree that salvation is "in Christ," although some might equate this with "church membership" and miss its deeper significance. For others, emphasis upon conditions of pardon have become more "good news" than the "Victory in Christ" for which the conditions are given. I once asked a class of thirty brethren to write briefly "the plan of salvation"—

and only two mentioned the crucified and resurrected Lord. Twenty-eight wrote something like "faith, repentance, confession, and baptism." These are conditions, but not the *means*, nor the basic *plan* of salvation.

To appreciate victory in Jesus we must see ourselves for what we are: separated from Almighty God by our *sins*, facing justice in irrevocable judgment. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isaiah 59:2). *Sin* is the problem, the disease, the slaveholder. "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The law of God is "holy, and just, and good"

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(7:12), but it classifies sins and makes them more apparent (3:20; 7:7-13). None are free of guilt on a law basis, for none have kept any law perfectly (3:20; Galatians 3:10f). Without *mercy*, we are without hope, lost, utterly undone. It is difficult for our self-sufficient and proud generation to see ourselves in this light. Like David, we may need a pointed "thou art the man" to open our eyes; but the remedy will not be applied until we are stripped of pride, and throw ourselves upon His mercy (Matthew 16:24). In this sense all law "brings us to Christ" (Galatians 3:24). The candidate for salvation presents himself "Just as I am, without one plea; but that thy blood was shed for me."

Victory in Christ is a *promise* of God. Implementing His eternal purpose, God promised Abraham: "in thee (thy seed) shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). Paul identifies that "seed" as Christ (Galatians 3:16); and "the promise" became a central part of New Testament gospel preaching (Acts 2:39; 3:25f). The "curse" of law, its demand for perfection, was removed by Christ's death in our stead (Isaiah 53; Galatians 3:13). "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Because of His death, the heavenly Father can be both "just, and the justifier" of the believer, though he be less than perfect (Romans 3:26). The promise of Christ becomes a *promise of forgiveness* as taught so clearly in Paul's sermon at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:23,32-38). God has kept His promise and "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:14-17).

With this understanding and attitude, coming to Christ takes on new meaning. Faith changes our heart (Acts 15:9). We recognize His holiness, and are ashamed; we see His mercy (verse 11), and gratefully reach out to Him. Our former life hangs heavily upon us, and we sorrowfully acknowledge it, turning from it. The penitent believer submits to baptism (a passive act): as one dead, being buried. We have denied self, and come to Christ for victory over sin (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27; Titus 3:4-7).

Now we live for Christ, or, as Paul puts it, "Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). The "new creature" is perfected as we "press toward the mark" in keeping with the "mind of Christ" (Philippians 2:5f; 3:9-15). Our faith in the resurrected Lord removes the fear of physical death, and our confidence in His advocacy brings us boldly to God's throne (Hebrews 4:14f). Well might we say, "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55f).

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# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

Clarence R. Johnson

## Love Your Enemies

"BUT I SAY TO YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. . . . Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:44-48).

We find this passage puzzling and perplexing. How can I love someone who hates me and mistreats me? And how could I possibly think to be perfect as God is perfect? Does Jesus require the impossible?

As we begin to seek the solution to

words as *philosophy* (the love of wisdom), *philharmonic* (the love of harmony), etc. This is not the word Jesus used to command that we love our enemies. The word used in our text is *agape*, a word that describes a determination of the mind to seek what is good for the person who is the recipient of that love. Emotionally, we may not like that person, but we have set our minds upon seeking what is good for him, even though he may be seeking to harm us. We serve a God who seeks the eternal welfare of those who have sinned against Him, and as we take upon our-

falsely accused Jesus and sought to kill Him, He said to them, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. . . . He is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). Of course, they were not literally, physically descended from Satan. They were his "sons" by being like him. If we are to be sons of God, we must become God-like.

### How?

How can we accomplish this great goal? Jesus explained, "Bless [speak well of] those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." We may say, "But I can't like a man who curses me; I can't like a man who abuses and persecutes me." Jesus didn't tell you to like him. Jesus said love him; seek what is good for your enemy. Do good things for him. This, you can and must do. When he curses you, say something nice about him. When he behaves hatefully toward you, do something kind for him. When he abuses and persecutes you, pray for him. It may take a while to enjoy behaving this way—but you grow into it. And in doing so, you grow to be more like God.

A side benefit of such behavior is that often in response to our kindness and prayers, enemies are transformed into friends. They may even be led to Christ by our behavior. Abraham Lincoln is said to have remarked that the best way to destroy an enemy is to gain him as a friend.

### Perfect?

But, in what sense can we be perfect as God is perfect? Again, it will help to realize that the Greek word does not denote sinless perfection. Sure, God is sinless—but that is not what this verse is describing. The word perfect might be better understood if it had been rendered "complete." God is complete in His love, excluding no one from it. We, in the process of becoming like Him, must learn not to omit anyone from our love. "And therefore you shall be perfect [complete] just as your Father in heaven is"—complete in the matter of love.

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**"We certainly aren't going to claim that what Jesus commanded will always be easy. It's not easy to love those who hate us, pray for those who abuse us, etc. But we can do what Jesus has asked of us, when His commands are properly understood."**

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our dilemma, we certainly aren't going to claim that what Jesus commanded will always be easy. It's not easy to love those who hate us, pray for those who abuse us, etc. But we can do what Jesus has asked of us, when His commands are properly understood.

### Agape

There are two different Greek words commonly translated "love" in our English versions, *agape* and *phileo*. *Phileo* describes a love that involves the emotions, a close affinity, a warm, friendly relationship. A form of that word has passed into English in such

selves His nature, we too will learn to seek the good of our enemies.

### Why?

Why are we expected to love, that is, seek the good of those who are seeking our harm? Jesus says, "[in order] that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." The statement brings to mind the proverbial expression, "like father, like son." Sonship by character and association is a common figure of speech in the Bible. In that sense, Abraham is the father of the faithful, whether or not they are physically descended from him (Romans 4:16). When certain Pharisees



# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS



## The Shield and Sword

Keith Sharp

A SOLDIER CAN BE NO MORE EFFECTIVE than his armament. Eminent among the implements of the Christian's panoply are "the shield of faith" and "the sword of the Spirit." How do they pertain to our warfare?

### The Shield of Faith

"... withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16, ASV). The great Roman shield to which the apostle refers was of strong iron, shaped like a curved door and large enough to protect the combatant's entire body. It was of sufficient size and strength to withstand even the flaming projectiles hurled from city walls. It was the Roman soldier's chief defensive armament.

"Faith" is both the assurance which supports our hope and the conviction substantiated by evidence (Hebrews 11:1). This saving faith views the unseen things of God as though they were seen by accepting credible testimony (Hebrews 11:3; 2 Corinthians 4:18).

The testimony upon which our faith rests, being of divine origin, is far stronger than that coming from merely human sources (Romans 3:3-4). Those God-given bodies of evidence which sustain our trust are the world, God's first and general revelation of Himself to man (Romans 1:20), and the word, the Lord's second and special revelation (Romans 10:17). Our shield is of divine strength.

To withstand the fiery temptations, trials and attacks of Satan, our faith must cover the entire life, not just one facet of it (2 Corinthians 5:7). It should be carried to business, school, market and home as well as to worship. It is our chief daily protection against the onslaughts of the wicked one.

As the mothers of Sparta exhorted their sons going to battle concerning their shields, "Bring this back or be brought back upon it," our Commander encourages us, "Cast not away therefore your confidence" (Hebrews 10:35). For the soldier in battle to drop his shield and to turn his back to the enemy was to meet certain and dishonorable death.

"Confidence," i.e., "cheerful courage," is tantamount to faith (Hebrews 10:38). To cast off one's faith and to slink away as a coward from the fray is to meet sure and ignominious destruction (Hebrews 10:39).

### The Sword of the Spirit

"... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). The soldier of Christ has but one

bestows upon him a new life (John 6:63; 1 Peter 1:23-25).

This sword is powerful. When used it will accomplish its Maker's will (Isaiah 55:10-11). It has the might to overthrow all opposition to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

This sword is sharp (Hebrews 4:12-13). It lays bare the human soul, showing us for what we are, providing

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**"To withstand the fiery temptations, our faith must cover the entire life, not just one facet of it. It should be carried to business, school, market and home as well as to worship. It is our chief daily protection against the onslaughts of the wicked one."**

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offensive weapon with which he may attack the enemy. It is his sword, the word of God.

Our sword is an awesome weapon. Since it is "the sword of the Spirit," it is of divine origin (2 Timothy 3:16-17). As such, it is living, powerful and piercing (Hebrews 4:12).

This sword is no dead word! When it pierces the heart of the enemy, it

the basis of divine judgment.

### Conclusion

With such mighty weapons the Christian need fear no enemy. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Soldiers of Christ, put on the armor of God! With renewed courage and determination, march forth to triumph and to conquer!

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THEME

# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

Jeff Smelser

## The Devil's Strategy

**Satan can work as darkness  
and apparent light at the  
same time, with respect to  
the same issue.**

IN A WORD, SATAN'S STRATEGY IS TO deceive. He will not win many followers by saying, "Follow me to terrible eternal condemnation." Satan, in the form of a serpent, said to Eve, "you shall not surely die," and "the woman, being deceived," fell into transgression (2 Timothy 2:14). So it has been ever since. As surely as there has been law, Satan has had opportunity to lead man to death, but as a rule, he must resort to deception to take advantage of that opportunity (Romans 7:11, KJV). Jesus said, "He is a liar and the father thereof" (John 8:44). Satan is "the deceiver of the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

For sin to be tempting, it must be alluring. But ultimately "the wages of sin is death"—and that is not very alluring. Therefore, one of the ways in which Satan deceives is by causing us to see only what is near (2 Peter 1:9), rather than the ultimate consequence of our actions. This, in part, is what he did in the case of Eve (Genesis 3:6), and so it is today. Does the young mother who puts her children in day-care while she pursues a career outside the home think of what she will reap in eternity? Does she even think of what she may reap in this life sixty years later when the children to whom she was not a mother institutionalize her just as she institutionalized them; or of the heartache that she will likely suffer only twenty years later when she first realizes that the world to whom she has given her children has won their hearts? No, she sees only what is near—the extra money with which she can buy more possessions, the status associated with being a career woman, and the freedom from the responsibilities of motherhood. It is no wonder that Paul admonished us, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6:7-8).

Another way in which Satan deceives is to cause us to think that our sin will not be found out. The man of whom it can be said, "God is not in all his

thoughts" (Psalm 10:4, KJV) has likely convinced himself that "God has forgotten; He has hidden his face; He will never see it" (Psalm 10:11). Such a man has fallen prey to Satan's strategy. He needs to heed Paul's admonition: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, [et al.] shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). And then, of course, "Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light," and "his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Thus man is often deceived so as to believe that sinful acts are good! Acceptance of someone's "alternate lifestyle" (i.e., homosexuality) is deemed a loving thing while condemnation of such a lifestyle is deemed bigoted intolerance. Man has been deceived. God's law teaches us how to love our fellow man (Romans 13:9-10). No matter how loving a thing may seem, if it is contrary to God's law, it is not truly loving.

The Bible speaks of the "wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). Perhaps we are not aware of just how wily he is. We know Satan can fashion himself into an angel of light, but did we realize that he can work as darkness and apparent light at the same time, with respect to the same issue? At times I have maintained tropical fish aquariums. Occasionally, I would need to remove fish from an aquarium, and being too cheap to buy a net large enough to catch the largest fish, I devised another means. I would reach into one end of the aquarium with the net I had, and of course the fish would recognize it as a danger and dart away. But in the other end of the aquarium, I would have placed a clear plastic bag. To the fish, the net was an

obvious danger; in contrast, the direction in which the clear plastic bag lay appeared to be safety. In desperately fleeing the net, they were caught in the bag. Satan can, and does, work like that. With respect to a given issue, he can be behind the obvious danger of one side of the issue, and at the same time, be behind the apparent light of another side of the issue. In contrast to the obvious evil represented by his neighbors' intentions toward the angels, Lot saw the defilement of his daughters as apparent light (Genesis 19:4-8). In his denunciation of Jereboam's sins, Abijah characterized himself as a minister of righteousness (2 Chronicles 13:4-12). However, Abijah was in fact allied with Satan (1 Kings 15:3).

And so it is today. For example, humanism, the philosophy which insists that the way of man is in himself, is an obvious danger. Some will be deceived by it, but most of us who profess to be Christians readily see humanism as the work of Satan. It is the net in one end of the aquarium. But are we aware that Satan is working on the other side of the issue as well? If, in darting away from humanism, I become too cozy with the evangelical groups which oppose humanism, but whose subjective religion is also of human origin, I will find myself in Satan's clear plastic bag. We might say that this is Satan working his deceit by means of distraction. He poses one enemy to our faith which we readily recognize and denounce, but because it is so obvious an enemy, we are distracted from recognizing enemies far more subtle, and therefore more dangerous, also of Satanic origin.

Paul admonishes us three times, "Be not deceived." The only way we can avoid falling prey to Satan's strategy of deceit is to first realize that God's word is truth (John 17:17), and then believe it and love it (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12), no matter how true something else might seem. Had Eve done this, Satan could not possibly have persuaded her to eat of that fruit.

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# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS



## Protection: Truth and Righteousness

Dee Bowman

PERSONAL PROTECTION IS INSTINCTIVE. Strike at a fellow and he will instinctively throw up a guard to protect himself. It's prudent and wise to protect yourself.

Life is full of various forms of protection measures. Immunization provides protection against various kinds of diseases. Insurance is purchased as protection against losses caused by fire, thievery, or natural calamities. The government requires labeling to protect us against our own tools and devices. Cigarettes carry a warning that smoking is a health hazard. The cord on your electric lawn mower warns against using the device on wet ground. Education is even a kind of protection.

Protection is a vital concern for the soldier of Christ. In fact, most of the panoply of Ephesians Six concerns itself with protection. Verse 10 says, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Again, in verse 13, we are told to "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." Part of the training of the soldier is learning how to protect himself.

The word "protect" is from the Latin. It is *pro*, a Latin preposition which means "in front of," and *tegere*, which means "to cover." And that's exactly the sense of Ephesians 6:14. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." We are to gird our loins with truth and put on the protection of righteousness. In both cases the purpose is to "cover our front," or protect us from injury or danger.

### The Loins Girt About With Truth

We are to gird the midsection with truth. The truth spoken of in our text is not subjective, but objective. It is the gospel. The gospel provides both the offensive and defensive thrusts we need to fight against the "principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world." These powers are dedicated, militant, and we must retaliate in kind. But we must have protection from their carefully devised plans which are

designed for our defeat. That protection can come only from truth. Error cannot be efficiently combatted with more error; nor is it possible for some mixture of truth and error to do an adequate job of protecting us.

This truth is to be buckled on as one would a girdle. It will provide, first of all, a place from which to hang all the armaments for our battle. And since we are in hand-to-hand combat (we "wrestle not against flesh and blood," verse 12), the various pieces of weaponry must be nigh at all times. That's where truth comes in. From it hangs all the principles we need to combat the noble encounter and protect us from the ploys of the

scales on a fish. Sometimes it was leather, or some other material. But no matter the material, it was intended to guard a man's body from injury. The material for the breastplate in the army of the Lord was "righteousness," purity of life, piety, acting in accordance with the rules. And what better protection? No one can successfully defend himself against temptation, the snares and cunning stratagem of the Devil, without purity of life and holiness of character. There is great personal safety in being righteous.

### Conclusion

During the Revolutionary War the "Minutemen" plowed their fields and

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**"The girdle worn by the Roman soldier helped brace his body when he became weary and fatigued. It is the same for the Christian. Truth will hold us up, brace us so that we can remain constant in battle."**

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evil one.

Furthermore, the girdle worn by the Roman soldier helped brace his body when he became weary and fatigued. It is the same for the Christian. Truth will hold us up, brace us so that we can remain constant in battle.

### Having On the Breastplate of Righteousness

The breastplate was like a coat of mail. It protected the vital parts of the body. And what a grand figure Paul uses when it compares the coat of mail to a "breastplate of righteousness." The stuff of which the coat of mail was constructed was usually brass or some other metal, arranged in rows much like the

tended their businesses and commerce while in a constant state of readiness, their weapons never more than a few feet from them. I remember during World War II when the servicemen came home they were not allowed to wear civilian clothing, indicating that they were separated to duty, always ready for immediate service (2 Timothy 2:4). We must stand ready at all times. We must ever be prepared for the fracas and whether we are called on to answer the charge and go forward or stand in the breaches and defend our position, we are ready and able because our armor comes from God.

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# ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

John Clark

## Sacrifice: The Key to Victory

"BORN FOR BATTLE" IS THE TITLE OF R. Arthur Matthews' book on spiritual warfare. The child of God will soon learn, and should be sooner taught, that we were born into Christ's kingdom for a titanic spiritual struggle. Such an idea is exciting and at times frightening. We are either dull or distracted if we are not stirred by the military metaphors that abound in the New Testament. We are in a war (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 1 Timothy 6:12). The enemy is strong (1 Peter 5:8-9; Ephesians 6:12). Our leader is stronger (1 John 4:4). Our weapons are mighty (2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Ephesians 6:11-18). We are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). The victory is glorious (1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 John 5:4; 2 Corinthians 2:14).

When we realize we were "born for battle" we will hasten to drop our toys and hurry to take up the "weapons of our warfare" (Ephesians 6:11). The child of God must grow up! The pressing need of our age, even among Christians, is less hoopla about how to stay young and more information on how to grow up! Too many are trivializing life. As Robert Abrahams has put it:

"Some men die by shrapnel,  
And Some go down in flames;  
But most men perish inch by inch,  
In play at little games."

### Call For Sacrifice

In the apostle's second letter to Timothy he calls for sacrifice, the key to victory for the good soldier of Christ: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:1-4).

In this great text Paul urges three things upon Timothy: (1) Standing (v. 1); (2) Sharing (v. 2); (3) Sacrificing (vv. 3-4). Let us focus our attention on the

third. D. M. McIntyre has written: "The first duty of a soldier is obedience. The most evident duty of a soldier is to endure hardness. The ultimate duty of a soldier is to offer the supreme sacrifice." The willingness to sacrifice self to the commander, the conflict, and the cause is the *key to victory*. These words are unwelcomed and unwanted by a generation attracted to ease and escape—an age that thinks security, prosperity and physical well-being are evidences of God's blessings. Not born to battle, these!

### Mobilizing Our Minds

It was said of Winston Churchill that "he mobilized the English language and sent it into battle." The apostle Paul mobilizes the mind of the Christian with his stirring call to sacrifice "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Churchill's often quoted words, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat," spoken to the House of Commons, May 13, 1940, remind us of the price of victory. Yes, *sacrifice is the key to victory*.

**Commitment to the Commander.** "No soldier gets entangled in civil pursuits; his aim is to satisfy his commander" (*Moffatt's Translation*). The first responsibility of the good soldier is obedience. We are not in the Lord's army to debate the rules, but to obey Him! He has the battle-plan for victory; He has the weapons to assure our triumph; and He will lead those who follow. The apostle John gives this striking picture of victory: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14). The loyal will share the victory!

**Duty and Difficulties.** "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (NIV). Kittel's comment is helpful here: "Timothy, too, must suffer and enter the fellowship of those who like Paul himself, endure as true soldiers of Jesus Christ, holding out in the afflictions appointed for them, and thus

wrestling through to victory" (*Theological Dictionary of the N.T.*, Volume V, p. 937). I fear that too many of us have a "dress parade" mentality about serving Christ and not a "foxhole" faith. It is not wrong to desire the warm and wonderful feeling of being a part of an army arrayed in colorful splendor. It is vital, though, to remember that dress uniforms are to be laid aside and "fatigues" are to be put on when the call to battle comes. Life is essentially difficult. Once you accept this, you transcend it. Waiting is difficult. Warring is difficult. Both are battles we must fight if we serve Christ as "good soldiers." When you and I sing, "I want to be more like Jesus," and begin to face hardships, remember you asked for it! Yes, like Jesus, Paul, Timothy—all who serve God will "endure hardship." Difficulties are fuel for the furnace in which figures of clay are transformed into vessels of honor (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

**Sacrifice of self: the key to victory.** In Christ, God offers us an opportunity to become moral and spiritual heroes. This opportunity has a fixed price. The price tag reads, "SACRIFICE." There are many in our age who know the price of nearly everything and the value of almost nothing. It sounds like sheer folly to the self-centered that they must sacrifice to become Christ-centered.

1. Real sacrifice is expensive. Are we willing to give up time to learn and teach? Are we willing to give up some of the pleasure we purchase with our money to do some things for Christ that can be purchased only at the price of giving ourselves?

2. Everyone is sacrificing themselves to something (Romans 6:16). Each of us give up our lives, minute-by-minute, and day-by-day, to something. The only question is, "What are you giving your life to?" And the next question is, "Is it worth it?" Christians, who sacrifice themselves to the service of Christ, recognize they get the best of all bargains! They give up what they cannot keep to gain what they cannot lose!

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# That's Life!

Dee Bowman



*A YOUNG PREACHER CALLED* wanting my advice about a matter. He drove fifty miles to visit with me and we sat and talked for about an hour. Or rather, I sat and *he* talked for about an hour. During that time he described the problem, analyzed the root of the problem and at length recommended a solution. And what was great was that when he left, he thanked *me* for the advice. As he drove away, I chuckled to myself and thought, "Boy, I sure hope that works out; if it doesn't, he's liable to blame me for the bad advice."

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*MY CHILDREN ARE GROWING UP.* And I am not at all sure that I am mature enough to handle their maturity.

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*I READ SOMEWHERE* that "the object of all teaching is to enable those taught to get along without the teacher." It's so, I guess. But it seems to me that the teaching of the Scriptures is somewhat different in that it is designed to cause us to depend more and more on the Teacher.

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*DID YOU EVER NOTICE THAT THINGS RUN IN CYCLES?* Here awhile back, everything we had broke all at once—the TV, the dryer, the stove, the weed eater, even the door bell. And, speaking of broke, about the same time we had to raise some extra money for income taxes. You ever have times like that? Keeps you from having too much pride, I'll tell you that.

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* "It is an old fashioned porch swing. It is on the front porch of a modest frame home in Northern Alabama. It has provided me with a place to meditate and pray this week. It has been my vantage place from which I have watched the sparrows dart to and fro in the yard; where I have seen two dogs, one black, the other brown, doze peacefully in the warm autumn sun; where I have pondered the glory of God's creative power in the huge, spreading trees surrounding the house; and where I have this morning listened to the gentle rain as it played a melody in the leaves of the trees through which it fell. Times of solitude are precious and good for the soul."

\* \* \*

*THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE:* Set aside at least fifteen minutes—just fifteen minutes—each day to just think about you and God. Think you can do it?

\* \* \*

*JESUS IS GOD.* He is eternal, uncaused, and infinite in all His attributes. He had the greatest mission ever assigned; He fulfilled it flawlessly. He had the most important obligation ever borne; He took it on Himself gladly. He had the most shameful condemnation ever known to man; He gave Himself to it lovingly. Jesus was born a priest; He is our great intercessor. Jesus was born a prophet; never yet man spake as did He. Jesus was born a king; never was there a more benign nor a more kind monarch; He is the potentate of mankind. But most of all, Jesus was born a Savior. Matthew 1:21—"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."



# Making Love

*Elmer Prout*

The apostle Paul may have been an old bachelor, but he clearly knew the importance of love. "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The apostle makes it clear: the flashy aspects of religion fade in comparison to love. Notice how he puts it in the opening section of 1 Corinthians 13:

- Love is more important than the ability to talk and sing like angels. All the modern clamor about talking in tongues may not be so helpful to the body of believers after all (13:1).
- Love is more vital than the faith that moves mountains. The twentieth century call for "miracles" misses the central thrust of the gospel (13:2).
- Love exceeds the greatest personal, painful sacrifices. Outward show is a dead-end street. The gospel must get to our hearts or we won't get anywhere with the Lord (13:3).
- Love will outlast the world and all that is in it, for, as Paul reminds us, "Love never fails" (13:8).
- Love remains. Every skill, every ability, every spiritual gift, every insight fades into obscurity (13:8-13).

Paul looked at the troubled church in the city of Corinth. It was divided, quarreling, impolite and hateful. It was a congregation that used God's gifts for evil purposes. The apostle looked at those believers and said, in effect, "It's time you folks started making love in the church."

If that expression startles us it is because we have confused romance and being sexy with love and being loving. The Lord is not opposed to either romance or sex—He made it possible for us to be romantic and sexy. But love is a whole universe larger than those two tiny words.

Making love in the church means down-to-earth practical things like "keeping no record of wrongs; not being rude;

trusting another person to the very end; waiting for the other person before we begin to eat" (contrast the confusion mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11 with the attributes of love in chapter 13).

The meaning of love begins in the heart of God, goes 'round by Calvary and is intended to come out on the

loved and said to a wayward disciple, "When you are converted, comfort your brothers . . . feed my sheep."

Our world can get along without mountains being moved, without angels' voices and mystery messages—can even get along without bodies burning in sacrifice (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-3). But

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**"Paul looked at the troubled church in Corinth. It was divided, quarreling, impolite and hateful. It was a congregation that used God's gifts for evil purposes. The apostle looked at those believers and said, in effect, 'It's time you folks started making love in the church.' "**

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streets where believers live. The love of which the Bible speaks asks us to love in that specific way that Jesus did. He loved and fed the hungry. He loved and said to a lady, "I do not condemn you; go and sin no more." He loved and called the tax collector down from the tree to say, "I must eat at your house today." He

without love the world and the believer's place in it effectively ends.

God is love. Shall we join Him in loving? And, shall we not begin with those who are nearest to us in family and church?

1620 Oak Tree Dr., Roseville, CA 95678



# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"The transgression of the wicked uttereth its oracle; there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, that his iniquity will not be found out and be hated. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath ceased to be wise and to do good. He deviseth iniquity upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil" (36:1-4).

## Eight Marks of a Godless Man

Someone has said that verses 1-4 of this psalm are God's revelation of man to himself, while verses 5-9 are God's revelation of Himself to man. At any rate, there is in these verses a striking contrast of man's wickedness with God's goodness. Note that the wicked man bears these distinguishing marks:

1. **He has an oracle of his own** (verse 1). "The transgression of the wicked uttereth its oracle"—so says the marginal reading of the ASV. He makes his own rules, writes his own laws. The righteous man has his oracle from God (1 Peter 4:11). The godless man is a law unto himself, but he transgresses God's law whether he admits it or not. The godless one has decided it is all right to sin—he says so (see Psalm 2:2-3; 12:4). This "oracle" (or saying) springs from rebellion to God.

2. **He has no concern for divine approval** (verse 1). "There is no fear of God before his eyes." It is my judgment that the psalmist is referring here to the *dread* of God which acts as a check or restraint against sin. This man is like the one described in Psalm 10:11: "He saith in his heart, God hath forgotten, He hideth his face, he will never see it." Thus he believes himself to be free to do whatever he wants.

3. **He is arrogant** (verse 2). "He flattereth himself in his own eyes." That is, he flatters himself as to God's ability to find out and hate his sin. He actually believes

that he can conceal his sin from God. This idea may come from his observation that iniquity is not immediately punished, and thus he infers that it never will be. The wicked man acts under the delusion that there is no divine retribution.

Several other things result from this erroneous attitude and thinking.

4. **His word is undependable** (verse 3). "The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit." This man's word cannot be trusted. "They speak falsehood every one with his neighbor; with flattering lips, and with a double heart, do they speak" (Psalm 12:2). He says only what serves his self-seeking interests.

5. **He is void of worthwhile activity** (verse 3). "He hath ceased to be wise and to do good." A godless man has no real reason or desire to pursue things that are noble.

6. **He plots wickedness** (verse 4). "He deviseth iniquity upon his bed." Even in his quiet and reflective moments he spends his time planning evil.

7. **He pursues a perverted course** (verse 4). "He setteth himself in a way that is not good." This man does not just drift into evil; he follows it by design. He has progressed in sin so that he not only "stands in the way of sinners" but he also "sits in the seat of scoffers" (Psalm 1:1). He is entrenched in ungodliness.

8. **He tolerates evil** (verse 4). "He abhorreth not evil." On the surface, this may not seem to be such a serious charge; in reality, it is the final stroke in the description of the godless man. One who does not *hate evil* cannot possibly *love good* (Romans 12:9). Hatred of sin is an essential feature of God's character. Habakkuk describes Jehovah as "Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness" (1:13). We are thus warned: "O ye that love Jehovah, hate evil" (Psalm 97:10; see also Jeremiah 44:4; Proverbs 6:16).

These are the marks of a godless man. Put this psalm into practice and be sure that none of these salient characteristics mark your life.



# Origin of the Omagh Church of Christ

Edgar McFadden

Omagh (pronounced Om-aw) is an Irish settlement in Halton County, Ontario. One of the first settlers to come to this community in 1818 was John Beaty. He married Elizabeth Stewart on September 23, 1823. Their home was a modest log cabin in an unbroken wilderness. To this union were born four sons and nine daughters.

Both John and Elizabeth had been raised in a religious environment in their native land of Ireland prior to their coming to Canada. One of the things they tried to do was bring their children up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). They were members of the Church of England but there was no congregation in the community with which they could assemble. Although the Beatys were never Methodists, they nevertheless worshiped at the Methodist Church because of its proximity to their home.

Robert Beaty, the eldest son, was considered to be too delicate at age 18 for the hard work on the farm. His parents therefore sent him on July 1, 1842, to his Uncle James Beaty, Senior, in Toronto to assist him in his leather business. For some time this uncle and another man had been diligently "searching the scriptures" (John 5:39) until they became convinced that immersion was the right form of baptism. To complete the act of obedience, they went to Lake Ontario where each baptized the other (Acts 8:38).

Robert, having been brought up by deeply religious parents, was at once interested and began to study the "new religion." Soon afterwards he wrote a letter to his parents, giving his reasons, and asking for their permission to be baptized. After reading Robert's letter and having studied and prayed about it, they replied by telling him to do what he believed to be right. So in 1844 he, along with some others, was baptized in a hole cut through the ice.

Being full of zeal, Robert often visited his parents on the farm, and never ceased talking about the "ancient gospel" to the entire family. James Beaty, Senior, often

invited his brother John to Toronto and they talked much about religion. In the meantime Robert's mother continued to "search the scriptures" (Acts 17:11) day and night until she, too, became convinced of the truth.

A short time later, John and Elizabeth Beaty and some of the children who

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were old enough to understand, rode on a wagon pulled by oxen to Toronto, a distance of some 35 miles, with only a blazed trail for much of the journey. Upon their arrival the whole family was baptized.

John and Elizabeth Beaty began to have worship services in their own

home. John talked to his brother, William, who lived on an adjacent farm. William and his family joined them after having been taught about baptism and the other requirements of the church modeled after the New Testament pattern. Then Elizabeth's sister, Ann, and her husband William Johnstone and family, also began to meet with them. So a church of the "ancient order" was begun. Just as in the Scriptures, it was "the church in thy house" (Philemon 2). After a period of time they met in the schoolhouse at Omagh. Frequent visits from James Beaty, Senior, the untiring disciple, caused the church to grow, and the need for a permanent place of worship was soon recognized.

James Beaty, Senior, owned the farm at the southern corner of Omagh. He donated an acre of land for a burial ground and "Meeting House" as it was called for many years. The erection of the frame building was done by volunteer help, and its design by Mr. Beaty was unique. The seating was in the style of an amphitheater. All eyes of the audience were directed to the communion table. The preacher would stand on the floor looking up to most of his congregation.

The Meeting House was opened for worship on Sunday, October 12, 1851. Martha Beaty, a daughter of John and Elizabeth, had her ninth birthday on this date. It must have been a wonderful day in her life and one that she would remember for many years to come.

Three meetings were held that day with one in the morning, the afternoon, and again that night. The building had a seating capacity of 300 people. The speaker for the occasion was Alexander Anderson of Eramosa, Ontario. He was a well-known visiting evangelist who traveled on horseback to preach the gospel in rural churches. The preaching of brother Anderson was biblical, simple, and never tedious as to length. With his high-pitched Gaelic voice, so unsuitable for public speaking, he yet persuaded many to enter the Kingdom.

712 Imber St., Pasadena, TX 77506



# Mining The Scriptures

## PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

### The Sermon on the Mount

**"R**esist not him that is evil" (Matthew 5:39). Though much controversy surrounds this section of the sermon, our first task is to lay issues aside and attempt to understand in its most elemental form the point that Jesus is making.

In Matthew 5:38-42 Jesus broadens the scope and deepens the application of the principle of neighbor love. He has now moved from dealing with the problem of evil in ourselves to the challenge of wrestling with evil in others. It is one thing for the kingdom citizen to withhold all injury from the innocent, but what does love demand of him when others, far from innocent, attempt to abuse and injure him?

The Pharisees had worked out the problem nicely. They simply picked up on an Old Testament statute governing the amount of retribution that might be exacted in law for a particular injury done and turned it into a *right* to vengeance upon their adversaries.

The purpose of the Old Testament law of retribution was likely two-fold. It was intended to restrain and deter the practice of evil (Deuteronomy 19:20-21). It also served to control the disposition of men to exact in anger a punishment disproportionate to the injury suffered (Exodus 21:23-24). Anger at injustice suffered can so easily burn out of control and exact wholly exorbitant punishment. God's law to Israel intended that such excesses which only initiate an endless cycle of hatred and violence should be restrained. It is also very important to note that this justice was not to be administered privately but meted out only by the appointed judges of Israel (Deuteronomy 19:18).

The Pharisees evidently saw in the words of the law they so often quoted ("An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth") a right of personal vengeance. Instead of understanding this as a statement of the maximum possible retribution under law, a control on excess, they held it as their personal minimum right. Like Shakespeare's Shylock these merciless hypocrites demanded their "pound of flesh."

In contrast to the teaching of the Pharisees which established the right of personal revenge and retaliation in kind Jesus says, "Resist not him that is evil." He then follows His statement of principle with four very dramatic illustrations of it.

It is imperative at the outset that we consider Jesus' prohibition (against resisting evil) in the context of His sermon and to an extent in the broader context of the New Testament. Jesus' concern in this whole section (5:21-48) is the working out of the principle of love for others. In Luke's account of the sermon Jesus' illustrations of His principle are preceded by the command to love

one's enemies and followed by the admonition, "And as ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also to them likewise" (6:27-31). Perhaps this will help us to understand that the Lord is not issuing a doctrine of mere non-resistance but simply using a series of very arresting statements to accentuate our obligation never to retaliate for wrongs done us, and never to withhold good from those who have injured us unjustly. We must not make these statements walk on all-fours.

When Jesus instructs His disciples not to resist evil, He is *not* telling them never to do anything to restrain evil in others. Such a wooden interpretation would prevent even a word of reproof. The Lord taught otherwise in Matthew 18:15-17 and Himself rebuked the officer who wrongfully struck Him during His trial (John 18:23). What our Savior is concerned with in these verses is that we should never resist evil *with evil*. This is exactly how Paul states the principle in Romans: "Render to no man *evil for evil*. . . . Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:17,21). This is the natural working out of the command to love one's neighbor as oneself and the appeal to do toward others what we would have done to ourselves. Whatever we do in response to their evil must be done *in love* for *them*, not out of some desire for revenge or concern for *self*-defense. It seems to me that this principle would not preclude even the use of some rather strong means to restrain another from inflicting wrongful injury but it must always be administered out of love for the offender and never selfishly or vengefully.

**S**o in these pointedly dramatic statements of Jesus in which He has certainly gotten our attention He is telling us: that it is better to turn the other cheek to the person who has struck you than to do evil to him; that it is better to give your cloak to the man who has wrongfully sued you for your coat than to wrong him or withhold what he really needs; that it is better to go two miles with the man who has wrongfully compelled you to assist him for one than to do evil to him or fail to give the assistance that he truly needs; that it is better to give aid to the man who has treated you badly than to withhold what he genuinely requires in his time of trouble.

If this sounds to you as if we are draining the force from these commands, please remember that Jesus' instruction to "give to him that asketh thee" is not without reservation. Paul said, "If any will not work" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Yet even Paul's charge is not punitive but motivated by love. And remember, too, that we will have more than enough to challenge us in keeping our hearts free from all selfishness as we determine how we are to treat *with love* those who deal unjustly and often brutally with us.





## God's Rule Amidst His Enemies

### Philippians 1:12-14

**T**he intense concern of the Philippians for Paul and his welfare in his bonds should be evident not only from the introductory passage (1:3-7) but also from two later passages (2:19-30; 4:10-20). After Paul's opening passage (1:3-11) expressing his own tender feelings and hopes for the community of saints at Philippi, he then brings the Philippian saints up to date with regard to his present circumstances and prospects (1:12-26). His first lengthy sentence (1:12-14) will indicate how little his thinking was focused upon personal discomfort and inconvenience. Quite clearly, Paul was caught up in something greater than himself—something which put his sufferings far into the shade by comparison.

Up to a point the commentary on Paul's reference to his circumstances (verse 12) will be found in the last chapters of Acts and developments from the time he was arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17ff). He had been falsely accused; had his assassination plotted by Jewish conspirators; was held for two years by Roman governors more anxious to placate the Jews than to see justice done; appealed to Caesar when it became clear he could not get justice done in Palestine; suffered shipwreck; and finally ended up in Rome as a prisoner. He reports the outcome in Philippians 1:12. "The things with respect to me (Arndt-Gingrich, 407b, No. 6) have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel." The Greek verb is "come" (*erchomai*). These things have come to this—not unto the hindrance, as one might have expected, but rather, "unto the progress of the gospel."

Two results ("so that," Greek conjunction *hoste*) are reported. First, Paul writes, "My bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest." I have not yet been able to research the word *praetorian* enough to feel much certainty, but good defenses of the translation "praetorian guard" will be found in the commentaries of J. B. Lightfoot (pp. 99-104) and Marvin Vincent (ICC, pp. 51-52). The New International Version makes the main point of verse 13 extremely clear. Not only among the guard, but even

beyond, "to all the rest," likely meaning the population of Rome at large, "it has become clear . . . that I am in chains for Christ."

The importance of that statement can best be appreciated in the light of the controversies in the last chapters of Acts. As various Roman officials tried to arrive at "the certainty whereof Paul was accused of the Jews" (22:30; 23:28; 25:18-20,26), the Jews explained the matter one way and Paul another. The Jews started out trying to pin some criminal charge on Paul (21:27-29; cf. 24:1-9). But from Acts 23:6 on, Paul was insistent that the real reason he was "called in question" was his proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus (cf. 24:10-21). At first Paul replied to the trumped-up criminal charges (24:10-21; 25:6-8), but in his last speech, before Agrippa, these are completely forgotten, and Paul's "defence touching all the things whereof he was accused by the Jews" deals only with what he has insisted all along was the real reason for the Jewish opposition to him—namely, his loyalty to the Old Testament messianic expectation which has been fulfilled in the resurrected Jesus (26:1-23).

**W**hen, then, Paul writes that in Rome it has become obvious that his is no ordinary criminal case but that his bonds are due to his proclamation of Christ, he is reporting a tremendous victory.

The second result is that this state of affairs had emboldened the Christians of Rome, who had been holding back previously, "to speak the word of God without fear" (verse 14).

The emphasis of Philippians 1:12-14, then, falls upon the sovereignty of the Almighty God who can turn even the efforts of his enemies into instruments of His own purposes. The nations may rage; they may conspire to break free of the divine sovereignty and to overturn the throne of God. The most they can do is "whatsoever God's hand and God's counsel foreordained to come to pass" (Psalm 2; Acts 4:23-28). So let the nations rage as they may. "He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh" at the absurdity and futility of their efforts.

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# The Conscience

Mark Mayberry

What is this thing we call the conscience? The biblical expression comes from the Greek word *syneidesis* which means "with-knowledge." Man is to act with knowledge of himself. However, this implies more than self-awareness; it has to do with our moral intuition. It refers to that inner voice which passes judgment upon our thoughts, words and actions. Thayer defines the Greek word as "the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending the one, condemning the other" (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 602). Webster defines conscience as "a knowledge or sense of right and wrong, with a compulsion to do right; moral judgment that opposes the violation of a previously recognized ethical principle and that leads to feelings of guilt if one violates such a principle."

Our conscience has both a positive and negative side: it approves and condemns (see Romans 2:13-15). Doing what we understand to be right brings peace of mind. A French proverb says, "There is no pillow so soft as a clear conscience." How true! But violating our moral sense of right brings a sense of shame, and a conviction of sin (Genesis 3:8; Matthew 26:75). The Bible places a great importance upon the conscience: "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5).

## The Need for a

### Properly Educated Conscience

However, having a good conscience does not guarantee that we are doing God's will. It is possible to feel that you are right, and still be wrong. Consider the example of the Apostle Paul. He stated, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1; see also 24:16). This is the very same person who said, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). Paul led the early wave of persecution against Christianity. He thought that was his duty! Unfortunately, Paul was misinformed. His beliefs were wrong, and therefore his moral judgment was wrong (see Acts 26:9-15; 1 Corinthians 15:9; 1 Timothy 1:13,15).

The conscience regulates us according to what we have been taught. Having a clear conscience simply means that we are living according to the standard we have chosen, but it doesn't mean that the standard is right. Our conscience is somewhat like a computer; what you put in it is what you get back. If you put in erroneous information, there is no way that it is going to operate properly. This is the old "G.I.G.O." principle: if you put garbage in, you're going to get garbage out. Paul's information was wrong, and therefore his moral judgment was wrong.

We could compare the conscience to the way our court system is to operate. Our courts are not to make laws, they are to enforce them. So it is with our conscience. It doesn't make the laws; it sits in judgment on our actions, according to the principles it has been taught. When our teaching has been wrong, our conscience cannot make proper judgments. We may approve of things that are sinful.

"Conscience is merely our own judgment of the right and wrong of our actions, and so can never be a safe guide unless enlightened by the word of God" (Tryon Edwards). Thus we should strive to gain a good knowledge of the Truth, so that our conscience will operate properly. God's word should guide us (Psalm 119:105; Jeremiah 10:23; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). If we follow what the Bible teaches, we can be sure that we are right. Our conscience will have been fed the proper information.

### The Danger of a Seared Conscience

This describes the person whose conscience has become calloused, insensitive and hardened. The Bible speaks of the possibility of one's conscience being "seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:1-2). By constantly rejecting its warnings, we may reach the point where our conscience ceases to bother us. Paul describes such people as being "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:17-20). Titus 1:15 speaks of those whose mind and conscience is defiled. Some people focus on evil so long that they see evil in everything. They are almost beyond hope. Their sense of right and wrong no longer operates.

It's very dangerous if the physical body becomes insensitive to pain, and the same holds true in the spiritual

realm. For example, we may have been taught from our youth that it is our duty to attend worship services. But somewhere along the line we begin to slip. At first, our conscience cries out and reprimands us. But if we miss again and again, eventually it will cease to bother us. In such cases, we grow insensitive to our transgression. We become hardened, and may reach the point where we no longer want to do right.

Let us do all we can to keep our conscience tender and receptive. Don't view a given act of transgression as just a little matter. "It is astonishing how soon the whole conscience begins to unravel if a single stitch drops. . . . One single sin indulged in makes a hole you could put your head through" (Charles Buxton).

### A Weak Conscience

This describes the person who does not fully understand the Truth and is not yet strong enough to distinguish clearly between what is right and wrong (see Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8). This conscience is weak because it has not been properly taught.

It is a sin to violate our conscience, even if it is misinformed (Romans 14:23). Why? Because violating our conscience causes it to become seared. A man should heed his own conscience, even though it be weak; otherwise his moral personality would be destroyed (1 Corinthians 8:10). It is also wrong to violate the conscience of others (1 Corinthians 8:7,13). We should be concerned about our brethren in Christ. Those weak in the faith are to be given every consideration by those who are stronger. But ultimately all should grow strong in the faith to properly discern between good and evil.

### Conclusion

There are great rewards in having a good conscience. But realize that a good conscience by itself will not suffice; it alone is not an infallible guide. Yet, when we know God's word and actively seek to obey it, our conscience plays an invaluable role. It helps keep us on the path of faithfulness and warns us when we stray. Thus it is the most precious and valuable restraining force that a man has. We should seek to keep it tender and responsive. Otherwise, there is little hope for us.

Rt. 10, Box 723B, Tyler, TX 75707



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### "Part-Time" Preachers from the Past

A visit to Birmingham, Alabama, always takes me back in memory to the first seven years of my life, spent with my family in that city. If my childish impressions of the churches there in the early 1930s are to be trusted "there were giants in the land."

John T. Lewis was recognized as the pioneer of the work in Birmingham, having moved there in 1907 to work with a small group meeting on the third floor of a grocery store. When I knew him, he was preaching for the Ensley church which he had recently established. Floyd Horton was at Woodlawn. Jack Meyer succeeded Cecil Douthitt at West End. My father, Gardner S. Hall, was at North Birmingham. These were the men who were supported by the church to give their full time to preaching and their names were well known outside of Birmingham.

There were other men, however, not so well known, who depended mainly on secular work for their livelihood. There was brother Clayton, a mail carrier; J. R. Ezell, a salesman; W. C. Graves who worked for the telephone company; Elliot Hill who was in the lumber business; J. G. Pruitt, a carpenter; and Robert Turner who, as I recall, worked for the railroad. These men, too, were shining lights in my memory. Mature reflection has made me appreciate their work all the more.

This latter group of men did not attend colleges operated by the brethren. As a rule, they were not college men at all. Most of them did attend a weekly men's training class conducted by brother Lewis in which they made talks, engaged in practice debates and improved their speaking. Great emphasis was placed on use of Scripture, most of which was quoted.

Brethren in Birmingham considered it urgent that a congregation be established in every area of the city where one did not exist. Priority was given to communities where a few members already lived. Tent meetings were conducted there year after year until there were enough converts to supplement the existing nucleus and begin a church.

Seldom could the new congregations afford "full-time" preachers. Usually one of these, or some other good man who supported himself, would do the preaching until the church grew strong enough to provide full support. Then, feeling they had accomplished their mission, these "part-time" preachers would find another place where they were needed, sometime even beginning a new work on their own.

All of those named have passed on to their reward, but through succeeding years brethren like Roy Crocker, Clarence Hurst, Reginald Ginn and several others have carried on in the same tradition. Those of us who go to Birmingham to preach for one of the forty or more strong churches do well to remember the words of the Lord: "I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor" (John 4:38).

Birmingham is not unique. Every city or area where churches have grown numerous has had such men.

In the Atlanta area even now, Harvey Buttrey, John Clark and F. L. Wiser are serving effectively in this manner. Those familiar with other areas can fill in the names of men in those places who have done and are doing the same kind of work.

The men we are describing do not work for money—often they contribute more than they receive. They do not work for fame—their names are seldom known beyond the areas in which they live. They serve for the glory of God. Only eternity can measure the extent of their contribution to the spread of the kingdom.

If congregations are to multiply as they should, we must forget the idea that every church must have a "full-time, fully supported" evangelist working among them. There are not that many preachers! Furthermore, stronger congregations cannot carry the financial load of supporting such men and at the same time do what needs to be done in sending the gospel to those who have never heard. Godly men who are secularly employed must dedicate themselves to helping small congregations get on their feet. And churches must learn to appreciate these men for what they do and realize that some of these "part time" men may actually accomplish more than some "full time" men they might get.

Please forgive me one more personal observation. For half a century the men named earlier in this article have continued to shine as lights in my memory because I was taken as a child to most every service of their meetings whether in tents or buildings across the city. I even attended some of the training classes. I was impressed by their quoting of Scripture and I delighted in their frequent visits to our home. They became my heroes. Maybe that is why I think of them as giants. Maybe that is why they have continued to bless my life. Thank you, Mother.





# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## A Lasting Duet

*Jim Cope recently sent me this story. It calls forcefully to mind the importance of making memories with our children. Few people have touched more lives for good in the past generation than Jim Cope. Let us give thanks for, and learn from, the father who touched him.*

\* \* \*

Yours in the April issue regarding your early learning of "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" reminded me of "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder" so often sung with my father.

Before the day of tax-supplied school buses where country kids rode "subscription" buses to the nearest county high school if they didn't have their own auto or horse, I would frequently hurry to feed the livestock and milk three or four cows, usually before breakfast, so

I could beat the bus and ride to White County High School at Sparta, Tennessee, with my father who was a wholesale grocery drummer as well as a farmer. Primarily to be with Dad, I suppose, I would be through with my chores and ready to ride the A-Model Ford and later the V-8 by 6:30 A.M. It was on those 30-minute often "before sun-up" rides on a winding, hilly, gravel road that I learned much about the background and lifestyle of many of the families of the schoolmates and the early settlers of Upper Cumberland Mountains by which our frame house was completely surrounded.

Though my father was small of stature he had a soft bass voice with which my boyish soprano harmonized quite well—so *we* thought! It was on these trips that he would frequently talk to me about moral

and spiritual matters as well as imparting his own philosophy of life. Such talks would often result in reminding us of some song or hymn familiar to both of us and we would frequently harmonize on these melodies—just the two of us.

One day as we wound down on "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder" with the words "I'll be there," my father drove home a point I cannot and have no desire to forget. Frequently it comes to mind when I think of my father and never fails in memory when I hear or sing that grand old song of desire and expectation.

In his direct manner of address, he said, "Son, when the roll is called up yonder, will you be there? Will I be there?"

I would guess that I said, "I hope so, Dad," or "I want to." I'm not certain about my

exact words but as I think back to that early morning hour of some 55 years ago, I thank God for that question. It was the right one for the right time in my life. It is not always the amount of a parent's talk that counts the most with the child but its timing. When the mental and emotional stage is properly set is the time to make the lasting impression on the mind of the hearer.

When those who read these lines I write to my beloved Ed Harrell think about my father's question, I ask you—my brother, my sister—"When the roll is called up yonder, will you be there?"

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## The Importance of Mutual Edification

**"S**eeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). Because we are who we are, we ought to love one another. "For this is the message of God that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11). You see, love is the foundation for what we are; it is at the very beginning of God's instruction to us. "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:9). This passage may be saying that because their new relationship in Jesus taught them so, they ought to love one another; but it seems to me that it may be saying that there is really no need for a man to be instructed to love his brethren, for such an instruction is indigenous to man—he knows to do so intuitively.

This love for one another may be expressed in many ways. It may evolve into help, or pity, or encouragement, among several other things. But one of the main directions it takes is edification. Edification plays a vital role in loving someone. If you truly care for them you want to build them up. I love the character of Barnabas in the New Testament. He was a builder. Not just a builder of churches, mind you, but a builder of men. He is referred to as "the son of consolation" (Acts 4:6). We need builders in the church to strengthen and shore her up. And remember, the church is persons.

Far too many people view Christianity as a spectator affair. They enlist, then sit and watch. Some even draw subsistence from their association, while seldom giving anything back to it. They do nothing to build up or edify.

Let's talk a minute or so about edification. Who does it? How is it done? What are its results?

Edification is a private affair. It always starts with just one person. There's no need to call the church together to encourage someone. To edify (from the same root as "edifice," both from the Latin *aedis*, a building, and *facere*, to make; thus to make a building) is to build up. And there are lots of things in people which need building up. There's personal esteem. That needs constant attention, it seems. Then there's confidence. Only when a person has faith in himself can he function at the height

of his abilities. Still further, there's the need to build up confidence in others. When you compliment others, you give them standing in the eyes of him to whom you make such comments. And that helps both parties. But it has to start with you.

**B**uilding up (the Greek word originally meant to build a house) is work. It takes concentration. I think the biggest hindrance to edification is selfishness. It's easy to spend all your energies on yourself. Edification means losing sight of oneself in preference to accomplishing good for others. Paul says it well in Romans 15:2: "Let everyone of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." Now that means showing proper respect for his feelings (even if it means sacrificing some of your own); learning to listen to him (even when you're about to explode to say something); promoting his best interests both when he's around and when he's not; giving in where you can without compromises; and a host of other unselfish activities.

One of the best forms of edification is teaching. Nothing builds up like good, sound instruction. We often talk about someone being involved in a certain "discipline," or area of study, because discipline is learning designed to develop a certain type of behavior. In fact, notice that "discipline" and "disciple" are from the same root. Both are from the Latin *discere*, to learn. When you teach someone about Jesus you edify him in the best possible way. And when you continue to teach him the discipline popularly known as Christianity, you continue to build him up (see 1 Corinthians 14:3-4).

Paul says, "Love edifieth" (1 Corinthians 8:1). Love is the great builder, that which bonds all the good together (Colossians 3:14). In describing the essence of architecture, Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639) said, "The end is to build well. Well building hath three conditions. Commodity, firmness, and delight." It's an apt description. Love, extended in the form of edification makes a person useful, and that's the sense of commodity. It makes a man firm, or solid, able to meet obstacles. And it is delightful, for it promotes a sense of well-being.

"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as ye also do" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).



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# Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 663 Denise Drive, Melbourne, FL 32935

## A South American asks: "Where are the workers?"

The May, 1985 issue had an article written by Sewell Hall on "Father and Son in South America." It had a very interesting question at the end of the article: "Where is another Phillip Morgan who will accept for himself and for his family the challenge of another South American country?"

It is obvious they aren't here. Being an American myself, I believe I know the reasons. The biggest reason is *idolatry*. You think that can't be? Why not? What are the reasons people do not come?

1. "I don't go because I don't know Spanish." I didn't either, but I do now. I have taught myself to speak, read, and write Spanish. Can't you prepare yourself in an adult education class?

2. "I can't take my wife and kids over there." I admit it is hard, but I gave it no thought when I left the U.S. I was 22 with only 3 months of marriage under my belt. If I can, so can she.

3. "How do they wash?" Here comes the rough part—nothing like a U.S. wife. You wash by hand with a scrub board if you can't afford a machine. I am blessed to have one that agitates, but I still must do the rinsing and wringing. When I am finished, I can honestly say I washed the clothes. (In addition I have to heat water over a wood fire; I can build a fire in nothing flat!)

Amongst all these excuses, where is the Christian concern for the commandment to "go into all nations and preach the gospel?" My husband has spoken to many a young man about coming here; while single, they have a spark of interest. But when they get married, it is gone. Does that tell you anything?

I admit the going has been rough. I arrived in this country not knowing how to say "hello." But communication comes before you know it. During the 7 years I have lived in Chile, I have met some of the most important people in my life—my in-laws and brother and sister Castillo. No family or single person need go it alone. You can work alongside a family already speaking both languages. We personally are looking for someone and have been for the past 7 years.

This country is beautiful with more than beautiful people. I love it and will make my final home here. The only ties I have to the U.S. are my grandparents. Foreign work is exciting, challenging and rewarding. Knowing that the gospel is being spread and you are fulfilling a commandment given by God makes the sacrifice worth it.

I am afraid that idolatry is keeping many from coming.

Joanne Martin de Valdes  
Chile, South America

## Another view on "Why Call for the Elders?"

The purpose of my writing has to do with the article, "Why Call for the Elders?" [April, 1985, p. 19] by Weldon E. Warnock. Although I agree with most of the article I would like to make a few comments on his personal conclusions.

Why should "anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" necessarily mean that the elders must provide either doctors or medicine that is needed? If the oil is medicinal then the Holy Spirit has delivered us the type of medicine to be used and it seems to me a lack of faith not to use it. If a doctor is to be provided then it would only seem reasonable that the Holy Spirit would have guided James into stating "call for the elders who are to bring a physician."

