

THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

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Vol. 34 No. 1

January 2, 1997

THE WELL-BALANCED CHARACTER OF GOD (NO. 2)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

BALANCE BETWEEN POWER AND PURITY

He is all powerful. "And God said" occurs repeatedly in Genesis 1. Each one reflects the awesome power of God in creation. To Abraham in Genesis 17:1 He revealed Himself as "the Almighty God;..." His power is exhibited in bringing in the universal flood upon Noah's godless peers (Genesis 7). Exodus 14 is another chapter depicting His amazing might as He opened the Red Sea as a passage way for Israel to escape Egyptian tyranny. Gabriel, the dispatched angel to Mary the maiden in Luke 1:37 informed her, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." It is affirmed of the Christ, one of the Godhead Three, that he upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrew 1:3).

Yet amidst all this amazing power He is purity personified; He is righteousness in perfection. Faithful Abraham knew that the Judge of the earth would do right (Genesis 18:25). One of the minor prophets of the Old Testament, Habakkuk, wrote these wonderful words of God, "Thou are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:...(Habakkuk 1:13). Inspired James in the New Testament said this of his holy God on heavenly high, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15). What has been described as the "best and shortest biography of the Christ" states in language both eloquent and excellent, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Power and goodness went hand-in-hand with God's Son. In Matthew 28:18 He laid claim to all authority or power. Yet in that very context He sent forth His disciples on a mission of mercy--evangelizing the world in order that all submissive ones might be

saved.

Yet, with man this is not usually the way the matter works. Give a LITTLE man a little power and it corrupts him a little; give that same LITTLE man great power and it will corrupt him wholly. We have all seen what an accumulation of power does to men and women.

Yet with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit there is a beauty of balance between power and purity. They are all-powerful and yet are all-pure and all-good.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN WISDOM AND CONDESCENSION

God is omniscient or all-wise. David in the Old Testament knew of this and wrote, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalm 139:1-6). James, during the Jerusalem Conference, stated, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). The penman of Hebrews wrote, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (4:13).

Yet, in creation, in providence and in redemption He has condescended or come low/to make man, preserve man and save man. Jesus came down to become one of us. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh though no sin ever soiled His pilgrimage while here (Romans 8:3; I Peter 2:22). The fullness of Christ's condescension is captured in these words of wisdom and weight, "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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WHEN A BRIDE FORGETS HER HUSBAND

Kim and Krickitt Carpenter had been married 10 months when they were traveling on Interstate 40 in Mexico and had a wrenching automobile accident. Krickitt was injured the worst and through great determination and the help of her husband Kim, gradually made progress back to normal life. There was however, one big hurdle: The accident, and her head injury, took away the memory of the last 12 months of her life. She didn't know her husband. She would see him daily but felt nothing for him. She called him "that guy." After exhausting every effort to make her remember, Kim finally decided the only way to go about this was to start the courtship over again. He asked her out for a date. Then another. And another. To his delight his plan worked. Although she didn't remember ever being married to him, he still had the same good qualities which made her fall in love with him the first time. He proposed, and she accepted. Kim and Krickitt Carpenter are now married. Again. (For the full story read *Readers Digest*, December 26, pg. 120).

There are several times in the New Testament in which Christians relationship to Christ is compared to the marriage between a husband and a wife. In Ephesians 5:21-27 Paul plainly draws comparisons between Christ's church and man's wife.

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul wrote, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may pre-

sent you as a chaste virgin to Christ." The "other man" who poses the threat of spiritual adultery is the sinful world: Ye adulterers and adulteress's, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

In Matthew 22 Christians are likened to the guests in the wedding of the King's son: "And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. (10) So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests" (Matt. 22:1-3,10).

In Matthew 25, Christians are like virgins who have come to greet the bridegroom as He arrives with His new bride. At His arrival some are prepared, and some are not. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them..."(Matthew 25:1-3). Having a lamp represents being a Christian. The oil represents living faithfully to Him in good works and faithful, diligent service.

But back to the story of Kim and Krickitt, in which a bride tragically forgets her loving and devoted husband. The husband naturally tries to win her back. But all he has to offer her is what he had at the beginning. He once again offers his kind affections, his considerate spirit, his life-long devotions. It worked with Krickitt. She had forgotten her husband, but she hadn't stopped appreciating the wonderful qualities which Kim came to offer her. She fell in love with him all over again. She was won back.

When a Christian, as the bride of Christ, "forgets" Christ, the Lord tries to win her back. He offers the warm embrace of forgiveness (Luke 15:11-24). He sends a Christian family to beg

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THE DREADED "S" WORD

Dalton Key

Asked in Bible Class to define "a sin of omission," one small boy responded, "A sin of omission is a sin we should have committed, but didn't have time to get to."

And if truth were told, that fairly represents the thinking of many today.

Of course most people wouldn't use the word "sin". That word is too staid, too old-fashioned, too judgmental. Sin isn't talked about much these days, even from the pulpit. We hear about "faults," and "lapses in judgment," and "failing to live up to our potential," but the word "sin" rarely surfaces.

Yes, times have changed. Folks who used to require repentance now need understanding. Those who in days past were rebuked for sin are now accepted "as they are." Confession has been replaced with counseling; godly sorrow and repentance with therapy.

The poor publican of Luke, chapter eighteen, who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner, seems pathetic to enlightened, more-secure-with-their-inner-self adherents of twentieth century psycho-babble. To confess sin

appears weak, self-demanding even borderline masochistic. The self-assured Pharisee would be a much better candidate for membership in most modern churches than the pitiable publican.

But modern second-guessing notwithstanding, notice which of the two "went down to his house justified" - the publican. (Luke 18:14.) The poor in spirit have always been better received of heaven than the proud of heart.

The facts are these: Sin is sin, period. "All have sinned." (Romans 3:23.) Even Christians deceive themselves by denying the fact of their own sins. (I John 1:8.) However, Christ came to save from sin. (Matthew 1:21.) And for the child of God, His truth promises, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:19.)

It's strange, isn't it? The less we confess the more we have to confess. Since we have stopped using the "S" word, sin has increased and taken a firmer hold.

Maybe the first step in solving a problem is admitting it.

THE WELL BALANCED CHARACTER OF GOD NO. 2, *continued from page 1*

made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). Scores of times in the gospel records He referred to Himself as "Son of man" which connected Him with those He came to redeem.

Yet, among men those with great wisdom often

are aloof and would never think of condescending to those they deem inferior. Such arrogant people could learn much from the all-wise Godhead who has condescended to humanity in such wonderful ways.

There is a beauty of balance between God's wisdom and His willingness to condescend.

MOST OF A MINUTE THE CLOCKS TICK

Letitia Baldrige is considered one of the leading authorities of etiquette. I was reading an article recently about her and something she said caught my eye. She was discussing the choosing of a proper gift for your host when traveling. Some gifts, she pointed out, are inappropriate. For example, to bring a clock to the Chinese is insulting. Reason? According to Ms. Baldrige, "They look upon the clock as the harbinger of death."

Is the clock really the "harbinger of death"? Well, that depends on your view point. For example, a man who isn't a Christian and

therefore has no hope beyond the grave may hear the clock's tick with discomfort.

Theoretically, each tick brings him a bit closer to the ultimate tragedy in death. A man who is a faithful Christian however looks at death, not necessarily with anticipation, but neither with dread. After all, death to him is but a stepping stone into heaven. The clock ticks him not closer to the end, but closer to beginning...of eternity in heaven.

Revelation 2:10 says "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown for life."

WHEN A BRIDE FORGETS HER HUSBAND, *continued from page 2*

her to return (Gal. 6:1, I Cor. 5). But what does He have to offer? Exactly the same things He possessed and offered which won her the first time. The light of eternal truth. forgiveness. A family of God's people. The promise of the mansions of heaven. That's it. The awesome grandeur of it is to faithful Christians always breathtaking. But suppose a Christian walks away from Christ? Suppose he or she leaves this sweet marriage with Christ with all He has given? Suppose he or she leaves this sweet marriage with Christ with all He has given? Suppose the bride rejects and refuses that? Then the bride will never return, for Christ has nothing more to offer! Hebrews 6:4-7 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Sons of God afresh, and put him to an open

shame."

Are you that spiritual bride who has left Christ? Were you once a faithful part of His body the church, but have now slipped away from living right? Then quickly ask yourself the question that will this very moment reveal whether or not there is hope: Does forgiveness appeal to you? What about the sweet friendship of other Christians in the family of God? What about the right to dream of eternity in the "land that is fairer than day," heaven? If the answer is yes, if these things do appeal to you, then quickly take the steps to come back to Christ. Pray for forgiveness for your sins. Then rush to the next assembly of the Lord's church and let them know that you have turned around and want to be restored. You were once part of His bride, the church. He wants you back.

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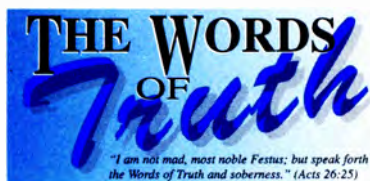
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Individual rates are \$20.50 per year. All bills payable to Words of Truth, 3051 McQueen Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107



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Vol. 34 No. 2

January 9, 1997

THE WELL-BALANCED CHARACTER OF GOD (NO. 3)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN JUSTICE AND MERCY

Two of my all time favorite verses in precious Psalms are, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other...Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Psalms 85:10; 89:14). Here we have mercy, truth, righteousness, peace, justice and judgment all linked by the Inspired word of the Old Testament. God is not a God of all justice with no mercy; He is not a God of all mercy with no justice. He has tempered His justice with marvelous, magnificent mercy. Had He been a God of nothing but justice, He would never have headed for Pentecost when man sinned in Eden. Man deserved justice but God dealt with him in merciful fashion.

Calvary is the best definition of justice tempered with mercy. The justice of God called for punishment for man's sin. God could have said to man, "You have sinned against Me and now you must reap punishment for the same with no manifestation of mercy shown you." But this is not what the merciful Godhead did. He began to unfold His precious plan of redeeming man which culminated in Calvary, the resurrection and the establishment of Christianity upon the earth.

Paul touches God's justice tempered with magnificent mercy in Romans 3:23-26 wherein we read, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." In Calvary God manifested His abomination for sin and yet His amazing mercy for wrecked humanity.

In ancient times there was a king which legislated relative to the crime of adultery. The penalty for

its commission was the loss of both eyes. His own son was the first one to disobey it and thus feel its punishing effects. The loving and yet just king faced a great dilemma. He loved his son and yet the law of the land must be upheld which called for the loss of two eyes. He decided to take one of his own eyes and one of the eyes of his son. This way the law was met and yet mercy was shown. His subjects lost no respect for his moral government and deep was their respect for the mercy he exhibited.

There is a beauty of balance between God's justice and His mercy.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN TRUTH AND LOVE

Love to modern man, is on the front burner; truth, to many of these same people, is on a remote back burner. They find little or no affinity between the two. This is precisely why truth is of no higher premium to them than is error.

God is love as we see reflected in 1 John 4:8,16. The Son and the Saviour are of the very same essence. In the Bible there is no alienation between truth and love. They are royal handmaidens; they go hand-in-hand. God is the very essence of truth. In both His oath and promise it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). Paul taught Titus and the Christians on the Mediterranean isle of Crete this same basic and beautiful truth (Titus 1:2). In the Upper Room Discourse Jesus claimed to be the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). Minus Him there is NO knowing at all. During the Roman phases of His trial He informed Governor Pilate that He had come to bear witness of truth. Pilate inquired, "What is truth?" but awaited no answer from Him who was its very precious personification (John 18:37,38). The Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth" by John both in His gospel record and in his first epistle (John 15:13; 1 John 5:6).

Those who have little or no love for truth really do not have the love of God in their hearts at all.

There is NO imbalance between truth and love in the character of God--NONE at all!

SEE ARTICLES

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VALIANT SERVANTS OF GOD
MEN AND WOMEN ARE
DIFFERENT

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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HOW TO REJECT BIBLE MIRACLES

People who criticize God's word offend me.

Popular Mechanics cover story for December 1996 was entitled *Ancient Mysteries of the Bible*. The editors would have done better to stick to what makes some cars faster and how to repair dishwashers. The article is chocked full of miracles of the Bible and how they can be explained to the satisfaction of any atheist or skeptic. According to the article, these were no miracles at all, but were rather odd quirks in nature--easily explainable by scientific theories. Such explanation, dear reader, is blasphemy, for it seeks to make people distrust the word of God. Jesus said in Matthew 24:24, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." This is just such an effort.

You thought Noah built an ark of Gopher wood as God commanded and that ark with God's blessing withstood a flood which covered the earth? You thought it came to rest on Mount Ararat? "Not so," says David Fasold, who with others have discovered what they claim is the remains of Noah's ark twenty miles from the mountain near the border of Turkey and Iran.

Moses, by inspiration, taught us that Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt. Clearly, Lot and his daughters believed the same thing. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed when God brought down fire from heaven. The Bible says, "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven..." (Genesis 19:24). However, the article in question says, "Harris and Beardow believe that Sodom and Gomorrah were located near the southeast corner of the North Basin because it was rich in both salt from the Dead Sea and bitumen, or asphalt, which was mined nearby. According to their theory, the bitumen could have ignited during an earthquake and the resulting fire would have helped to destroy the cities."

And what about Lot's disobedient wife? "The geologists believe she may have drowned as she fled when the tidal wave swept across the Dead Sea. They also speculate that what Lot saw when he looked back from the safety of the mountain was not his wife transformed into a pillar of salt, but a woman-sized block of salt on the newly formed beach." Evidently when Sodom was ablaze through natural means, a tidal wave came along and doused it.

The scientists argue that there was not necessarily any miracle involved in Moses dividing the Red Sea. How? "...computer calculations indicate that because of the peculiar geography of the northern end of the Red Sea, a moderate wind blowing constantly for about 10 hours could have caused the sea

to recede about a mile and the water level to drop 10 feet, leaving dry land for a period of time before crashing back when the winds died down." Of course, the Bible doesn't say the water receded. Bible students will note an inconsistency. The waters didn't recede. They walled up on both sides: Exodus 14:22 "And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left."

The infidels argue that what Moses saw was not really a burning bush as God spoke to him. The fire was actually burning a seepage of natural gas and oil coming through the ground surface which was ignited by lightening. The bush was a few feet in front of the fire so Moses naturally assumed it was the origin of the fire. However the Bible says, "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed, (Exodus 3:2)."

The authors of this piece believe Lazarus didn't really die, and therefore Jesus did not really raise the dead. According to them, "Police officer Gary Dockery spent a remarkable 7.5 years in a coma. Full recoveries after 3-4 day comas are common." One is left to wonder if these present-day sick folks in comas are without nourishment or liquids for days and years. Do they have cloth tightly wrapped around their breathing passages preventing air flow to the lungs? John 11:44 says about Lazarus, "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." Futhermore, do they smell of the decomposition of death? In John 11:39 Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone." Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, "Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days." The article was silent as the grave about that.

The article concludes sadly with a quote from the Vernon Robbins, professor in the Religious Studies Department at the Candler School of Theology, in Atlanta. "The words of the Bible are not themselves the Word of God. They are human language that is presenting the Word of God." Yet Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," (Matt. 4:4), and then went on to quote the words of the Old Testament to reveal God's truth. God does reveal Himself in words! Words! In John 12:48 Jesus said, "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."

Let us make some concluding observations:

1. These scientists

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VALIANT SERVANTS OF GOD

Johnny Ramsey

Rocks bounded off Stephen's body because he had the unbending loyalty to preach truth to an angry mob that included a great enemy of the gospel--Saul of Tarsus. Death claimed the valiant preacher of righteousness, Stephen, but out of the shadow of his demise arose a man he helped to convert by his sterling message and godly conduct (Acts 7:51-60). That man, Saul, who later was known as the Apostle Paul, would write half of the New Testament and preach across the Roman Empire the very message that had converted him (Acts 13:26-29). Later, in Acts 22, in his famous speech on the Castle's stairs, Paul would tenderly and gratefully recall:

"That faithful martyr, Stephen."

THE GREAT COMMISSION

The Lord had challenged his followers to take the powerful gospel of salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8) to Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. In chapter eight of Acts they present the message of reconciliation (1 Cor. 5:19) to Samaria and "there is great joy in that city" when they believe Philip's preaching concerning Christ and his kingdom. The result naturally follows:

"They were baptized; both men and women."

Later, in this same vibrant chapter, the Secretary of the Treasury, in Ethiopia, hears the clarion call of the gospel under the preaching of Philip, the evangelist, is baptized into Christ and goes on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-29). How simple the message, how profound the results!

"Joy to the world, the Lord has come
Let earth receive its King."

Paul mentions the love of God shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5) and Peter tells of joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter 1:7-8) that belongs to every child of God Almighty. The book of Acts reflects and projects that peace and joy and love in abundance. What a blessed privilege it is to partake of all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 1:3; 3:20). We are indebted to brother T.S. Teddlie for these words:

"O the depth of the riches of God's saving grace
Flowing down from the Cross for me,

There the debt for my sins by the Savior was paid
In His suffering on Calvary!"

CONVERSION OF SAUL

Chapter nine of the grand and eloquent Acts of the Apostles is truly pivotal. Therein are we introduced more fully to the greatest servant Christianity has ever known by virtue of his productivity. The peerless Paul will use his Jewish background, brilliant mind, and educational prowess to magnify the Lord (Phil. 1:20) as Christ's ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20), and to herald the message of salvation to kings and peasants, rich and poor, male and female, Jew and Greek--in a marvelous, surrendered life to Prince Immanuel.

"All to Jesus I surrender
All to Him I freely give
I will ever love and trust Him
In His presence daily live."

Those words, of a favorite gospel hymn truly represent the sacrificial sojourn of an ex-Pharisee that lost himself in the Redeemer's cause. In the third stanza of Philippians the humble devotee of Jesus said:

But what things were gain for me those things I
counted loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus
my Lord. That I may be found in him, not having
a righteousness of mine own...that I may know
him and the fellowship of his sufferings...

Paul was told in Acts 9:16 that he would suffer many things for the name of the Lord and, surely, his life was many times in jeopardy thereafter (1 Cor. 15:30-31; 2 Cor. 1:9), but that courageous soldier persevered even unto death (2 Tim. 4:6-8). What a noble example Paul set for preachers of every age when he willingly counted not his life dear unto himself (Acts 21:13) but gladly poured out his life on the altar of sacrifice for the noble cause of the Savior.

"None of self and all of Thee
Lord, at last, Thy love has conquered,
None of self and all of Thee."

HOW TO REJECT BIBLE MIRACLES, *continued from page 2*

acknowledge the details in scripture which they want, and forget to mention the others. Good scientists do not ignore relevant evidence/data in order to support their preconceived theories.

2. These men were not living at the time the miracles were performed, and therefore can only speculate. The Bible is the only record in existence of many of these occurrences, and they have rejected the Bible. They are left to created theories in their imaginations.

3. If the article is right, then at least some of the Bible's writers are liars, for they wrote about the amazing occurrences, claiming them to be miracles of God.

And if Bible writers are liars, then why does the publisher of Popular Mechanics magazine believe the Bible enough to analyze it?

4. The motivation for such articles is confusing. The writers know, as the article indicates in various places, that they cannot *prove* their far-fetched theo-

ries. Then why bother printing them? It is a natural assumption that they are driven with a desire to derail the faith of God's people.

5. Evidence of God's power is all around us, (Rom. 1:20). It is not hard to believe that a God who can take a seed of corn which decomposes in the soil and make life spring from it, can also do all these other amazing things described in the Bible.

6. If some parts of the Bible, such as the passages describing these miracles, are false, then the entire Bible becomes suspect and unreliable. How could we possibly know which passages to trust and which to reject?

7. If these agnostic scientists of *Popular Mechanics'* fame are right, and the Bible is wrong, then when we all die we simply cease to exist.

If, on the other hand, Bible believers are right, death will usher faithful Christians into heaven, and infidels into hell to reconsider their blasphemous theories.

MOST OF A MINUTE - MEN AND WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT

Men and women are different in so many ways. The Bible of course, recognizes this fact, and teaches us that the differences are designed by our Creator. 1 Peter 3:7 says regarding the marriage relationship, "Husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife..."

Listen, husbands, what do you think would happen if you sat down with your wife and asked her what her five most basic needs in marriage are? According to William F. Harley, Jr., noted marriage

counselor, here is the common list. If you are like most men, these things may surprise you. They are listed in order: 1. affection, 2. conversation, 3. honesty and openness, 4. financial support, 5. family commitment.

Gentlemen, God's word teaches that we should show honor to our wives, and that we should daily be considerate of her needs - and this takes effort, for as you know, men and women really are different.

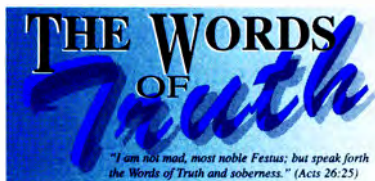
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**THE WELL-BALANCED
CHARACTER OF GOD (NO. 4)
ADVICE FOR A YOUNG MOTHER
BARGAIN BASEMENT RELIGION
LESSONS FROM THE UNIVERSE**

Vol. 34 No. 3

January 16, 1997

THE WELL-BALANCED CHARACTER OF GOD (NO. 4)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES

Even a cursory study of the Bible reveals that God requires positives but He also demands negatives. Our God is not all-positive; He is not all-negative. Were He all of the one and nothing of the other He would not be well-balanced for a surety. Yet amazingly amazing is the realization that we have some all-positive people who do not want any negatives--not as many as one! On the other hand we have some all-negative people who want No positives--not as many as one. God the Father fits neither category; neither does the Son; neither does the Spirit.

Adam and Eve in Eden were given both positives and a negative. People under the Patriarchy were given both positives and negatives. The Ten commandments had mostly negatives but there are positives as well. Bible students tell us that to the Ten Commandments were added six hundred and three other precepts making a total of six hundred thirteen for the Mosaic Dispensation. About 60 percent of these fell into negatives with the remaining forty falling into the positive category.

The New Testament continues with both negatives and positives. Paul placed more negatives into Romans 13:9 than he did positives. He did more of the same in 2 Timothy 4:2 where he wrote to a young dynamic gospel preacher that he "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Here we have two very strong negatives and one powerful positive.

In God's character there is a beauty of balance between the positive He inculcates and the negatives He demands. Those who seek to be all-positive or all-negative cannot please God the Father, God the Son or God the Holy Spirit.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN GRACE AND OBEDIENCE

The Bible Doctrine of Grace does not war against the Bible Doctrine of Obedience. God confers

grace but He also demands obedience as a faithful response from each one of us.

Grace is truly on the front burner within the book of Acts as we see countless ones converted to Christ and Christianity. In fact, there can be no conversions in the absence of grace. But also there could not have been any conversions in the book of Acts minus obedience on the part of men and women, accountable boys and girls. At the Jerusalem Conference Peter reminded the audience that heard him that both Gentiles and Jews were alike saved by grace. Here is his precisely worded proposition, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:11). This makes grace operable in all conversion accounts given by the inspired church historian--Luke the beloved physician. Yet Luke gives major emphasis to the great Bible Doctrine of obedience throughout his second treatise of truth penned to Theophilus. Look at what Peter taught by way of obedience in Acts 2, 10.

Grace is very much on the front burner in the epistles as the various writers major in the sanctification (setting apart for sacred or holy purposes) of the saints of the most High God. In Ephesians 2:8 Paul says they were saved by grace but not by grace only. It was grace through faith. Grace was God's part; faith was man's part. Growing out of the very context is Paul's statement in Ephesians 2:10 wherein we read, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In the very middle of Titus 3 Paul affirmed their justification by God's amazing grace (v. 7). Yet in verses 1,5,8,14 he mentioned actions incumbent on them. In the mind of marvelous Paul grace did not war against obedience and obedience did not war against grace. They still do not among those who accept just what the Bible says on both grace and obedience.

There is nothing but beauty of balance and holiness of harmony between the grace God bestows and the obedience He demands of all of us who seek salvation and relish in redemption.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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ADVICE FOR A YOUNG MOTHER

God's word teaches us that there are occasions on which some ought to talk, and others ought to listen! For example, members of the church ought to listen to what the elders say, Hebrews 13:17; Children ought to listen to their parents, Ephesians 6:4; Husbands and wives ought to listen to one another, Ephesians 5:25, Titus 2:4. We often talk when we should listen, and sometimes listen when we should talk.

Older women are taught in the scriptures to teach the younger women. Titus 2:3-5 says, "The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

Recently I was given a copy of a letter which an older woman lovingly wrote to a young mother. I was impressed with the simplicity of the advice, and the solid values taught here, that I decided to print it for the benefit of our readers, especially young mothers. The handwritten sheet, at the top, said, "Discipline Self in 1997." After noting Titus 2:3-5, the older woman wrote this:

1. Behave always as a lady becoming to the Lord.
2. Be a teacher and example to your family and friends. Your soul is to save, and you are responsible to help save family and friends.
3. Be serious about your responsibility as a wife.
 - A. Love your husband! Show him respect and consideration. Apply the golden rule.

- B. Listen to your husband. Fulfill his needs.
4. Love your children enough to discipline them. That means setting rules and sticking to them.
5. Be honest, open, and modest.
6. Keep your home.
 - A. Keep it clean
 - B. Keep the refrigerator stocked with good nutritious food that will keep them healthy and help them maintain their weight properly.
 - C. Help your family be disciplined in their eating habits.
7. Keep a home that is well ordered, and a husband who is loved. Make sure your children are cared for spiritually and physically.
8. Pray every day--often--for strength and wisdom. Proverbs 3:5-7 says "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.
9. Don't run from or shirk your responsibilities.
10. Always remember that I love you.

This older woman clearly knows what Paul was saying to Titus about teaching the younger women. Many young mothers could richly benefit from the sound advice of older women if it was only given and heeded. May God bless us as we try to help one another please our Father.

BARGAIN BASEMENT RELIGION

Jim Gillaspie

We are a bargain hunting people! Words like “discount”, “Halfprice”, and “reduced” catch our eye. We feel like we have accomplished something when we find a bargain, and then find the same item elsewhere at a higher price. Likewise, we feel frustrated when we buy something, and then see it cheaper at another store. All because we like bargains - we want to get the best price!

However, the church of our Lord is no place to look for bargains! Webster defines bargain as; “Something offered or sold at a price favorable to the buyer.” The verb form means; “to try to get cheaply.” One of the problems of our day is that people are looking for “bargains” in the wrong places - in our homes, in our relationships, in education, and even in the church. Christianity is a religion of sacrifice - not “sale price!” There is a very important principle in 2 Sam 24:21-25. David is going to offer a sacrifice to God, and Araunah freely offers him everything he needs at no charge. David replied; “Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which cost me nothing...” (2 Sam 24:24). David realized that a religion that costs nothing is worth nothing.

Are we paying the price that God is asking of us? Can we honestly say that we are offering Him our best? Or have we become a generation of bargain hunters - even in the Lord’s church? Let’s consider a few areas where we may practice “Bargain Basement Religion.” (1) Cut Rate Reverence: We owe our God a tremendous amount of respect. “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him” (Psa 89:7). Do we always show the reverence that we should, or do we sometimes get a little too casual about our worship? Talking, whispering, and sleeping do not demonstrate reverence. Letting our minds wander does not demonstrate reverence. Are we looking for a bargain here? (2) Half-Price Attendance: All members of the church have heard Hebrew 10:25. and most could quote it. Yet we still have a problem with attendance. I once studied with a young man who had no

religious background at all. When we came to Hebrews 10:25, I asked him if he understood what it meant. He thought a minute and said; “Don’t skip church!” Why do so many of our brethren not understand? Are we looking for bargains? (3) Discontinued Growth: Sometimes we forget our purpose and become content with the status quo. Mark 16:15 gives us our marching orders to carry the Gospel into all the world, but we have built fine buildings and have waited for the world to come to us. Another bargain? (4) Drastically Reduced Enthusiasm: Do we still get as excited about spiritual things as we once did? Or have we become “weary in well doing” (Gal 6:9)? Jesus didn’t look for any bargains...”who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). Dare we seek bargains after the price He paid? (5) Close-Out Commitment: It is difficult to be enthused if we are not committed. We will not grow if we are not committed. There will be no desire to attend if we are not committed. We will lack proper reverence if we are not committed. One of the great needs of the hour is for God’s people to “take up the cross” and follow Him (Luke 9:23). The early Christians were willing to lay down their lives for the church. The cost of commitment was high back then - and it has never been marked down! In Mexico, on religious holidays, peddlers go through the streets selling crucifixes. Some of them shout: “Cheap crosses for sale!” The curse of the church over the past 30 years is that too many of God’s people have been looking for cheap crosses! Close out commitment will never build any church nor save any person.