May I introduce my own view? Perhaps these verses are really not so hard as some are trying to make them. Is it possible that the *prayer* and the oil could be a parallel to the water in baptism? Using it (the oil) might give one a good conscience toward God as Peter explains the purpose of the water in baptism in 1 Peter 3:21 and the *prayer of faith* shall save the sick as stated in James 5:15. James 5:16 states that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Perhaps this explains why we call the elders. Now if we look around the congregation, who should be more righteous than the elders (if they meet the qualifications for elders as stated in Timothy and Titus)? If these suppositions could be found to be true, then the verses wouldn't be hard at all, but would literally

mean exactly what they say. The biggest problem then would be the embarrassing situation that it would put us in for not having followed the simple truth, and would mean humbling ourselves and saying that we were wrong.

Ron Harlin  
Stevenson, AL

## Beginning at the end is like starting at the back . . . or something

Dear brother Ed,

My original intent was to belatedly order Volume 1 of *Christianity Magazine*. Please send it if it is still available . . .

Although I'm not Oriental, I begin with the back page of *Christianity Magazine*. In fact, everything has to wait until I read what you have to say in "Rear Views." You know, getting delivery of the magazine is almost like receiving a number of letters from good friends. The theme approach is a meaningful way to organize the work of various authors. It's rather like reading a good "meeting."

I feel like I know the other editors personally after reading their articles every month. I have never written to an editor before, but wanted you to know how much your effort means . . .

Nettie A. Britt  
El Cajon, CA

---

*We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?*

---





# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Restoring New Testament Christianity (VII)

*(This series is a revised version of an article prepared for the forthcoming Encyclopedia of Religion in America.)*

\* \* \*

The union of the Christian movement and the Disciples of Christ was formally recognized in a four-day meeting in Lexington, Kentucky, beginning on Christmas Day, 1831. The key figure in arranging that meeting was John T. Johnson. Johnson was a member of a distinguished Kentucky family (his brother was elected vice-president in 1836) and served as a member of the Kentucky legislature and the United States House of Representatives before accepting Campbell's view of restoration in 1831 and becoming the minister of a Disciples congregation. Also a close friend to Stone, he came to be regarded as a member of both groups and was the personal link that led to the union discussion. Although Campbell was not present at the Lexington meeting, several widely known Disciples preachers were. Barton Stone was the chief spokesman for the Christians; John Smith for the Disciples. All of those present agreed that they should unite their efforts. Two evangelists—John Smith (Disciple) and John Rogers (Christian)—were dispatched to ride together throughout the country informing the churches of their meeting. Smith and Rogers also wrote articles appealing to their respective brethren. Since there were no societies or denominational organizations to merge, the union of Christians and Disciples amounted primarily to encouraging a sense of fellowship among the scattered local churches. Both groups were jealous of the autonomy of the local churches; the merging of specific churches in the same community proceeded slowly and imperfectly.

Although the union was gradual, in many areas, it was virtually complete. Some of the Christian churches of the South and Midwest rejected the union, choosing rather to unite with the Christian Connection movement.

The Disciples probably outnumbered the Christians at the time of the union by several thousands and the personality of Alexander Campbell came to dominate the united movement long before the death of Barton Stone in 1844. Nonetheless, many of the most visible leaders in the church in the nineteenth century began as a part of the Christian movement and the two groups showed little residual loyalty to their distinctive pasts after the passing of a few decades.

While there was never perfect uniformity of practice among the churches of the restoration movement, by the middle of the nineteenth century most of the central beliefs had been worked out. Perhaps most important was the emphasis on New Testament precedent for everything practiced by local churches. Alexander Campbell explored that subject in a long series of articles in his magazine entitled: "The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things" and in 1839 summarized his thinking in a book entitled *The Christian System*. Organizationally, the churches were autonomous, presided over by elders and deacons. In worship, they differed little from their evangelical neighbors other than in the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. Doctrinally, the movement's most distinctive teaching was its insistence that baptism preceded the remission of sins and admission into the church.

Another important motif in early Disciples thought was a commitment to liberty of opinion. Early restorers allowed and demanded freedom of conscience in all questions which were not "essential." The definition of "essentials" has never been clear-cut in the movement's history, and has been a constant source of friction and schism, but it has also provided a canopy for a wide variety of beliefs on theological questions and in matters of personal conduct. To some extent, the movement also accommodated considerable variation in the practice of local churches.



# There Is A Way

*Sam Binkley, Jr.*

Many a person has become frustrated, confused and discouraged trying to solve a puzzle such as a Rubic's Cube, only to have someone who knows how it works show him the way to solve it. Learning certain basic rules enables one to recognize the key to understanding how it works. In a much more important sense there are many who have given up trying to learn what to do to be saved. In some cases they have tried to understand the way, but were either ignorant

the road map. Many lose their way to eternal life by trusting what seems right to them rather than what is found in the word of God.

Jesus said there is a way that leads to destruction. He was making a contrast between two ways when He made that statement (Matthew 7:13-14). The way that leads to destruction is a broad way, and many people enter that way. All who do things contrary to the will of God or fail to do what He requires, are

who thinks it is impossible to know whether there is a God or not, and therefore does not bother to even consider the evidence either for or against. The one who enters the strait gate and travels the narrow way, however, must consider the evidence, recognize its credibility, believe it, and follow Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life" to the Father and an everlasting home in heaven.

In this same passage of Scripture (Matthew 7:13-14), Jesus mentioned another way. It is a narrow way, but it is a way. This way leads to everlasting life. The fact that it is narrow suggests we must use caution while traveling it. It also suggests, and other Scriptures plainly teach, that we cannot take any excess baggage while traveling it. There is no room for our prejudices, jealousies, hatred, ill will, or any other sins. They must be left at the strait gate when we enter this way. Of course, the only way we can get rid of them is to obey the gospel of Christ and obtain forgiveness, and then walk the new life in Christ.

Isaiah prophesied of a way that would be called "The way of holiness" (Isaiah 35:8). The kind of people who were to travel this way were not the unclean, but the redeemed. The redeemed are those who have been bought back from their evil ways by the blood of Christ. God offers redemption to man in Christ Jesus. Speaking of Christ, Paul wrote, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7; see also Colossians 1:14; Revelation 5:9; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

"How can we know the way?" Thomas asked this question when Jesus told His disciples He was going to prepare a place for them, and come again and receive them; He then said, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (John 14:1-5). Jesus answered, "I am the way" (John 14:6). Yes, there is a way, and you can travel that way that leads to everlasting life by coming to Jesus and following in His footsteps.

604 Hereford Dr., Athens, AL 35611

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**"The way that leads to destruction is a broad way, and many people enter that way. . . . It doesn't take any effort to travel the broad way. It is not necessary to believe or do anything. One can simply 'go along with the crowd.'"**

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of or were not applying the right rules.

The thought expressed in the words: "There is a way" is found several times in the Bible. Solomon said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). The fact that a way seems right unto a man does not mean that it will lead to the desired destination. Many lose their way, at least temporarily, when they trust their "intuition" rather than the compass or

traveling that way. The drunkard, the idolater, the adulterer, the talebearer, all liars, etc., are traveling the broad way; so are the slothful, lazy, indifferent who do not actively do the Lord's will. It doesn't take any effort to travel the broad way. It is not necessary to believe or do anything. One can simply "go along with the crowd." The infidel who makes the effort to formulate and/or use arguments in support of his belief is traveling that way. So is the agnostic



**Brent Lewis**



# My Brother/My Self

## Conquering Covetousness

**E**very person who lives is seeking contentment. It is our number one pursuit. God's word tells us how to be happy because God wants us to be our very best and get all that we can out of life. However, if we want to be content and fulfilled, the word says that we must conquer covetousness.

What is "covetousness?" The word "covet" in the New Testament comes from a Greek word that means "striving for more." Does that not describe many of us? We are not content with what we have and think we must have more to be satisfied. But once that has been acquired we find still more that we think we need.

Covetousness sometimes involves strong desire for that which belongs to another. God told the Israelites that they should not "covet thy neighbor's house" or "thy neighbor's wife" nor "anything that is thy neighbor's" (Exodus 20:17). But covetousness involves more.

Paul said that covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). This is so because the covetous person has set his affections on acquiring these things rather than giving God first place in his life. It is possible to be covetous and not know it. Witness the young man who came to Jesus, convinced that he loved God and enumerating the commands he had kept (Matthew 19:16-20). But when Jesus told him that he must sell all that he had and give it to the poor, it became clear where his affections were. It is likely true that covetousness is the least confessed sin; it is so difficult to discern in oneself.

There are some infamous covetors in the Bible. **Nabal** (2 Samuel 25) was so greedy that he did not want to repay David for sustaining and protecting his herds-men who had wandered into David's territory. And when Nabal's wife, Abigail, took some of her husband's goods to appease David, and Nabal learned of it, the Bible says that "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone" (verse 37). **Ananias and Sapphira** in the New Testament were so greedy that seemingly they wanted credit for selling their land and giving all of the proceeds to the Lord—but they could not part with it all and thus they

lied to the apostles and to God (Acts 5). Of course, we are all acquainted with Jesus' story of the **rich man** in Luke 12 who revelled in his prosperity and never once thought of God. **Judas'** primary problem was the love of money and it so controlled his life that he found himself saying about his Lord, "What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?" (Matthew 26:14).

**W**e must all learn that "godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:6-7) and that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (6:10). It is easy to become convinced that we must have two dozen suits (or dresses) and a dozen-and-a-half pairs of shoes; and that we must trade in last year's model of everything to have the newest and the best.

Christians surely have their work cut out for them in conquering covetousness. We must see this sin for what it is—a threat to our very souls. We must realize that "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). We must understand that Christians who covet this world's goods dilute their effectiveness in serving God; they become "at ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1) and are content to dwell in their "ceiled houses" (Haggai 1:4) while the Lord's house (spiritual pursuit) is neglected. And that inevitably "the covetous renounceth, yea condemneth Jehovah" (Psalm 10:3) because he has another God in his heart.

To fail to conquer covetousness is ultimately to lose our souls. "For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God and Christ" (Ephesians 5:5). God's way is clear and certain: "He that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days" (Proverbs 28:16).



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# Woman's World

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## Evangelism for Women

Jenny Reed

Not enough Christian women are teaching the lost. We hide behind excuses: not enough knowledge, too many responsibilities at home, not enough time. We understand our responsibility to share the good news, yet months and years go by without any real effort on our part.

The problem really is not other responsibilities; the problem is not putting God first. We live in a busy age, and the only way you'll have time for study and teaching is to let God be the judge of your priorities. If you do that, it will mean getting up earlier, cutting out TV or magazines, trading babysitting time with a sister, or some kind of sacrifice on your part.

The first step is time with God every day. Even 15 minutes of prayer and study daily will help you increase your knowledge of God and your love for Him and others. Be sure you make personal application of what you read. Intellectual knowledge is useful, but what you need is "the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:9-10). Pray for wisdom, and pray that God will help you learn to spread the good news.

Next, you need to take a good hard look at your life. Are you a light in the world, drawing others to God by your life? What you believe is important, but are you living it? How well do you light up the world with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? How about modesty, hospitality, and tongue-control? These are not just good works—they're beacons to a dark world that say, "Here's a woman of God!" Does your life exhibit the riches and joys of being a Christian, or are you always worried and complaining? Do you handle frustrations with patience, or do you get irritated and speak sharply? Do you deal with disagreements with a proud, "I'm right, you're wrong" attitude, or do you speak the truth with love, gentleness and patience? What draws others to Christ is

not the arguments we make in favor of Christianity, or the pride we express about our loyalty to the truth, but rather the happiness, joy, and peace we radiate in our lives. Living this kind of life will bring you opportunities to teach. Be sure you use the opportunities to give the glory to God, to talk about eternal values, and to encourage others to study God's word.

You need more opportunities? *Pray!* Less than a year ago my sister-in-law decided to do something about her responsibility to teach the lost. The first thing I heard, she was teaching three non-Christians a week. I was eager to know how she'd managed this (her children were 3, 5 and 7), what she'd said, how she'd found the courage, etc.

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***What draws others to Christ is not the arguments we make in favor of Christianity . . . but rather the happiness, joy, and peace we radiate in our lives.***

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When I asked her, her answer was simply "through prayer." She had begun purposefully to pray for opportunities, for the courage to use them, and for wisdom and strength to fit them into her busy life. I've seen unfolded laundry piled up on her dining room table, but one of the three women she was studying with is now a Christian, and the woman's husband is now involved in a study with my brother. If you're willing, God will give you opportunities.

Learn to see with your spiritual eyes. As Paul reminds us, "from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Every person you come in contact with is a soul that needs what you have to offer. I'm studying now with the mother of a girl in my Scout troop; my sister-in-law is studying

with her child's teacher; another sister in Christ had a Bible study with a woman she met on her morning walks. Open up your eyes and see! Learn to be friendly and outgoing (if you're naturally reserved like I am, you'll have to work at this) and *listen* to people. As you get to know them you'll find opportunities to talk about spiritual values, or how following God's will helped you deal with a similar situation. You may have to talk to ten souls before you find one who's interested, but don't give up. "Conduct yourself with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of every opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Colossians 4:5-6).

Remember that the particular "method" you use won't be nearly as important as your love for God and for that soul you're studying with. I prefer to just read the Bible together, making a few comments and trying to answer any questions that arise. Let the word speak for itself. You might start with one of the Gospels, then go to Acts, but let the individual's need be your guide.

Finally, quit thinking about it and do it. Paul said, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13)—and so can you. Start *today* spending time with God daily. Work on your patience, friendliness, tongue-control or whatever your weak areas are. Talk to people—*everyone*—about spiritual things. And pray, pray, pray. Pray for opportunities and the ability to recognize them. Pray for the boldness to use the opportunities you are given and the wisdom to know what to say and how to teach. Pray for the women you teach that they might open up their hearts to God's word. Pray that you'll be able to be strong through the frustrations and disappointments that will come. And be prepared to rejoice like you've never rejoiced before when someone you've taught becomes your sister! I'll be praying for you.

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## Christian Purity and X-Rated Records

**I**n his letter to Titus Paul includes the following statement of principle: "To the pure all things are pure; but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure" (1:15). These words have been twisted by some to mean that in the hands of the truly pure-minded the most morally gross activities are somehow transformed into something fine, and in the hands of the corrupt the most innocent pursuits become tawdry. Paul's actual meaning is that people that are pure in heart don't harbor impure thoughts or commit impure deeds. Jesus had said the same thing during His earthly sojourn: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit" (Matthew 7:18). Still there are many Christians who continue to live with the myth that if our hearts are "pure" nothing we do or expose ourselves to can corrupt us. This is especially applied to the kind of music we listen to. Some of this music is not just filth, it is vile filth. We have lived to see the fulfillment of the axiom that pure smut will always succeed in driving out mere smut.

To prove that this view is not an alarmist one we cite an editorial by David Gergen in a recent issue of *U.S. News* (5-20-85) which speaks of the efforts of two prominent Washington women (the wife of the Secretary of the Treasury and the wife of the junior senator from Tennessee) to clean up a pestilence of hard-core pornography in the lyrics of many popular songs. These lyrics have become even more explicit and objectionable since MTV (music television) has come to instruct the eye as well as the ear. High on the list of musical tripe which these women have compiled are: "Purple Rain" by Prince, "She Bop" by Cyndi Lauper, and some songs by the singing group Judas Priest. The lyrics of all these songs are explicitly sexual and erotic, but they are merely representative, not exhaustive. There are many others pouring daily into the ears and out of the mouths of American youth, songs which trade in the most degraded and perverted variety of sexuality. Gergen asks wonderingly, "Why do we allow this filth?" The answer is: Because so many of us like it or don't care. No true Christian will be among the number. Those possessed of the mind of

Christ will be repelled by this musical sinkhole.

Gergen further reports that when he questioned his own children about the matter they dismissed his concern quickly by saying, "We just listen to the beat, never the words." He then caught them with guile by asking innocently if they had ever heard the song "Relax." His 11- and 14-year-old broke immediately into the lyrics of the number which is performed by Frankie Goes to Hollywood, a group that advocates gay sexuality. We have also heard young people that are Christians say that they don't listen to the lyrics. This is not evidence of their guilelessness but of their carelessness and irresponsibility. Parents, I know that some of this music can jar your eye teeth just to listen to it (a totally prejudicial remark by an old-timer who cut his teeth on more sedate melodies which my children refer to as "elevator music"), but you need to listen to the words of the songs your children are playing. Peer pressure is strong and young people need guidance in their selection of the kind of music to which they subject their minds. Perhaps what goes into the mouth cannot defile a man (Matthew 15:17-20) but what we take into our ears and eyes goes into the heart (as any good advertising executive knows).

**T**he emperor Marcus Aurelius once observed that "a man's thoughts dye his soul." Solomon has warned us: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). This being the case we ought to carefully screen what we allow to engage our thoughts whether in music, movies, television or prose. It is destined to surface somewhere in our character. That is the reason that Paul makes the following appeal to the Philippians: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (4:8). Remember. The pure mind produces pure deeds because it is fed on pure things. And the Bible is just full of things that stir the heart, enlarge the mind and ennoble the soul.





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Ed Harrell

### The Bible

**N**o book has so influenced human history as the Bible—the book.

The title given by men to the collection of writings which form the sacred Scriptures for Christians was derived from the name of the ancient Phoenician city of Byblos which was famous for its papyrus. Though attacked and demeaned through the centuries, it has remained *the* book.

There is no question about the internal claims of the Old and New Testament writers—they claimed to speak the words of God. Nor is there any doubt that early Christians regarded the Bible as the authority for their conduct. One recent historian of world civilization wrote: "By the fifth century this tradition [the practice of the churches] rested essentially upon the Christian Bible, a collection of authoritative books believed to have been written under divine inspiration. . . . To this core of tradition were added, as occasion demanded, church pronouncements and enactments" (Chester G. Starr, *et. al.*, *A History of the World*, p. 370). The centrality of the Bible to those of us committed to the restoration of New Testament Christianity is obvious. We believe that the great mistake of history was to add,

"as occasion demanded," to that body of revelation which guided the early church. We believe that God leads men not by the unfolding of His ways in history, but by the revelation of His truth in the book.

And yet, the Bible itself has emerged and survived history. Surely its integrity has not depended on the work of men, but on God. To believe that God wrote the book is to believe that God has preserved the book. God's truth has not rested insecurely on the shoulders of copyists and translators, on kings and popes. The continuity of Christian teaching through history is the best evidence to the contrary.

Nevertheless, to consider the Bible is to consider countless intriguing questions about its history—how were the books selected, do we have the original texts written by Paul or Moses, can its ideas be adequately translated from one language to another, has revelation continued in modern days? Some of these questions are complex; indeed, they are areas where scholars spend their lives searching for answers. The articles that follow only introduce these issues. I asked some highly-trained men to compress their learning into very short summaries. Some readers may find

this issue too scholarly for their tastes; others may think we have covered the ground much too quickly. We felt that it was important to place the Bible in perspective as the word of God preserved through history, and to acknowledge that Christians are not unaware of the ways the book has been providentially guided through history.

One could speculate about why God did not relieve us of the troubles of dealing with the questions raised in the articles that follow. He could have preserved the original manuscripts; He could have given an inspired list of books to be included in the Scriptures; He could have insisted that all who would understand His will must learn the language in which it was first written (as Muslims believe of the Koran). But He did not; He left us with the Bible of history. Perhaps it was to save us from becoming captured by artifacts rather than the message; perhaps it was to assure that the truth was equally accessible to every man of every tongue; perhaps it was to keep each generation honest in its commitment to the truth. Honest men never will be afraid to seek to learn better the meaning of the Bible; they also will be prepared to spot pretenders and frauds.

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# THE BIBLE

## The Bible – An Overview

Steve Cawthon

"BORN IN THE EAST AND CLOTHED IN Oriental form and imagery, the Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet and enters land after land to find its own everywhere. It has learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man. Children listen to its stories with wonder and delight, and wise men ponder them as parables of life. The wicked and the proud tremble at its warnings, but to the wounded and penitent it has a mother's voice. It has woven itself into our dearest dreams; so that Love, Friendship, Sympathy, Devotion, Memory, Hope, put on the beautiful garments of its treasured speech. No man is poor or desolate who has this treasure for his own. When the landscape darkens, and the trembling pilgrim comes to the Valley of the Shadow, he is not afraid to enter; he takes the rod and staff of Scripture in his hand; he says to friend and comrade, 'Goodbye; We Shall Meet Again'; and, confronted by that support, he goes toward the lonely pass as one who walks through darkness into light" (from *Companionable Books*, by Henry Van Dyke).

Such eulogies of the Bible could be multiplied endlessly. This volume is truly, as Patrick Henry said, "worth all other books which have ever been printed." But to benefit from this "Book of books," one must appreciate what it is—a small library of 66 books written over a period of 15 centuries by about 40 different authors from varying backgrounds. The books range in length from 150 chapters (Psalms) to a single chapter (Jude). Their style and content are as different as the authors themselves. Some are historical narratives, some poetry, some personal letters. The rationale for selecting these particular writings from the world's literature and binding them into a single volume is their credible claim to divine inspiration. Many are convinced that these books are unique in that they contain not the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Spirit teaches (1 Corinthians 2:13).

The Bible consists of two main sec-

tions—the Old Testament and the New Testament. The 39 books of the Old Testament, originally written in the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, give a history of God's dealings with mankind from the creation to about 400 B.C. Significantly, the Old Testament develops God's three-fold promise to Abraham: (1) To make him the father of a great nation (Israel), (2) To give that nation a land in which to dwell (Canaan), and (3) To bless all nations through the seed of that patriarch (i.e., through Abraham's descendant, Jesus Christ, salvation is offered to all nations; Galatians 3:16). This theme is seen in the four types of Old Testament literature: Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy), History (Joshua through Esther), Poetry and Wisdom (Job through Song of

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*With each reading  
of the Bible, one's  
understanding of and  
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Solomon), and Prophecy (Isaiah through Malachi). Jesus trisected the the Old Testament in His reminder to His apostles that "all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Inspired condensations of the story of the Old Testament are found in the discourses of Stephen (Acts 7:1-53), and Paul (Acts 13:17-41). The value of the Old Testament is identified in Romans 15:4: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope."

The New Testament, first written in Greek, begins with the fulfillment of the third portion of the Abrahamic promise

—the birth of Christ. It describes His sinless life, His miracles, His sacrificial death, and His resurrection from the dead (The Gospels, Matthew through John). The purpose of the four gospels is well stated by the fourth historian: "But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

The book of Acts is a history of the establishment and spread of Christ's church throughout the world. Numerous accounts of conversions to Christ are recorded in Acts, including that of Paul, who later wrote, "in me . . . might Jesus Christ show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life" (1 Timothy 1:16).

The remainder of the New Testament includes letters of instruction in Christian doctrine and living to various local congregations (1 Corinthians through 2 Thessalonians and Hebrews), to particular individuals (1 Timothy through Philemon), as well as general epistles to Christians everywhere (James through Jude). The final book in the Bible, Revelation, is a prophecy addressed to seven first-century churches in Asia. Although it is unique in the New Testament, it is not unlike the Old Testament prophecies of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. The general purpose of the New Testament epistles is "that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

With each reading of the Bible, one's understanding of and appreciation for God's eternal purpose for man become deeper and clearer. Let the simple and plain passages serve as nails well-fastened, to give stability to your Bible study. But don't neglect those "things hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16). They will become fewer as you "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18)

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# THE BIBLE



## The Earliest Manuscripts

Ferrell Jenkins

"IN THE ORIGINAL GREEK IT SAYS . . ."

How many times have you heard that in a Bible class or sermon? The fact is, we have no originals (autograph copies) of any New Testament (NT) or Old Testament (OT) book. Textual critics, those scholars who work with the available materials to produce Hebrew and Greek texts, have three sources of material to which they turn to determine what the original says.

The materials of textual criticism are (1) Manuscripts (MSS); (2) Versions (VSS); (3) Quotations from contemporary or near-contemporary writers who cited the Scripture in their writings. This field of study, called patristics, is especially important in New Testament textual criticism. Our purpose in this article is to look at some of the earliest manuscripts of the Bible. Since the Old Testament was written in Hebrew (HEB), with small sections in Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Greek (GK), we must deal with them separately.

### Old Testament Manuscripts

Translations of the OT in English are made from the Masoretic Text (MT). In its published form this text is known as Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*, and is based on four major HEB MSS, primarily the *Leningrad Codex*. Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, the oldest MSS of the HEB text dated to the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. The Masoretes were a group of Jewish scholars who flourished from about A.D. 500 to 1000, who arranged, organized, and copied the Jewish Scriptures. Their main contribution was the vowel system which they added to the Hebrew consonants. The quality of the existing MT MSS is very good; careful and reverent copying was a hallmark of Masoretic activity.

Only 731 HEB MSS were published prior to 1890. In that year the Cairo Geneza collection of some 10,000 biblical MSS and fragments, dating from A.D. 500 to 800, was discovered. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, MSS from as early as the second century B.C. could be studied and compared with the

MT. The Dead Sea material included a complete scroll of Isaiah, another nearly complete, and fragments of every OT book except Esther. These MSS antedated the MT by about 1000 to 1200 years. For the most part they confirmed the accuracy of the MT.

### New Testament Manuscripts

MSS of the NT are of four kinds: papyri, uncials, minuscules or cursives, and lectionaries. A textual scholar reported in 1978 that there are 5,338 GK MSS extant. We will make note of the earliest ones by century.

**Second Century.** The earliest papyri is the *John Rylands* fragment (P52) of the gospel of John. It is usually dated about A.D. 125 to 135 and contains only about

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**"In the original Greek it says . . ." How many times have you heard that in a Bible class or sermon? The fact is, we have no originals (autograph copies) of any N.T. or O.T. book.**

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five verses, but is an important witness to the NT text. The *Bodmer* papyrus (P66) is of the gospel of John. It does not contain 5:4 and 7:53-8:11. Papyrus 75 contains portions of John and Luke 3-24.

**Third Century.** The *Chester Beatty* papyri includes the gospels (P45), epistles (P46), and Revelation (P47). Some material from the *Bodmer* collection belongs to the third century.

**Fourth Century.** Some of our great uncial MSS belong to this century. *Codex Sinaiticus*, which is usually dated about A.D. 350, contains the entire NT and a large portion of the GK OT. *Codex Vaticanus*, which is also dated to about A.D. 350, originally contained the entire GK Bible. Now a few sections of

the OT are missing; the NT terminates at Hebrews 9:14. *Codex Washingtonianus* belongs to either the 4th or 5th century. From the *Bodmer* collection, the General Epistles (P72) is from the 4th century.

**Fifth Century.** *Codex Alexandrinus* is usually ranked after Sinaiticus and Vaticanus in importance. *Ephraemi Rescriptus* belongs to the fourth or fifth century. The NT part lacks 2 Thessalonians, 2 John, and parts of some other books. *Codex Bezae* is the oldest bilingual MS of the NT (GK and Latin).

### Some Comments on NT Manuscripts

The dozen or so MSS mentioned above represent our earliest witness to the text of the NT. After these come the more than 5,300 other MSS. One may safely conclude that these MSS provide a more reliable witness to the NT than those which come centuries later and may have been copied from them. All of the MSS listed above from the second or third centuries have been discovered in this century. Of the earliest MSS listed for the first five centuries, only *Codex Bezae* was available to the King James translators in A.D. 1611. The Stephens text of A.D. 1550, which appears in many interlinears, likewise did not utilize the earliest MSS. Our most recent Greek texts, such as Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 26th ed., and *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed., published by the United Bible Societies, reflect the evidence of all the MSS including the earliest ones. This type of Greek text has served as the basis for most of our English translations since the Revised Version (American Standard) of 1881 and 1901.

### Conclusion

How can one know what the "original" says? He can study all the MSS, early versions, and quotations. Or he can use an English version which is translated from a text which includes the evidence of the earliest MSS. We are thankful to the Lord for the preservation of His word. (Note: Complete documentation can be found in my *Introduction to Christian Evidences*, pp. 74-84).

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# THE BIBLE

## The Development of the Canon

Clinton D. Hamilton

CANON IS FROM THE GREEK WORD *kanon* which means a reed or measuring rod. It came to mean the norm or rule. Eventually it came to mean a catalog or list. Today it signifies a collection of writings God-breathed and, therefore, these writings are authoritative and binding on men. The comparable Hebrew term is *kaneh* which has the same meaning.

Holy men who spoke from God being borne or moved by the Holy Spirit did not need someone to declare their books canonical. Each knew he was God's prophet and that his book should be received as God's word. However, after all the writers are gone, men need to know the listing of the authoritative, God-breathed books. Hence the need for the canon of Scriptures.

### Development of Old Testament Canon

Canonization is not addressed in either the Old or New Testament. However, the two testaments furnish evidence about their origin, authority, and normative value.

Moses reveals that the testimony, the two tables of stone containing the ten commandments, was put into the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 40:20). Having written the "Law in a book," Moses commanded the Levites to "take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant" for the purpose "that it may be there for a witness against thee" (Deuteronomy 31:24-26). This book of the law was preserved (1 Kings 8:9; 2 Kings 11:12).

Josiah instituted reform of religion in his day after having found "the book of the Law" (2 Kings 22:8ff). He and his associates recognized that the book contained the words of Jehovah (2 Kings 22:13, 18-19). Moses "took the book of the covenant" and read it to the people and they said they would do all that Jehovah had spoken (Exodus 24:7). When Israel returned from Babylonian captivity, Ezra read from the "book, in the law of God" (Nehemiah 8:8). It is rather obvious that there was a body of writings received as the authoritative word of God. To be so considered, the writer must have been guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Septuagint version is the first translation of the Old Testament. This is the version used by Jesus and the apostles. This translation was initiated by Ptolemy Philadelphus and was a literary endeavor, not one to preserve a canonical list of books. The process of canonization of the Old Testament had not been completed.

But by the time of the New Testament it is obvious that the Old Testament canon was established. There was a body of writings known as Scripture divided into the law, the Psalms, and the prophets (Luke 24:44). Josephus, Origen, and Jerome list the scriptures received from the Jews. Josephus listed twenty-two books which are really the thirty-nine in our day because the twelve minor prophets were considered one book; each of the following combinations was considered one book: 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. Likewise Ruth was joined to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah.

### Development of New Testament Canon

Twenty-seven books constitute the canon of the New Testament. New Testament Christians had the canonical books of the Old Testament. Numerous New Testament passages refer to the *scripture* or *scriptures* (see 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Galatians 3:8; 1 Timothy 5:18; 1 Peter 2:6; 2 Peter 1:20; 3:16; *et. al.*).

New Testament writers refer to their writings as from God (1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:25-26; 16:11-13; 1 Corinthians 2:13, 16). Letters sent to one group were to be read to others (1 Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16). By approximately 96 A.D., all the books of the New Testament canon were in existence.

Shortly after the first century closed, from writings of such men as Justin Martyr, we know that the New Testament books were being read among the churches. The process of canonization, however, was gradual and extended over a long interval. Not all the New Testament books were listed by all sources in the first two centuries. By the third century, all the books are listed.

Origen listed them. In the fourth century, Eusebius does also. Athanasius of Alexandria in 367 listed 27 New Testament books which were accepted in his day. These same books are the ones recognized as canonical today.

The entire canonical list was developed in stages. By the end of the second century, the four gospels were designated as Scripture. The Pauline epistles were also accepted as Scripture. By the end of the third century, most all of the books of the New Testament were accepted without much question. By the early fourth century, the list is complete with Eusebius listing all of the books. He basically agrees with Origen.

The council of Carthage in 397 lists the 27 books of the New Testament and refers to them as "the canonical Scriptures." The whole process of developing the canon of the New Testament took over 300 years. As false doctrines, especially Gnosticism, developed in the second century, it became imperative to know what was God's word and what was not. Therefore, there was a powerful impetus to develop the canon of Scripture. By 397, the process was basically complete.

### Conclusion

The claim of the Bible that it is of divine origin is evident by reading it. History reveals that it was so considered. In the second century, men holding to truth fought error by quoting the Scriptures. They settled issues by appeal to Scriptures.

No doubt, there was a providential care exerted to preserve the Scriptures. Their influence in the four corners of the world attest to their power. Changes wrought in sinful men attest that God's gospel is His might or ability to deliver men from sin (Romans 1:16).

No church, no group of men, and no official body made authoritative the books of the Bible. God's authorship gives them the stamp of truth. They are canonical in reality, that is, they stand the test of examination as from God and not from men, because God's chosen prophets wrote them—not because some body declared them to be a part of the canon.



# THE BIBLE



## Apocryphal Books and Ante-Nicene Fathers

Daniel H. King

AFTER THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD, SEVERAL documents appeared in the literature of the early church which proved to be forgeries. Also, there were a number of writings which gave evidence of having been written after the end of the era of inspiration. These books were called *apocryphal* (from a word meaning "hidden"), and others were described as *pseudepigraphical* ("written under assumed names"). Some apocryphal works claimed that they were "hidden from view" until a later age and then revealed. They pretended to have been lost and then found. This answered the obvious question of why no one had ever heard of them before.

Books of pseudepigrapha laid claim to divine inspiration through their writers. But the names which appeared on the documents were false. In the days after the apostles were deceased they took the outward form of the New Testament writings and made them out to have been written by New Testament worthies. Thus, there were "Acts of John," a "Revelation of Peter" and one of Paul, Gospels of Thomas and Pseudo-Matthew, etc.

Early Christian writers, especially those known as Ante-Nicene Fathers (men who lived and worked prior to the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.), wrestled with the question of which books should be read in the churches as Scripture and which ones were to be rejected as false. The importance of these men and their work cannot be minimized. The composite of their decisions have come to be registered in history as our list of accepted books. The ones they turned down have come to be generally forgotten. Sensationalist writers have alluded occasionally to these documents as the "forgotten books of the Bible." In truth they are only "forgotten" since they never made up any part of the Bible. But it was the diligent work of these men which aided in bringing to us the present books of our Bible. They encouraged the reading and study of some writings and discouraged it with others, so that both positively and negatively they con-

tributed to the process of canonization.

At an early period the Ante-Nicene churchmen compiled lists of books which were deemed inspired and genuine. In so doing they "bracketed out" other works considered apocryphal or pseudepigraphical. This was precisely what they had in mind, for they were facing a real threat to sound doctrine and faith in the churches in which they labored. Errorists were turning out books and letters, claiming for them apostolic authority and urging them upon the reading public. The result was that ungrounded Christians were imbibing the doctrines enshrined in these documents without being aware of their non-apostolic origin. The lists were the answer. They were put together on the basis of solid traditional evidence, their compilers carefully inquiring into the support for any book, as well as the internal and external features which might prove it illegitimate.

One such list is the *Muratorian Fragment*, a partial Latin copy of a Greek list from the second century. In it reference is made to certain letters forged under the name of Paul by the Marcionites (a gnostic group), and "several others which cannot be received into the catholic church, for gall ought not to be mixed with honey." It mentions also the Shepherd of Hermas, a writing of the second century, commenting that it should not be read in the church, for Hermas wrote it "quite recently, in our own times, in the city of Rome, during the episcopate of his brother Pius."

An apocryphal work would have had to overcome two difficult obstacles to have been accepted. The first is what Guthrie calls "the mesh of early Christian suspicion." Early Christians demanded that any book be proven by history. It cannot have recently turned up. Second, the early church was very unfriendly toward the production of spurious books. One presbyter of the province of Asia was not only condemned for the practice, but deprived of his office. It was no casual matter. It threatened the validity of the very

documentary basis of the church. And so no permissive attitude was taken toward it.

During the course of the second century most churches came to possess and acknowledge a canon which included the four Gospels, Acts, 13 letters of Paul, 1 Peter and 1 John. Seven books still lacked general recognition: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation. Several other writings, such as the first letter of Clement, the letter of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas and the Didache (otherwise known as the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles"), were accepted as Scripture by a number of writers; though rejected by the majority.

In the third century and part of the fourth, there was a sifting of the disputed books. Some were accepted as canonical and others as apocryphal. Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Ecclesiastical History* (Book 3, chap. 25) summarized the results of his own investigations in sorting out which books were real and which ones were spurious. In so doing he searched the writings of earlier Christian authors (the Ante-Nicene Fathers) and formulated a list which is essentially the canon as we know it today. After Eusebius' time (A.D. 325) the apocryphal writings offered very little threat to the faith or to the officially accepted list of authoritative books.

Although this process may seem to the reader to be an entirely man-centered one, in reality it is not. The works written by inspired men were so far superior in spiritual and doctrinal quality that they outshone the books of dubious origin. For this reason they were venerated and the latter disregarded. One has to experience the apocryphal materials by personal reading before he can feel comfortable in so saying. But after he has read them, it becomes clearer how God's providence protected the inspired Scriptures—by their own inherent quality—and so assured their preservation.

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# DAILY BIBLE READING

JANUARY			FEBRUARY			MARCH		
DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.	DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.	DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.
1	Gen. 1,2	Mt. 1	1	Ex. 27,28	Mt. 21:23-46	1	Num. 26,27	Mk. 8:22-38
2	Gen. 3-5	Mt. 2	2	Ex. 29,30	Mt. 22:1-22	2	Num. 28,29	Mk. 9:1-29
3	Gen. 6-8	Mt. 3	3	Ex. 31-33	Mt. 22:23-46	3	Num. 30,31	Mk. 9:30-50
4	Gen. 9-11	Mt. 4	4	Ex. 34-36	Mt. 23:1-22	4	Num. 32,33	Mk. 10:1-31
5	Gen. 12-14	Mt. 5:1-26	5	Ex. 37,38	Mt. 23:23-29	5	Num. 34-36	Mk. 10:32-52
6	Gen. 15-17	Mt. 5:27-48	6	Ex. 39,40	Mt. 24:1-22	6	Deut. 1,2	Mk. 11:1-19
7	Gen. 18,19	Mt. 6	7	Lev. 1-3	Mt. 24:23-51	7	Deut. 3,4	Mk. 11:20-33
8	Gen. 20-22	Mt. 7	8	Lev. 4-6	Mt. 25:1-30	8	Deut. 5-7	Mk. 12:1-27
9	Gen. 23,24	Mt. 8	9	Lev. 7-9	Mt. 25:31-46	9	Deut. 8-10	Mk. 12:28-44
10	Gen. 25,26	Mt. 9:1-17	10	Lev. 10-12	Mt. 26:1-19	10	Deut. 11-13	Mk. 13:1-13
11	Gen. 27,28	Mt. 9:18-38	11	Lev. 13	Mt. 26:20-54	11	Deut. 14-16	Mk. 13:14-37
12	Gen. 29,30	Mt. 10:1-23	12	Lev. 14	Mt. 26:55-75	12	Deut. 17-19	Mk. 14:1-25
13	Gen. 31,32	Mt. 10:24-42	13	Lev. 15-17	Mt. 27:1-31	13	Deut. 20-22	Mk. 14:26-50
14	Gen. 33-35	Mt. 11	14	Lev. 18,19	Mt. 27:32-66	14	Deut. 23-25	Mk. 14:51-72
15	Gen. 36-37	Mt. 12:1-21	15	Lev. 20,21	Mt. 28	15	Deut. 26,27	Mk. 15:1-26
16	Gen. 38-40	Mt. 12:22-50	16	Lev. 22,23	Mk. 1:1-22	16	Deut. 28	Mk. 15:27-47
17	Gen. 41	Mt. 13:1-32	17	Lev. 24,25	Mk. 1:23-45	17	Deut. 29,30	Mk. 16
18	Gen. 42,43	Mt. 13:38-58	18	Lev. 26,27	Mk. 2	18	Deut. 31,32	Lk. 1:1-23
19	Gen. 44,45	Mt. 14:1-21	19	Num. 1,2	Mk. 3:1-21	19	Deut. 33,34	Lk. 1:24-56
20	Gen. 46-48	Mt. 14:22-36	20	Num. 3,4	Mk. 3:22-35	20	Josh. 1-3	Lk. 1:57-80
21	Gen. 49,50	Mt. 15:1-20	21	Num. 5,6	Mk. 4:1-20	21	Josh. 4-6	Lk. 2:1-24
22	Ex. 1-3	Mt. 15:21-39	22	Num. 7	Mk. 4:21-41	22	Josh. 7,8	Lk. 2:25-52
23	Ex. 4-6	Mt. 16	23	Num. 8-10	Mk. 5:1-20	23	Josh. 9,10	Lk. 3
24	Ex. 7,8	Mt. 17	24	Num. 11-13	Mk. 5:21-43	24	Josh. 11-13	Lk. 4:1-32
25	Ex. 9,10	Mt. 18:1-20	25	Num. 14,15	Mk. 6:1-32	25	Josh. 14,15	Lk. 4:33-44
26	Ex. 11,12	Mt. 18:21-35	26	Num. 16,17	Mk. 6:33-56	26	Josh. 16-18	Lk. 5:1-16
27	Ex. 13-15	Mt. 19:1-15	27	Num. 18-20	Mk. 7:1-13	27	Josh. 19,20	Lk. 5:17-39
28	Ex. 16-18	Mt. 19:16-30	28	Num. 21,22	Mk. 7:14-37	28	Josh. 21,22	Lk. 6:1-26
29	Ex. 19-21	Mt. 20:1-16	29	Num. 23-25	Mk. 8:1-21	29	Josh. 23,24	Lk. 6:27-49
30	Ex. 22-24	Mt. 20:17-34	<i>Divide chapters for Feb. 29 when only 28 days; read part Feb. 28, rest on Mar. 1.</i>			30	Judg. 1,2	Lk. 7:1-30
31	Ex. 25,26	Mt. 21:1-22				31	Judg. 3-5	Lk. 7:31-50

JULY			AUGUST			SEPTEMBER		
DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.	DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.	DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.
1	Job 21,22	Ac. 10:1-23	1	Ps. 65-67	Rom. 2	1	Ps. 148-150	1 Cor. 11:16-34
2	Job 23-25	Ac. 10:24-48	2	Ps. 68,69	Rom. 3	2	Prov. 1,2	1 Cor. 12
3	Job 26-28	Ac. 11	3	Ps. 70-72	Rom. 4	3	Prov. 3,4	1 Cor. 13
4	Job 29,30	Ac. 12	4	Ps. 73,74	Rom. 5	4	Prov. 5,6	1 Cor. 14:1-20
5	Job 31,32	Ac. 13:1-23	5	Ps. 75-77	Rom. 6	5	Prov. 7,8	1 Cor. 14:21-40
6	Job 33,34	Ac. 13:24-52	6	Ps. 78	Rom. 7	6	Prov. 9,10	1 Cor. 15:1-32
7	Job 35-37	Ac. 14	7	Ps. 79-81	Rom. 8:1-18	7	Prov. 11,12	1 Cor. 15:33-58
8	Job 38,39	Ac. 15:1-21	8	Ps. 82-84	Rom. 8:19-39	8	Prov. 13,14	1 Cor. 16
9	Job 40-42	Ac. 15:22-41	9	Ps. 85-87	Rom. 9	9	Prov. 15,16	2 Cor. 1
10	Ps. 1-3	Ac. 16:1-15	10	Ps. 88,89	Rom. 10	10	Prov. 17,18	2 Cor. 2
11	Ps. 4-6	Ac. 16:16-40	11	Ps. 90-92	Rom. 11:1-21	11	Prov. 19,20	2 Cor. 3
12	Ps. 7-9	Ac. 17:1-15	12	Ps. 93-95	Rom. 11:22-36	12	Prov. 21,22	2 Cor. 4
13	Ps. 10-12	Ac. 17:16-34	13	Ps. 96-98	Rom. 12	13	Prov. 23,24	2 Cor. 5
14	Ps. 13-16	Ac. 18	14	Ps. 99-102	Rom. 13	14	Prov. 25-27	2 Cor. 6
15	Ps. 17,18	Ac. 19:1-20	15	Ps. 103,104	Rom. 14	15	Prov. 28,29	2 Cor. 7
16	Ps. 19-21	Ac. 19:21-41	16	Ps. 105,106	Rom. 15:1-20	16	Prov. 30,31	2 Cor. 8
17	Ps. 22-24	Ac. 20:1-16	17	Ps. 107,108	Rom. 15:21-33	17	Eccl. 1-3	2 Cor. 9
18	Ps. 25-27	Ac. 20:17-38	18	Ps. 109-111	Rom. 16	18	Eccl. 4-6	2 Cor. 10
19	Ps. 28-30	Ac. 21:1-14	19	Ps. 112-115	1 Cor. 1	19	Eccl. 7-9	2 Cor. 11:1-15
20	Ps. 31-33	Ac. 21:15-40	20	Ps. 116-118	1 Cor. 2	20	Eccl. 10-12	2 Cor. 11:16-33
21	Ps. 34,35	Ac. 22	21	Ps. 119:1-96	1 Cor. 3	21	S. Sol. 1-3	2 Cor. 12
22	Ps. 36,37	Ac. 23:1-11	22	Ps. 119:97-176	1 Cor. 4	22	S. Sol. 4,5	2 Cor. 13
23	Ps. 38-40	Ac. 23:12-35	23	Ps. 120,121	1 Cor. 5	23	S. Sol. 6-8	Gal. 1
24	Ps. 41-43	Ac. 24	24	Ps. 122-124	1 Cor. 6	24	Isa. 1-3	Gal. 2
25	Ps. 44-46	Ac. 25	25	Ps. 125-127	1 Cor. 7:1-24	25	Isa. 4-6	Gal. 3
26	Ps. 47-49	Ac. 26	26	Ps. 128-131	1 Cor. 7:25-40	26	Isa. 7-9	Gal. 4
27	Ps. 50-52	Ac. 27:1-25	27	Ps. 132-135	1 Cor. 8	27	Isa. 10-12	Gal. 5
28	Ps. 53-55	Ac. 27:26-44	28	Ps. 136-138	1 Cor. 9	28	Isa. 13-15	Gal. 6
29	Ps. 56-58	Ac. 28:1-15	29	Ps. 139-141	1 Cor. 10:1-13	29	Isa. 16-18	Eph. 1
30	Ps. 59-61	Ac. 28:16-31	30	Ps. 142-144	1 Cor. 10:14-33	30	Isa. 19-21	Eph. 2
31	Ps. 62-64	Rom. 1	31	Ps. 145-147	1 Cor. 11:1-15			



# ING SCHEDULE

APRIL			MAY			JUNE		
DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.	DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.	DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.
1	Judg. 6,7	Lk. 8:1-21	1	1 Ki. 1,2	Lk. 22:54-71	1	2 Chr. 4-6	Jn. 12
2	Judg. 8,9	Lk. 8:22-56	2	1 Ki. 3-5	Lk. 23:1-26	2	2 Chr. 7-9	Jn. 13:1-17
3	Judg. 10,11	Lk. 9:1-36	3	1 Ki. 6,7	Lk. 23:27-38	3	2 Chr. 10-12	Jn. 13:18-38
4	Judg. 12-14	Lk. 9:37-62	4	1 Ki. 8,9	Lk. 23:39-56	4	2 Chr. 13-16	Jn. 14
5	Judg. 15-17	Lk. 10:1-24	5	1 Ki. 10,11	Lk. 24:1-35	5	2 Chr. 17-19	Jn. 15
6	Judg. 18,19	Lk. 10:25-42	6	1 Ki. 12,13	Lk. 24:36-53	6	2 Chr. 20-22	Jn. 16:1-15
7	Judg. 20,21	Lk. 11:1-28	7	1 Ki. 14,15	Jn. 1:1-28	7	2 Chr. 23-25	Jn. 16:16-33
8	Ruth	Lk. 11:29-54	8	1 Ki. 16-18	Jn. 1:29-51	8	2 Chr. 26-28	Jn. 17
9	1 Sam. 1-3	Lk. 12:1-34	9	1 Ki. 19,20	Jn. 2	9	2 Chr. 29-31	Jn. 18:1-23
10	1 Sam. 4-6	Lk. 12:35-59	10	1 Ki. 21,22	Jn. 3:1-21	10	2 Chr. 32,33	Jn. 18:24-40
11	1 Sam. 7-9	Lk. 13:1-21	11	2 Ki. 1-3	Jn. 3:22-36	11	2 Chr. 34-36	Jn. 19:1-22
12	1 Sam. 10-12	Lk. 13:22-35	12	2 Ki. 4,5	Jn. 4:1-30	12	Ezra 1,2	Jn. 19:23-42
13	1 Sam. 13,14	Lk. 14:1-24	13	2 Ki. 6-8	Jn. 4:31-54	13	Ezra 3-5	Jn. 20
14	1 Sam. 15,16	Lk. 14:25-35	14	2 Ki. 9-11	Jn. 5:1-24	14	Ezra 6-8	Jn. 21
15	1 Sam. 17,18	Lk. 15:1-10	15	2 Ki. 12-14	Jn. 5:25-47	15	Ezra 9,10	Ac. 1
16	1 Sam. 19-21	Lk. 15:11-32	16	2 Ki. 15-17	Jn. 6:1-21	16	Neh. 1-3	Ac. 2:1-13
17	1 Sam. 22-24	Lk. 16:1-18	17	2 Ki. 18,19	Jn. 6:22-24	17	Neh. 4-6	Ac. 2:14-47
18	1 Sam. 25,26	Lk. 16:19-31	18	2 Ki. 20-22	Jn. 6:45-71	18	Neh. 7,8	Ac. 3
19	1 Sam. 27-29	Lk. 17:1-19	19	2 Ki. 23-25	Jn. 7:1-31	19	Neh. 9-11	Ac. 4:1-22
20	1 Sam. 30,31	Lk. 17:20-37	20	1 Chr. 1,2	Jn. 7:32-53	20	Neh. 12,13	Ac. 4:23-37
21	2 Sam. 1-3	Lk. 18:1-17	21	1 Chr. 3-5	Jn. 8:1-20	21	Esth. 1-3	Ac. 5:1-16
22	2 Sam. 4-6	Lk. 18:18-43	22	1 Chr. 6,7	Jn. 8:21-36	22	Esth. 4-6	Ac. 5:17-34
23	2 Sam. 7-9	Lk. 19:1-28	23	1 Chr. 8-10	Jn. 8:37-59	23	Esth. 7-10	Ac. 5:34-42
24	2 Sam. 10-12	Lk. 19:29-48	24	1 Chr. 11-13	Jn. 9:1-23	24	Job 1-3	Ac. 6
25	2 Sam. 13,14	Lk. 20:1-26	25	1 Chr. 14-16	Jn. 9:24-34	25	Job 4-6	Ac. 7:1-19
26	2 Sam. 15-16	Lk. 20:27-47	26	1 Chr. 17-19	Jn. 9:35-41	26	Job 7-9	Ac. 7:20-43
27	2 Sam. 17,18	Lk. 21:1-19	27	1 Chr. 20-22	Jn. 10:1-21	27	Job 10-12	Ac. 7:44-60
28	2 Sam. 19,20	Lk. 21:20-38	28	1 Chr. 23-25	Jn. 10:22-42	28	Job 13-15	Ac. 8:1-25
29	2 Sam. 21,22	Lk. 22:1-30	29	1 Chr. 26,27	Jn. 11:1-17	29	Job 16-18	Ac. 8:26-40
30	2 Sam. 23,24	Lk. 22:31-53	30	1 Chr. 28,29	Jn. 11:18-46	30	Job 19,20	Ac. 9
			31	2 Chr. 1-3	Jn. 11:47-57			

OCTOBER			NOVEMBER			DECEMBER		
DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.	DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.	DAY	OLD TEST.	NEW TEST.
1	Isa. 22,23	Eph. 3	1	Jer. 31,32	Tit. 2	1	Ezek. 45,46	2 Pet. 3
2	Isa. 24-26	Eph. 4	2	Jer. 33-35	Tit. 3	2	Ezek. 47,48	1 Jn. 1
3	Isa. 27,28	Eph. 5	3	Jer. 36,37	Philemon	3	Dan. 1,2	1 Jn. 2
4	Isa. 29,30	Eph. 6	4	Jer. 38,39	Heb. 1	4	Dan. 3,4	1 Jn. 3
5	Isa. 31-33	Phil. 1	5	Jer. 40-42	Heb. 2	5	Dan. 5,6	1 Jn. 4
6	Isa. 34-36	Phil. 2	6	Jer. 43-45	Heb. 3	6	Dan. 7,8	1 Jn. 5
7	Isa. 37,38	Phil. 3	7	Jer. 46-48	Heb. 4	7	Dan. 9-12	2 Jn.
8	Isa. 39,40	Phil. 4	8	Jer. 49,50	Heb. 5	8	Hos. 1-4	3 Jn.
9	Isa. 41,42	Col. 1	9	Jer. 51,52	Heb. 6	9	Hos. 5-8	Jude
10	Isa. 43,44	Col. 2	10	Lam. 1,2	Heb. 7	10	Hos. 9-11	Rev. 1
11	Isa. 45-47	Col. 3	11	Lam. 3-5	Heb. 8	11	Hos. 12-14	Rev. 2
12	Isa. 48,49	Col. 4	12	Ezek. 1-3	Heb. 9	12	Joel	Rev. 3
13	Isa. 50-52	1 Th. 1	13	Ezek. 4-6	Heb. 10:1-23	13	Amos 1-3	Rev. 4
14	Isa. 53-55	1 Th. 2	14	Ezek. 7-9	Heb. 10:24-39	14	Amos 4-6	Rev. 5
15	Isa. 56-58	1 Th. 3	15	Ezek. 10-12	Heb. 11:1-19	15	Amos 7-9	Rev. 6
16	Isa. 59-61	1 Th. 4	16	Ezek. 13-15	Heb. 11:20-40	16	Obadiah	Rev. 7
17	Isa. 62-64	1 Th. 5	17	Ezek. 16	Heb. 12	17	Jonah	Rev. 8
18	Isa. 65,66	2 Th. 1	18	Ezek. 17-19	Heb. 13	18	Micah 1-3	Rev. 9
19	Jer. 1,2	2 Th. 2	19	Ezek. 20,21	Jas. 1	19	Micah 4,5	Rev. 10
20	Jer. 3,4	2 Th. 3	20	Ezek. 22,23	Jas. 2	20	Micah 6,7	Rev. 11
21	Jer. 5,6	1 Tim. 1	21	Ezek. 24-26	Jas. 3	21	Nahum	Rev. 12
22	Jer. 7,8	1 Tim. 2	22	Ezek. 27,28	Jas. 4	22	Habakkuk	Rev. 13
23	Jer. 9,10	1 Tim. 3	23	Ezek. 29-31	Jas. 5	23	Zephaniah	Rev. 14
24	Jer. 11-13	1 Tim. 4	24	Ezek. 32,33	1 Pet. 1	24	Haggai	Rev. 15
25	Jer. 14-16	1 Tim. 5	25	Ezek. 34,35	1 Pet. 2	25	Zech. 1-3	Rev. 16
26	Jer. 17-19	1 Tim. 6	26	Ezek. 36,37	1 Pet. 3	26	Zech. 4-6	Rev. 17
27	Jer. 20-22	2 Tim. 1	27	Ezek. 38,39	1 Pet. 4	27	Zech. 7,8	Rev. 18
28	Jer. 23,24	2 Tim. 2	28	Ezek. 40	1 Pet. 5	28	Zech. 9,10	Rev. 19
29	Jer. 25,26	2 Tim. 3	29	Ezek. 41,42	2 Pet. 1	29	Zech. 11,12	Rev. 20
30	Jer. 27,28	2 Tim. 4	30	Ezek. 43,44	2 Pet. 2	30	Zech. 13,14	Rev. 21
31	Jer. 29,30	Tit. 1				31	Malachi	Rev. 22





# THE BIBLE

L. A. Stauffer

## The King James and Early English Versions

THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL: FOR "ALL nations," for "every creature" (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). God, thus, directed the writers of the New Testament to pen His revelation in what is now called "Koine" Greek, the common language of the average man. As a result, Paul could say to the recipients of his epistles, "when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4).

This was not the case in fourteenth century England when English became the dominant language of the realm. The Scriptures were available only in the Latin Vulgate of Jerome. The average Englishman could not read Latin and "churchmen" who could do so knew little of the Scripture's meaning and cared less about imparting it.

John Wycliffe, however, was different. In the spirit of the apostle Paul, Wycliffe, a scholar from Oxford and a parish priest who cared about the people, wanted the ordinary man to read the Scripture for himself. Wycliffe was interested in reform and sought to bridge the gulf between "churchmen" and "parishioners."

The Oxford scholar's solution was to translate the Scriptures into the language of the common man. "The Sacred Scriptures," he said, "are the property of the people, and one which no one should be allowed to wrest from them . . . Christ and His apostles converted the world by making known the Scriptures to men in a form familiar to them."

Amidst ecclesiastical opposition Wycliffe and a student, Nicholas of Hereford, put their scholarly heads together and translated the Latin Vulgate into the language of the people. This first of many English versions was completed by 1382. Because copies had to be made by hand and the cost was prohibitive, circulation of the Wycliffe Bible was severely limited. It was, however, a beginning of things to come.

The next two centuries witnessed many changes in Europe and England, changes technologically, politically, religiously and educationally. These

changes created a climate for the birth and growth of a permanent English translation. By the mid-fifteenth century the printing press was invented and Constantinople had fallen and Greek learning and manuscripts had come to western Europe. Within another century the political and religious domination of Rome had lost its hold on England.

Even as these changes took place William Tyndale was born near Wales in 1484. He was educated at Oxford and Cambridge, where he became proficient in both English and Greek. Caught up by the notion of reform, Tyndale, as his predecessor Wycliffe, was eager to translate the Bible into the language of the people. He once vowed to a "high churchman": "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that

two remain. Tyndale himself was betrayed by a "friend," captured in Germany, strangled and burned at the stake. As he died October 6, 1536, he reportedly prayed, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

Little did Tyndale know that as his eyes closed in death the king's eyes had already been opened to the need of the Scriptures in English. In 1534 a petition for an English translation was filed and by 1535 Miles Coverdale had completed a version acceptable to the king. Ironically, it was little more than a reproduction of Tyndale's work. The same can be said of the "Matthews' Bible" of 1537 and the first authorized version, the "Great Bible" of 1539. Of Matthews' Bible it is said: "This work was Tyndale's translation pure and simple." The Great Bible, one author notes, is "really little more than a revised edition of Tyndale." Edgar J. Goodspeed says, "They are all followers of Tyndale and nothing more. His translation, at first condemned and proscribed, had within fifteen years become the Authorized New Testament of the English Church."

Tyndale seems to have set the standard for the remaining translations of that century—the "Geneva Bible" of 1560 and the "Bishops' Bible" of 1568 and its revision of 1572. Also, according to Goodspeed, "it was the terse and telling common English of William Tyndale that chiefly colored the King James Bible" (1611). "It is not too much to say," he says, "that William Tyndale wrote nine-tenths of the King James New Testament."

Although the beauty, the diction, the style of today's King James Version, a product of many revisions before and after 1611, still grips the English mind, the important lesson to learn from early English versions is the constant need for revision. As new evidence from Greek manuscripts appears and as the language changes, revision will be necessary so that, in the words of Paul, "when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ."

1716 Dover Trace Dr., Fenton, MO 63026

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driveth a plough shall know more of the scriptures than thou doest."

Tyndale received little support in England. Therefore he moved to the free city of Hamburg to do his translating. Using Erasmus' Greek text and Latin version, the Latin Vulgate and Luther's German translation, Tyndale completed an English translation by 1524. He went to Cologne the next year to have it printed, but officials learned of the undertaking and he was forced to flee to Worms to complete the project.

The next ten years were difficult times for Tyndale and his translation. Tyndale ingeniously smuggled hundreds of copies into England, but high church officials bought them and burned them. More than 18,000 copies were printed between 1525 and 1528, yet fragments of only



# THE BIBLE



## Later English Versions

Luther W. Martin

THE SCIENCE OF RENDERING A MESSAGE, such as the gospel of Christ, from one language to another, is called *translation*. English readers are quite dependent upon the scholars who render the Hebrew and Greek of the Bible into words which the reader understands.

Two scholars, John Beekman and John Callow, have authored a book entitled *Translating the Word of God*. It is published by Zondervan Publishing House of Grand Rapids, Michigan. In this work, the two authors have suggested four basic classifications for evaluating translations of the Scripture: (1) The highly literal translation. (2) The modified literal. (3) The idiomatic. (4) The unduly free translation.

Interlinear translations are typical of the first group; the nearest equivalent English word is placed directly under the original Hebrew or Greek word. "For so loved God the world that His Son the only begotten He gave . . ." (part of John 3:16). Notice how awkward the English is when a literal translation is attempted. The English, the receptor language, loses its literary smoothness.

The *modified literal* translation is represented by the King James Version, American Standard Version, New American Standard, and the New King James Version. Italicized words indicate additions necessary to properly complete the English sentence.

The *idiomatic translations* are those which attempt to accommodate the idioms and vernacular of the receptor language. A Black Version reads: "God really did love everybody in the world. In fact, he loved the people so much that he done gave up the onliest Son he had. Any man that believe in him, he gonna have a life that ain't never gonna end. He ain't never gonna die" (John 3:16). Other versions, though "English," are Pidgin-English and Creole.

The *unduly free translation* is represented by The Living Bible, wherein the translator uses the word "Paraphrased" in the title. This confirms the free or "loose" manner in which the translating is done. James Moffatt wrote

in the preface to his version of the New Testament: "I have endeavored to make the New Testament, especially St. Paul's epistles, as intelligible to a modern English reader as any version that is not a paraphrase can hope to make them" (page vi). Moffatt, like other translators, knew the difference between translating and paraphrasing.

### Major Modern Translations

**English Revised Version, 1881.** Thirty-seven scholars were involved in revising the Old Testament, and twenty-eight participated in the New Testament revision. Additionally, the English scholars invited thirty-two American scholars to assist in the work. However, the differences between British English

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and American English was a source of sharp disagreements. These translators rejected the text of the majority of manuscripts, accepting the urging of Westcott and Hort to go along with their two-manuscript theory.

**American Standard Version, 1901.** The American translators who had assisted in the English Revision were eager to publish a version containing the conclusions of the Americans. They, too, embraced the Westcott and Hort text, but this version was considered the truest to the Greek text.

**Twentieth Century New Testament, 1898.** A company of some twenty scholars sought to render the New Testament in simple, modern English. They,

too, followed the Westcott and Hort two-manuscript text. Their goal was to use only words currently being used in the English language.

**Tercentenary Commemoration Bible, 1911.** Three hundred years after the publication of the King James Version, a committee of thirty-four American and Canadian scholars published this version. It received little attention.

**Revised Standard Version, 1946 & 1952.** Forty Protestant denominations had a hand in producing this version. The N.T. appeared in 1946 and the O.T. in 1952. This version also follows the Westcott and Hort text.

**New English Bible, 1961.** Work on this version began as early as 1946. Churches of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and England were the leading forces in its production. They prepared a new Greek text from which they rendered their version.

**New American Standard Bible, 1960, 1962, 1963.** Published by the Lockman Foundation and planned as a revision of the American Standard Version of 1901, this version was still influenced by Westcott and Hort's Greek text, but it has many features to recommend it.

**New International Version, 1973.** Produced by a primary committee of fifteen, approximately one hundred scholars assisted. These represented numerous religious groups. However, this writer considers the NIV to be an unduly free translation.

**New King James Bible, 1979.** Published by Thomas Nelson, and based upon "The Majority Text," this version benefits from textual discoveries made since the days of Westcott and Hort. It also displays respect for the many manuscripts that were summarily rejected by the English Revisers of 1881. This version attempts to retain the majesty of the 1611 King James Version, yet omitting the archaic words.

(*Author's Note:* I did not list any works prepared by just one scholar. The works of groups are generally more dependable. LWM.)

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# THE BIBLE

Melvin Curry

## Biased and Perverted Versions

EVERY SEAMSTRESS KNOWS THAT TO CUT or sew on the bias means to cut or sew a diagonal line across the weave of the cloth. This is a normal, even necessary, procedure for a seamstress, although certain material may sag as a result. But an individual who cuts the pattern of God's word on the bias is slanting the message according to his own prejudices. Thus, a biased translation of the Bible is one that leans toward a particular view of interpretation.

Few, if any, translations have escaped the charge of bias. Moreover, as one would expect, accusations of bias sometimes are colored by the doctrinal views of the critic himself. For example, Alexander Campbell's *Living Oracles* was accused of bias for translating *baptizo* as "immerse." Most of us, however, would agree with Campbell. Campbell, in turn, printed James MacKnight's accusations that the *King James Version* was biased in favor of witchcraft and the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and election (*The Christian Baptist*, 1825, 2:226). James Moffatt showed his "liberal" bias when he translated Matthew 1:16 in such a way as to make Joseph the father of Jesus (based on a disputed reading supported by only one or two manuscripts). A liberal bias may also be seen in a few translations in the *Revised Standard Version*. Both the *New American Standard Version* and the *New King James Version* are slightly slanted toward premillennial interpretations. The *New International Version* seems to lean in favor of the doctrine of original sin, and the *New World Translation* is biased against the full deity of Jesus and in favor of conditional immortality. These are merely a few samples of bias to be found in translations.

The occasion to express one's bias in translation frequently arises either from variant readings among the manuscripts or from ambiguities involved in lexical and grammatical considerations. Seldom, however, does bias completely destroy the usefulness of a translation, yet some otherwise good translations

may be either avoided or blacklisted because of such. A Bible student should seek to familiarize himself with the beliefs of those who translate the Bible and to look out for translations that are slanted toward false views. Generally speaking, he will find that translations produced by large committees that represent a variety of religious viewpoints are more likely to avoid bias.

Paul charged Timothy to be an unashamed workman, "handling aright (literally, cutting straight) the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). This charge came in the face of the danger posed by Hymenaeus and Philetus, "men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some" (verse 16).

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Sad to say, some Bible translators demonstrate outright perversions of God's truth. They even deliberately turn aside from what the text demands and insert erroneous views that are based neither on manuscript evidence nor on lexical or grammatical ambiguities. Thus the resulting translations are contrary to God's word.

The *New World Translation*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, is a perverted translation. Intolerable alterations abound that go far beyond the translation's general bias in favor of Arianism, conditional immortality, and class distinctions among believers. Ironically, however, the Preface to the 1950 edition of the *New World Translation* claims that all previous translations from Wycliffe to

the present "have fallen victim to the power of human traditionalism;" consequently, "an inconsistency and unreasonableness have been insinuated into the teachings of the inspired writings" through them (page 6). Let us now examine whether or not the *New World Translation* is the only version free from bias and perversion.

One of the most glaring perversions to be found in the *New World Translation* is the unwarranted translation of the Greek word *kurios* ("Lord") by the Hebrew word *yahweh* ("Jehovah") some 237 times in the New Testament. By doing this, they are able in many contexts to soften the doctrine of the deity of Jesus. Another horrible example of perversion is the insertion of the word "other" four times in Colossians 1:15-17 in order to make Jesus one of God's created beings. The NWT reads as follows: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, because by means of him all *other* things have been created through him and for him. Also he is before all *other* things and by means of him all *other* things were made to exist" (italics supplied). The word "other" is also inserted in Philippians 2:9, "God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every *other* name" (italics supplied). Then, in Philippians 3:11, a plurality of resurrections is read into the text by the word "earlier." The NWT reads, "If I may by any means attain unto the *earlier* resurrection from the dead" (italics supplied). The examples could be multiplied many times over.

Each one of us must decide for himself what translation to use for Bible study. We must not, however, be naive and accept all translation equally nor even accept everything that is within a single translation. The reason is simple: there are biased and perverted versions. All translations are human works. Understanding this fact, we must exercise caution and search for those with the fewest errors.

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# THE BIBLE



## Cultic and Sectarian Additions

Patrick Farish

AS A RULE, NOBODY "RELIGIOUS" OPENLY rejects the Bible. Its claim, even on the hearts of those who make little effort to walk by its precepts, is too deep-seated. A religious leader openly contemptuous of the Bible would have few followers. So, while everybody claims to believe that "the Bible is the word of God," frequently there is attached a qualifying "But . . .!"

Joseph Smith ("First prophet, seer and revelator to the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," i.e., Mormons) made the claim with the qualifier. In "The Articles of Faith" of the church he began in this statement: "8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly;" BUT! . . . "we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God."

Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy ("Founder and Leader of the Christian Science movement" and author of *Science and Health With Key To The Scriptures*) made similar sounds. She said, "The Bible has been my only authority" (*Science and Health*, 126:29-31); BUT! . . . her teachings were also presented as "divine revelation:" "The revelation of Truth in the understanding came to me gradually and apparently through divine power" (*SAH*, 109:21-24).

Weigh this proposition: any addition to the Bible is a rejection of the Bible. Every cultic and sectarian addition to the Bible must confront this proposition, for it rests squarely on the claims of the Bible regarding itself: about its origin, its sufficiency, exclusiveness, and preservation.

The origin of the Bible is divine: Scripture is "inspired of God" (literally, "God-breathed," 2 Timothy 3:16); Scripture is the record of that which "God . . . hath . . . spoken unto us in his Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). This was communicated by the Holy Spirit through selected men, "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Corinthians 2:13) and the word thus communicated was not "the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God"

(1 Thessalonians 2:13). The origin of the Bible being divine, that which the Bible says *must be true*. This makes compelling those statements in the Bible regarding its sufficiency, its exclusiveness, and its preservation.

The Bible is sufficient. Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit "shall guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). That the Holy Spirit did as Jesus promised is evident in that the Scripture inspired of God makes the man of God "complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17); and that "divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and

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Bible is a REJECTION  
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Additions to the Bible  
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fraudulent.**

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virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). The key word is "all." Did the Holy Spirit guide them into "all" the truth? Jesus said He would; and Peter said that "all" things pertaining to life and godliness had been granted by divine power. There is nothing lacking to be supplied by additional revelation.

This sufficient Bible is exclusive. The Holy Spirit through John warned that "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). Paul urged that we "learn not to go beyond the things which are written" (1 Corinthians 4:6) and again, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any

gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Galatians 1:8; see also verse 9). The claims of additional revelation contradict plain prohibitions of the Bible; they merit the anathema of God.

This sufficient, exclusive Bible is preserved by God. It is at this point that pretenders try to justify their productions. Mrs. Eddy asserted that "a mortal and material sense stole into the divine record, with its own hue darkening to some extent the inspired pages" (*SAH*, 139:20-22). Joseph Smith and his followers have notoriously sought to minimize the Bible by assertions that there have been "many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God" (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:28). Smith blamed the Catholics; I don't know who Mrs. Eddy blamed; but they both contradict the Lord, who said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Peter was moved by the Holy Spirit to describe spiritual begetting as being born "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God which liveth and abideth. For, All flesh is as grass, And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower falleth; But the word of the Lord abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23-25). Did "a mortal and material sense" steal into the divine record, "darkening to some extent the inspired pages"—OR did Jesus' words "not pass away?" Were "plain and precious things taken away from the book"—OR does "the word of the Lord abide forever?" What do you believe?

The sum of the matter is this: additions to the Bible are spurious and fraudulent—if the Bible comes from God. It claims to be sufficient revelation, needing nothing more; it demands to be exclusive revelation, allowing nothing more; and it has been a protected revelation, enduring through the ages. The faith was once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

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# THE BIBLE

## The Internal Claims of the Scriptures

Harold Dowdy

THE BIBLE CLAIMS TO KNOW ABOUT wisdom and poverty, fathers and fools, money and wine, harlots and judges, rulers and love, suffering and song, writing books and eating food, suffering and friendship, stars and gopher wood, singing and war, judgment and donkeys, etc., etc. The Bible claims to know about death, one of life's most serious problems. Sin, the Bible tells us, is the cause of death. It tells us of sin's beginning, progress, treatment and cure. Does the Bible really claim to be an impeachable source of information?

1. The highest claim the Bible makes is: "*Quiet! God is speaking here.*"

"All scripture is given by *inspiration of God* and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, completely furnished unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Inspiration means God-spirited or "filled with the breath of God." The Bible claims to be God-breathed words.

"God, having of old times *spoken* unto the fathers by the prophets . . . hath in these last days *spoken* unto us in his Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). The New Testament claims that on its pages, God is speaking for the last time to man.

"For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). The Bible is the product of the Holy Spirit, it came down from God, not up from man.

In Hebrews 1, the writer quotes such prophets as Moses and David. Yet he argues that it is God who is speaking, by saying, "He saith." Who "saith?" The quotations come directly from Moses or David, but when these prophets spoke, it was God speaking. Even Jesus said, "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16).

2. The Bible claims that *it reveals the past and future*. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." "Let there be light, and there was light" (Genesis 1). God's word commanded it. His word is powerful. The Bible claims to be His word and to unveil the details

of the beginning. Little wonder the four and twenty elders gave glory and honor and thanks to God, for He "*didst create* all things, and because of *thy will* they were and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

In Romans 4:17, we read, "A father of many nations have I made thee." God did not say, "*I will make* you a . . .," but uses the perfect tense. It is as if Abraham was already the father of many nations, for God's word had ordained it. The Bible tells the future as though it were the past.

Isaiah 53 speaks in detail of the Suffering Servant, Jesus. He was to be rejected of Israel, die, be resurrected. In telling

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this story 700 years before it happened, the Bible uses the future, present, and the past tense. These events were as sure as if they already had happened.

3. The Bible claims that *it is THE truth*. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into *all the truth*, for he shall not speak from himself" (John 16:13). The Bible claims that the Scriptures are God's word. They make the man of God complete, for here is *all* the truth.

"But the word of the Lord abideth forever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25). The Bible claims to be the truth, all the truth, eternal, God's word, the gospel that was preached by the

apostles, breathed of God, and furnishing man to every good work.

Christ promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would enable them to know "how" and "what" to say in Matthew 10:19. These phrases may well be saying that both the "how"—the words—and the "what"—the thoughts—were inspired.

4. The Bible claims to have *the key to sin and death—man's central problem*.

**The Problem:** "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Romans 5:12). **The Remedy:** "For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

**How Received:** ". . . all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death . . . so we also might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:2-4). We become "dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (verse 11). In the words of Jesus, "Go preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

5. The Bible also claims that *its truth is not irresistible*. "But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him . . . they did not confess him . . . they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God" (John 12:36-43). No one is forced to believe the Bible against his will.

**Conclusion:** Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The Scriptures are as eternal as is God, for the Bible is the revelation of His nature. Thus one can no more add to or change the Scriptures than he can change the nature of God. This revelation is The Bible. The reformers would say that "it is the highest exercise of human reason to understand and obey the revelation of almighty God."

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# That's Life!



Dee Bowman

*THERE ARE BASICALLY THREE WAYS TO VIEW LIFE*—retrospectively, introspectively, and prospectively. And in each of these cases examination—looking into your life—is the main concept. Sometimes it's a good idea to just separate yourself from the duress and pressures of everyday living and take a look at your own life: how it has been, how it is, and how you'd like it to be. I believe it's called meditation.

\* \* \*

*IF I COULD ASK GOD FOR ONE THING* to help me in life, I think I'd ask for wisdom. Wisdom is actually the ability to see the end of a thing from the beginning. It's the need of every man, no matter his station in life. The ability to cope with situations, meet challenges, make peace, sustain progress, acquire maturity—all are dependent on wisdom

\* \* \*

*EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD CULTIVATE AN ATTITUDE OF THANKFULNESS.* To do less is to show a gross ingratitude toward God for what He has done for us. "In everything give thanks" may seem to have an element of the impossible in it; but it is no mere theory Paul gives (1 Thessalonians 5:18). And please note the slight distinction between "thankful," or full of thanks, and "thanksgiving," the giving of thanks. Gratefulness is not an option, it's a command.

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*THE LITERAL DEFINITION OF SIN* is "missing the mark." (In fact, when missionaries were translating the Bible for the Dakota Indians several years ago, they were surprised to find that they had no word for "sin." So they used "miss the target," a concept perfectly understood by the Indians.) The literal definition of correction is "to make straight again." Paul says, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, that the word of God is sufficient for "doctrine, reproof, correction." It teaches us who we are, what we are, and how to correct the mess we've made by repeatedly missing the mark.

\* \* \*

*OGDEN NASH*, the great American poet and humorist, once wrote a piece, the title of which was longer than the verse. He called it, "Reflection On A Wicked World." It is a gem. It goes like this:

"Purity  
Is obscurity."

It's so!

\* \* \*

*BEING EQUAL TO THE OCCASION* almost always means being able to subtract your own ego from whatever you're going to do.

\* \* \*

*ROBERT HALDANE* said, "Christianity is everything, or nothing."

\* \* \*

*IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE WHAT JAMES SAYS*, that "no man can tame the tongue." I surely do have trouble with it. Do you? Sometimes I tend to just throw my mind into neutral and let my tongue idle on. "A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart," says Solomon. How sad that sometimes I must be thought a fool.

\* \* \*

*I WAS WATCHING CASSIUS CLAY* (now Muhammed Ali) as he told the whole world, via television, just how great he was. It made me sick! I complained aloud to my dad about his pompous antics. My dad, always one for the wry, quieted me with a touch of his hand to my shoulder as he said, "Son, as you go through life you'll just have to remember that some fellows are just as good as they tell you they are." End of tirade.

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*AND THAT REMINDS ME OF A WISE SAYING*—from Solomon again—"Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips."

\* \* \*

*IT'S A POOR USE OF INFLUENCE* to try and hurt someone with it.

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* "I would do well to dismiss from my mind so-called 'brotherhood' concepts and center my thoughts on just being a good Christian."

\* \* \*

*THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE:* Take just one area of your character and try to improve it. Work hard at it. Think you can do it? Sure, you can!



## Let Us Do What We Will Do

When I first began preaching, I could not understand why so few members did personal work. I mean, how hard is it to ask an acquaintance for a Bible study? So I reproved, rebuked, and exhorted. But the more I preached on it, the more frustrated the members became. Needless to say, it did not do much for my encouragement either.

Today, I understand why. Of course, the answer was before me all the time. It wasn't that I ignored it. Rather, I was trying to provoke people to overcome it. Well, I've given up on that course. Either there is no way to accomplish that task or I am not skillful enough.

Oh, I still urge people to do personal work. I don't believe a person can be a faithful Christian and not do personal work. However, doesn't personal work consist of more than just one member's effort? Didn't Jesus teach that we all have different talents (Matthew 25:14-30)? Didn't Paul show us that different ones do different things in the vineyard of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:5-9)? And doesn't 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 teach that all members of the body, though having various functions, work together?

At the close of services one day, I asked, "How many would talk to acquaintances about receiving literature if they had the responsibility of making contact after the literature was sent?" Only a few hands went up. Then, I asked the same question again, except that I would make the follow-up contact. Nearly every hand went up!

Ah, that is enlightening, isn't it? But, I wondered, would it not be more effective for members to follow up on their own acquaintances? Such silly ponderings! Was it not just indicated to me that in most cases the initial effort would not be made? Doesn't that, then, silence the query regarding follow-up?

The members were telling me, "Let us do what we will do." Do I not, then, hinder them by pressing for action beyond what they will do? Worse, do I not frustrate the work of God if I fail to utilize what they will do? But, can they not do more? Can they? Who am I to judge that?

Therefore, those that will sow the seed, let them sow. Those who will water what is planted, let them water. We are, after all, workers together in God's kingdom; and God will bring forth the increase.

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# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Better is a little that the righteous hath than the abundance of the wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken; but Jehovah upholdeth the righteous. . . . I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (37:16-17,25).

## The Riches of the Righteous

Whatever our perplexities may be about the prosperity of the wicked (see Psalm 73) we must see that they do not really prosper at all. The section of this psalm which begins with verse 16 refutes the idea that a wicked man is better off than the righteous. What possible advantage could a man have whose arms are about to be broken and who is soon to perish?

The righteous man may not prosper in life as much as the unscrupulous wicked man who will stop at nothing to advance himself. But the godly man still has character and peace of mind. The wicked often gain their riches by dishonest practices (see James 5:1-5); they have no real peace of mind (Isaiah 58:7-8). Besides that, the wealth of the wicked is temporary and fleeting (Luke 12:16-21); they will not enjoy it long. By contrast, the righteous enjoy what they have, knowing that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17)—and they are fully satisfied in their God and all that He supplies (Psalm 22:26; 104:23-28).

The Christian can see that little is better than more when the more causes one to lose his soul. Thus the discipline of God comes to view life in the correct perspective. Verses 16-17 agree with similar statements in Proverbs: "Better is little, with the fear of Jehovah, than great treasure and trouble therewith" (15:16). "Better is a little, with righteousness, than great revenues with injustice"

(16:8). "In the house of the righteous is much treasure; but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble" (15:6).

One of the old English preachers, Thomas Brooks, commented upon this verse: "A little blest is better than a great deal curst; a little blest is better than a world enjoyed; a pound blest is better than a thousand curst; a black crust blest is better than a feast curst . . . Jacob's little blest unto him was better than Esau's great estate that was curst unto him. 'Tis always better to have scraps with a blessing, than to have manna and quails with a curse . . . a hole, a cave, a den, a barn, a chimney-corner with a blessing is better than stately palaces with a curse . . . why should not a Christian be contented with a little, seeing his little shall be blest unto him? . . . Oh, therefore never let a Christian murmur because he hath but little, but rather let him be still a-blessing of that God that hath blest his little, and doth bless his little, and that will bless his little unto him."

Beyond all this, the psalmist observes that "I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (verse 25). The righteous man is specially blessed by God's providential care. This is the same promise that we find in Matthew 6:33: "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The statement of the psalmist is a general principle. "Begging bread" does not mean that some good man might not occasionally be in want. David himself desired bread of Abimelech (1 Samuel 21:3). But the righteous man has God's promise that he will be cared for. He will not have to live in a continual state of begging from door to door. Part of the reason for this may be given in the next verse (26) where we see that the *character* of the righteous man causes him to be merciful and lend to others. People will surely respond with gratitude and liberality when such a man is wanting.

Let us all see that the little of the righteous is a greater treasure than the abundance of the wicked. And please be assured that if you are one of His, God will never let you starve.



# Some Things You Will Never Regret (I)

Kenneth E. Thomas

Who would dare say that he never did anything that he didn't later regret? Probably no one in his right mind. John, by inspiration, says that the man who says he has not sinned makes God a liar and His word is not in him (1 John 1:10). Certainly one whose heart isn't hardened through the deceitfulness of sin will regret past mistakes and repent of them (2 Corinthians 7:10; Hebrews 3:13). Let's study about some things you will never have to repent of, and for which you will never have any regret.

**You will never regret telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.** When you tell the truth, you don't have to worry about remembering what you told. When the subject comes up again you simply relate the facts as they are and it will always be the same. This cannot be said of those who practice deceit. They must always be careful so as not to be tripped up when the subject under consideration is discussed and questions are asked. One who so conducts himself must be miserable indeed!

The reason for being honest and truthful should not be because we simply want good human relations; the overriding reason for any morality in life is because we are responsible to our Creator and must give an account one day for the deeds done in the body (2 Corinthians 5:10). Paul admonishes us, "Therefore putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25, NKJV). To the Colossian brethren Paul said, "Do not lie to one another, since you have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3:9-10).

Lying is a way of life with many. That's a fact which you, too, have had to accept sadly. I'm confident as you deal with your fellow man in the market place, on the athletic field, and even over a friendly game around the table, you have found this to be the case. It shouldn't be so surprising that this is so in a world that is under the control of Satan, the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). However, even among non-Christians, in past years honesty was more common than it is today. Sadder still, is that many times brethren will be dishonest with you; this is about more

than one's heart can stand. It used to be an isolated case that such would happen and then only under extreme pressure. Even then, when such was brought to light, the brother/sister would humbly admit his/her sin, confess it, and repent with tears. Today, too often you catch a brother/sister in a lie and it doesn't seem such a big thing to him/her—or even to other brethren. The practices of the world have affected us so that many things which used to cause horror are only mildly protested, if at all, by some.

We must understand that lying will keep one out of heaven, the eternal city of God. "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters and *all liars* shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8, NKJV, emphasis mine, KET). You will never regret telling the truth.

**Doing your best.** If you try as hard as you can to do the best you can do, as my step-father used to say, "That's all a mule can do." None of us measure up to our own potential. But something can certainly be said for the one who is always willing to try when called upon to be of service to Christ and to others. Few, if any, will criticize a person who does the very best he can. I don't believe the Lord will either, but He does expect us to put out effort. In Ecclesiastes 9:10, the wise man said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Some of the apostle Paul's enemies said of him that "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10b), but he said to the brethren at Rome, "So as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome also" (Romans 1:15).

Preachers, and other members of the body of Christ: do the best you can with the ability that you have and you will never have any regrets. Make the application of this to every area of your life as a Christian and you can lie down at night with a clear conscience before God and man. See Paul's statement in Acts 20:17-27.

**Thinking before acting or speaking.** Someone said, "Be sure you put your mind in gear before you put your mouth in motion." Paul, by inspiration, said it in these words: "Let your speech always

be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6). We sing a beautiful hymn which pleads to us and to others, "Angry words! O let them never from the tongue unbridled slip!" It is so easy to sin in anger. In fact, the Scripture states that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20, KJV). Knowing this, Paul writes, "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26-27). The old adage, "Think twice before you speak is good advice because it follows a biblical principle. "Therefore, my brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

**Forgiving another, not holding a grudge.** The consequences of "holding a grudge" or being unwilling to "forgive another" are of much greater detriment to the grudge-holder than to the one against whom it is held! We all need mercy, but if we do not extend it to others, God will withhold it from us. Jesus said, "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15) and James informs us, "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13, NKJV). We often expect more of others than we ourselves are willing to give. An old Indian proverb said, "Do not judge the other fellow until you have walked three moons in his moccasins." Jesus said, "Judge not that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matthew 7:1-2, NKJV). It seems to me the Lord is saying, "If you expect me to take extenuating circumstances into account as I judge you, then you had better be doing the same toward your fellowman. If you hold them to the 'letter of the law,' then you can expect the same from me toward you." There would be a lot less criticism, a lot more forgiveness and a lot less grudge-holding if we would just keep this in mind. You will never regret not holding a grudge and the fact that you forgave another. **(To be continued.)**

401 24th St. W., Bradenton, FL 33505





## The Sermon on the Mount

### The Unthinkable Commandment (Matthew 5:43-48)

With every advancing sentence since verse 21 Jesus has taken an ever larger bite out of the human ego. Every new contrast between the popular Pharisaic perversions and the real demand of kingdom righteousness has served to heighten the moral challenge. What the Lord at last commands in the sixth and last of these antitheses must have stunned His audience. He had spoken the inconceivable when He said, "but I say unto you, Love your enemies" (5:44). To many of His listeners such counsel must have seemed not only unthinkable, but impossible!—and contrary to the very concept of justice.

Now for the first time in the sermon Jesus has spoken the word which best sums up the principle underlying the whole of His message. He has led His hearers up an ascending plane from what love prohibits in the treatment of others (even those who abuse us) to what love demands of us positively. And who among His audience then or now could have anticipated that the journey would not be finished until He had demanded of them the hardest thing of all—to love the very ones we are most drawn to hate—our enemies. Finally the Lord has left no room for "self" at all.

"Enemy" was hardly a foreign idea to first century Jews. By Jesus' time there was a palpable enmity that had attached itself to the partitioning wall that was the law (Ephesians 2:14-15). The people of Israel had suffered much from a hostile world and often looked with disdain upon the ignorant paganism and egregious immorality of the Gentiles. The Gentiles were not slow to return the favor. The Pharisees, with their separatist fervor, were not ignorant of the law's demand that the sons of the covenant were to love their neighbor as themselves (Leviticus 19:18) but they understood that obligation to end at the borders of Israel. There were plenty to hate beyond the pale and many in the nation held that it was not only their privilege but their obligation to do so. The fact that the Pharisees were aware of the command to love but floundered on the definition of "neighbor" is evidenced by the conversation with a certain lawyer (Luke 10:25-29). The lawyer knew the formula but was yet to make a proper application.

But how and why did the teachers in Israel come to conclude that the law commanded hatred for the enemy?

It might have been the "holy wars" of extermination which God commanded Israel to wage against the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 20:16-18), or the imprecatory psalms ("Do not I hate them, O Jehovah, that hate thee? . . . I hate them with a perfect hatred: They are become mine enemies," Psalm 139:21-22. Note especially Psalm 109). Yet, however difficult and perplexing be the problems which these facts present, the law did not distinguish in the matter of neighbor love between the Israelite and the stranger (Leviticus 19:18 with 19:33-34) and it did not counsel hatred and vengeance for the enemy (Exodus 23:4-5). Even Job, whose times most likely antedate the law, understood the sin of rejoicing over the calamity of an enemy (Job 31:29-30). It has always impressed me that when Paul sought to instruct his brethren in their treatment of enemies he felt no need for some new revelation but drew easily upon the book of Proverbs: "But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink" (Romans 12:20; Proverbs 25:21). There is no portion of the Old Testament which more directly addresses the problem of Israel's attitude toward her enemies than the book of Jonah. The Assyrians were a brutal people, enemies of God and men, but Jehovah loved them and He intended that His servant Jonah should do the same (4:9-11).

Still, if after all this, we find ourselves hard pressed to believe that the law did not counsel enmity toward enemies, we are left to trust the Son of God who rebukes this idea as a misconception of the law and wholly inconsistent with the nature and purpose of God. It was just such teaching as this that made the nation so unprepared for the coming of the peaceable kingdom.

Had Jesus told His followers to love their "neighbor" they might well have continued in the old narrow ways, missing completely this love's unique nature. But when He teaches them to love their *enemies* they may be startled but they will certainly be instructed. As Kierkegaard has observed, the gospel has made it forever impossible for anyone to be mistaken about the identity of his neighbor. If we are to love our enemies, then there will certainly be no member of the human race, however different, however distant, however vile, to which we will not owe the best we can give him.





## The Heart of A Preacher

Philippians 1:15-18

Some folk could go to the superest of all Super Bowls, played for the championship of a thousand worlds, see a perfectly played game won on the last play by the indisputably best team, and come away talking about how bad the hot dogs were.

Paul was not like that, as we see in this great passage where he declares his joy over the preaching of Christ, even though some were preaching with the intention of increasing his difficulties.

I do not think these preachers could be Judaizers, as many hold. Paul deals with the Judaizers quite differently in Galatians and in Philippians 3:2. He writes here about preachers who had the right message but the wrong motivation.

Not everyone preaches for the right reason. "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife." Can you believe it? They preach *Christ!* But they do it, literally, *because of* (i.e., "prompted by," Grimm-Thayer) envy and strife (Greek *eris*, "strife, discord, contention, wrangling," G-T and Arndt & Gingrich combined). Envy (Greek *phthonos*) is "displeasure at another's good." As Phineas Fletcher wrote, it is to be "sick of a strange disease, another's health" (Trench, *Synonyms*, p. 90).

Some, on the other hand, were prompted by "good will." Paul elaborates. Those who acted out of love did their preaching with the understanding that Paul was divinely appointed (Greek *keimai* as in Luke 2:34 & 1 Thessalonians 3:3) for the defense of the gospel (see verse 7). They loved and appreciated Paul and wanted simply to support his efforts in the gospel.

The other group saw Paul as a competitor. They were proclaiming Christ, but (can you believe it?) "out of faction." The Greek noun *eritheia* is "found before NT times only in Aristot., Polit. 5, 3 p. 1302b, 4; 1303a, 14, where it denotes a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means" (A-G, 309). Most Greek specialists I have consulted derive it from a root meaning "to work for hire" (see Kittel, II, 660f. for a good discussion). The noun reflects the usual spirit of the hireling as concerned with gain and his own selfish purposes (see John 10:12f).

So these preachers were proclaiming Christ, but out of "selfishness" or "selfish ambition," "not sincerely" (i.e., "from pure motives," A-G, 12). They proclaimed Christ, "thinking (and evidently with the implication *intending*)

to raise up affliction for [Paul] in [his] bonds."

The Greek for "affliction" (*thlipsis*) is literally "pressure." It is used figuratively in the New Testament for "oppression, affliction, tribulation," but here is not likely to refer to "distress that is brought about by outward circumstances," but rather (as in 2 Corinthians 2:4) has application to "mental and spiritual states of mind, affliction in the spiritual sense, trouble" (A-G, 362). Paul's opponents intended "to increase the misery of [his] imprisonment by causing [him] anxiety" (G-T, 291).

The motivation of these men is the key to understanding this point. They were prompted by envy, a competitive spirit, selfishness and selfish ambition. That much we are told. What follows is my guess (influenced by Lenski) at the probable situation. They were likely leading men among the Roman Christians before Paul's arrival, though they had done little with regard to speaking the word of God (see verse 14). But when Paul was brought to Rome as a prisoner all attention was focused upon the apostle. Paul's case was being discussed throughout the city (verse 13). These small-minded men were cut to the quick. They were moved to proclaim Christ with more boldness and energy, determined to show that Paul was not the only preacher in Rome. They evidently thought Paul was like them and would be deeply agitated by their success and acclaim.

"What then?" Let Paul report the results and the state of his mind. "Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (verse 18). Paul was caught up in something much bigger than himself. It was of no importance that he be personally exalted, but of surpassing importance that Christ be magnified (see verse 20). And if Christ was being proclaimed Paul could rejoice, no matter if the proclamation of Christ was in some cases a cover for the selfish ambition of spiritual pygmies. He could not be happy about their motives (see 2:3). But here the instruments of God's purpose fade into the shadows beside the overwhelming greatness of that purpose. Christ was being proclaimed, and Paul could rejoice.

O my Father, give me a great heart like Paul's, and a mind wholly devoted to the exaltation of Christ rather than self.

3715 S.E. 12th Place, Ocala, FL 32671



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## **DON'T MISS COMING ISSUES!**

**OCTOBER THEME: "For Those Who Hurt"**

**Edited by Brent Lewis**

### **ARTICLES:**

**When Children Disappoint—***Sewell Hall*

**When Marriage Breaks Up—**

*David Crawford*

**Suffering As A Christian—***Chuck Durham*

**Does Jesus Care?—***Steve Goff*

**And More . . .**



# A Good Idea

## Bible Class System

L. A. Mott has worked for the past six years with the church in Ocala, Florida, developing a systematic Bible study program for the classes at that congregation. He has completed an impressive unit which allows every person in attendance to study the entire Bible in three years. Every family member studies the same lesson each class period, a feature which greatly encourages family Bible study. It is natural for parents and children to discuss their common study of common passages. Furthermore, every teacher is thoroughly trained before the class begins. In fact, in the system, a new set of teachers is constantly being trained in preparation for the next quarter's classes.

L. A. has written a series of workbooks which include readings and study questions for the entire Bible. He also has prepared cassette tapes and video tapes of his classes instructing the teachers. All or any of these aids are available for distribution. By using the cassettes, teachers would have L. A.'s fine commentary on the passages in addition to their own local preparation.

The church in Ocala has nearly completed a second round of studies through the series and its elders and teachers recommend the system very highly. The unit is also being used by a number of other churches. L. A. has prepared a video tape which explains the system in detail for those who might wish to consider it. Information may be secured by writing to L. A. Mott, P. O. Box 524, Silver Springs, FL 32688.

## Children's Workbook

No area of work requires greater creativity than teaching children's classes. I was recently given a book which seems extremely useful to me. Written by Betty Belue Haynes and Rebecca Haynes, it is entitled *Building Bible Knowledge*. The authors state that it is "For parents and

teachers: an illustrated guide to innovative, high-interest Bible teaching aids." The book is filled with ideas which can be used to teach any Bible lesson. Those interested should write to Naftaolh Publications, P. O. Box 2503, Columbus, MS 39704. Betty Haynes has been a teacher for many years and my guess is that she would be a source of information which reaches far beyond this book.

## Congregational Assessment Profile

Matt Hennecke has developed a highly sophisticated, computerized instrument to test Bible knowledge. It is constructed in such a way that it would not be offensive, generally asking simply how "capable" one would feel in answering a variety of questions. The form ranges over a broad field of important topics, including asking whether one could explain from the Scriptures why a person needs to be baptized and "using your Bible, can you explain why it is wrong for the church to financially support *human institutions* (orphans' homes, colleges, etc.)?" I believe elders would be startled to learn what the members of their congregations do not know. Such information would almost surely stir us to do some teaching on fundamental doctrinal questions. To secure information about Matt Hennecke's test, write to MANNA, 730 Lexington Ave., St. Charles, IL 60174.

## A Good Idea

Do you have a good idea? Many Christians have creative talents which can be used to improve our work. I would be glad to hear from you. If I don't think it's such a good idea, I'll send it back. While *Christianity Magazine* does not accept advertising, we would like to be able to tell our readers of things that have worked in other places.

Ed Harrell



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### Northern Lights

When Tom and Shirley Bunting decided to return to Norway in 1980, many of us wondered, "Why Norway?" Some of the finest gospel preachers of our day, including Tom, had spent years in Norway with very little or nothing to show for it. Why not shake the dust from our feet and go elsewhere in the hope of finding people more receptive?

Perhaps we can understand their enthusiasm for that country if we follow Tom through his correspondence with a thirteen-year-old girl who responded to a newspaper ad soon after they arrived. Teaching had to be done by correspondence courses and letters because she lives 1,000 miles from Bergen where the Buntings live. After Lesson #7 on "The Church" and several letters, she wrote:

The correspondence course says that to be saved is to be a member of the church and that being a member of the church is the same as being saved. To say such a thing is completely wrong. After reading the Bible through 5 times in my 14 years I believe that personal faith also means something. May I have permission to say that after reading the tract, "What is the church of Christ?" which states that only your sect is right and all the others are wrong (excuse me that I say this), I don't believe you belong to the church that Jesus established.

Tom thought that would be the end. But one month later she wrote: "I am in complete agreement with your sect's teaching concerning baptism." A month later, her perception was increasing. "I understand better your position concerning the church and salvation." Still later she wrote, "You write about the false churches and that people can choose between true and false. I believe that is true.

After a few weeks, a change of attitude was evident. "Your letters have helped me very much in my search. Could you give me some information on the church? I am thinking about where they exist and how many there are." One month later: "It is strange to think about all of the Catholic traditions that Protestant churches have taken up. I think we should stay away from everything not directly related to Christianity and the Christian life." Twelve to fourteen months later, the correspondence was

still coming. "Before I read the announcement in the newspaper, I had never heard of the church of Christ. Of course, I had read of it in the Bible, but I didn't think it existed any more. When one sees all of the confusion of the churches, one never thinks of exactly 'the church.'"

Six months later (July, 1982), she was still interested.

I am writing at 1 a.m. I couldn't sleep. There are several things worrying me. The first thing is: I have not been baptized. I was baptized as an infant, but we both know that was not baptism. I have taken a stand on this for a very long time, but I don't feel that I am ready to be baptized. I will explain. I don't feel that I have sufficient understanding of the truth that you confess. I don't have enough knowledge. Do I need the knowledge before baptism or can I learn it after?

September, 1982.

During the summer I have had time to think a lot and have been made more certain that this is the right way. I felt very confused in my search for the truth and prayed to God for direction. When I saw the announcement in the newspaper for the first time, even before I started the course, I thought: "This is different from all the others." I had read about the first Christians and the church with its teaching which is for us. I searched but found none like the one in the Bible.

Taking their cue from this letter, the Buntings went to visit her, hoping to baptize her. But for unknown reasons they were not even permitted to see her. Tom wrote her, asking if she had changed her mind. Her reply: "If I ever change my mind, you will be the first to know."

Two years later (four from the initial contact), a mature young lady of 17 wrote in the Buntings' guest book after a ten day visit: "I have fulfilled my greatest dream—to be baptized."

Aren't you glad they were there to help her find the way to Jesus? Others, with their help, have found Him, too. Terrell, their son, hopes to go with his wife to join them in the work in 1986 if support can be obtained. The Buntings' address is: Ovsttunvegen 23, 5050 Nesttun, Bergen, Norway.

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341





# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## Scraps of Paper

I have watched them sitting entranced by images on bits of paper, folding and unfolding, fondling them, reading and re-reading, gazing pensively away and then returning to look again—human beings. The old, I believe, are more given to such exercises, but all humanity honors the ritual. So much of life seems bound to these private messages encoded on paper with our pictorial and linguistic symbols.

I have observed little boys open mysterious and cluttered private boxes, to gaze transfixed at a grimy baseball card with an autograph scrawled across its face. I have seen those cards displayed on the dressers of boys grown many years older. And I have watched little girls with paper dolls strewn carefully about a room, lecturing them on their conduct. Just scraps of paper.

Sitting on airplanes, I have glanced out of the corner of my eye at a fellow passenger open-

ing and closing his briefcase to survey his private world of trivia. One businessman scuffles hurriedly through stacks of forms; another reads and re-reads a letter, smiling faintly. Perhaps a promotion, or a big sale? Just scraps of paper.

I have seen it in my home. In near-forgotten drawers and closets, my wife has hidden boxes filled with the disorderly refuse from our past. I have watched her and her (and my) children rifle through those crates, looking at the pictures and reading the little papers. An enduring fascination inherently resides in birth certificates, and elementary school grade reports, and weathered, forty-year-old newspaper clippings about high school basketball games. Just scraps of paper.

I have, on occasion, caught myself engaged in the ritual, entranced by some bit of scribbling, caressing it lightly and daydreaming—a diploma, the

dust jacket of a book written long ago, a passport. Just scraps of paper.

How is it that such faded relics from the past so mesmerize us? Is it not that they relay messages to our divine nature? Those symbols arouse in us our God-given capacity to remember and to ponder, to plan and to hope. They call my consciousness back to scenes which I savor but shall never see again; they compel my mind to walk through landscapes I never visited. They make me conscious that I am made in the image of God.

It is, I think, not without meaning that Christianity is a book religion. In the midst of his agony, Job yearned that his experience be recorded: "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever" (Job 19:23-24). His wish was granted. Later the Lord told

the prophet Jeremiah: "Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book" (Jeremiah 30:2). The Bible is only words; one might lightly say, it is only a book. It is, in fact, just scraps of paper.

But I read it and my spirit soars. I am present at the creation and the consummation of earthly things; I pass through intellectual vistas too grand to speak of; I strain to glimpse just over the horizon. This book, these leaves of paper, instruct and inform, but that only begins to measure the power of the word of God. These pages are for savoring and meditation. As my eyes pass across the familiar symbols, my spirit grows quiet. Then I stare into space, and breathe softly, and let my mind wander, combining precious memories with exquisite divine meanings.

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**FOR THOSE  
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Dee Bowman



# Front Lines



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## Public Acceptance of Sin

In the sixties, preachers everywhere sought to persuade the ladies to lower their hemlines to a reasonable length, one that would still be stylish and yet not lascivious. It was all for nought. Only a few ever did anything about it. Suddenly, however, a call came from the style marts in New York, Paris, London, crying, "Bring them down; long is in." What hundreds of pleading sermons could not do over a period of months and years, style did in less than a week! Does this tell you anything? Just who is it that determines what's right and wrong anymore? The answer is frightening.

The Latin political proverb correctly addresses the situation: *Vox populi, vox Dei*. The voice of the people is the voice of God.

We Americans are totally sold on democracy. That's as it should be. It is far and away the finest, fairest form of government. But majority rule is not a good criterion for measuring morality. Public opinion is in a constant state of flux, as it changes to meet the whims and fancies of the people. Contrariwise, the word of God is constant, dependable, even in the midst of an ever-changing society.

But we are so obsessed with the majority rule process we have decided that if the public accepts a thing it surely must be moral. Several evidences of this fact are available.

Living together without marriage has become an accepted lifestyle in this age. Youngsters who engage in the practice cite fear of failure in marriage, sex, financial advantages, companionship, along with several other things in an effort to defend their course of action. But living together without marriage is a sin. "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2). No amount of figuring can change the fact that premarital sexual relations are immoral, public acceptance notwithstanding.

The Bible teaches against homosexuality. The public doesn't. You have a choice. You can believe the Bible and accept it as your standard for determining morality, or you can rely on public opinion. "And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in

their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet" (Romans 1:27). That the public has become so broadminded as to accept homosexuality is a tribute to the sagacity and efficiency of the forces of evil. Face it—the public has been duped. The word of God condemns homosexuality. Some have even supposed that the "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error" is a reference to diseases which are transmitted by homosexual actions, such as the outbreak of AIDS among the homosexual community. That may be. One thing is sure: the Bible condemns homosexuality, whether the public does or not.

The number of rape cases in this country has increased markedly in the past several years. I am not a sociologist, but I would venture to say that the number of cases of rape in this country has increased at about the same rate that the public has accepted immodesty and pornography. Immodesty is rampant in this country. So is pornography. Advertising is filled with combinations of sexual innuendo and scanty apparel. You can hardly watch a commercial without some use of sex, not to mention the regular programs which are almost all dependent on it in some way or another. Even the more conservative magazines (like *Sports Illustrated*) have taken to featuring flesh. (And the person who says that sort of thing has no effect on him has a deeper-seated problem than he knows, or at least will admit!) It is public acceptance of immodesty that has made it popular. Even Christians are seen in public places scantily attired and looking like the rest of the world. Nobody is against style, but style is not the criterion for morality.

For the Christian the word of God is the final authority in all he does. It may mean that he is ridiculed, that in some situations he will not be accepted, that he must occasionally take some other kinds of abuses. But he knows where he is headed and he knows to whom he belongs. And one thing he has learned: the public does not dictate his course of action—God does.



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## Christianity Magazine

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# Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 663 Denise Drive, Melbourne, FL 32935

## The "other side" of women in business meetings

I agree that business meetings of the men do not take the place of an eldership. The business of the church, however, must continue when the church does not have a scriptural eldership. The evils of one-man rule or women trying to assume authority over men in the church are readily apparent. Thus, a business meeting is the next best thing . . . better than the church not functioning! The question is, *who* shall be in this business meeting? Every baptized believer, regardless of age? Of gender? Of spiritual maturity? (I'm not talking about casual observers, but active participants.).

There are scriptural principles to be considered in selecting the *who* of business meetings. The spiritually immature should not be included (Hebrews 5:12-14). Those who conform to the world should not be in the number (Romans 12:1-2). Those who are not to usurp authority over another should not be a part of the actual decision-making body, possibly overruling one whom they are scripturally forbidden to be over (women over men in the church, 1 Timothy 2:12-15; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:34).

I also take note that the *decision-making* body in Acts 6:1-6 was composed of male saints! If there is a parallel to be made between the men's business meeting of today and Acts 6, it would have to be made of the seven men—the *seven men became* the decision-making body, *not the multitude of the disciples*. Further, it is an *assumption* that women were in the "multitude of the disciples." We do not know if it was all men, or if both genders were there—but they did *not make any decisions*, except who would become the decision-making body. The apostles approved and empowered them by laying their hands on them.

All of this is *not to say that a woman's point of view is unimportant*. It is vitally important. She is also an heir of salvation, and the man is not independent of the woman (1 Cor. 11:11). But, her point of view can be given *outside* of the business meeting. So, what function would she serve in a business meeting of spiritually-minded male saints? Her input at such a meeting seems a dangerous thing, an open door for contention. But

"our" American value system says "one man/woman, one vote." Of course, we are not affected by this, are we? We are all aware that God's church is *not a democracy*, aren't we? Certainly the world is not creeping into us through this issue, is it?

Yes, worldliness *is* creeping in. . . . Apostasy creeps in little by little and does not rear a mature head until it has caught its object in a lulled condition. It seems "we" are on the way to women preachers in the Lord's church . . . little by little. I hope I am wrong, but I think not—therefore, I write.

Keith E. Clayton  
Bristol, VT

## Something from an elder on women in the business meetings

There is no question about how church business is to be conducted when a congregation is scripturally organized with elders and deacons. God's wisdom is exemplified by the silence of the Scriptures on how it is to be done when no elders exist. The question of women in business meetings is a case in point of confusion, and differences, over what the Scriptures do not say, rather than what they say. If God had provided guidance on how it is to be done without elders, a valid argument could be made against selecting elders on the basis that "we are already scripturally organized."

I perceive that, without elders, Christians have relied on the men to conduct the church business because God has always assigned leadership to men, in the church and family unit. I find no fault in that.

Part of the problem, however, seems to stem from elders inviting only men to attend *communications meetings* to solicit ideas and input. It is not appropriate to call these meetings business meetings. No business is conducted. No decisions are made. The elders are at liberty to invite those of their choosing to such meetings, men or women. But they are not business meetings.

The greatest problem here often is not the presence or absence of women, but overly assertive men in the exuberance of their youth who seize upon the chance to thrash the elders. They would be well advised to

remember that elders don't have to have such meetings. They should feel complimented that elders value their judgment enough to invite them.

Both problems will vanish if we all heed Paul's admonition to be content in the state wherein we find ourselves. I say this kindly, but the woman who can't be content with the secondary supportive role which God ordained for her does not have an argument with the men or elders. Her argument is with God!

Cecil Rutherford  
Austin, TX

## Clarifying a point in an article

In the July, 1985 issue [*Soundings*, p. 5], a good brother questioned the implications of the use of the word "murdering" (unlawful killing) in an illustration of a WW 2 American pilot downing a German pilot. "Killing" would have been better suited in this particular context of the article, "Brotherly Back-Stabbing" [*April, 1985*, p. 7]. I didn't intend it to be a passing jab at Christians who have killed in wartime.

The point of the article dealt with improving brotherly attitudes and relationships, not with the controversial question, "May a Christian kill for his government?" But the thorny "war question" does deserve careful, clear-headed study.

Yet, let's remember that a more pressing issue is that we too often verbally murder one another with hateful words and harsh judgments (Matthew 5:21-22). We must love one another as Scripture emphasizes or else we're damned (1 John 3:10, 14-15; 4:20-21). Let's work together to do better!

—W. Frank Walton  
Camden, SC

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*We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?*

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# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## "Restoring New Testament Christianity (VIII)

A generation of farmer-preachers spread the restoration message west from its centers in Ohio, Virginia and Kentucky in the three decades from 1830 to 1860 and on the eve of the Civil War the Disciples of Christ reported around 200,000 members. The restorers did not have much success in the East, but rather moved with the frontier population, becoming strong in the tier of Midwestern states which included Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Iowa. The movement was strongest in the Upper South states of Kentucky and Missouri, but it was also established early in Tennessee and spread from there as settlers moved into Arkansas and Texas.