We can be thankful that our Heavenly Father didn’t look for any bargains. He cared enough to send the very best (John 3:16). It cost Him dearly to build the church (Acts 20:28), and to pay for redemption (1 Pet 1:18-19). How can we look for bargains when it comes to serving Him? Remember David’s words: “I will not offer to my God that which costs me nothing.”

MOST OF A MINUTE - LESSONS FROM THE UNIVERSE

Are you familiar with the term, "Designer clothes"? You probably are. These garments are usually considered to be high quality, high fashion, and high priced. And one more thing...they often have the name of the manufacturer on the outside of the garment so as to be visible.

I read a quote the other day that I think you're going to have a hard time forgetting. Someone said, "God doesn't have to put His name in the corner of a meadow because nobody else makes meadows."

You don't just hear sermons about God

from church pulpits...even though that's important. You are offered great sermons every day on the power, divinity and love of God in the beauties of the Universe He's loaned to us. The vastness of His universe should teach us that the necessity of obedience to this omnipotent God is inescapable.

Psalms 19:1 - "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

Psalms 19:3 - "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

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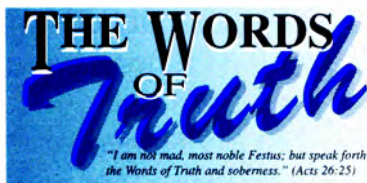
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Congregational Rates: Mailed directly to each family, friends, etc. forty cents per copy payable by the church on receipt of statement the first of following month.

Individual rates are \$20.50 per year. All bills payable to Words of Truth, 3051 McQueen Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107



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THE WORDS OF Truth

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 4

January 23, 1997

THE WELL-BALANCED CHARACTER OF GOD (NO. 5)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN LOVE AND HATRED

John the apostle of love tells us in his wonderful writings what God is like. He is Spirit (John 4:24). He is light (1 John 1:5). He is love (1 John 4:8,16). Being the very essence of love He "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). Yet, this does not mean that He loves everything and has no hatred in His character. Solomon, wisest of the ages, wrote, "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief. A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19). He hated the hypocrisy of their superficial worship and service when their hearts were hollow and filled with vice and corruption (Isaiah 1:10ff). The last writing prophet of the Old Testament, Malachi, spoke of God's holy hatred of the popular divorce system of his day (Malachi 2:14-16). Men and women in our day affirm God's holy toleration or even approval of every type of divorce and remarriage paying no attention to Matthew 5:31,32; 19:3-9. In 2 Corinthians 8,9 there is a wonderful wealth of marvelous material relative to giving. Paul affirmed in 1 Corinthians 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." Surely implied in this is the absence of His love for one who gives grudgingly or of necessity.

How could God love the pure, true and worthy unless He hated the impure, the false and the unworthy? Reverently, we say He cannot!

The Second Person of The Timeless Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, is of even balance relative to love and hatred. He loved man enough to make him as we see affirmed in John 1:1ff; Colossians 1:15-17; Revelation 3:14. His was an everlasting and unchanging love as we see reflected in John 13:1. He loved man enough that He came to earth, as Man of Sorrows, to die in his stead and offer him the sunny rays of redemption. Love reached its greatest climax at Calvary. Surely, no one can survey Execution Hill that Friday morning and afternoon nearly two thousand years ago and be unimpressed with the love of Christ for fallen humanity. This is love unsurpassed and minus any and all parallel.

Yet Jesus Christ is not minus any and all hatred. Prophecy indicated there would be a balance between His love and hatred. In a precious prophecy in Psalms, the First Person addressed the Second Person of the Godhead Three and declared, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (45:6,7). We read of the pinpoint fulfillment of this in Hebrews 1:8,9, "But unto the Son, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." In Revelation 2,3 Jesus addressed the churches of Asia. To two of them, Ephesus and Pergamon, he had John write, "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Revelation 2:6,15). We, too, must strike a happy balance relative to what we hate and what we love.

WHEN A CHRISTIAN SINS

Benny W. Hester

In his book, A NATION OF VICTIMS, Charles J. Sykes relates the following: "An F.B.I. agent embezzles two thousand dollars from the government and then loses all of it in an afternoon of gambling in Atlantic City. He is fired but wins reinstatement after a court rules that his affinity for gambling with other people's money is a "handicap" and thus protected under federal law." (The court, of course, should have described him as "differently abled.")

"Fired for consistently showing up late at work, a former school district employee sues his former employers, arguing that he is a victim of what his lawyer calls "chronic lateness syndrome."

"In Framingham, Massachusetts, a young man steals a car from a parking lot and is killed while driving it. His family sues the proprietor of the parking lot for failing to take steps to prevent such thefts."

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FROM THE EDITOR

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TAKE ME BACK TO JAIL

Most Bible students are familiar with the details of Paul and Silas in a Philippi jail at midnight in Acts 16. We know about the singing and praying, a sweet light of faith and courage in a cell of darkness. We remember the earthquake which flung open the doors and loosed the chains, and a jailer crying out the world's most important question, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Paul taught that man the Gospel that night. The jailer took his two evangelistic prisoners to a pool of water where he washed their stripes in repentance and was baptized. His baptism was a natural obedience to what he was taught. Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." What had Jesus taught that prompted this man to go that night straight to the pool for immersion? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall not be condemned," (Mark 16:16).

But there is a detail here some may have never considered. The next morning the Roman magistrates sent sergeants to the prison to get Paul and Silas. They were there waiting. We can assume that Paul and Silas were shackled and sitting locked in their inner cell just as they were the day before, because the Roman sergeant saw nothing there which surprised him.

Imagine the conversation which must have transpired after the midnight baptism, at the supper table in the jailer's house. The jailer was serving food to Paul and Silas.

Paul: "That was good food. Now we better be getting back."

Jailer: "Back? Back where?"

Paul: "Back to the jail. You need to lock us back up."

Jailer: "I don't see how I can! I feel badly enough about how you've been treated. You were viciously beaten and your backs are a mess. You have bruises now on your ankles where the stocks were locked to your legs. You have shown me Jesus. You showed me how to have my sins forgiven. I am on my way to heaven because of you. You are my brethren in the Lord. How can I possibly take you back to that awful place?"

Paul: "We won't have it any other way. If we don't go back, and the sergeants come at dawn, they will see we have escaped and they will surely execute you for not stopping us. We are just not going to let that happen."

Though this conversation is imaginary, what we do know is that after feeding his guests the jailer took them back to jail. They didn't have to go, and he knew it. He knew that the power of Heaven had opened those prison doors, and he could not bind them even if he wanted to!

That night, Paul and Silas taught their new brother in the Lord about freedom. It is freedom which every Christian possesses but which we often ignore. When

Jesus was beginning His earthly ministry He stood in the synagogue and read from Isaiah 61, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." (Luke 4:18) "Deliverance to the captives" is to all of us who have ever needed forgiveness from sins but could not pay the price for redemption. Jesus freed us from the bondage of sin with the key of truth. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free, (John 8:32)." From a purely spiritual standpoint, the irony of Acts 16 is that the prisoners were free while the jailer was in bondage.

They taught the young Christian the selflessness of Christianity, and what Jesus meant when He said, "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted," (Matthew 23:11-12). Paul could have reasoned, "Why should I go back to that cold, damp cell? I'm exhausted. My back hurts so much I can't even lay on it. There is a nice guest room for me at Lydia's house, and it's a short walk. Surely no one would fault me for not going back to that miserable jail." But Paul did not reason this way. He went back. He was a great Christian because he was a serving Christian. You should want to be the greatest Christian in your city--greatest by Jesus' standards.

Finally, Paul and Silas taught us how important it is to show a good example to new converts to Christianity. This unselfish act of returning to the jail meant a great deal to the jailer. First, because it spared his life, and second, because he saw something he had probably never seen before: Genuine caring Christians. Once someone sees it, they usually want to be that way themselves.

That night, Paul and Silas were acting on an attitude which Jesus showed His disciples before He died:

"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them, (John 13:12-17)"

May God bless us all with such happiness.

According to the philosophy of our day, nothing "wrong" is ever OUR FAULT. There is no longer anything called "SIN". Whatever we do, whatever we say, is someone else's fault. Our parents may have withheld something we wanted as a child. Our parents may have been too strict in raising us. The kids in our class at school may not have liked us. Then, when we became adults, our sins and mistakes are NEVER OUR OWN. We are just victims our raising.

Actually this is nothing new. Remember Adam and Eve in the beautiful Garden of Eden? They had everything they could possibly need. Yet, when the devil tempted Eve, she submitted to the temptation. She then gave her husband to eat of the fruit. THEY HAD SINNED. God had told them that they could eat of every tree in the garden with the exception of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They were warned of what would happen if they did. Of course the devil said in Gen. 3:4 "...ye shall not surely die:" (Sounds like some psychiatrists today doesn't it?) The advice seems to be, "Do what you want to do. Nothing is wrong in and of itself."

Gen. 3:8 reads, "And they heard God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." After talking with them, God asked in vrs. 11,

"...Hast thou eaten of the tree, wherof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" NOW, LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THE RESPONSE. Gen. 3:12, "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." God then said to the woman in the next verse, "...What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

When you read the above, you will find Adam and Eve making this excuse to God, "I am a victim." "The SERPENT caused it." "The WOMAN caused it." Then finally, "The woman that THOU gavest to be with me caused it." You see, they finally blamed God with all the trouble they had brought upon themselves.

Let us be willing to admit sin when it rears it's ugly head in our lives. God has made it possible for us to receive forgiveness of our sins when we do what he says. 1 John 12:9 reads, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The following verse says, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

As Christians, we sometimes sin. Let us be willing always to turn to God and not excuses.

WHY SOME REJECT THE OLD PATHS

John Ramsey

The weeping prophet of Anathoth made it very clear that refusing to walk in the "old paths" was a definite sign of apostasy on the part of Judah (Jer. 6:16). Another prophet abruptly told his fellows to "leave the landmarks alone" (Hos. 5:10). Babylonian captivity was a harsh reality for thousands because of rebellion in their hearts and spiritual apathy in their lives! And today one can see the same trend within the church. Especially can we observe a disdain for God's plan regarding the purity of the church and the sanctity of the home.

Following the biblical criteria is more than some folks intend to do. When we read and compare the background of the problem in Jeremiah's day with the parallel situation in 1980 we learn again that human nature has not changed in all these centuries. A current lack of regard for divine mandates can be clearly detected by any honest student of the Scriptures. What caused apostasy in Jeremiah's time? Why would his contemporaries reject the "old paths? And why are these exact problems in our midst today?

Let us list eight clear-cut contributions to Judah's folly in 600 B.C. and then see the sad application to our own spiritual decline. If we can gain insight into human weakness and thereby correct our backsliding ways our study shall be beneficial. If we do not have the wisdom and fortitude to change then something even worse than Babylonian captivity awaits us. The reasons God punished Israel and Judah can be found in Judges 2 and II Chronicles 36. Briefly, those passages tell us that Jehovah was tired of their:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) Idolatry | (5) Stubborn will |
| (2) Ingratitude | (6) Rebellion toward God's Word |
| (3) Immorality | (7) Flippant attitude in worship |
| (4) Disobedience | (8) Mocking of the prophets |

The form of idolatry that staggers many people today is the overwhelming sin of covetousness (Col. 3:5). In the church we have many stingy givers who hinder the progress of the gospel due to an obsession with houses, lands, furs, jewelry and other fancy, mundane concerns that war against the simplicity of the old paths! Worldliness occupied the minds of Israel and Judah in the days of the prophets of old, and such carnality robs God of full allegiance from many professed Christians in our time.

Rebellion toward the word of the Lord is graphically portrayed in the lack of bible knowledge so rampant among members of the body of Christ in this generation. We cannot walk in the old paths if we do not even know where they are (II Tim. 2:15)! We cannot teach what we do not know (Heb. 5:12). When we procrastinate about improving our spiritual depth this very delay becomes a tool of the Devil in capturing our souls and heading us in the direction of bondage. Far too many of us seek out easy preaching that demands very little because we "love to have it so" (Jer. 5:31).

One of the saddest scenes in the scenario of Judah's doom comes in Jer. 7:1-11 where the seed of Abraham made their sanctuary their cemetery! Yes, they put too much stress on the temple and forgot to cleanse their hearts (Joel 2:13). Likewise, some brethren today refuse to walk in the old paths of personal devotion while they foolishly center their religion around a building, a paid "staff" and a program. When we try to guide ourselves (Jer. 10:23) we lose contact with our Maker (II Cor. 3:5) and the church crumbles. Such deterioration was carefully chronicled in Lamentations 4 where Jeremiah weeping reminded Judah of how the people who had been raised in scarlet now searched the garbage dumps looking for tiny reminders of the past!

MOST OF A MINUTE - EBONICS

By now you've heard about the Oakland California school board's decision to recognize Ebonics as a legitimate language accepted and taught in the school system. Ebonics is the incorrect English of the ghetto. In this school system it would be considered correct to say, "I stays at this house," or "I be comin witch you."

Ebonics is but another example of an effort afoot to lower standards in America. Its the same mentality which argued "we ought to legalize drugs--that way drug dealers and users won't be breaking the law any more." The idea is that instead of people pulling themselves up to the standard, we pull the standard down to where peo-

ple are already living. Now when considering our language we aren't worried about our position effecting our eternal destiny in heaven or hell. But this "lower the standard" mentality happens in people's religion too. So many religions today are based more on people's feelings than what the Bible says. Unfortunately for them however, we will be judged one day not on how we felt, but on the word of the Lord. John 12:48 -- "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."

WHY SOME REJECT THE OLD PATHS, *continued from page 3*

Just as Judah mocked the prophets some brethren today chide faithful proclaimers of the gospel. In fact, a favorite pastime of some folk is to run off those devoted to truth. And as the *marriage and divorce* issue becomes more sticky due to worldly people who put asunder what God has joined together (Matt. 19:6-9) we can expect even more ridicule. Walking in the old paths of marital purity is more than some will tolerate. But walking in the broad path that leads to perdition (Matt. 7:13-14) will prove to be a course we will live

to regret. Deceptive human pride thwarts heaven's plan and causes us to fall (Prov. 16:18).

Jeremiah impressed Judah that one must *seek* the old paths and not *avoid* them. Therein is the key. When good and honest hearts *desire* to do right in the sight of heaven, the problem is solved. May God Help us to point men in that direction and to be sure that we walk there as well!

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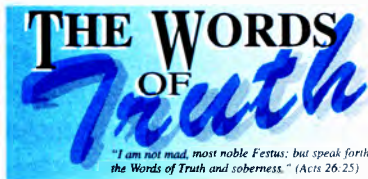
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THE WORDS OF Truth

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 5

January 30, 1997

THE WELL-BALANCED CHARACTER OF GOD (NO. 6)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN PERFECTION AND PATIENCE

Each member of the Timeless Trinity is absolutely perfect minus any spot or blemish. Jesus spoke of the Father along this line in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." We can only be perfect in a relative sense or in the sense of being spiritually mature (cf. Philippians 3:15). God is infinitely perfect in all His attributes. He is perfect in His wisdom, power, goodness, benevolence, etc. He is perfect in what He says and in what He does. He is perfect with reference to the past, the present and the future. When He finished His creative activity at the end of day six during that eventful week, He surveyed all He had just made and declared it to be "very good" (Genesis 1:31). In redemption He is perfect in the plan He drafted, the Son He executed and the Holy Spirit revealed within the pages of Sacred Scripture.

Yet, in all his amazing perfection He is patient or longsuffering with finite, frail man. Look how long He waited between the time He announced what He was going to do relative to man's great evil in Genesis 6 and the coming of that universal flood--one hundred and twenty years (Genesis 6:3, 13). He was patient or longsuffering as Noah and his family of seven constructed the ark. Peter called to mind just such longsuffering on God's part by writing, "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Peter 3:20). He was longsuffering with Jacob during his struggle to change from being a supplanter to a prince that prevailed in power with God. He was patient with fickle Israel during the wandering over forty long years. It was while they were in that barren wilderness that Moses was allowed a coveted glimpse of God's glory upon holy Horeb. God passed by while Moses was in the cleft of the rock and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,..." (Exodus 34:6). Had it not been for His merciful longsuffering of them in the

wilderness, rebellious Israel would have never survived those four decades between the Red Sea and the eastern banks of the Jordan River. He was longsuffering with His people after they were situated in Canaan's land. He was longsuffering with His prophets, His kings and His priests as they went about their respective duties in leading His people. He was still longsuffering with them and planned carefully for their restoration back to the land long theirs.

As God in human flesh during the Incarnation period, Jesus was amazingly patient and longsuffering with His people, especially His apostles. They were so slow in giving up their materialistic concepts about what the Messianic kingdom was going to be like. He was longsuffering with Simon Peter, a diamond in the rough but how much polishing the Heavenly Jeweler did with the rugged fisherman from Galilee. Peter never forgot the Lord's longsuffering nature and referred to it in both of his epistles (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:15). The former passage has already been quoted in this article. The latter passage states, "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;..." Compare also what he wrote in 2 Peter 3:9. Each day, month, year and decade that the Father retains the Son in heaven prior to the second advent is an additional period of time allowing man to obey the gospel and thus be saved.

As a rule the more perfect that man is relative to a certain activity, the less patience he has with those who perform far less proficiently than does he. We have all known of such cases and many have been on the receiving end of those short of patience with their efforts to master some particular line of human endeavor. We can all be very grateful that God, even though perfect in an absolute sense Himself, is patient and longsuffering with us in our weakness and frailties.

There is a beauty of balance between His absolute perfection and His amazing patience and longsuffering with each one of us.

**SEE ARTICLES
INSIDE:
THE WELL-BALANCED
CHARACTER OF GOD (NO. 6)
WHAT TO PREACH NEXT SUNDAY
DOES THE CHURCH NEED A
REVIVAL?
KNEE DEEP IN BLESSINGS**

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 6th Avenue
Jasper, AL 35501

WHAT TO PREACH NEXT SUNDAY

This article is to encourage all the preachers who read the *Words of Truth*. Preachers face the challenging task of presenting lessons week after week that are Biblical, well prepared, thought provoking, inspiring, and motivational. As time passes in a particular congregation this becomes even more challenging, and demands deeper study. Some may loose their course. They may gradually loose sight of what they are really up there to do. Preachers who love souls and who love Jesus Christ are there to preach the Gospel. They are not there to entertain, to pacify, or to simply fill a job and draw a check. They are there with the world's greatest purpose: To preach the Gospel.

The scriptures hold the Gospel in highest esteem. The word "gospel" is found ninety-five times in the Bible. It is defined by Strong's Greek Lexicon as "the glad tidings of the kingdom of God soon to be set up, and subsequently also of Jesus the Messiah, the founder of this kingdom. After the death of Christ, the term comprises also the preaching of (concerning) Jesus Christ as having suffered death on the cross to procure eternal salvation for the men in the kingdom of God, but as restored to life and exalted to the right hand of God in heaven, thence to return in majesty to consummate the kingdom of God; the glad tidings of salvation through Christ."

Why should a man preach the gospel? Here are twelve reasons.

1. Because if your listeners are saved it will be by the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."

2. Because the Gospel is for all people.

Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations..."

3. Because we are obligated to preach the Gospel.

Mark 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

4. Because every occurrence of the word "Gospel" in the book of Acts, the book of conversions, is about preaching the Gospel.

Acts 8:25 "And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans."

Acts 14:7 "And there they preached the gospel."

Acts 14:21 "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch..."

Acts 15:7 "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe."

Acts 16:10 "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."

Acts 20:24 "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

5. Because the Gospel is good news!

Romans 10:15 "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

6. Because the Gospel must be obeyed.

Romans 10:16 "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"

2 Thessalonians 1:8 "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 4:17 "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

7. Because people become children of God through the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 4:15 "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

8. Because preachers are obligated to preach the Gospel, and will suffer if they do not.

1 Corinthians 9:16 "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

9. Because preaching illuminates the truth.

2 Corinthians 4:4 "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

10. Because there are some who preach to distort the truth.

continued on page 4

DOES THE CHURCH NEED A REVIVAL?

Jim Gillaspie

A little boy and his father attended church services one day. The little boy noticed a plaque on the wall, and asked his dad what it was for. The father replied that it was for all the members of that congregation who had died in the service. The little boy thought a minute, and then asked; "Did they die in the morning service, or the evening service?"

The truth is, far more members have died in service than we would like to admit! The apostle Paul recognized this in 1 Cor 15:34, when he said: "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." When Jesus addressed the church at Laodicea, He said, "I wish you were cold or hot" (Rev 3:15). He went on to call them "Lukewarm" (Rev 3:16), and urged them to be zealous and repent (Rev 3:19). How can the church today have a lasting revival?

First, let us understand what revival is. Psalms 85:6 reads: "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" The word "revive" means to keep alive, to recover, to repair, or to restore to life. When it comes to the church, these words are certainly appropriate. Churches that are dead need to be "restored to life!" Churches that have sold out to Satan need to be "recovered!" Surely there is a need for true revival today!

But notice where this revival comes from. It does not come from a "feel good seminar" (Prov 14:12). It does not come from compromise with religious error (Matt 15:9, John 4:24). It does not come from "tolerance" for the sins of mankind (2 Cor 6:17, 1 Cor 15:33). Rather, a true revival comes from God. "Wilt Thou not revive us again..." was the plea of the Psalmist. Our spiritual revival must be God centered, not man centered. Too many folks today get converted to the preacher. When the preacher moves, the revival ends. True revival begins with God. Paul said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). To have true

revival, the will must be completely submitted to Him (Matt 7:21). When we crucify self, and allow Christ to reign supreme in our lives, we will have a lasting revival (Gal 2:20).

New life is essential to lasting revival. We have already seen that the word revival can mean to "come back to life." We are brought to life spiritually when we experience the new birth (John 3:3-5). Peter says we then need to grow as new born babes, by desiring the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2). We are to continue to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Pet 3:18). When we quit growing, we start dying. Psalm 85:6 is talking about the resuscitation of our spiritual being. It is talking about breathing new life into a spiritual body that has become cold and still. This can only happen as we feed again on the word of God. Jesus said: "...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

Finally, notice that joy is the key to lasting revival. The Psalmist asked; "Wilt Thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in Thee?" (Psa 85:6). A church that is spiritually dead cannot get excited about spiritual things. There is simply a "going through the motions" (Matt 15:8). The spiritually dead cannot rejoice, because sin destroys all joy (Psa 51:1-3, 12). When sin is removed, then we can "rejoice with joy unspeakable (1 Pet 1:8). When joy is restored, it will fill the empty void, and make a lasting revival.

May God revive us again! May it be permanent revival! May we find new life and new joy in our service to Him, so that one day, we will hear Him say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

MOST OF A MINUTE - KNEE DEEP IN BLESSINGS

Kathy Mattea sings a beautiful song called, "Standing Knee-Deep in a River (Dying of Thirst)". Its a song of friends who have been taken for granted, sweethearts she had known, and a wonderful world full of strangers just waiting to make a connection with us while we turn our eyes away.

Sometimes happiness in life isn't another car, another dollar, another this or that. It is a great blessing to one day stop and just realize that we have everything in life we need to

make us happy. Simple conscious awareness of what we have is so refreshing. How many of us go through our days parched and empty, thirsting after happiness, when we're really standing knee-deep in the river of abundance?

God, through His word, will help you do this. The apostle Paul said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (Phil. 4:11)

WHAT TO PREACH NEXT SUNDAY, *continued from page 2*

Galatians 1:7-11 "Which is not another, but there be some which trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man."

11. Because the preaching the Gospel demands conviction of its truth.

Galatians 2:5 "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."

12. Because the Gospel offers men life and immortality.

2 Timothy 1:10 "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

There it is. Men, go preach the Gospel. Preach it simply, Biblically, fervently, courageously. Never lose heart. Time for men is always short and eternity is long.

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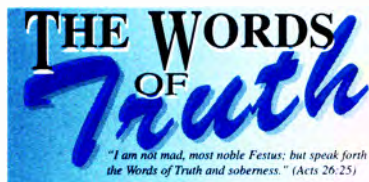
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Individual rates are \$20.50 per year. All bills payable to Words of Truth, 3051 McQueen Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107



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THE WAY HE SAID IT
"LET'S BUILD THOSE
BRIDGES!"
THE PARABLES OF JESUS
1997 THE NUMBER SEVEN**

Vol. 34 No. 6

February 6, 1997

THE WELL-BALANCED CHARACTER OF GOD (NO. 7)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN HIM AS REWARDER AND PUNISHER

He is not just a God who rewards and never punishes; He is not a God who just punishes and never rewards. There is a blending balance between these concepts. The book of Hebrews sets forth both of these portraits of God. Hebrews 11:6 sets Him forth as rewarder. The familiar passage reads, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a REWARDER of them that diligently seek him" (Emphasis supplied). But in the chapter right before and the chapter immediately thereafter, He is set forth in His punishing role. Note this duet of declarations, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God...For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 10:31; 12:29). In 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 we read, "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." In this interesting, intriguing passage Paul depicts two classes of people--the troublers and the troubled. The troublers were non-Christians who persecuted the sons of God. The troubled were the sons of God who were suffering trials, tribulations, privations and persecutions. There are two recompenses--tribulation for the troublers and rest for the troubled. As punisher He will bring tribulation upon those who hate His Son and His saints on earth. As rewarder He will tender rest to those tried and persistently persecuted by the sons of Satan.

Both rewards and punishments are experienced in three different realms--in this life, immediately subsequent to death in the Hadean realm and beyond final judgment. Those who obey God now become His children; they have access to all spiritual blessings in Christ as per Ephesians 1:3; they are on praying grounds and pleading grounds

with Him; they have hope in Christ; they may and must worship Him in spirit and in truth; they experience the sweetest fellowship this old earth offers; they are objects of His Fatherly care and sympathy. Beyond death they go to Abraham's bosom where there is rest, comfort and pleasure. This is where righteous Lazarus went after he had paid nature's final debt--as physical demise had been descriptively called. From final judgment onward they will inherit the kingdom prepared for them by the Lord of Glory as per Matthew 25:34. They will enter into the joys of the Lord (Matthew 25:21,23). This is the royal realm Jesus is now preparing and making ready for the reception of His people when mundane affairs are brought to a final close.

Punishments, likewise, comes in three dimensions--prior to death, subsequent to death and then subsequent to final judgment. Solomon wrote in the Old Testament that "the way of the transgressors is hard (Proverbs 13:15). Note the tense of the employed verb---IS---not just SHALL BE. There is punishment for sin in this life--not ultimate or fullness of punishment but some of it is now administered the wicked sons of Satan. Immediately subsequent to death there is Hadean torment as per Luke 16:19-31. This lasts for the wicked from the time of physical death to the coming of final judgment. From judgment onward the wicked will go into everlasting fire as per Matthew 25:46. Other descriptions of this horrible realm are found in Matthew 3:11,12; 13:42; 25:41; Mark 9:44-48; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 14:11; 20:14,15; 21:8,15. Hell is horrible in every New Testament description we have of it. God is balanced as rewarder and punisher. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people; hell is a prepared place for an unprepared people as per Matthew 25:34ff and John 14:1ff.

CONCLUSION

From the ten major points covered in this series we see the perfect balance in God's character. Let us never make the mistake of elevating one of His attributes and lowering another one of them simply because we admire the one we elevate and detest the one we lower to reject.

FROM THE EDITOR

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THE WAY HE SAID IT

When we speak, we communicate using more than just words. We express ourselves while we speak with our facial expression, our gestures, and the inflection in our voice. We can assume that this was also true during the time Jesus was a man. Surely when talking to His disciples and others He sometimes smiled, or grimaced, or nodded His head in agreement. Perhaps the inflection in His voice occasionally helped the listeners understand His meaning.

There are few passages which I have studied over the past year or so which are somewhat troubling. When read they may leave the student perplexed. Let me suggest that in a limited number of cases, the inflection in Jesus' voice may have made His meaning crystal clear to those who actually heard Him speak.

For example, consider Luke 14:16-21. Jesus was in the synagogue and stood to read. They handed Him the book of Isaiah, and He read from chapter 61. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He sat down, and look at the reaction of the other people present: "And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him (Luke 4:20)." Why did they look so intently on Him? The public reading of scripture was common. There must have been something about the way He read--some inflection in His voice--that made the people understand that He was claiming to be the very Messiah.

Consider another. In John 2:3-8 we read, "And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them,

Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it."