These Christian reformers competed particularly with the Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians for the religious allegiance of the common people during the first half of the nineteenth century. They inherited from Alexander Campbell a reputation as debaters and engaged readily in the doctrinal argument so common on the religious frontier. While many Disciples preachers were farmers, others combined an educational career with preaching and they frequently established academies and short-lived colleges. The most important school founded by first-generation Disciples was Bethany College, established by Alexander Campbell near his home in western Virginia in 1840.

Several Disciples preachers promoted the establishment of the restoration movement's first quasi-official organization in 1849, the American Christian Missionary Society. Both Campbell and Stone had been critical of missionary societies in their early years, but their objections had been largely practical rather than doctrinal. When the society was formed in 1849, it was opposed by a few Christians, but for the most part it went unchallenged. However, the society remained weak in its early years and was ignored by the vast majority of the churches.

The restoration movement escaped serious division in the early nineteenth century. The slavery question

created tensions within the movement, but most of the early Christians in America were border state moderates and they resisted extremist positions in the 1850s. Campbell decried slavery but dismissed abolitionism as irrational and unscriptural. By the middle of the 1850s the movement included a group of disgruntled abolitionist leaders in Indiana and Illinois, and in 1859 they formed a separatist missionary society, but their efforts amounted to little in the long run. Congregational autonomy did much to defuse sectional tensions; local churches were free to follow independent courses. In the absence of authoritative national organizations, the movement survived the slavery controversy and the Civil War without formal division. However, in the post-war years sectional bitterness rose to the surface and contributed to a major division in the movement. That sectional bitterness was exacerbated by the passage of loyalty resolutions by the American Christian Missionary Society in its meetings in 1863 and 1864.

\* \* \*

COMMENT: 1. The plea to restore New Testament Christianity has always found its readiest reception among those not bound by traditional loyalties. Those infatuated by tradition, social and family status, and their own intellectual attainments are not likely to listen to such a simple and self-effacing message. 2. Denominational consciousness (that pernicious turn of mind which draws us irresistibly to think of the universal church as a corporate and operative unit) manifested itself first in the establishment of the missionary society. Such developments begin innocently; often the staunchest restorationists have difficulty seeing the inconsistency of new innovations. The test of one's commitment to scriptural authority, and to the plea to return to it, comes when such denominational constructions are challenged. That was to be the work of the second generation of restorers.



# A Friend of Sinners

Berry Kercheville

The day was Sunday, almost four years ago. A number of us had arrived early at the church building and were standing at the edge of the parking lot talking about the events of the past week. This was always one of the joys of assembling, talking with friends—brethren who offered a welcome reprieve from the vileness in the world. Suddenly a loud, abrasive sound shattered the serenity of our pre-Bible class routine. We all turned at the same time to see what some would call a “Hell’s Angel” type riding a big, ugly Harley Davidson motorcycle, and he was pulling into our parking lot. This man was certainly not a person one would expect to be interested in God. From his shoulders up there was nothing but hair with his nose and eyes barely discernible. Tattoos lined his arms which seemed to fit quite well with his T-shirt and Levi’s attire.

To our amazement, this man was actually planning on attending services. I will never forget my first thought when I realized this person was staying for worship: “What is *he* doing here?” I noticed, however, that I was not the only one with such a thought; few people that day went out of their way to greet our visitor. To my surprise, the next Sunday brought another visit from this man. It was then that I discovered that his name was Pete and that not every member had avoided him the week before. One member saw what so many of the rest of us were not seeing—a precious soul who was lost and needed to be found. That member was not prejudiced in the least by appearance—and had invited Pete to his home to study the Bible.

Within a few weeks Pete was baptized. Within a few more weeks Pete was teaching others. Within a year he had married a daughter of one of the elders. Within three years he was preaching the gospel full time. And today Pete is one of the finest young preachers I have ever heard.

In Luke 17:34, the Pharisees are recorded as making one of the few truthful accusations against Jesus. They said

He was a friend of publicans and sinners. Earlier when the scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus eating in the house of Matthew where many publicans and sinners were gathered, they murmured against Him. Jesus replied, “They that are whole have no need of a physician but they that are sick.” Paul said, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Jesus said, “If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners do also even the same” (Luke 6:32-33).

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James strongly warned against offering a lower standard of treatment to the man who comes into the assembly “in vile raiment” (James 2:1-13). James further points out that we “are become judges with evil thoughts,” and again, “If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.”

Now what was that thought I had? “What is *he* doing here?” What did I think he was doing here? What does it matter? Christ has called on us to carry on His work by following His example.

We must follow Christ’s example and be a friend of sinners. We must sit at meat with the lost and develop a relationship with them that we might teach them. But we will never do it by avoiding those who are *perceived* as different than we are. How many members in churches across this land are sinning by not seeking to teach those who are not on their “social” or economic level? We need to be weary of seeing our churches filled with “white middle-class” members. We need to be ashamed of ourselves when we allow visitors to the services to go ungreeted and practically shunned from the saving gospel. Who gave us the right to judge the thoughts of men’s hearts?

In Luke 15, when the Pharisees and scribes murmured because Jesus received sinners and ate with them, Jesus replied with a parable about lost things. He talked of the great rejoicing that takes place when a shepherd finds a lost sheep. He also spoke of rejoicing when a woman finds a lost coin. And finally He spoke of an elder brother who would not rejoice when his lost younger brother was found. The Father had run to his younger son and fell on his neck and kissed him. He then commanded that there be feasting and rejoicing. And when the elder son refused, the Father said, “It was meet that we should make merry and be glad.” Have we become the elder brother, not willing to be a friend of sinners, to seek their salvation and to rejoice over their interest in God?

When you go to worship this week, take a look around you. Don’t look for those you know, look for those you don’t know. Look for that person who may not be dressed real nice—or who possibly is dressed too nice. Look for that man who has hair that’s too long or that woman who has a dress on that’s too short. Look for that person who is in need, who appears bewildered, who is lost. That is the person who needs to be found. I thank God that there was a member who did just that to a man named Pete. He isn’t a “preacher.” But he is a friend of sinners.

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Brent Lewis



# My Brother/My Self

## The Sin Of Laziness

**Y**ou might be surprised to find the number of times the Bible treats the subject of laziness. The book that instructs us about righteousness of character has nothing complimentary to say about indolence. The honor of hard work is extolled by the Scriptures and the shame of laziness is made equally clear. Christians are to be lights in the world. Our activities are observed by others. The work ethic of a jaded society must not become the standard for God's child.

God calls the lazy man a "sloth" (Proverbs 12:27) and a " sluggard" (6:6). Webster says sloth means "disinclination to action or labor" and that sluggish means "indisposed to exertion." Some people are in want because of circumstances beyond their control; such people deserve the assistance of others, including God's people (Ephesians 4:28). Other people are in want because they are "indisposed to exertion" and they deserve no help from anyone. The wise man says of the sluggard, "So shall thy poverty come as a robber, and thy want as an armed man" (Proverbs 6:11). What should be the fate of the man who can, but will not, exert himself—who continually says, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands" (6:10)? He is entitled to every bit of the poverty he has earned.

Sleep is the major occupation of the sluggard. "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep: and the idle shall suffer hunger" (Proverbs 19:15). "As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the sluggard in his bed" (26:14). His excuses for not working are novel, if not logical. But then it doesn't take much of an excuse for one who is lazy. It's either too cold to get out ("The sluggard will not plow by reason of the winter," Proverbs 20:4) or too dangerous ("The sluggard saith, There is a lion without; I shall be slain in the streets," 22:13) or too something else.

The results of laziness are obvious. Many people's lives and surroundings are in shambles, simply because they will not get up and do something about it. Solomon says, "I went by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, the face thereof was

covered with nettles, and the stone wall thereof was broken down" (Proverbs 24:30-31). Lazy people may have their house falling in around them, their yard grown waist-high in weeds, their children ill-clothed and ill-fed—yet they will merely keep on watching TV. Such people are not only undeserving of any help, but the Bible teaches that we sin if we help them. Jesus called the slothful man in Matthew 25:24-26 a wicked man (in spite of his excuses) and Paul said, "This we command you, if any will not work, neither let him eat" (1 Thessalonians 3:10).

What passage will we cite as justification for helping such a person? He deserves no help; let him starve. Solomon said, "By slothfulness the roof sinketh in, and through idleness of the hands the house leaketh" (Ecclesiastes 10:18). Paul said, "But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

**T**he lazy man is his own worst enemy. He misses one of life's richest experiences—the satisfaction of a job well done. "The desire of the sluggard killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor" (Proverbs 21:25). It kills his spirit and his self-respect; how can he have any? And it actually kills him a day at a time, for he has no worthwhile purpose for living. An indolent man is a dead man who can't be legally buried.

I don't know what it would take to get some people to go to work. Our society seems to endow laziness. Maybe we should threaten to shoot all who are able, but refuse to work. The public would never agree to that. But it seems that some need the threat of dire consequences to stir them to activity. Like the jockey who always whispered to his horse before the race: "Roses are red, violets are blue; horses that lose are made into glue." Perhaps something like that would do it.

One thing is for sure. Those who are Christians must determine to be productive, responsible disciples of Christ in every area of their lives. They must be, as Paul said to the Romans, "in diligence not slothful" (Romans 12:11).



# The Problem of Suffering

Mark Mayberry

One of the most universal and timeless of all questions is, "Why do people suffer?" Why is there heartache, disease and death? The question is as old as Adam and as recent as the evening news. The problem cannot be shrugged off, because sooner or later it will enter each of our lives in agonizing closeness. If we don't have a proper understanding of the subject we may become bitter and disappointed. We may mistakenly blame God.

A few years ago the Associated Press reported the story of a young man whose fiancée was brutally murdered only a few hours before they were to be married. His friends tried to comfort him, but in agony he cried out, "There can't be a God, there just can't be" (*Houston Post*, August, August 29, 1981, 6B). Are such tragedies God's fault? Does He cause illness and pain?

As we discuss the problem of suffering, we must quickly acknowledge that we don't have all the answers. Yet we can go to God's word for guidance. The Bible is a timeless and universal book because it deals with the questions that plague man. Open-minded study of the issue should correct some of the common misconceptions. We certainly can learn enough not to blame God for every tragedy that befalls mankind.

## The Origin of Suffering

We must never forget that man was created perfect, and placed in a world free from suffering, pain, and death (Genesis 1:26-28,31). Man was created with a free will—the ability to choose between good and evil. He was told to disobey God, and warned of the consequences of disobedience (Genesis 2:16-17). If Adam had been obedient, he could have enjoyed an unending life of happiness. However, he chose to disobey God (Genesis 3:6), and every one of us has ratified that rebellion (Romans 5:12). His action brought dire consequences. When sin entered the world, suffering came in the form of pain, corruption, drudgery, and death (Genesis 3:15-19, 22-24). We do not inherit the sin of Adam, but we suffer the consequences of his rebellion: death.

Some may ask, "Why didn't God make man so that he couldn't sin?" He could have, but if He had done so, we would be nothing more than puppets. Would you like to be married to a toy doll? There would never be any arguments or conflict, but there wouldn't be any true love either! God obviously thought it was worth the risk to create us with a free will. We can choose to obey

or disobey. When we obey God, we glorify Him more than a puppet ever could.

## The Difficulty of This Issue

We must balance our desire for a rational explanation to this question with the obligation to walk by faith. True faith does not require an immediate and complete understanding of the workings of God (Habakkuk 2:2-4). Consider Job who, although he was a good man, suddenly lost his children, his possessions, and his health. He felt great perplexity over this unexplained suffering. Job was never really given an answer. He did, however, gain an understanding of the overwhelming power and majesty of Jehovah (Job 38-41). Job learned he could not subject God and His ways to human calculation. Jehovah cannot be put in a test tube to be examined and analyzed. Job learned that he could triumph over difficulties, even though he was not able to provide a rational explanation of all circumstances of suffering (Job 42:1-6).

## We Can Recognize

### Some of the Reasons for Suffering

Much of the suffering in the world can be traced directly to the evil choices men make (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21). Faithfulness to God is the path to happiness, but sin brings pain, both now and in eternity (Psalm 1). Some sins carry physical penalties, such as alcoholism, drug addiction, and social diseases. The person who misuses his body will eventually pay the price. It is highly unjust to blame God for suffering in such cases. Also consider that sin harms not only ourselves, but often innocent parties. Is it right to blame God for the drunk driver, or the murderer, or the rapist? Sin is to blame!

At certain times, God has *in a sense* been responsible for suffering. The Bible records cases of divine punishment upon wicked men (Leviticus 10:2; Joel; Acts 12:23). It is Satan who tempts man to rebel against God's commandments (Genesis 3:4; John 8:44). When punishment came, who was really at fault? Satan! In this regard, the Lord no longer deals with us today as He did then. Fire no longer falls from heaven to devour sinners. We await the day of judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10). Thus it is false to say that when disaster strikes people today, that they are being punished (Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-9).

Much of man's suffering is the result of the harsh conditions of nature. But the natural world itself has fallen into disorder because of the curse of sin.

Originally the creation was "very good" (Genesis 1:31), but death entered the world when man fell. Disease and illness are means by which death occurs from natural causes. Eventually the world became so wicked that God was sorry that He created man (Genesis 9:5-6). He sent the flood and "the world that then was perished" (2 Peter 3:6). Think of the tremendous changes implied in these verses. Before the flood, the earth was apparently watered by a mist (Genesis 2:6). Creation scientists argue that a "vapor canopy" existed prior to the flood which produced a greenhouse effect, so that the entire world had a mild climate. Temperature extremes, and the violent weather that accompanies such, would not have existed. The flood was a catastrophic destruction of the original world. The fountains of the deep were broken up (Genesis 7:11). This would have had a tremendous destabilizing effect on the crust of the earth. Earthquakes, which result from the movements of an unstable earth crust, would certainly have increased. Today the natural environment is much harsher and weather conditions are apparently much more severe. There was a balance which originally existed in nature that has been lost. When we see suffering caused by nature, should we blame the Creator? Think back to the way it was, and remember that in God's original scheme, the creation was "very good." Let's realize that the consequences of sin affected even the natural realm.

There is also the suffering which God's people inevitably experience (Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12). Why do we suffer as Christians? We stand for God and would uphold Truth in a world ruled by the prince of darkness (Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 4:1-4). This kind of suffering should be viewed as the cross which we must bear in following Christ (Matthew 16:24). If we react properly, it can have a positive effect in our lives (James 1:3).

## Conclusion

Why do men suffer? Even after studying the issue, we are left with more questions than answers. Remember, Job was not given an answer. We can learn enough not to falsely blame God. To say all suffering is His fault is to make Him into a cruel monster. So, if we're going to get angry over human suffering, let's make sure our anger is directed at the one responsible. Satan is to blame, for it was through his influence that sin and suffering entered the world.

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## Playing God

**I** have been accused more than once of trying to "play God." I do not take such a charge lightly. It has cost me some long thoughts and deep self-examination. First of all it has caused me to think a lot about the role that God actually plays in the universe.

God is most fundamentally the Creator—the foundation of all reality. Nothing exists without Him (Acts 17:24-26). Out of that He possesses absolute authority. It is not derived, but intrinsic to Himself. His will and reality are the same. He is greater than all (John 10:29) and gives account to none (Romans 9:20). His wish is the final word on everything (Romans 3:4). He also possesses the absolute right of judgment (Hebrews 12:23) and does so out of His perfect righteousness (Psalm 119:142) and perfect knowledge (1 Corinthians 4:5; Hebrews 4:12-13).

It seems inconceivable in the face of this that any man, created and finite, should attempt to behave as if he were God, Creator and infinite. But it is just such an effort that is at the heart of the human problem. The Bible's story is one of men who have not been content with the greatness of being creatures, even creatures made in the image of God. They have instead aspired to be God, with right over all and responsibility to none. One would think that any attempt on man's part to seize the throne of the universe would be glaringly obvious. In fact, such attempts are more subtle than we know. Let's think carefully about some ways in which we can attempt to "play God."

**We can attempt to play God by rebelling against His will.** The genius of sin is in the pride which makes men think that they know better where their best interests lie than the One who made them. Like Eve, they wish to call the shots of life for themselves and are tempted by Satan's puerile lie that God does not care for them; that He has deceived them and denied them the only thing worthwhile. Every sinner has rebelled against his Maker and determined to set up shop on his own, beholden to no one. He has fallen for the old enticement, "ye shall be as God" (Genesis 3:5).

**We can attempt to play God by judging God's rule in the world.** This was the failing of Job. He was a good and godly man but his suffering was intense and long and his disappointments deep. In the bitterness of his soul he complained that God's treatment of him was unjust, and though righteous he was receiving the judgment of the wicked (Job 10). God replied by asking His servant a barrage of questions impossible for Job to answer; for a man who presumes to judge God must surely stand above Him and be wiser than He (Job 38). At last Job

must confess his arrogant presumption and repent (Job 42). We fall into the same trap when we begin to think that God has gotten everything all wrong. The clay cannot say to the Potter, "Why didst thou make me thus?" (Romans 9:20).

**We can attempt to play God by the unloving condemnation of others.** Often in our anger and pride we take great delight in consigning other people to the nether regions. Our statements are not redemptive warnings calculated to turn people from destruction but smug edicts intended to humiliate. We become like the sons of Zebedee, ready to call down fire from heaven, having forgotten that Jesus came to save rather than to destroy (Luke 9:53-54). Our Lord warns of such harsh and unmerciful condemnation of others (Matthew 7:1-5), an attempt to sit on God's throne and judge His servants (Romans 14:4). We are neither good enough or wise enough to assume such a role. Our task, as God's servants, is to humbly speak His truth in love and stand firmly upon it (Ephesians 4:14-15). Others will do with it what they will and God, who has the right, will judge their case.

**We can attempt to play God by presuming to speak for Him.** This is as subtle a trap as any. Some men become more righteous than God and find it satisfying to be harder than the Almighty. For them, the hard line is always the true line and they fall in with the Pharisees, "teaching as their doctrine the precepts of men" (Mark 7:7) and laying on men heavy burdens, grievous to be borne (Matthew 23:4). It is for this real or supposed infraction that many are accused of "playing God."

But there is an even more subtle form of presuming to speak for God, and that is the effort to be more merciful than "the Father of mercies." Some people, in an effort not to judge others too severely, begin to presumptuously deliver them from God's clear commandments. Like the unrighteous steward, they begin cutting the Lord's demands in half. They make soothing statements about how sure they are that the Creator is not specially concerned about this particular violation of His will or that particular presumption on His silence. Never do we more blatantly play God and toy with men's souls than when we presume to deny power to what He has spoken. Our task is the task of the creature, the servant. As Peter says, "If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God. . . . that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:11).

Let us be content to be men. It is a high calling.





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Brent Lewis

### For Those Who Hurt

Life is often painful for each of us, even when we are Christians. Things don't always turn out as we had hoped or expected. A marriage goes sour, a child rebels, a treasured companion dies, one is born with a handicap or finds out that he has cancer with only a few short months to live. What do we do when faced with such tragedy? How does one cope with the cruel blows of life?

The answer may be found in the Scriptures expounded on the following pages. Read the articles and apply them. Save them for future reference. Pass them on to a friend. This issue is for those who hurt.

One of the deepest problems men face in our time is loneliness. A woman in her middle years recently said, "There have been times when I felt so desperately alone that I have gone to the greeting card rack and bought for myself the card I wished someone had sent me." One man admitted needing to have someone speak to him so badly that he dialed his telephone only to hear a recorded voice which said, "The time is . . ."

To be sure, these are unusually severe cases. But the loneliness of our age is

not limited to those who are merely by themselves, physically isolated. It affects young and old, rich and poor, strong and weak. A recent study indicated that the loneliest of persons can be married couples—people with nice homes, good jobs, money, family activities, and all the rest, but who are out of touch with each other, who have no intimacy or understanding.

Whatever it is that hurts in your life, you need to see that *God knows and Jesus cares*. Life is filled with inequities and suffering. Paul said, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain until now" (Romans 8:22). But we must not blame God when pain comes. We must view pain in the proper perspective, realizing that we as Christians "groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). The pain and hurt of life makes us yearn and strive for that better place where there will be no pain or crying (Revelation 21:4).

In addition, *your brethren care*. They "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). They will help you bear your burden (Galatians 6:2). God's wisdom is

expressed in the church—a relationship of mutual sharing and caring. When we know that we belong to God and we have a family of brothers and sisters who care—we can survive any hurt.

When Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, near the end of his life, discovered just how ill he was, he surprised his colleagues in Congress by announcing that he was going home to Bonham, Texas, for medical tests and treatment. Some of them asked why he did not remain in Washington, D.C., where he could have the use of the prestigious National Institute of Health facilities and other outstanding medical facilities. Rayburn said: "Because Bonham is a place where people know it if you're sick and where they care when you die."

The Lord's church is that kind of place in a much loftier sense. We must extend our hands and our hearts to those who hurt. If you are a hurting Christian, you have much to gain from those who care and are willing to draw close to you.

And beyond all of that, you may know that you have a loving God to whom you can go, "casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT

Robert L. Gabhart

## Living With Loneliness

SEVERAL YEARS AGO A MAN PUT AN AD IN a Kansas newspaper. It contained only fifteen words, but it got amazing results. It said: "I will listen to you talk for 30 minutes without a comment for \$5." It sounds like a hoax, but it was legitimate. The person who put that ad in the paper realized that this is a lonely world and saw a way not only to make some money, but to provide a service to people who had real needs. In fact, some people so needed to talk to someone else that they called long distance. After the ad ran for several days, the person was receiving 10-20 calls a day.

"None but the lonely heart can feel my anguish," the song says. Loneliness has been called "the most desolate word in all human language." Oddly enough, increased activity and a fast-paced life do little to solve the problem. Travel does not work; a lonely soul is not comforted by new surroundings. Many people in our accelerated society are immobilized by the bleak feeling of loneliness. It strikes those in every stage and circumstance of life: the single person following a broken romance; the inmate in prison with nothing to look forward to but the next day; the military serviceman thousands of miles from home; the widow who buried her life's mate and now must set the table for one; the teenager who stares disinterestedly into the TV set, attempting to escape the pain of a home pressured by drugs or alcohol or divorce; the divorced man or woman with little opportunity or no scriptural right to remarry.

But solitude is no new phenomenon. The apostle Paul knew penetrating loneliness. In 2 Corinthians, his most autobiographical writing, he enumerated personal experiences that throbbed with loneliness (11:24-28). The most eloquent of Paul's writings on the subject of loneliness were penned during his final days of life in his second letter to Timothy. From those words we can learn when loneliness comes, what it does to us, and how it can be controlled. Most of us, like Paul, have had some pretty desolate times. His words, maybe

written by candlelight, can serve us well today in dealing with loneliness.

We are lonely when separated from cherished friends. Paul wrote, "Demas . . . has deserted me and gone . . . Crescens has gone . . . Titus . . . Only Luke is with me . . . Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus" (4:10-12). Later he added, "Erastus remained at Corinth; but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus" (verse 20). His closest companions were gone. Paul said, "I'm alone; there's no one around," and then pled, "Make every effort to come to me soon . . . come before winter" (verses 9, 21). Except for Luke,

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***Many lonely people tend to lick their wounds and drown themselves in self-pity, saying, "Poor me—no one ever had it so bad." We have all been there. You will not be immune to loneliness in the future just as you have not escaped it in the past.***

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those on whom he had depended for love and support were scattered. At that moment he needed his intimate friends. None were there to put their arm around him and say, "I care about you. Thanks for all you have done."

We are lonely at certain times of the year. So was Paul. Winter was on the way. The change of season could be felt in the dark, stony dungeon of the Mamertine Prison. Paul seemed to be saying, "I can't take the winter alone, Timothy!" Psychologists say we go through cyclical times in our lives. When a bad experience occurs, the next

year on that date we subconsciously slump; our minds will not forget. The holiday seasons are tragically difficult times for many people. There is a perceptible rise in suicides.

Paul, however, did not die from loneliness. Loneliness does not have to be a totally wasted experience. Some beautiful things happened to Paul in his loneliness, as they can to us. Isolation makes us aware of the significance of other people. "Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service" (verse 11). Paul seemed to see John Mark now in a different light. In Acts 15 he had little respect for one whom he considered a deserter. But, in his final days, he saw Mark's value. Loneliness does that to you. In the emptiness of the hour you suddenly realize, "That person really is significant in the Lord's body; look at the good he is doing; I can gain strength from him." People who quickly write others off probably have never been lonely. The apostle may have never before appreciated Dr. Luke as he did in the dungeon.

Loneliness also forces us to turn our concerns over to God. That can save you when you are lonely—when you are going under and there is nobody there. "But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me . . . The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen" (verses 17-18).

Many lonely people tend to lick their wounds and drown themselves in self-pity, saying, "Poor me—no one ever had it so bad." We have all been there. You will not not be immune to loneliness in the future, just as you have not escaped it in the past. How, then, can we handle loneliness? Each of us must come to terms with the opportunity loneliness presents. It is the ideal occasion to say, "Lord, I've exhausted all my alternatives; now it's up to You. Make me the man or woman You had-in mind all along, and I'll go on from here." He will do just that.

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT



## The Death of a Loved One

W. Frank Walton

DEATH IS THE MOST CERTAIN THING about life. "It is appointed for men to die once" (Hebrews 9:27). Death robs us of a dearly loved parent, child, spouse or friend. This ruptured relationship, whether it happens in tragic suddenness or with ample warning, leaves us lonely and shaken. And if we are not prepared for the inevitable, we could be overwhelmed with bitter sorrow. Our faith could be weakened or overthrown when a loved one goes "the way of all the earth" (Joshua 23:14).

1. **God is not to blame.** In our emotional trauma, we might cry, "Why would God take them?" Death's chilling void can cause us to doubt God's goodness. A lady told me she stopped believing in God because her husband died. But God does not cause death. Because of Adam and Eve's sins, God banished them from the tree of life and cursed the earth (Genesis 3:17-24). By sin, death passed upon all men. All suffering and death is ultimately traceable to the consequences of Satan's work, not God's (Luke 13:16; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

Someone may ask, "Where was God when my loved one died?" He was in the very same place as when He watched His Son die. But make no mistake: God pities the human plight. His love seeks to save us. This painful world is not our home but a place of preparation for a better world.

2. **Immediate grief is normal.** Our Lord came to the grave of His beloved friend Lazarus. Although Jesus would raise him from the dead, "Jesus wept" as He mourned the tragedy of death (John 11:34-36). We should not overly "grieve, as do the rest who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). We shall see them again in bliss. But life here must go on (Genesis 23:2,4).

What if they were lost? This is the awful tragedy of sin. It grieves God just as much as it does us. He is not willing for any to perish. But our love for God and truth must surpass any earthly tie (Mark 12:30). We will not waste another fleeting opportunity to snatch others out

of the fire. God can give us the wisdom to cope now, for He, too, has to mourn over His lost offspring—mankind.

3. **Learn one of life's important lessons.** "It is better to go to a house of mourning . . . because it is the end of every man and the living takes it to heart" (Ecclesiastes 7:2). It takes the finality of death to teach us the meaning of life. In 1951, a gospel preacher lost his only daughter, a precious, blue-eyed blonde 7-year-old named Vivian. She was burned to death. Out of his anguish

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he wrote, "The most important lesson I have learned this year is the uncertainty of life. How could I fail to learn it? How shall I ever forget it? If one so young and full of life as Vivian was, could so suddenly go, how can I be certain of what a day may bring forth? I know now how brittle is the thread of life. I know that no one knows whether tomorrow shall find him among his friends on earth or in the presence of his God." How precious is the time we have together *now*! Oh Lord, "Teach us to number our days,

that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). Death's sobering reality reminds us of life's priorities and purpose. What am I really living for? Today may be my last.

4. **You can find comfort.** Our Father is the "God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). He alone "gives songs in the night" (Job 35:10). He will never leave us. He knows when it hurts. He will always listen. We can search His word for light when the hour of our grief is so dark. The Bible is a book of life and death. We hear the gospel assurance, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55,57). Death is not the end, but a new beginning. God has furnished all we need, both here and hereafter.

If you have lost a child, find solace in their safety. David comforted himself: "But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). Also, let us be happy for a departed saved one. Would they want you to be continually mourning in despair? Wouldn't they want you to be glad for the hope of heaven's reunion? Wouldn't they want you to carry on the work of God? Their influence lives on in us. "The memory of the righteous is blessed" (Proverbs 10:7).

We can draw strength from other relationships (Genesis 24:67). As God's family, we lovingly lend supportive words and a caring presence. In death, we truly "bear one another's burdens" as we "weep with those who weep."

Let us be thankful and enriched for the time we had together. It was the gift of God. Let us fervently look forward to the great family reunion in heaven, where there never will be any death, mourning, pain, separation or curse. "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 21:4). "Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT

Sewell Hall

## When Your Children Disappoint You

A YOUNG CHILD SUDDENLY DISAPPEARS from home. An alarm is sounded. Police send out bulletins. The media run the child's picture. The parents are interviewed and a nation responds sympathetically. Hopefully the child will be found.

But there is another group of parents for whom there is little sympathy. Police give little help and the media are unconcerned. Even fellow Christians who should share the burden all too often do little more than criticize and condemn. These are the parents of children who rebel and walk out on their families abruptly after reaching their teens.

Such leaving is more common than one would think. It may be caused by rebellion against the moral standards of the family, by fancied intellectualism, by acceptance of some new religion or disillusionment with all religion, or by an extreme reaction to over-dominant parents. But regardless of the cause, the trauma suffered by the parents can scarcely be imagined by those who have not experienced it.

When parents realize their child has left them they are overwhelmed by successive waves of varying emotions. At first they are dominated by anxiety for the safety and well-being of their offspring. This often changes to anger—anger directed at the child, his peers, or anyone else who seems to share responsibility. Anger, in turn, becomes embarrassment as parents have to face their own peers. Their pride is gone and they feel their influence is irreparably compromised. Despair takes hold as all of their dreams for their child are shattered and the future seems hopeless. Bitter resentment may develop toward parents who have escaped this ordeal and even toward God who permitted it to happen.

Destructive as these reactions are, however, there is another which may be more harmful. It is the sense of guilt which is almost universal among Christians whose children go AWOL. They ask, "Where did we go wrong?"

Sometimes parents *are* to be blamed. The delinquency of children may be the result of bad parental examples or of a failure to discipline properly. But if we as parents are guilty, nothing is gained by letting it destroy us. Brooding will not bring children back, nor will it atone for the mistakes we have made. We need simply to "repent and pray God" for forgiveness and then do whatever we can to correct the condition that caused the problem. If Paul, the Apostle, could put behind him his days as a persecutor and get on with the work of preaching Christ, surely we must put behind us our

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failure as parents, and even the loss of our own child—and get on with the work of saving others.

But does the sin of a child necessarily prove the guilt of the parents? Ezekiel 18:20 seems to say otherwise: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son." Free moral agency means that a child can do whatever he may choose to do regardless of how he has been reared.

But what of Proverbs 22:6? "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from

it." First, the common translation of this verse may not be the correct one. Keil and Delitzsch render it: "Give to the child instruction conformably to his way; So he will not, when he becomes old, depart from it." This would mean that the child's aptitudes and inclinations should be considered in his education. This is not unlike other Proverbs.

Accepting the common translation, however, we should still see it as a valuable general rule, but one to which there may be exceptions. To do otherwise may lead to seriously erroneous conclusions. Consider the following: "He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor" (Proverbs 10:4). "The fear of the Lord prolongs days, But the years of the wicked are shortened" (10:27). "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (16:7). Someone might observe that Jesus was poor, died young, and was put to death by his enemies. Would this prove that Jesus dealt with a slack hand, was wicked, and did not please the Lord? *Certainly not!* But that is the same kind of reasoning which would attempt to prove that because a child departs from the right way, the parents did not bring him up in the way that he should go.

The story of the Prodigal provides the best possible guidelines. It reminds us that God has rebellious children; He is the Father in the story. He continued to love the son, stood ready to forgive him and was eager to restore him to his place in the family. Yet, he hated the sin of his son, never compromised his own principles and did not go begging the son to return as a favor to his old father. The door was open, but the boy had to decide on his own to enter it.

This story also holds out hope that someday such parents may see, even "a great way off" their child penitently returning home. In the meantime, what greater source of comfort can be found than communion in prayer with Him who understands and shares our love and concern for that lost child?

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT



## Living With Handicaps or Loss of Health

Irvin Himmel

HOW CAN ONE ADJUST TO LIVING WITH a handicap such as blindness, being paralyzed due to a spinal injury, or complete loss of speech? What happens after the doctor looks one squarely in the eye and says with a soft, yet firm, tone of voice, "You have only about a year in which to live?"

People react differently to serious handicaps and the loss of health. Some panic. Some commit suicide. Some are depressed beyond description. Others remain cheerful and display a remarkably good attitude.

Here are some suggestions which I trust may be helpful to all who are handicapped or who have lost good health:

**1. Face reality.** If you have a physical disadvantage, whether from birth or in consequence of disease, accident, or other causes, you are not alone. Thousands of people have handicaps. If you have a health problem that is incurable, so do many others. If you have a terminal illness, stop and consider that millions of people have died because of disease. Is a terminal illness worse than being hurled into the great beyond without warning? Perhaps God has allowed you to be warned of the approach of death for a reason.

Be realistic. Accept what is beyond your power to change. Do the best you can with what you have in whatever time you have remaining.

**2. Trust in God.** The heavenly Father knows more about what is good for us and what is bad for us than we know ourselves. Handicapped people and unhealthy people have vivid reminders of their dependence on God. We cannot be strong spiritually until we face up to our human weaknesses. When Paul besought the Lord to remove his "thorn in the flesh," the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Realizing this truth, Paul said, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Many of us have correct answers to

doctrinal questions but lack sustaining faith in the face of adversity. Let us learn to feel as David did in saying, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

**3. Do not be bitter.** A disagreeable, harsh, biting, distasteful attitude will make matters worse. Anyone who has become bitter over personal losses should be reminded that Paul said, "Let all bitterness . . . be put away from you" (Ephesians 4:31). Bitterness only serves to make one sour, crabby and repulsive. A rotten, rebellious attitude will not

thing constructive and beneficial. Brooding over adversity will not turn it into joy. Dwelling on things pleasant, being thankful, and letting the peace of God rule in the heart will give joy in spite of physical losses.

**5. Focus on things above.** This world is not everything. This earthly pilgrimage often is difficult, and it will reach an end. Therefore, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2).

In another passage, Paul wrote, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in

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restore health nor prevent death.

The statistics are that one out of one dies! A dear sister who is a victim of cancer said in my presence, "Everyone has to die sometime." Her serenity and composure through months of suffering have been an inspiration to others.

**4. Avoid self-pity.** There is one thing that is worse than a handicap or loss of health, and that is a morbid preoccupation with feeling sorry for self. "The spirit of man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14). Self-pity wounds the spirit. Physical loss makes life hard; inward loss makes life unbearable.

Let the attention be centered on some-

us" (Romans 8:18). Let us "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

It won't be very long until all our human frailties will cease to concern us. In heaven there will be no sickness, no sorrow, no dying. In the resurrection we shall be given glorified spiritual bodies (Philippians 3:20-21). The hope of these better things above should flood our souls. Strong faith and genuine expectation of what God has promised will soothe and sustain.

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT

## When Your Marriage Breaks Up

David Crawford

C. S. LEWIS, COMMENTING ON HIS mother's death, said, "All settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life. There was to be much fun, many pleasures, many stabs of Joy; but no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis." These words could well describe the feelings of one who loses a mate to divorce. The pain is often worse for the one who was *not* the cause of the breakup. If you have no right to remarry, your pain will undoubtedly escalate from an already heavy burden of grief. Even if you have put a spouse away for unfaithfulness, and have the only God-approved right to remarry (Matthew 19:9), you will still experience pain.

To those who have not caused a marital breakup, but are rather the victims of it, I particularly address these remarks—especially to those who have no right to remarry. It would be easy at this point to fall back on the old cliché, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." But to address *prevention* ignores the fact of homes already broken, and to address *cure* altogether avoids the treatment of present wounds which, left untreated, would prove damaging to every area of one's life, especially the spiritual. What about the dreadful chasm somewhere between prevention and cure? Well, to those who are facing this chasm and who may see their dilemma as little different from the valley of the shadow of death, I express my heartfelt sympathy and concern.

"Yet now there is hope . . . in spite of this" (Ezra 10:2). Those words were spoken in a context similar to the one we are dealing with. Multitudes of God's own people were in unauthorized marriages. Ezra mourned the sin already committed and contemplated the sin that would continue if they failed to extract themselves from those ungodly relationships. But because of good teaching and a respect for God's word, the people determined to do what was right. When they were encouraged to view their situation from a godly

**I say these things to those who are the victims of a marital breakup—especially those with no right to marry.**

perspective, they found the strength to carry out their painful obligation. Their unauthorized marriages are not as important here as the *perspective through which they saw things as God would have them*, thus enabling themselves to do what was right. If we can attain the height from which we *all* ought to view *everything*, we will see this difficult situation in a better light. There is a bright side to this; never think otherwise. Though it will not be fully realized until we are in the presence of the great Light Himself, still its rays can even now reach into those places in our lives that seem the darkest.

Jesus addressed the bottom line of this perspective when He said: "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee . . ." (Mark 9:43-48). The social or cultural amputation that may be required by refusing to remarry when no right exists *can be borne*. This passage, though frightening, is still overwhelmingly constructive and optimistic. We must perceive Christ's "It is better . . ." Volumes are spoken here, and when we grow to believe them as we ought, we will have done ourselves the greatest favor since obeying the gospel. The Christian may be called upon to bear the personal and social pain of not remarrying; still he can, through this perspective, see his way through it all the way to a home in heaven. Jesus also spoke of some who, for the kingdom's sake, refuse to (re)marry (Matthew 19:12). Those who determine not to do so "for the kingdom's sake" place themselves among those whom Jesus says *can* do it. When Paul speaks of those who must either be reconciled to their mate or remain unmarried, he says that such *can* be done, for "the time is short . . . the form of this world is passing away" (see 1 Corinthians

7:11,29,31). Such a child of God will naturally feel crippled, but would rather limp into heaven, where there is no pain and where all tears shall be wiped away, than to dance into hell, foolishly holding what he can never keep there.

Are there "real people" who live their lives by this radical perspective? Yes, more than you might think. One such individual is a good brother named Bruce Pelligrini. Bruce is a member of the North Street congregation in Tampa, Florida. I talked to him and, with his permission, briefly pass along the insights he offers. First, he says that the family love he receives from the congregation is a help beyond description. Bruce feels that the reason most refuse to try to remain celibate, or fail after an attempt to live by the stringent conditions required of those who have no right to remarry is that they simply do not apply the basic principles of Christianity (he specifies knowing the love and care of God, and believing His promises). By recognizing God's love for him, Bruce says that *nothing* (even remaining unmarried) cannot be handled in the strength derived from such love. More than anything else, Bruce said his desire to be like Jesus tops his list of helps. Christ, of course, was never married (much less divorced), but His lifeblood *was* to please the Father, doing His will *at all costs*. I thank Bruce for these insights and am happy to say that he is unselfishly willing to talk to one in similar circumstances who may be in need of encouragement (813/985-4122).

If you do have a right to remarry, a spiritual perspective is still indispensable to your present contentment and future well-being. If you have no right, please remember Jesus' statement that nothing must offend. The stumbling-block may often appear to be a mountain—but realize that Heaven is just on the other side; and by your godly faith you will be able to address this great mountain and say, "Be cast into the sea." The prayers of a host of brothers and sisters are with you to this end.

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT



## When Other Christians Let You Down

Charles Brackett

FEW THINGS HURT AND DISAPPOINT MORE than being let down by someone close, a loved one. To be in the family of God for any period of time is to know what it means to be let down by brethren, and it hurts.

It has always been so; early Christians let one another down in the same ways we do today. While the Master agonized in prayer in the garden (Matthew 26:36-45), the disciples slept. They let Him down. Diotrophes robbed others of authority and honor (3 John 9-11), loving preeminence. Some in Thessalonica were a burden to others when they could have worked and supported themselves (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12). Peter failed in a promise to Christ when he denied that he knew Him (Luke 22:54-62). The list goes on, serving as a practical reminder for our own behavior.

As we examine New Testament examples, it seems that much of being let down can be defined as being deserted, either in purpose or expectation, if not physically. Onesimus, though not then his brother in Christ, let Philemon down when he left his bond-service (Philemon 4-22). Fortunately, the end was better for Onesimus because he later met Paul and became a Christian. Philemon, his master, benefited too, for though he suffered loss and must have hurt, in the end he gained a brother in Christ and the opportunity to grow in spiritual maturity. How did he respond when Onesimus returned? Hopefully, as Paul requested and anticipated (verse 17). What a let-down to the faith of so many it would have been if one so influential as Philemon (verses 5,7) failed to react with love and generosity.

Those who desert the faith certainly let us down; in such cases, however, our response must be very different. Hymeneaus and Alexander rejected faith and a good conscience and Paul reacted by delivering them to Satan (1 Timothy 1:19-20). Bold confrontation is necessary when prominent teachers give way to sin and fail those who follow their teaching and those who labor with them. This

was imperative when Peter, in cowardice and hypocrisy, refused to associate with the Gentile brethren in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-21). We must follow Paul's example in similar cases. To do less is to ignore the tremendous consequences that result from the sins of those with influence. Notice in the above instance that a number of Jews joined with Peter in his hypocrisy; even Barnabas was carried away. They knew better! When is such a tidal wave of sin to be stopped? And who should confront the sinner?

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The answer should be clear to teachers and students alike: sin must be exposed immediately and the sinner must be confronted by the first one who has the goodness, knowledge and ability to speak the truth against error (Romans 15:14).

Sometimes it is not easy to know what to do when let down by a brother. Paul and Barnabas sharply disagreed about using Mark after he deserted them in Pamphylia (Acts 15:36-41). Paul did not want to travel with him. Mark had

certainly let them down—not only Paul and Barnabas, but all of their traveling companions. The journey from Pamphylia was perilous. Rugged country and ruthless robbers added to the physical danger and mental anguish that they had encountered from Jews all along the first journey. Was Mark too young, too immature in his faith and convictions? Perhaps Barnabas understood why Mark turned back from their task. Maybe he could see, more clearly than Paul, Mark's potential for greater faith and service. After all, the apostles had named him "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36).

Our own experience with our brethren is not without disillusionment. We are sometimes disappointed, even hampered, in our service to Christ by those whose convictions and dedication to the work seem to fall short of the challenge. While the perils we face are seldom as apparent or as dangerous as those that Mark faced, it is not uncommon to find those who turn back. Notice, however, that neither Paul nor Barnabas allowed Mark's behavior to deter them from the work. Though the load might seem heavier because there are fewer to lift, God will help. He did then and He will now. We dare not shirk even if all others desert.

How should we react to the one who turns back, to one who lets us down? Was Paul wrong to refuse to take Mark on the second journey? Who's to say? Perhaps both reactions were instructive to Mark. Paul's refusal would certainly teach him the seriousness of failure; and Barnabas' willingness to give him another chance would surely encourage him to grow up, to overcome the challenges to his faith. God be thanked that we do not all react the same when let down by others. There is room for firm rebuke as well as sympathetic encouragement. Both can be proper expressions of love. Let us determine, though, that however we respond, it will be with unflinching courage and the wisdom to be like Christ.

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT

## Joseph: A Faith for All Seasons

Rod Boston

NOW YOU TELL ME, HOW IS AN impressionable teenager likely to react when he is betrayed by his own brethren, a victim of envy and jealousy, and sold into slavery to be carried into a distant land where no cry of help will be heard? And that's not the half of it. Forsaken, forgotten, a victim of false accusation and ingratitude, he is finally left in an Egyptian prison to rot. And he didn't deserve any of it! In fact, much of his misfortune occurred when he was doing exactly what God would have him do. Can you imagine the opportunities here to doubt God and forsake His way? Why, it's enough to cause a man to identify with the words of a once-popular song: "Causing me to doubt all about God and his mercy; if he really does exist, why did he desert me? In my hour of need, I truly am indeed, alone again, naturally."

Oh, but what a beautiful story the life of Joseph is. No whining, no defeatism, no bent to revenge, no forsaking God. And though we can only imagine what he suffered and how he hurt at the hand of others, we can only conclude from how he handled his life that he was the victor. The people of God are drawn to the story of Joseph because of his indomitable spirit, unquenchable hope, and his life-sustaining faith. Such an attitude makes any life not only worth living but an ultimate victory. Permit me to identify certain key ingredients in Joseph's life and thinking that made his life so powerfully victorious and successful.

1. He never lost his faith in God. Perhaps this does not sound like a particularly novel observation—but have you noticed how doubt and criticism of God and even a failure to depend upon God are conspicuously missing from the text? This becomes even more significant when you remember that it is not characteristic of the Bible to ignore the weaknesses of God's stalwarts—people like Abraham, David, and the like. A faith for all seasons was truly Joseph's most valuable asset. He relied upon God when all was well; he depended upon

God when everything looked bleak. An example of Joseph's close relationship with God and his continued reliance upon Him is seen when, confined within prison walls, he tells the baker and the butler, who are saddened in having no one to interpret their dreams, "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell it to me, I pray you" (Genesis 40:8; see also 41:15-16).

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***"Jehovah was with Joseph"—that's what the Bible states. However, the key to Joseph's life was that HE KNEW IT WAS SO. . . . these statements were made just as Joseph entered new periods of trial and suffering. The Bible tells us that God knows what is going on in our lives and He is ready to strengthen and comfort His people. However, without our faith in this promise, we receive little comfort or strength.***

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2. Joseph lived with a constant awareness of God's powerful presence. "Jehovah was with Joseph"—that's what the Bible states on several occasions (Genesis 39:2,21). However, the key to Joseph's life was that *he knew it was so*. And this awareness becomes critical when you note that these statements were made just as Joseph entered new periods of trial and suffering. The Bible

tells us that God knows what is going on in our lives and He is ready and able to strengthen His people. However, without our faith in this promise we receive little comfort or strength. Loneliness is one of the more powerful forces that can make suffering so debilitating. From Joseph's life we learn the difference in being alone in an Egyptian prison and being in prison while still in the presence of God. In times of temptation, Joseph's faith in the constant presence of God gave him the kind of strength that we all need. He found himself alone with Potiphar's wife, a woman who had literally thrown herself at him, pleading for his sexual participation. If he succumbed to lust, who would know? Yet he responded to the woman, "How can I do this thing and sin against God?"

3. Joseph lived with an overriding conviction that God was working His divine purpose. Joseph did not view his suffering as God's personal vendetta against him. Our inclination when things are not going our way is to wonder, "Why me?" Joseph, though, is found saying, "Ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20). If we are not careful, whatever personal suffering we must endure in this life gets twisted out of perspective in our minds in relation to God's great scheme of things. God is working His eternal purpose and we have His promise that ultimately all things will work together for the good of those who trust Him. Though some television preachers are peddling the idea that God becomes one's personal caterer, we must realize that our personal comfort and financial success has low priority in God's greater scheme of redemption. The carnal mind will shudder at the thought. But our commitment to God and His spiritual purposes, like Joseph's, must be made well in advance of our trials—and then when trials come we can be asking, "How can I best serve?" instead of "Why me?"

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT



## Suffering As A Christian

Chuck Durham

HE JUST STOOD THERE. HE LOOKED INTO their eyes, eyes full of hatred and raging fury. They cursed him and hit him with their fists. One walked toward him and spit on his face. He just stood there and took it. His wife stood helpless, tears streaming down her face, clutching their baby. They slipped the rope around his neck and hung him, then rode off into the night with only their trademark of terror visible in the moonlight: white-robed bodies with white, conical-shaped masks. Indignation exploded inside of me, my fist clinched at the thought of the many black men who had suffered such a fate. So real is the power of TV that we believe we are there, we are involved.

There was One who suffered the greatest indignity. Why did He suffer so much when He deserved only adoration, yet He did nothing to defend Himself? He could have assembled an army with such awesome power that one soldier could kill 185,000 enemy soldiers in a single night. Yet, He just stood there and took it. He did it all to accomplish our salvation and to leave His disciples an example to follow in the midst of suffering as a Christian (1 Peter 2:21-23).

When we suffer because of doing right, it is easy to grow bitter. We think we don't deserve such treatment. But is it really such an astonishing thing that Christians would suffer for doing right? Jesus said, "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" (Matthew 10:25). Peter likewise wrote, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you" (1 Peter 4:12).

The true Christian will be different from the world. There will be many things that he will have no part in. The world will look askance at the Christian. "You mean you won't drink a beer? You don't dance? You won't sleep with your girlfriend?" Peter admonished, "In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation." Men will naturally fear

and hate those who are different, and as a result they will "[speak] evil of you" (1 Peter 4:4).

Popularity is strong enticement to forsake the Lord. The thought of the guys on your dormitory floor calling you a "Jesus freak" because of your convictions is not very appealing. It hurts when you are ostracized for doing right. Perhaps even stronger than this is the fear of offending one's family. Yet, Jesus plainly said that His gospel would divide

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families. Even the most tender bond of kin would be affected so that "brother would deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death" (Matthew 10:21; see also verses 34-37).

How can we handle the pressures of suffering as a Christian?

1. **We must rejoice.** That seems to be a contradiction; yet, the inspired writer is not saying that the sufferings cause the rejoicing, but "rejoice to the extent that

you partake of Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 4:13). The suffering is positive proof that we are His, and being His, we will inherit eternal glory. Rather than letting the fiery trials discourage us, we must lift our eyes toward Him who suffered the same things and remember that "so persecuted they the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:12). Think of being in the noble company of Elijah, Jeremiah and Micaiah! "If you are reproached [receive verbal abuse and slander] for the name of Christ, blessed are you" (1 Peter 4:14). Think of your spiritual prosperity. One in chains can even sing with joy in his heart (Acts 16:25).

2. **Do not be ashamed, but rather glorify God** (1 Peter 4:16). To be persecuted is not a misfortune to be suffered in self-pity, but actually a privilege for which we should thank God. Do we, like Moses, esteem the reproach of Christ as greater than all the world's treasures? What value do we place on our salvation? If our government confiscated all our possessions because we are the servants of God, would our hearts skip a beat because we "were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41)? The Bible says that He sends trials to test our character and purify us in the crucible of suffering. It is true that "a man's devotion to a principle can be measured by his willingness to suffer for it." God desires that we take the suffering patiently, bearing up under the burden of suffering even when doing right (1 Peter 2:20). We just stand there and take it because we understand why it comes.

3. **Commit yourself to a faithful Creator** (1 Peter 4:19). God will not forsake you. When suffering comes, trust God's wisdom that He has sent what you need to improve your character. Jesus entrusted His soul to the Father at His death because He knew that God would not fail Him. The Father's credibility rests in His infinite power to create; you may totally rely on Him when you suffer as a Christian.

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT

Randy Harshbarger

## Job: Keeping On Under Trials

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING IS COMMON to all men. The trials, problems, illnesses, and burdens of life indiscriminately afflict us or someone close to us. Many questions have been raised concerning God and the suffering that He permeated His universe. How could God, who is good and full of mercy, create a world that is plagued with suffering? We suffer not only from nature (tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.), but other men sometimes cause great hurt to us. Television newscasts and daily newspapers are filled with calamity after calamity. How can we make sense out of the experiences of life that are often unpleasant and painful? Do we blame God for all of this? How should the child of God respond to the suffering that is sure to be a part of his life?

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). This man of faith was a mystery to Satan. Could Job serve God apart from any ulterior motives? Surely if Job's blessings were taken away, he would turn from the Lord. "Remove the hedge from Job, and he will curse Thee"—or, so Satan thought!

The book of Job describes the trial of Job's faith. Job was a righteous man, but he suffered the loss of his health, his family, and the respect of his wife. There was no hedge about him. Righteous men suffer; just because one is a Christian does not mean that he is immune from the troubles, trials, and temptations of life. James tells us that something good can result from the trials of life and we should use what happens as a source of joy (James 1:2-4). Why? Because "the proving of your faith worketh patience." We pass through the fire and emerge pure from dross. This helps us understand just how strong our faith is and that, in turn, fortifies us for the future.

The object of Job's faith was God! Many say that such faith is irrational and suggest there is no evidence for God's existence. Some things are invisible to man in his natural state (John

1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16); but just because Job could not see God (as we see other men) did not mean that God was "dead" or did not exist. Why did Job believe in God? In Job 1:1 we are told about Job's relationship with God. Job revered God and obeyed Him! Job was characterized by righteousness. Even after Satan began his affliction of Job, this

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righteous man refused to turn away from God, and remained convinced that God was the source of all blessings (Job 2:10). Job was surely perplexed about his troubles; he argued and wondered why, but he never doubted God's existence. "The heavens declare the glory of God," but Job had to confess his inability to explain how the creation of God worked (Job 37:14-15). Still, his

inability to explain did not cause him to doubt or deny God. Rather he was humbled before his God and he showed greater faith than before.

Job suffered and did not understand. Yet, in the midst of all his troubles he looked to the Lord for his salvation. To be sure, a godless man could not stand before the Lord. Even if his suffering meant death, even if the Lord decided to slay him, Job wanted to do right in God's sight. He said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him" (Job 13:15).

Do we appreciate the *intensity* of Job's faith? Is our faith that fervent? In the face of trouble do we turn on God, or do we constantly seek His help? Do we blame God for all the misfortunes of life, or rather try to see some good coming from them? Is our faith in God such that regardless of what comes, we will still maintain a righteous walk before Him? New Testament Christians were ardently faithful, even to the point of death (Revelation 7:13-17). Even in death, God provides the way.

The story of Job begins with troubles and trials, but the rest of the story should cause us to thank God for all He has done and will do on our behalf. While many things happen that defy any explanation (any that suits us, that is!), we view Job's life and realize that faithfulness to the Lord is always rewarded. The *triumph of Job's faith* provides great incentive for us to press on. In fact, what happened to Job might make some of us ashamed of the way we complain about the relatively few problems that come to us. Through it all, Job looked toward the Lord. "He also shall be my salvation" (Job 13:16). When it was over, Job had twice as much as before (Job 42:10). But more than that, Job still had his faith in God. Truly, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). With faith in the Lord, nothing can happen in this life that will diminish the hope for a brighter day!

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT



## How You Can Help Those Who Hurt

Don C. Truex

AMERICANS. WE'RE TAUGHT TO BE TOUGH, proud, independent and self-sufficient. I'm sorry, but real life just doesn't work that way. The natural course of human affairs eventually and inevitably leads to occasional hurt and hardship, discouragement and disappointment. And those who have been mired in such valleys will tell you plainly: it is here that you learn the value of Christian brethren.

"Bear ye one another's burdens." Fine. But, Paul, just how shall I do that? Is it enough to simply quote Robert Schuller—"Tough times never last, but tough people do?" No, I think not. The words sound nice and roll easily off the tongue, but, quite frankly, they do not address the needs of those who legitimately hurt.

Perhaps the world's solution is the appropriate one. Are you financially distressed? Declare bankruptcy. Is your marriage empty? Get a divorce. Is there trouble at church? Abandon the Lord. Don't solve your dilemma; run from it. Escape physically or into a bottle of alcohol or pills. Well, to be honest, these "solutions" are not solutions at all.

What can we do—we who love our brethren—to truly help when those we love hurt? A partial answer would include the following:

1. **Help the hurting realize that he has a loving father:** a real, live, loving, compassionate, caring, protecting, providing Father. What a blessing it is to turn to a God who is not impersonal and detached, but who looks upon us with a benevolent heart as His children (2 Corinthians 6:18). When I was a boy in California, my father and I would take long walks in a wooded tract of land that he owned. As the sun would begin to set, the shadows lengthen, and every noise of the woods was amplified, I would begin to be afraid. It was then that I reached up with my small hand to take hold of my father's hand. With my hand in his, all was well. Christians enjoy that privilege with their heavenly Father as well. We would do well to remember that our Lord, when hurting the most, went to a garden, alone, and placed Himself in the hands of His loving

Father.

2. **We must meet the needs of those who hurt—not our own needs.** *We need* for those we love to solve their problems quickly and get back to being the old person we know and love because to see them hurt *makes us uncomfortable*. But what we must do if we would be helpful is meet the needs of the one hurting.

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*The first few months after the diagnosis was made were a nightmare . . . But when we needed encouragement, our brethren helped. When we were not there to take care of the necessities at home, our brethren helped. When endless medical bills began to mount, our brethren helped. When we needed friendship and support, our brethren helped. I cannot imagine enduring the past year without the prayers and help of my brethren.*

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That help may take the form of practical physical aid. It may be simply giving reassurance and support. It may call for being a real friend who will bluntly tell the truth, though it may not be what one wants to hear. It may be presenting viable alternatives to present crises. It may be honestly evaluating our abilities and credentials along with the needs of the hurting and encouraging them to

obtain professional counseling. Or it may be letting the hurting one vent their true feelings. We are all human and we will experience depression, anger, jealousy, etc. Rather than denying these emotions, we must face them and conquer them. Platitudes and guilt will not accomplish the task.

3. **Recognize the value of silence.** Regarding the three "friends" of Job, the Bible says, "They sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great" (Job 2:13). The silent presence of a true friend can be of great comfort, particularly to those who grieve. There simply is no intellect so deep nor eloquence so great as to be able to remove grief from the human heart.

4. **We must help in practical ways.** Please indulge me a personal observation. A year ago our then four-week-old son was diagnosed as having S.I.D.S (sudden infant death syndrome). By all rights, we were told, he should not be alive. By God's grace he is, and is perfectly fine. But, to be honest, the first few months after the diagnosis was made were a nightmare. Hospitals, tests, innumerable doctors, and countless monitor alarms in the night made life difficult at best. But when we needed encouragement, our brethren helped. When we were not there to take care of the necessities at home, our brethren helped. When endless medical bills began to mount, our brethren helped. When we needed friendship and support, our brethren helped. I cannot imagine enduring the trials of the past year without the prayers and help of my brothers and sisters in Christ.

The point is simple: we are a family. We are bound together by a common heritage through the blood of Christ. We anticipate a heavenly home with our eternal Father. We love, serve and help one another, not because of what we possess of money, intellect, beauty or honor—but because we are family and, as such, we desperately need each other.

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# FOR THOSE WHO HURT

Steve Goff

## Does Jesus Care?

NO PERSON IS MORE SENSITIVE TO THE problems encountered in life than is Jesus. His life upon this earth gave Him first-hand experience in human need, in poverty, in suffering, in temptation. Jesus was a man of sorrows. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus wept over the death of a close friend. At Gethsemane, in agony, His sweat fell as great drops of blood. Jesus knew the disappointment of being betrayed by one of His own disciples. He knew loneliness. He lived a celibate life, and thus understood what it takes to make oneself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake. And having experienced the pain and hurt which life can bring, Jesus has an abiding and intimate

cate our needs to Deity, we are invited to cast all our care upon Him (2 Peter 5:7). As our mediator, Jesus makes it possible for our requests to reach the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

**Jesus left us an example.** Actions speak louder than words. The strength Jesus exhibited in times of pain and suffering forever echoes hope to those who hurt. Jesus fought depression, praying to His Father. Jesus endured false accusations, answering nothing in His own defense. When scourged and then nailed to the cross, Jesus rose above hatred and vengeance, crying, "Father, forgive

3:17). What Paul learned from Jesus made him strong enough to suffer many hardships and still be content (Philippians 4:11). In this world of darkness, Jesus left us His word, which is truly a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

**Jesus left us His church.** One of our greatest blessings is the encouragement we can receive from brethren of like precious faith. Jesus designed His church to bear each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2). The body of Christ should ever be characterized by the love its members have for each other (John 13:34-35). When one member of the body is in pain, the others also weep. When one rejoices, his brethren join in the happiness. And when our pain is caused by sin, Jesus gave us the opportunity to "confess your trespasses to one another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

**Jesus left us a promise of heaven.** Preparing His disciples for His certain death, Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled . . . In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-4). A view of heaven moved Paul to express his desire to die soon and be with Christ. This expectation of reward enabled Paul to endure afflictions and persecutions. It granted him the strength to tolerate times of hunger, weariness, sleeplessness, cold and nakedness. And the promise of heaven will help all Christians endure pain, knowing that life is short and heaven is for eternity.

Only a caring Savior would leave His disciples such help in dealing with life's problems. Through pain and sorrow, in loneliness and depression, when other friends are not with us or do not understand the hurt, the Christian has an ever-caring and abiding friend in Jesus. And even in life's darkest hours, we are comforted with His words of assurance, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

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**Only a caring Savior would leave His disciples such help. Through pain and sorrow, in loneliness and depression, when other friends are not with us or do not understand the hurt, the Christian has an ever-caring and abiding friend in Jesus.**

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compassion for those who must bear hardships in life.

Jesus cares! In fact, everything we know about Jesus shows that He cares for us. Perhaps the greatest illustration of His compassion for those who hurt is in what Jesus left when He departed this earth. Whatever our problems, Jesus left us the practical help to either solve those problems, or else tolerate the unavoidable pain. Consider some examples.

**Jesus left us an avenue of prayer.** On earth, Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the Father, and now in heaven He "ever lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). No greater practical help could He have given us. Through the opportunity to communi-

cate our needs to Deity, we are invited to cast all our care upon Him (2 Peter 5:7). As our mediator, Jesus makes it possible for our requests to reach the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

**Jesus left us His word.** I have not found the problem which cannot be answered by the Bible. Even life's "crooked things" which cannot be undone or erased can be tolerable when one has faith in Jesus Christ. Paul, the apostle, wrote that the Scriptures are designed to thoroughly equip the man of God for every good work (2 Timothy



# That's Life!

Dee Bowman



*THE INSIDES OF A THING ARE IMPORTANT.* Jesus spoke of hypocrites as those who looked good on the outside, but inwardly were full of rottenness. There are several areas of life where we need to make sure about the inside. For instance, as one English clergyman said, watch about:

1. Politics without principles
2. Wealth without work
3. Pleasure without conscience
4. Knowledge without character
5. Business without morality
6. Science without humanity
7. Worship without sacrifice.

\* \* \*

*I WENT INTO THE LITTLE COUNTRY CAFE FOR A CUP OF COFFEE.* I was captivated immediately by the framed picture of a little baby, oatmeal all over his face, touseled hair, his dripping spoon raised high. The caption read, "I know I'm important, 'cause God don't make no junk."

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*ONE OF THE MOST COMFORTING PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE* is in 1 Corinthians 10:13. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." I don't know about you, but I'm encouraged when I think that the only way Satan can get an advantage over me is if I let him.

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*MEDITATION IS SUCH A VITAL PART OF CHRISTIANITY.* David said that the blessed man is one who gives thought-time to God (Psalm 1:2). It is meditation that helps us to know who and where we are. And how can a person know if he's right with God when he doesn't really even know where he is?

\* \* \*

*RUSS WROTE SOMETHING AWHILE BACK THAT I THINK BEARS REPEATING.* "It's a strange arrangement when the children of God measure success in the world in a very definite and uniform way, yet consider living for

Jesus as a minor task, accomplishable in the easiest possible manner with minimal regard to the Lord's requirements. In this physical world, we must work and be devoted to succeed. Why, then, is it not the case spiritually?"

\* \* \*

*A. HUGH CLARK* once told me, "If you really want to know what you think about something, write it down." I just wonder what would happen if we all took the time to write down our thoughts about our own spiritual development. How would yours read?

\* \* \*

*HOW TO HAVE A FUSS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:*

1. Get up in a crabby mood; and stay that way.
2. Learn the value of scorn; be sure you don't agree with anyone.
3. Look down on people; let pride be your partner.
4. Criticize. Especially if someone has been praised for doing something.
5. Be an "aginer" and while you're at it, be loud!
6. Be tough. After all, being macho is better than being right.

If you do these things, chances are you will have at least one fuss before noon.

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* "We had a noon meal at a local cafeteria with an older couple, name of Peebles. They were most cordial and completely unostentatious. I really enjoyed them. I love the simple folk—I guess because I'm one of them. Actually, they have the most interesting things to say and their stories are the best—mostly about family, friends, neighbors, and not about how many famous people they know, or where they have been, or what they have done. But one thing they all have in common—they *all* brag about their grandchildren."

\* \* \*

*THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE:* Try to feel with your friends. If they feel joy, feel it with them. If they are sad, be sad with them. In doing so, you will learn the real meaning of "compassion"—with-feeling.



# A Father Who Missed the Joy of Expressing Love

*D. L. Stewart*

I never kissed my father.

We never touched, never hugged, never put our arms around each other's shoulders and walked together. On the day I graduated from college, he shook my hand briefly. It was the first time I ever had felt his hand. And the last.

On the day after he died I stood in front of his coffin, alone, and looked at the body of this strong, silent, undemonstrative man, this man who never once said he loved me, who never seemed to wonder if I loved him. I expected to feel nothing, expected that our last encounter would be the way our relationship always had been.

But I cried. And I didn't know why.

He wasn't a bad man, my father. He didn't beat me. He hardly ever yelled at me. I never went hungry. I had clothes on my back and a roof over my head. He drank some. He drank a lot. But he never was a mean drunk. Drinking made him friendly, opened him up, exposed a sense of humor that I seldom got to see. When he came home swaying, he always laughed. It seems, now, that it was the only time he did.

He was a big man, a tough man, a good-looking man, with wavy blond hair and thick arms. He went to college for a short time, played semi-pro football briefly, rode the rails during the Depression. He worked in machine shops all his life, running a turret lathe. He was good at what he did, my mother told me.

We didn't spend much time together. He took me fishing a couple of times, but we didn't catch anything and he said it was because I scared the fish away with all of my talking and after a while I got bored and left my fishing rod on the bank and went off to throw stones at trees. He bought me a .22 rifle one year and we went out and shot at paper targets. But I wasn't very good at it and we never went out again. He sold the gun that winter.

When I was in high school, I played football for a year. I thought he'd be proud. But I was afraid of the contact and spent most of the time on the bench. He never came to a game.

We didn't see much of each other after I went off to college. He never came to campus for special events and I always seemed to be busy when I came home for vacations and, after graduation, I married and started a family of my own.

When I was 27, he died and I stood in front of his coffin and looked at the body of this strong, silent, undemonstrative man. And I cried. Deep, painful sobs that came from nowhere and caught me by surprise and echoed in the stillness of the room.

And for 13 years I have wondered why.

Part of it was fear, I am sure of that. He was a man who never showed pain or fright or worry. If he suffered, he suffered in silence, keeping it in, handling it alone, dealing with it "like a man." He was so strong and now he was dead and that scared me.

But there was more to it than that. Sadness and self-pity helped bring forth the sobs. Sadness that we had spent a lifetime together, but never were close. Self-pity that I never had felt his arm around my shoulder, his hand on my cheek. I blamed him for that, but I know now that it wasn't his fault.

He was the product of a different time, a different upbringing. The men in his family never hugged, never kissed. They were men's men. Macho men. They were of the John Wayne era. They would not have understood Alan Alda. They might have identified with Archie Bunker but not with Phil Donahue.

But there was, that day, an even deeper reason for the tears, a problem with which I have not yet come completely to grips.

There was a feeling of resentment for the macho legacy he had left me. A legacy that enabled me to put my arms around my sons and wrestle with them on the living room floor, but did not allow me to put my arms around their shoulders and walk with them together.

A heritage that made it easy for me to put my hand on their heads and tousle their hair, but difficult to put my hand on their faces and stroke their cheeks.

I could carry them on my back, but I could not hold them on my lap.

It is a legacy that is deeply ingrained and long-lived, a legacy that has kept me from knowing the full meaning of what it can mean to be a father.

A legacy that colored my memories of fatherhood with shades of guilt.

When he was 12 and had fallen short in something he attempted, I went to my oldest son's room and knocked on the door and poked my head inside and said, "Hey, don't feel bad. I'm still proud of you."

"You are?" he said, and there was surprise in his voice. That hurt me a little. A son should never be surprised when his father is proud of him.

On the Christmas when he was 15 he came up to me after he had opened the special present he had hoped for and tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Dad?" When I turned around, he kissed me on the cheek.

I flinched.

"Yeah, well, Merry Christmas," I said, finally.

Then he was gone and I was alone, an opportunity lost, a special moment squandered, a chance to put my arms around him and hug him and let him know my feelings inhibited by the legacy of my father.

But I am learning. The progress is slow, sometimes, but I am learning.

Last month, with my suitcase packed for a business trip, I put my hand on my 10-year-old's head and I tousled his hair and I said something flippant.

And then I pulled him to me and I looked down at him and said, "I love you."

And my wife, who had overheard it, waited until he was gone and said, "You know, that's the first time you've ever said that to him."

"It felt good," I said.

And, in that moment, I knew that I had cried for my father because he had missed the joy of being able to say to a son, "I love you."

*Today Newspaper, Cocoa, FL  
June 16, 1985*



# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"A man's goings are established of Jehovah; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for Jehovah upholdeth him with his hand. . . . The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (37:23-24,31).

## The Steps of a Good Man

God is glorified by the life of a good man or woman. He wants each of us to obey His will. There are certain features that mark the good person's life. We have previously considered the marks of a godless man [see August, 1985, p. 25]. Now let us note the steps of a good man.

1. **He has an order to his life.** "His goings are established of Jehovah" (verse 23). The KJV translates, "The steps of a good man are ordered by Jehovah." This man does not live his life indiscriminately, out of control. He cares about what God wants for him and he pays attention to God's directions. "Righteousness shall go before him, and shall make his footsteps a way to walk in" (Psalm 85:13). "Establish my footsteps in thy word; and let not my iniquity have dominion over me" (119:133). Here is a man who wishes to bring his life into accord with God's will.

2. **He receives the approval of God.** "He [God] delighteth in his way" (verse 23). This presupposes that God is aware of this man; He knows his way. "For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the wicked shall perish" (Psalm 1:6). God is pleased with the good man who orders his life after His way. "Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Jehovah be

magnified, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant" (Psalm 35:27).

3. **His weaknesses and failings do not cause God to cast him off.** "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down" (verse 24). This is not to say that one *cannot* fall or be cast down. Even Paul, the apostle, said, "But I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected [a castaway, KJV]" (1 Corinthians 9:27). And Paul said to some Christians in Galatia, "Ye are severed from Christ . . . ye are fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4).

But it is not *necessary* for one to be lost. God does not give up on us when we slip into sin. He urges other Christians to rescue this man: "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1). He offers His Son who still functions on behalf of the fallen Christian: "My little children, these things I write unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). No, God does not summarily discard the good man who slips into sin. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

4. **He keeps God's law in his heart.** "The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (verse 31). This is absolutely necessary. God counseled Israel, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart" (Deuteronomy 6:6). "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (119:11). *This is the man* who "will not slide." Hosea accused God's people of "sliding back as a backsliding heifer" (Hosea 4:16). But there was a clear reason for it: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). That is merely to say that they did not keep God's word (law) in their hearts!

Let us determine that we will put this psalm into practice by walking in the steps of a good man.



# Some Things You Will Never Regret (II)

Kenneth E. Thomas

**Tearing up a letter written in anger.** Unfortunately, in my past twenty-five-plus years of preaching Christ, I have felt the need to write a few letters and to make a phone call or two to "set the record straight." Having been falsely accused, I was sure I was doing the right thing. The calls always messed up more than they cleared up; well, maybe not always, but usually. I took the advice of some older men concerning letter writing and let them lie there, allowing myself to cool off before mailing them. Guess what? I still have some of them (most, in fact) somewhere in my files. They were never sent. There are times when one must speak out in defense of self and actions as it relates to divine truth. But usually if one's reputation is what it should be, those who really matter will not believe untruths told about him; and those who will would not listen to one's defense anyway, regardless of how factual the material presented nor how sweetly written or stated. With those few rare exceptions I have already stated, tear up that letter written in haste and anger and do not make that phone call.

**Standing on your biblical principles.** R. L. Whiteside said, "Happy is the person whose conduct does not raise a question in the minds of others as to where he stands. Some people never have to answer the question, Will you have a drink with me? There is a reason. Some young people are never subjected to certain temptations to which others are frequently subjected, and there is a reason. When your conduct raises a question as to where you stand or as to what you might do, the devil will make you answer that question. Every person who raises a question mark in the mind of people has to defend himself or surrender."

One much greater than "Bob" Whiteside said, "I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and

perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). The girl who can say "no" to the boy's sexual advances and wait until marriage where such is honorable (Hebrews 13:8) will never have occasion to regret that decision. She will be happy she can tell her own children in later years when they say, "Mom, what did you and Dad do?" "We did what I am saying you should do and we have never been sorry for one moment." The young man who can say "no" to the gang who calls him a "wimp" because he refuses to go along with some of the things "macho" men are supposed to do, will have the problem of peer pressure to be sure, but will feel so much better about himself in later years that he will never regret the ridicule of his peers when he becomes an adult whose life reflects Christ to the world. Sometimes the only way to refrain from being pulled into activities that we ought not, whether young or old, is to stay out of the company of those whom we know would want us to participate in ungodly activities. Paul would say, "What fellowship hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). We should not feel of more worth than anyone else, but we are to realize that "evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33, NKJV). Young and old alike should be strong enough to say to the invitation for a drink, a joint, a dirty joke, a filthy movie, illicit actions with those of the same or opposite sex, etc.—"No, thank you, I'm a Christian."

**Being kind to others.** Am I getting to be an old fogey and seeing only the negative, or is it true that "the milk of human kindness" is not as evident as it used to be in our society? It ought to be second nature to practice the "golden rule" in daily life both towards brethren and those of the world. Is it? I don't think it is; not as much as it should be. The "golden rule" is so superior to any other rule for life that nothing else begins to compare with it. This rule doesn't say to return good to those who have been good to you. It doesn't say simply not to do anything bad to another. If you

analyze it carefully it says something like this: *think of something good you would like to have done (or said) to you, and do that for others.* It is a way of thinking which always has the other person's good in mind and goes about living out that philosophy. Remember Grandma saying to you, "Son, if you can't think of something good to say about someone, then don't say anything at all!"? Are you the kind of person that makes others who have been in your presence for awhile feel good about themselves and others and see the future as full of promise? Or are folks about ready to give up on life and the human race when you take your leave? Kindness is so precious and we each desire it of others. Why don't we work more diligently at being kind, ladies and gentlemen? You will never regret it if you do. So, open that door. Stand up when the old person or a lady enters the room. Say, "How nice you look" to another. Don't forget "please," "thank you," and "pardon me."

**You will never regret becoming a Christian.** When one realizes his lost condition before a holy God and the price God had to pay for his redemption and then responds in humble obedience to the gospel of God's grace, thereby being forgiven and placed in a relationship with the saved of all the ages, there is reason for great rejoicing! (Romans 3:23; 5:6-9; Acts 20:24; 8:39; 2:22,38,41,47; Hebrews 12:22,28). To be granted the right by Jesus Christ to approach the majestic throne of God's grace in worship, and in petition and thanksgiving, what a privilege! (Hebrews 4:14-16; Ephesians 3:20-21). Being a child of the king is something no one could ever regret. But look at the other side of the matter. What of those who obey not the gospel and those who turn back to serving Satan? They will have eternity to regret their mistakes (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

Why not resolve, if you haven't done so, to obey the Lord and reap by grace the benefits of His blood—and continue to live so that you will never have any regrets, here or hereafter?

401 24th St. W. Bradenton, FL 33505



# Mining The Scriptures

## PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

## The Sermon on the Mount

### A Different Kind of Love

**T**he love to which Jesus calls His followers is one which surpasses the ordinary. Old "loves" that we have known are an insufficient preface for the new lessons we must learn. Family ties, devotion between friends, passion between lovers are "natural" affections so common to men that their absence is a sign of subhuman degradation (Romans 1:31). Loving those who love them gives no special distinction to the sons of the kingdom. As Jesus observes, even such "low types" as the publicans and the Gentiles were capable of such an exchange of kindnesses (Matthew 5:46-47).

The "love" of kingdom righteousness is extraordinary, not merely in intensity, but in kind. It is love of a different and higher order. Much of the difficulty we suffer in our efforts to understand it comes from the mistaken presumption that it is of the same genre as our natural affections, built upon strong mutuality, deep attraction, shared experiences and interests. How, we ask, can we feel a warm affection for those who are doing their dead level best to destroy us? Our enemies are not only unattractive to us but their behavior is despicable. We are repelled by both their actions and their persons. Clearly the old rules do not apply here. A love for one's adversaries cannot be built upon emotion.

The love that can embrace its enemies does not originate on earth. Men, even in their most heroic moments, have only managed to love the lovable (Romans 5:7). God, on the other hand, has consistently loved His enemies, sending rain and sunlight upon both good and evil (Matthew 5:45). This divine good will has nothing to do with some attractive quality found in us. We have succeeded to a man in making ourselves morally repugnant (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:9-18) and it is highly unlikely that we shall ever in this life understand how fully His holy nature is revulsed by our ungodly ways. The yearning of God for men arises, as it must, from His own gracious character and will. In His mercy He wills to do good to those whose very lives are an offense to His nature. He has loved the unlovable. How truly Paul has written, "But God commended His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The power that opens to citizens of the kingdom of heaven the ability to love in such a selfless way is the example of their Father. There is an awesome strength about the One who has created all things. The heavens declare His glory (Psalm 19:1). The universe testifies to His everlasting power and deity (Romans 1:20). But it is not in the greatness of His creative power that we truly

know God (1 Kings 19:11-12). The final, full revelation of God was reserved for One who came in "weakness" (1 Corinthians 1:27) and emptied Himself for the sake of others (Philippians 2:5f). Jesus alone has revealed the Father in completeness (John 1:18) and only when we have seen Him have we seen His Father (14:6-7). We have never looked more squarely into the face of the living God than when we stand by faith at the foot of the cross and hear His Son plead for mercy upon the ungodly men who are murdering Him. Here is power. Here is deity. We do not deny His absolute physical might. We cannot resist His wisdom. His perfect righteousness fills us with reverential awe. But when we have found access by Christ into the "deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10) we will know that there is no truer description of the divine character than John's brief affirmation, "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

Men who have been the beneficiaries of such an undeserved graciousness ought to be able to understand and apply it to others. Indeed, "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). But this love is a love of the will, not of the emotions. Our Savior is not asking that we have a warm affection for our enemies. In reality, our success in truly loving them will be directly dependent on our ability to detach ourselves from their behavior and respond to their true need rather than their conduct. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, William Barclay has given a most apt description of this heavenly kind of love: "Agape [love] does not mean a feeling of the heart, which we cannot help, and which comes unbidden and unsought; it means a determination of the mind, whereby we achieve this unconquerable good will even toward those who hurt and injure us." This is the kind of moral determination which must come at last to be the foundation of all our other loves. It must be the sustaining force upon which is built the deep affections of marriage and the family, the selfless comradeship of friends, and above all, the fellowship of the saints.

"Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). There is something immeasurably grand as well as deeply disturbing about being called upon to be like God. The possibility thrills while the challenge frightens. The perfection which Jesus both promises and commands for His disciples does not refer to God's sinless righteousness but to the fulness and completeness of His love. Our imperfect, selective good will must be enlarged to encompass all men. Such a love will not be bought at a cheap price. Pain and agony are in the process. But we must grow up to be like our Father or yield the right to be called His children (1 John 4:7-8).





## "To Live Is Christ"

### Philippians 1:19-21

**P**aul explains the reason for his rejoicing in the proclamation of Christ even though some preached Christ from unworthy motives and even thought by their preaching to increase his trouble: "For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation."

"This" has the same reference as in verse 18: "in this I rejoice." It refers to the proclamation of Christ which has resulted from his present circumstances. Paul's imprisonment had not hindered the gospel, but had "fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel," as he explains in verses 12-18. The sovereign God had turned evil and adversity into instruments of His own purposes. And now Paul expresses confidence that the ultimate outcome would be his salvation.

We must not be arbitrary in defining "salvation." Paul explains what he means by attaching various modifying phrases and clauses to the word. But first we must observe the allusion to Job 13:16. Job's friends contended that he must be a great sinner, since he was a great sufferer. That was Job's great trial—that God seemed to be treating him as a sinner, though he was innocent. He pleaded for an opportunity to take his case before God. He was confident that he would be able to establish his integrity. "This also shall be my salvation, that a godless man shall not come before him." "Salvation" means something like vindication.

Paul's case was similar. But what would be his "salvation" in the circumstances? He had already won a great victory when the reason for his bonds had become clear (verse 12; August issue). And now he expresses confidence that in his present defense of the gospel (see verses 7, 16) he would not be put to shame, but that Christ would be magnified in his body. That is the deliverance he speaks of. Note the modifying phrase he attaches.

This "salvation" would come "through" two means: (1) "your supplication" and (2) "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" which would be the result of their prayer (verse 19). Recall what Jesus had promised the apostles about the supply of the Spirit when they would be on trial (Luke 12:11f). Then consider the supplication Paul

wanted saints to make on his behalf when he wrote these prison epistles (Ephesians 6:17-20; Colossians 4:2-4). The reference is clearly to his equipment for the hearing before Caesar.

But Paul adds other modifiers (verse 20). "This shall turn out to my salvation . . . according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing [i.e., in no particular, no respect] shall I be put to shame, but that with all boldness [Greek *parresia* here with some reference to its primary sense of 'freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech,' Grimm-Thayer], as always, so now also [in the present circumstances] Christ shall be magnified [lit., enlarged or made great; here as in Luke 1:46, Acts 10:46 & 19:17, glorified] in my body [rather than 'in me' because of what follows:], whether by life or by death." As Ellicott paraphrases, "My body shall be, as it were, the theatre on which Christ's glory shall be displayed."

This expression of Paul's "earnest expectation and hope" elucidates what Paul means by his "salvation!"

**B**ut how can it be? Surely he cannot make his salvation to consist in the magnification of Christ in his body, and even on the alternative that the outcome of his trial may be his death. Oh, but indeed he does. And we will understand his point of view when he takes his explanation one step further: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (verse 21). Paul had no life apart from Christ. His whole life was devoted to Him. He was a slave (verse 1) with no will of his own, but wholly given over to the will of his Master. And because that was so, he could add "and to die is gain." But how so? For would not death be a great loss for one to whom "to live is Christ?" Would death not mean the loss of Christ? Should Paul not have said, "and to die is Christ also?" He could have. For death would mean "to depart and be with Christ" (verse 23). But death would mean having Christ in an even better way, a closer union. "It is very far better."

So, it is true. "To die is gain"—a great personal advantage indeed.

Oh, dear God, teach us the mind of Paul that we may be devoted to the Christ as he was.

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# DON'T MISS COMING ISSUES!

**NOVEMBER THEME: "Be Ye Thankful"**

**Edited by Dee Bowman**

## **ARTICLES:**

**For Your Brethren—***Gardner Hall*

**For Prayer—***Homer Hailey*

**For Forgiveness—***Julian Snell*

**For Your Husband—***Carol June Kay*

**And More . . .**

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**DECEMBER THEME: "The Local Church"**

**Edited by Ed Harrell**

## **ARTICLES:**

**What Is A Local Church?—***Paul Earnhart*

**Worship In A Local Church—***Brent Lewis*

**Relations Between Local Churches—**

*Harold Dowdy*

**Discipline in a Local Church—***Dee Bowman*

**The Paramaters of Fellowship in a Local Church—***Ed Harrell*

**And More . . .**

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**JANUARY THEME: "True Worship"**

**Edited by Sewell Hall**

## **ARTICLES:**

**Expressions of Worship in the O.T.**

**Worship—Spontaneous or Prescribed?**

**Improving Assembly Worship**

**And More . . .**



# And Then Some...



**Brent Lewis**

## Finding out who we are

There are many people in our society today who are hurting deeply because they haven't found themselves yet. To find oneself is to understand the kind of creature that God has created—to recognize and acknowledge God as our Father. Those of us who are Christians can help those who are hurting this way. Augustine properly said, "Every man is restless until he finds rest in Thee."

There is the story of a man who was very upset to be discharged by his psychiatrist after years of analysis. "You're cured," said the doctor. "Some cure!" the man retorted. "When I first came here I was Napoleon Bonaparte—now I'm nobody!"

Knowing who you are is very important. We can help men and women to realize their importance before God. This is where much of the pain comes from in life. Many people unfortunately identify with the woman who received a birthday gift from her co-workers consisting of a package of plain bath towels. Inside was a card that read, "We wanted to give you *monogrammed* towels, but nobody could remember your name."

There are some people who are hurting that way. It is a deep, deep hurt to feel unknown, alone, unimportant and abandoned.

## Parents, be alerted!

In the December/January, 1983 issue of *Public Opinion*, the results of a recent survey of 104 leading writers, producers and executives of network television programs was reported. The article "Hollywood and America: The Odd Couple" offers a revealing, but somehow not surprising, view of the

"cream of television's creative community." The survey shows that the media is largely controlled by individuals with an anti-religious, anti-moral bias.

All of the television leaders surveyed were very well paid—96% reporting annual incomes exceeding \$75,000, with 63% over \$200,000.

Although 93% had a religious upbringing, only 7% now attend religious services of any kind. On moral issues, 51% believe adultery is not wrong, while 80% say homo-sexuality isn't wrong. 86% believe homosexuals have a right to teach public school children, and 97% favor abortion on demand.

Is it any surprise, then, that biblical principles and faith are disdained and ridiculed on TV? *Parents, be alerted!*

—Kenny Chumbley

## Broken things

God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume. . . . It is Peter weeping bitterly, who returns to greater power than ever.

—Vance Havner

## When your affections become divided

A boy said to his girlfriend one night, "I don't have a lot of money like Jerome Green, but I sure do love you," to which she said nothing. Then the boy said, "I don't have a beautiful home like Jerome Green, but I really love you." Again, the girl was silent. "I don't have a brand

new Porsche like Jerome Green," added the boyfriend, "but you mean all the world to me." Finally the girl responded, "I love you, too—but tell me a little more about Jerome Green."

Sometimes we profess our attachment to Christ but are still pretty interested in the world. Then we wonder why people are more interested in learning about the world than they are about Christ.

## Seeing the blessing in our trials

We do not understand that we are to give thanks for evil itself, but we may offer praise for the overruling of it for good. Many things that we regard as misfortunes are blessings. Trials and crosses are often among the greatest blessings in disguise, for it is only through such disciplinary processes that the character is perfected. When we consider that the disagreeable is indispensable enrichment and strengthening of character, we see that we should offer thanks for this phase of experience, as well as for the agreeable. What a change would be worked in our lives if we would so act!

George Matheson, the well-known blind preacher of Scotland, said: "My God, I have never thanked Thee for my 'thorn.' I have thanked Thee a thousand times for my roses, but never once for my 'thorn.' I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensation for my cross, but I have never thought of my cross as itself a present glory. Teach me the glory of my cross; teach me the value of my 'thorn.' Show me that I have climbed to Thee by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have made my rainbow."

—Author Unknown

## Creatures of choice

When he was a boy in school Napoleon wrote an essay on the dangers of ambition. Yet his own ambition wrecked his life. Moses was noted for his meekness. In fact, the Bible says he was the meekest man on the earth (Numbers 12:3). Yet, in a moment, when he tried to usurp the power of God by striking the rock, he lost his chance to enter the Promised Land. Simon Peter was noted for his impulsive courage. Yet it was through failure of his greatest strength that he denied his Lord.

A man is no stronger than his weakest moment, and every man has an Achilles' heel, a point of vulnerability. We cannot escape temptation because we are endowed with freedom of choice. And since no one has an iron will, every one is in danger of falling. We can choose between good and evil, between being true and false, between being brave and cowardly, between being generous and selfish. But the very freedom of choice becomes temptation.

Life would be much simpler if we had no such freedom. Thomas Henry Huxley once said: "If some great Power would agree to make me think always what is true and do what is right on condition of being turned into sort of a clock, I should instantly close with the bargain. The only freedom I care about is the freedom to do right; the freedom to do wrong I am ready to part with." But one freedom requires the other freedom—thus our temptation.

—Author Unknown



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### "A Mother In Israel"

I met her only once, and that was more than twenty-five years ago. But I have seen her influence on three continents. She is not in politics or business. She is not a musician, a painter or a poet. Although she was a mathematics teacher until retirement, it was not in the schoolroom that she wielded her greatest influence. She is first and foremost a mother—a mother of four sons.

She was left a widow to rear those four sons alone when the eldest was fifteen and the youngest nine. Even before that time the principal responsibility for their training had fallen on her. But at this point, returning to the classroom which she had left when her first child was born, she accepted responsibility for their financial needs.

From the beginning she impressed on her sons that she could not do it all. They had to help with the housework; they picked up odd jobs as they could; and all went to the farm of a relative in the summer to work in the fields to provide food for the winter. As one of the sons reports, however, "She never said anything about our being poor or deprived. We never knew that we didn't have anything."

Neither did she allow pity for her fatherless boys to compromise her expectations of them. She always expected the best. They remember her as a consistent disciplinarian who let them know exactly what conduct was acceptable and what was not. "And it was not easy," said one of them, "dealing alone with four boys, not one of whom was the quiescent type." Yet, through it all, there were two facts which they were never allowed to doubt: that she loved them and that she loved the Lord.

How rewarding it must have been for her to watch those sons increase in wisdom, in stature and in favor with God and men! How gratified she must have been to see each of them obey the gospel, obtain a degree after four years in Abilene Christian College and, one by one, marry a Christian companion!

If a mother ever had the right to insist that her sons seek lucrative occupations and remain close around her to provide for her social and economic needs, this mother had it. But she had not reared them to serve her; she had reared them to serve God and others.

This was what they chose to do. Three of the four decided to give their lives to preaching the gospel, all of them in areas where the church was weak or non-existent.

This choice has taken them far from their native Oklahoma and from their mother. In fact, the three have spent a total of thirty-two years preaching overseas.

First, it was Jerry and wife Shirl who went to Switzerland in 1957. Twenty years later, they returned to the U.S. to work in Canby, Oregon. Next was the youngest son, Rex, who went to Austria in 1961 and remained for nineteen years preaching in that country. In 1962, after several years of preaching in the needy areas north of Chicago, son Paul and his wife Wilma left for Nigeria where they worked for three years.

Three-fourths of her family overseas! What should she do? Some parents have pined away and complained bitterly about one son or daughter overseas. This would have been totally out of character for this good woman.

Winter after winter as she taught school, she saved her pennies with the purpose of visiting her sons in Europe during the summer months. It was not easy on a teacher's salary. But she went, not once but six or more times. Rather than discouraging her sons in their work, she went to encourage and assist them as she could.

At home in McAlester, Oklahoma, she has been active in the church, using her talents as a teacher and accepting whatever other opportunities came her way. It should be noted, too, that her son Reid, who does not obtain his living by preaching, is himself an able preacher who has been a great help to small congregations up and down the eastern seaboard where he has lived and worked as a chemist.

Her sons are all back in the U.S. now and she enjoys their visits and those of her nineteen grandchildren. At 84, she still drives her own car, at least as far as Paul's home 180 miles away, where she now spends her winters.

In what role could this good woman have accomplished more or been a greater blessing to the world than in her role as a mother? Not only do her children "rise up and call her blessed," but so do hundreds who have been drawn closer to Christ through their influence. This includes readers of this magazine who have been edified by the writings of her son, Paul. Her name: Eva Earnhart, mother of Paul, Jerry, Reid and Rex—a servant of God and a "Light in the World."

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341





# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## Running A Bluff

A few months ago a polite young man approached me at the conclusion of a service and introduced himself, reminding me that I had visited his home when he was just a youngster. I remembered it much better than he; I could hardly believe I was seeing the neat and courteous countenance which stood before me.

About a dozen years earlier, after preaching the first Sunday morning sermon of a meeting, I had ridden home with the young man, his brother and father for dinner. I sat in the front seat with his father while he and his brother committed mayhem in the back seat. They banged and kicked and butted; they hit and bit one another and threatened much worse treatment. Even more foreboding, I felt that each of them was eyeing me as fair game once I was in easier reach.

When we arrived at their home, I was given a seat in the living room while everyone else went to change clothes or prepare for dinner. In a few

minutes one of these rambunctious youngsters appeared to look me over. He immediately began some aberrant behavior. I looked at him sternly and said, "Son, don't do that." He seemed startled and I thought I had won a major victory. But in just a moment he recovered, threw out his tiny chest, looked me square in the eye, and said with considerable impertinence, "Why!"

There we stood, eye to eye and toe to toe; he had called my bluff. It was time to rally the reinforcements. I squinted menacingly and lifting my 6'3" frame out of the chair, replied, "Because I am going to beat the fire out of you if you don't stop." You could almost see the wheels turning behind his eyes calculating the odds. We must have stood motionless for thirty seconds before he turned and quietly left the room. I think he must have discussed the matter with his brother, because I was treated with deference and respect during my stay. I always hoped that he did not discuss it with his

mother and father.

My recent encounter with this young man reconfirmed in my mind a lesson that I have learned through the years about child rearing. Many things about the atmosphere of a home are variables that are not absolutely important. Some children are so quiet and deferential that it worries me; my young acquaintance and his brother were so fierce and unruly that I fully expected to visit them next in the penitentiary. But, within limits, love and respect for God can exist in a wide variety of atmospheres. Those are the absolutes that worked for my young friend.

I learned another, more profound, lesson out of my show-down. It was a lesson about man's bluffing and divine veracity. So much of our human posturing is filled with huffing and bluffing, empty promises and broken pledges. I wonder what I would have done had the youngster rallied the courage to call my bluff. I doubt that I would have worked him over in his own

living room.

Our human inconstancy and inconsistency contrast starkly with the immutability of God's word. Over and over the Scriptures remind us of His faithfulness. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:17-18). "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

It will all be exactly as He promised—so we are assured. The punishment of the faithless will be sure and inescapable. And the rewards of the faithful will be grand; you can count on it.

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## Walk Worthy for the Preservation of Unity

**I**n Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul said, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

### The Assignment: Walk Worthy of Your Vocation

A man's walk is his way of life, how he conducts himself. Paul says that Christians should walk worthy, that is, they should walk in a manner befitting one who professes to follow Christ. Several times in the book of Ephesians, references are made to walking properly. "Walk in love," he says (5:2). "Walk as children of light" (5:8). "Walk circumspectly [prudently]" (5:15). "Walk in them [good works]" (2:10). "Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind" (4:17).

Together, these warn us to be careful. To "walk worthy" of our vocation is to live so as to not bring reproach on Him whom we follow. It means we will not be ashamed to own Him before men (Matthew 10:32). It means that we will serve Him, even if it means that we must sometimes sever earth ties, or in some other manner suffer for having done so (Matthew 10:34ff).

It's a bold assignment, a grand occupation, a noble endeavor.

### The Method for Its Accomplishment: A Right Attitude

To walk as we should begins with a right attitude. First, he says, "with all lowliness." Humility is the antecedent to all learning. In order for a man to grow, he must first have the humility to express openly his need. Humility is the foundation for Christianity. Christ was its personification. He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant" and in doing so, showed us the great example of how a man must gain a true concept of his own worthlessness.

To walk worthy of our vocation we must develop an attitude of meekness. A meek person is gentle. He is easily guided. That does not mean he can be guided by just anyone, for he has determined by his own will whom he will serve (1 Peter 3:15). His strengths have been placed at the disposal of Jesus Christ. He is gentle to His rein (and reign!). He will furthermore be slow to insist on his

own rights, showing his meek spirit by respecting the rights of others. His meekness will many times take the form of restraints in the face of provocation, showing compassion to even those who don't deserve it.

Much as we would like to avoid it, when we walk through life we are apt to bump into others. A good walk necessitates a longsuffering attitude. I am sorry to say that some of my brethren not only don't suffer long their brothers and sisters, they don't even suffer them short! And such an attitude makes for a hard way to go, one filled with continual disappointments, depression, anger, sometimes even sin. But that person who has a forgiving spirit (even when it's not asked for!) will be the peacemaker. It's that person who will reestablish contact, promote unity.

Yes sir, sometimes we just have to bear with one another. After all, everybody (even you) has a bad day sometimes.

### The Purpose of the Project: To Keep the Unity of the Spirit

The project is not just achieving unity, but its preservation. He says keep it, care for it.

The plea for unity, as far as I can tell, is always spoken of in an organic sense in the New Testament (see John 17:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:10ff; etc.). That is, the unity called for is internal. I would not argue that the principles which achieve this organic unity do not apply to today's divided conditions, but the passages we use to call for unity must first be understood as applying to us. This passage is a case in point. It is addressed to those who have been "called" (verse 1).

Unity begins with samemindedness. Later in this same chapter, Paul says, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God" (4:13). This unity of mind must be predicated on each person looking to the oracles of God for the same faith, each one having the knowledge of the Son of God which produced that faith at the beginning (see Romans 10:17). Otherwise, we will be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Until we decide that the word of God will be our only guide in religious matters, we cannot expect to have the sameness of mind, unity of purpose, determine, hope.

It's sure a good idea to watch your step, to look where you're going.



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# A "Modern Version" of the Bible

W. Frank Walton

We are awash in many modern versions and translations of God's word. Too many gullibly accept whatever new translation Bible publishers promote to a religious public eager to "hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). Careful evaluation is needed. But we must also guard against prejudice that might automatically reject every new translation as liberal tampering with Scripture. "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21, NASB).

The long established and widely used King James Version was made in 1611 during a time when several translations were already well-established. The KJV translators expected public and ecclesiastical prejudice and criticism; they knew that many would perceive the KJV as just another "modern version." The scholars thus wrote a preface to the translation, "The Translators of the Reader." Here they stated their purpose and sought to diffuse suspicion, prejudice and criticism. (It is sad that this preface is no longer in today's KJV Bibles. I'll be quoting in this article from "The Translators to the Reader" as given in D. M. Beegle's *God's Word Into English*. Remember this when you see quotation marks.) We should keep these excerpts in mind when we look at any translation.

## Answering Objections

The KJV scholars were not inspired to translate God's infallibly inspired word from the original Hebrew and Greek. Therefore they sensed their work might "find cold entertainment in the world. It is welcomed with suspicion instead of love. . . . It is sure to be misconstrued, and in danger to be condemned." The KJV translators were willing to be "tossed upon tongues [criticized]." ". . . We subject ourselves to every one's censure." They knew that anything new, especially a modern translation, would be suspect. "For was there ever anything projected, that savoured any way of newness or renewing, but the same endured many a storm of gainsaying or opposition?" ". . . Whosoever attempteth

anything for the publick (especially if it appertain to religion, and to the opening and clearing of the word of God), the same setteth himself upon a stage to be glouted upon by every evil eye . . . to be gored by every sharp tongue."

They anticipated the objections of those who championed older translations. "Many men's mouths have been opened . . . with speeches about the translations made before: and ask what may be the reason, what the necessity of the employment. Hath the Church been deceived, all this while?" ". . . Was their translation good before? Why do they now mend it? Was it not good? Why then was it obtruded [presented] to the people?"

The translators of the 1611 modern version reply, "Do we condemn the ancient? In no case . . ." They only wanted "to make a good one better." The "good one" they were revising was the Bishops' Bible, translated in 1568. "So if we building upon their foundation that went before us . . . we persuade ourselves, if they were alive, would thank us."

## Major Purpose of the KJV Stated

The major goal of the KJV translators was to give the ordinary person an accurate translation in clear, current English. "How shall men meditate in that which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept close in an unknown tongue?" They objected to current translations which "darken the sense" and "by the language thereof it may be kept from being understood."

The KJV scholars stated the necessity of an understandable translation. "Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light . . . that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place . . . indeed, without translation into the vulgar [common] tongue, the unlearned are but like children at Jacob's well (which was deep) without a bucket . . . to draw with." These men understood the need of everyone studying the Bible for him-

self. "The Scriptures we are commanded to search. John v.39. Isaiah viii.20. They are commended that searched and studied them. . . . They are reprov'd that were unskilful in them. . . . They can make us wise unto salvation. 2 Tim. iii.15."

Therefore the pressing need for their new version was "for the behoof and edifying of the unlearned which hungered and thirsted after righteousness. . . . Now what can be more available thereto, than to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue which they understand?" They did not consider their human efforts as inspired or as the final English translation of God's inerrant word. "If anything be halting, or superfluous, or not so agreeable to the original, the same may be corrected, and the truth set in place."

The KJV weathered sharp criticism. In 1612, Hugh Broughton, outstanding language scholar and staunch advocate of the Geneva Bible, said of the KJV: "It is so ill done. . . . I had rather be rent in pieces with wild horses than any such translation by my consent should be urged upon poor churches. . . . The new edition crosseth me. I require it to be burnt" (F. F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English*, p. 107). But by the late 1600s the KJV's merits were recognized. The widely used Geneva Bible, translated in 1560, and Great Bible, in 1539, fell into disuse. The KJV survived the "modern version" stigma.

Today, the KJV's original translation goal still applies. Should God's living word be frozen in seventeenth century English? Jacobean English is not our "mother tongue." The KJV is a good, reliable translation, but the New King James Version is a timely revision of clarity and accuracy for many modern readers. The NKJV has done for the KJV what the KJV translators did with the Bishops' Bible 374 years ago—"to make a good one better." Many using the KJV could benefit from the NKJV's easier-to-understand English.

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# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Restoring New Testament Christianity (IX)

In the years after the Civil War the restoration movement entered a second phase of its history—an era marked by the emergence of new leaders, continued growth and an increasing sociological diversity, growing sectional tension, new doctrinal disputes and schism. By the time a national religious census was published in 1906, the movement counted a total membership of about a million, but it also had completed a division which estranged a little over ten percent of the most conservative churches from the remainder of the movement.

In the absence of official organizations, the most powerful centers of influence in the restoration movement were people—particularly the editors of papers. In the years after the Civil War a new generation of papers appeared within the movement and for the next hundred years they exercised much influence. Their editors filled the vacuum left by the death of the first generation of American restorers. With the death of Alexander Campbell in 1866, the last of the first generation leaders was removed from the scene.

Actually, before Campbell died others had come to be widely recognized in the loose-knit movement. For a time, the most important new figure was probably Benjamin Franklin, who in 1856 began editing the *American Christian Review* in Indianapolis. But by the late 1880s the *Review* had been eclipsed by three other journals which came to be symbols of the theological and sociological partitioning of the movement. In the South, the most influential paper was the *Gospel Advocate* which was founded in 1855 by Tolbert Fanning, one of the patriarchs of the church in Tennessee. Its publication was interrupted by the war but in 1866 it was revived by Fanning and young Tennessee preacher David Lipscomb. Lipscomb edited the paper for over fifty years; he brought to it a stolid, conservative character which captured the mood of the movement in the South in the late nineteenth century. By the 1880s the most widely circulated paper in the movement had become the *Christian Standard*, published in Cincinnati beginning in 1866 and edited by Isaac Errett. Errett came to be viewed as the voice of moderation within the church. By the end

of the century the *Christian Standard* had probably been supplanted as the leading journal by the more liberal *Christian Evangelist* which for many years was edited by James H. Garrison in St. Louis.

These three papers illustrated the three paths which were to separate the movement into three distinct churches in the early twentieth century. The most conservative churches clung tenaciously to the restoration plea and increasingly objected to the "digression" of more liberal churches. The specific issues which became most divisive were the introduction of instrumental music in the worship by some churches beginning in the late 1850s, new attacks on the missionary society and other church organizations as unscriptural, and the increased power of "pastors" in local churches as opposed to congregational elders. The rejection of organs and support for the missionary society provided convenient methods of marking the dissenting congregations. In 1906, Lipscomb insisted that the conservative churches should be listed separately in the census and they were identified as the Churches of Christ.

\* \* \*

NOTE: This section of my article provides numerous historical insights for those intent on restoring New Testament Christianity. (1) Each generation has its own history. When the original restorers died, they were followed by others who did not always share their convictions. (2) All undenominational Christians must resist the temptation to unconsciously denominationalize their thinking by identifying parties around papers or men. Indeed, New Testament Christians were warned to avoid this in 1 Corinthians 1. (3) When differences of opinion become severe, division necessarily follows. People of conviction should not (indeed history leads me to believe they cannot) compromise their beliefs for a meaningless unity in diversity. In the next several articles we shall explore in more depth the underlying dynamics of this dividing of the movement which set out to heal Christian division by returning to New Testament patterns.



# What Do You Do In the Twilight Zone?

Kevin S. Kay

When Moses bid farewell to his people in a series of farewell speeches on the plains of Moab, he challenged them to make the most basic and fundamental choice in life. "See, I have set before thee this day *life* and *good*, and *death* and *evil*. . . . I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee *life* and *death*, the *blessing* and the *curse*: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed" (Deuteronomy 30:15,19).

In all the years that have come and gone since the time of Moses, that choice has not changed. Like the Israelites of old, we, too, must choose between *life* and *death*, *good* and *evil*, the *blessing* and the *curse*, etc. And these two alternatives are diametrically opposed to one another. There are only two roads to follow: the *broad way* which leads to destruction or the *narrow way* which leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). We are either with Christ or against Him (Matthew 12:30). There can be no communion between light and darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14ff). Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). God is *light*, and in Him is no *darkness* at all (1 John 1:5b).

We *must* choose between *right* and *wrong* and, unfortunately, that choice is not always an easy one to make. In fact, at times, that choice is extremely difficult for a number of reasons, but it is often especially difficult because the line between right and wrong is not always easy to draw. Some things are *black*, some things are *white*; others, however, are *gray*. There is the realm of *darkness* and the realm of *light*—and then there is the *twilight zone*.

Please let me illustrate what I mean. I believe that most of us would agree that the modern dance is lascivious in its nature and, therefore, clearly in the realm of darkness. I believe that all would agree that to forego dancing is clearly in the realm of light. But someone asks, "What if I go to the prom, but I don't dance?" Drunkenness is clearly in the realm of darkness, and abstinence is clearly in the realm of light. But some-

one asks, "What if I go to the party, but I don't 'party'?" Fornication is clearly in the realm of darkness, and chastity is clearly in the realm of light. But someone asks, "Why can't we stay out all night just to talk and go for a walk in the moonlight? What's so bad about that?" Do you see what I mean?

*What do you do in the twilight zone?* I believe that before we can answer that question, we need to answer another: *What do you do in the realm of darkness and in the realm of light?* Until one is

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---

able to deal with things that are black or white, he will not be able to deal with things that are gray. What is to be our *attitude* and our *actions* toward those things that are clearly right and clearly wrong? The word of God has the answer. Those who *love* God must *hate* evil (Psalm 97:10). We must *cease* to do evil and *learn* to do well (Isaiah 1:16-17). We must *hate* the evil and *love* the good (Amos 5:14-15). We must not be *conformed* to the world, but rather be *transformed* (Romans 12:1-2). We must *abhor* that which is evil and *cleave* to

that which is good (Romans 12:9). We must *abstain* from every form of evil and *hold fast* that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

Now, let us ask the question again: *What do you do in the twilight zone?* What is to be our *attitude* and *actions* toward those things in the gray area? Once again, the word of God has the answer. Listen to the words of the wise man: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, And walk not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it; Turn from it, and pass on" (Proverbs 4:14-15). Can you do that and go to the prom, even though you do not dance? Paul said, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). Can you do that and still go to the party? Paul told the Corinthians: "All things are lawful for me; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6:12). While something may not be *wrong*, that doesn't mean it's *wise*. It may not be wrong to give a box of matches to a baby, but it's certainly not wise. That all-night walk in the moonlight may not be wrong, but is it wise? How does it look? Where will it lead? Paul commands the Christian to *flee* youthful lusts and fornication (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 6:18). Borrowing the words of Flip Wilson, may I suggest to you that "the booth in the back, in the corner, and in the dark"—is *not* the place to *flee* youthful lusts and fornication. Can we not see that one might never lust or commit fornication and still not *flee*?

Paul told the Ephesians: "neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). One of the ancients once said: "Give me a place to stand, and I'll take the world." That, my friend, is all that Satan needs. If you give him a place to stand, he will take your soul straight to hell. Please, be careful in the twilight zone—and remember that it is better to be *safe* than *sorry*.

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**Brent Lewis**



# My Brother/My Self

## How To Handle Inferiority

One would have to be blind, deaf and dumb to not have observed that feelings of inferiority are a common problem in our society. Many people feel that in some way they just do not measure up. Much of this has to do with standards and competition.

The standards of a pleasure-seeking society are self-serving and arbitrary: wealth, beauty and pride. Virtually all advertising appeals to these standards and everyone is thus trying to attain them. You need the sleek, fast automobile because it is driven by the elite, those who have "arrived;" and all your neighbors and friends will be envious once you get it—that's pride. If you can wear designer clothes with the right makeup and get yourself slim and trim enough, then everyone will love you and want to be in your company—beauty. If you can just find the right investment firm (or hit the state lottery) then you will be filthy rich and never have to work again—wealth. Such standards of our materialistic culture make many people feel inferior.

Then there is competition. Everybody wants to be Number One. You see, if you're not number one, you're nothing. Sports competition has become so disproportionate in our time that not only do the players fight and cheat, but the fans (a word fittingly derived from the word "fanatic") riot and kill in support of their favorite team. Many parents, by means of organized sports, launch their children at an early age in quest of being Number One. Children soon get the message: "If you're not Number One, you're nothing." This spills over into schools and jobs and professions and even churches—and off we go at a frenetic pace, all seeking to be Number One in whatever we do.

People who have handicaps often feel inferior. And why wouldn't they? Society says that the only thing worth having is a perfect specimen. People from a disadvantaged environment also feel inferior. They don't want people to know where they came from and will often try

to hide it. What can one do about inferiority feelings?

1. **One can see things as God sees them.** With God, there is no inferiority among men. He accepts us as we are; we are not in competition with others. Besides that, God is the great equalizer. Caleb urged Israel to take the land of Canaan while others pled their inability to do so. The difference was that Caleb saw things through God's eyes and said, "We are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30-33). Moses felt unable to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, but he failed to see that God would be with him (Exodus 4:1-14). Paul felt inferior to deal with sin in his life, but realized that he could be victorious through Jesus Christ (Romans 7:15-8:1).

2. **One can accept himself as he is.** You do not need to be someone else. You just need to be yourself. There is only one of you and there never will be another. You are not in competition with anyone else unless you *choose* to be. Every person is important in God's sight, so recognize your value and worth. You do not have to be rich, beautiful or powerful in order to have worth. What a person is *inside* is much more important than what they are on the outside—and infinitely more significant than the kind of car they drive, house they live in, or clothes they wear!