A casual reading of this passage makes one think Jesus is refusing His mother's request for more wine. In fact, it appears that He refuses with a cool rebuke. But look at Mary's reaction! She immediately indicates to the servants that Jesus would need their help because He was going to get the wine. Why did she do that after He said what He did? Jesus appeared to say "No", and she took it for a "Yes". Consider that Jesus and Mary loved one deeply as a mother and son should. Under what conditions can you imagine a loving son speaking to His mother this way? Perhaps with a smile, a wink, and an inflection in His voice suggesting playful sarcasm. That would explain why Mary heard what amounted to a "No", and took it for a "Yes."

Another possible example of this is in Luke 16:1-10. Jesus describes a servant who is dishonest and conniving with his master's goods. And yet, Jesus concludes by saying, "And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations, (Luke 16:8-9)." That Jesus would commend and teach such deception seems impossible. That Jesus would say that the "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness" would receive us into "everlasting habitations," is shocking because it goes against so much of His other teaching. That is, of course, unless Jesus was using sarcasm with these listeners in order to make His point. If indeed Jesus employed sarcasm in this text, the teaching makes perfectly good sense, and a poignant point.

This possibility is admittedly speculative, and should never be used to try and alter the plain and simple teaching of Jesus. Yet, it may help unlock the truth behind a few passages which have been troublesome to serious Bible students.

“LET’S BUILD THOSE BRIDGES!”

Neal Pollard

U. S. Presidents are sometimes remembered for single phrases. “Ask not what your country can do...,” “I am not a crook...,” “I...can’t remember,” “Read my lips...,” and, more recently, “What I really meant was...” Concepts and images also stick to one’s remembrance of American Commanders in Chief. “Walk softly, but carry a big stick.” “A thousand points of light.” “Build a bridge to the future.”

Sometimes, values in this society are distorted. Catch phrases, constructed by ungodly men, are the slogans used to push Satan’s agenda. However, some of these ungodly concepts, sheltered under the umbrella of concise sound bytes, are important and right when taken from the biblical frame of reference.

For instance, mankind needs “values clarification.” That is, the moral and doctrinal stand a person, particularly a Christian, takes should be clearly known to everyone (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:15). There can be a great gulf separating what a person professes to believe on Sunday with what he actually does throughout the week!

Further, there is great need for “outcome-based education.” Evaluating the Bible school program of the local church, great care needs to be taken with regard to the curriculum chosen. Will it help produce souls which, upon maturity, know more about the Bible than only Adam and Eve, Mary and Joseph, and Jesus, know the distinctive qualities concerning the church and daily living, know the importance of living in view of eternity, and know the Lord well enough not to leave

Him in adulthood? Has enough scrutiny taken place, as pertains to the Bible material congregations use to shape minds and build bridges to heaven? What results are being produced from the Bible school?

Additionally, more emphasis needs to be placed on “choice.” Joshua emphasized it (Joshua 24:15). David thought choice was important (1 Chronicles 21:10ff). Job did, too (34:4). Jerusalem church of Christ made a very deliberate choice, marking its importance (Acts 6:5ff). Paul made circumspect choices (Acts 15:40). Hardened hearts decide rather quickly, needing no time to weigh a thought, word, or action with the divine standard. Hearts which yield in obedience to Christ, by deliberation and examination, choose carefully those same things.

“Affirmative action” is important. There are important steps men must take to please God. Becoming a Christian involves taking action in agreement with God (following the plan of salvation). “Can two walk together, except they be agreed” (Amos 3:3)? Thus, no one can walk with God whose deeds do not comply with His will. One’s actions must reflect Christlikeness (cf. 1 John 1:3-7). Act only in concurrence with God!

There are flaws in the human plans which carry the names in the above quotation marks. But, the abiblical terms are biblical principles when they are used in light of scripture. Each individual must build a bridge over sin and neglect if he will finally reach God. Otherwise, the final moment of reckoning before Christ the Judge will be “a day which will live in (eternal, painful) infamy!”

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Johnny Ramsey

There are thirty major parables of our Lord in the four accounts of the gospel. These masterful lessons thrill our souls and challenge our intellect. Knowing what is in man (John 2:25) Christ was able to convey grand truths in special and memorable ways never to be forgotten. These earthly stories with heavenly meanings have warmed the hearts of millions for 2,000 years. They stand as a tribute to the genius of the communication skills of Jesus. They are ever fresh and new though they are the heart of the legend that caused Nicodemus to exclaim in John 3:2...

Thou art a teacher come from God!

In the first seven parables that launched His epochal journey into this form of teaching technique the Saviour captured the heart and core of the nature of His kingdom. Matthew 13 is a unique journey into the mind of Deity. We learn major points about the cause of Christ. In reflecting upon the parable of the Sower we can see the power of truth hindered by the hard and indifferent hearts of men. Only a few with good and

honest inclination accept the challenge of truth. Jesus taught us to sow the seed and not personally to be discouraged when only a minority obey. In the parable of the Tares we can understand that Satan tries desperately to confuse the world with counterfeit religion and careless endeavor. We may have to wait until Judgment Day to see the end result of this battle between good and evil that fills us with consternation now. Then, in two parables concerning leaven and mustard see we are told valuable points that enlighten and challenge us. It is very important for us to allow God to give the increase and take charge of keeping the roll book. The Lord adds to the church and keeps the record accurately. Read Acts 2:41; 1 Corinthians 3:6-7; Revelation 3:1-5! From a very small beginning Christianity grew to a wonderful power in the midst of an unbelieving world without the pomp and clever tactics used by false religions. May God help us to be content with the simple sowing of the seed and never engage in the gimmicks and gadgets of carnality.

The next two parables are truly marvelous reminders of the incomparable value of God's kingdom. The pearl of great price and the hidden treasure form a magnificent tribute to the blessings that attend salvation. Worth far more than the wealth of secular enterprise is the depth of truth and redemption in Christ Jesus.

Take the world, but give me Jesus,
All its joys are but a name;
But His love abideth ever,
Through the endless years the same.

The enduring quality of the gospel transcends all the charming and fleeting vanity of Satan's enchanting and devious schemes.

In the seventh parable of Matthew 13 our blessed Redeemer makes it very clear that no evil or error, how-

ever well-disguised will slip through the net when the final curtain falls. Even if sinners can bluff their way and deceive their friends in this brief life they will face eternity without hope.

You can fool the hapless public
You can be a subtle fraud
You can advertise your virtues
But you cannot fool God!

When Jesus began to teach in parables he left a legacy that reaches the hearts and minds of men. We must preach the word but allow God to take care of the harvest. We must be patient and allow the leaven time to produce the growth. The tremendous value of the kingdom deserves our very best endeavor. And, ultimately, the righteous will not have to put up with sinners. Praise God.

MOST OF A MINUTE - 1997 THE NUMBER SEVEN

The new year, 1997, has officially begun. Are you accustomed to writing it yet?

A study of numbers in the Bible is interesting, particularly the number seven. It is found in the Bible 391 times. And while there is nothing magic about the number seven, it is arguably God's favorite number. There are seven days in a week. There are seven notes of music, and seven colors in the rainbow.

Over the years, seven became a number which represents completeness. That's probably why Peter used

the number when asking Jesus about how many times to forgive a brother who keeps on and on wronging you. In Matthew 18:21 Peter asks, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Peter figured that would be to completely forgive the man, even though after that the forgiveness stops. Listen to Jesus answer: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

Whenever we are asked for our forgiveness, Jesus expects us to forgive.

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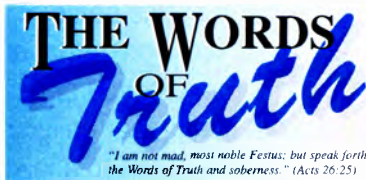
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THE WORDS OF Truth

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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HOW TO MAKE IT RAIN

The Athenians, (Acts 17:21) loved new thoughts. Their minds were open windows with no screens to keep anything undesirable out. When they heard Paul offer them the sweet and pure Gospel of Christ it was to them just another opinion among many. Some today are like that. They fancy themselves as open-minded, liberal thinkers. It is difficult for them to ever believe we have absolute truth. Bible classes, instead of being sessions in which Bible truth is taught, become discussion sessions in which any and all opinions are given equal value of validity, no matter what they are, or how much they conflict with other Bible passages.

Assertions are not proof of truth. People can assert any number of falsehoods and do so convincingly, but that won't make a false statement of doctrine true.

Suppose someone asserted the following: "Washing one's car effects rainfall. Rain is more probable on a particular day if on the day before, one washed his car." This line of reasoning is offered as proof:

1. Although I don't know how many times this has occurred with me, it has been many, and seems more likely than not to occur.
2. Most, if not all, of the people you ask would say that this has certainly occurred with them one time or another.
3. Since man doesn't control the rain, how can you prove that the two aren't connected?

Pretty good arguments. Are you convinced?

Of course we all know that God sends the rain (Matt. 5:45), and that the washing of one car is not going to motivate Him to bring rain on a town or state of people. His goodness brings the rain. Washing a car has nothing to do with causing rain to fall!

Consider however, that this style of smoke-and mirrors logic is being fed to people with reference to matters of the "change movement" within churches of Christ.

With reference to baptism we hear, "Yes, baptism is for the remission of sins, but where does the Bible say the person being baptized has to know that's what it is for? Any bap-

tism will therefore do, and God will make it for the forgiveness of sins."

With reference to marriage, divorce, and remarriage, we hear, "I used to take the traditional view of this subject, but not any more. If a person asks forgiveness, God forgets the past. Even if it was adultery, that means a person can stay in whatever marriage they choose." Or we hear, "There are many different opinions about marriage, divorce, and remarriage today. So many that we can't possibly know the truth. We should just not worry so much about this and let God sort it out later."

With reference to instrumental music in our worship we hear, "Our tradition in the churches of Christ on this subject is just different from the traditions of other churches. I'm not going to try to get our people to bring in the instrument, but neither do I think others are wrong for using it."

With reference to denominationalism we hear, "There are sincere, knowledgeable and devout Christians scattered among all the denominations." Or we hear, "The church of Christ is just on big, sick, denomination."

With reference to women taking a leadership role in our worship assemblies we hear, "Our reluctance to use women in these capacities is just part of our cultural prejudices. For too long we have suppressed women, and should gradually change to give women a freer course in our churches."

All of these represent the pop logic of the day with some of our brethren. With such logic people are being deceived and churches are being divided. But the Bible is still true, and none of these assertions will stand the brilliant light of God's word. Remember that an assertion is not proof that a thing is so. Furthermore, the holding of a particular opinion does not make it so. Let's get back to the simplicity of Bible truth and stand for that. Paul said it this way: Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, (1 Corinthians 1:10)."

MOST OF A MINUTE - IF SHE HAD KNOWN

Last week marked the anniversary of Roe versus Wade, the supreme court decision legalizing abortion in America. People marched in Washington to advocate and fight for women's right to abortion whenever she wants without any interference.

I think this scene is humorously ironic. If these abortion promoters had had mothers who also practiced abortion, these wouldn't be alive today to *advocate* abortion!

But there is a more troubling thought about their mothers. Suppose their mothers had known that

their daughters would grow up to kill their babies and encourage others that it was acceptable to kill babies in abortion. What would they have done? What if they knew? "I'm carrying in my womb one who will kill her children with abortion," or "I'm carrying one who will one day become an abortion doctor."

I'd rather spend today thinking about the Bible. Psalm 127 says, "Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD *and* the fruit of the womb is *his* reward."

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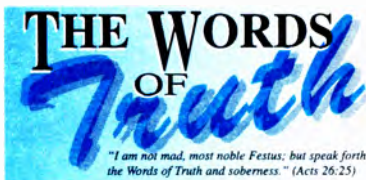
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 cents per copy payable by the church on receipt of statement the first of
 following month.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 34 No. 7

February 20, 1997

**SEE ARTICLES
INSIDE:
PREACHING POWER IN ACTS
DRESS UP AND PRETEND
THE BEST MARRIAGE MANUAL
KEEPING OUR THOUGHTS ON
THE LORD DURING THE
LORD'S SUPPER
TRANSUBSTANTIATION**

PREACHING POWER IN ACTS

Johnny Ramsey

The fifth New Testament book, Acts, is powerful, pungent and pulsating. That section of the Bible tells us of the establishment of Christ's church, cases of conversion and an historical background to many of the epistles that follow.

Perhaps the finest contributions Acts provides, however, are the brilliant sermons contained in the vibrant, action packed pages. It is significant that such preaching converted thousands out of paganism, Judaism and shameful lifestyles. The gospel truly is God's dynamite to save! In surveying the dramatic scenes of insightful proclamation from Peter, Stephen, Philip and Paul one can readily conclude the boldness was a characteristic of every sermon. There was no apology for defending truth and exposing error. A constant call to repentance was evident in every lesson and the exaltation of the Savior was the basic foundation of the messengers of God. The spirit of Psalms 9:1-2 was the impressive urgency of the evangelist:

I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.

Reverence for Scripture evinced itself as proof-texts from the Old Testament buttressed proper application to first century audiences. Just as Jesus had opened the word of God to the men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:32) so did His servants as the gospel system was unfolded in Jewish synagogues (Acts 13:26-28) or in the midst of idolaters in Athens (Acts 17:22-31). On the very day the church began, Peter clearly informed the massive crowd of what an ancient prophet had written centuries before...

This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel...

The exposure of sin was a dominant theme throughout Acts. Notice:

Acts 2:38.....For the remission of sin

Acts 3:19.....That sins may be blotted out

Acts 22:16...And wash away your sins...

Yes, the Lamb of God who came to seek and save the lost had come to redeem you from Satan, sin and hell. What

a message of redemption, joy and hope! Victory was attainable in the midst of a wicked, perverse and debauched society. Jesus Christ was the only way back to God (Acts 4:12).

Only in Thee, O Savior mine
Dwelleth my soul in peace divine
Peace that the world though all combined
Never can take from me...

Acts reflects many facets of the success of the Christians. They loved one another dearly, the truth deeply, the souls of men intently **and they were patient** in the midst of persecution because they sincerely trusted in the providence of God. Someone has challenged us in these words:

There are two ways to get to the top of an oak tree:
Catch that first limb and climb... or, find a good healthy
acorn, sit on it and wait.

In our day of instant coffee, potatoes and entertainment we tend to forget the parable of the mustard seed and that God gives the increase. Our task is to sow the seed and cultivate the soil. The One who knows the hearts of men (Acts 1:24) will take over from there.

In the sermons found in Acts there is a preponderant urgency concerning final Judgment. On Mar's Hill in Acts 17 the great apostle Paul promised that crowd that ultimately they would appear before the tribunal of heaven to give answer to the Creator. Could it be that we have allowed a pseudo-sophisticated society to dampen our enthusiasm for such a majestic theme? T.S. Teddlie wrote:

Someday you will stand at the bar on high
Trembling you will fall on your knee
Facing the sentence of life or death
What will your sentence be?

But, if there is one emphatic message of Acts it is the glorious reminder that the past misconduct in our lives can be overwhelmed in the blood of the Lamb! The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world is the wondrous message of 1 John 4:14. Jehovah desires to cast our sins into depths of the sea (Micah 7:19) and to forever blot them out of His memory (Hebrews 8:12). Great enemies of the gospel were

FROM THE EDITOR

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DRESS UP AND PRETEND

When we were children pretending was such fun. Girls and boys alike have a God-given capacity to enter make-believe worlds. Yet, as adults pretending is sometimes dangerous when it is preferred over reality.

A recent Newsweek magazine (January 20, 1997) has a cover photo of 6-year-old JonBenet Ramsey, the little girl who was abused and murdered a few weeks ago. She was put in a pretend world in which pretty little girls were made up to look sexy and much older. But reality won out and stopped the pretending. She wasn't 22, she was six. And she really is dead.

But we do this in other ways. We pretend that we can divorce and remarry and children can go with the flow--that somehow not actually living with their real dad or real mom--won't have much effect on them. That's pretending.

We tell them that this is the age of feminism and that mothers aren't supposed to do the things mothers used to do in the home. Careers are necessary to feel totally fulfilled as a woman. The kids will adjust. They'll do just as good without that kind of time and attention. That's pretending.

We drink beverage alcohol, in "moderation", and fully assume that our children will not see that as a license to drink or use drugs. That's pre-

tending.

Christians marry people who aren't Christians and assume that when the children come along they will be reared by the influences of Christianity. They will be like their Christian mother, not their unbelieving father. That's a good thought, and sometimes happens, but it is probably pretending.

Some pretending, as you can see, is not good. Let's be honest with ourselves. Children come into the world today the same way they did at the dawn of time. And they come needing the same direction, leadership, and godly example the first children needed. Parents, let us do all we can to make sure they get what they really need and not what we pretend they need. They will be with us for such a short amount of time, and yet that time is the most impressionable in their lives. They need us to be the parents.

Ephesians 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (KJV)

Psalm 127:1 "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

MOST OF A MINUTE - THE BEST MARRIAGE MANUAL

I've believed for years that the best marriage manual is the Bible. In my studies I've learned that the three most common areas of problems in marriage are these. Money, sex, and in-laws.

What are the Bible's answers to these important issues?

1. Money: Luke 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. (KJV)

2. Sex: 1 Corinthians 7:45 The wife hath not

power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. (KJV)

3. In-laws: Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be on flesh. (KJV)

converted--yes, even the carnal Corinthians heard and believed the message of redemption and were baptized into Christ (Acts 18:8). What a viable demonstration of heaven's concern for lost humanity!

Preaching that emanates from Acts needs to be revived and the shallow pulpits reeking with human philosophy and sophistry erased. The result would then beautifully ring out.

God Glorified
Christ Praised
Scripture Honored
The Church Strengthened
Heaven Overflowing
May these magnificent goals be realized!

KEEPING OUR THOUGHTS ON THE LORD DURING THE LORD'S SUPPER

Neal Pollard

"Three babies are crying across the auditorium...Somebody dropped a songbook...Everybody has a cough today...What's for dinner this afternoon...Oh, good...brother So'n So is leading the prayer for the fruit of the vine...He sure prays nice prayers...I think I forgot to write out the check for giving again...Better do...wow!! Are we done already?"

The scenario depicted may very easily have taken place in many a mind. The greatest memorial, the Lord's Supper, commemorates the greatest moments of all time, Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, but it can also provide the greatest mountain to climb--concentration in the midst of distractions. The Lord's Supper is a corporate (congregational) activity, but it is participated in by individuals and is a private and personal matter. The following key words may be helpful in keeping the Lord's Supper in the center of the individual's thoughts as he memorializes the Savior of mankind. What does it take to maintain concentration on the significance of this feast?

Examination. 1 Corinthians 11:28 reads, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." One, approaching this act of worship, is to test or prove himself. The Christian must examine the state of his mind, taking care to dwell upon the suffering and death of Jesus, the triumph of Christ and the Christian through His resurrection, the debt of thanks owed the Lord, the depth of love heaven bestowed by the atonement, and the joyous hope through His reconciling act. Too, the Christian must examine the state of his life, and, through self-investigation, review it to see if he is honoring the Savior during the week through his conduct. It is possible to have the wrong motive, the wrong morals, or the wrong mind-set. Those things are checked through self-examination.

Forgetting. During the Lord's Supper, one must completely forget the daily affairs of life. They have no place in the heart of one concentrating on things of much greater spiritual and eternal significance. Anything apart from the cross

and the themes thereabouts should be shut out of the mind. This is the Lord's time.

Fellowship. When a Christian takes the Lord's Supper, he is doing so with every other saint in the assembly. This is a special moment of fellowship (cf. Acts 2:42). And, in an extended fashion, the individual Christian is remembering Christ with every Christian in the world in that every New Testament Christian is assembled to remember Him in the same profound way on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Supper provides a bond of fellowship that has special meaning for and ties together all baptized believers in fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:3-7; Ephesians 5:11).

One. The inspired Paul reminds the reader, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in 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" (Ephesians 4:4-6). One commemorates the Lord in the one body (the church Christ died to establish) according to the instruction of the one Spirit (the written word of God) with the one hope that because of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection he has salvation and access to the Father through Him (cf. Acts 4:12). Further, in this memorial, one is honoring that one Lord (who died for his sins) and following the one faith (His doctrine; cf. Jude 3) in obedience to the will of the one God.

Remembrance. As a memorial, the Lord's Supper is a time for looking back at the cross with its multifarious significance. Until He come again, the Lord's Supper is an appointed, weekly, and mental trip back to His death (1 Corinthians 11:26). One remembers, recalling the gospel accounts and viewing through the eye of faith, the body wounded on the tree and the saving blood flowing from from the veins of the incarnate Lord. He has no trouble understanding the symbols of the table, possessing the lenses of retrospect with which to see the greatest act of love.

Thanksgiving. The Lord's Supper is a time for deep appreciation and gratefulness. Because He suffered, the Christian can have peace. Because He died, he can have eternal life. Because He arose, he can rise from sin into newness of life.

Paul had to remind Corinth that the Lord's Supper was not just another meal (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:20-34). Modern Christians, too, need always to keep in mind that fact when they lose focus and concentration of forget why it is they are partaking of the Lord's Supper. Simply, then, what is needed to maintain concentration during this time (despite the many, natural distractions) is EFFORT! God bless His children as they keep this grand memorial. May it never grow old in the heart of a single saint!

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

Mel Futrell

Transubstantiation is a big word, one that may not be in your vocabulary. And understandably so since it is not a Bible doctrine. The title term has reference to a 13th century (1215) Roman Catholic doctrine which was first proclaimed by pope Innocent III. This false doctrine says that in partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine (many erroneously call it the wine) these elements are converted (trans- "moves across") into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, only the external appearance of the bread and fruit of the vine remaining. Listen to one Catholic writer's explanation of this:

Q. BUT HOW CAN BREAD AND WINE BECOME CHRIST'S BODY AND BLOOD?

"Christ's presence in the form of bread and wine, and how it comes to be that way, is part of the mystery of faith we call the Holy Eucharist. The official Catholic teaching is that Christ is really present in the consecrated elements. The explanation known as "transubstantiation" says that the substance of bread and wine is changed into Christ's Body and Blood, leaving only the appearance, taste, and so on of bread and wine. Transubstantiation sheds light on the change that takes place, and goes farther toward expressing the faith of the Church than do some other theories about it." (Philip St. Romain, Catholic Answers To Fundamentalists' Questions, Liguori Publications, 1984, pp. 33-34)

Now if that seems unbelievable to you then join the club. When folks start relegating things to "the mystery of faith" category you know there is a problem. Brethren, one need not have the wisdom of Solomon to know that if transubstantiation is true then there is a miracle wrought in participating in the Lord's supper. But there are no miracles being wrought today (1 Cor. 13:8-12) so a commitment to transubstantiation requires one to distort reality. One writer in criticizing the mir-

acle in the mass belief said:

They are clearly perceived as bread and wine. They look like bread and wine, taste like bread and wine, smell like bread and wine, and feel like bread and wine. If we dropped them, they would sound like bread and wine." (R.C. Sproul, Not A Chance, 1994, Baker Books, p. 111)

In Matthew's account of the institution of the Lord's supper we read that Jesus, "Took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body" (Matthew 26:26-28). Consider this, when Jesus took the bread and broke it, was it His own body which He held in His hands, and which He Himself broke to pieces? Are we suppose to believe it was His actual body He held in His hands? When Jesus gave them the bread and they ate it were they actually and literally eating the flesh of Jesus? Did Jesus have less flesh after the supper than before, due to their eating His body? And of course this is absurd but it seems to me that the doctrine of transubstantiation cries out cannibalism and I'm not alone in that assessment. Our late brother G.K. Wallace, who was a staunch defender of the faith, once said in debate:

"The Lord's Supper is not a cannibalistic service where we either take the body of Christ straight or make a sandwich of it. To teach that you eat the actual, natural flesh and blood of Christ is to maintain a cannibalistic service...The Lord's Supper is a communion service (1 Cor. 10:16). The bread, when blessed, does not become the true body and the true blood of the Lord to the one partaking, but it becomes to him a communion of the body and a communion of the blood of the Lord. We eat bread and drink the cup and thereby have communion with the body and the blood of the Lord. The bread and cup do not become the actual body and blood of the Lord. To us, it is a communion of the body and the blood of the Lord." (Wallace-Stauffer Debate, 1946, DeHoff Publications, pp.96-98)

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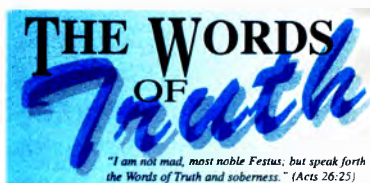
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"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 8

February 27, 1997

**SEE ARTICLES
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IS DIFFERENT**

GOT MILK?

David W. Hester

You know the commercial. It has several variations, but it is effective in impressing upon us the need for milk. One of them has a person stranded on a desert island, with a crate of cookies but no milk to wash it down. As the ad continues, the man tells what happens. All the while his voice gets harder and harder to understand. When a boat at last appears, he rejects it, because they have no milk. At that point, a voice sonorously asks, "Got milk?"

Whether or not you enjoy the commercial (I confess, they have worn on me), it is effective in making its point. Milk is a good, healthy source of nourishment for the body. But, in the spiritual realm, one could ask the same question that is asked in the ad.

Food is a very important requirement for growth in both the physical and spiritual realms. A child cannot grow and develop a strong physical body without sufficient nourishment. Just so, a child of God cannot grow spiritually without sufficient spiritual nourishment. That is why Peter said to Christians, "**Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.**" (1 Pet. 2:2) The word of God is the only God-ordained food for the soul. Jesus said, "**It is written: man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**" (Matt. 4:4) Inasmuch, then, as the word of God is the only food for the soul, a lack of knowledge of the word will keep one from growing. The apostle Paul told the elders at Ephesus, "**And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified.**" (Acts 20:32)

We understand that in many unfortunate countries of the world, as well as in some parts of American, many little bodies are emaciated due to insufficient diet. Who could not look at the bloated stomachs of the children of Ethiopia a few years back without being cut to the heart?

But, how much more universal this picture is spiritually, because many of God's children have starved their souls! Many Christians have failed to grow and develop as they should as a result of a failure to feast upon God's Word. "**When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that someone teach you again,**

which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." (Heb. 5:12) Proper diet, then is necessary in the spiritual realm.

Paul, in condemning the divisions of the church at Corinth, said: "**And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.**" (1 Cor. 3:1-2) There comes a point in one's life where he needs to digest the meat of the word. The Hebrews writer said, "**For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**" (Heb. 5:13-14)

Yes, many of God's children are literally suffering of spiritual malnutrition! Peter said we are to "desire" this food. Do we do that? Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness..." (Matt. 5:6) Do we actually hunger and thirst for a knowledge of God's righteousness?

"But," someone says, "I am just so busy, I don't have time to read and study the Bible." Have you ever heard that said? Have you said it? Allow me to ask a question. Do you have time to eat, and thus feed your body? I'm sure that most people eat about three times a day, or twenty-one times a week. (Frankly, I admit that I rarely ever miss a meal!) Since I make time to spend an hour a day eating, doesn't it stand to reason I should be able to spend a little time reading the Bible, and feeding my soul?

It's not the little infant in Mommy's arms that disturbs the preacher. In fact, his cries are music to his ears! Rather, it is the six-foot, 180 baby that bothers the preacher! He needs to grow!

So, the next time a question arises at work about a Bible topic, or a friend wants to study with you tonight, or the denominationalist comes to your door and desires to "just talk," ask yourself just one question.

GOT MILK?

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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A CHURCH WITHOUT ELDERS

Paul wrote to Titus (chapter 1, verse 5), "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

From this verse let us observe the following:

1. This instruction was commanded (or "appointed") by the Apostle to Titus. It was not a matter of indifference. To ordain these elders in the churches was the will of God.

2. Elders were to be ordained (or selected), for each city in which the Lord's church existed. We learn elsewhere that every church was to have elders. In Acts 14:23 we read, "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."

It is important that in Acts 14:23 groups were called churches even before they had elders. Hence, it is possible for a group of God's people to meet regularly today and be a church of Christ without the benefit of elders.

3. The churches in Crete which were without elders had something missing which they needed. That, of course, was the elders. God looks at a church which has no elders as a church in which something is wanting. It would not therefore be right for a church to avoid selecting elders simply because they preferred a church without elders. They should always desire and eagerly anticipate the time when elders can be ordained.

It is not too uncommon today for churches to exist which have no elders. There may be a variety of reasons. The most obvious, and only acceptable reason that comes to mind, is that in that church there are no qualified men. Churches which do not ordain elders for this reason are doing right. Churches would sin by presuming to ordain men who did not meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 or Titus 1:6-9. They have no right to ordain unqualified men, and without doubt the wisdom of the qualifications would become more and more apparent as unqualified men set out to do a job for which they aren't suited. How many churches today are suffering as a direct result of ordaining men who were novices, or not apt to teach, or not given to hospitality, etc.?

There is a practice concerning this matter which needs to be addressed. Suppose a church has no elders nor

men who are so qualified. They still have decisions which must be made, business which must be attended to, problems which must be solved. How can they carry out these obvious needs and still please God without elders? They can announce times at which general business meetings will occur. The men of the church can then jointly carry out the workings of the church without any particular man or group of men being set apart to hold authority. They may simply agree to let the Bible be their final standard, and judge matters accordingly. This system, used until elders could be ordained, would not violate the scriptures.

Some well-meaning brethren from time to time in churches without elders will handle this differently, and in a way which raises some interesting and perhaps serious questions. Some churches will appoint a "leadership committee" or a "work and finance committee" or a committee which goes by another such name to govern the matters of the church in lieu of elders. Is this a good practice? At best it should be approached with great caution. The moment it takes the place of the eldership, it is wrong, for it would be a governing plan for the church which replaces what the Bible says. It would be in the same category with the unscriptural church government of the Jehovah's Witnesses or Catholics. We must ask a question of the authority for having such a "committee". God wouldn't have told us how the men are to be qualified to lead the church and then accept whatever substitute we hand Him.

We must also ask a question of the authority such a committee would possess. Would they be perceived by the church as the men who "take heed to the flock" as the elders are charged to do? Would they be looked to as elders are looked to in a church which has elders? If so, they have been placed in that role without meeting the mandatory qualifications of the New Testament. Remember that 1 Timothy 3:2 says, "A bishop then must be..." and then lists the characteristics. Who would set the qualifications for the men on the "governing committee?" Lingering questions.

Let's do Bible things in Bible ways. Generally speaking, churches which have qualified men should ordain them as elders. Churches which do not have qualified men should not set men in authority in committees which look like elderships but are not.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Dalton Key

Like it or not, for the present, we must live within this world. Paul instructs us to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

Though we are the people, the children, of God; and though our home, ultimately, is in heaven, we must still, while clothed with flesh, live as "strangers and pilgrims" in this foreign land (1 Peter 2:11). We are not angels, living above and apart from this sphere. Neither are we called of heaven to live as monks or hermits, in recluse from the people and problems surrounding us. This world may not be home, but is out temporary abode- and our largest realm to influence.

While we must live in this world physically, we must also determine to live beyond it morally, ethically, and

spiritually. Our hope, our home, our treasures, our citizenship, and our crown all concern heaven (1 Peter 1:3,4; Matthew 6:19,20; Philippians 3:20, ASV; 2 Timothy 4:6-8). We have been married to Christ, not to the world (Romans 7:4; Revelation 21:2).

This world is both a challenge and a threat. What a challenge to think of the billions of souls in need of the saving gospel of Christ; souls which we have opportunity to influence and teach. Yet this world is a threat to out very salvation as it attempts to draw us ever closer to it, shaping us into its' sordid, sinful mold.

Both God and Demas are said to have loved the world (John 3:16; 2 Timothy 4:10). God loved and loves the souls of those who live in the world; Demas fell in love with the world's seamier side. God sought to save the world; Demas, to become one with it.

May we be followers, not of Demas, but of God.

CONTEND FOR THE FAITH, NO MATTER THE PRICE

Benny W. Hester

Jude 3 says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needed for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

You see, dear reader, it is our duty to call men back to the Bible. We are to speak where the Bible speaks, and to be silent where the Bible is silent. Sometimes it becomes necessary to do as Paul says in 2 Tim. 4:2, "...reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." It is never pleasant to reprove or rebuke a brother in Christ, yet there are times this must be done. This is not only for the benefit of the brother in Christ, but also the Church for which our Lord bled and died. Notice that Paul says that we are to, "...be instant in season, out of season...". In other words, preach the truth when it is accepted and when it is rejected. We have no choice in the matter.

Recently, when a known false teacher moved into a city in our state, faithful brethren made known his denominational views. (He had made his views known publicly.) Instead of the congregation thanking these brethren and sending the false teacher packing, they began to attack the faithful brethren. Even some preachers around the state joined in the attack.

Brethren should thank these brave brethren for contending for the faith. I would like to remind them that this is not the first time that faithful men of God have been attacked because of their stand for truth.

In Jeremiah 18, the Lord had instructed Jeremiah to speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. His mission was to inform them to change their ways or, suffer the consequences.

When Jeremiah did what the Lord commanded, the people should have thanked him and mended their ways. But, instead, they reacted in much the same way some brethren do today. First of all, they said that Jeremiah was wasting his time. Verse 11, says "...we will walk after our devices...". In other words, we don't care what the Lord wants, we are going to do what we choose to do. Then they chose to attack Jeremiah. Verse 18 says, "Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah...". In other words make Jeremiah the "BAD GUY". Verse 18 goes on to say, "...Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

A very successful device of the devil is to call evil good, and good evil. See Isaiah 5:20.

I for one want to thank those brethren who have the courage to stand against false teachers. As I grow older, I see very dark clouds on the horizon for the Lord's church. May we stand shoulder to shoulder with brethren to remain true to the Book and contend for the faith.

WHY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS DIFFERENT

Chuck Webster

"You're the church that doesn't have music, right?" Or maybe, "You're the group that thinks you're the only ones going to heaven!" How many times have you heard these things before? Most people know there's something different about the church of Christ, but they're not exactly sure what the differences really are. The distinctions noted are usually external variations that one might see upon visiting a church service. But we need to understand an important point here: Beneath those externals are some extremely important distinctions, which lie at the very foundation of what makes the church of Christ different from the religious group down the street. We believe...

...That the Bible is the pattern for all we do religiously. Most denominations have their manual or discipline, which is a book of their interpretations which they follow. The church of Christ has no such manual. Notice what God's word says about its all-sufficiency: "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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Why would we need something more? "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3; emphasis added). If He's given us everything, do we need another book? In addition, it's possible for us to *understand* what He has revealed. Paul said, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4). Our Lord stated: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). He has given us all we need, and it's something we can understand-the Bible is our creed book.

...That we should respect the silence of the Bible.

Throughout history, many have taught that is the Bible doesn't explicitly condemn something ("Thou shalt not..."), then that practice is allowed.

Many denominations follow this principle today. But think about God's dealings with mankind in the past. Take, for example, Nadab and Abihu, two of God's priests under the law of Moses (Leviticus 10:1-2). God had told the priests what kind of fire to offer Him, but He hadn't specified the kinds of fire that were forbidden. He just told them what to do, and that excluded all else. But perhaps Nadab and Abihu thought that God didn't condemn practices which He didn't explicitly forbid. Whatever the reason, they offered fire which God "commanded them not," and fire from God devoured them. What do we learn from this, as well as other Bible examples [see also Noah (Genesis 6-9)]? We learn that God expects us to do what He says the way He said to do it. This is the reason you don't find pianos and organs in our buildings (see Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; God has told us to sing). It's why we don't serve hamburger and sodas for the Lord's Supper. It's why we don't dance, juggle, or jump up and down in worship to God. God has specified how He wants to be worshiped, and that excludes any of man's innovations.

...That we must obey God in order to be saved. Call

any denomination in town and ask them the question, "What must I do to be saved?", and the answer will be something like this: "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as your personal Savior, inviting Him into your heart." We believe that goes against a very fundamental principle taught throughout the Bible: *God has always demanded man's obedience in order to receive His blessings.* Don't confuse obeying God with earning one's salvation. Not one single person who has ever lived has ever done enough good things to earn his or her salvation. But that doesn't negate the fact that God expects obedience. God gave the Israelites the city of Jericho, but He expected them to follow His orders in order to receive the city (Joshua 6). Faith in God and His ability to give them the city wasn't enough. That faith had to produce action. And the very same thing is true today with God's gift of salvation (Romans 6:23). "Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,..." (Acts 2:37-38). "But wilt thou know...that faith without works is

dead?...Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:20,24,26). Faith that won't act is worthless. We believe faith is foundational because without it we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). But we believe that faith only, a doctrine that many denominations subscribe to, is non-biblical.

Other differences exist, but they are mostly outgrowths of the above fundamental distinctions in how we view the Bible versus how most people in the denominational people interpret the Bible. If you're not a member of the church of Christ, we invite you to consider the thoughts above. If you have a question, please ask the preacher or one of the elders, and we'll be glad to help you find what the Bible says. There are many questions in life to which the answers are inconsequential, but the answers to religious questions will determine our eternal destiny. Be sure to let the Bible, and not any person, answer them. May God bless you in your search for truth.

MOST OF A MINUTE - THE BEST LETTER TO WRITE

While it is frustrating when the price of postage stamps goes up again, one postal service argument is hard to get around. Using their service is still a lot cheaper than delivering your letters yourself. And yet, that's not the best way to send a letter.

In this age of advanced communication I have recently become part of an E-mail service. This is really amazing. I can type a letter to another E-mail user, push the send button, and within seconds my letter is there on his computer screen in another part

of the world! And yet, that's not the best way to send a letter either.

In II Corinthians 3:2, the apostle Paul writes that Christians are living letters, known and read of all men. Not written with ink, but with the Spirit of God. Not in tables of stone, but in the heart. People see, hear, and read the word of God thru your example and Christian character. We call it a good Christian example. And that's the *best* way to write a letter.

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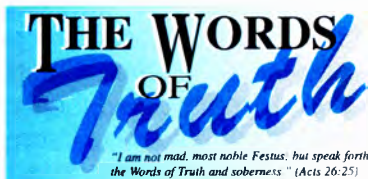
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THE NOTHINGS
THE CHURCH IS DIFFERENT
TELL ME WHAT I
WANT TO HEAR**

Vol. 34 No. 9

March 6, 1997

WHAT IS MAN?

J. C. Choate

The Psalmist David wrote, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth" (Psalms 8).

We will further see, though man became a sinner, that God was even willing to send his son to die on a cruel cross that he might be saved (John 3:16,17). Now why did he do this?

Let's go to the scripture to see if we can determine why man is considered so important by God.

1. God created man from the dust of the earth. We read, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground..." (Genesis 2:7). That is why we read that when man dies physically that his body will return to the dust of the earth (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

2. Physically, man was not complete, so God created woman as a help meet for him. The record says, "And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). Reading on, "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: And they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:21-24). Now, man and woman, together, are complete. They can live together, help one another, and they can reproduce. With children, and their children having children, generation after generation can continue. The Apostle said, "For the man is not of the the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Corinthians

11:8,9). He continues, "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God" (1 Corinthians 11:11,12). You can see then that both man and woman are dependent on each other and therefore it takes both of them to be complete. As a result, when the Bible speaks of man, it is often in the generic term, including both man and woman, male and female.

3. Man was God's crowning creation in that he gave him a soul. We read that after God made the heaven and earth, the animals, fowls, and fish of the sea, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26,27).

Please note that God said, "Let us." This included God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit as in the creation of the heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1). Notice again that he said, "Let us make man in our image." This means that since the godhead was Spirit (John 4:24), that man was given a spirit, soul, or inner being. It could not have meant that man was created in the likeness of God physically, since God has no physical body. God did create him physically but he also breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). Then we read that when man dies physically that his spirit or soul will return to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

4. Man's soul is eternal in nature. It is called the inward man (2 Corinthians 4:16) and the heavenly body (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). Christ said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). The soul can die in the sense of being separated from God, but it cannot die in the sense of ceasing to exist. The soul therefore is worth more than the world itself (Matthew 16:26), and when man is willing to hear the Lord, follow him, and obey his teaching, then he can be saved from his sins and have the hope of eternal life (Matthew 17:5; Luke 9:23; Mark 16:16; John 14:1-3).

5. Man is to worship God, serve him, and be faithful unto death (John 4:24; Matthew 6:24; Revelation 2:10). He brings honor and glory to God by doing all in

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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SERVANTS AND MASTER

The Greek word in the New Testament for slave is "Doulos" (pronounced doo'-los). It is found 125 times in the Bible. The cruelties of American slavery during the seventeen and eighteen hundreds still cause our people to shudder. It is reason to pause when we consider that only one-hundred and fifty years separates us from that America. We are broken hearted when we consider how some people were treated.

When Americans think of slavery we naturally think of being black and white. The principles of slavery in the Bible however, *do not* pertain to skin color. In fact, color isn't even mentioned as an issue in the master/slave passages. Slavery was rather a social arrangement, even practiced sometimes among people of the same nation. Israelites had slaves among their own people. Exodus 21:1-6 says, "Now these *are* the judgments which thou shalt set before them. If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free. Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever." Although people would not desire to be poor, and in need of a place to live and work as servants, they nevertheless accepted servanthood as a reasonable course.

The Bible does not explicitly condemn slavery. That is, there is no where in the Bible that we read "thou shalt not own slaves", or, "it is sinful to own slaves." Of course, a practice does not have to be specifically condemned for it to be sinful. The word pornography is not in the Bible, but it is wrong to purchase or produce such because it violates Colossians 3:5. The words "crack cocaine" are not found in the Bible but to use illegal drugs would be sinful because the Bible does condemn things associated with drunkenness (1 Gal.5:19-21). Slavery, as we commonly think of it, is sinful because of Biblical principles which would be violated.

The interesting thing about slavery is that it was sometimes practiced in a favorable way. Although that is hard for us to believe, it is

Biblically true. What we must remember is that any arrangement in which people abuse other people is sinful. Slavery, if it includes abuse of others, is sinful. On the other hand, slavery, if practiced while obeying the "golden rule" (Mt. 7:12), is not sinful.

That is the reason the Holy Spirit chose to *regulate* slavery rather than *condemn* slavery. Consider, for example, Colossians 3:22-25: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

The next verse, Colossians 4:1, is written to Christians who were slave owners. Notice what they are commanded: "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." Frankly, it is hard to imagine slavery existing for very long in a society in which masters gave their slaves what was just and equal. That sounds like paying them for their work--and slave owners might as well consider their servants employees! Yet what is commanded is fair treatment of slaves. True Christians in the first century, and in every century since, who have owned slaves, have treated those people with kindness. They have taught those servants the Gospel of Jesus. Remember that the book of Philemon is written to a slave owner about one of his slaves who had obeyed the Gospel.

This article is not to advocate slavery in any country, but is rather written to shed light on the passages in the Bible which deal with the subject. In whatever walk of life we may find ourselves, we must remember that all men are of one blood, (Acts 17:26). We must remember that we who are saved, whether we be "Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female" (Gal. 3:28), were all redeemed by the Savior, and are brethren in Christ. 1 Timothy 6:2 reads, "And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort."

And remember, we all have a Master in heaven. He is Jesus.

his name (Colossians 3:17), and by being a member of his church (Ephesians 3:21).

6. Man has a mind with the ability to think, learn, reason, make decisions, to choose, to believe, to obey, to worship, to speak, and to be faithful. He can also reject, deny, resist, disobey, and refuse God's love and salvation. To those who will accept God's grace and mercy, he will save, bless, and keep for himself (Ephesians 2:8,9).

7. Man will have to give an account to God and spend eternity in heaven and hell. To whom much is given, much is expected. Paul said, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). The Lord will judge us by his word (Acts 17:31; John 12:47,48), and we will be judged according to our works whether they be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). The righteous will be given everlasting life but the wicked will be cast into eternal hell (Matthew 25:46).

What is man? He is a dual being. He is physical and spiritual. He is flesh and Spirit. He is mortal and he is immortal. He will die but he will live. He is you. He is me. He inhabits the earth but will eventually go to that eternal abode of the soul -- to live in heaven or hell. How great he is. How honored he is. But how great his need. He needs God and salvation. God wants to save us and take us to heaven to live forevermore with him. Let us not disappoint him for his sake and especially for our sake.

THE "NOTHINGS"

Neal Pollard

What the child is always doing, despite the evidence to the contrary(nothing). What is wrong with one's mate who sits nearby, tightlippedly and quietly fuming(nothing). What the interrupted person was going to say(nothing). The word which defines itself is "nothing." The Bible teaches, "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Galatians 6:3).

Those low in self-esteem think of themselves as *nothing*. Children and spouses who are constantly told so think of themselves as *nothing*. Those not as wealthy as their neighbors often conclude themselves to be *nothing*. Those unrecognized for their accomplishments or labors can feel like they are *nothing*. But the inspired apostle refers to some who think themselves to be *something* who are actually *nothing*. The Bible makes mention of that arrogant family, *The Nothings*. They are a brutish crew, haughty and proud. They are self-involved. They have no regard for heavenly things.

Meet *The Nothings*.

There Are The "Good For Nothings." Jeremiah introduces them. He says, "This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing" (Jeremiah 13:10). These *Nothings* have some problems of which they seem to be unaware. They are evil, they are spiritually deaf, they are selfish, and they are idolatrous. Jeremiah compares them to a good for nothing, straight from a hole in the ground, dirt-soiled belt!

No one is inherently useless. One chooses to be of no value to God through a wicked lifestyle. One may also be estimated as "good for nothing" through luke-warmed indistinctness. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus says, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt

have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13). Christians, by their distinctive nature, are of great value to God (cf. 1 Peter 2:9). Yet, by losing the unique properties of Christianity through lack of commitment, one becomes "good for nothing."

There Are The "Brought To Nothings." After referring to the danger of making decisions based solely on human reasoning, Jeremiah prays that God will not bring him to nothing (Jeremiah 10:23-24). God will rename some the *Brought To Nothings*, those who believe man's theories over God's facts. Referring to the vital work of preaching, Paul warns that God will "destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." (1 Corinthians 1:19; cf. Isaiah 29:14). The wisest and most scholarly man who discounts God's wisdom will be a regretful member of the *Brought To Nothings* someday.

There Are The "Need Of Nothings." These are the overly comfortable, spiritually out of shape members of the *Nothings* clan. They live their lives saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" and are unaware that they, in reality, are spiritually "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). They are not really bad people, but they are not all that good either. They are just quite satisfied with what they *have* done for Christ, which is not all that great and not too bad. They merely yawn through their spiritual lives, occasionally stirring from spiritual sleep to momentarily do right before going back to their slumber (cf. Ephesians 5:14). They half-heartedly do just enough to deceive themselves into thinking that they are pleasing the Lord.

Unrelated to these nothings are some good folks, like the *Ashamed In Nothings* (see Philippians 1:20), the *Terrified By Nothings* (see Philippians 1:28), the *Careful For Nothings* (see Philippians 4:6), and the *Wavering In Nothings* (see James 1:6). But the *Nothings* family mentioned above are black sheep in God's family. No one should want to "take after" them!

THE CHURCH IS DIFFERENT

Franklin Camp

God has always taught His people to be different. One of the major problems of His people has been forgetting this truth and losing their distinctiveness. The nation of Israel wanted to become like other nations (1 Samuel 8). They became like them and God cast them off. Surely there is a warning for the church.

The church differs from the world in its attitudes and ambitions. "They are not of the world, even as I am not the world" (John 17:16). The values of Christians are different from those of sinners. Sinners live for self. Christians live to glorify God and serve others (Matthew 16:24; Mark 10:45). Are we losing this distinctiveness today? Are the attitudes and ambitions of Christians different from non-Christians?

The church differs from Judaism. Judaism was carnal; the church is spiritual. "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary...which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:1,10). Look carefully at the word *carnal*. The church is spiritual (Ephesians 1:3). It is heavenly (Ephesians 2:6). Its worship is in spirit and truth (John 4:24; Romans 1:9). This is one reason that mechanical instruments of music have no place in Christian wor-

ship. If one granted that it was right in the Old Testament, it does not suit the spiritual worship of the New Testament. Christian worship must be from the heart. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

The church differs from the Catholic Church in that it accepts the authority of the scripture.

Catholics do not accept the authority of the scripture. Consider the following quotation: "One must keep the commandments of God and the church" (*Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, No. 1, p. 31). The scriptures are an authority but not the only authority. In truth it is no authority since the Pope must interpret it. Catholics teach that 2 Peter 1:20 denies the right of individual interpretation. This is a perversion of the passage. Peter is speaking of how scripture was given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1:21). Paul commanded the Thessalonians to "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). He did not say prove all things by what Peter says. The church differs from Catholicism by "Speaking as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). The church urges all to have an open mind and "search the scriptures daily" to see if what is heard

is in harmony with what one can read (Acts 17:11).

The church differs from Protestantism in that it accepts the completeness of the scripture. The church has no creed but Christ and no book but the Bible. All teachings is based upon the book. All questions are decided by what the book teaches, not a manual or discipline. It also differs from Protestantism in accepting the completeness of the scripture and denying the need for a direct operation of the Spirit to be able to understand it. Protestants generally misapply 1 Corinthians 2:14. They think the natural man is the sinner, and without a direct operation of the Spirit he cannot understand the Bible when he reads it. It has always been strange to me that even though the Bible is made of words just like one finds in the school books or the newspaper one can understand them in a book or paper but not the Bible.

The church differs from the Christians church in its respects for the silence of the scripture. The Christian church teaches that where the Bible is silent we may speak or act. This opens the door for anything that is not specifically forbidden. This is a real difference between it and the church.

MOST OF A MINUTE - TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO HEAR

The late Lewis Grizzard, noted columnist, once said, "My life improved dramatically when I found a doctor who told me I could smoke, a preacher who says there is no hell, and an accountant who believes that 2+2 is whatever I want it to be."

I suppose none of us want to be told what to do. We like things our way.

The disaster comes when we simply want to use our preferences as our standard for living. We decide that our preferences determine what is right instead of the Divine standard, the Bible. We say, "My body, I can have abortion if I choose, instead of

"You are not your own, therefore glorify God in your body and spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6). We join man-made religions and say, "Choose the church of your choice", instead of "Study the Bible and choose the church of Christ's choice." We say, "This is my sexual preference," instead of "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife."

Jesus said in John 12:48, "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."

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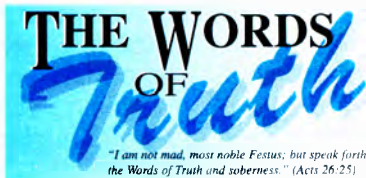
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Congregational Rates: Mailed directly to each family, friends, etc. forty cents per copy payable by the church on receipt of statement the first of following month.

Individual rates are \$20.50 per year. All bills payable to Words of Truth, 3051 McQueen Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107



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Vol. 34 No. 9

March 13, 1997

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IT'S THE THOUGHT
THAT COUNTS(?)
A MEMBER OF HE FAMILY**

INVESTIGATE

Johnny Ramsey

Even the casual reader of the Bible would admit that pure Christianity existed in the first century. The New Testament gives us a clear picture of the church Jesus built (Matthew 16:18). The worship, doctrine and life of the early Christians can be ascertained from a study of the Word of God. Regardless of what has transpired between the first and twentieth century one can be a Christian today just like Paul, Peter, Stephen and Philip. Not some kind of a Christian. Just simply a member of the same church the first century Christians were members of. How? If we do what they did, teach what they taught-- we will certainly be what they were! What denomination would that make us a member of? Why, none of course! None of the denominations were in existence until the sixteenth century. Jesus prayed for Unity not diversity in religion (John 17:20-21). Paul condemned division (I Corinthians 1:10). Therefore, we know that the early Christians were members of the church of Christ and not of any sectarian movement.

Since the seed of the kingdom is the word of God, men can be just Christians today as well. It will mean giving up all doctrines of men. Anything not taught in the Scriptures will have to be dropped. For our Lord said that men worship in vain when they teach for doctrine the commands of men (Mark 7:7).

Are you willing to investigate all that your religion teaches in the sacred light of the Bible? You might find that instead of following New Testament Christianity you have been adhering to the principles of some man of movement that arose centuries after Christ. Do you have a Bible reason for what you do in religion? A passage in I Peter 4:11 states: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."

The pristine view of New Testament Christianity found in the book of Acts is a tremendous challenge to us. Nineteen centuries ago a small nucleus of devoted saints accomplished more for the Lord than we have done with all of our modern means of communication and transportation. They were pure and holy (I Peter 1:16) as they lived soberly, righteously and godly (Titus 2:12) as pilgrims in a wicked world (I Peter 2:11). Those saints of yesteryear were evangelistic and worshipful (Acts 8:4; John 4:24). Generous giving was characteristic of their conduct

(II Cor. 9:6-11) as they first gave themselves unto the Lord. They truly believed these words of challenge:

"It is not what we own
That gives us peace
In an age when peace is rare
But how honest we are
When we set aside
Our own and the Master's share."

The church of the New Testament was simple, not ostentatious. They were compassionate and not caloused. They were zealous but not flamboyant. They were steadfast and not flashy. Their theme was based on Revelation 2:10. . . .

"Be faithful unto death and
I will give you the crown of life."

Their impetus was Proverbs 11:30. . . .

"He that winneth souls is wise."

They knew that "the seed of the kingdom was the word of God" (Luke 8:11). Realizing they were in the body of Christ and that each member was necessary (I Cor. 12:23-27) they diligently pursued the life of godliness. Being a part of the royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9) they magnified the Savior day by day (Phil. 1:20). As soldiers in the army of the Lord they pressed the fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12) on every front - and won!

"The fight is on, O Christian soldier
And face to face in stern array
With armor gleaming and colors streaming
The right and wrong engage today". . . .

Built solidly upon the bed-rock foundation of the Deity of Christ they absolutely glorified God in all their actions (Eph. 3:21). The church, as bulwark of Truth, swept across the first century with the banner of the Lord leading them on to certain victory!

Those brilliant servants of the Master were not easily discouraged, never ashamed of the gospel

FROM THE EDITOR

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UN-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

For a man to say that he is a member of a particular denomination, is to suggest something which most folks have never seriously considered. They have accepted the concept of denominationalism for so long that it comes as second nature to them. They reason that it must be God's will because so many respected people in the system called "denominationalism."

What does the word "denomination" mean?

Webster says that to denominate is, "Having a definite name or designation." In the religious world it implies the idea that many different religious bodies, or sects, having declared and named themselves, are independent of all other "Christian" bodies. Nevertheless, they all believe that one can go to heaven from any of the various denominations. While they would like for people to join their denomination, they don't believe membership in their sect is essential for going to heaven. One sect is as good as another for going to heaven. To put it another way, they view the church of the New Testament as a big circle divided like a pie. The whole represents the church, and each piece represents a different denomination.

The vast majority of folks in these denominations have never really considered what the Bible has to say about Christians and the church. If they did, and they truly wanted to please God, they would leave the denominational idea and seek to follow the simple New Testament pattern. The New Testament teaches church membership which is absolutely *un*-denominational.

Did you know that a man today can be a faithful Christian, actively serve Jesus Christ, live his life, die, and then go home to heaven for eternity, having never joined any denomination? It is true. The Bible doesn't teach membership in denominations. It does teach us about the church, but it isn't many divided sects, it is one church -- and it belongs to Jesus.

In Ephesians 4 we read a list of seven "ones." That is, seven things of which there is only one. Pay attention to this passage. A man simply cannot believe in the concept of denominationalism and also believe this passage. Ephesians 4:4-6 -- "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in 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." There are plainly as

many bodies as there are Gods! There is one God. There is one body. That body is the church. In that same book of Ephesians, chapter one, verse twenty-two, Paul says, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

There is a New Testament example of Christians who began "denominating." The Corinthians. They decided to divide into different groups, or sects, and name themselves after various different preachers of the Word. Paul leaves no room for confusion as he responds to this arrangement which is interestingly similar to the denominational arrangement today:

1 Corinthians 1:10-15 -- "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius, "Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name." What does God want? Many different churches, divided by different names and doctrines as we have today? Certainly not! This passage says, "...speak the same thing...same mind...same judgement." It does not say "many divisions are good," it says, "...no divisions..."

When a man is scripturally baptized, the Lord adds him to the church. Later, in the letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13). Remember, that body is His church. Colossians 1:18 says, "And he is the head of the body, the church..."

The church of Christ taught and described in the New Testament, is not a denomination. The Bible no where calls it that. It is simply the church.

May we all study our Bibles and be faithful members of the church of *Christ's* choice.

and ever in love with the souls of the lost and dying men. Bound together by the strong ties of brotherly love (1 Peter 1:22) those Christians put the kingdom of God absolutely first (Matt. 6:33). When those traits abound in our lives no power on earth - or in Hell - can stop us today!

ON A HILL TOO FAR AWAY

Neal Pollard

A young Christian rationalizes his cursing, expressing his "need" to fit in with his peers. Someone habitually falls asleep during Bible study or worship. A Christian woman tends to talk bad to her friend about their mutual companion. A middle-aged couple forms the habit of missing the evening assemblies to be with friends or pursue other interests. Several Christians silently fret over their inability to focus while partaking of the Lord's Supper. Some of the brethren seem indifferent to the work of the church. What is happening with these precious children of God?

Several scenarios have been portrayed, but there is in them but a single issue. Why do people, even Christians, do wrong or fail to do right? The first several words of George Bennard's famous hymn are, "On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame..." So, what does one do when it seems that Christ died on a hill *too far away*?