Paul teaches that our self-confidence comes from God. "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:11-13).

If you will live by the standards of God and not the world, realize that you are not obligated to compete with anyone to prove your worth (to yourself or anyone else), and see things as Paul saw them—you will never again feel inferior.



# "I'll Never Forget the Rose"

Roger M. Hendricks

Although this piece of writing bears my name, it is, in the main, not my work at all. My comments, in fact, will be relatively unimportant. The letter which serves as the basis of the article is the significant part. As you will see by the date, the letter was written a number of years ago. However, the lessons it teaches are never outdated.

This letter was addressed to the Par Street church in Orlando, Florida. Since I was preaching there at the time, I am the "Dear Sir" to whom its tender, touching appeal was made. An answer was sent which I am certain brought a degree of joy and happiness to the woman who penned it. I am omitting her name and address since the inclusion of it is really unnecessary.

Before printing the letter, perhaps it would be good to preface it with these remarks. So often our deeds of kindness and consideration go unnoticed and unrewarded, failing even to elicit any form of thanksgiving. It seems so difficult for man to say, humbly and meaningfully, "Thank you." Even Jesus noted this weakness of man when He posed the question, "Where are the nine?" (Read the story in Luke 17.) The good sister who wrote this letter was, for many years, one of "the nine." But she finally became the "tenth"—one out of so many, who was willing to return, saying, "Thank you." Here is the letter:

June 20, 1976

Dear Sir,

I'm sorry, I don't know your name. I'm writing because I need help to make amends for a situation I caused in your area many years ago.

The year was either the end of '64 or sometime in '65. I was at that time a drunken, unpredictable, undependable girl of about twenty-five. I had been raised in the church, but I was off the track by my early teens. I was in trouble with no money and no place to go when I reached Orlando. I called the church, and you people found me a place to stay with some fine

people who helped me find a job and gave me much love and care. I wasn't able to appreciate those good people at the time, but now I'd like help in finding them so I can thank them.

It seems as though there was a church in Winter Park at that time, but I don't remember. I don't remember their names, either, so what I've prayed for may be impossible. My name at that time was \_\_\_\_\_. They were an older couple whose children had

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already left home. I remember I awoke one morning and the husband had put a beautiful rosebud on the dresser. The wife was a beautiful woman who fixed lovely meals for me and tried to get me to talk to her. All I could do at that time was lie.

They got me a job with their next door neighbor who had heart trouble. I was, of course, totally irresponsible. I later moved to the neighbors' house. Then I found work at the hospital in Winter Park, moved, and never went

back. I had a small brownish car and red hair.

If you can think of anything to help me in my search, I'd be so grateful, or anything else I can do. "Thank you" would never be enough to give them, but I could tell them that, thanks to AA and God, who did not choose to leave me in hell, I've been sober and without drugs for nearly four years. I don't even smoke. I work with others who were like me, trying to help where I can. I married a while ago, and we expect a baby in a few weeks. I have been given such riches of the spirit and in my surroundings. And I have been able, with God's help, to return to the church for the right reasons.

I'd like them to know these things, because I was ready for something terrible to happen when I met them, and I believed they helped put it off. And I'll never forget the rose.

Thank you,  
S/\_\_\_\_\_

The brother and sister who provided such love and care are still members at Par Street. They are deeply loved and highly esteemed by the members there. Some of the "long-time" members recall their kindness to this woman and immediately recognized them in the letter. Their lives are characterized by just such kindness and hospitality as was exemplified in this case. Identification is unimportant (but will follow). *Don't you wish that such a letter could be written about you?* May God increase their kind!

"*Thank you*" would never be enough to give them . . ." Dear sister, if I know these fine people as I believe I do, your letter is more than enough. "*I'll never forget the rose,*" marks this account: PAID IN FULL!

Yours is a beautiful story. May God bless you!

And may He continue to abundantly bless *Thurman and Clella Wright!*

2901 Riverbend Dr., Ft. Smith, AR 72903





## In Praise of Godly Women

I am the gladly acknowledged product of the patient labor of two women—my Mother, whose sacrificial love and faith began the process, and my wife, whose patient love and goodness have continued it. I owe so much to godly women. Looking back over the last thirty-odd years of preaching the gospel serves to heighten this feeling. Those years have not been without crisis or discouragement, but in the painful memories of almost all those difficult times there rises in my mind the dear face of an earnest daughter of Eve who nurtured me like a mother through the turmoil. How shall I forget or ever repay the critical comfort and encouragement received from those gentle spiritual giants who lived their lives in quiet but powerful simplicity? Some of them stayed the heart of a young, untried preacher and made the difference between surrender and endurance. Many of them have gone to be with their Savior, but they live still in my heart.

The New Testament reminds me that I am not alone in this experience. Our Lord frequently received His only comfort in dark times from faithful women. The tranquil hours He spent at Bethany with Mary and Martha must have been golden ones—a quiet and energizing respite to ready Him for renewed struggle. And what must Mary have meant to Him during that last week. His disciples were too occupied with their own ambitious dreams to notice His heaviness, but Mary sensed His burdened thoughts and, though feeling powerless to help, determined to do *something*. In prodigal earnestness she poured out the alabaster cruse of precious ointment. The disciples did nothing. Mary, as the Lord said, did what she could. And how like a woman to stand like Mary Magdalene very near the cross, unashamed—unable to deliver her Savior but unwilling to depart. The words, “Last at the cross, first at the tomb” pay fitting tribute to the tenacious loyalty which seems to rise to greater heights in women than in men.

The letters of Paul tell the same story. His epistles are sprinkled with the names of women whose faith must have somehow touched his own. There is Priscilla, Phoebe, Mary, Persis, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. And there is Claudia, Apphis, Euodia, Syntyche and the unnamed mother of Rufus. With the exception of Priscilla, their lives are largely unknown to us and yet the context in which they are mentioned suggests that many stories of love and valor could have been told of them. They must have been very dear to Paul.

Doubtless we have failed in general to express

appreciation for the love and faith of other Christians, but it is with our sisters that many of us have failed most grievously. We tend to offer lavish praise to those who serve publicly, and let other work go largely unheralded. By this we leave the impression that most everything important in the kingdom happens in the church assemblies. The Scripture indicates to the contrary—that more critical spiritual activity goes on outside the assemblies than in. Yet, by this negligence, however unintended, we must have left many a godly woman feeling useless and abandoned. Where is the needed encouragement for those faithful mothers whose great work determines in large measure whether there will be any faithful men to stand to teach in the church, and whose hearts must at times cry out for the simplest assurance of the value of their investment? Where is the kind word for those Christian women whose influence for the gospel has led to more conversions than any two “full time” preachers? Where is the open joy for their selfless hospitality and their gentle care of the sick and aged?

We have often wondered if the undue emphasis put upon public preaching and leading roles in the assemblies (places where women should not function), combined with our failure to express appreciation for the vital work being done by these quiet servants of God could have played its part in tempting women to assert themselves in ways they ought not. It bears thought.

Women in local churches need encouragement and support, but they need more. They do not have a place in the actual decision-making process of the church, whether it has elders or not. But what they do have is a need for useful information about the planned work of the congregation. How can earnest women serve well when kept in the dark about what needs to be done? Churches need to find scriptural ways of adequately informing the women without inviting them into the deliberative and decision-making process.

Godly women ought also to have enough access to those who lead in the local church to be able to express their genuine concerns and ask their questions in a quiet way without being made to feel out of place. The husband is the head of the wife, but he yields nothing of his leadership and greatly enhances its effectiveness when he listens to and counsels with his mate as he makes his decisions. This is equally true in the family of God.

Thanks be to God for faithful women. May we esteem them exceeding highly for their work's sake.





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Dee Bowman

### Be Ye Thankful: Sign of An Appreciative Heart

**I**ngratitude is the sin of our age. Of all the people who have ever lived, we are the most blessed. And yet we are ungrateful, unappreciative. The world in general and persons in particular seem to feel that the affluency in which they luxuriate is to be expected, that they in some way or other deserve it.

Paul described the Gentiles as those that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful" (Romans 1:21). I trust that the people of our day and age are not at the same level of degeneracy as those described by the apostle Paul in this most scathing rebuke. But we are certainly headed in that direction. One of the tell-tale signs is our failure to recognize and give thanks for the lavish surroundings in which we live, the numberless array of blessings we enjoy. We are actually immersed in luxury—luxury for which we often forget to give thanks. Shakespeare called it "benefits forgot."

"Thank" and "think" are kin. They both have a relation to thought. To think a good thought is what "thanks" is all about. In fact, the early meaning of

the word had to do with kindly feelings for someone who had befriended or favored you. So, when you say, "Thank you," you are actually saying, "I think good thoughts about your favor to me."

"Thank you" is a warm sounding and expressive phrase. No one tires of hearing it. It is never out of order. In this simple expression is to be found one of the few remaining humble remarks made by people. It puts things in order, makes me keep my place with respect. It's hard to be very proud while you're saying "Thank you."

I think an attitude of thankfulness is best developed by getting close to God, by actually realizing how great He is and how He has favored us so richly. Such intimacy makes us think good thoughts about Him. When you come to see the majesty of God, His creative power, His sustaining power, you cannot but be impressed. And such impressions make you thankful for His provisions.

We should be thankful for even the smallest things. Things like the seasons so things can grow; heat to keep us warm in the winter and cold to cool us off in the summer; cars; washing

machines; doctors; money; popcorn; and peanut butter—all the things that make us happy. As we shall shortly see, we need to even be thankful for periodic chastisement, knowing that it is a sign of God's love for us. All blessings—even the little ones—come from God. How thankful we should be!

But when you become aware of sin and its consequences and man's inability to deal with it by himself, then's when you really become grateful to God.

Listen. God has "given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). Be thankful! He has given us His Son for our salvation (John 3:16). Be thankful! He has given us the avenue of prayer (Hebrews 6:19-22). Be thankful! He has prepared for us a heavenly abode (2 Corinthians 5:1-2). Be thankful! He has given us the days of our lives (Acts 17:28). Be thankful!

In this month's theme section, you will find articles designed to call to mind the simple and wonderful things God has provided for us. In each of them I hope you will find good reason to bow your head and be thankful.

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# BE YE THANKFUL

Don Givens

## Thankful In Everything

THE WORDS "THANKFUL, THANKS, AND thanksgiving" occur frequently in God's word. The attitude expressed by these terms should be a constant characteristic of our lives.

*Thankfulness* and continual *gratitude* graces the life of the child of the heavenly Father. Acts of adoration, expressions of gratitude, and reverence and praise for bountiful blessings received are found in alert Christians.

The person who is thankful will also

Paul reminded the Colossian Christians to "let the peace of God rule in your hearts . . . and be ye thankful" (Colossians 3:15). Note that the peace found by being obedient to Christ must *rule* in our hearts. "Be thankful," commands the apostle. This response is not a drudgery or an unpleasant burden but rather a joy beyond measure.

### Thanks

David, the inspired singer, proclaimed in Psalm 18:49, "Therefore will I give

Persia, still prayed to the Lord God against the signed decree—and gave thanks. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Daniel 6:10).

In Luke 17:16 we see only one leper out of ten cured returning to give thanks unto Jesus. Is the percentage any better today among those who ought to be grateful? What ungrateful individuals the other nine were! In which class am I?

Ephesians 5:20 commands this: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul says further: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

### Thanksgiving

An everlasting principle is found in Psalm 50:14 which says: "Offer unto God *thanksgiving*; and pay thy vows unto the Most High." Paul reminded the Philippians to "be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with *thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God." Truly, our lives should "abound with *thanksgiving*" (Colossians 2:7). Paul lists "unthankful" along with other despicable sins (2 Timothy 3:2).

I remember from my childhood the delightful story of a family and group of friends who were sitting around the festive board at Thanksgiving time. As everyone was about to devour all the good food prepared, each was asked to express something for which he was thankful. One old man, known as a real grouch, would say nothing. A young lad looked at the grouch and said, "Grandpa, isn't there anything you can think of to be thankful for?" "Humph, nothin'" replied the old man as he began to describe his aches and ills. "Well," the young boy astutely replied, "you ought to at least be thankful you're not a turkey!"

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**"In Luke 17:16 we see only one leper out of ten cured returning to give thanks unto Jesus. Is the percentage any better today among those who ought to be grateful? What ungrateful individuals the other nine were! In which class am I?"**

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be kind and considerate of the feelings of others. One hates to give a gift and receive absolutely no thanks in return. What about the good gifts God has given us?

### Thankful

Psalm 100 is a song of thanksgiving, admonishing "all ye lands" to "be thankful unto Him, and bless His name" (verses 1, 4). The Father made us, sustains us, and will bless all who love Him. Jehovah is good; His lovingkindness endures forever.

thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name." And, "To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent, O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee forever" (Psalm 30:12).

Ingratitude is one of the most hideous of all sins, universally despised. The ingrate is one who never stops long enough, nor gets far enough from his own selfishness, to thank the Lord for all His goodness.

Courageous Daniel, in idolatrous



# BE YE THANKFUL



## Thankful for Your Health

*Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.*

IT IS PROPER TO ASK GOD FOR GOOD health. John prayed that Gaius might "prosper in all things and be in health," just as his soul prospered (3 John 2). What a commentary on Gaius' spiritual health! If only his physical health could parallel it!

If we petition the Lord for health, how much more should we thank Him for it when we receive it. How many of us are so busy enjoying the things that good health allows us to do that we seldom think of what a blessing God has granted us in our health? Why wait until it is gone, or seems about to be, to talk to God about your health? Why not thank Him right now for eyesight that allows you to read these lines? Or, if someone is reading it to you, for the hearing that allows you to hear the words?

No one has perfect health. We live in a world where sin has set into motion sickness and ultimately death. The healthiest of us have our occasional aches and pains. The sickest of us usually have some faculties that are in pretty good shape. With all of us, it is kind of a mixed bag. We could all handle our illnesses better if we would dwell more on being thankful for the health we have.

When I get a little down in the dumps, I visit a sister who is a member of the congregation where I work and worship. She has enough health problems to keep a good complainer going for years. She has been able to attend only a few services of the church in the fifteen years that I have known her. Why go to see her when I get a little down? Is it to remind me of how blessed I am with good health by seeing her poor health? No sir! I seldom think of her heart trouble, diabetes, allergies, etc., while there. She won't let me. She is busy telling and showing how thankful she is for the Bible tapes, sermon tapes, etc., she has. She has just received a new sermon tape from a young preacher who lives down near the coast. She would just like for me to listen to it with her. How thankful she is that she can hear them so well! Then there are all those religious

papers and the books . . . and, just think, God has blessed her with good eyes to read them. How great it is that she can use the phone to check on the sick to see if they need anything and to offer them an encouraging word. On and on she goes until I must leave. Now, what was it that caused me to go by in the first place?

We ought not to think of good health as an end in itself. Certainly there is nothing wrong with wanting to feel good and enjoying life, but there are far greater reasons to be thankful for your health. Your body is the tool that you use to serve the Lord.

your husband and children (Titus 2:5).

Be thankful when you are well enough to meet with the saints (Hebrews 10:25). Sing with them. Pray with them. Study with them. Serve with them.

Be thankful when you are well enough to visit a neighbor who needs your help or needs to be taught the gospel (Galatians 6:1-10).

Be thankful when you are well enough to walk around and just enjoy and meditate on God's creation all around you.

Be thankful when you are well enough to read the Bible and study its contents.

Be thankful when you are well enough

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**"We ought not to think of good health as an end in itself. Certainly there is nothing wrong with wanting to feel good, but there are far greater reasons to be thankful for your health. Your body is the tool that you use to serve the Lord."**

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Be thankful when you are well enough to give more to your family. Pleasant times with your wife, husband, parents, children and, by all means, those grandchildren—giving and receiving those things shared by a Christian family. Feeling well enough to be pleasant.

Be thankful when you are well enough to be "working with [your] hands what is good, that [you] may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28).

Brother, be thankful when you are well enough to be a good provider for your family (1 Timothy 5:8).

Sister, be thankful when you are well enough to be a good homemaker for

to understand that you need to be thankful.

Be thankful when you are well enough to just enjoy the company of good brethren with whom you can share your common faith and interests in the Lord.

Health is relative. It does not matter what degree of it you may have—you have reason to be thankful for it. If you will get in the habit of being thankful for your health—you might find that your health will be better. You might even find yourself thinking and talking more about it than you do your aches and pains.

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# BE YE THANKFUL

## Thankful for Your Brethren

Gardner Hall

SOME OF THE MOST AMAZING WORDS IN the New Testament are those of Jesus about His apostles in John 17. For example, "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them" (verse 26).

Why are such words so amazing? They indicate a profound thankfulness for weak, vacillating men who had given Jesus all kinds of problems with their immature faith.

### How Could Jesus Be Thankful for Such Men?

**Key #1.** He was able to see the good within each of the apostles in spite of their glaring weaknesses. For this reason, horrendous apostolic blunders such as Peter's impulsive words on the mount of transfiguration, his sinking beneath the waves, Thomas's skepticism and the childish feuding for preeminence were not met with angry disgust, but with gentle, yet stern, rebuke. Jesus was not blinded to the good in the apostles by their defects and was therefore able to be sincerely grateful for those qualities that shallow, impatient eyes would have overlooked.

**Key #2.** He gave everything He had to help them. It is an amazing fact that we are most thankful for those for whom we sacrifice the most.

My wife, Beverly, and I had to give up our sleep, sanitary concern (dirty diapers), free time and innumerable other small blessings to take care of little Leah when she was born almost eight months ago. At that time she seemed to give only slobbering, early morning yelling sessions and dirty diapers in return. Yet, it seems the more time we spend, bleary-eyed at 3 A.M. in the rocking chair, and the more we exert ourselves in other ways for Leah and older sister Rebecca, the more deeply grateful we are for them.

As parent's sacrifices for their children deepen their gratitude for them, so the incomprehensible sacrifices that Jesus made for His apostles, His emptying of Himself (Philippians 2) and thousands of hours of prayer and teaching must have

made it possible for Him to express such deep thanksgiving for them in spite of their sometimes serious faults.

### How Can We Be More Thankful for Our Brethren?

Too often brethren are at worst a source of intense aggravation, or at best people with whom we can very politely discuss "niceties" two or three times a week. How can we cultivate that fervent love and closeness that produces such strong feelings of thanksgiving as those demonstrated by Jesus toward His apostles?

**Key #1.** We must follow the example of Jesus and learn to see more than the weaknesses of brethren, but the good as well. Sometimes the odd turn that a brother has, the weird idea, or the time he offended me five years ago becomes so big in my mind that I can see I am good in him, much less be grateful for him.

This inability to cope with any deficiencies in other brethren has perhaps been the greatest obstacle to peace and growth in the kingdom. While sects that emphasize closeness among members have grown by leaps and bounds in spite of hard-to-swallow doctrines, growth among true brethren has often been stunted by a lack of love brought on by a lot of growling, snapping and yapping at each other that reminds one of a stirred-up dog kennel. In such all-too-common flareups, brethren seem about as thankful for each others as the Iranians are for the Iraqis. And they wonder why they don't grow! When some take every weakness in a brother as if it were a sign that he has fallen from grace, is it any wonder that such brethren seem to be sitting in their foxholes suspiciously peering out at each other while emitting low, threatening growls?

Satan has won many battles because we have simply overlooked Jesus' example of patience with His apostles in spite of their shortcomings.

Don't misunderstand me. Jesus did not ignore weaknesses nor participate in error as some extremists would have us do. But neither did He treat all faults as

if they were signs of hopeless depravity. Weaknesses in sincere Christians *must* be corrected, but with due time, gentleness and patience (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

**Key #2.** We must give ourselves to our brethren. Do you feel a need to be more thankful for your brethren? Follow the example of Jesus and give yourself to serving them. Have them in your home for dinner or dessert. Go on a picnic with them or out for ice cream after services. Attend a meeting with them or go to a ballgame. Pray with them, study with them, cry with them and give your money to them when they need it.

Unhappily, we often do not open ourselves up to our brethren because of a growing emphasis in our increasingly urban society on privacy and formality. Some brethren have gotten so polite with each other that they would seldom think of visiting one another without formal invitations, fine china and complicated entrees with foreign names. All this formality tends to limit the all-important contact *outside* of worship services. After all, who wants to drag out the crystal glasses once or twice a week? With less giving and exchange there is less thankfulness for each other; and with less thankfulness, churches become cold and dead.

Christians must burst through the shell of shyness that the urban formality has produced so that they can give freely of themselves to each other with confidence and openness. When brethren share our homes, our activities and our hearts, then we can learn to be truly thankful for them.

### Conclusion

The world is too evil to face without this close brotherly relationship that God has given us. Look at those fighting evil alongside of you. You need them and they need you! Remember the keys to Jesus' thankfulness for His apostles and be thankful for your brethren, even if they have some weaknesses. Fight Satan with them, fight for them and go to heaven with them.

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# BE YE THANKFUL



## Thankful for the Fact of Forgiveness

Julian R. Snell

FROM AMONG THE COUNTLESS BLESSINGS of our heavenly Father attention is directed to forgiveness. To the truly forgiven this fact must be viewed as the pinnacle in the expression of God's love. Actually, forgiveness comprehends the eternal purpose of God—the epitome—and is the base for any stable and secure relationship in life. Can one know assuredly that sin is forgiven? We do not address the hope of forgiveness but the fact of it.

Any practical consideration of forgiveness presumes acquaintance with the need for it. Forgiveness is a need of every responsible and accountable being because of the fact or reality of sin. Man is a sinner because he has transgressed and violated God's law. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Since all sin is against God, it is God's forgiveness we must seek; in this respect, forgiveness must be understood as an executive act.

Within the Scripture forgiveness has a number of synonyms. The most common words and expressions are: pardon, cleanse, put away, acquit, remember not, covered, purge, redemption, and remission. The fact of sin necessarily involves the fact of forgiveness. It is not the hope of forgiveness, but the fact of it, that establishes and stabilizes a relationship with our God that is real and secure as children.

The positive aspect of forgiveness is not elusive but is a certainty supplying stability and hope. The God who cannot lie has promised that when conditions are met, forgiveness results—whether forgiveness is extended to the alien sinner or the erring child of God. Strangely, professed believers are plagued by doubt and uncertainty from within, which often saps spiritual energy at the personal and finally at the corporate level.

John, in his epistle, addresses the certainty of our salvation, or—if you will—our forgiveness. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may

know that ye have eternal life, that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). "We know—we know" that forgiveness is ours. When the sinner complies with the conditions of forgiveness, he can be confident. "Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38) is the condition. When met in faith and sincerity, the result is fact. Knowing this, the Eunuch of Acts 8 "went on his way rejoicing"—thankful for God's love and mercy and secure in the knowledge that for him a new day with God had dawned. He was secure in the "new

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or the erring child  
of God.*

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creature" relationship which produced a peace within that indeed passed all understanding. He had met the conditions—forgiveness was his.

Forgiveness for the erring child of God—the Christian who sins—is likewise needful and factual. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9). The need for forgiveness is here implied, the conditions by which it is obtained are projected, and the fact of it is estab-

lished. Every Christian, young or old, sins. However, provisions have been made through the infinite love and mercy of God so that sin can be forgiven. How? "If we confess our sins" comprehends whatever conditions God imposes, including repentance, correction, retribution, and humble acknowledgement to God. The classic example of Acts 8 is eternal, as Peter speaks to Simon of Samaria. Hear him: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (verse 22).

Faithful Christians daily thank the Lord for food, for the wide range of physical blessings, even for life itself. How wonderful these things are! Yet, these things are not to be compared with the greatest of all blessings—redemption and forgiveness as offered in Jesus Christ our Lord. This, the most expensive of ventures on the part of God, has been made the most extensive in its being offered to "whosoever will."

The atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ has been beautifully pictured in an ancient Oriental custom. When a debt was settled by full payment, or by forgiveness of the indebtedness, the creditor would take the canceled bond and nail it over the door of the man who had owed him, that all might see that the debt had been paid. This is a good illustration of the glorious redemption and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. He is the door through whom all must pass to bask in the light of grace and mercy, to know forgiveness. Thus, the obedient are made free of sin's debt and guilt, for He became "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). Had He not died, or if we should refuse to live under His influence, we would be bankrupt and hopelessly in debt.

How wonderful the privilege to say, "Father, forgive me." What peace to my troubled soul and faltering life. Standing in the glow of His grace we can "know that we have eternal life" because of forgiveness. Thank you, dear Lord.

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# BE YE THANKFUL

## Thankful for Your Husband

Carol June Kay

ON JULY 24TH OF THIS YEAR, MY husband and I observed the thirtieth anniversary of our marriage. There was no elaborate celebration but a quiet reflection on the years of our marriage and thanksgiving to God that He has allowed us this time together. In many ways it seems like only yesterday we made those vows to each other. And yet when specific events are recalled—three children and grandchildren—the thirty years are all there. My husband especially likes a ballad sung by Tex Ritter that

the need to nourish and sustain our physical bodies. How can we expect the marriage relationship to be strong and vibrant if we neglect it? Stephen Vincent Benet expressed it: "Life is not lost by dying; Life is lost minute by minute, Day by dragging day, In all the thousand small uncaring ways." In Galatians 5:22-23 we are told, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." These attributes are to charac-

the husband is to be the head of the wife and he is to love her as his own body. In 1 Timothy 5:8, he is given the responsibility of providing for his family. Do we consider the challenge a man accepts in trying to achieve a balance between leadership and unfair domination, earning a living and obsession with material things? Our appreciation and contentment with those things provided can help him in these responsibilities.

There are many ways to demonstrate thankfulness for your husband: by words spoken, by moral support, and by making your home a haven of love, joy, peace, and kindness. Let us not assume that he knows we appreciate him as the head of the home and the provider for the family. *Tell him* how thankful you are for his devotion and care in providing for your needs. ("A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver," Proverbs 25:11). Let him know you love him. Tell him how thankful you are for his faithfulness to you. If your husband is a Christian, you have an even greater blessing for which to be thankful. If not, your behavior toward him may be the very thing to bring him to Christ (1 Peter 3:1-2).

I am not saying that as long as we remember to be thankful and show loving kindness there will never be any trials or conflicts! That would be very unrealistic! However, we can, with the right attitudes, work together to overcome life's problems.

Above all, be thankful to God for your husband. The home is under attack in our society today, but God as our Creator knows what is best for us. Our greatest opportunity for happiness will come when we follow God's plan—husband and wife each fulfilling their own role and maintaining the sanctity of marriage. In the words of Longfellow: "As unto the bow the cord is—so unto the man is woman. Though she bends him, she obeys him, though she draws him, yet she follows—useless each without the other."

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**"In the early years of marriage it seems so natural to do little loving things to show the one we've chosen he is special. But sometimes, as the years go by, we forget to keep love alive."**

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says, "When you're blue the days go by a draggin', but when you're happy the years fall away."

What a wonderful blessing to have a loving husband and a happy home. However, happiness in the home does not just automatically fall into place. Diligent effort is required on the part of both husband and wife.

In the early years of marriage it seems so natural to do little loving things to show the one we've chosen he is special. But sometimes, as the years go by, we forget to keep love alive. We understand

terize a Christian in all the facets of life. Kindness and common courtesy are just as important in the home as in our dealings with others.

All of these things have been said to bring us to the theme to be considered here: "Be ye thankful for your husband." Many of life's daily tensions might be eased if we would remember to show our gratitude for the one who is our husband. Positions of leadership and authority are often not easy, and yet a man chooses to accept this responsibility in marriage. Ephesians 5:23ff tells us that



# BE YE THANKFUL



## Thankful for Godly Elders

Jeff Corey

RECENTLY I WAS INVITED TO THE HOME of a friend so that I might assist him in moving a barn to a new location. When I arrived I discovered several other Christians present to accomplish the same task. The floor of the building was undergirded with oak boards which we could grasp for lifting. Together, men on each corner lifted the barn, carried it a distance and then gently placed it on a new foundation. By using forethought, teamwork, and individual strength we were able to move a very large and heavy load. Organized labor can sure get a big job done!

Similarly, Christians realize there is a *tremendous amount of work* to be accomplished for the Lord's kingdom. Isn't it wonderful that God, by His wisdom and forethought, provided organized leadership for the local church so that it might complete its work? I thank God for His raising up godly elders who lead and feed His people with the Scriptures. In fact, as a young evangelist, I heartily appreciate elders, deacons, and other teachers of God's word with whom I share the weight of soul watching. These fellow-laborers are a gift from Jesus to the church (Ephesians 4:11). I know from experience that active, qualified pastors are a good gift!

There are many qualities abounding in the lives of godly elders for which I am thankful. (1) God has blessed them with "wisdom from above," qualifying them to be dependable spiritual counselors. (2) Their ability to handle the Scriptures accurately allows the church to maintain sound teaching and therefore edify all who heed the word. (3) Their qualified leadership provides forethought and guidance for the growth and soundness of the local church which they oversee. (4) I can always depend upon them to be genuinely concerned for the burdens of every Christian within the church. (5) I am able to share the weight of my hardships as an evangelist with them because we are like-minded and they care about me. (6) Being spiritually mature, they consistently demonstrate "the fruit of the Spirit" in

their behavior and speech. I enjoy the happiness, peace, kindness, and longsuffering that shines from their lives, as they provide godly examples for other Christians to follow. (7) There are times

men as these who carry a tremendous load of responsibility within the local church. Ask God to develop more godly men who would be willing to help bear this burden of love. Do all you can to

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**"I thank God for His raising up godly elders who lead and feed His people with the Scriptures. In fact, as a young evangelist, I heartily appreciate elders, deacons, and other teachers of God's word with whom I share the weight of soul watching."**

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when they make mistakes, but because of their sincerity to serve God, they have the humility to say, "I am sorry; please forgive me."

Brethren, give thanks to God for such

help lift up the hands of those overseeing a flock of God's people. Remember — organized labor can sure get a big job done!

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### CORRECTION

*In Mark Mayberry's fine article last month on "The Problem of Suffering," a mistake was made in the first column, where it says about man, "He was told to disobey God . . ." It should read, of course, "He was told to OBEY God." Our apologies to brother Mayberry for the error.*





# BE YE THANKFUL

Homer Hailey

## Thankful for Prayer

AMONG THE MANY RICH BLESSINGS OF the Christian, and one for which he should ever be grateful, is the privilege of prayer. Prayer is not only a privilege, but also an essential to living a faithful life. It is an act of faith, and an expression of one's dependence upon God. The subject is broad and includes every aspect of the Christian's life; therefore, it will have to be limited. Let us think of *Prayer in Time of Trouble*, and of how thankful we should be for the great privilege of casting our anxieties upon the Lord.

One should not wait until trouble comes to pray, but should "pray without

### Old Testament: Troubles and Prayers

Back of trouble there is the violation of law by someone. Saul's jealousy of David caused him to seek David's life, wherefore David showed unto Jehovah his trouble, called upon Him, and was delivered (read the beautiful Psalm 142).

In the sin of his flight from Jehovah, Jonah found himself in trouble—big trouble—in the belly of a great fish: "And the flood was round about me; All thy waves and thy billows passed over me" (Jonah 2:3). "Then Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God out of the fish's belly" (2:1). "And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon

that of Isaiah (verse 37), and God delivered the city by slaying 185,000 of the Assyrians in one night. What if neither had prayed? But they did, and God responded according to His promise.

### New Testament: Troubles and Prayers

Saul of Tarsus had been persecuting Jehovah's Anointed and His people. On the way to Damascus the Lord appeared to him, causing the persecutor to become blind. Saul had been fighting against God! He was in deep trouble and realized it. Being led to the house of Judas, he spent three days praying. In response the Lord sent Ananias to him with heaven's message of salvation. Saul then gave his life in serving God to His glory.

Then there was Peter's imprisonment and prayer being made on his behalf by the church, and his glorious release (Acts 12:5,7). There is the Lord's promise to those in trouble whom He bids to call for the elders of the church and pray, promising to save or heal (James 5:13-16). And on and on.

### A Higher Deliverance

Seemingly some prayers go unanswered; what about these? Moses prayed that he might enter the land of promise; David prayed that his infant son might live; Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh might be removed. And though God said, "No"—He hears and answers. Sometimes there is a richer blessing, a greater deliverance, for which we should be thankful. In Job's case, for instance, through his troubles God delivered him from hidden faults, and allowed the patriarch to see the Lord in a new light: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; But now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5).

Let the Christian rejoice and be thankful for prayer; let him hear and respond to the Lord who says: "Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High, And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." When delivered, let him not forget to glorify the Father for the deliverance.

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**"Prayer is not only a privilege, but also an essential to living a faithful life. It is an act of faith, and an expression of one's dependence upon God."**

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ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17); "at all seasons in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18); "in everything" (Philippians 4:6). But when trouble comes, the Christian should claim the promise of God: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm 50:15).

Trouble comes into every life. Eliphaz said, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7), to which Job agreed: "Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble" (14:1). In the realization of this truth, we should be grateful for God's promise (Psalm 50:15).

the dry ground" (2:10). How grateful Jonah should have been for the power of prayer and for God's promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

The city of Jerusalem was being besieged; Sennacherib's army was at the gate of the city; Rabshakeh had sent an insulting note to king Hezekiah. The nation had sinned and was reaping the consequence of its rejection of Jehovah. Hezekiah sent word to Isaiah: "This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of calumny . . . wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left" (Isaiah 37:3-4). Hezekiah added his prayer to



# BE YE THANKFUL



## Thankful for Periodic Chastening

Don Bassett

"HE WHO SPARES HIS ROD HATES HIS SON, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently" (Proverbs 13:24, all Bible quotations from the *New American Standard Bible* unless otherwise marked). So the wise man wrote concerning our "earthly fathers" (Hebrews 12:9). And the writer of Hebrews assures us that the "Father of our spirits" is not negligent toward His spiritual children in this regard (Hebrews 12:9, NIV).

To a faltering band of Jewish Christians he writes that "those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6). This is not easy medicine to take: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful"—i.e., full of sorrow (Hebrews 12:11). And yet we are told to be joyful in the midst of chastenings and trials: "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials" (James 1:2). And we are told to fight the depression and despair into which chastening and trial may lead us: "Strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed" (Hebrews 12:12-13).

Easier said than done! When I have lost my job, my health, my family, my friends and my self-confidence it is hard to get up off my back, onto my knees, and thank God for "periodic chastening." Even when I have been justly rebuked by my brethren or my conscience from the word of God itself, it is an effort to respond with cheerful gratitude for the whipping I have received.

Yet I had better learn to do so, for the ups and downs of life are going to come—as certainly as the fact that I was born. "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1, AV). And I *can* learn to thank God for the lows when they come—by whatever means and through whatever persons.

The Hebrew Christians had at one time "accepted joyfully the seizure" of their property (Hebrews 10:34). Paul, a persecuted prisoner, writing the Philip-

pians, a persecuted church, said, "I joy and rejoice with you all" (Philippians 2:17, ASV). And though Habakkuk trembled with fear as he looked toward the north and saw the Babylonian horde coming to rape the Kingdom of Judah, he could say:

Though the fig tree should not  
blossom,  
And there be no fruit on the vines,  
Though the yield of the olive should  
fail,  
And the fields produce no food,

kindness. For He does not afflict willingly [Hebrew, "from his heart," D.B.], or grieve the sons of men" (Lamentations 3:32-33).

Periodic chastenings are a healthy, if painful, discipline (Hebrews 12:7; James 1:3-4). They are corroboration of my identity as one of the Father's children (Hebrews 12:8). And they may make the difference between the damnation of a self-indulgent brat on the one hand and the salvation of an humble, chastened, obedient child on the other (Hebrews

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**"When I have lost my  
job, my health, my family, my  
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it is hard to get up off my back,  
onto my knees, and thank God  
for 'periodic chastening.'"**

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Though the flock should be cut off  
from the fold,  
And there be no cattle in the stalls,  
Yet will I exult in the LORD,  
I will rejoice in the God of my  
salvation. —Habakkuk 3:17-18

And I, too, can be grateful for periodic chastening because the word of God says the Father "disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). In the midst of periodic chastenings I must remember that "if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to His abundant loving-

12:11; see also 1 Peter 1:6-9). How beautifully, yet simply, chastened King David said it: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:71, AV). And how humbly Paul accepted his thorn in the flesh, knowing that its humiliating presence, day after day after day, was a "severe mercy," as C. S. Lewis labeled such things, given to protect him from the most damaging of all human failings—pride (2 Corinthians 12:7).

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# BE YE THANKFUL

David Barnes

## Thankful for Your Friends

JUST A BRIEF REFLECTION ON FRIENDSHIP produces a vivid spectrum of emotions and a parade of faces. Our friends come in all sizes, shapes, ages, colors and kinds. I would encourage you to make a list of all your friends, past and present. It has been suggested that it is impossible to count all our blessings. The same might be said about our friends. God shows us all aspects of friendship in His word. Take, for instance, Elijah, who had 7,000 friends he knew nothing about, while Job had three friends he probably wished he didn't know. The friendship between Jonathan and David is noteworthy. Then there is Paul and Silas. No two men could have spent so much time in prison and not have been friends! The list could go on, but I am sure you have the idea.

There are certain things which will be true of a good friend. As we mention them, I hope you will immediately recognize them in your friends. But, more importantly, I hope you see them in your friendship to others.

1. A friend will tell you when you are wrong. Naaman, no doubt, learned the value of this essential aspect of friendship when he rejected the instruction of Elisha. He might have been a leper until the day he died had his servants not cared enough to tell him he was wrong. King David never had a better friend than the one who said, "Thou art the man." Friends mention our mistakes so we can move on toward success. In fact, the *only* reason they tell us our faults is that we might correct them and better ourselves.

2. A friend will mention your good qualities and praise your achievements. We all crave recognition and a friend will look for positive things to commend. When Jesus wrote to the seven churches of Asia He began, when possible, with what they were doing right before noting their problems. Good friends look for the good things.

3. A friend will give you time to grow. The last thing anyone needs is a tirade enumerating their shortcomings. It

seems, at times, that the more familiar one becomes with you, the more they allow the trivial to become a source of tension or irritation. Many a good friendship has been lost over the unimportant. Jesus must have been able to see hundreds of problems with Peter, yet He spoke only what was necessary at

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**G. Campbell Morgan, in his book *DISCIPLESHIP*, wrote these words about death among friends:**  
*"Death is but a pause, wherein the one hears from the great silence the old voice, and feels drawing him thither, the old love, and the other waits in the splendors of that silence, with the Lord, for the coming of that fellow—whose song will add to heaven's music." We never lose our friends. We will strike hands in paradise, and sing together through the ages the song of the Lamb.*

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the time and allowed him to grow (see Luke 22:31-34). A friend will speak when it is necessary and smile when it is not.

4. A friend sends his heart with you wherever you go. In 2 Kings 5:25, Elisha said to Gehazi, "Went not mine heart with thee?" No matter what path we

choose to walk, we carry the heart of our friend with us. Our friends can either rejoice or cry with us because we have carried their heart in our heart.

5. A friend is never lost to us. We may be separated by time, distance or even death, yet none of these dull the influence of a friend. In Proverbs 27:17, God says, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The last time I saw Floyd Thompson in this life he read that passage at the end of our visit. I know who was "sharpened" by our time together. His influence still sharpens me. G. Campbell Morgan, in his book *Discipleship*, wrote these words about death among friends:

"Death is but a pause, wherein the one hears from the great silence the old voice, and feels drawing him thither, the old love, and the other waits in the splendors of that silence, with the Lord, for the coming of the fellow—whose song will add to heaven's music."

We never lose our friends. We will strike hands in paradise, and sing together through the ages the song of the Lamb.

Out of all the people who could fulfill the duty of friendship, one stands out as the most important. The first friend we need on this earth is our Lord. In John 15:15 He said, "I have called you friends." When Jesus said this, the idea of friendship moved into new territory. Jesus flawlessly performs all the duties of friendship that we have noticed. How blessed we are to have this one as our friend.

The apostle Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 1:3, said: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as is fitting." When we have friendship with others and a friend like Jesus, then there is need for being thankful. Paul gave us a good example to follow in his treatment of the brethren at Thessalonica. To have a friend is a blessing. To be a friend is a privilege and a responsibility. Thanks be to God who blessed the world with friendship.

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# BE YE THANKFUL



## Thankful for Godly Parents

Eric Earnhart

I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO WRITE ABOUT parents. I feel I am well suited for the job. I am not a parent, though it is something I look forward to in the future. I am not a very eloquent writer, but I am still well qualified for this assignment. I am qualified because this brief article is about a certain type of parent—godly parents. I have been blessed with two.

Sometimes I feel I am a member of a minority. When my friends talk about problems they are having because of their parents' separation or divorce, I cannot say I know how they feel. I don't. When I hear of children moving back and forth between parents who live in different states, I cannot even comprehend what that must be like. When I hear someone say (sincerely) that their parents don't really care about them, my heart aches for them, but inside I thank God that I will never experience that feeling. I am truly blessed because, above all else, my parents love the Lord.

I guess my first recollection of our family is the few years we lived in Nigeria, West Africa. I was only about three years old and I didn't understand much of what went on, but I did know this: I knew who God was, I knew that He sent Jesus, His Son, to die for us, and I knew that Dad was there to tell people about that. As time has passed, I still remember home Bible studies, singing hymns together in the dining room of our old house in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Dad preaching every Sunday. As I grew, times were not always good. There were disagreements, confrontations, and tears. But behind all the actions of my parents was God's word, and God's will. My time with them was much too short. I have lived away from home for a year and a half now, and I think I probably will not live in their home again. Not because it was a terrible place—it wasn't. It was a home of love. But my parents also raised me to be independent. When it was time for me to leave, I was ready, and so were they. But of all things, I am most thankful that my parents brought me up

in the training and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). I am now a child of God, as they are. Though becoming a Christian was my decision alone, their influence played a great part in that choice.

Parents, don't be afraid to teach your children in the Lord. Do not rely on Sunday morning Bible class; it isn't enough. Don't be daunted if they complain or have other things to do. Be firm, be consistent, and be an example. If sometimes you are not sure that you are accomplishing anything, believe me,

mine, thank God for them. Don't confront them or work against them; you will come to regret it later. Try to trust them. Try to realize why they do what they do. Let their godly influence work with you and for you. Support them as much as they support you. Above all, don't take them for granted. Your time in that home will be much shorter than you imagine now, and when you do leave, you will realize just how much you appreciate and need them. If you have godly parents, thank the Lord—for He has blessed you richly.

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**“When my friends talk about problems they are having because of their parents' separation or divorce, I cannot say I know how they feel. I don't.”**

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you are. Your children may not realize it or appreciate it for several years, but it *will* make a difference in their lives.

Also, parents, on behalf of your children, love each other in the Lord. Your sons and daughters will see, as I saw, what the love of God and a commitment to His word means in a marriage. I will settle for nothing less, because I have seen what it can achieve. Parents, train your children to be children of God, and you will have done more for them than all else combined.

Young people, if your parents are like

My prayer this day is that I can be like Asa in 1 Kings 15:11: “Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father David.” I have been given a great advantage in life through the godliness of my parents; if I waste it, I believe God will call me to account. I have godly parents and I am proud of them. It is my most fervent hope, prayer and goal that my children will be able to make the same statement. Mom and Dad, thank you; and thank you, Lord.

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# BE YE THANKFUL

Gary Fisher

## Thankful for Jesus

THANKFULNESS IS THE EXPRESSION OF gratitude for blessings we are aware of and appreciate. To be thankful for Jesus we must begin by telling that old, old story that motivates our gratitude. We will never be adequately thankful for that which we seldom think about. Why should I be thankful for Jesus?

1. **Jesus made the world's greatest sacrifice.** Sacrifice involves giving up something of great value. Think of what Jesus sacrificed for our salvation. He was God in heaven. He became a man on earth (Philippians 2:6-8). He sacrificed more than I can imagine.

2. **Jesus endured the world's greatest suffering.** Jesus was scourged, which means His back was shredded by a whip that had bits of glass, metal and other sharp objects attached to it. Jesus had a crown of thorns beaten into his skull. Of course, you knew that already—but have you stopped to think what that felt like? Then Jesus was crucified. Crucifixion was an excruciatingly painful death. It was so horrible that even the hardened Roman soldiers would mercifully offer the victim a narcotic to dull the pain. Jesus refused the narcotic. He felt every bit of the hurt of being crucified. When we think of Jesus' suffering, we might only think of the physical suffering—but that was a very small part of His total anguish. Jesus, while on the cross, was forsaken. He was forsaken by His closest friends and left alone in His last hours. But even more painful, as Jesus bore our sins He was forsaken by God (1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6,12; Matthew 27:46). I don't completely understand what that means, but somehow Jesus must have suffered the horrible punishment I deserve for my sins.

3. **Jesus showed the world's greatest love.** All of Jesus' sacrifice, pain and suffering was for you and me. He did not have to die. At any point in the trial and crucifixion, Jesus could have been immediately rescued by thousands of angels. Jesus suffered voluntarily for "our griefs . . . our sorrows . . . our transgressions . . . our iniquities . . . our well-being . . ." (Isaiah 53:4-6). How

humbling it is to realize that Jesus suffered so I don't have to bear the punishment I deserve.

4. **Jesus gave us the world's greatest gift.** He gave us escape from certain punishment in hell and provided an eternal home in heaven. Have you ever thought what your life would be like if Jesus had chosen not to be crucified? You would have to hope to live just as long as you possibly could—for the moment of death would bring eternal

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agony. At death, the door would be shut and there would be never-ending suffering, pain and horror. Imagine the most terrible suffering you have ever experienced. Then imagine having to suffer something one hundred times worse for one hundred years. When you have done that you have not begun to imagine how terrible hell is, nor how long it will last. And Jesus, out of love for us, suffered extreme torture to rescue us from certain punishment and to give us an

eternal home in heaven with joy beyond description.

Can you see why Paul encourages us to be overflowing with gratitude (Colossians 2:7)? Can you see why the Hebrew writer said, "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15)? Can we ever thank God enough for Jesus? We often thank over and over again those who do exceptionally nice things for us; we feel inadequate ever to thank them as much as they deserve. Our thanks to God can never be sufficient!

There are three ways to express thankfulness for Jesus. First, we can thank God in prayer. Prayer ought to emphasize praise and thanks. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). Second, we need to express thanks in our songs. "Singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16). We sing many songs to exhort us. And we sing many songs about the blessings of heaven that will come to us. But do we sing enough songs of thanks and praise to God for making all spiritual blessings available to us? Third, we need to express thanks for Jesus in our conversations. I resent the fact that some religious folks, by their casual use of such phrases as "praise the Lord," have made most of us somewhat embarrassed to seriously offer praise and thanks to God in our ordinary conversations. We should never use God's name in a flippant way, but we need to feel free to express our thanks to God at all times. Paul often expressed thanks to God as he wrote letters (see Romans 6:17; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 9:15; 1 Timothy 1:12; etc.).

Thanks for Jesus begins with serious thoughts about what He has done for us. Then we must express that thanks continually, always realizing our inadequacy to give sufficient thanks. Be ye thankful for Jesus!

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# That's Life!



Dee Bowman

*IN HIS COMMENTARY ON PROVERBS*, W. Gunther Plaut makes a very astute observation about education: "It is often erroneously said that education and knowledge will change the face of society. They may indeed; but they may also annihilate it if character, education, and moral knowledge do not keep pace with the acquisition of mere intellectual bulk."

\* \* \*

*IF YOU ARE STILL ANGRY WITH SOMEONE TODAY* chances are you are using your mind in a most inefficient manner.

\* \* \*

*I AM AFRAID LOTS OF CHRISTIANS SUFFER FROM SPIRITUAL OBESITY.* They take in lots of food, but instead of using it for work and exercise, they sit down and get fat.

\* \* \*

*WORDS ARE FUN.* Misuses and malaprops are the funniest. At a local pizza place I recently read this: "We except all coupons." And a local furniture store was having its "annual quitting business sale." I once heard a disc jockey introduce Frank Sinatra as the "late, great Frank Sinatra."

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*WE WOULD DO WELL TO REMEMBER* that there is a fascination for forbidden fruit simply because it is forbidden.

\* \* \*

*THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE:* Choose ten people and sometime during the month write them a short note expressing your appreciation for them. Can you do it?

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* "The different parts of the coun-

try show you the different faces of the people. And there are no more friendly and hospitable ones than in the South. In addition to their well-reputed hospitality, there is a genuine sort of concern when they say, "Hey! How y'all doin'?" But no matter the area—Maine, with its clipped speech and sharp inflections; Chicago, with its mid-western dialect which in reality is the only area without distinguishing language characteristics; California, with its constantly changing vocal styles and vernacular; or my own well-loved Texas, which has its hodgepodge of English-Mexican-Western-Southern pronunciations (as well as idioms)—when you are with Christians there's a very real sameness, a sort of kinship of spirit, that comes through in a most forceful and appealing manner. Such a joy it is to company with them, to enjoy their most sincere provisions, and to preach to them that most blessed message of all, Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

\* \* \*

*HAROLD TURNER ONCE TOLD ME*, "If you took all the people who sleep in church and laid them end to end, they'd probably all be more comfortable."

\* \* \*

*DOUBT IS A MONSTER. IT:*

- Ruins your outlook for the future.
- Dampens your mood so that you are ineffective.
- Shortens your view of what is really important.
- Impedes your personal progress and growth.
- Radiates a lack of trust and confidence.
- Causes others to be discouraged.
- Retards your energy.
- Gives the Devil great opportunities.

But, most important of all, doubt is sinful! (Matthew 6:24-34).

\* \* \*

*I LOVE THE BUMPER STICKER RUSS SAW* on his way to the University recently. It said,

"Roses are red, violents are blue;  
I'm schizophrenic; me, too!"



# The Gift of Sight

Leo Rogol

Blindness is one of the great tragedies of life. Living in a world of total darkness is something we cannot really comprehend. I am sure some of us have known people who have been struck with blindness but have adapted well, live useful, productive lives and appear to be happy. They have developed other senses and talents to compensate for their blindness.

There is another type of blindness which binds the man in misery, despair and hopelessness and, in a sense, is as tragic (if not more so) as physical blindness. We speak of spiritual, mental, or emotional blindness. A person afflicted with this is ensnared in self-pity, despair, gloom and a sense of hopelessness—all because he does not know how to look for (or will not see) the thing around him that can give peace, joy, comfort and meaning to life. Let me tell you of an experience that taught me the great lesson of "sight."

In west-central Georgia where I lived for a few years, there is a beautiful place called Callaway Gardens—over 2,500 acres of natural, cultivated beauty. For exercise, I took daily walks there. Spring and summer brought abundant hues of blossoms and flowers. The gentle breeze carried the fragrant scent of flowers as wisps of vapor throughout the beautiful woods and meandering trails.

Gradually, however, the beauty of summer gave way to the law of change in nature. The trees and shrubs were steadily stripped of their foliage and the flowers faded away. Soon the naked trees appeared stark, dreary and lifeless—especially on a dark and dismal day.

About that time of year, my moods and feelings blended with the bleak and empty scenes of the woods around me. All of my children had recently married, and the sense of loss and loneliness was overwhelming. To make matters worse, I was suffering pain as the result of an auto accident and was required to undergo therapy three times a week. This had a way of sapping not only my

physical vitality, but my mental and emotional as well. It was this matter of "seeing," however, that brought about a change in me and helped me to overcome my despondency.

It happened on a cold, drizzling, late November day. I was in a dismal mood as I walked through the woods when suddenly I saw a tall bush with leaves on it of green, yellow and purple. Further on I saw more—a beautiful variety of hues and colors, as if they were telling me, "Look at the beauty in us, not at your drab surroundings." My mind and spirit responded.

The longer I looked at the beauty of those bushes, the more oblivious I became to the bleak surroundings about me. It was as if they were saying to me, "Receive the blessings from the beauty we offer you, for it is your blessing from God." Soon my mind and heart responded and my spirit was uplifted. I went back again and again and absorbed the beauty as some great delicacy that is to be relished with a feeling of thrill, excitement and wonder.

The leaves faded and fell in time, but the warm, uplifting memories lingered on and brought joy and happiness to my heart, changing my life for the better.

What made the difference? *Looking at, determining to see the right things!* And realizing that God's love provides things in nature as a source of peace and contentment. We can look about us, see a world of sorrow, misery, suffering and cruelty and our hearts can fail us, our lives can become miserable—because we look at things that are miserable and allow them to have negative effects on us. Our minds dwell on the things we see and eventually affect us accordingly.

Think seriously about the words of Christ: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). They look at the evil and wickedness about them and eventually it destroys their faith and the beauty of life because they fail to look in the right direction and see the grand,

wonderful, beautiful blessings God offers them.

We are to "run with patience the race that is set before us." But we cannot succeed if we only look at the evil around us and allow that to affect our thinking. How are we assured success? "*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:1-2). As the Psalmist said, "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary" (Psalm 96:6). And we are to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (verse 9). Thus, looking to Jesus we see absolute, divine beauty. In Him we can find "beauty of holiness" in daily living. Whatever we look at and determine to "see" will determine the quality of life we will have.

We can have the "peace that passeth all understanding" that will "keep our hearts and minds." But it does not come from human origin or surroundings. It "passes all understanding" because it comes from a higher source, wisdom and power than anything earthly. It is "through Christ Jesus." Things that are honest, just, lovely, of good report. *But we must think on these things!* (Philippians 4:7-8).

As I saw the evidence of God's greatness, love and power in those shrubs that had the leaves of beautiful hues of color, I soon lost sight of the dreary, gloomy surroundings and my heart and soul received strength, joy and comfort. I thought of the goodness, greatness and the love of God and I realized and received that "peace that passeth all understanding." And all because *I looked for and saw* those things that afford such blessings.

Dear reader, there is always something beautiful and wonderful God has provided for us. It abounds all around us. But *sight* is the important factor in determining the quality of mind and life. Only if we are determined to *look* for and *see* these wondrous gifts of God will we receive His true blessings.

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# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sins" (38:18).

## The Only Way to be Restored to God

**W**hen a man sins, he cuts himself off from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). In order to be restored to God's favor, he must do two things: confess and repent. Repentance is an act of contrition, a sorrowing of heart and humility of spirit that causes one to change his attitude and actions. It is possible for one to confess his sin and not be sorry for it, but God will not accept such a man. "Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18).

When God's covenant people, the Israelites, left His way and worshipped other gods, He called them back through His prophet, Samuel. They put away their idols and Samuel gathered them to Mizpah where he prayed on their behalf. The divine record says that the children of Israel "drew water, and poured it out before Jehovah, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against Jehovah" (1 Samuel 7:3-6). It was not only appropriate for the people of God to confess by saying, "We have sinned," but to draw water and pour it out before the Lord. This was a symbol of their emptying themselves

and coming clean before God. They were sorry for their sin and they declared it—the water poured out was a token of their contrition.

When we confess our sins, our hearts must be mightily involved or God will not restore us into His favor. We must be like Jeremiah who said, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears;" or David who said, "Streams of water run down mine eyes;" or Job who said, "Mine eye poureth out tears unto God" (Jeremiah 9:1; Psalm 119:136; Job 16:20).