The most dangerous thing that can happen to anyone is for the cross of Christ to lose its meaning. It **can** lose its meaning for people. Paul said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (1 Corinthians 1:17).

Does the cross have much meaning for the Christian's friends and colleagues whose words and actions assault that for which the cross stands? Willful sin is against the cross (cf. Hebrews 6:4-6). People like the ones there in Hebrews hurt Christ all over again because the cross means, if their actions accurately reflect their hearts, little more to them than does a fairy tale or ancient history. Because of a desire to please the world, the Christian can develop the same attitude toward the cross. In this moral quandary, he can choose to be close to the enemies of the cross instead of the One who died there. But, when one chooses the world over Christ, he becomes God's enemy, too (cf. Ephesians 8:11; James 4:4).

Perhaps a few brief facts will help children of God, especially when the hill far away seem too far away.

Remember that the cross is real. So taught Paul, without equivocation (cf. 1 Corinthians 18:1-4). Contemporaries of the cross attest to its historicity. Atheists and skeptics only have blind eyes for the plain facts because acceptance would inevitably put them in realization of the absolute imperative of obeying the doctrine of the slain Savior (cf. Romans 8:17). But the facts, according to Paul, are simple; namely, Christ really died, He was buried, and He arose! What the Bible teaches that Christ did

humanity as a whole and for the individual in particular is *true!* The cross is real.

Remember that the cross is really important!

On the cross Christ died for the sins of everyone (Romans 8:8). He died for the seemingly insignificant, seemingly minor sins. He also died for the big, ugly, embarrassing, shameful sins! On the cross Christ died to bring man back to God (Romans 8:34). Because of his sins, man was rejected by God. God wanted nothing to do with any, vile person (note: Romans 3:23). But, because of Christ, anyone can come back to God who obeys Him. On the cross Christ died to be the ruler of the human heart (Romans 14:19; Galatians 2:20). On the cross Christ died to show the individual how much he loves him (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; John 14:23). On the cross Christ died to open the door to heaven, shut by the separating power of sin (1 Thessalonians 4:14; Isaiah 59:1-2). Thus, in its importance the cross exceeds all else!

Remember that the cross is really special.

Only Christ could have hung there. No one else was qualified. Only the blood of Christ was right in God's sight for cleansing man from his ugly sins. Only His love, as shown by the cross, is strong enough to break one's love of this world.

Remember that the cross was really necessary. Christ had to die to satisfy God's perfect justice. Though all sin, no sinner, of himself, has anything to offer God to satisfy His just requirements. Everyone needs what Christ gave on that hill far away (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9). There's no good news to obey without the cross (cf. Romans 1:16; Romans 5:5-9). If no cross, then no hope, no joy, and no heaven!!

What can God's child do when the cross seems so distant from him in his spiritual life? Understanding the reality, the importance, the uniqueness, and necessity thereof, he will be prompted to renew his zeal and dedication to the suffering servant who died there for him (Hebrews 5:8-9). Matchless love led God to Calvary. It is love that leads man back to Calvary.

IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS (?)

Chuck Webster

Maybe it was another tie or tool set. Or your seventh pair of gloves. Whatever it was, it wasn't exactly what you wanted for Christmas. But that really wasn't that important anyway, because, after all, "it's the thought that counts." When your child or spouse searches long and hard for the perfect gift and comes up short, who cares? The thought behind the gift is what's really important. On the other hand, suppose you tell your son to be sure and take out the garbage before going to school. You come home from work that evening and find the garbage right where it was that morning. You confront your son, who responds by saying, "Well, I thought about it, but never got around to it." It's the thought that counts, right? Hardly. Sometimes the thought is sufficient; sometimes it's not. The same is true in religion.

God cares about our thoughts. On at least eight

different occasions, Jesus explicitly asked people around Him about their thoughts (cf. Mt. 9:4; 17:25; 18:12; 21:28; 22:42; 26:53; Lk. 10:36; 13:4). He placed a great deal of emphasis on the heart because it is there that thoughts and, as a result, actions originate (cf. Mt. 5:28; 12:34-35). Paul admonished the Philippians to guard their thoughts carefully, thinking on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). David cried out, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in they sight, O LORD" (Psalm 19:14). Why are thoughts so important? Because if we're going to act right, we must first get our thoughts right.

Although right thinking is vital in our relationship to God, it's not sufficient. Right thinking must lead to right doing, right living, right serving. It's possible for thoughts to be pure and actions to be wrong. Consider Cornelius. No one would question his heart. Luke calls him "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, [and who] gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts

10:2). But was that sufficient? Not by itself, for God led Peter to his house, and Cornelius obeyed the gospel after hearing Peter's sermon. At what point was Cornelius saved? When he got his thoughts right? Or when he obeyed? With Cornelius, the thought counted, but only as it led to obedience.

Saul of Tarsus was a man who was living according to his conscience (Acts 23:1). He thought he was doing right. He thought he was pleasing the Lord. He thought God was looking down on his actions with pleasure...But he was wrong. Although his thoughts were right as he was tearing down the Lord's church, his actions were wrong. But his good heart led him to accept the truth when confronted with it, and as a result he became one of the greatest preachers of all time (Acts 9:1-31).

So what's the answer? Is it the thought that counts? Up to a point. But in order to please God, good thoughts must lead to good actions. Maybe we ought to rephrase the saying just a little when we apply it to serving God: "It's the thought *and* life that counts."

MOST OF A MINUTE - A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY

Recently *Newsweek* ran a story about Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who just learned that she descended from grandparents who were Jews killed by the Nazis in WWII. Imagine learning you were part of a family, but for years didn't know it. In 1993 Henry Leon Ritzenthaler wrote Mr. Clinton and claimed to be his half-brother. One man is portrayed in the article as learning, after he was grown, that his older sister, 16 years his senior, was really his mother, and the woman he grew up thinking was his mother, was really his grandmother!

I want you to know that no one will ever accidentally learn that they are members of God's family, the church. You don't just trip into this, or become a member of the family because of what some ancestor did. God has no grandchildren. God has no step-children. He only has children. And you must be a child of God to go to heaven. Galatians 3:26-27 -- "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

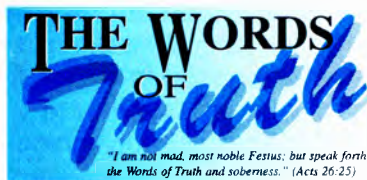
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Individual rates are \$20.50 per year. All bills payable to Words of Truth, 3051 McQueen Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107



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THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 34 No. 10

March 20, 1997

**SEE ARTICLES
INSIDE:
WHAT ABOUT JESUS?
THE QUESTION OF CLONING
SEEKING JESUS
THE NAME OF THE CHURCH**

WHAT ABOUT JESUS?

Mel Futrell

Jesus once asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I the son of man am?" They responded, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets". Evidently, even in the first century there was some confusion about who Jesus was. Our Lord though doesn't leave it at that, he continues. "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter replies, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living GOD" (Matthew 16:13-16). Brethren, this confession of Peter's is the rock that the Lord's church is built upon. It's that important and I would hope and expect that anytime we are asked the same question, we would give the same answer (1 Peter 3:15).

Unfortunately, there has been and is today much confusion about Jesus. Some scoff at the belief that Jesus was a historical figure. In other words, that he actually and really existed. Others, although affirming that he existed deny his deity. So the fundamental questions for us today are: Was Jesus a historical figure? And if he was, was he a mere man or was he the divine messiah? Brethren, the answer one gives does make a difference. If Jesus is the Christ, the son of GOD (John 20:30-31) then the church is obligated to give Jesus the *preeminence in all things* (Col. 1:18; Mt. 28:18). In Matthew 22:42 Jesus asked the Pharisees this compound question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" Now with that question in mind please consider the following.

Albert Schweitzer, in his volume Quest for the Historical Jesus. 1906 had this to say.

"The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of GOD, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give his work its final consecration never had any existence. This image has not been destroyed from without, it has fallen to pieces, cleft and disintegrated by the concrete historical problems which came to the surface one after another."

Jon Murray, president of the American Atheists, is quoted in the December 1994 issue of Life Magazine. in an article titled, "Who Was Jesus?" as saying:

"There was no such person in the history of the world as Jesus Christ. There was no historical, living, breathing, sentient human being by that name. Ever. (The Bible) is a fictional, nonhistorical narrative. The myth is

good for business." (page 68)

Such was an is the disposition of the disbeliever in Jesus. Although we are saddened by their disinterest in what GOD's word says on the subject. Yet, we are not willing that their objection alone be allowed to settle the matter. What if it were possible to produce testimony from sources not sympathetic to Jesus or his cause that authenticate his very existence, might not that be convincing? Brother F. W. Mattox has correctly stated, "The facts of the life of Christ are confirmed both by pagans and unbelieving Jews" (THE ETERNAL KINGDOM, 1961, P. 31). The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, said,

"At that time lived Jesus, a wise man, if he may be called a man; for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. *He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles.* This was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men among us, had condemned him to the cross, they who before had conceived an affection for him did not cease to adhere to his. For on the third day he appeared to them alive again. The divine prophets having foretold these and many other wonderful things concerning him. And the sect of the Christians, so called from him, subsists at this time." (ANTIQUITIES, Book 18, Chap. 3, Section 3)

Others such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny could be cited for further verification. But friend, surely one can see that the historical evidence confirming the existence of Jesus is overwhelming. And the cries of those who disavow his life are muted by the voice of history.

Now let's turn our attention to those who affirm that Jesus existed, yet deny his deity. By deity we mean divinity or being divine, a possessor of divine nature. The fundamental question then is, was Jesus a mere man or was he the divine Messiah? Again, the answer one gives does make a difference.

As far back as New Testament times there have been those who conceded Jesus' existence but denied his deity. The books of First and Second John have a great deal to say about "antichrists" (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7). In John's writings the term antichrist seems to apply to all who manifest a disbelief in Jesus as the Christ (see 1 John 2:22). (NOTE: One should

FROM THE EDITOR

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THE QUESTION OF CLONING

It seems too much like a movie thriller from the 1970's. Cloning. And yet the news shot across the world on February 25th that scientists in Scotland had successfully cloned a sheep. This is seen by many as the breakthrough which will inevitably lead to the cloning of humans. Government officials believe it. On the same day as the news broke, Senator Christopher Bond, R-Missouri, urged Congress to permanently ban use of federal money for human cloning research, saying such research on humans would be "unethical and morally reprehensible." Did you know that last year congress included a temporary ban on such scientific work in a health spending bill? That ban expires September 30.

The human cloning possibility instantly creates questions.

Isn't there a large potential market for this procedure? All good parents want the best possible life for their future children. Conscientious parents seek the best prenatal care. It is easy to see the cloning practice becoming popular. Could this become so readily available and popular that "regular" kids would be considered underprivileged?

Wouldn't parents tend to demand that a cloned child meet unreasonable pre-designed expectations? Put yourself in the uncomfortable shoes of the cloned child. If he were cloned from Pavarati genes (a famous singer), it would be for a reason. The parents want a little Pavarati. Cloning would add a new dimension to the teacher who says to a student, "I'm giving you this failing grade because I know you didn't do your best. I know you can do better."

The attraction to human cloning, it seems, is based on the belief that genes are the key players in what makes a person what he is. Yet, while genes play a role, who can deny that our environment plays a bigger role? If you cloned a famous football player twice, producing two identical children, although they would both be large, one might grow up to be a football player and the other a taxi-cab driver. How the child was raised would mean more the genes. If you cloned a famous and respected Gospel preacher, would you have thus guaranteed that another was coming to fill his shoes?

Furthermore, environmental factors cannot be duplicated through the formative years. Suppose in a cloning case the second one has divorced parents? Suppose the first one had to endure some wrenching hardship? Yet these occurrences clearly influence the personality.

Remember that a child, regardless of the nationality, can be raised speaking any language. The hands can be guided to hold a Bible or a bottle. The heart and character can be of gold or of stone. The way a child is reared will always take the lion's share of credit for how the child matures, and with what values.

Will cloning further contribute to the increasing numbers of people who don't consider marriage a valuable arrangement when considering child bear-

ing?

Who would be the father of a cloned boy? Would the man to whom he is genetically identical bear any Biblical responsibilities (Eph. 6:4)? In cloning, there literally is no father. No sperm is used. The cell is "tricked" into thinking it has been fertilized, and begins to grow.

Is man to be deceived into thinking he has creative ability? For centuries, godly people have asserted that we are owned by God because He created us. Creation, we suggest, is the highest form of ownership. If scientists and parents, through manipulation of the DNA and egg, *fail* to produce the kind of child they expect, will they feel at liberty to kill that child since they "created" him in the first place?

Would human cloning diminish from the already decreasing value Americans place on human life? We already have partial-birth abortion. We have euthanasia, or killing of the infirmed. Is it conceivable that someone might clone a duplicate of himself in order to have a perfectly correct set of spare parts for when he grows older? Repulsive. But so is partial-birth abortion.

As one medical doctor said it, "We are tampering with things we should leave alone. We are going too far."

One question which is easy to answer when considering human cloning is this: "Would a human clone have a soul?" Yes, he would certainly have a soul. James 2:26 says, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." A dead person is dead because he hasn't a soul. The reverse must also be true. If a man is alive he has a soul.

In times like these it is good to know and trust the One who holds the reins of the universe. We do not know what tomorrow holds, but we know who holds tomorrow. Perhaps with this in mind, the inspired psalmist wrote,

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the most High. God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, *and that* right early.

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah." (Psalm 46:1-11)

not equate the terms antichrist and false christ- Mt. 24:24) Many commentators believe these antichrists to be those later identified as Gnostics, a name derived from the Greek word "gnosis" meaning knowledge. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt as to the apostle John's position relative to those denying the Lord's deity. John exhorts the brethren to abide in Christ and not be led astray by false prophets who deny that Jesus is the Christ and that he came in the flesh (1 John 2:26-29; 4:1-3).

In more recent times, about 70 years ago, Charles T. Russell founder of the International Bible Students (now the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses) said Christ, "was the highest of all Jehovah's creatures, so also he was the first, the direct creation of GOD,...and then he, as Jehovah's representative, and in the exercise of Jehovah's power, and in his name, created all things, angels, principalities and powers, as well as the earthly creation" (Studies in the Scriptures, 1924, p. 27).

Brethren, one need not be an Einstein to figure out that the above position has Jesus relegated to creature status. And so it is that the Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity of Christ; thinking he was the archangel Michael, a created being. Further proof of their denial is attested by simply consulting THEIR OWN Bible, The New World Translation which renders John 1:1 thus, "In the beginning the word was; and the word was with GOD, and the word was a god".

Now brethren, please compare that with the rendering of John 1:1 in a reliable translation such as the King James Version.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with GOD, and the Word was GOD".

It would be impossible to miss the difference in the two. The former denies that Jesus is GOD, the latter affirms that he is. What will we say to such blatant dishonesty? The simple fact of the matter is because of their own position denying the deity of Christ they were forced to prepare their own translation or else panic every time they looked at John 1:1. When people will stoop to doing that (making "their own" bible) there's not much they won't do or say.

The Jews viewed Jesus and still do as a carpenter who decided to preach, a good man, but not the Messiah. Almost 2000 years ago our Lord told the Jews.

"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24-KJV).

Other religious groups (Moslems, Mormons, and New Age) to name but a few are equally wrong in the stance they take on the deity of Jesus. But remember this, the Bible is correct when it says of Jesus:

"For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily". (Colossians 2:9)

Brethren, well do I remember hearing my "Pa" Gould through the years comment on John 8:58 which says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am". He would say, and correctly so, that the words "I am" are the language of the ETERNALLY PRESENT. Did Jesus have a beginning? NO. Is Jesus Christ eternal? YES. Is it correct for us to call Jesus, GOD? ABSOLUTELY.

Brethren, why, so many people will not believe what the Bible says about Jesus just flatly escapes me.

The fact that Jesus is the son of GOD is the foundation you and I rest upon (Mt. 16:16). The fact that Jesus is GOD (John 1:1; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8) is the awesome truth of the ages.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

SEEKING JESUS

Jerri Manasco

The wise men came to Jerusalem, having an inquiry and an intention. "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." (Matthew 2:2). These men were seeking Jesus, even when he was a baby! They were not seeking merely out of curiosity, but they had a specific purpose in seeking. They sought the new king of Israel, knowing by some means that the time had arrived when the "desire of all nations" had entered the world. All the hopes of the human race were met in that singular birth. Thus with great anticipation these men aspired to find the baby born in Bethlehem. Others have sought Jesus and still seek him, but for what purpose?

Herod sought the child Jesus, but his seeking was that of a hypocrite. Though pretending and professing to seek Jesus "that I may come and worship him also" (Matthew 2:8), his real intent was to murder this new king before he posed a threat to his political ambitions (verse 13). Today there are liberal "scholars" wearing the badge "Bible Critic" who pretend to be seeking to find the "real" Jesus, but in fact they are out to destroy the Jesus who is so dear to the heart of every wise seeker! There have recently been great claims made by a body of such men who say they have discussed the new testament texts and have decided that most of what the texts say about Jesus is nothing more than fanciful inventions of the disciples of Jesus. Such men claim that they only want to "come and worship him also," when their real intent is to discredit the integrity of the inspired word of God. As Herod attempted to kill the Son of God, so these murder the biblical text. Everything from the virgin birth to the marvelous resurrection is being cast out as fictitious. How tragic!

Mary and Joseph sought Jesus, but theirs was the search of someone who through carelessness had become separated from him! Having left Jerusalem after the passover, Mary and Joseph misplace Jesus because they **supposed** he was in their travelling group (Luke 2:44). Discovering him to be absent and unaccounted for, they immediately began their search for his twelve year old boy. They sought him among their kinfolks and friends and failed to find him (verse 44). It was when they returned to Jerusalem that they found Jesus in the temple (verses 45-49). When asked why he had done this thing, the boy Jesus replied, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (verse 49). This is like so many today in religion who walk their own way (Proverbs 14:12), and they suppose Jesus is with them merely because they are religious and have been discharging religious duties. Like Mary and Joseph, there is a lot of searching that must be done to find the Lord. And where is he found? He is found exactly where you might expect! It is to be noted that Jesus was in fact "at home" when he was found! He was in his Father's house! Jesus hasn't moved; we are the ones who have moved and need to come back to see him.

The chief priests and scribes sought Jesus, but

theirs is the seeking that rises out of hatred.

"And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him..."(Luke 22:2). This intention was even voiced after Jesus had worked the great miracle in raising Lazarus from the grave. The fact that Jesus had wrought this wonderful thing was not denied; in fact it was freely admitted by them (John 11:47)! So envious were they of Jesus' influence, though, that they "consulted that they might also put Lazarus to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus" (John 12:10,11). This must truly be the height of spiritual hardening! They hated Jesus so much that they would do anything to rid themselves of him. This is still the tactic used by the enemies of the truth. If reason and argument fails, then they will do all they can to destroy your influence. How sad that such strategies are employed even by some in the church when they want to rid themselves of a sound gospel preacher or rid of a sound elder.

Those who benefited from Jesus' miracle of feeding the five thousand sought him out, but theirs was the seeking of one who wants to receive instead of give. When they found Jesus after seeking him (John 6:24, 25), Jesus told them, "Ye seek me, not because ye

saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (verse 26). Jesus warned them not to seek for things which are temporary but to seek for the eternal things (verse 27). Some today want the food, but not the fellowship of Jesus! They want to be Christians and enjoy church membership, but they don't want the obligations that go with it. They will find exactly what they seek for!

There were some Greeks who came up to a feast of the Jews with the request, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:20,21). Who these Greeks were no one knows for certain. What is certain is that their coming indicated that the time of the atoning death of Jesus was near (verses 23-32). They must have come for a purpose, and there is every reason to believe that it was a noble purpose. Whereas the Jews were soon to reject Jesus, the Gentiles would open their hearts to him. God speaks through Isaiah and declares, "I was found of them that sought me not" (Romans 10:20; Isaiah 65:1). Whoever these Gentiles were, they stepped over the barriers that would have kept them from seeing Jesus! Barriers of prejudice and error must be torn down in order to seek and find Jesus.

Are you seeking Jesus?

MOST OF A MINUTE - THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

What church are you a member of? Now hold that answer in your mind for a moment.

Is there anything in a name? Well, I suppose if you are Shakespeare and discussing roses, then maybe not.

Most of the time names are very important to us. Take that mail box in front of your house or apartment for example. Whose name is on it? I know the answer to that. If it's your house, and your mailbox, then the name on the box is yours. Suppose I come along one day and put my name

on your mailbox in front of your house. Would you object to that?

Now, back to the church. Can you find the church of which you are a member in your Bible? The church of the Bible is called the "church of Christ" in Romans 16:16, the "church of the Firstborn" in Hebrews 12:23, and the "church of God" in I Corinthians 1:2. --And given the choice, I would much rather presume to change the name on your mail box than to change the name of the church for which Christ died.

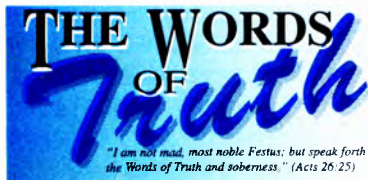
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Vol. 34 No. 11

March 27, 1997

"...HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH"

Jason Roberts

The above statement is found in the latter part of Hebrews 11:4 in which the account of Abel's heroic action of faith is recorded alongside the many other stalwart names of God's faithful. The passage indicates that Abel's sacrifice to God, in contrast to his brother's, was offered by faith (cf. Rom. 10:17). Why is the latter part of the statement recorded, "...he being dead yet speaketh?" Obviously Abel's death was not the end. We know that he died, but through his supreme act of faith he is still speaking today. How does Abel speak? Lightfoot, in his commentary on Hebrews, suggests in one of two ways, either (1) through the record of Scripture calling for the avenging of his death, or (2) through the continuing force of his example of faith. The latter seems to fit the context of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Abel died as the first of all martyrs. He was a righteous man, who through his sacrificial offering, inspires and motivates man to this very hour to live a faithful life. In that sense, Abel, though dead, is still speaking to mankind.

We are well aware of the fact that there are many great preachers who have left this life, and who are still speaking to us through their sterling character and their loyal faith they had in the Almighty. There are some, who have passed on to their reward, who are still speaking to us. In my short life as a preacher I have heard many interesting stories about how people have been converted to the Lord. I have heard how that a man named James Kent from Abilene, Texas knocked on a family's door in Erie, Pennsylvania and asked if he could study the Bible with the lady who answered the door. The following Sunday she went to the Church of Christ and was baptized by Owen Olbricht and became a member of the Lord's church. Her husband at that time was a Presbyterian, later was converted, no doubt through her godly influence. And to this day that man is a faithful member of the Lord's church. In fact, he is currently an instructor of one of the finest preacher training school's in our brotherhood, of which this writer was privileged to attend.

I have heard how that a man by the name of Joe Crockett, now paralyzed, and living in Texas,

simply said the following to a man whose terrible plight would take books to record, "If I were you I think I would start studying my Bible." He later pondered the admonition, and he eventually became a New Testament Christian. He preached his first sermon and later enrolled in the Memphis School of Preaching, graduated in 1972 and is currently the President of the Alumni Association for the Memphis School of Preaching, and now preaching in Arkansas. He has a son who was reared by two godly parents (Eph. 6:4), who attended Freed-Hardeman University and is currently preaching for the Southaven Church of Christ in Southaven, Mississippi. On and on we can list the occurrences of people becoming members of the Lord's church because of somebody taking the time to mention Jesus in one way or another.

Many of you will remember the late and lamented brother Andrew Connally. He was a man who epitomized the great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). In 1957 he and his good wife left the states and traveled to Africa where they spent some 25 years doing mission work. It was through their efforts that the very first mission hospital was built by members of the Lord's church. To this very hour the hospital, known as **Chimala Mission Hospital**, under the oversight of the elders of the Seagoville, Church of Christ in Seagoville, Texas, is still going strong. Attending both to the physical needs as well as the spiritual needs of thousands upon thousands of dying Africans, countless numbers have been, and are **currently being added** to the Lord's church (Acts 2:38,41,47). His work is not finished, even though he has finished his work. "...he being dead yet still speaketh."

Many of us can remember hearing all 6 foot four, 270 pounds of Connally who wore a size 14b shoe! preach. And yet as he thundered from the pulpit challenging us to live better for Jesus, in the midst of his powerful messages there was a tender side to brother Connally. His wife, Claudene, speaks of this in her book, **"I Walked By His Side."**

(The following story is true to the very letter). On March 2, 1997, a man in Cordova, Alabama

SEE ARTICLES
INSIDE:

"...HE BEING DEAD
YET SPEAKETH"

LET GOD DO THE CLAPPING
CLONING

WHAT DOES "TAKE HEED
LEST HE FALL" MEAN?

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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WHAT DOES "TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL" MEAN?

In I Corinthians 10:12 Paul uses a phrase which has been casually used by many in ways unfair to the context of the verse. Perhaps this article will help.

The verse says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Does this really mean that the moment you begin to think you are saved you are ready to fall? Does this teach that we should be shy about having confidence in our salvation?

Recently an article was written in which the verse was used to prove that teenagers should avoid dating situations in which they might be tempted to commit fornication. Lest they argue that they are strong enough to resist the temptation, they should "take heed lest they fall." The argument was a good one, but the verse was actually misapplied.

Seen in context, what the verse is actually teaching is this: "When a person begins thinking he is standing alone, as if there is no God above, he is on dangerous ground. Others have fallen into sin because they began thinking this way."

Let's briefly walk through the verses:

I Corinthians 10:5 -- "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." This refers to Israel in Numbers 13-14. When the twelve spies returned from looking at Canaan, ten acted as if they would have to fight those giants alone! They wanted to abandon their hopes of entering the promised land out of fear of the enemy. They knew there was a God in heaven, but they acted as atheists. Their conclusion was to leave their post and run. "And they said one to another, 'Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt.'"

I Corinthians 10:7 -- "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." This has reference to God's people in Exodus 32:1-6. Moses did not return from the mountain as soon as they expected, and see their reaction: "...Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him..." They had troubles, Moses, they thought, had left them. They just assumed that they had no one to take care of

them in the wilderness. They wanted a god they could feel and touch and see. They practiced idolatry. They acted as if there was no God.

I Corinthians 10:8 -- "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." This has reference to God's people in Numbers 25:1-9, when the Israelites "began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab." What were they but people living in blatant immorality? Is not that the lifestyle of those who deny God's existence? God's people acted as if there was no God.

I Corinthians 10:9 -- "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." This familiar passage is found in Numbers 21:5-7. The people of God murmured against God because they did not like the way He was providing for them. "And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people." Where did the manna come from? Who brought them out of Egypt? God! Yet they act as if there is no God when it comes to offering Him gratitude.

It is in this context that Paul makes the statement of interest in this article. Consider what all these instances which Paul mentions have in common: God's people sometimes find themselves in trouble, and instead of responding in faith, begin acting as if there really is not God. In that situation, God's man stands cautioned by the Apostle. He must take heed lest he fall.

When we suffer, let us never abandon our God. The fact of suffering never has indicated that God has ceased to exist, or ceased to love His people. Let us rather say with Paul, "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).

was baptized for the remission of his sins. His son attends the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama and is a faithful member thereof. He wanted his dad to become a Christian more than anything in the world. Something, though, was holding his father back from becoming a member of the Lord's church. He would attend periodically, but now at the age of 63 he basically came to the conclusion that he would never change. I gave his son several tapes which brother Connally preached many years ago, not knowing that he would eventually give these sermons to his father. His father listened to them. And he listened. And he listened. On one occasion his son went to his father's house and standing at the front door he could hear the tape of brother Connally thundering throughout the house, while his dad was listening to the preaching inside. He started forgetting about the morning paper and started listening to brother Connally's sermons. His good wife started seeing a dramatic change in her husband's life. And on Saturday night, March 1, she said to her son, after he asked her if she was alright, "I'll be better tomorrow." Her son went home that night and said to his wife, "I believe daddy is going to walk the aisle tomorrow."

Sunday came. It was Homecoming day for the Cordova Church of Christ in Cordova, Alabama. The son and his wife were sitting with his father and mother. The sermon was preached, and as the first stanza of the invitation song began, his daddy walked the aisle. His son said that he never heard a more genuine heartfelt confession than the one he heard March 2, 1997.

Upon his good confession (Rom. 10:9-10) preceded by his faith (Heb. 11:6) and repentance (Acts 17:30), this 63 year old man was baptized for the remission of his sins (Acts 22:16) by his own son. After the service the son's mother said to him, "It took you and a dead preacher to reach him." The last sermon this man heard brother Connally preach was entitled, "***Weighed In The Balances And Found Wanting***" (Daniel 5:27). This sermon was preached many years ago at the Seagoville Church of Christ in Seagoville, Texas, and yet a copy of the tape was a contributing factor that converted this man to Christ.

Brethren, brother Connally is currently basking in the sunshine of God's love. After battling cancer for many years, he passed away in 1992. Five years after his death a 63 year old man walks the aisle and becomes a New Testament Christian, no doubt influenced by the preaching from a man who is no longer with us, or is he? "*...he being dead yet speaketh.*"

LET GOD DO THE CLAPPING

Bobby Duncan

From time to time a question arises concerning the practice of clapping during our worship periods to show our approval of something said or done. This practice is, generally speaking, relatively new among churches of Christ. That fact within itself does not make the practice either right or wrong.

Neither does the fact that it is a practice borrowed by our denominational neighbors from the entertainment industry, and then by churches of Christ from our denominational neighbors. The rightness or wrongness of an act is determined, not by its antiquity or its novelty, not by who has or has not made it a practice, but by whether or not it is in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament.

Clapping during worship fits into the agenda of those who are trying to change the church. Some of them have made it plain that worship must be changed to make it more appealing to the worshiper. Calvin Warpula wrote, "I also believe we should let individuals and congregations use the musical format they like without judging them." Rubel Shelly said, "The tired, uninspiring event we call worship in traditional churches has to give way to the exhilarating experience of God that exhibits and nourishes life in the worshipers." He also said in the same speech, "The church has got to change. If it doesn't change, my kids are not going to stay with it."

These statements suggest that worship must please the worshiper. They ignore the fact that worship is designed to honor God. When the design of worship is to entertain the worshiper, we expect those being entertained to show their approval by clapping.

There is the same authority for clapping in Christian worship as there is for playing a piano or organ. It is doing something for which there is no divine authority. Furthermore, those among our brethren who first started clapping in worship are the same ones who have stretched the tent of fellowship over the denominational world, and who will not say those who use the instrument in worship sin in so doing. While clapping has now caught on with some who are otherwise, it should be remembered that hand clapping in worship was originally borrowed from the denominations by some who believe those in the denominations have God's approval.

It would be admitted by most that clapping the hands in worship does not in any way add to the dignity and solemnity of the occasion. It does not do honor to God; we honor him by doing what he has told us to do in worship, and he has not told us to clap.

It is also a fact that, until recent years, it was considered in bad taste to applaud any religious activity. If you think otherwise, consult the books by Emily Post, whose name for many years was synonymous with etiquette.

Who is being applauded when there is hand clapping in worship? Are those who clap their hands doing so to honor God? If so, they are seeking to honor God in some way he has not authorized instead of as he has directed. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Second John 9 says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." It will be admitted by all that we can abide in the doctrine of Christ without ever

having a round of applause in any of our worship assemblies.

If hand clapping is something of value in our worship, then why didn't God prescribe it? Could it be that those who initiated this practice think they have thought of something God overlooked? Or did God simply not know of its great value? Brethren with such wisdom would do well to read First Corinthians 3:18-20:

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

Those really interested in the peace and harmony of the church will not insist on clapping in worship. They themselves will agree that clapping is not necessary in order to have scriptural worship. They will acknowledge also that clapping is not an act God has prescribed. Therefore, they must confess they can worship scripturally and conscientiously without applauding. In love for

those who conscientiously oppose it, and in the interest of peace and harmony, it should be omitted.

Occasionally one will be heard to say that hand clapping is no different from saying, "Amen." But there is one slight difference: saying "Amen," is authorized in Scripture. First Corinthians 14:16 says,

Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? Where is the verse which mentions clapping hands in worship?

I would emphasize that I am not one who is opposed to change, provided the change is in harmony with the will of God, and provided the change will be an improvement. However, if we are to improve our worship, it will not be by adding other acts, but by improving the worshipers. If there is to be applause in connection with our worship, let it be by God; he is the only audience. All of us are participants.

MOST OF A MINUTE - CLONING

By now you've probably heard about what scientists in Scotland did with Dolly the sheep. After almost 300 failures, they successfully cloned a sheep. Now the possibility of a human clone is exciting and disgusting people all over the world.

Out of all the questions people will be asking about this possibility, I think one will be particularly interesting to Bible-believing folks: "Would a man who was a clone, have a soul?" The very question will reveal that cloning

makes men think they are God to create life. But they aren't. We may manipulate what God has made, but we do not create, and certainly not life itself.

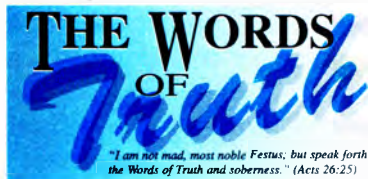
The answer to the question is yes. A man, even a clone, would have a soul if he was alive. James 2:26 states, "The body without the spirit is dead." The reverse must also be true. The body, which is alive, must have a spirit. And remember: The Bible says God is the Father of spirits, Hebrews 12:9.

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Individual rates are \$20.50 per year. All bills payable to Words of Truth, 3051 McQueen Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107



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Vol. 34 No. 12

April 4, 1997

Be An Olive Tree

Neal Pollard

One's appreciation of the Bible is greatly enhanced by learning the geography or history of the time in which the events recorded took place. For an American Bible reader who lives 2,000 years after the days of Christ is a need for extensive education about the region and culture about which he reads. There are even great differences between the lives and times of characters from the Old Testament and those in the New. An example of a "commodity" which had special value to one living in the ancient eastern culture is the olive tree. Even today, the olive tree is important to Near Easterners.

There are occasions (cf. Zechariah 4:2-6; 1 Samuel 10) where the olive tree or its oil is used in connected spiritual things. Usually, however, it is symbolic of the wealth and prosperity it brought those who tended and gleaned the trees. Studying about this tree will leave one with the impression that, if more humans were like them, Christ would have better servants and the world better citizens.

Its Oil Is Priceless. According to one source, the olive tree was "famous for its fruit, oil and wood" and its "oil especially was a staple, being used in diet and shortening" (Lev 2:4-6), in lamps for light (Ex 27:20) and in ritual for anointing (Ex 29:7)" (Theological Wordbook of the O.T., 240). It was also used "medicinally and as a perfume (Ps 104:15; Ezk 16:9)" (ibid). Except maybe salt, olive oil was the most indispensable commodity for the common Easterner. It was a staple, and without it, one was highly inconvenienced.

A person should, because of their godly influence, wield an influence like this oil. Jesus calls His disciples to be of value (cf. Matthew 5:14-16) to a world filled with people selling away their souls for the pennies of pleasure and the fool's gold of fortune. The influence of a Christian will make better workers of his coworkers, a better spouse of his or her mate, and better Christians of other saints (cf. 1 Timothy 4:12). Sadly, some children of God are letting their fear of ungodliness, their anxiety over things, and their timidity about the gospel withdraw them from being a priceless part of Christ's kingdom. Truly, some are waving the black banner of defeat. Christians must assert the righteous ways so needed (and missing) from this sinful world (1 John 3:7; John 15:8). Needed are more individual children of God that are five talent Christians (cf Matthew 25:15) who will teach a class, study the Bible with the lost, visit and encourage the sick, the shut-in, and the visit-

ing, and so forth. Such Christians are mightily used by God and sorely missed by man when they leave this earth.

Its Roots Are Undemanding. The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible says, "Olive trees can stand long periods of drought and can grow in very shallow soil" (Alexander, 220). According to Hastings, the olive tree "loves rich soil, but flourishes without irrigation" (A Dictionary Of The Bible, Vol. 3, 616). That is, they need water but require no extra attention. Irrigation is a time-consuming process and one that requires an amount of monitoring. The olive tree is quite self-sustaining, though dependent on God to naturally supply its needs.

Should not all Christians grow to that point? The Hebrews' writer laments the immature of faith who are infants in the kingdom even after a long period of time (cf. 5:12-13). Some Christians seem to always need constant prodding, urging, admonishing, and encouraging just to keep them semi-involved. How frustrating and counterproductive this is for stronger Christians. Does not maturity in Christ mean drawing spiritual strength from personal daily Bible study, faithful prayer, and increasingly purer living? It is sad to see Christians who have been such for twenty years still struggling over whether or not to attend the assemblies, much less being active in encouraging and evangelizing. Elders pray for more "olive tree" Christians, "low-maintenance" followers of Christ!

Its Flowers Are Easily Cast. The oft-mistaken Eliphaz was right when he alluded to the quick-dropping flowers of the olive tree (Job 15:33). Olives are plentiful every other year, and they rest in the alternating years. In the years in which they bear less fruit, their flowers bloom thickly and drop early (Keil-Delitzsch, Vol. 4, 272). While Eliphaz uses this simile in accusing Job of wickedness and revealed unfruitfulness, there is sometimes great value in quickly letting go of certain things.

The Christian is to shed all worldly activity which violates the will of God. Paul writes, "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). The Christian is told to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man..." (Ephesians 4:22). There are a host of actions found in Colossians 3:8-9 Christians are told to "put off" so as to "put on the new man" (Colossians 3:10). The book of

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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THAT'S A RISK I'VE GOT TO TAKE

The Great Commission is punctuated with risks. They are all earthly risks in that every one is brought by putting some earthly relationship on the line for Christ.

Christians are bound by the Great Commission to be soul conscious. We must be interested in the soul of every man, woman and child who comes into our circle of friends and acquaintances. But therein lies the risk factor. For in our hearts we know that the closeness of some relationships may be damaged or lost when we begin speaking the truth about Christ and His church.

Suppose a Christian, teenage girl, is dating a young man who is religious but not a member of the New Testament church. He is in a man-made church. At every opportunity she interjects gentle statements about the truth of the Bible, and the importance of following the doctrine of Christ (II Jn. 9). He is comfortable with a "you do your thing, I'll do mine" policy, but she knows that he is outside of Christ. She could continue that relationship with smooth sailing if she never actually addressed the subject of the one church of the Bible (Eph. 4:4). That one conversation, she knows, will knock them off center. Either he will continue to ask questions and be converted to Christ, or he will cling to and defend his denomination and their relationship will suffer. What should she do? Here in lies the risk factor.

Suppose a Christian woman in her mid-thirties has a grandmother who was never baptized, but was instead sprinkled as a child. The grandmother is devoutly religious, and is respected by most who know her as a serious-minded Christian. Knowing that baptism in the Bible is immersion in water and that sprinkling is not ever taught in the Word of God, the granddaughter is faced with the risk factor. To tell her grandmother the truth by saying, "You know how much I love and respect you, but according to God's word you have never been baptized to have your sins washed away," could be considered insulting to the aged one. She will perhaps open her Bible and study this question and be baptized as Jesus taught us, or she will perhaps defend her sprinkling and put an imaginary barrier between her and her granddaughter. Do you see the risk factor? What is the granddaughter to do? Baptism is essential for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38, I Pet. 3:21, Acts 22:16). Knowing that fact, she must take the risk.

The members of the early church were not strangers to the risk factor in Christianity. In (Acts 5:17-29), the apostles, after being jailed and threatened not to continue to preach salvation through Jesus Christ, went back to the tem-

ple and worked to convert the souls of men. They kept right on preaching. Foolish? No. Just part of the package. They were Christians, and this was just a risk they had to take.

Sometimes the risk involved close and important friendships. Real friends did not pretend that a person living outside of Christ was approved of God. They took the risk and spoke up. They spoke gently in love and genuine concern, but they spoke! In Galatians 2:11 Paul withstood Peter "to the face" because he was acting in a way which was sinful and which threatened the work they were trying to accomplish. Did Paul not know that to criticize the actions of Peter might jeopardize their relationship? Yes, he knew. But that was just a risk he had to take.

Throughout history there have been people who have humbly submitted to the Gospel call knowing that their father and mother would disapprove. Some have been told to forsake the church of Christ or not return home. Don't these people know that becoming a simple, New Testament Christian could cause their family members to react negatively? Certainly. Couldn't this obedience to Christ potentially result in a breaking of sweet family ties? Yes, that could happen, and it would be sad. And yet, that's the risk which has to be taken. For you see, the only other alternative is to protect your family relationship at all costs by not obeying the Gospel. In that case, one might keep the family, but would certainly lose the soul. Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, (Matthew 10:37)."

There comes a time when we have made friends and shown them Christian affection. We must then express the Bible truth that pertains to exactly what that friend is in trouble over -- failure to confess Christ, infant baptism, man-made religious affiliation, denominational name, unscriptural baptism, unscriptural worship practices, sinful marriage relationship, etc. Just think of how many people today would not be New Testament Christians were it not for someone willing to take the risk with them!

Risky? Yes. But think: you'd tell them if their house caught fire in the night and they were about to be burned. Why wouldn't you tell them if they were about to die and go to the lake of fire?

Take the risk. Love them, care about them, show them Christ living in you. Then open the Bible and tell them the truth.

Hebrews teaches one to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us..." (12:1).

Then, the Christian is to quickly cast his cares upon God. Most of the Christian's problems occur when he tries to go it alone without God. If one would learn to turn to God in devotion and praise in joyful times, there would be ample strength to face the famines of life. David challenges, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22). Simply Peter says the faithful child of God is found continually "casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Additionally, the Christian is to cast down his pride and self-service. Speaking of the spiritual warfare in which God's people are enlisted, Paul outlines the strategy. By inspiration, he writes, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Paul prescribes the throwing down or destruction of the strong holds and imaginations. The first may refer either to the fortresses or the prisons of ungodliness. The second refers to human reasoning and logic. Apparently, the battle Paul speaks of is waged in the heart, for the prisoners needing execution are the thoughts of the individual's heart. Truly, Paul struggled with daily decisions between right and wrong (1 Corinthians 9:27). And he warns against trusting carnal calculations (cf. Colossians 2:18-23; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 13). Pride chokes needed apologies, prevents repairing an apostate condition, and nourishes strife and division. Therefore, like leaves from an olive tree, pride must so swiftly be cast down from the character of the Christian.

Its Leaves Are Filled With Beauty. This is revealed to the bible student in Hosea 14:6. Those familiar with the topography of Palestine concur. Here is one writer's description.

The leaves are...of the characteristic dull olive-green at their upper surface, and a frosted silver colour below. This arrangement of colours makes an olive tree at a little distance appear as if covered by a filmy veil of silver gauze, which gives a soft dreamy sheen to the landscape (Hastings, 616). Some (cf. Matthew Henry, A.R. Fausset, C.F. Keil) understand the "beauty" of Hosea 14:6 to be the stability of its ever-green leaves. Regardless of the season, the leaves are green. Thus, the idea is of the beauty of faithfulness. The whole story of Ruth's life demonstrates this principle (cf. Ruth 1:16).

In his carnality, man judges beauty based upon outward appearances. But, this is not true beauty. God told Samuel, "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). What does God find beautiful? According to Psalm 29:2, he finds holiness so! According to Romans 10:15, he calls the feet of preachers beautiful (an illusion to the beauty of the work in which they engage). According to Isaiah 4:2, God apparently alludes to Christ as the beautiful branch.

Concerning the Christian's life, it should be one of spiritual beauty. When a Christian is fruitful (John 15:5), he is beautiful to God. When a Christian bears the marks of Christ (Galatians 6:17), he is beautiful to God. When a Christian turns many to righteousness (Daniel 12:3), he is beautiful to God. One who walks in the light of Christ draws others from darkness (1 Peter 2:9), is recognized by God (1 John 1:7), and guards his own steps (Psalm 119:105). Like the olive tree's leaves, the Christian can, through continual faithfulness, show forth the beauty of Jesus. God's people must be faithful in stewardship (1 Corinthians 4:2), in ministry (1 Timothy 1:12), in trials (Revelation 2:10), yes, in all things (1 Timothy 3:11). When Christians are faithful to Christ, how beautiful that community becomes! The people surrounding Christians begin to witness a better way of life, a better hope, and a better answer.

So many other interesting things characterize the olive tree. "It grows slowly, but lives to an immense age" (Smith's Bible Dictionary, 464), and, as such, illustrates the benefit of steady, active growth in Christ. "It thrives best in warm and sunny situations" (ibid), and the Christian grows best in the light of Christ (John 1:4; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Romans 11:17 and 11:24 teach that there were two common types of olive trees, one being wild and the other the finer, garden variety. Just so, there are faithful and unfaithful Christians, fruitful and unfruitful ones, and some who are assets and some who are liabilities to the cause of the Lord. Be the faithful, fruitful kind of Christian. Be the kind of olive tree found in Jotham's allegory, one who glorifies God with his abundance (Judges 9:9). In practical worth, be valuable! In personal growth, be viable! In purging sins, be vigilant! In perpetual devotion, be veritable! Be like a tree (cf. Psalm 1:3)!

A Practical Book

Johnny Ramsey

A thorough study of Acts will help us in teaching the other New Testament books. Acts proves that the early church grew because they were truly converted to Christ. It should be inspiring to every Christian to read of men with hearts aflame with concern for the souls of men. Let us arise and march for the Master as they did!

The book of Acts stresses the success of the church of the Lord. The fervent action of New Testament Christianity is the pulsating drama in Acts of The Apostles. Why was the church of the first century so vibrant?

1. They Were Not Ashamed of the Gospel

Truly, they filled all Jerusalem with the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:28) as they went everywhere preaching the word (8:4-5) both publicly and privately (5:42). No wonder the word of God grew and multiplied (12:24) and great multitudes believed (14:1-3). Knowing the power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16) their message prevailed mightily (Acts 19:20). Their sound went out into all the earth (Romans 1:18) as every creature heard redemption's message (Colossians 1:23). Paul was set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians 1:17) and was not ashamed to present it before Kings (Psalms 119:46). The early Christians obeyed God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

2. They Preached Boldly Without Compromise

Never apologetic concerning Truth, the servants of God "turned the world upside down" for the Master

(Acts 17:6). The New Testament church tried to be the friend of Jehovah (Galatians 1:10) and not of the world (James 4:4). They stood firmly against error (Jude 3) and for Truth (Amos 5:15). We, today, should take a stronger stand against the world and never be afraid of what men can do to us (Hebrews 13:5-6). When we preach like they preached we shall accomplish what they did!

3. They Were Pure In Life

Unlike the shallow ground hearers in the parable of the Sower (Luke 8) the members of the church in the first century did not allow tribulation to hinder them in the great work of redemption. The trials of Paul but made him stronger (II Corinthians 11:23ff). Suffering with Christ was a prelude to reigning with Him (II Timothy 2:11-12). Persecution—even unto death—was one of the main reasons for the rapid growth of Christianity. Nero's opposition to the church of the Lord just made the servants of God more determined than ever to press on. Nothing separated them from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39) as the Christians believed the Lord would be with them to the end of the world.

4. The Deep Love They Had For Each Other

The prayer of Paul in I Thessalonians 3 was true of them: "The Lord make you increase and abound in love toward one another and all men." One of the

proverbial statements of the first century can be found in many books:

"See how the Christians love one another."

They provoked one another unto love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). Christians loved one another purely and fervently. This gave them a strong tie to offset the flimsy allure of the world. Their hearts were knit together in love (Colossians 2:2).

5. They Put The Kingdom Absolutely First: (Matthew 6:33)

Since life is a search for that which we deem most valuable the New Testament church was successful because their purpose in life was Christ (Phil. 1:21) and their definite goal was Heaven (Hebrews 9:24). The kingdom was incomparable in value (Matthew 13:45) and they were willing to pay the price. Christ had transformed their lives (Romans 12:2) and they would not look back (Luke 9:62). They suffered all things lest the gospel of Christ be hindered (I Cor. 9:12) and were content regardless of the afflictions the Truth brought them (Acts 14:22).

The book of Acts emphasizes the success of New Testament Christianity. These same ingredients will make us strong today. Let us press on!

MOST OF A MINUTE - WHERE IS GOD?

It's a fascinating thing to think about God: who He is, how He is, where He is.

One of my favorite passages of scripture is Hebrews 13:5: "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, 'the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.'"

Now think: How could God say to all believers "I will not leave you"? Believers are scattered over the earth! There's of course only one way. He would have to be everywhere at the same time. The word is omnipresent.

Here's what the Bible says in Psalm 139:7-10:

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there thy hand shall lead me, and thy right hand hold me."

God, in His infinite knowledge, is everywhere at the same time.

You can't escape God. But then again, who would want to?

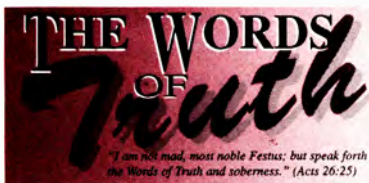
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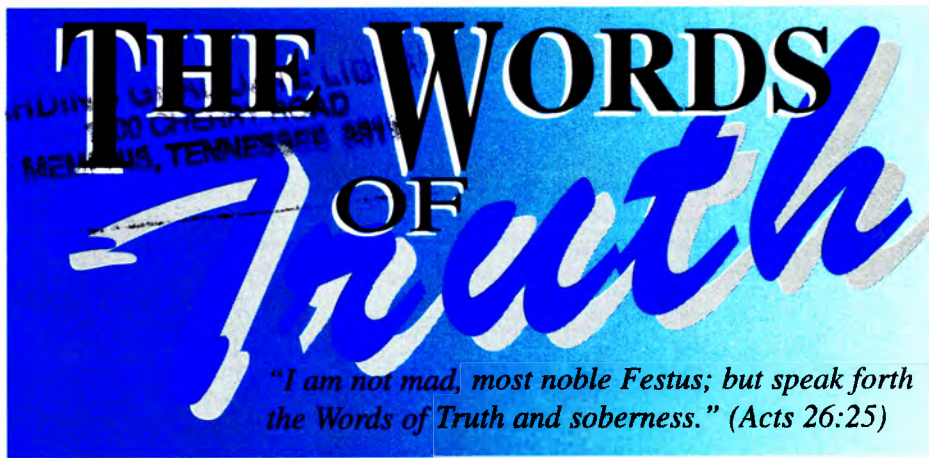
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Vol. 34 No. 13

April 11, 1997

Haunting Cries From the Bible

Johnny Ramsey

Some passages in the Holy Scripture are truly powerful, piercing and memorable beyond description. They are the kind that we just cannot forget as they leap out of the pages to gain attention. They remind us of the up-to-date nature of Bible truth and the practical application of such valuable material. For instance, when Luke 17:32 tells us to *remember Lot's wife* we immediately think of a wicked woman who looked back longingly to evil and debauchery just before she died. When preachers mention the "handwriting on the wall" we recall Daniel's warning to wicked Belshazzar and the shameful monarch's last night upon earth. Just the unusual word, *nehustan*, takes us back to Hezekiah's purging of idolatry wherein he described a famous object as "just a piece of brass" (2 Kings 18)! When Paul wrote, at the close of the first epistle to the Corinthians, that any who loved not the Lord would be "Anathema Maranatha" he points out the tragedy awaiting those who would be unprepared when Jesus comes. Preachers usually get the attention of the assembly when they remind us that Israel came out of Egypt in one night but it took forty years to get Egypt out of them! Also, it makes a memorable point to contrast Egyptian bondage and Babylonian captivity. Regarding the first arrangement God told Moses to *let my people go* but centuries later when Judah was so corrupt and Babylon took them away for seventy years, Jehovah said, in essence, let my people stay, because of their own corruption.

Some of the haunting cries of the Bible

that ring in our ears are these:

- (1) My sins are not hid from Thee
—Psalms 69:5
- (2) I have erred exceeding; I have played the fool
—1 Samuel 26:21
- (3) I have sinned against heaven
—Luke 15:21-24
- (4) The wicked are like the troubled sea
—Isaiah 57:20
- (5) For the great day of his wrath is come
—Revelation 6:17
- (6) They have taken away my Lord
—John 20:13
- (7) Their heart is like an adamant stone
—Zechariah 7
- (8) They are past feeling
—Ephesians 4:19
- (9) They will not come to me that they might have life
—John 5:40
- (10) How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land
—Psalms 137:4
- (11) "O Absalom, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee"
—2 Samuel 18:33
- (12) "If a man die, shall he live again?"
—Job 14:14

When we carefully read and study the sacred text we learn the terrible sorrow that sin always brings. The estrangement from God that evil produces is sadness personified. In 1625, John Ford wrote words that could apply to the haunting cries of the Bible:

"They are the silent griefs that cut the heartstrings."

Our blessed Savior, at Calvary, spoke

**SEE ARTICLES
INSIDE:
HAUNTING CRIES FROM
THE BIBLE
NEVER TAKE ME BACK THERE
THE DEVIL IS ATTENDING
THE MEETING
FEELING WASHED**

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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NEVER TAKE ME BACK THERE

The Apostle Paul wrote to the "churches of Galatia," (Galatians 1:2). His heart was firmly set on defending the liberty in Jesus, that no one would bring Christians into bondage (2:4). The specific bondage threatening was from those who persuaded the disciples to go back into the law of Moses and adopt circumcision as part of their service to God. Because the law of Christ contained no such instruction, and because binding one part of Moses law' obligated the individual to all of Moses law, Paul fought against these Jewish enemies.

How dangerous was this "religion" which included circumcision? "After all," some might argue, "the participants were devoutly religious." Here is Paul's answer:

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing...Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:1-4).

Even Peter was influenced by these Jewish friends who sought to pull people away from the simple law of Jesus (Galatians 2). Paul "withstood him to the face" when Peter showed the Jews favor over the Gentile Christians. Paul's frustration peaked. He couldn't believe that even Peter, a "pillar of the church" (Galatians 2:9), would be slipping from the truth of Jesus under the pressure of these religionists.

Now consider what Paul wrote: "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor" (2:18). Paul is saying, "I don't want to live like that. I've destroyed the things in my life which are against Christ and true service to Him. I will not give in to this false teaching with it's offensive practices!"

"For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor."

I suggest that we would all do well to adopt the same attitudes toward false doctrines and worship practices today. When an individual becomes a Christian, though he is at that time a "babe" in Christ (Hebrews 5:12-14), he has made a commitment to Christ which has a definite bearing on ALL sin. In that sense he has "destroyed" or "put to death" (Colossians 3:4-6) all attitudes and actions which he knows, or will learn, are against Jesus.

Don't try to bring me down with denominationalism, for I want to know only Christ's church (Matthew 16:18). Don't try to bring me down with women leaders in worship, for I want only to worship according to God's will (1 Timothy 2:12). Don't try to bring me down with clergy/laity class divisions, for Jesus taught us to all be brethren (Matthew 23:1-12). Don't try to bring me down with teaching on marriage and remarriage which ignores simple teachings of the Lord, for Jesus said what He meant and meant what He said (Matthew 19:9). Don't try to bring me down with a new hermeneutic which leaves men without solid truth, for I want the illuminated path the scriptures offer (1 Timothy 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:15). Don't try to bring me down with pleas to unify with religions which teach baptism is irrelevant and unnecessary to a persons' salvation, for I want to trust Jesus for my salvation (Mark 16:16). I'm a Christian; a simple follower of Jesus. I do not want to build again the things which I destroyed.

Stand tall. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Don't let others pull you down into ideas contrary to God's book. Jesus told the Devil himself, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

the most piercing of all cries as he quoted from Psalms 22:

“My God, my God why has Thou forsaken me?”

Could there ever be a love so great as the deep concern the Creator had for us in allowing his beloved Son to die there for sinners like all of us? Both Paul and Peter inform us that Jesus bore our sins upon the tree at Golgotha to become our offering or atonement (1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21). John, the apostle of love, makes it clear that Christ gave himself for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). H. R. Trickett wrote:

“In my weakness I turn to the fount,
From the Rock that was smitten for me;
And I drink and I joyfully count
All my trials a blessing to be.”

Though sinners come from “the city of Destruction” and from a castle whose owner is called *Great Despair*, to quote John Bunyan in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, those of us who belong to the Lord because of Golgotha, have a rich inheritance, a cleansed past and a vibrant future! Haunting cries of the Bible remind us that the true light dispels darkness and gives us joy. Christians live in hope, light, purpose, and commitment to a heavenly cause. One of the world’s grandest hymns proclaims:

“Sin hath no more its cruel dominion,
Walking in newness of life I am free,
Glorious life of Christ my Redeemer
Which He so richly shareth with me.”

The call of the world may allure millions and be attractive to sensual multitudes but the pristine beauty of Christianity has a glow that transcends all that Satan can muster. Praise God for the joy and splendor of the gospel system!

THE DEVIL IS ATTENDING THE MEETING

Whenever the gospel is preached, you can rest assured that the devil is in attendance. He is not interested in supporting the truth but in destroying its effect on the hearts of men. He brings his bag of excuses (2 Cor. 2:11) and sits waiting for the Gospel to enter

the hearts of listeners. When one is about to obey, Satan steals the word and replaces it with excuses (Matthew 13:19).