God has always required the confession of sin. Of the Israelites God said, "They shall confess their iniquity . . . in their trespass which they trespassed against me, and also that, because they walked contrary to me" (Leviticus 26:40). David's prayer after his sin with Bathsheba is exemplary in its expression of contrition: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight" (Psalm 51:1-4). David was sorry for his sin and declared it. (See also Luke 15:21 and 1 John 1:9.)

Many great men have sinned but were noble enough to admit it and confess it. Aaron (Numbers 12:11), Saul (1 Samuel 15:24), David (2 Samuel 24:10), Ezra (9:6), Daniel (9:20) and Peter (Luke 5:8) were among the number. These men were of the noblest character, not because they were sinlessly perfect, but because they knew what to do when they sinned against God.

Do we know what to do? Will we do it? One thing is for sure. The psalmist reveals to us in this passage the only way that any man can be restored to God once he sins against Him. He must humbly seek the "twin children of grace"—*confession and contrition*.



## "Let Us Consider One Another"

Even as I begin this, I am aware that many Christians are not going to like this article. I also realize that there is a good chance it will be ignored by any non-Christian who might happen to read it. However, a Christian ought to be able to make a plea to his brethren and not have them be as indifferent as those in the world.

We recently had a very disturbing occurrence in our family. We had spent some time in the home of some Christians who were smokers. On our way home, we stopped briefly to get some hamburgers and french fries. When we were back on the road, I happened to see our two-year-old son in the rear-view mirror. He had a french fry hanging from his mouth, with the end of it barely inserted in his lips. I continued watching while he raised his hand and inserted it between his first two fingers to take it out of his mouth. I suddenly realized that my son was "smoking" his french fry!

If that scene causes you to chuckle, let me say that I did not consider it to be humorous at all! I prayed long and hard for that son and, Lord willing, I hope to spend many years seeing him in good health. It is not funny to see him developing a fascination for something that will be injurious to him (for proof of that, read your pack of cigarettes). You could as well chuckle at the thought of him wanting to play in the street.

If you are a Christian who smokes, I don't want to re-hash long-worn arguments on smoking. I do, however, want to make sure you realize what you are doing. A lot of Christians smoke, while seemingly unconscious of the fact that they are *exerting influence!* I'm sure these people we stayed with would tell my son he ought not to smoke, and yet, they were teaching him to smoke just as surely as if they had put a lit cigarette in his mouth! Because, you see, actions speak louder than words!

You may be thinking that I ought to just teach my son that he shouldn't smoke. That's relatively easy to do when the example is being set by one of the world. You can just say that that person is "of the world" and "God's people are to be different." But, what do you say when the bad example is being set by one who is a Christian? You make it doubly hard on us to teach our children not to smoke.

Christians are to be "lights in the world." What kind of example are you setting? Be not deceived—when you smoke in front of my children, you are teaching my children to smoke! You might think of that the next time you are about to light up outside the church building, or in front of your good brother's children, or in front of your own. What if someday you have to answer for them following your example? You would do well to read what Jesus had to say about that (Matthew 18:6-7).

I began by saying I had a plea—here it is. I love my children and want to spend many years seeing them in good health. From a brother in Christ, please, don't teach my children to smoke.

—Steve Ramsey

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# Mining The Scriptures

## PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

### The Sermon on the Mount

#### Must We Always Love Our Enemies?

**T**he love demanded of the Lord's disciple is radical. It is far more than the civility that keeps one from exacting personal vengeance upon his enemies. It is the positive goodwill which causes him to pray and work for the ultimate good of his adversaries (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:35). It is not surprising, therefore, that men have often struggled against its impact.

Must the kingdom citizen always act for the eternal well-being of others? Must this be his attitude when his property or even his life is being threatened? Must the disciple as peace officer, soldier, father, mother, etc., continually govern his behavior by this selfless and redemptive principle?

This question has rent the centuries with controversy, some arguing that the love principle of the Sermon is absolute and universal, others defending various exceptions. For two centuries after the death of the apostles no extant writer approved of the Christian's participation in war. Following the reign of Constantine when the now "Christian" empire was under attack by barbarian hordes, Augustine and others, while still counseling personal non-violence, permitted, and often urged, the Christian to participate in "just wars" as agents of the civil state. Augustine defended such a war as a defensive war of last resort waged by constituted authority for just causes, by just means, and for just ends (Roland Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*, pp. 66, 67, 89-100). The leading voices of the Reformation held the "just war" view, justifying the Christian's involvement in military combat by the wars of Israel and making a distinction between the disciple as an individual and the disciple as an agent of the state.

There is no easy way to resolve the question of whether the Christian is always to love his enemies, involving us as it does in the difficult issues of the Christian's relation to the state and the right of individual self-defense. Nonetheless, we believe that the answer to the question we have raised should be an unqualified "yes."

When one argues the unrestricted right of personal self-defense against the teachings of Matthew 5:38-48, the Lord's command to work the ultimate good of one's enemies has been effectively nullified. Excluding the right of self-defense in cases of attack for the gospel's sake leaves the Christian in the virtually impossible position of having to quickly and accurately ascertain the motive of his assailant. We are content to say that any self-defense consistent with the eternal good of our adversary is wholly permissible (Matthew 7:12).

When one argues that the wars of Israel should establish that a people commanded to love their enemies

can also wage war against them, it should at least be noted that these were wars of unprovoked aggression, and often extermination, which were fought at God's command (Exodus 23:31-32; Deuteronomy 20:10-19). They speak more to God's right of judgment upon the wicked than to any case for "just war." It is difficult, if not impossible, to compare modern wars with the wars of Israel (Clouse, *War: Four Christian Views*, p. 10).

The waging of a "just war" by unconverted men has always been more dream than reality. There is hardly a modern war, perhaps none, in which both sides have not in some clear way violated the "just war" model. Modern warfare has forced us to ask how justice can be meted out to the guilty and the innocent preserved by the blanket bombing of whole cities or the incineration of whole populations in an atomic holocaust. And, even if this were not true, there would remain the impossible burden which this view places on the Christian to know things about international conflicts which often do not become generally known until years afterward. No nation openly wages an unjust war. Justice is always the cry by which they stir their citizenry to arms.

At the extreme, we may be dealing in the civil state with an instrument of God which exists by His *permissive* authority (Romans 13:1; John 19:11) and which He uses as a "vessel of wrath" to maintain order in an ungodly world (Isaiah 11:5-7,12; Jeremiah 25:9; Isaiah 14:4-6; Daniel 4:17,24-25; Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). At the least, we are dealing with an institution under a limited commission to act with justice in punishing the evildoer and protecting the innocent (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14). In neither case are we free to have a heedless relationship with civil authority, naively presuming that because God "ordained" it, it will always act in accordance with His will. The rulers of this world are most often portrayed in Scripture as the enemies of God's purposes (Psalm 2:1-2; Daniel 2:44). The rise of nationalism has often made mindless patriots of Christians in all countries, loyalty to the great King all but forgotten in the fever of a narrow partisanship. In no case are we allowed to turn our responsibility for moral choices over to the state and so escape the commitment we have made to love all men. The kingdom of heaven is a community from "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" which must fulfill the prophetic vision of a realm where men learn war no more (Isaiah 2:4; 11:9). If, in the service of kingdom righteousness, we forfeit our lives, nothing unexpected will have happened (Luke 14:26). In whatever circumstance we are found, we must love our enemies. If our circumstance prevents that, then our circumstance must be changed.





## Torn Between Two Worlds

Philippians 1:22-26

**T**hese verses come at the end of a lengthy passage (verses 12-26) bringing the Philippian saints up to date with regard to Paul's circumstances and prospects. The outcome of Paul's difficult and trying experiences had been the progress of the gospel (verses 12-18). Paul was confident that the further outcome would be his "salvation," which is explained by the connection (verses 19-21). He concludes the development of thought with an explanation of his own feelings and conviction with regard to the outcome of his hearing before Caesar (verses 22-26), laying his heart bare for all to see and expressing some thoughts that are bound to astonish those of us who have not yet achieved the mind of this great apostle of the Lord.

Paul had concluded the elucidation of his "salvation" with the statement that for him to die would be gain (verse 21). That being the case, one would surely expect that his whole heart's desire would be that the Lord would take him home. But it was not the case.

"Ah yes," one says, "no one wants to die when it actually comes down to it." But the reason for Paul's dilemma sweeps away such cynicism and perhaps will surprise us all. He did not cling to life for any of the usual reasons. What put him in a hard spot was turning from the thought of personal advantage to consider his apostolic ministry and the fruit that his work may yet bear. That consideration caused him to say, "I do not make known what my personal choice may be" (verse 22).

That, I believe (with Meyer, Vincent and Kennedy), is the correct translation of the Greek verb. True, the verb is used classically to mean *to know*, but this meaning would make this verse an exception to the otherwise invariable New Testament usage *to make known*.

Under the circumstances Paul simply refrains from declaring his personal choice and leaves the choice in other hands.

But Paul was pressed from the two directions (see NASB and the Greek). On the one hand was "the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better." (Paul was not a soul-sleeper. After writing "to live is Christ," he surely would not say it would be better to sink into a state

of unconsciousness. No. Death would mean to possess Christ in an even better way.) The other direction from which Paul felt pressure was the necessity of abiding in the flesh for the good of other Christians whom he could serve (verse 24).

Paul's standpoint is more than merely putting spiritual ahead of worldly considerations. He was dead to the world and its music had no allure for him. He puts the good of others above even his own desire for closer fellowship with Christ.

**P**aul's confidence with regard to this necessity for remaining in the flesh produced a firm personal conviction respecting the probable outcome of his trial (verses 25-26). ("Know" is not based on revelation, but is a conclusion drawn from this "confidence.") He was persuaded that the Lord would see this "need" as he did and, therefore, that he would remain to contribute toward the progress and joy of the faith of the saints (verse 25). That would be the immediate purpose of his remaining in the flesh, but the ultimate purpose was "that your glorying [that of which you glory or boast] may abound in Christ Jesus [the element or sphere in which the boasting abounds and not, therefore, selfishly, in the realm of human attainment] in me through my presence with you again [for it would be through his presence and teaching that faith would increase, as said before]." So Paul was confident of remaining, for his presence would be the occasion and means of an increase in the faith of the saints, producing abundant ground of boasting in Christ Jesus and all He means to and has done for them (see 3:1-10).

Does it seem strange that such reasoning over alternatives would appear in an inspired epistle? Why would God preserve such a sample of the apostle's ruminations? Evidently God wanted us to see the workings of this man's mind. But why, if not that this man reasoned and weighed alternatives with the mind of a disciple—a mind worthy of imitation?

Again, Dear Lord, we plead, give us such a mind as was found in your great apostle Paul—teach us to think as he thought.

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# **DON'T MISS COMING ISSUES!**

**DECEMBER THEME: "The Local Church"**

**Edited by Ed Harrell**

## **ARTICLES:**

**What Is A Local Church?**—*Paul Earnhart*

**Worship In A Local Church**—*Brent Lewis*

**Relations Between Local Churches**—

*Harold Dowdy*

**Discipline in a Local Church**—*Dee Bowman*

**The Parameters of Fellowship in a Local Church**—*Ed Harrell*

**Restoring N. T. Churches**—*Paul Earnhart*

**And More . . .**

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**JANUARY THEME: "True Worship"**

**Edited by Sewell Hall**

## **ARTICLES:**

**Expressions of Worship in the O.T.**

**Worship—Spontaneous or Prescribed?**

**Improving Assembly Worship**

**The Prophets on Worship**

**Temple or Synagogue: Prototype of N. T. Worship?**

**Our Daily Life as Worship**

**And More . . .**



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# Woman's World

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Donna Keith

## The Importance of Preparation

It seems that I have a reputation among my acquaintances for going overboard in being prepared for any emergency. I have an "emergency kit" in my car containing the basic necessities for a variety of troubles. I keep a bag in my bedroom closet filled with items that would be useful in the event that a hurricane should hit the area where I live. I keep a small drugstore in my purse most all the time—just in case I need it. I have even been known to keep a fire extinguisher in my car since two friends of mine were involved in car fires.

However ridiculous these extremes might appear to be, the idea of being

itutions to be watchful (1 Corinthians 16:13; 1 Peter 5:8), awake (Romans 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:6), and ready (1 Timothy 6:18; Titus 3:1). Most Christians are aware of these exhortations and have determined that their major goal in life is to reach heaven to live an eternity in the presence of God. But our enemy, the devil, is very subtle and adept at attacking us the moment we show signs of sleeping on the job. The parable of the tares in Matthew 13 vividly illustrates this point. "But while men slept, his enemy came." Are we spiritually awake and ready for whatever circumstances develop in our lives?

Are we prepared to think of others ahead of ourselves as God commanded? Satan may succeed in this area more than any other in the life of a Christian, especially in our self-oriented society. We are repeatedly told in God's word to love our brethren and to show them compassion (1 John 3:17-18); to show kindness and tender affection (Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12); to be hospitable to strangers (Hebrews 13:2); and to help and encourage the weak (1 Thessalonians 5:14; Acts 20:35; Romans 15:1). Many times, however, we are quick to be angry and we are impatient with the faults of our brethren. We appear to be inconvenienced by the slightest request and we would rather not be troubled by visitors when we are tired. Rather than concern for others' problems, we show apathy. Are we really ready to count others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3)?

Are we prepared to accept our circumstances in life without bitterness and resentment? Or are we always ready to complain at the slightest setback? It is so easy to forget that we are just strangers and pilgrims on the earth, looking for a city to come (Hebrews 11:13-16; 13:14). Often we are not willing to be content with what we have and where we are because we forget that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). If we constantly look toward Christ and live as Christians because of our love for Him and desire to be with Him, it will be easier to make it through the ordeals and difficulties of life. Are we really setting our sights on heaven?

There are many things for which we should be spiritually prepared. If we succeed in being ready for all the little things along the way, we will be ready for the most important and most certain event in life—we will be ready to die and meet the Lord. May we never find ourselves in the condition of the Jews of Jeremiah's day when it had to be said, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20).

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### "The parable of the tares in Matthew 13 says, 'But while men slept, his enemy came.' Are we spiritually awake and ready for whatever circumstances develop in our lives?"

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prepared or being ready is a vital part of everyday life. We spend our days in preparation for one event or another on this earth, often without even realizing that what we are doing is getting ready. We get ready for work, we practice for a ball game, and we get dinner ready. We make sure the children are ready for school, and we plan for vacation. The list seems almost endless. It is sad, though, that many times we fail to realize that our lives as Christians should surpass our earthly lives in preparedness. We are often most active with our physical bodies, while our spiritual bodies are sound asleep.

The New Testament is full of admon-

Are we, for instance, really ready to teach the lost the way to Christ? When "by reason of time" we ought to be able to help the souls around us who know nothing about the Lord, many of us still struggle with the very basics of teaching the gospel. If, year after year, we never learn any new Scriptures, never understand more fully any difficult passages, and never become better able to impart our knowledge to others—are we really ready to "give an answer to every man" who questions us about our religion (1 Peter 3:15)? Are we able and willing to fulfill our responsibilities as laborers in fields that are "white unto harvest" (John 4:35)?



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### Love Finds A Way

All Christians want to bring the lost to Christ. But each of us has some handicap which causes us to feel limited in our ability to do so. It may be a weakness of knowledge or difficulty in expressing ourselves. Perhaps it is a personality deficiency or even a lack of transportation. Whatever it may be, we tend to feel that it excuses us from responsibility.

Actually, our most debilitating handicap is a lack of zeal. Once zeal is stirred, love will find a way to overcome all obstacles.

Take June McNeese as an example. Just four years ago, June held a responsible position with a Tennessee-based company which manufactured automobile hoses. She was, however, experiencing considerable throat trouble and the problem grew steadily worse, slurring her speech until she could no longer function in the office. Doctors discovered that she had the dreaded Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, more popularly known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease. Rapidly it began affecting other parts of her body until all of her limbs were paralyzed. Her speech continued to deteriorate until now only a constant companion can understand anything she says, and then only when she uses the simplest words. Often she must spell out very slowly what she is trying to say. Meanwhile, her sparkling eyes and the few words she is able to get across reveal a mind that is still keen and active.

If ever anyone would be excused from "personal evangelism" it would be June. Without use of her lower limbs she cannot go on her own; without her arms and hands she cannot write; and with her damaged speech mechanism she cannot talk. But June does not look for an excuse; she looks for a way.

When a nurse was employed, one stipulation was that she would take June to worship just as long as possible. Patti, the nurse who was chosen, found the services strange and the sermons very different from what she was accustomed to in her own religious experience. Soon she was asking questions which June found very difficult to answer with the communication problem. To add to the frustration, Patti could never seem to remember her questions when Joe Olson, a gospel preacher, came to visit.

Somehow June had to find a way to get those questions answered, either by herself or by Joe. But all she had to work with were her neck muscles. Then an idea! An electric typewriter! One was borrowed to see if she could use it. Her father cut a wooden dowel rod and placed a rubber tip on one end. Placing the other end of the rod between her teeth, June happily began typing some answers for Patti, and typing questions for Joe when he came.

Patti was not easily converted. She had already changed religion once and she wanted to be sure this time. But little by little, the truth, adorned by the life of her cheerful patient, did its work. Patti was baptized into Christ.

Patti is not her only convert. A Christian couple who were in error visited her on occasions. She loved them and longed to see them come closer to the truth. She successfully used her limited opportunities to teach them "the way of the Lord more perfectly." There are others whom she hopes to reach before her time runs out. The limited life-expectancy characteristic of those with her disease makes her constantly aware, as Jesus was, that she is approaching a night "when no man can work." This lends urgency to her efforts.

Perhaps all of us would be more zealous and more diligent if we could only realize how short is the time each of us has to accomplish whatever is to be accomplished in this life.

I visited June recently in her Tennessee home. I did not understand a single word she said. But, at her usual speed of five words per minute, she typed a message for me, perfectly capitalized and indented: "Dear Bro. Hall, I am very glad you could come to see me this afternoon."

June, the privilege was mine. The memory of your cheerful attitude and zeal for the Lord has made me more grateful for my health, and all the more determined to use all of my faculties to communicate His gospel to those who are lost. May the Lord lengthen your days, according to His will, that you may continue as long as possible to shine as a "light in the world, holding forth the word of life."





# Rear Views



**Ed Harrell**

## Keeping Busy

Shortly before my mother died a few years ago, I passed through Jacksonville for a visit. She was at that time confined to bed and could talk only with considerable effort.

It was always difficult for me to think of what to say that would cheer her up, but I always knew that she (and my father while he lived) would be glad to hear that I had been preaching. They had always feared, I think, that a successful career might diminish my commitment to preaching. Like most parents in their declining years, they would listen with pride as Deedie and I told them of my minor accomplishments, but the conversation very generally ended with the admonition, "You need to be sure you don't stop preaching."

On this particular occasion, I entered my mother's room and bellowed out: "Well, I sure

have been preaching a lot. I went to over forty places last year."

She stared in space and thought for a moment. She smiled faintly and weakly said, "Is it doing *you* any good?"

I confess I was taken aback. After all, that was not my point. My point was that *I* was doing good.

I recovered quickly and shot back, "Well, it's keeping me off the streets at night."

But I did not leave it there. I thought it over. I have come to conclude that indeed it is doing me good. In fact, I am now convinced that it is doing me more good than anyone. It is that kind of realization which allowed the Apostle Paul to glory in his imprisonment. He wrote to his Philipian brethren: "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the

supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:19).

For our own good, all of us need to be active in service, "fervent in business." I am constantly surprised when I look again at the scores of biblical warnings against sloth. Lazy servants of God must have abounded when Proverbs was written: "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster" (Proverbs 18:9). It is no surprise that some are still around.

It is certainly true that the Lord needs workers and that Christians are called to a high and noble profession. But the point of this piece is to remind us that work is good for us; it will keep us out of trouble and make us strong. It will give us a storehouse of treasures in heaven that will pull our attention and affections upward.

One final tip. I notice that I work best when I have to. If it is possible to avoid work, I find a way. The reason I end up preaching is because I schedule my meetings far ahead. When the time comes to leave home, I often don't want to go (and try to postpone or wriggle out of the commitment), but I am trapped. I trapped myself—on purpose. Because I need it.

Let me suggest that you try the same strategy. Trap yourself into working. Tell yourself that you are going to spend one evening, or two evenings, a week visiting or teaching someone. Write it down in a book so that nothing else can interfere. This may work out to the saving of your soul.

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## Love Thyself?

**W**e must guard against what I choose to call "self worship," a tendency among humans to be narcissistic, completely devoted to self. "If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," warns Paul (Galatians 6:3). Our "self worship" is seen in self-indulgence, the gratification of human desires without regard to restraint or law (Ephesians 2:3). It is seen in inordinate self-preservation, protecting ourselves at all cost—even to the point of dishonesty (Luke 14:18ff). It is seen in self-justification, a dishonest look at the reflection we see of ourselves which allows us to judge ourselves not guilty when we are in fact to be blamed (Romans 2:1ff). We can also worship riches, pleasure, popularity, all of which are merely extensions of such "self worship."

Such conduct is not only seen in the world today, it is approved by it. The television programs and commercials, as well as the newspaper and magazine ads, encourage all of these things.

Is it wrong to love yourself? No. Paul says that "no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it" (Ephesians 5:29) and it is on every man's recognition of that fact that he bases his enjoiner that men ought to "love their wives as their own bodies." The second most important commandment of all, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:39), is based on God's awareness of the fact that self-love is expected. And when Jesus said, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12), He predicates His command to do good on His cognizance that all men want good done to them.

In order to please God you must learn to love yourself as you ought. That means:

**We must protect our attitude.** First, by remaining humble, modest, meek. Jesus said, "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased" (Matthew 23:12). He caused Paul to say, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Romans 12:3). We must come to realize that our value, apart from our connection to God, is not much!

**We must view our abilities honestly.** "And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" asks Paul (1 Corin-

thians 4:7). We must come to view ourselves as "unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10). We can cultivate and develop our talents, but such never discounts the fact that they came from God; we didn't buy them at Sears, or put them on our BankAmericard.

**We must be sure that we are truly in control.** Bad habits, bad persons, bad circumstances can control us if we're not careful. And we must remember that "to whom ye yield yourselves as servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey" (Romans 6:16) and that "of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage" (2 Peter 2:19).

**We must come to view our duties as privileges designed to help the development of our spiritual body.** What could possibly be bad about keeping (watching after) ourselves in the love of the Lord (Jude 21); or keeping ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27); or watching so that we are not seduced by the devil (1 Peter 5:8)? And what could possibly be bad about putting on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6)? And how can being with those we love in the Lord on His special day be thought anything other than a privilege (Hebrews 10:25)? These are not merely duties, they are blessed privileges.

**We must come to see the sense of restraint.** God has never required of man anything which was not for his benefit. Read Hebrews 12:6-11. Learn the role played by discipline in your relationship to God. It's a sure sign of love, discipline is.

**We must realize the need for constant self-examination.** Paul said, "Examine yourselves . . . prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). It takes great courage to honestly examine yourself, but it's important that it be done.

Spiritual health begins at home. Jesus said, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Matthew 7:3). If we are to be the kind of benefit to others we ought to be, we must come to grips with ourselves first.

No, it's not wrong to love yourself, but it is wrong to love yourself so much that you don't subordinate your will to the will of God. Or, maybe that's loving yourself too little, right?



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# Historical Evidence About Instrumental Music

W. Frank Walton

The New Testament teaches vocal music is the proper and exclusive music to worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). "That with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:6, NASB; see Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 13:16; 1 Peter 2:5).

But many scholars also admit that historically early Christians did not use mechanical instruments of music.

There is no record in the NT of the use of instruments in the musical worship of the church. In this regard, early believers followed the practice of the Hebrew synagogue music ("Music, *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, p. 1163).

The background antecedent of early Christian worship was Jewish synagogue worship. Our Lord Jesus attended and participated in the synagogue (Luke 4:16). It did not use instrumental music.

Jingling, banging, and rattling accompanied heathen cults. . . . The voices of nonconformists were emerging from places of Jewish and early Christian worship; . . . Early synagogue song intentionally foregoes artistic perfection, renounces the playing of instruments, and attaches itself entirely to "the word"—the text of the Bible ("Music, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 12, p. 566).

Other historians, religious and secular, agree that the early Christians only used vocal music in worship.

The rejection of all musical instruments from Christian worship is consistent among the [Church] Fathers. They were associated with pagan, orgiastic rites ("History of Sacred Music," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10, p. 106).

Singing formed an essential part of the Christian worship, but it was in unison and without musical accompaniment (Lars Qualben, *A History of the Christian Church*, p. 112).

The development of Western Music was decisively influenced by the exclusion of musical instruments

from the early Christian Church (Paul H. Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, p. 54).

The primitive Christian community held the same view, as we know from the apostolic and post-apostolic literature: instrumental music was thought unfit for religious services; the Christian sources are quite outspoken in their condemnation of instrumental performances. Originally, only song was considered worthy of direct approach to Divinity" ("The Music of Post-Biblical Judaism," *The New Oxford History of Music*, Vol. 1, p. 135).

*Music*, p. 53).

Only the corporal institutions have been rejected, like circumcision, the sabbath, sacrifices, discrimination in foods. So, too, the trumpets, harps, cymbals and timbrels. For the sound of these we now have a better substitute in the music from the mouths of men" (*A Cappella Music*, p. 54).

Faithful Christians today enthusiastically worship God with "a cappella" music, as authorized in the New Testament. The term *a cappella* itself has an interesting history.

"A cappella" comes from the Latin by way of Italian and means "in the

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**"The purpose of these quotes is not to establish authority for vocal music solely by historical tradition. Ultimately, we must have revealed, divine authority for all we do (Colossians 3:17)."**

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For evidence of this widely held belief, we cite two quotes from around 400 A.D. The first one is from a work called *Questions and Answers for the Orthodox*, the second from *On the Utility of Hymn Singing*, as quoted in Everett Ferguson's *A Cappella Music*.

It is not simple singing that belongs to the childish state, but singing with lifeless instruments, with dancing, and with clappers. Hence the use of such instruments and the others that belong to the childish state is excluded from the singing in the churches and simple singing is left" (*A Cappella*

style of the church," "as is done in the church." The classical form of church music is unaccompanied song" (*A Cappella Music*, p. 83).

The purpose of these quotes is not to establish authority for vocal music solely by historical tradition. Ultimately, we must have revealed, divine authority for all we do (Colossians 3:17). But we have seen that mechanical instruments of music were foreign to early worship and have been introduced by man long after the apostolic age.

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# Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

## Restoring New Testament Christianity (X)

**T**he Disciples churches which remained united after the separation of the most conservative congregations in 1906 were by no means united in belief. While all still paid lip service to the old slogans of restoration, many of the leaders of those churches embraced liberal theology at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly a group of young men associated with the University of Chicago. In the twentieth century, the *Christian Century*, a Disciples journal which had begun as the *Christian Oracle* in 1884, became the foremost organ of liberal Christianity in America. The rise of this outspoken and talented liberal leadership disturbed many of the moderates who remained in that majority fellowship; they increasingly viewed the *Christian Standard* as their voice. The *Christian Evangelist*, on the other hand, became the organ of the more liberal element. After decades of debate over higher criticism, Darwinism and other intellectual issues which threatened all American evangelical churches in the 1920s, and over such practical issues as the reception of unbaptized members into Disciples churches, in 1927 several hundred of the more conservative Disciples churches withdrew their support from the church's agencies and founded a competing convention, the North American Christian Convention. The boundary between the two groups remained obscure for many years, many congregations passing easily back and forth between support of the two conventions. Not until the 1970s, after the liberal Disciples had restructured into a representative denomination, did the lines become rigid and the picture clear.

The divisions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries seemed to mark the failure of the optimistic dreams of early restoration leaders. It was clear by 1865 that the Disciples' formula for restoring New Testament Christianity was not going to result in an immediate end of religious strife and division, introducing a millennium of Christian union. In a sense, second generation Disciples were forced to choose

between restoration and Christian union. Conservatives clung to the hope for restoration, in spite of the fact that the plea often proved to be divisive rather than ameliorative. More liberal thinkers, on the other hand, increasingly sought to extend the area of religious liberty, keeping alive the hope for Christian union. All Disciples claimed to remain loyal to all of the original pleas of the first generation, but it was clear that they increasingly overemphasized one plank or the other.

\* \* \*

**NOTE:** At this point in our series we have described the division of the restoration movement into three spheres of influence, or, one might say, three fellowships. The differences in belief were vast—spanning the entire theological spectrum from liberal to conservative. While little denominational structure existed in the movement even in the twentieth century (although institutions had proliferated among the liberal Disciples), individual Christians, and preachers particularly, were compelled to choose to support one point of view or the other. At stake ultimately was a commitment to the restoration plea. Liberals increasingly discarded the plea as unrealistic and set out down that familiar road to union which accommodates every human preference and sacrifices every divine prerogative. Conservatives were forced to confess that the early hopes of the reformers to unite all Christians were unrealistic and they set out down that arduous path of debate and self-examination which makes truth its sole objective.

While it is true that the mind of the movement was dividing as the churches filled with second and third generation restorers, and that diverging attitudes toward the Bible and the need to restore New Testament Christianity accounted for the movement's schisms, it is also true that the divisions reflected profound sociological and economic changes in the churches. The next several articles will examine those changes and note how they related to the movement's history.



# Words Never Fail

Gary Dennis Jones

Words! Words! Words! Sometimes we don't quite know what to do with the words at our disposal, but whatever would we do without them? They are necessary tools in the vanishing art of communication. Sometimes "words fail us;" we're left speechless. Many times words are more abused than used. But in the hands of a skilled craftsman, they can either be put to a very good or very bad use.

From the Bible we may note several ways of using words wisely. We may use them to sing the praises of God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), teach (Colossians 3:16; Matthew 28:19), pray (1 Corinthians 14:15), exhort (1 Timothy 6:2; 2 Corinthians 9:5; Hebrews 3:13; 10:25), encourage (Psalms 64:5; 2 Chronicles 35:2; Deuteronomy 3:28). Indeed, Christ stated, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).

We must realize, however, that in a living language the meanings of words are changed through use over a period of time. Remember when "gay" meant "happy?" Perhaps a few of the more "colorful" changes in the meaning of common words will prove profitable to the Bible student.

Whenever a Bible teacher asks if we, as Christians, are a "peculiar" people, one is immediately tempted to declare that some of us are. However, we know that the Bible specifically states that we are "a peculiar people" (Titus 2:14). The word is used correctly in both instances, but the meanings and time references are greatly different.

In ancient days, the Latin root word *pecus* referred to cattle. In those days, cattle were used as a money substitute. Over the centuries, this term underwent several changes in spelling and meaning. Emerging in English as "peculiar" by the time of King James, it had come to mean "one's own property; one's possession; having the characteristics of." Now, however, the term has degenerated to the point that it simply means one who is "queer," "strange," or perhaps only "different"—to one who "flew over the

cuckoo's nest."

Marriage, a subject on which there is much discussion and disagreement, is mentioned in several scriptures (Colossians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 7; Matthew 5:32; 19:3-11). To us, "wed" simply means "marry." But this was not always so. To our English ancestors "wed" was used as a gambling term, having the meaning "to take a chance on; to bet; to wager; to risk something of value." Despite the element of risk thus indicated by the term, it wasn't used exclusively to

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***Words in a living language such as English do not retain their same meanings over the centuries but many change several times. It is important to remember this whenever reading or studying something that was written in a language prevalent many years ago.***

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refer to "gambling away one's money," although one could indeed "wedding his money" on sporting events as a fight or a horse race, perhaps a poker game, etc.

On the other hand, the man who was so inclined could "wedding a woman"—as the early English people saw it—"for fairer, for fouler." Gradually the term lost all of its gambling significance so that today the term "wed" is no longer indicative of taking a gamble—or is it?

The word "fool" has been used to indicate a very wicked, vile person

(study the use of the term in Matthew 5:22), but this is a far cry from its origin. The root word of fool is the Latin *folis*. What does *folis* mean? Simply "a wind-bag" (one is tempted to relate the latter to politics, but one will refrain from such futile frivolity).

"Scruples" might today be defined as "one's sensitivities to matters of right and wrong"—or perhaps this could be defined as "having a good conscience toward God"—and are therefore of great importance to the Christian (see 2 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Peter 2:19; 3:21; 1 Timothy 1:5,19; Romans 13:5; Acts 24:16). But reckon how many know that the early Romans could lose all their scruples without doing anything wrong? They could do this because the *scrupulus* had nothing at all to do with conscience. Rather, it was a small stone weighing about 1/24 ounce, which was just the right size to be annoying if it got into one's sandal.

Perhaps the persons who were troubled by these small stones or pebbles could have been considered "scrupulous," for there would be no doubt in his mind that he had them. But those who could not feel these pebbles because of their thick skin were as though they did not have any scruples at all; therefore, were "unscrupulous."

"Hussy" is today considered a term of contempt and derision. Many years ago this was not true, as the word merely meant "housewife." "Hussy" is derived from the English term, "huswif."

Many other examples could be given, but these should be sufficient to show that words in a living language such as English do not retain their same meanings over the centuries but many change several times. It is important to remember this whenever reading or studying something that was written in the language prevalent many years ago. Although this writer does not object to the use of the King James Bible, this is often a case in point.

Even though words never fail us, their meanings may—if we aren't careful.

—Reprinted from *Bible Truth*





## How to Deal with Loneliness

**F**rom the very beginning God saw that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Man is a social creature and he craves the companionship of other humans. The presence of our fellows allows us to exchange ideas and express our love. God made man with these deep needs. It is true that there are some individuals who seem to function well in isolation, but they are few and far between. Most of us hate loneliness and will take whatever steps that are necessary to prevent its being a part of our lives.

There are many things that can cause loneliness: the death of a loved one (Genesis 35:19-21), an illness which forces one to be shut in (Leviticus 13:46), the separation of friends (1 Thessalonians 3:1). The Christian may be ostracized by his peers because of his righteous living. "I sat not in the assembly of them that make merry, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand; for thou hast filled me with indignation" (Jeremiah 15:17). Some are lonely because they have not yet found their counterpart and companion in life and, thus, have never married. Others face loneliness because they are unscripturally divorced and must remain unmarried in order to please the Lord (Matthew 19:11-12).

What does one do about loneliness? How can one cope? I certainly do not have all the answers, but here are some suggestions:

**1. Take advantage of your position to pray and meditate.** Most people are so involved with life's distractions that they are unable to reflect upon important things. I have never particularly liked being alone but it seems that I have always gained some benefit from it. The Bible says of Jesus, "And after he had sent the multitude away, he went up into the mountain apart to

pray: and when even was come, he was there alone" (Matthew 14:23).

**2. Use your time to learn more of God's word.** "Give diligence [study, KJV] to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). The more associations we have with other people, the more demands are placed upon our time. People who are not alone must, of course, find time to study. But try to view your situation as an *opportunity* not afforded to other people. Use it to grow in the knowledge of God's will.

**3. Become a person of hospitality.** You do not have to shut yourself up. You can invite friends and family to your home. Many Christians who are alone have found that their brothers and sisters in Christ become their "family." They cannot possibly feel alone because of the sharing they experience with other Christians. All Christians, after all, are to be "given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13).

**4. Busy yourself in doing things for others.** The problem of loneliness is often only in one's mind. We feel sorry for ourselves and slump into boredom and inactivity. If you will only look past yourself you will see others who need you. It is a wonderful thing to feel needed. A widow named Dorcas was highly regarded at her death because of all the things she had done for others (Acts 9:36-39).

The best remedy for loneliness is offered by the Apostle Paul: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Be assured that you and God together can conquer loneliness.



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# Ways That Work

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## Telephone Messages and Personal Work

Tommy Poarch

Personal evangelism has too long been neglected by saints who claim to be the children of light and destiny. We are thankful to find many who have recognized this and are now desirous of carrying the gospel to every creature with renewed interest and zeal. Many times saints are discouraged because they have problems finding prospects to teach. I want to share a method we have successfully used in making contacts for Bible studies. These studies are bringing forth conversions.

We advertise a telephone number that can be called for a short Bible message. The cost is not great. It was about \$100.00 for installing the telephone line and the monthly phone bill is just over \$20.00. We use a "Record A Call 690" telephone answering machine. We tried a less expensive model but found that it could not handle the volume of calls. The number of calls is directly related to the amount of advertising done. We have a daily ad in the Personal Notices section of the classifieds. It is a three-line ad that reads: "A Bible Message / Messages Changed Daily / Call 288-7575." We have a free ad in a local advertising paper, *The Bulletin Board*, which is published weekly. The local TV stations display the ad free in their public service notices (a request must be sent in each week). With this amount of advertising, along with business size cards for members to distribute, we get over fifty new Bible Correspondence students each week. The short messages are designed to find people who want to learn more about the Bible and who appreciate godly living. We tape wholesome messages of truth, but we try not to say anything that could "turn someone off" at this stage of the teaching program. Our goal is to get them to request the Bible course and have a home study with us upon completion. The beginning and ending of each message will go something like this: "Thank you for calling for this daily Bible message. At the end of this message we will be offering to you a free Bible Correspondence Course." . . . . "We will be happy to

send to you our free Bible course entitled 'Jesus is the Way.' All you need to do to receive it is simply leave us your name and address when you hear the tone at the end of this message. Please spell your name and the name of your street. This will help us to get them correct. We hope you will call for tomorrow's message. If you wish to receive this free Bible course, you may now leave your name and address. Here is the tone."

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We first offer Sewell Hall's seven lesson course, "Jesus is the Way." If they send back lesson one, we then send two lessons each mailing. This gets them through the course quickly and us into their homes as soon as possible. The second course we use is Gene Tope's six lesson course, "Know Your Bible." The final course we offer is the six lesson course, "Acts of the Apostles." As soon as they finish the first course, we write them a letter letting them know when

they can expect a visit from us to deliver their certificate and discuss vital religious matters with them. We give them two numbers to call if they wish to change the appointment. We believe the studies go much better if the students are expecting our visit. On our first visit into their home, we desire to let them know that we are offering something different from the denominational world and that we want a Bible study now if possible. We give them lesson one of Tope's course during this first home visit. If we do not set up a home study on the first visit, we tell them that we will next time. For our home studies, we mainly use the Jule Miller film strips presented as suggested by J. L. Brazell in his booklet, "Saving Other Souls."

This basic approach has been very fruitful for the church here. We believe that handling the course with urgency is a very important factor in being successful and converting souls. It is very important to return the graded lessons to the student quickly and get into his home as soon as possible after he has finished the study.

Diligent work will bring forth converts. There must be many, many studies in order to find one true disciple. With the possibility of getting twenty to sixty new students each week, churches will be forced to begin thinking of supporting men either partially or fully as personal workers—home Bible teachers.

You can expect some problems in holding converts who were to the church "strangers in the community." It is more difficult than grounding and holding a member's mate, relative, or someone who has been attending services regularly. Getting a Bible correspondence student to attend the public assemblies during his course of study is a positive step toward retaining him when he is converted.

While we have suggested one proven method of personal evangelism in this article, any method will work if saints will work, work, work with urgency, urgency, urgency!

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## What Being a Christian is All About

**P**eople are inclined at times to get so caught up in some of the mechanics of religion that they forget what being a Christian is all about. That was at least one of the problems in the church at Corinth, and in the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul addresses himself to this important matter.

The church in Corinth had begun in a remarkable way. From the cesspool of rank materialism and unbridled lust which was ancient Corinth, there was drawn out by the preaching of the cross a most unlikely combination of former idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves and murderers (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). It was an extraordinary demonstration of the power of the gospel, but the drawing together of this collection of urban "riffraff" into a bonded spiritual brotherhood was not to prove easy. Old habits die hard and the carnal pride, once renounced, resurfaced to send them fighting, as in former days, for a "place in the sun." Preachers of peace were made a rallying cry for division (1:10-13). The memorial feast intended to minister love was turned into an occasion for contempt (11:17-34). And even those miraculous gifts of the Spirit which were designed to reveal the gospel for the first time to a lost world and to edify a young church were turned instead into weapons in an ego war. It is to this tragic misuse of the spiritual gifts (12:4-9) that the apostle speaks in chapters 12-14 of his letter. From these instructions and admonitions, especially those found in chapter 13, we believe there are some very important lessons to be drawn.

The first of these lessons is that possessors of these special gifts were not automatically spiritual people. Though Paul says that the Corinthians came behind in no gift (1:5-7) he also tells them in no uncertain terms that they are carnal (3:1-3). In the initial section of chapter 13 (verses 1-3) Paul mentions some almost unbelievable things that people could do and still be devoid of true spirituality, but the list begins with the exercise of four spiritual gifts (tongues, prophecy, knowledge and faith) at an exaggerated or at least an unusual level. There was and is no shortcut to spiritual maturity. As in all other areas, it takes time to grow up.

The second lesson to be learned from Paul's teaching in these three chapters is that the value of spiritual gifts was not in having them. The Corinthians in their great sweat to "speak in tongues" doubtless believed that they were seeking "the greater gifts" (12:31). They certainly were persuaded that it added greatly to their stature in the church. But these spiritual gifts were not an end in themselves but a means. The purpose of prophecy was

not prophecy, nor the purpose of healing, healing. These gifts were to accomplish one thing—the revelation (prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, et. al.) and confirmation (miracles, healings, tongues, et. al.) of the gospel (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). Their value was not in the process but in the product—God's revealed will to men. We are constantly reminded in the New Testament that there is where the power lies (Luke 8:11; Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 1:23-25). The problem among the Corinthians did not lie in their failure to exercise their gifts of revelation and confirmation but in their disregard for what was revealed. It was a message of selfless love and they hadn't heard a word of it. It is for this very reason that Paul stressed the importance of "understanding" if these gifts were to mean anything in the assemblies of the church (14:1-25). Without understanding there is no edification. Without edification there is no spiritual growth. The idea that the mere exercise of these gifts brought some deep spiritual experience is unknown to Scripture. It is the hearing and understanding of God's word that changes lives.

The third lesson of our text is that Christians should not make ultimately valuable things which are temporary and which by nature are means to even greater ends. The spiritual gifts were of necessity to pass away (13:8) when God's word to man was complete (John 16:13; 1 Peter 1:3). They were never intended to be what being a Christian was all about. They were important, but only as instruments of revealing God's word which would in turn lead to those things which "abide"—faith, hope and love (13:8,13; see Romans 10:17; Psalm 119:43,49).

But even faith and hope, though they were yet to abide when spiritual gifts had been ended, were themselves means to a yet higher end. Though there is certainly a sense in which trusting God will continue into eternity, it cannot continue as faith in unseen realities (1 Peter 1:8; Hebrews 11:1). Faith must end in sight (1 John 3:2). And hope cannot continue as an endless longing but must someday end in realization (Romans 8:24). That is the reason that Paul at last makes a distinction in the things that "abide" (13:13). Why is love greater than faith and hope? Because love will transcend time, and because faith and hope are just means whereby we are at last transformed into the image of the God who is love incarnate (1 John 4:8; 2 Corinthians 3:18). That is what being a Christian is all about—becoming "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4)—being "conformed to the image" of God's Son (Romans 8:29). Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and see how you are doing.





# Christianity Magazine

## Theme Editorial

Editor: Ed Harrell

### The Local Church

**B**ecoming a Christian is an individual act. Most of what we do as Christians is done alone. But we are also social beings, living together with others in countless orderly arrangements. It is obvious that man needs these social relationships, both for his own benefit and in order to accomplish those things which can be done only through cooperation. In His wisdom, God provided Christians with a spiritual social organization, the local church.

The articles in this section make clear the centrality of the local church in New Testament Christianity. The first local church was established in Jerusalem in Acts 2 and thereafter churches arose when the gospel was preached. These churches were instructed and corrected by inspired men, leaving behind for us a considerable record about their nature and purpose.

Several assumptions are clear in the articles that follow. First, we believe that the local church is important. Some people would argue that they want to be Christians but they do not want to be associated with any church. But no one could seriously believe that New Testa-

ment Christians shared such a view. Where there were Christians, there were churches. They were lovingly and carefully instructed on how to behave themselves.

Second, it is clear from the articles that follow that one cannot perform his or her Christian service outside a local church. Many of our duties require a community in which to act. These social acts are not the sum total of being a Christian, but neither can one please God while ignoring his duties within a local church.

Finally, the basic assumption of this series of articles is that the local church is the earthly institution provided by God for Christian activity. The revealed identity of the local church is no accident; the biblical pattern is given to us by intent and tells us all that we need to know. So, we set out in this series of articles to discover what is revealed about the local church. When the pattern is exhausted, we are convinced that we should do not more nor less. While we admit to human frailties and imperfect understanding, we countenance no compromise with the demand for the estab-

lishment of New Testament churches in the twentieth century.

History and experience make us painfully conscious that the integrity of the local church has been undermined over and over through the centuries. Denominations have arisen as means of uniting and controlling local churches. But they exist without biblical authority and are altogether harmful to the spirituality of man. Institutions have arisen demanding that they be entrusted with the work which local churches were commissioned to do. But they exist without scriptural authority and they inevitably become leeches bleeding the churches they set out to serve. Churches have been diverted from their biblical goals to do works judged good by men. The end has been the abandonment of the responsibilities entrusted by God to the local church.

The remedy to these ills is the establishment of local congregations of saints according to the New Testament pattern. We believe that the articles in this theme section provide some guidelines on how to do that.

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# THE LOCAL CHURCH

## Restoring New Testament Churches

Paul Earnhart

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY "RESTORATION" efforts since the apostles went about preaching. They have arisen most often when people came to feel that the churches which claimed a connection with Christ had drifted away from His teachings. They were perceived to have ceased to be what the gospel demanded of them and though they were in business on the same corner, the merchandise had been radically changed. The presence of the New Testament in the world has continued as a disturbing reminder of how things were expected to be "at the beginning" and how they ought to be still. So whenever and wherever the Bible begins to be taken seriously among nominal Christians, some one may be expected to say with concern, "We have drifted away from the way of the Lord and it is imperative that we return to His word."

Historians have not dealt kindly with restoration movements and for the most part have pronounced them failures because they did not carry the day. For this reason when someone stands up in our times to say that we need to get back to the biblical blueprint and restore in our lives and in the churches the right ways of the Lord, he may be met with a yawn and an observation that that's been tried before and has never worked. For many failure is inevitable since they are convinced that the divinely approved pattern of behavior for the New Testament churches was never intended as a model for imitation. They see it as merely the record of how the early Christians responded to the gospel in their own way, arranging churches as the times seem to dictate. It is interesting but not binding on future generations of disciples. They view restorationist fever as brought on by a reactionary distaste for modern life with its "artificial" technology. Those who call for a return to New Testament ways may be chided for their use of central heating and air conditioning as though this betrayed the principles of their cause. This misses the mark by a wide margin.

The idea of restoration is not strange

to the Bible. It presumes two things: (1) that there is an unchanging standard by which the people of God are expected to operate and (2) that a departure from that standard demands repentance and return.

Jehovah gave a pattern of life and worship to Israel at Mt. Sinai. The plan for the "tent of meeting" was minutely detailed and it was expected that there be no deviation from it inasmuch as it was an expression of the wisdom of God (Exodus 25:9; 40:16). In just this careful and faithful way the Lord wanted His statutes kept. He wanted, He said, a people that would love Him absolutely (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and manifest that love by keeping all His commandments always (5:29) without alteration (4:2) and without deviation (5:32). These

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tions called churches.*

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ordinances involved commands dealing with moral purity and justice, and commands pertaining to worship and the orderly arrangement of His people for that worship. Israelites were punished alike for immorality (Numbers 25) and for deviations from the ordinances of worship and order (Numbers 15:32-36; Leviticus 10:1-2; Numbers 16).

The history of Israel is a history of repeated departures from the law of God (Acts 7:51-53) and of similarly repeated appeals by God's prophets for them to return (Jeremiah 3:22; 6:16). When the people were restored to faithfulness it was always the result of their rediscovery of God's word and a reapplication of its principles to their lives. So it was in the days of King Josiah of Judah (2 Kings 22,23). Of course, most often the appeals

of the prophets went unheeded by most but there was always a remnant that responded (Romans 9:27). Of these very events the apostle Paul says that they "happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for *our* admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

In this last age of human history God has given to us, not by prophets but by His own Son, a pattern of truth which is calculated not only to redeem the souls of lost men but to govern their life and service as His people. It was no accident that disciples of the Lord gathered themselves together in local congregations called churches (1 Corinthians 11:16; Romans 16:16) or that they were alike in their forms of worship and organization (Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19). The Savior had delivered all truth to the apostles (John 16:13); the apostles had taught it (Acts 20:26-27) and the church had followed it (2:42). The apostles did not vary their teaching according to their mood or the desires of their hearers but, guided by the Holy Spirit, they taught the same thing "everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17). Paul speaks of the *form* or *pattern* of this teaching (Romans 6:17) and urges Timothy to "hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me" (2 Timothy 1:13) and to commit them to other faithful men (2:2). When men or churches veered from that pattern they were reprov'd and called to repentance (Revelation 2:1-5, 14-16; 3:1-3).

Peter assures us that the word of the gospel which they preached would remain forever true (1 Peter 1:25). It is for this reason that we seek to restore New Testament churches in the twentieth century by being restored ourselves to the way of the Lord and inviting others to do the same. If not many join us in this grand adventure it will be no failure to those who do. Even though they be but a remnant the Lord will always have His people (Romans 11:5).

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# THE LOCAL CHURCH



## What Is A Local Church?

Paul Earnhart

THE EXPRESSION "LOCAL CHURCH" IS NOT found in the Scriptures but it has come into wide use in order to distinguish the different meanings of the word *church* (Greek, *ekklesia*) as it appears in the New Testament.

The writers of the New Testament took a word used in the Greek world to describe a gathering of citizens called together to do the business of the state and applied it to a people called out by God to do the business of heaven. The idea of a "called-out" people suited perfectly the gospel concept of a people whom God "called . . . out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The most fundamental use of the word *church* in our English Bible has reference to all those who have responded to the call of the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14) and come into a new relationship with God. The move they have made is not spatial but spiritual. They have by faith left the world of dark values and have come to the light of the Son of God (Colossians 1:13). It is in this sense that Jesus speaks of the church in Matthew 16:18 and Paul in Acts 20:28 and Ephesians 5:25.

It is very important to understand that the call of God is an individual and personal call. The called-out people may be from "every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9) but they do not come to Christ by groups. The choice to leave the darkness and walk in the light is a very personal one. We must come to the Lord as individuals. There is no one else who is party to the covenant we make with Him. If not another soul on earth should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord our commitment to Him remains the same.

This then is where the church of God (the called-out people who belong to God) begins—with the personal commitment of individuals everywhere who respond in faith to God's call in the gospel (Ephesians 1:13). So they came on that Pentecost when the gospel was first preached, one by one repenting of their sins and being baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of them (Acts

2:38,41). And so they have come ever since, one by one committing themselves to Christ and being called "Christians" after the One who is the center of their lives (Acts 11:20-26).

This great family of all God's people are never destined in this life to be assembled together in one place or to know one another as a whole, but they have all "been baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). They are the "general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). For this universal body of believers there is no earthly headquarters (Colossians 1:18) to draw them into national or international entities so that they might function as a unit. Yet they were and are children of the same

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*There are  
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Christians.*

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Father, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Most of what we do in service to the Lord will be worked out as individual disciples in the pursuits of daily life where we meet our obligations to our families (Ephesians 5:22-6:4), to our employers (6:6-9), to the officials of government (1 Peter 2:13-17), to our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:17-21), to the poor (Ephesians 4:28; James 1:27) and especially to lost men and women (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 8:4). All this will be liberally sprinkled with private prayer (Philippians 4:6-7) and Bible study (Colossians 3:16), and even a spiritual song now and then (James 5:13).

Yet, vital as individual duties in Christ are, there are some things which the

Lord expects His people to accomplish together with other Christians. It is this "together" or team work which expresses itself in *local churches*—groups of disciples who function together in particular localities (1 Corinthians 1:2; 11:16; Romans 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Revelation 1:4). Unlike the universal body of believers which has no organization, these local churches are organized for the purpose of collective action. They are voluntary associations of disciples formed by mutual agreement (Acts 9:26-28) which have a common leadership (Acts 14:23; 20:28), a common treasury (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 4:34-35) and divinely ordained work to do (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Hebrews 10:24-25; Ephesians 5:19; Acts 4:34-35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Philippians 4:15-16). These local assemblies have important work to accomplish in the nurturing of young disciples to mature spirituality and fruitful service (Ephesians 4:11-13) but they were never intended to be the coordinating instrument by which all or even most of the duties of God's people are met. Paul warns Timothy of this misconception when dealing with the problem of needy widows among the saints—"If any woman that believeth hath widows, let her relieve them and let not the church be burdened; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed" (1 Timothy 5:16). It is one of the sadnesses of our times that local churches have been turned into political, social and recreational centers and thereby stripped of their power to bring spiritual strength and nurture to the saints.

But how do we distinguish between the work of local churches and the work of individual Christians? That is not difficult when we look for clear indication in Scripture that the work to be done is to be done *collectively*. As members of the great body of the redeemed we glorify God in all that we do as individual disciples (Ephesians 3:21) and in the work we do *together* in local churches.

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# THE LOCAL CHURCH

Brent Lewis

## The Worship of a Local Church

IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN, THE LORD HAS added you to His church (Acts 2:47). All who have been saved are part of this church (Ephesians 5:23). But this is the universal church—and it never comes together for worship. We can only come together for worship in a *local church*. God's wisdom has seen fit to command Christians to "come together" for the purpose of worshipping Him (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:23,26). He even warns us not to forsake this coming together (Hebrews 10:25).

### The Object of Our Worship

Any time Christians congregate for worship, we must realize that we are there to worship God. God wants true worshippers who will honor Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). We do not come together to be entertained. We are there to praise God and to edify one another. The activities of worship (which follow below) are important, but nothing is more important than the attitude of our hearts and minds as we engage in these activities. We must be careful that our public acts of worship do not take on a "showiness" that detracts from the praise of God. Men are not to be praised—God is.

### The Activities of Worship

What do we do when we come together to worship God in a local church? There are only two possibilities: we either do what *we want* or what *God says*. True Christians will do only what God says in His word. Jesus warned about those who worship God *in vain*, "teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Matthew 15:8-9). Do we burn incense? Do we count beads? Do we have a rock festival? No, the activities of worship must consist of what God wants; they must be patterned after the approved activities of local churches in the New Testament. What did they do? (1) They sang (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). There are only two kinds of music: vocal and instrumental. God specified that the church is to sing. This is the only *kind* of music provided in God's plan. (2) They prayed (Ephesians 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:1,8; Acts 2:42). God

is honored when men lift their hearts and voices toward Him in prayer. Further, man can receive no greater gift from his brethren than when the combined prayers of the local-church-come-together are sent heavenward (Acts 12:5; 1 Corinthians 1:11). (3) They communed (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 10:16). Early Christians partook of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Him every first day of the week. (4) They listened to God's word (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:6,19). Teaching, reading, and preaching of the word of God took place. (5) They contributed (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 2:42). This was a free-will offering on the part of the members in order that the Lord's work might be done.

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***The activities of worship are important, but nothing is more important than the attitude of our hearts when we engage in these activities.***

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These are the worship activities of local churches in the New Testament. Scripture does not reveal that they practiced anything else. That being the case, we cannot practice more than this in a local church today.