To equip us to meet him we now note five of his most common excuses.

“WAIT, IT WILL BE EASIER TO OBEY LATER.” This is one of his favorites. After all, it has been effective for a long time. When Paul preached to Felix, the devil pulled it from his bag. “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; **when I have a convenient season**, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). So far as the Bible records the “convenient season” never came for Felix.

“WAIT, YOU ARE ALREADY A GOOD MORAL PERSON.” This is most likely true, but no one is good enough to save himself (Titus 3:3-5). Trusting in Christ’s righteousness is the only way to be saved (John 14:6) and humble submission to His Gospel puts one into God’s grace (Rm. 5:2; Heb. 5:9). No one, no matter how good, will be saved without having his sins washed away (Acts 22:16).

“WAIT, YOUR KINFOLKS WILL DISAPPROVE.” The terrible thing about the devil’s tactics is that he can turn our good intentions into bad actions. It is proper to honor parents (Eph. 6:1,2) and God demands obedience to them. But God has never expected a person to put the wishes of his parents ahead of the will of the Father. Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). It is always in the best interest of your family to obey God. Perhaps by your good example they too can be led to walk more closely with God.

“WAIT, YOU COULD NEVER LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.” Many sincere people feel so inferior that the devil preys on their humility. God does not expect His children to be perfect, if He did no one would make it to heaven (1 John 1:8-10). And, without

the Lord's help and long-suffering, no one could live the Christian life (Heb. 13:5). But by vigilance and God's providence the devil can be defeated and Christians can live the life that God expects (1 Peter 5:8; 2 Tim. 4:8).

“WAIT, THERE ARE HYPOCRITES IN THE CHURCH.” Satan usually saves this one as the last resort, but often uses it very effectively. Let it first be stated that hypocrites make God sick (Rev. 3:15-17) and that they will be cast from the kingdom (Mt. 23:13). They are not to be defended nor ignored. But to allow another person to stand between you and salvation is very foolish. If you stay away from God you will end up spending eternity with these hypocrites (Mt. 7:21-23). But, maybe, if you become a Christian you can help them to change and

go to heaven with you.

Did you notice what each excuse has in common? Each time the devil wants the sinner to *wait*. He knows that each time one sits through an invitation song it becomes easier. Each opportunity lost is one step closer to eternal damnation. Each day spent in the world is one less to be used to God's glory. Therefore, his constant refrain is “wait, wait, wait.” But remember the words of God, “...behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2) and “...*To day* if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3:7,8). Please do not let the devil hand you an excuse from his bag and win the battle for your soul. It is your decision. Let God win the battle for your soul.

MOST OF A MINUTE - FEELING WASHED

I was intrigued by a recent editorial by Donna Britt, a columnist for the Washington Post who wrote about her Easter church-going experience. She and her family don't go to church very much, but, after all, it was Easter.

She was glad she went. She wrote that she felt better, cleaner and stronger upon leaving than when she arrived. She wrote, “I always feel washed.”

It would be nice, I suppose, if the Bible

would go along with this notion--If in some chapter it said, “Go to church once in a while and feel washed.” But it doesn't say that. In fact, to believe that is to play the game of religion, but not to live the life that will bring you to heaven.

Acts 22:16 says, “Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins.” Rev. 2:10 says, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 14

April 18, 1997

**SEE ARTICLES
INSIDE:
OVERCOMING A
TROUBLED HEART
SPRINGTIME IN JASPER
AN IMPOSSIBLE
PROPOSITION**

Overcoming a Troubled Heart

Neal Pollard

Someone once said, "When in trouble, always hold your chin up-- if it does nothing else, it will keep your mouth shut." God obviously anticipated that this life would often trouble us, for He often tells us not to be troubled. And, he often prescribes help for our troubled hearts. Through Paul, He says to all Christians, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God, for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

Obviously, all our troubles are not the same size and of the same magnitude. A scratch is far less upsetting than a large, gaping wound. An automobile breakdown is far less troubling than a nervous breakdown. Folks who have problems generally want to talk about them. And the truth is, some have relatively small problems while there are people whose troubles are so great it is hard to imagine how they can carry such burdens.

Through the course of our lives as Christians, we are going to be troubled. When loved ones die, we will be troubled. Jesus was (John 11:33). When we are betrayed, we will be troubled. Jesus was (John 13:21). When frightening things occur, we will be troubled. The disciples were (Mark 6:50). When Christians fall into error, we will be troubled. The early church was (Acts 15:24).

At least three types of troubles common to all Christians are discussed on the pages of the New Testament. In these verses, God tells us how to overcome each type of them.

WHEN AGITATED BY "LITTLE TROUBLES" (TARASSO), TRUST THE PROMISES

OF CHRIST. The first, most common "trouble" dealt with in the New Testament is the kind we can classify as "irritations" and "agitations." These are the earthly concerns and the emotional scrapes. Yet, they can still be spiritually harmful. Such things can still roil the heart and muddy up our spiritual judgement. Notice what God says about these agitants with which we are confronted.

In John 14:1-4, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Life at that point was confusing for the apostles; they did not have or understand all the answers. That troubled them. But as they faced the uncertainty, Jesus says, "trust me."

Just so, life can confuse and baffle us. We know heaven awaits us if we are faithful, but the promise of that place seems so distant and future at times. From the Book of Hope, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled." He says (as it were), "trust me!"

In John 14:27, He continues, "Please I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Back in the sermon on the mount, Jesus upbraids the chronic worrier. He teaches us the necessity of trusting God. He does likewise in John 14. Jesus promises to help us with the power of His Word (26) and with the peace that comes in being right with Him (27).

Whatever worries us can be conquered by faith and the Bible. When we read of increased

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Occasionally I enjoy thumbing through the old issues of Words of Truth and reading from past editors. Naturally I love to read from the late Gus Nichols. I know you will enjoy this article.*

AN IMPOSSIBLE PROPOSITION **Gus Nichols**

Some propositions cannot be proved true. One of these is the proposition affirmed by the Atheist. He affirms, "There is no God" (Psalms 14:1; 53:1.) Even if there were no evidence that there is a God, the Atheist could not prove his proposition that, "There is no God." If the Atheist were right, he could not prove it. There is no known evidence proving there is no God.

The atheistic proposition that, "There is no God" is unreasonable and impossible of proof. It is implied in the affirmation that the one testifying and bearing witness knows all things, and this is not possible. There is a limit to human knowledge, and the one thing the Atheist may not know is that there is a God, and he has not learned that fact. No man, nor all men together, can know all things—all facts and truth existing in all the universe of God. We do not know what electricity is, and no man has ever seen it. No man has ever seen an atom, and there are great mysteries concerning their composition and power, yet they are known to exist. We have never seen gravity and it has its mysteries, yet we all believe it does exist. Electricity and light travel at the mysterious speed of 186,000 miles per second, and we believe it, notwithstanding their mysteries.

"Great is the mystery of Godliness" (I Tim. 3:16.) Man is not capable of understanding all the truth and facts in the infinity and great ocean of God's wisdom and knowledge. If the Atheist claims to know all things, he is, as God labeled him, a "fool" (Psa. 14:1; 53:1). And if he does not claim to know all things, he is not qualified to testify in proof of his negative proposition, that "There is no God." Because of their ignorance, men have lived who would have affirmed that there was no such thing as gravity, and no such thing as

atoms from which we could make bombs with which to win the last world war.

There is a world of difference in affirming an affirmative proposition and in affirming a negative one. We can reasonably affirm only in the realm of human knowledge, and use as proof of our proposition such evidence as is known and knowledgeable. The evidence that God is, is in this realm. God has made himself known unto man. This is a fact demonstrated both in revelation and in nature. From one side of the Bible unto the other, God has revealed Himself—especially in the person of Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, who was crucified and whom God raised from the dead (Jn. 1:20; Rom. 1:1-4).

Before the Atheist could qualify to testify in proof of his negative proposition, he would not only have to know all that is true in the material world, in which we live, but he would have to delve into the spiritual realm and learn all that is true in that realm. If he says there is no such realm, he obligates himself to prove first of all that he knows all things, and has visited all realms, and knows there is no realm of the spiritual, where God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and angels dwell.

The Russian astronaut upon returning from orbiting our earth, said "There was no God up there, I did not see any." The facts are that he did not see all that was up there. He did not see any gravity or electricity, up there. And if God had stood before him in his natural form he would not have been able to see him, "For God is a Spirit", and not a physical and material Being (Jn. 4:23-24). Furthermore, if the Atheist were able to go into the spiritual realm he would not be able to know there is no God unless he had visited all places in the Spirit world and been able to see spiritual things, and able to conquer all mysteries in that world, as well all the mysteries of this world.

Therefore, a man is a "fool" who assumes to possess all knowledge in all the universe of God, and to know all that is true in all the infinity of universal knowledge.

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crime, immorality, and pressures with which our families, our children, our mates must cope, we can get troubled. But, these are passing problems. Jesus offers lasting peace. If we equip our minds and souls, no harm to the body will trouble us (Matthew 10:28).

In 1 Pet. 3:14-15, Peter encourages persecuted Christians with these words: "but and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Here, Peter tells us how to cope with the adversity we face in being a Christian. Peter says that by godliness we will avoid a lot of hurt that comes to the world (13). But, if we have to sacrifice for the Savior, we still do not have to be troubled.

A young person may get teased for missing a ball game on Sunday or Wednesday night. A grown person may lose a few cents per hour for not taking the overtime shifts that fall during the times of worship. You may get laughed at or scorned for not attending that dance, for not gambling with the guys at the water cooler, for avoiding the office and neighborhood gossip, or for not taking that drink, but console yourself with this as you live the gospel: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (18). He who bore the greatest troubles tells us not to worry about the little troubles. Don't we trust His promises?

WHEN AFFLICTED BY "MIDDLE-SIZED" TROUBLES (*THLIBO*), KEEP YOUR FOCUS.
The nineteenth century poet, Ella Wilcox, wrote:

"I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea
come drifting home with
broken masts and sails; From seeming evil
worketh good to me. And, though
I weep because those sails are battered, still
will I cry, while my best hopes lie
shattered, "I trust in thee"

We've considered that our lives will be filled with troubles which irritate and nick our hearts. But, we also realize that sometimes the cut is more serious and the bleeding is a bit more significant. Some trials we face may cause us to lose sight of why we are here. 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,

that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

The word translated "troubled" in 2 Corinthians 4:8 is different than the word used in John 14 and 1 Peter 3. Here, Paul is speaking of hurts and problems a little greater than mere irritations. This kind of trouble is akin to doubts, persecution, and deep discouragement. This kind of trouble may come from a prolonged personal struggle, a troublesome person who despises everything you and the Lord stand for, or a haunting temptation that you must fight everyday.

But look at the exhortation of Paul. He tells us not to lose sight of why we are here. We are here to hold up the crucified Lord to a lost and dying world. We should say with Him, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17).

Our careers are just a means to an end. Our possessions are just perishable things borrowed from the Lord. Our problems are just obstacles between us and heaven. But it is not always quite that easy, is it? Our problems can seem so big to us that they eclipse our spiritual sight, blinding us to our purpose for being here. Our main purpose in life is not to solve all the problems on the job, in the school, in the government and in the community. If we keep our focus on lost souls, these other things will improve. When troubled by the middle-sized afflictions of life, let us boldly say, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

WHEN AFRAID BECAUSE OF LIFE'S BIG TROUBLES (*THROEO*), DON'T LET GO!

Someone says, "The Bible's words about trouble sound good for the minor problems or middle-sized hurts. But, my troubles have about caused me to let go of my faith. I'm not sure being faithful is worth it. What am I supposed to do to defeat the big problems?"

Let us ask Paul. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 he writes, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." Paul here is addressing, not emotional scrapes or spiritual gashes. The word translated "troubled" in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 speaks of huge, gaping, spiritual and emotional wounds. He is referencing serious hurts, the kind that will cause death-- the death of faith, the spiritual death of the soul. The Thessalonians, he warns, would face very cunning deception (3). They would be in battle with the forces of Satan (8-9). They would see good

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brethren believe and obey the lies of the devil (10-11), and consequently be lost (12).

Don't we face that today? How does it affect us? When looking at the moral breakdown of society, how often are we tempted to ask, "What's the use in trying to do right? Where does it get me? Look where doing wrong gets people in the world who could care less about Jesus." When it seems that the devil is winning the battle with our loved ones and neighbors, how discouraging is that? When brethren we trust and respect disappoint us, what can it do to *our* faith?

There are certain situations that try our faith and cause us to ask, "Can I hang on?" Job teaches us that there are times when all we have left to hold onto is our faith in God. Yet, we must. And, if we do, it will have more than been worth it all!

How do we treat the gaping wounds? Back in 2 Thessalonians, Paul encourages the brethren with three reminders which also aid us today. In 2:13, he says to know that God had a special purpose for you from eternity (cf. Ephesians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:5,9). In 2:14, he says to know that He would have shown you the way to Him, even if you were the only person on earth. Finally, in 2:15-17, he says we should realize that God is rooting for you to endure and has left you everything you need to hang on unto the end. When the day comes and your faith is tested, don't let go!

The Bible is magnificent, for it rebukes the haughty and lifts up the broken-spirited. It chastises the sinful, but comforts the saintly. When we are confronted with trouble of any size, we know that God has already told us how to overcome it (cf. 1 John 5:4)!

MOST OF A MINUTE - SPRINGTIME IN JASPER

Spring is finally here! I've been waiting on this season of new life for about six months now, and it is everything I remember it to be.

I want you to pity the man who can look at this beautiful creation and not be grateful to God for it. Jesus said in Matt. 5:5, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." How do we inherit the earth? Well, II Peter 3 says that on the judgement day the earth, and

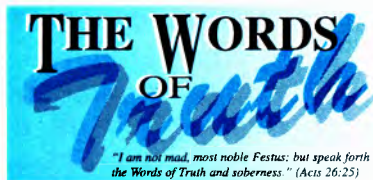
everything in it will be burned up. Furthermore, I've known folks in my life who were meek and faithful Christians who lived and died w/o holding deed to any property. How then do we "inherit the earth?" I believe it's in the fact that we look to a springtime like this and bask in the reality that our Father made it all, and owns it all. Prov. 1:7 says, "The fear (or reverence) of God is the beginning of knowledge."

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It Happened At Calvary

Johnny Ramsey

I am reminded every day of something that happened long ago and far away. And, yet, its power and beauty is fresh at all times. My Savior died for me on a lonely cross on Golgatha's brow and hope springs eternal because of that monumental occasion. Nothing before or since Calvary has so changed lives and destiny as has the death of Christ on behalf of each of us. This is a personal matter and it ought to claim our utmost gratitude and allegiance! A gospel song captures the solemnity of that scene.

I'm The One

I was not at the trial when the crowd jeered at His name,
I did not make Him bear a cross or walk a road of shame;
I could not do a single thing to hurt God's only Son,
But every time I sin on earth, I feel that I'm the one.
I'm the one who shouted "crucify."
I'm the one who made His cross so high;
I'm the one who stood and watched Him die;
What have I done?
I'm The One.

The love of God shone brightest on this tragic day. No wonder Paul exclaimed in II Corinthians 9:15.

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.
Jesus gave Himself for our sins (Galatians 1:4).
When He became obedient even unto the death of the Cross (Philippians 2:8) and shed precious blood for the redemption of our sins (Romans 5:9).

When that fountain for cleansing opened wide vile sinners could see an escape from defilement and a blessed ray of hope on the radiant horizon (Revelation 1:5).

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it
Redeemed by His infinite mercy
His child and forever I am!

On a hill far away that old rugged Cross beckons lost mankind to a nobler pursuit of life. Out of the depths of despair and ruin untold, comes a clarion call from heaven that provides salvation for wayfaring men estranged from God to come back home to the Father who runs to meet the prodigals

once enveloped in the pig-pen of iniquity. The compelling love of the One who died for all (II Corinthians 5:14) draws us to a richer, fuller and purpose filled life that responds to the suffering Savior in obedience, gratitude and loyalty.

Bring Christ your broken life
So marred by sin,
He will create anew, make whole again
Your empty wasted years He will restore
And your iniquities remember no more.

Yes, it happened at Calvary - The world's greatest story of love, compassion and drama. How could anyone overlook such boundless mercy and grace.

Jesus left the beauty and bliss of heaven to come down here for lost mankind that we might leave the depths of ruin and shame to inherit the riches of glory (II Corinthians 8:9).

What happened at Calvary shall be consummated on a golden street in the land of fadeless day. We dare not miss the end of the story!

LIFE'S LITTLE LESSONS

Jerry W. Carmichael

In the words of Amos, "I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet..." But, I have lived over forty years on Earth, at this writing, and I've been married to the same woman for well over half of my life. We have raised two fine Christian daughters, and I've violated all the advice that my father and mother gave me at one time or another.

There is a chance that a young person does exist somewhere who is wise enough to heed the warnings of one who has already made the mistakes, and recovered from them. Facts are often heeded, advice seldom ever is! Remember, these are lessons from MY life. Others may not agree with all of the details but the principles ring true throughout the ages.

1. *You won't understand the importance of sexual purity until after you are married. Stay pure anyway! I promise it is worth it.*

2. *Make, as one of your goals in life, a promise to never taste tobacco, alcohol or other drugs. If you are successful, you will be one of the most rare and envied people in the world!*

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ

1501 6th Avenue

Jasper, AL 35501

THE HANDBOOK OF DENOMINATIONS

Have we raised a generation of youth who have never been taught the non-denominational nature of the Lord's church?

There is a strong movement marching through the churches of Christ today called by most the "change movement." There have been some excellent books written to help people understand the various teachings and heresies of the movement, (*Behold the Pattern*, by Gooble Music, *Change Agents and the Churches of Christ*, William Woodson, *Piloting the Strait*, by Dave Miller, *Loose Change*, by Glenn Colley, etc. If you contact our office we will gladly give you ordering information for these books.) Our attention should be given to the fact that the objective of the change movement is to make the church of Christ a denomination. Their agenda is to melt us together with the great sea of denominations.

There is a book by Frank S. Mead entitled "*Handbook of Denominations in the United States*," (Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 1955) Which lists approximately 300 different religious bodies, their background and a brief explanation of what makes them different.

Under the "Church of Christ" heading, the book's author says, "They endeavor to be non-denominational and to be just the church as it was in the New Testament. They claim not to be *all* Christ's church but to be His church without denominational prefixes or suffixes, and they refuse to be 'denominated' in any sense that would distinguish them from others. They are 'not the only Christians, but Christians only.' This is true, but needs clarifying. The church of Christ, that is, the church of people who belong to Jesus according to His New Testament, make up the saved. No one will be saved outside of His church. It is certainly possible that a group of people would congregate together and form a church of scriptural name (other than church of Christ), and scriptural preaching and practice, and be fully approved by God. But note: They are right with God because they are members of Christ's church! A denomination which practices and teaches doctrine contrary to the New Testament, (The "doctrine of Christ," II John 9), does not contain the saved. At best it contains those who were once saved, but have become unfaithful.

Some observations of the *Handbook of Denominations* are in order.

1. This book is roughly the size of a common Bible. It took Mr. Mead that much space to give even a brief examination of the divisions in Christendom in 1955.

2. This book stands as a monument to the grievous way people have missed Paul's clear teaching in I Corinthians 1:10 where he wrote,

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

3. The fundamental, foundational belief of every denomination is that any will do - "we're all going to heaven only different ways, and doctrine doesn't matter." If that is true, then a man may pick and choose any of these 300 groups and have God's approval. In fact, he could alternate during his lifetime. He could practice Catholicism for a few years, then change to Southern Baptist. During his forties he could switch to the Episcopalians, then later to the Methodists; all the while fully bound for heaven. The fact that different churches taught different things about what a person must do to go to heaven wouldn't matter. The fact that these churches teach contrary to Jesus Christ wouldn't matter. His loyalty to one or the other would need to be based only on his own personal preferences and not on the authority of the Bible.

Consider that a person who believes in the denominational approach to religion believes that you can affirm a premise to be true without implying that the opposite is false. Imagine a man saying, "I believe and know that two plus two equals four. There are those who believe two plus two equals five, yet I do not believe they are wrong in so thinking." Suppose a medical doctor used this crippled logic and said to a patient, "This drug you are about to take is actually poison, and will kill you. I know this drug, I've seen it work, and it is poison. However, my friend Doctor Smith believes it is not poison, and I would never say he is wrong. To put it in practical terms, one denominational preacher affirms from I Peter 3:21 that baptism is essential for salvation. That's what he reads in the Bible, he knows it is true, and preaches it to be true. Yet at the same time, he knows that a neighboring denomination teaches the opposite--that baptism is not essential for salvation. Yet he would argue that one church is as good as another and that a man can as easily go to heaven from one as from another. He believes that in religion you can affirm a premise to be true without implying that the opposite is false.

4. This author well verbalized the controlling principle behind denominationalism. His book dedication says, "To those in the Church who see that the great truths we hold in common are of more importance to God and man than the little fences and barriers which divide us this book is dedicated." Little fences and barriers? Is that what you call the matters over which we are separated? Is the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins a little fence, (Act 2:38)? Is making a man the earthly head of the church a little barrier, (Col. 1:18)? Is promoting the writing of a modern-day

3. Please do not buy into the American myth that true happiness and inner peace is the result of more things! The accumulation of material wealth has ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to do with teal happiness! You may not understand this now, but you will.

4. Do not choose your partner for life based solely on physical looks. Stomachs enlarge, hair-lines decrease, scalps become visible where they once were hidden, waistlines go steadily upward until trousers are worn slightly below the armpits. If the physical is all there is to your marriage, IT CANNOT WORK!

5. Care about what others think about your reputation, your influence, and your choices in life. This is a great restraining device to keep you from making mistakes early in life, for which you cannot make restitution later.

6. Never allow yourself to become selfish! The happy life is one which is lived in service to others.

7. Never be too serious to laugh at yourself.

8. Never laugh loudly and tell inappropriate jokes at somber occasions.

9. Remember: Intelligent people can communicate without profanity and can settle their conflicts without violence! (ALWAYS)

10. The majority is usually wrong in matters where it really counts.

11. Real life is made up of more than ballplaying, cheerleading and baton twirling! Prepare for it while you have the chance!

12. Never fail to give an absolute minimum of 10% of all household income to the Lord. As your income increases, so should your contribution.

13. People who wear an excessive amount of golden jewelry, who drive exceptionally expensive cars, and who try to display wealth at every opportunity, are usually shallow and insecure with who they really are, and they rarely like themselves much!

14. THE CLOTHES DO NOT MAKE THE MAN OR WOMAN! THE HEART INSIDE DOES!!!

15. Never bore people with tales of your own greatness!

16. Never talk badly about yourself; others will do that for you!

17. Never ridicule, or slander your mate in public!! Never talk badly about him/her to others. Talk TO each other instead of ABOUT each other.

18. Never put your parents above the Lord or your mate! Care for them if you can, but never to the detriment of your faith or your marriage.

19. Obey the Gospel and always remain faithful! You will grow to appreciate your relationship with God more each day!

20. Life is like trying to sink an inner tube. You push one side down and the other pops up. The winners are those who keep on pushing. The losers are those who relax and float down the creek to the river, and down the river to the ocean never to be seen again!!!

Jerry Carmichael preaches in Whitley City, Kentucky.

prophet like Joseph Smith as being equal with the Bible a little fence, (Gal. 1:8)? Is having women preachers a little barrier, (1 Tim. 2:7-15)? Is worshipping to please men a little fence, (Jn. 4:24)? Yet these are among the matters which divide the Lord's church from the churches of men.

5. Only a small percentage of these groups in the book see fit to be called by a Biblical name, that is, a name by which the church was called in the New Testament. Instead, they chose to "denominate" by earthly names of men or movements.

Sadly, in the churches of Christ, we have raised a generation born about the same time this book was written in which many were not impressed with the oneness of the Lord's church and her non-denominational nature. Where is the truth on this matter? The word of God!

Ephesians 4:4- "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling..." What is that one body? Ephesians 1:22-23-- "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Colossians 1:18- "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Matthew 16:18- "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Note, not "churches")

Jude 3- "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Note, not "faiths")

2 John 9-10- "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

The back of this book lists the headquarters of each denomination and its address when possible. This takes eight pages of small print. The church of Christ is missing from that list, and rightfully so. You see, there is no street address for heaven, and heaven is where the Head of this church resides, (Col. 3:1).

Brethren, let us preach the truth about the church for which Jesus died! On the judgment day the books will be opened (Rev. 20:12). But the Handbooks of Denominations will not be opened. They will be rather carried by those who promoted division and false teaching into eternal fire. Jesus said, "It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones, (Luke 17:1-2)."

"THE PREACHER IS OUT OF TOWN THIS WEEK..."

David Decker

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom..." (Matthew 9:35)

Few things annoy church members more than a preacher who is "always out of town." This is especially true when members feel that they are in need of having the preacher at their side for some reason.

However, it should be noted that Jesus traveled and preached (Matthew 4:23; Luke 4:43). Jesus sent the twelve to travel and preach (Luke 9:1-6). Paul traveled and preached (Acts 14:1-15:41). Therefore, there is sufficient precedent for time being allotted to preachers for the purpose of traveling, preaching, doing mission work, and going away to rest and refuel (Mark 6:31-34).

Business has long grappled with the problems of stagnation and burnout among its own. It was learned long ago that vacations, seminars, conventions, and even the dreaded "leave of absence" are all viable options for keeping a work

force sharp, productive, and functioning at its optimum level. This concession is no different when it comes to preachers.

Congregations and elderships should not only grant the preacher ample time away they should encourage it. Time away for gospel meetings, mission trips, lectureships, seminars and yes, even vacations is smart and wise. The freshness, refueling, and retooling that these "perks" provide will help make the preacher more effective, and will also give the congregation a break. After all, the preacher is not the only one who gets burned out.

Preachers should not abuse this privilege. Some are gone too much. The local work of the church should never suffer because of an "absentee" preacher. If he has committed to a congregation to work as its preacher then he should be diligent in this work. For any preacher to neglect his primary duties in a local setting while he becomes the most prolific "frequent flier" in the brotherhood is not right. The congregation that employs him deserves a better fate than this.

If you are tired of your preacher and/or he is tired of you the best thing to do is to get a "new" one. The best way to get a "new" preacher might just be to keep the one you have and simply encourage him to get away more often.

MOST OF A MINUTE - THE DEATH PENALTY

There's an interesting controversy in Florida right now over their 74 year old electric chair. The other day a murderer was executed in the chair, and after he had passed from this life the hood caught on fire. Florida officials want to keep the chair like it is. They believe, and I agree, that the troublesome chair may be another deterrent to would-be murderers.

What does the Bible say about capital punishment?

The Old Testament clearly authorizes it. When someone argues against capital punishment by

quoting Exodus 20, "Thou shalt not kill," they don't realize that they are quoting a book that commands capital punishment. The killing which is prohibited is murder, the deliberate taking of innocent human life, and not capital punishment.

But what about the New Testament? Romans 13:4, in showing that God approves civil authorities like the police, says, "He beareth not the sword in vain." The sword is a weapon of death for curbing criminal activity, and God has authorized its use.

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Individual rates are \$20.50 per year. All bills payable to Words of Truth, 3051 McQueen Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107



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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 34 No. 16

May 2, 1997

**SEE ARTICLES
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"I WOULDN'T
HAVE YOUR JOB..."
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"Heaven" Do You Want To Go To Heaven?

Mildred Adams

Heaven is a place only for the ones who prepare for it-only for the saved. A place that knows no time-time is without beginning or ending in eternity (Phil. 1:21-24).

A Bible description of heaven leaves no doubt that it is a prepared place for prepared people. Peter writes, "Nevertheless we look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth all righteous" (II Peter 3:13).

John, while on the isle of Patmos, was permitted to see heaven by divine guidance-the City of God, an eternal abiding place for God's people. By faith, we too see heaven. Surely you must want to go there.

John said, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away" (Rev. 21:1-2). There is room for everyone there. The one who prepared it made sure of that. Age, size, rich or poor makes no difference. There will be no housing shortage, no slums, no rich section, no poor ones, no low income, no blacks or whites. All will be one-if we make sure we get there. All that God has promised for his people will be waiting for us. "The City had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it; the gates will not be closed by day for their will be no night there" (Rev. 21:23,25). No sickness, no sorrows, no tears, no separation from our loved ones. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nei-

ther shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

Heaven! Can you imagine such a beautiful place? All the burdens of this life that seem so heavy at times, will be no more. All these things will be forever unknown. Surely, you must want to go there to live throughout eternity with all redeemed of all ages in this "Beautiful City of God" John wrote about. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13).