### The How of Worship

Worship is to come from deep within the human heart and, as such, is highly individualized. When men begin to structure the forms of worship, they often quench its spirit. Differences exist in the expression of worship from one country to another. Black Africans undoubtedly worship God in truth, but they do not worship in the exact form of American churches. Nor do churches in Australia, Japan, or the Philippines. Is not the same true of local churches in America? Must every local church order

their worship the same way? I have worshipped with churches where, several minutes before the scheduled services begin, someone starts a gospel song from their seat and others join in. We do not do this where I regularly worship. However, the local church where I am separates the communion service from the contribution with a song; other churches do not. Some congregations sing during the communion service. Are these things unscriptural because they are unorthodox? Is it my place to dictate to another local church the "how" of worship? I believe not. Every local congregation has its own make-up and personality; there must be room for latitude in such matters. No one has the right to "police" other churches and demand a certain form of worship.

### Where Do I Worship?

Christians should desire to fellowship and worship with faithful churches. There are no perfect local churches, but there are churches whose leadership and members are committed to following the New Testament pattern. I must worship with a church like that. I cannot conscientiously be a part of a "team" (local church) which violates God's pattern for the local church's work and worship. Some have attempted to compile a list of faithful churches. I can appreciate the intent of such an endeavor but I do have some reservations about it. First, the fact remains that no man or group of men can assemble an accurate list; second, compiling a list of "approved churches" could easily tend toward a denominational concept of the local church.

### Conclusion

The richest experiences of your life will likely come because you are a part of a local church. God's great love and wisdom is seen in this arrangement. Determine that you will make the worship of the local church where you are everything God intends for it to be. Strike hands with your brother, lift your voices in praise and adoration of the Father, glorify His Son—worship Him in spirit and in truth!

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# THE LOCAL CHURCH



## The Organization of a Local Church

Dee Bowman

TO ORGANIZE SOMETHING IS TO FORM into a whole all the dependent parts, or to frame and put into working order all its various parts. Organization is indigenous of the nature of God. Accordingly, all His laws show His devotion to such arrangement as they inform us with assignments such as "let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 15:40).

The local church is a religious community comprised of Christians who, in order to enjoy the benefits of mutual edification through worship and teaching, have formed themselves into a corporate body (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The local church is organized along the lines of its mission and responsibility. It has no right to assume to do anything God has not assigned it and thereby has no right to more organization than God has approved.

Its primary mission is edification, the building up of the body (Ephesians 4:12-16). This building up is accomplished in basically two ways: by evangelizing, or teaching aliens about the salvation that is in Christ; and by the regular edification of its members through teaching and worship. In these ways the church is built up numerically and strengthened organically.

The unit of function in the local church is the individual (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; etc.). Before there can be any corporate action, the individual must act. Before there can be a treasury, individuals must purpose to give (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Before there is any action using that treasury, it must be decided by the individuals which comprise the body (1 Corinthians 16:3). Just as the covey must have quail, the body must have parts, and the army must have men, so the body must have members (1 Corinthians 12:20).

God ordained that elders oversee the local church (Acts 14:23). The work of elders among the people is seen in the words which are used to describe them.

They are called "elders" (from the Greek *presbuteros*, an older man), which indicates that they are to be men

of wisdom and faith—men who, by reason of years of experience, and attention to the word of God, have qualified themselves to become leaders of the people of God.

They are called "pastors." Pastor is from Middle English through the Latin and is from the word "pasture," meaning a shepherd. The Greek word from which it is translated is *poimen* which means one who tends herds or flocks (W. E. Vine says, "not merely one who feeds them"). It is the duty of the shepherd to "pasture" or care for the sheep. Even so it is with the pastors over God's flock.

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***The local church is a religious community comprised of Christians who, in order to enjoy the benefits of mutual edification through worship and teaching, have formed themselves into a corporate body.***

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Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "feed the church of God" (Acts 20:28). And Peter admonishes that elders "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof" (1 Peter 5:2).

Elders are also called "bishops" or overseers (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25). The English word "bishop" is from the Latin and Greek (which are essentially the same) *episkopos*, which is formed of *epi*, over, and *skopos*, watcher; thus, one who watches over others. There is a very strong conceptual similarity between an overseer and a shepherd.

The elder is one who watches over the people under his charge.

The qualifications for men who would serve in such a noble capacity are set forth in 1 Timothy three and Titus one.

Deacons are approved of God in the local church. A form of *doulos*, a bond servant, their duties are inherent in the word. The deacon is a special servant, one who acts on behalf of his master. Paul, in addressing the saints at Philippi, says, "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." The requirements for serving in this capacity are listed in 1 Timothy 3, along with the qualifications for elders.

The church had evangelists whose responsibility, again as indicated in the Greek term *euangelistes*, a messenger of good, was to distribute the message of salvation. The good news of the gospel was entrusted to their care (2 Timothy 2:2) and they were instructed to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

The local church is an autonomous community; it can do all God intended without outside help. It is not a denomination, dependent for its survival on some ecclesiastical hierarchy, but a separate entity, answerable only to its head, Christ. There is no indication in Scripture that any eldership ever, at any time, had the oversight of more than one local church. Luke's narrative says, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23). And the apostle Peter said, "The elders which are among you I exhort . . . feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." In both instances the Holy Spirit affirms that elders' responsibilities were in each local church, or "among you."

The local church will function at its best level of efficiency only when it is organized as God ordained.

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# THE LOCAL CHURCH

Harold Dowdy

## Benevolence of a Local Church

LOVE, UNSELFISHNESS, AND CHARITY ARE key words in the life of a Christian. Jesus gave us the example. Here we are at the heart of the kingdom of God (Philippians 2:5-9).

But we are not left to reach our own conclusions in the matter of true benevolence. Christians are commanded to care for some folk. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). A Christian's limits for doing good are the bounds of his opportunities and abilities.

As broad as these privileges and responsibilities are for the Christian, such unlimited responsibility is not authorized for the church. "But if any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed" (1 Timothy 5:16).

Here God says that the church is not to be charged with the care of a Christian's widow. That means simply that "Christian" work is not always "church" work. Happily, an understanding of this scriptural rule can solve some of our problems.

Since the church's work in benevolence is obviously limited (1 Timothy 5:16), how can we determine its limits? Why not allow the Bible itself to mark these limits?

Acts 2 tells us in verse 44 of "all that believed" having all things common—believers.

Acts 4 gives us the information that it was "the multitude of them that believed" who had all things common (verse 32)—it was believers.

Acts 6 describes the widows as belonging to those who made up "the

number of the disciples" in verse 1—the disciples' widows.

Acts 11 includes the account of "the disciples, every man according to his ability, determin[ing] to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea" (verse 29)—to the brethren.

Romans 15 has them of "Macedonia and Achaia [making] a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at

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Jerusalem" (verse 26)—poor saints.

1 Corinthians 16 records the command, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye" (verse 1)—saints.

2 Corinthians 8 has Paul and his friends saying that there was a taking "upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints" (verses 4-5)—saints.

2 Corinthians 9: "For as touching the

ministering to the saints . . ." (verse 1). "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints . . ." (verse 12). This gift by Gentiles to poor Jewish Christians was not only a feeding of the poor saints, but a blessing to all Christians everywhere—relief for saints.

1 Timothy 5 defines the widow indeed as one who is "desolate, trusteth in God," etc., who is the church's charge—widows indeed.

With such a limited responsibility given to the local church, no wonder that Acts 6 almost tells us "how" the church cared for their indigent. It was their *own* widows who were needy, and their *own* servants who were chosen from their *own* group, who cared for their *own* responsibility. This was precisely all the "how" they needed since the work was limited to their own congregation. No world-wide agency was ever in operation, since all such problems were congregational in scope.

What would be the result of every Christian meeting his individual responsibility, and every church limiting its benevolence in accord with the specifics of the New Testament? Would the needy be assisted? Truly! Would there be any need for congregational problems in regard to "institutions"? Surely not! Would following the Lord's pattern really work? Why not trust God's wisdom to accomplish God's will.

It should not be overlooked that much benevolence is to be done by the individual. This kind of activity most often needs the tender, personal touch. Additionally, Christians need to be "washing feet" for the good they will get from it. Becoming too proud or too important could keep us from getting personally involved.

With each church and each disciple following the lead of His word, the needy are relieved and God is pleased. Recognizing these divine limits allows the church to give primary consideration to its most important task—preaching the gospel.

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# THE LOCAL CHURCH



## Evangelism, Teaching and the Local Church

Sewell Hall

"GOD OUR SAVIOUR . . . DESIRES ALL MEN to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). The order of words seems strange at first. After all, one must know some truth to be saved. But when we learn that the original word for knowledge means "a full comprehensive knowledge" the passage becomes clear.

God desires that all men hear enough truth that they may be saved. This is *evangelism*. Then, He desires that they be further rooted and grounded in truth until they are no longer "children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . . but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ" (Ephesians 4:14-15). This is *edification*.

This desire of God is translated into a commission in Matthew 28:19-20. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations [evangelism, SH] baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you [edification, SH]."

Christ has made the church responsible for evangelism and edification. Both are accomplished by faithful teaching of the truth, and the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

The church in the first century fulfilled this commission remarkably. Within thirty years, the gospel "was preached to every creature under heaven" (Colossians 1:23). This was accomplished because those who were converted were sufficiently taught (edified) to be "able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Much of what the early church accomplished was done by its members working personally. Those disciples from Jerusalem who "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4) were not sent out by the church; they were scattered by persecution. But the result was "churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria" (Acts 9:31). The great evangelistic work of Paul was accomplished with no evidence of oversight by any eldership. Edification was also com-

pleted as individuals admonished one another (Romans 15:4).

Effective as individual efforts are, however, Christ intends that we also work together as a group, collectively. The church in Philippi was organized with bishops and deacons (Philippians 1:1) and as a church, they supported Paul's preaching in other places (Philippians 4:15-16). By collectively supporting Paul, they fulfilled evangelistic responsibility, for Paul said that the fruit of his labor abounded to their account (Philippians 4:17).

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The churches of the New Testament did not *operate* "schools of preaching;" they *were* schools of preaching. Christ provided the necessary staff for this purpose: "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). The apostles and prophets revealed the truth to that generation directly; they reveal it to us now in the New Testament. Evangelists preach the word. Pastors and

teachers in local churches do the edifying and training which brings members to that full knowledge of truth which God desires, and equips them for ministry and service. This is all that is necessary.

The Jerusalem church existed alone for many months, maybe for one or more years. It did all of the evangelizing and edifying that God intended for it to do without benefit of human institutions or "sister congregations," to say nothing of "sponsoring churches." Any other church of which we read in the New Testament could have done the same. Not one of them had to resort to supporting an institution of men such as a missionary society to do its evangelizing, or a college to do its edifying. Neither did smaller churches send their money to larger churches to have them oversee their evangelism; or send their sons to larger churches to have them trained as preachers. If funds were sent to another place to support the preaching of the gospel, they were sent directly to the men doing the work (Philippians 4:15-17, *et. al.*).

This plan worked effectively in the first century and it will work in the twentieth. Indeed, it is working. In several nations and on all continents, men are preaching the gospel where it is not known, supported directly by autonomous congregations who know them and maintain close ties with them unobstructed by intermediate organizations. An increasing number of these local congregations are using direct mail, radio, TV, correspondence courses, home Bible studies, telephone messages, and numerous other methods to reach out to the lost of their communities. Many effective teachers and preachers are being developed with no other organized spiritual training than that provided by these churches.

Not enough is being done. But the great need is for more zealous utilization of the simple organization God has given us, not the creation of more institutions or arrangements for church cooperation.

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# THE LOCAL CHURCH

Harold Dowdy

## Relations Between Local Churches

DIRECT RELATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL churches was a limited proposition in the New Testament. In one instance (Acts 15) the brethren from Antioch came to Jerusalem to certify that the Jerusalem church did not stand between them and God's revelation. Another case involved several congregations, each choosing its own messenger, sending relief to the Jerusalem saints because they were an object of charity (2 Corinthians 8).

Indirect relations between churches involved churches sending wages to the same preacher as he labored in another city (2 Corinthians 11:8). Also every church was to obey the apostles' teaching (1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17). Churches were used as examples of generosity (2 Corinthians 8); of faith (1 Thessalonians 1); and unfaithfulness (Revelation 3). They saluted one another (Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 16) and Paul prayed for all of them. Twentieth century man is appalled that there was such meager contact between churches in view of the task that lay before them. The apostles were poor, the churches they were to establish would be poor as well. Could they preach the gospel to the whole world?

First, the apostles were ready to give every man an answer for the hope that was in them (1 Peter 3:15). And second, the early converts were as zealous as the apostles, for they "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8). This was a serious quest for souls. How these teachers worked: "Every day . . . publicly and from house to house!"

In the third place, there were local churches involved in spreading the word. "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad" (1 Thessalonians 1:8). Also these churches supported known, trusted evangelists in foreign fields (2 Corinthians 11:8). One is surprised to learn that there were no missionary societies or sponsoring churches to aid in the work. There were no state-wide youth

rallies or Christian retreats, no area sporting events for churches, etc. Certainly in the mind of many truly committed people today, all these programs should have been in place.

This simplicity was no accident. Hebrews 7:14 assumes we know the rule that sets God's boundaries. "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe *Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.*" He says that men from the tribe of Judah could not be priests. God specifically named Aaron's sons to be priests. His specific command had a limiting effect. Just so, the authority of elders is confined to one flock, by the same rule. "Feed the flock of God which is *among* you, taking the oversight thereof" (1 Peter 5:2). Central-

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ized church work was outside the scope of God's authority.

Did these churches cooperate? Of course. Every church (and Christian) was working on the same project all the time—preaching the gospel to the world. The world was everywhere, and every creature was the target. Every church was working on the same project—"everybody"—all the time. Each church, every brother and sister, and every preacher, was chipping away at the world. That was cooperation, Bible style. A church was faithful, depending on her relationship to God, not on whether she knew of a single other church in the world.

The two New Testament examples of churches supporting preachers involved no contact between the churches.

"I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service" (2 Corinthians 11:8). And, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Philippians 4:15-16).

These events were different occasions. This is seen by the difference in: (1) the language, "churches" vs. "ye only;" (2) the place, "Corinth" vs. "Thessalonica;" and (3) the time, "in the beginning of the gospel" vs. the end, at "Corinth." This means that the example of supporting preachers was always direct, it was to care for his necessities, it was appreciated and reported by the preacher, and it helped the giver as well as the recipient. This pattern answers the needs of church-supported preaching and raises no problems for the future.

True independence was the reason there were so few contacts between churches. Each church stood in the same equal relationship to the great commission as every other church. Each church planned its *own* work, to be funded from its *own* treasury. The Scriptures are remarkably silent concerning any church making plans to spend another church's funds. Such planning would have filled the New Testament with organizational charts and regulations.

The president of an insurance company told his people that their 100,000,000 policy holders were all sold one at a time. This illustrates for us that teaching, not more organization, is the key to growth. It is also eminently scriptural.

The simplicity of God's pattern! Each local church being tended by its own elders (1 Peter 5:2). Each church supporting preachers of its own choosing. Each church caring for its own needy, with her own servants.

Effective? The world would hear the gospel in a single generation (Colossians 1:23).

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# THE LOCAL CHURCH



## Discipline in a Local Church

Dee Bowman

EVERY SOCIETY, NO MATTER THE SIZE, has to police itself. The Lord's church is no exception. In order for the church to retain its distinctive nature, discipline must be administered. More importantly, for the people who comprise the church to stay faithful, there must be constant and fair attention to their needs, both preventative and corrective. The regulation and control of the affairs of the church is what church discipline is all about. God expects it.

Discipline is instruction given to cause a student, or disciple ("disciple" is from the same root as "discipline") to form a certain kind of attitude or conduct. It relates to the practical side of teaching in much the same way that doctrine relates to the abstract or theoretical side. It takes two basic forms: preventative and corrective. Preventative discipline is teaching intended to edify, warn, instruct. It could be described (I'm almost afraid to use this example!) as positive discipline. The negative discipline (which is every bit as necessary!) is the corrective variety, or teaching that is intended to convict, exhort, restore, straighten. In both instances there is no vengeance involved; the discipline has as its purpose the good of the subject.

But discipline has to do with the community as well. It is necessary in order to assure the purity of the whole. The New Testament encourages this kind of discipline with such admonitions as "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6). We are here concerned with congregational discipline.

Fellowship is the result of our mutual relationship with God. We are bound together in the local assembly in order that we might draw strength from one another by mutual edification (see Hebrews 10:23). This fellowship is dependent on our being likeminded, of the same motive, sharing the same aims (Philippians 2:2). It is impaired when any fellow fails to maintain his likemindedness with other fellows. Any time there is in this fellowship some sort of other-mindedness, whatever form it

takes, it must be attended to.

The Bible does not set down a list of rules for discipline. What it does is set forth several principles which are to guide local congregations as they engage in both corrective and preventative discipline. I have chosen some passages which deal with local churches as they are to be involved in discipline and have divided into three categories (subject, action, aim) the things involved in that discipline so that we can get an overview of what the New Testament teaches about discipline in the local church.

**Matthew 18:15-17—Subject:** One who has sinned against you. **Action:** Tell it to him; take two or three; tell it to the church. **Aim:** "thou hast gained thy brother" (verse 15).

**Romans 16:17-20—Subject:** One who causes divisions and offenses contrary to

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### *Discipline is necessary in order to assure the purity of the whole.*

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the doctrine. **Action:** mark them; avoid them. **Aim:** Protection of the body.

**1 Corinthians 5:1-13—Subject:** An immoral person who seeks to maintain fellowship while still living in sin. **Action:** Deliver him to Satan; purge out the leaven (verses 5,7). **Aim:** "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (verse 4).

**2 Thessalonians 5:14-15—Subject:** Those who walk contrary, disorderly, not according to the traditions of the apostles. **Action:** Withdraw from them; note them; have no company with them. **Aim:** "that they may be ashamed."

**Titus 3:10—Subject:** the heretic ("divisive man, NKJV). **Action:** Reject him after first and second admonition. **Aim:** not specifically stated.

Notice that in all these passages, the party being disciplined is one who seeks to maintain fellowship while continuing

in his sin. It cannot be allowed. Toleration of sin is sin itself.

What about withdrawing from those who have already withdrawn from us? The answer is obvious in the question. You can't. When one is no longer in fellowship, how can you withdraw that fellowship? "For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us" (1 John 2:19). But that does not argue that the church has no responsibility regarding those who have withdrawn from its fellowship. We are told that we are to "mark" some, to "note" some who have not walked according to the pure doctrine. And while we cannot withdraw from those who have left our fellowship, that does not negate the need for some public disavowal of their conduct. This action is taken in order that both those in and out of the fellowship should be apprised of the situation, that the church is not responsible for, nor does it condone such conduct, even though it may be no more than mere indifference or failure to attend.

Then there has always been a problem about whether or not a church can fellowship a person who has been withdrawn from at another congregation. There are no simple answers for such situations. But I would hasten to remind that local autonomy is to be preserved, and that in the final analysis, fellowship is the business of each local congregation as it operates under the control of the gospel of Christ. Although there can be no formal connection between local churches, certainly it is not a violation of local autonomy for one church to notify another that a person requesting membership has been disciplined by them, as long as they understand that their responsibility ends with the notification.

I don't pretend to have all the answers regarding local church discipline. But one thing is sure—discipline is for the good of the person and for the good of the community. And we all deserve it.

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# THE LOCAL CHURCH

Ed Harrell

## The Parameters of Fellowship in a Local Church

THE BASIS WHICH ALLOWS CHRISTIANS TO work and worship together in local churches is that they are "joined together in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). That fellowship is the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus that we could seek and find the truth (Matthew 7:7). Although skeptics sometimes argue that unity is impossible to achieve, thousands of local churches throughout the world testify to the contrary.

And yet, it would be less than honest

does not mean that nothing is certain and that we must abandon our search for truth and our commitment to restoration. Every local church exists on the basis of a profound and broad unity of conviction. Furthermore, the New Testament gives some clear guidelines on the *limits* of fellowship. Those limits restrict severely the parameters of fellowship in a local church, as well as telling something of the rights of individual conscience which remain. The four tests which follow may not exhaust this

faith. Find a local church where you can do so.

2. **The test of morality.** While every difference of individual belief is serious, and should provoke honest study and exchange, some are clear questions of immorality. The Corinthian church could not tolerate in its midst a fornicator whose conduct was a reproach even among sinners (1 Corinthians 5). The Thessalonians were instructed not to harbor those who refused to work but shamefully lived off the honest labors of others (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). All disagreement offends someone's sense of propriety, but many questions involve only one's personal relationship to God. Find a local church where individual conscience is honored but immorality is not tolerated.

3. **The test of divisiveness.** While the New Testament allows Christians the quite necessary right of private judgment, it limits the exercise of that right. One who is "weak in the faith" may be received into the fellowship, but not to "doubtful disputation" (Romans 14:1). The right to personal conviction is not the right to be contentious and disruptive. Too many local churches have been destroyed by high-minded and opinionated bullies intent on having their own way. Find a local church where you can serve in good conscience and in peace.

4. **The test of honesty.** While honesty and good conscience cannot be the sole test of fellowship in a local church (people do grossly erroneous things in good conscience), it is nonetheless an important one. I must judge that one is acting in faith (Romans 14:22-23). I could not work together with anyone whose beliefs were based on self-serving convenience regardless of where they lead him. I can tolerate differences only if they exist within the context of faith. Within that context, after all, we have an avenue which can lead to the resolution of those differences. Find a local church where every Christian intends to base his and her beliefs and practices on the teachings of God's revelation.

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**"The right to personal conviction is not the right to be contentious and disruptive. Too many local churches have been destroyed by high-minded and opinionated bullies intent on having their own way."**

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to argue that scriptural local churches always exist without imperfections and, indeed, without some diversity of belief. At least two chapters written by the apostle Paul, Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 10, speak in detail of the proper approach to disagreement. While we cannot imagine that doctrinal disagreement is a desirable state among brethren, it is a real one. We must acknowledge its presence and determine its limits.

To acknowledge the existence of biblical subjects difficult to understand

subject, but they provide some biblical principles to guide us.

1. **The test of common action in faith.** We are, as noted above, united together in a local church and act in common. It is clear that Christians must support in faith all of those common actions. Any act which is not done in faith is a sin (Romans 14:23). The introduction of unscriptural acts into the worship and work of local churches has necessarily disrupted those fellowships in the past. A Christian must work and worship in



# THE LOCAL CHURCH



## Heavenly Perfection and Human Imperfection

Brent Lewis

THE PERFECT CHURCH. IT DOES NOT EXIST. The reason is that it is made up of Christians—and there are no perfect Christians. I suppose you've seen the bumper sticker that says, "Christians aren't perfect—just forgiven!" Well, it is true.

But, you say, I want to be a member of a church where everyone agrees on every point of doctrine, where no one is ever mad at or jealous of anyone, where the preacher always says the right thing, where the elders never make a mistake, and where all the members are not only present at every service, but are teaching and baptizing people right and left. Is there a church like that somewhere? No, there is not. And there never will be. But I'll tell you *this*—there are churches that are *trying* to be like that. About the best you can hope for is to be part of a group that is making a concerted effort to be zealous for the Lord; or to *start* the one where you *are* on its way to becoming one.

The plan that God has given for the local church is divinely infallible. The local church, however, is made up of frail, fallible men. Men and women who compose the church often fall short of God's great design.

I recently had a conversation with a friend whose background is in a major denomination. He wondered how "my church" could be right and "his church" be wrong. He related an incident that happened when he attended a "Church of Christ" some fifteen years ago in another part of the country. If he accurately represented the incident, I could not condone what the members of that church did. He took their actions, however, to reflect what *the Lord's church* believes and practices. He was wrong. What that church did was only what a local congregation did and, actually, merely what *some members* in the local church did. Should I be called upon to defend what a local congregation did fifteen years ago in a place a thousand miles from where I now work and worship? I do not believe so. And I answered him by saying, "Tom,

I'm sorry that happened. I do not believe it should have. The best I can do is try to duplicate the New Testament church in the congregation of which I am a part."

Local churches in the New Testament were not perfect. Ephesus was careful about doctrine and false teachers, but short on love for God (Revelation 2:1-7). Pergamum had some who succumbed to false teachers (Revelation 2:12-17). Thyatira was strong in its love and patience, but weak in its stand against false prophets; though some evidently

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***The plan that God has given for the local church is divinely infallible. The local church, however, is made up of frail, fallible men. Men and women who compose the church often fall short of God's great design. . . . I must not decide that the Lord's plan for the church is tarnished because there are hypocrites in the church.***

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had not been affected (Revelation 2:18-29). Sardis had a reputation as a "live-wire" church, but God said that it was dead; still, some within it were pure (Revelation 3:1-6). Laodicea was made up of mostly indifferent people (Revelation 3:14-22).

You may be aware of the failings of the church at Corinth. They formed a following for the one who had baptized them (1 Corinthians 1). They failed to discipline one who was immoral (chapter 5). They took their disputes with one

another to public courts of law (chapter 6). They judged others by their own consciences (chapters 8,10). They made a common meal out of the Lord's Supper (chapter 11). They were puffed up because of spiritual gifts (chapters 12-14). Some even denied the resurrection (chapter 15).

The church as God designed it is divinely perfect (Ephesians 3:10-11,21; 5:27). The church as it exists in any locality is imperfect because it consists of humans. A failure to recognize this distinction may lead one to incorrect conclusions—such as my friend who judged the Lord's church, the divine body, by the mistakes and failures of people in a local fellowship where he had attended.

If every local church is made up of imperfect people, then I must not decide that the Lord's plan for His church is tarnished because there are hypocrites in the church. We should all be careful about placing faith in men, anyway; they often deceive us or let us down. Don't be discouraged by human failings. They have always been there (2 Timothy 4:10; Philippians 4:2; 1 Corinthians 5:1-9).

All of us are worshipping in a less-than-perfect church. You may, in fact, be worshipping with a *much*-less-than-perfect church. There are many to be found. What does one do in such a situation? First, recognize that there are no perfect local congregations. Every group of the Lord's people has its problems and shortcomings. Second, pray fervently for the spiritual growth and maturity of your congregation. If bad attitudes prevail, beseech God (and brethren) that they will be removed. Third, determine that you will do your dead-level best to make it a congregation after God's design. Work hard and encourage and exhort others to congregational excellence. You can be a catalyst for the improvement of the church where you are. Each of us *can* make the church where we are a better church. May God bless you to do so.

663 Denise Dr., Melbourne, FL 32935





# THE LOCAL CHURCH

## New Testament Churches —

Sewell Hall

## The Cornerstone of Udenominal Christianity

THE CHURCH WHICH JESUS ESTABLISHED was universal, encompassing all who were saved (Acts 2:47). All of the saved in a given community were the church in that community. On the local level they were organized for worship and work under elders (Acts 14:23). This was the only organization Christ gave to His church. He was the only head of the universal church and the only head of each local church.

This arrangement of autonomous, independent congregations without earthly headquarters should not be surprising to Bible students. In the Old Testament, God was displeased with the centralizing tendencies of those who built the Tower of Babel and He scattered them. His plan for Israel was that the tribes should operate without a central government or earthly king, He alone reigning over them. Their insistence upon centralization and a human king displeased Him.

Those same human tendencies to centralize appeared very early in the church. The noted church historian, John L. Mosheim, describes the changes made in the second century:

During a great portion of this century all the churches continued to be, as at first, independent of each other, or were connected by no confederations or confederations. . . . But in the process of time it became customary for all the Christian churches within the same province to unite and form a sort of larger society or commonwealth; and in the manner of confederated republics, to hold their conventions at stated times, and there deliberate for the common advantage of the whole confederation. . . . These councils — of which no vestige appears before the middle of this century — changed nearly the whole form of the Church (*Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. I, page 116).

Indeed, "nearly the whole form of the church" was changed — changed into a denomination. Now there was a new association, not of the members but of

congregations. Now there was a new organization between the churches and Christ. Now there was a new authority capable of multiplying organizations and offices to infinity. Now there was a division separating the churches that cooperated from those that did not. And it all began when local congregations surrendered a small part of their autonomy.

The autonomy of the local church is the first and last line of defense against the ever-present threat of denominationalism. At first, surrender of autonomy is always in small amounts, for a good cause and voluntary. But, like the Incredible Hulk, the organization to which it is given tends to grow into an irresistible and power-thirsty master.

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It happened in the second century. It happened again in the nineteenth century as hundreds of congregations agreed to allow a central missionary society to oversee their mission work, only to have that society grow in a single century into a full-fledged denominational governing body. And the same forces are at work in the twentieth century.

Churches are being solicited today by various institutions offering to accept responsibility for the church's work of evangelism, edification and benevolence in exchange for financial aid. Elders of sponsoring churches "assume oversight" of work to which all congregations have equal responsibility and ask support from those churches. Is not the boundary of local autonomy breached

when a local church allows the board of an institution or elders of another church to take the oversight of any part of its work? But the end is not yet. A book recently mailed to thousands of preachers attempts to prove that all churches in an urban area should be under one eldership. The book carries numerous endorsements.

Those who reject these concepts are not immune to denominationalizing influences. Churches are sometimes intimidated into decisions by inflated respect for a college or by fear of being written up in a paper. To bow to such pressures or to allow ourselves to be influenced by "what the brotherhood thinks" is to become sectarian and denominational.

There is, of course, the danger of reaction in our efforts to avoid denominationalism. Being udenominal Christians does not mean that we must avoid organizing into local churches — even large churches like the church in Jerusalem. Nor does it mean that such a church must isolate itself, adopt a unique designation and act as though no other such church exists on earth. The udenominal church in Jerusalem acknowledged existence of other churches, sent Barnabas to encourage one (Acts 11:22-24), received alms from others and was included among a group of churches which Paul spoke of as "the churches of God in Judea" (1 Thessalonians 2:14). But they retained complete control of their own affairs.

Encroachment on local autonomy must be resisted, not in a "spirit of fierce frontier independence" but by faith in Christ. He is the king, and in a kingdom all authority must be granted by the king. Today, the only men with credentials from the king are elders whom the Holy Spirit has made overseers (Acts 20:28). Their authority must be exercised in harmony with the will of Christ and only in the church of which they are a part (1 Peter 5:2). Loyalty to Christ demands strict adherence to this arrangement.

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



# That's Life!



Dee Bowman

*IF YOU CAN'T THANK GOD FOR IT*, you shouldn't be doing it!

\* \* \*

*I READ A STORY* about a little boy who had gotten a pair of skates for Christmas. As he was trying the new skates, he fell to the ice time and again, hard. An old gentleman who had been watching said, "Son, why don't you quit that. You're only hurting yourself." With red cheeks, and through tears of frustration, he said, "Mister, I didn't get these skates to give up with; I got them to learn with!"

\* \* \*

*IT SEEMS TO ME THAT* our brethren would be better off if they paid more attention to what the Bible says and less to what some men say the Bible says.

\* \* \*

*"THERE ARE ALWAYS MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS.* Had you ever thought of that?" Norma asked. She's brilliant! Specially when she's right. "Which is most of the time," she added, when I showed her this.

\* \* \*

*THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE:* Each week, pray for some preacher who labors in a difficult field; and each week, write a note of encouragement to one such person.

\* \* \*

*FROM MY JOURNAL:* One of the cardinal errors of Protestant Denominationalism is the insistence that conversion is an instant act. Conversion is a process, not a momentary act. Much heartache is caused by such a concept, for the 'converted' suddenly finds himself

mostly as he was before he 'accepted the Lord.' "

\* \* \*

*I DON'T KNOW WHERE I GOT THIS*, nor who wrote it, but it deserves wide exposure. It's called:

## TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS

1. Thou shalt love thy child with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, but wisely.

2. Thou shalt think of thy child, not as something belonging to thee, but as a person.

3. Thou shalt regard thy child's respect and love not as something to be demanded, but as something worth earning.

4. Every time thou art out of patience with thy child's immaturity, thou shalt call to mind some of thine own mistakes attending to thine own coming of age.

5. Remember that it is thy child's privilege to make a hero out of thee and take thought to be a proper one.

6. Remember that thy example is more eloquent than fault-finding and more moralizing.

7. Thou shalt strive to be a sign post on the highway of life rather than a rut out of which the wheel cannot run.

8. Thou shalt teach thy child to stand on his own feet and fight his own battles.

9. Thou shalt help thy child to see beauty, appreciate kindness, love the truth, and live in friendship.

10. Thou shalt make the place wherein thou dwellest a real home, a haven of happiness for thyself, for thy children, for thy friends, and for thy children's friends.

\* \* \*

*I AM GREATLY IMPRESSED BY THOSE MEN* who work a regular job and still find time to preach the gospel. These "tentmakers" are great men of God; and there are lots of them around the country. *John McGuire* is one such man. He teaches classes at the college and preaches every Sunday in Porterville, California. Thanks, John! Do you know other such men? Write me about them.



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# Woman's World

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## The Importance of Being a "Keeper at Home"

Richard Williams

"There is no shame or disgrace in a woman working outside the home . . . However, the one who is a willing and effective keeper of the home *exceeds* them all."

One of the saddest lies that women today have bought is that the vocation of a housewife is somehow demeaning and unfulfilling.

God directs that the woman is to be a "keeper at home" (Titus 2:5), that her desire is to be for her husband and that he is to rule over her (Genesis 3:16).

The foregoing directives from the word of God are considered by modern thinkers to be chauvinistic, disrespectful of the rights of women, and hopelessly outdated. That's pretty harsh criticism of Almighty God, the Great I AM, Creator of the universe!

It is sad enough when the women of this world fall for the lie that both sexes are equal (I have never yet seen a man birth a child nor a woman father one!), but sadder still is the testimony of some in the Lord's body who find being the keeper of the home unfulfilling.

Consider for a moment the description of the godly woman in Proverbs 31:10-31. This lady is no shrinking violet! She is a busy woman! Her value is far above precious jewels (maybe that's why only diamonds are considered appropriate for expressing the man's love for his bride!).

This lady supports her husband in his efforts to direct the security and fortune of his family. She uses her judgment in considering real estate for her family's need as well as in growing and preparing food for their sustenance.

She clothes her loved ones and helps those in need. She supplements her family's needs by making and selling garments. She has strength and dignity brought about by her godly conduct and resultant sense of self-worth and importance.

This woman radiates wisdom born of patience and self-development, and she is a willing and effective teacher. She minds her own business and finds plenty to do in serving her family, performing

her many duties and worshipping her God. Her children and her husband rise up and call her blessed (if they are smart!).

The wise man concludes with this observation, too often overlooked: "Many daughters have done nobly, but you *exceed* them all!" (Proverbs 31:20).

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fessions. However, the  
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the home EXCEEDS  
them all.***

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The Scripture does *not* teach that being a homemaker is the only acceptable role a woman can fill to find favor with God and man. There is no shame or disgrace in a woman working outside the home. "Many daughters have done well" in law, politics, business, industry, medicine, teaching and all honorable professions.

However, the one who is a willing and effective keeper of the home *exceeds*

them all.

The rationale of spending "quality time" rather than "quantity time" with one's children is merely an excuse, a phrase without substance or basis in reality. Without *spending* time at home, how can one *be* there for those precious, fleeting "quality moments?"

Who will spend the most time with the child, teaching the inestimable value of God's love, morality, decency, honor and respect? Can these things be taught to the child by a parent who is so exhausted from a full day of "professional" duties that crashing into bed transcends all other activities?

Can such important lessons be effectively transmitted to the child in nursery schools, day-care centers, or by baby-sitters hired at the lowest possible wage so that the mother can do something "worthwhile" with her life?

The question is largely one of circumstances, motives and priorities. Certainly circumstances beyond one's control may dictate the mother having to work when she would rather be home. However, each must answer for herself before God as to the *why* of her actions in life. (This statement applies to men as well!)

Perhaps a profession should either be accomplished first and then have the family, or the family reared first and then the profession. It is doubtful that any but the most organized and energetic of us can successfully do both at the same time since a basic law of physics cannot be violated: a solid object cannot occupy two different areas of space at the same time.

To direct our lives most effectively, of course, requires wise and mature planning, and the earlier in life this is instilled in one, the better! Therefore, it behooves the older to teach the younger, and the younger to listen to the wise counsel of the older.

As the wise man observes in Proverbs 11:14, "Where there is no counsel the people fall, but in the multitude of [godly] counselors there is safety."

204 Fillmore, Taft, CA 93268



# The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

## PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Jehovah, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; let me know how frail I am" (39:4).

## Vital Matters That Man Should Know

**W**e all know many things in life that are of little permanent value. Most people, in fact, are engaged in trivial pursuits when it comes to knowledge. They can faultlessly repeat mathematical equations, scientific formulas, and myriad sports statistics. But they do not know God—nor have they paused to reflect upon who they are, why they are here and where they are going. The psalmist confronts man here with some things he must know.

**1. Man must know his end.** In one sense, the end of all men is the same. "And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). We must all learn, before it is too late, that life has an *end*. We know that it had a beginning, but we are often too slow to recognize that it has an end. It has been said, "All men think all men mortal but themselves." Yet God declares of you and me that "the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). No one is rich enough or powerful enough to change this. "There is no

man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power over the day of death" (Ecclesiastes 8:8). Recognition of this has a sobering effect on one's life.

**2. Man must know the measure of his days.** Note first that man's life is described by the word "days." Do we realize that each day is important? Each day is a part of one's life. Then, of course, we know that there is a normal span of life, but we do not know that it will be ours. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years; yet is their pride but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10). When one knows this he sees the need to use his time wisely. "So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). Jesus said, "We must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4).

**3. Man must know how frail he is.** Life is a frail possession. It soon passes away. Man is described as "a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again" (Psalm 79:39). In the passage following our "snapshot" passage the psalmist says: "Behold, thou hast made my days as handbreadths; and my lifetime is as nothing before thee" (39:5). Job declared that "Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 14:1-2).

These are vital lessons. Learning them will cause one to make the most of his life, "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). Put this psalm into practice in your life: know your end, measure your days, and be aware of the frailty of your existence. To do so will sow the seeds of purposeful living.



# Testimony of an Old Chair

Steve Cawthon

While preaching this week in a meeting in Huntsville, Alabama, it has been my privilege to stay in the home of my long-time friends, Herschel and Reba Patton. While they are at the local shopping mall engaging in their "normal walks of life," I have the house to myself—a good time for me to tackle my assignment from Ed Harrell to write him an article.

The last article I wrote for Ed was on the topic, "The Bible." I learned that that subject was too specific. So this time he's given me greater freedom. He simply said, "Write me an article." I guess it is to be a part of a special issue entitled, "Various Articles."

othy 3:2). Through the years, hundreds of people have enjoyed the gracious welcome of the Pattons. Although an extremely close-knit family, they have not isolated themselves from others. This old chair seems to testify that its owners have applied the biblical injunction, "Above all things [be] fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins; using hospitality one to another without murmuring; according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:8-10).

How much better off the church would be if more of our homes had

brother that walketh disorderly" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Paul commanded that when a brother becomes unfaithful, "with such a one no, not to eat" (1 Corinthians 5:11). The impact of thus discontinuing our socializing with the disorderly will be great if the unfaithful member has been accustomed to such activities. But withdrawing becomes a travesty if the disciplined member has never sat in the chairs of his brethren in the first place.

Judging from the nicks and scratches on the lower rail of this chair, I surmise it has been the seat of discipline for the three Patton boys, Gary, Charles, and Steve. I can almost see a little five-year-old Gary (now 44) impatiently sitting in this chair, with his shoes scratching across the rail awaiting permission to get up. I'm sure that being "the preacher's kids" hasn't always been easy for the boys. But the old stereotype of the preacher's children being rowdy and unruly certainly does not fit the Pattons (except perhaps during the telecast of an Auburn-Alabama football game). Herschel has always been "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity" (1 Timothy 3:4). That love-motivated discipline through the growing-up years has been unpleasant at times. I imagine several hours of sitting in this chair after misbehaving would have been more comfortably spent standing. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11).

Having faithfully served the Patton family through the years, this old chair can now sit back and enjoy the fruits of its labors. Stacked with a Sears catalogue or two, it can now support the vivacious grandchildren when they come to visit. It also makes an inspiring typing table for visiting preachers.

P.S. I hope the Pattons don't tell me that they bought this chair at an auction last week.

2631 Copper Oaks Plaza, Fayetteville, AR 72703

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**"How many misunderstandings would have been quickly cleared up if more brethren had chairs like this one—places to sit down and talk, visit, and learn to love and understand one another?"**

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Looking for a suitable desk for my portable typewriter, I found in the den an intricately carved old straight-backed chair; it looks like it could have been in the family for eighty or ninety years. As I inspect its worn seat and refinished spindle back, I can't help but wonder what experiences this old chair has been through. Knowing its owners as I do, I'm sure my speculations are not far from accurate.

This chair, undoubtedly a part of a dining room suite, has witnessed much hospitality in the Patton home. Brother Patton, now serving as an elder of the Jordan Park church in Huntsville, has long been "given to hospitality" (1 Tim-

chairs worn by frequent guests. How many church problems and quarrels would have been avoided if brethren had simply shown more love to one another? And how many misunderstandings would have been quickly cleared up if more brethren had chairs like this one—places to sit down and talk, visit, and learn to love and understand one another?

And have you ever wondered why church discipline often fails to restore the erring to the Lord? Could it be that our chairs are unused, our hospitality too limited, our homes too closed to others? Scriptural discipline involves "that ye withdraw yourselves from every





## The Sermon on the Mount

### The Godward Life

**T**he fifth chapter of Matthew contains a searching study of the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven (5:20-48). Jesus has begun by attacking the hypocritical posturing of the Pharisees at its most apparent point—their treatment of others. He makes clear that true righteousness is a piety that reaches to heart depth, probing at motives and attitudes and not merely treating of words and deeds. Beneath all that He enjoins, though never explicitly stated, is the practical working out of the ancient command to love one's neighbor as oneself. Yet, if the Pharisees' loveless treatment of others was the most obvious manifestation of their spiritual bankruptcy, it was not here that their problems had begun. It is to that area where true righteousness begins that the Teacher now addresses Himself (chapter 6).

When Jesus concluded His teaching on neighbor love He had lifted His hearers to the very throne of God. "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48). It is here that the key to all piety, both moral and spiritual, rests—not in our relationship to others but in our relationship to God. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is the second of the great commandments; the first is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Matthew 22:35-37).

Men have struggled through the centuries to erect an ethical code apart from deity. But, as Schopenhauer once wrote: "To teach morality is easy. To find a basis for morality is hard." Such efforts have failed because in the absence of a moral God who cares about the behavior of His creatures all moral codes are arbitrary and meaningless. Indeed, if there is no such God it is inconceivable that man could even exist as a moral being. He should simply be incapable of entertaining ethical questions. The fact that man is moral speaks eloquently of the existence of a moral God.

But an ethic of human behavior, even so great and true as one as "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" cannot rest upon itself. It becomes meaningless and impossible apart from a deep commitment to the God upon whose nature and will the whole moral structure of the universe depends. Men who want to deal with morals must deal with God. That is the reason that the ethics of the kingdom of heaven are not possible of fulfillment

save by those who are fit for the kingdom. They cannot be kept by unconverted men.

As chapter five ends Jesus has already dealt in great detail with true righteousness, but the well-spring of that righteousness has only so far been hinted at. It is a heart-righteousness—whole and undivided. But even as the chapter reaches its climax in the call to love one's enemies, we are made to cry out in despair, "How?!" And even while we are asking, our attention is drawn to heaven. It is God alone who can open up the possibility of such love among men. As John says, "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Men, apart from God, may recognize in some measure the need to love one another in this very pure way, but they never will find within themselves the spiritual strength to do so. Only in an absolute commitment to God is it made possible.

It needs to be further understood that the ethical demands of the kingdom are not an end in themselves. As Jesus makes clear before introducing this new dimension of righteousness, the purpose of all ethical commands is to transform us into the likeness of our Father. So, if we have properly understood what Jesus is saying, the question with which we will end each day is not, "Have I committed murder or adultery or this or that?" but rather, "Has God been first in my life today?" "Have I kept His commandments?" "Have I been true to Him?" "Do I know Him better: am I more like Him?"

**M**en have always been slow to understand that the most fundamental sin of all does not rest in our mistreatment of others but in our stubborn and pride-filled refusal to worship and honor God above all else. It is to this cosmic criminality that Paul speaks in Romans when he says of the pagan world: "because that knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings and their senseless heart was darkened" (1:21). It is because of this central crime that men have visited upon themselves such horrors of immorality and inhumanity (1:26-32), and not the reverse. The first task of men when seeking the righteousness of the kingdom of God is to deal with God Himself, and the only approach that has ever been acceptable to Him has been one of absolute humility and devotion.





## Behavior As Citizens of Heaven

### Philippians 1:27-2:18

**A**fter the salutation (verses 1-2) Paul has expressed his tender regard for the saints at Philippi (verses 3-11) and brought them up to date with regard to his present circumstances and future prospects (verses 12-26). These opening passages are followed by a series of exhortations directed toward Paul's beloved Philippians. Paul has been talking about himself. Now he gives directions to the Philippians. This hortatory section ends at Philippians 2:18 and is followed by further explanations (2:19-30).

I believe Timothy Dwight's analysis of Philippians 1:27-2:18 (found in H. A. W. Meyer's commentary) is on target. The leading thought is the general exhortation which stands at the beginning: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ." This lead thought is then elucidated with three distinct applications. The first has in view the situation of the saints as living in the midst of hostile surroundings (1:27-30); the second deals with the saints in relation to each other as members of a community (3:1-11); the third is a call for earnest effort with regard to the accomplishment of their own salvation (2:12-18). These subdivisions will elucidate the manner of life worthy of the gospel. But before we look at the specifics I ought to offer a brief explanation of this general over-ruling directive, for it contains more than first meets the eye.

Although the text gives a general and rather colorless translation, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (verse 27a), the ASV marginal note indicates that the Greek is literally, "behave as citizens worthily of the gospel of Christ." Most other versions assume that this political coloring had been lost from the verb *politeuo*. But the scholarly commentaries are about as unanimous in arguing the contrary. I agree with the latter for three main reasons. (1) The use of the noun *politeuma* in Philippians 3:20: "For our citizenship (or commonwealth, mg) is in heaven," which indicates how Paul conceived of the saints in the world. (2) The two other epistles to churches from this period use Paul's more usual verb in similar connections: "to walk worthily

of the calling wherewith ye were called" (Ephesians 4:1); "to walk worthily of the Lord" (Colossians 1:10). Paul does not use this usual metaphor for conduct or behavior in Philippians 1:27 but selects a verb with a peculiar flavor or coloring of its own. (3) Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12). J. B. Lightfoot explains the significance of this point in the introduction to his commentary on Philippians:

A colony is described by an ancient writer as a miniature likeness of the great Roman people (Gell. xvi. 13); and this character is fully borne out by the account of Philippi in the apostolic narrative. The political atmosphere of the place is wholly Roman. The chief magistrates, more strictly designated *duumvirs*, arrogate to themselves the loftier title of *praetors* (Acts 16:19,22,35,36,38). Their servants, like the attendant officers of the highest functionaries in Rome, bear the name of *lictors* (Acts 16:35, 38). The pride and privilege of Roman citizenship confronts us at every turn (cf. Acts 16:21,37-39). . . . Addressing a Roman colony from the Roman metropolis, writing as a citizen to citizens, he recurs to the political franchise as an apt symbol of the higher privileges of their heavenly calling, to the political life as a suggestive metaphor for the duties of their Christian profession (Philippians 1:27; 3:20).

Thus Philippi was like a little Rome—a Rome away from Rome. But the church in Philippi was a community of saints, citizens of heaven, a colony of heaven planted in the midst of earthly and pagan surroundings. And Paul's leading exhortation to them is to discharge their obligations as citizens of such a heavenly community in a manner worthy of the good news which made them what they are. That will involve, first, a united stand in contending for the faith amidst hostile surroundings (1:27-30); second, unity of spirit by means of a selfless, serving disposition within the community of saints (2:1-11); and third, careful and earnest effort to accomplish their own salvation (2:12-18).

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# DON'T MISS COMING ISSUES!

JANUARY THEME: "True Worship"

Edited by Sewell Hall

## ARTICLES:

Why Worship?—*Dan Binkley*

"Shut the Doors"—*Robert Harkrider*

The Church of Christ: Synagogue

or Temple?—*Phil Roberts*

Mothers Must Worship, Too—*Caneta Hall*

Worship, Spontaneous or

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## Personal Work: Are You Ashamed?

I don't know whether this writing will do any good. After all, for twenty years, with little results, I have heard and participated in preaching which has reproved, rebuked, and exhorted Christians to do personal work. That is longsuffering! But, maybe it's the preacher's fault. On the other hand, maybe it's not. You judge it.

How do you feel about your personal work — your effort to bring the knowledge of Christ to others? Note your immediate reaction to that question. Then consider the excuses you give for your shortcomings in this area. Do they fall in the category of feeling inadequate? Maybe even a sense of being inferior or incompetent when it comes to approaching others with the gospel? If so, look up the meaning of the words "shame" and "ashamed." There you will find those very terms used in the definition.

Consider the words of Luke 9:26. "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed."

But, do you say, you are not ashamed of Christ or of being a Christian? Why, then, do you not talk of and about Christ to others?

Yes, a person can feel inadequate to explain or give instruction upon a matter. However, surely you believe you have the hope of eternal life abiding in you, do you not? Romans 5:5 says, "Hope maketh not ashamed." Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." Romans 10:17 teaches that faith is based upon God's word.

Why, then, do you believe what you do? What scriptural truths do you base your hope upon?

If you cannot answer, upon what do you have hope?

If you can answer, why can't you tell others? Are you ashamed?

—Rolf L. Miller  
492 S. Anacapa, Ventura, CA 93001



# Lights in the World

## HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

### Lights in New York City

**T**oday, Albert left us. We wanted him to stay to work with us in our efforts to find honest souls in Atlanta who will accept the gospel. But he left us. He drove off in his old Buick to make the long drive via Pittsburg to New York City.

Albert has been happy in Atlanta during the four months he has spent with us. He came just after his third year in Florida College and he has been busy here teaching publicly and from house to house. I think he left for only two reasons: (1) Last spring he promised Vince Coleman that he would move with him to New York in the fall. (2) There are more lost people in New York than in Atlanta and fewer teachers to reach them. So, he had to go!

You see, Albert Dickson is not what is often called a professional preacher. He is neither seeking a position nor pursuing financial security. While he could be working with a reasonably strong congregation with elders and deacons, owning its own building in a desirable residential area, he has chosen to work with a struggling group of four or five members in a rented hall upstairs over a store in a crowded tenement section of Queens. While he could have a secure income supplied by brethren to whom he is preaching, he will be depending on churches most of which are a thousand miles away to supply what they will for his support.

Last night, in fact, he still had nothing promised. Yet, off he went, confident that "the Lord will provide," either through brethren or through opportunities for work by which he can support himself. Just one thing is certain: as Paul was willing to preach to them that were in Rome (Romans 1:15), Albert fully intends to preach the gospel to them that are in New York City. That is the spirit of a true evangelist.

Vince and Albert will not be entering the great city of New York as "babes in the woods." Both of them are familiar with the metropolitan area. Albert was converted while in the service, but returned to spend some time with a brother in New Jersey. He worked there for a time in secular work, almost in sight of New York City. There, attending the Fair Lawn church, he was "taught the way

of the Lord more perfectly" by Dale Smelser, a faithful evangelist working effectively with that congregation. They have been a great encouragement to him.

Vince was reared in Atlanta, but after finishing Florida College in 1984 he chose to move to New Jersey to work with the Succasunna church. From the beginning of the little church in Queens, Vince has been interested in its growth. He shared with Ron Roark and others the teaching responsibilities, making many trips into the city. His eagerness to be more involved led him to seek for someone who would move there with him and Albert was the one who agreed to do so.

**N**ew York City is one of the true mission fields of the world. Its population is roughly that of Alabama and Tennessee combined, yet congregations adhering to the New Testament pattern are few, indeed. To name those with which I am familiar: besides the little church in Queens, Sam Turrentine is working with a small church in Brooklyn and Gardner Hall is working with two or three Spanish speaking churches. Likely there are others whom the Lord would list, but their number must be few. If brethren in the South and West could be as concerned about that great, largely unevangelized, area as we are about small villages nearby without a church, the story would be different. Could we be guilty of the same attitude as Jonah, concerned for our own people and for our gourds, but unconcerned for a great city where there are more than a million "persons who cannot discern their right hand from their left?"

Thank God for such young men as Albert and Vince who take the great commission seriously. Who knows what God may accomplish through them! This is not written to ask financial support for them. The church in Succasunna, though small and without a preacher, will be providing support for Vince and doubtless, by the time this is read, Albert will have the commitments he needs. This is written to commend their faith to encourage others to imitate them, and to urge us all to have fellowship with these good men in prayer as they "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341





# Rear Views



Ed Harrell

## Always

Susie is a strapping, blond and reasonably handsome shoeshine girl at one of my favorite Tulsa hotels. She is talkative and candid, and when you get your shoes shined you are also likely to get a dose of her down-to-earth philosophy.

I recently mounted the stand while Susie was just finishing brushing off one of the stream of businessmen who don't know her well and try to get too friendly.

She looked up at me and asked, "You wanna know the best line?"

I stammered around (I think I said "No"), but Susie was off and running long before I could get the floor.

"I'll tell you what *always* works. Don't get personal and don't get cute, just tell a woman her hair looks nice. She can't be offended by that and she will be flattered. It *always* works."

"Oh," I replied, trying to indicate that I thought it would be improper for me to pursue this intriguing question any further. We fell into a discursive conversation about the weather, and then for a couple of minutes there was an unusual lull. As Susie went about her business my mind began to mull over this marvelous piece of information that had fortuitously fallen into my hands. I did not have any use for such a valuable secret, and I did not want to pass it on to others lest it be misused, but I was fascinated that such a serious problem had such a simple solution.

The more I pondered, however, the more doubts I entertained. Surely, if anyone could predict human conduct in such encounters, Susie could. But *always*?

I found my mind returning to that theme that so frequently commands my attention—

the inconstancy of man and the constancy of God. Nothing in life is really predictable except that which carries the touch of God. The only certainties we know are day and night, winter and summer, the dependable repetition of natural law. It is those verities, not human predictability, which keeps us sane and makes possible a rational existence.

God's constancy is, indeed, a reflection of His character. As Hebrews 13:8 expresses it: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." God has changed His specific directions through the ages (for instance the Old Testament has given way to the New), but He has not changed His fundamental character. On that we can rely. It is that truth, of course, which is the source of the Christian's hope. Peter warned that "scoffers" would come who would question God's dependability: "Where is

the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But this they are "willingly ignorant of," that God has repeatedly made promises and He has kept them all (2 Peter 3:3-10). What He says is *always* true.

Susie was about to finish my shine by the time my mind stopped wandering. "Hey, Susie," I said, startling her a little bit.

"Are you alive?" She quickly recovered her composure.

"I just wanted to tell you that your hair sure looks nice," I said very seriously.

Even Susie had to think that over for a second. Then she slapped my shoe—hard. I was glad she couldn't reach my face.

"*Always*?"

The word stuck in my head for a week.

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