Don't you want to go there?

PSALM 119

Mel Futrell

Many Christians, no doubt, have received considerable comfort, enjoyment, and instruction from reading the 150 Psalms we have as the book of Psalms. Psalms 1,6,19,23,90,117,119 and 148 have been special favorites of mine now for many years. And I expect that you also have some favorites of your own. Our Lord recognized the Psalms as one part of the three-fold division of the Old Testament with this statement, "...all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the

continued on page 3

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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WHY I WANT TO BE THE BEST PREACHER I CAN BE

1. Because I am the preacher I will listen to most during my life. The bulk of the instruction I receive in classes and sermons will be from my own study and preparation. I want to hear good soul-building sermons every time I worship on the Lord's day.

2. Because I am the preacher my wife will hear most in her life. She has placed great confidence in me, not only as her husband, but as her preacher for the rest of our lives together. I do not want to short-change her. She should not be subjected to a lifetime of poorly-prepared, shoddy preaching simply because she loved and married me.

3. Because I am the preacher my children are hearing during their formative years. It is how they will construct the foundation of their faith. My sermons must be filled with God's word, and presented in clear, understandable terms so as to spiritually nourish them well. My children, and the children of others, are cutting their spiritual teeth on sermons I preach. They need the strong, solid direction that Biblically-rich preaching can give them.

4. Because I am the last preacher some people will hear before they are escorted by the angels to a place of bliss. Additionally, I am the last preacher some will hear before they awaken in torment to live with the devil and his angels. In both cases, I must preach the Gospel of Christ forcefully and lovingly. Faith, after all, comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17).

5. Because I know the Gospel will turn the hearts of men to Jesus, and after seeing it happen, I want to know that experience again and again. I will preach the soul-saving truth of the Gospel!

6. Because I owe a debt. It is the same debt of which Paul spoke when he said, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also," (Romans 1:14-15). The Lord has done so much for me, and I know I can never fully repay Him. The least I can do is preach to others.

7. Because the body of Christ, His church (Eph. 1:22-23), is very precious to my Lord. His church can be helped or hurt by the kind of preaching I offer each week. To hurt His bride would certainly hurt Him. To teach His bride how to love and serve Him better would certainly please Him.

8. Because faithful preachers are dedicated preachers.

I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry," (2 Timothy 4:1-5)."

continued from page 1

PSALMS, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Also in Paul's time the psalms had apparently already been divided into chapters as is indicated in Acts 13:3, "...as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee".

The longest of the Psalms and the real focus of this article is Psalm 119. This psalm of 176 verses is rather unique. It is composed of, "22 eight verse sections. Each section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each verse within the section begins with the same letter" (Berdman's Concise Bible Handbook, Poetry and Wisdom Literature, 1980, p. 178).

With such a de-emphasis today on the written word, in and out of the church, it is refreshing to re-read and study again the 119 Psalm. A recent advertisement from our local paper by a denominational group illustrates this well. It was said,

"We reject the idea that a book or institution is superior to the conscience of a morally responsible human being. Thomas Jefferson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Florence Nightingale endorsed our principles. Why don't you give us a try?"

Brethren, these people reject the inspiration and thus absolute authority of the Scriptures, yet they appeal to mere men as a drawing card to have others visit their group. Get this, the title of this brief recruitment plea is, "Are You Looking For A Church That Doesn't Tell You What To Think?". My point is this brethren, the 119 Psalm places great emphasis on the Word. This is David's psalm in praise to GOD for his Word. In fact, only five of the 176 verses do not mention GOD'S Word in any form, only five. (see verses 84,90,121,122,132). This emphasis on the Word of GOD is demonstrated by the use of ten different English words or phrases in the KJV to describe GOD'S revelation (Note: law, testimonies, ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, ordinances, word of truth). Surely, this evidences to all the great importance attached

to GOD'S revelation of his will to man.

Throughout the psalm we are impressed with the contrast between those who are righteous and those who are wicked in relationship to GOD'S word. The examples of such are too numerous to include here but perhaps a sampling will suffice. The righteous walk in it, keep it, respect it, learn it, desire to be taught by it, meditate upon it, love it, observe it, long for it, are not ashamed of it, will not forget it, are comforted by it, delight in it, are strengthened by it, are directed by it, pray they will not wander from it, speak it, take heed to it, are cleansed by it, stick to it, understand it, etc.,. While the wicked err from it, forsake it, fail to keep it, have forgotten it, are far from it, don't seek it, and by implication, the wicked do the very opposite of what it is listed that the righteous do.

Psalm 119 is truly poetry with deep insight. Unlike much of the world we do not reject the Book, the Word of GOD. But rather we accept it for what it is, GOD-breathed Scripture. And we cling to it realizing that the hope laid up for us in Heaven we heard of before in the Word of Truth, the Gospel (Col. 1:5).

"I WOULDN'T HAVE YOUR JOB..."

David Decker

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"
(Romans 10:15).

Occasionally, a brother or sister in the Lord will say to me, "I wouldn't have your job!" Usually this observation is tied to some challenge of the work of preaching that they have closely observed. Challenges such as preaching a difficult sermon, officiating an emotional funeral service, or studying with a hard-hearted person.

While I appreciate, as would most preachers, the admiration implied in the comment I always think, "Please don't say

such a thing!" I wonder if the person realizes how this sort of observation comes across. Does this mean that the observer wouldn't do the job because they are above it, or because it appears too difficult, or because it is undesirable for some other reason? Does it suggest that the preacher somehow made a mistake in choosing preaching as his life's work? In effect isn't this the same as someone saying to the Lord, "I wouldn't do what you did!?"

We need more people in the church who would declare just the opposite. Preaching is the "work" or "job" that Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Marshall Keeble, and Gus Nichols did, and is the job that many good men are still doing today. Preaching is the medium for the transmission of the gospel that God has chosen (Matthew 4:23; I Corinthians

1:21; 9:16; 2 Timothy 4:2). It is a noble task that blesses the lives of all who do it, and hopefully the hearts and lives of the many who are its observers, hearers and recipients.

Let us say to our young men and boys what Paul said to the church at Rome. Let us be what Barnabas was to Paul and the other apostles (Acts 4:36; 9:27). Let us encourage faithful men who preach to continue and preserve. Let us boldly declare before the Lord and to the world, "I WOULD have your job!"

(David Decker is a 1981 graduate of Freed-Hardeman University, a 1983 graduate of Harding Graduate School of Religion, and has been preaching the gospel for 17 years.)

MOST OF A MINUTE - SYMPATHETIC CHRISTIANITY

Do you consider yourself a sympathetic person? Webster says that sympathy is "a relationship between things so that whatever affects one similarly affects the other." It is one of the sweet benefits of being a faithful member of the Lord's church. In I Corinthians 12 the apostle Paul describes the church of Christ as being like a physical body. One member is the foot, another the

hand, another the eye. Each important, each different, and each part of the one body. Then Paul said this: "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice..." (I Cor. 12:26).

Sympathy is two hearts tugging at the same load. And that makes life a lot easier.

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THE WORDS OF Truth

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 17

May 9, 1997

**SEE ARTICLES
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PEARLS FROM
CORINTHIANS 13
PEACE PASSING
UNDERSTANDING
COPING WITH SORROW
TELLING LIES**

Reincarnation

Mike Benson

"I've been hearing alot about reincarnation lately. Could you please explain what it is and whether or not it is compatible with what the Bible teaches?"

Reincarnation, also known as rebirth or transmigration is *the belief that at death an individual's soul departs his or her body and then attaches to a new body-human or non-human.* This process allegedly repeats itself with the same soul occupying a series of bodies. One Hindu myth tells of a jealous woman being reborn as a chili plant. On the other hand, an animal that has done all the right deeds to be expected of its animalship, may be reborn in human status. *It all depends how well the previous life has been lived as to the status of the reincarnated life to follow.*

It is my understanding that George S. Patton (a WWII General) believed in reincarnation. On one occasion he told his nephew, *"I don't just think, I know there are places I have been and not in this lifetime."* Actress Shirley MacLaine in her book, *Out On a Limb*, insists that souls are invisible entities in harmony with nature and that *"none of it ever dies; it just changes form."* Surprisingly, recent polls suggest that nearly *sixty percent* of all Americans believe in the possibility of reincarnation.

Is this compatible with the Bible? consider:

1. *"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27). Study also Ecclesiastes 9:5,6).

***Is a man born many times and does he die many times?**

***What occurs after death - judgment or reincarnation?**

2. *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:10).

***Will each in the judgment receive according to what he or she has done in the bodies (plural) or body (singular)?**

***How can one be judged both as a good and bad person in varying states of his life?**

3. *"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it"* (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Study also Luke 16:19-31.

***Where does the soul go after it separates (James 2:26) from the body - to God, or to a series of other bodies?**

4. *"...Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

***Can a sinner expect to be reborn in other bodies and thus have numerous opportunities to obey Christ?**

***If he or she will have multiple opportunities for salvation, why does the Bible convey such a sense of urgency?**

**"PEACE PASSING
UNDERSTANDING"**

Johnny Ramsey

I once read a little story that accurately por-

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 6th Avenue
Jasper, AL 35501

PEARLS FROM I CORINTHIANS 13

A serious study of I Corinthians 13, commonly called the "love" chapter, will reveal some interesting words and phrases.

Understanding these details of the passage will enhance the Christian's ability to love the way Christ taught.

This chapter is not teaching people how to love the loveable. That's easy. We all know how to love people whose personalities appeal to us. We like to be with them. They make us feel good. But that's not the emphasis of this love chapter. The hard work comes in loving those whose personality does not appeal to us. Jesus emphasized this too when He said, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not the publicans so?" (Matthew 5:46-47). The love of Christ isn't to get the wolf to love the sheep, but the sheep to love the wolf.

Consider some of the interesting turns in I Corinthians 13:

Verse four says of this kind of love, "...vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." These two attributes, uncharacteristic of love, are much alike. To vaunt oneself means to boast, or to practice self-display. One commentator waxes eloquent and defines it thus: "Employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling one's self excessively." It's hard to love a bragger because a bragger isn't showing love to the people about him. The phrase "is not puffed up" also has to do with pride, except that it is more inward. To vaunt oneself is outward boasting. To be puffed up means that I am inflated with a sense of my own importance. Not only is this an unloving character flaw, it is also based on foolishness. We have nothing but what we have received, and actually deserve nothing we have gotten. While our actions and dedication are clearly important in attaining good things in life, we are totally

dependent on God's blessings. We have no room to boast or to be puffed up.

Verse six says, "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth." We fail to love as we should when we rejoice in iniquity. We do this when we enjoy the sin of others without regard to their destiny, or when we enjoy the iniquity (injustice) done to others who we dislike. What makes this particularly interesting is that the two uses of "rejoice" here are not the same. They come from two different Greek words. The first, to rejoice in iniquity, means to stand back personally, privately, and rejoice in the iniquity in/about others. The other however, "rejoiceth in truth", carries the idea of *joint* participation. It means to take part in another's joy; to rejoice together or congratulate. We must not be glad in our hearts when iniquity occurs with others. We are glad when they are glad about doing what is true and right. Christians are not the enemies of those who hate them. We want what is best for all, even our enemies.

Verse seven has been called the "optimism of love". It says that this love "bears all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." The phrase "bears all things" is literally translated from the Greek to mean "To deck, thatch, to cover." Love's purpose is not to broadcast people's faults. Love conceals everything that should be concealed. Love forbids gossip. There are times when the greatest expression of love between people is to cover over that which should not be spoken. Don't people know things about your past, embarrassing things, perhaps sinful things, which they will never reveal? It is easy to see how this can be included in this special list.

Loving as described in I Corinthians 13 is often difficult, and yet no Christian can be without it. It doesn't help to call Him Savior if I won't call Him Lord. Let us live as Jesus taught, and be Christians who love the I Corinthians 13 way.

trays our chaotic times. A wealthy farmer put an interesting sign in his most beautiful pasture one day. The sign read: "This field will be given to the first contented man I find." One hundred men applied for the choice land. But the owner sent each of them away with this pointed question: "If you are content with what you have, why do you want my field?"

There has probably never been a period in the world's history as filled with unhappy people as the one in which we live right now. More and more individuals are putting their trust in pills and psychiatrists instead of the living God. Tranquilizers replace faith in far too many lives. This is even true among Christians. But it should not be. To be sure, "into each life some rain must fall; some days must be dark and dreary." These moments, properly used, make for brighter, better tomorrow's. If there were not difficulties there could be no triumphs. The darkest clouds always give way, eventually, to the glistening sunlight.

The New Testament informs us of the life of peace Christians should lead. The kingdom of God is filled with righteousness, joy and peace (Romans 14:17). To be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6). Peter tells children of God to "seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11). We are to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). One of the manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit is peace (Gal. 5:22). To the loyal child of God these principles are indelibly proved every step of the way. So, come what may, we can possess the peace that passeth understanding.

There are four magic words that certainly aid us in acquiring this great peace of mind. Our Savior uttered them unto the heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. Under the strain of approaching agony Jesus was humble enough to say: "**Thy will be done.**" We are taught to manifest the same attitude (James 4:15).

To have the peace that passeth understanding we must live an obedient, devoted life before God. If we thus spend our short time upon earth in this manner, one of these days we shall be ushered into an even more abundant life of eternal bliss.

COPING WITH SORROW

Neal Pollard

Catastrophes and disappointments, tragedy

and betrayal can all transport the heart into the valley of sorrow. Such is a lonely place. Whoever stands upon his knees there feels utterly alone. Inevitably, the hurting heart aches most because it feels that no one else understands or that no one else has been through that pain. Sorrow is a dreadful word.

Revelation 21:4 implies that one of the great allures of heaven is its sorrow free environment. This side of time is ever tainted with through the presence of sin in the world. No one can live here without crossing sorrow's ravine. The water of tears wear it out.

Great heroes of the Bible have stood in that lonely place. Read what the inspired Bible writers felt as they ached through their moments of sorrow:

JOB: "*Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow.*"

DAVID: "*How long shall I take counsel in my soul, hating sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?*"

JEREMIAH: "*When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.*"

CHRIST'S APOSTLES: "*And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow...*"

PAUL: "*That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*"

TESSALONIANS: "*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*"

What pulled these hurting hearts from the prisons of despair, anxiety, and grief? Job is remembered for patience and trust (*cf. James 5:11*). David's devotion helped hi out of the valley (*cf. Psalm 23:4*). Jeremiah's tender heart kept him focused on the world to come (*cf. Jeremiah 9:1*). The apostles had a living hope within their hearts, as did other first-century Christians like the Thessalonians (*cf. 1 Peter 1:3*). Paul had courage and confidence through the gospel to overcome the many sorrows with which he was

laden (cf. Romans 1:16).

God's Word is man's best counselor in overcoming sorrow! Those who know it, are true to it, and have experienced life with it as their guide are equipped with the knowledge to navigate the bumpy narrow road that runs through the valley on up to the eternal home of the faithful souls on Mt. Zion! When one acquaints himself with the gospel and trusts the end of the Lord, his sorrow will be swept away by eternal Joy! Let us take heart.

Mechanicsville, Virginia

WANTED!

Someone or some congregation to help with our efforts, to send a weekly copy of the **Words of Truth** to all students who are Bible majors at all schools of the Church. We believe this will aid in confronting error in the Church of the future.

George Davidson

MOST OF A MINUTE - TELLING LIES

As diverse as we all are, there are some things we all share the same dislike for. Take for example, being lied to. Don't you hate to learn that someone has lied to you in order to gain some advantage of you?

And yet, while that's true, sometimes aren't we tempted to tell a lie? Oh, maybe not about something big, something which makes much difference, but about something small. We say, "I guess that's not so bad, right?" We've even got a name for this

style of lying. We call them "white" lies.

But even white lies are lies, and we ought to hate them as much when we tell them as we do when we hear them. I have to believe that this categorizing of lies is what Jesus had in mind when in Revelation 21:8 He said that "All liars..." will miss heaven.

Let's make sure we'll always tell the truth.

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Congregational Rates: Mailed directly to each family, friends, etc. forty cents per copy payable by the church on receipt of statement the first of following month.

Individual rates are \$20.50 per year. All bills payable to Words of Truth, 3051 McQueen Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107



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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
"MAY I SPEAK TO THE PASTOR,
PLEASE..."
THE BOOK OF OBADIAH
TO RECEIVE CHRIST
THE FUNDAMENTALS
GOD'S POWER TO RAISE THE
DEAD

Vol. 34 No. 18

May 16, 1997

"MAY I SPEAK TO THE PASTOR, PLEASE..."

David Decker

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," (Ephesians 4:11).

It is not a secret that the religious world often misunderstands the Biblical order of church government. Nowhere is this error so evident as is the case with preachers. Whenever someone who is untaught calls the church building they almost always ask for "the pastor." What a door of opportunity for teaching they have opened to us!!!

In responding to their request we may teach them about elders as pastors, and the difference between the denominational model and God's model (Acts 14:23; 20:28; Philippians 1:1). We may try to show them that it is the elders who shepherd the flock not the preacher (unless he is an elder) (1 Peter 5:1-4). We may even attempt to correct the erroneous notion that only one man oversees a congregation (Titus 1:5).

During this conversation we may also explain that the preacher preaches and teaches (2 Timothy 2:2; 4:1-5), that this is the whole of his task, and that it is a great one (Acts 6:4; Ecclesiastes 12:10; Romans 10:14). We may contend that he is not the pastor, and certainly not the sole shepherd or leader of the local church.

We may say all of these things in defending the faith and teaching the truth. But, is it really how we function in the church? If the preacher is in truth not the pastor, then brethren let us not expect pastoral things of him as a part of his job description. Let us not make him the focal point of all that is done in the church. Let us not place on his shoulders the burden for most of the administrative work that gets done. Let us not saddle him with the lion's share of the visiting, the counseling, the benevolence or with any other area of work that the church is commanded to do. If he is "the preacher" and not the pastor, then he should do the God-given work of an evangelist.

When someone calls the building or asks in public the "pastor" question we should be able to answer

in reality as well as in theory (1 Peter 3:15). If in truth we have made the preacher into the pastor we had better admit it, repent of our mistake, and begin to practice what we preach.

Let your preacher preach. Let the elders pastor. And, unless the preacher is an elder, let us resolve not to confuse the two by our deeds.

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Johnny Ramsey

I often refer to the contents and background of this book of the Bible as the high price of a bowl of soup because it tells of the overthrow of Esau's seed. Just as that ancient one sold out his bright future in exchange for carnal, physical pleasure so did his descendants in later years. And, in the era of the first century Esau's fellows were the Herods who opposed Christ and persecuted the Apostles. The lineage continued as unspiritual as their forefathers. In Ezekiel 35:5 we read of the perpetual hatred of the Edomites toward the children of Israel. Back in the wilderness wanderings of the seed of Abraham the inhabitants of Idumes had refused God's people access to their land. Also, according to Psalms 137 the Babylonians had Esau's posterity cheering them on as they plundered Jerusalem and ravaged the folk of Judah! No wonder God's wrath burned hot against those earthy people (Malachi 1:1-4). In Lamentations 4:21-22 Jehovah promised to uncover the sins of Edom.

By the time Obadiah depicts the scene involving the demise of Esau's seed those battle-scarred people had gained an awesome reputation for brilliant warfare. The natural rock-ribbed fortress of Mt. Seir had proved to be an impregnable defense and many an enemy had crawled back to lick his wounds when in battle with the Edomites. Such success had made

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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TO RECEIVE CHRIST

Most religionists in America would respond to the question, "what must a man do to be saved" by saying this or something similar: "Receive Christ as your personal savior." What exactly, according to the Bible, is involved in *receiving* Christ?

The phrase "receive Christ" is not in the Bible, but we can get close with John 1:12: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name..."

It is not unscriptural to speak of "receiving Christ," although such language is only occasionally seen in the New Testament. Zacchaeus received Christ. Luke 19:6 states, "And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." Luke 8:40 uses the word in a similar way: And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him." John 4:45 says, "Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did in Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast." But these passages speak only of receiving Jesus as an honored guest, not as a savior in the act of saving a soul.

The Colossian brethren received Christ in the spiritual, saving sense: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:" (Colossians 2:6). And yet, this verse doesn't give us details about what receiving Christ actually is, or about how we are thereby saved. John 1:12 does offer interesting and important details.

Again, the verse says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." The preceding verse, (John 1:11), says that the Jews, as a whole, received Him not. But some did receive Him. Who were they? According to the verse, they were those who "believed on His name." You receive Jesus when you believe on Jesus. Some would shout, "See there! Receiving Jesus by belief is all that one must do to be born into God's family. Belief, without baptism, will save you. Baptism is not essential for salvation, and should not be taught as the act which makes one a Christian."

But take another look at the verse. What was the benefit to those who received Jesus by their belief? "To them gave He power to become the

sons of God..." A quick Greek lesson is in order. The word "power" here, according to Strong's Lexicon (#1849), is from the Greek word *exousia* which means "power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases, leave or permission." The Greek word for "become" is *ginomai*, which means "to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being." In other words, what John 1:12 is saying is this: "But as many as receive Him, to them gave He liberty to become the sons of God."

We learn here that:

1. By itself, the act of believing in Jesus does not make one a child of God. Those who receive Him were given the privilege of *becoming* children of God.

2. Those people who receive Jesus are given "liberty of action". They can now proceed with obedience, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," (Mark 16:16).

3. No one can become what he already is. Those who receive Jesus were given the privilege of becoming sons. They obviously weren't sons at the point of belief. James says, "For as the body without spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:26).

To receive Christ today, one must first receive His word: "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). "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed," (Galatians 1:9). "and the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God," (Acts 11:1).

After receiving the word, he must be baptized, at which time his sins will be forgiven and he will be added to Christ's church. "Then Peter said unto them, 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 Ghost...Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:38,41).

If you are now lost, and thus without hope, our prayer is that you will receive Christ and obey Him so you will be saved and enjoy eternal life.

these half-breed Jews cocky. Their pride was their downfall (Proverbs 16:18). Obadiah, verse three, declares:

“The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rocks.”

God then promised, according to verse 4,

“Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah.”

To illustrate the utter devastation of God’s punishment upon Edom they are told that nothing shall be spared. Reminding them that thieves do not take everything and the reapers of fields and vineyards always leave a grape or a vegetable, the prophet then affirms that God will absolutely and thoroughly purge them! For the violence done to Jacob as well as mocking God’s host when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came (II Chronicles 36) they would certainly reap the sad dividends of their cruelty.

In Isaiah 34:4-9 we find exacting and even piercing language concerning Heaven’s wrath upon Edom:

“The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood---for Jehovah hath---a great slaughter in the land of Edom---For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.”

Jeremiah 49:8 tells us that the calamity of Esau would come upon the arrogant, impenitent people who came out of his loins. Edom would become a curse and a waste! Remaining aloof when Judah needed help was parallel to the priest and the Levite of Luke 10 who “passed by on the other side” when their help was needed.

In Obadiah 15 we are reminded again of the Day of Jehovah - a prelude to the final judgment -- which many of the prophets emphasized (see Amos 5:18; Jeremiah 46:10). The awesome nature of this intensely woven little book in the Old Testament reminds me of what Jesus said in Mark 14:21:

“Better for that man had he never been born.”
(See Obadiah, verse 16!)

Esau’s shallow concepts were passed on to other generations. Truly, a little leaven affects a whole loaf. The high price of a bowl of soup eventuated in a carnal worldly nation. May God help us to be wise in our decisions and points of emphasis!

THE FUNDAMENTALS

Mel Futrell

I have had the privilege of working with brother William Woodson in two gospel meetings within the past year. One in Alabama and one just recently here in Columbia, S.C. One of the many benefits I receive from occasions such as this is to enjoy private conversations about Bible themes and religious matters with men like brother Woodson. Men who have already plowed the row I’m on. The little bits of advice one receives during these times are invaluable. One immediately comes to mind. Brother Woodson shared with me what the late brother Gus Nichols shared with him 40 plus years ago as a young gospel preacher. He said, “In your preaching and teaching, stay close to the fundamentals”. Now brethren that is good advice. And the fact that one may already be following that course doesn’t make it any less valuable. But just what are the fundamentals? Webster says of the word fundamental,

adj. serving as, or being an essential part of a foundation or basis; basic; underlying; fundamental principles; the fundamental structure {Unabridged Dictionary, 1992, p. 574}.

From that definition many Bible topics and texts should register with you. Just from the book of Acts this would include teaching on:

1. God- Acts 17:22-34

2. The name of Jesus- Acts 8:12
3. The kingdom (church) of God- Acts 8:12
4. The establishment of the church- Acts 2
5. Baptism- Acts 1:5; 2:38,41; 8:36; 10:47; 16:33; 19:5 etc.,
6. Christian living- Acts 2:42-47
7. Missions/Evangelism- Acts 13:1-21:17
8. Church discipline- Acts 5:1-11
9. Conversion- (There are 10 detailed accounts in Acts alone.)

These are just some of the many fundamentals of the faith that we must preach and teach. This may be accomplished from the pulpit, in the classroom, and in the home. But they must be taught! And those of us that preach the gospel, whether for a living or not, logically should carry a good deal of the load associated with getting this done. Would not Acts 20:27, 2 Timothy 4:2ff, and James 3:1 be applicable here?

Also, materials to aid one in his/her study of these Bible fundamentals are available. One of the best, if not the best, workbooks I’ve seen on “fundamentals” is the late brother R.L. Colley’s Bible Class Notes Of Fundamentals Of Christianity. Gary Colley, the son of the author, gave me a copy probably 20 years ago. It was first used in 1936 and is to its

continued on Page 4

credit still in print today. Practical teaching on some 46 different, yet related, subjects is covered. Every congregation ought to use it some time.

Some time back, I came across a little volume of *Sermons* by Gus Nichols with a copyright date of 1948. In it he includes some 63 or so newspaper sermons he had written in 1947. Of that number 4 have to do with Christ, 3 with the church, 9 with baptism, 9 with music (singing vs. instrumental), 3 with faith, 1 with marriage, 1 with adultery, 1 with the Lord's supper etc., Brethren, these items represent Bible basics that every Christian should be well-versed in. And in these "perilous times" (2 Timothy 3:1) with an increasing number of brethren advocating change in regard to some of the most basic elements of New Testament Christianity those fundamentals should be sounded again and again.

Because some are willing to abandon the fundamentals of the faith and replace them with the doctrines and commandments of men doesn't make it right. What is right is for preachers, elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, and all Christians to "stand fast in the faith" (1 Corinthians 16:13). And it is never wrong to do right! What the church needs is more fundamental teaching.

MOST OF A MINUTE - GOD'S POWER TO RAISE THE DEAD

In John 5:28 said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth. They that have done good to the resurrection of life. They that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." Some may say, "Man, I can't believe that. What is in that grave is dead and decaying. How can life come from that? How can God one day raise the dead and give a new body which will exist forever in heaven or hell?"

But I don't have trouble believing it. Springtime helps me. I see backyard gardeners planting grains of corn in the soil. What's going to happen? That little seed will decay. But then life will spring from that decaying seed, and a stalk will emerge that contains ears of corn bearing thousands of kernels!

It's really this simple: / believe what God can do, because I've seen what He has done.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 19

May 23, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

A VIRTUOUS WOMAN
YOU CAN'T BE TIRES, YOU ONLY
WORK ONE HOUR A WEEK
TRUTH CONQUERS ALL
DID JESUS TURN WATER INTO
WINE?
HOW WE LOVE OUR CHILDREN

A VIRTUOUS WOMAN

Eva Nell B. Naramore

Of a meek, and quiet spirit, who else could it be?
So trusted, so gentle, so loving as she,
Who seeks to do good, keeping her marriage vow,
Sinful traits in her life, she will not allow.

Bears fruits of character, she wears modest clothes,
From the garden of youth, a beautiful rose.
The heart of her husband believeth in her,
Talking to the children, of him she'll refer.

She sews and she cooks, her work is at home,
Like the ant she's so busy, while others are gone.
She follows God's will in him is her trust,
Not in things of the earth that canker and rust.

She considers a field the value, the price,
When needed she's there to give others advice.
With strength and courage, God's word fills her life,
Faith gives her comfort, through temptation and strife.

With hurt that's untold, secret tears fill her eyes,
A good wife and mother, to please her husband she tries.

Their children's a blessing, she has much concern,
She's willing with patience to teach while they learn.

Broken hearts she can mend, for training she's there,

The family together knows the value of prayer.
Like merchants' ships bringing food from afar,
To the widows and orphans, she's a bright morning star.

From the vineyard of fruit with the works of her hands,
She gives to the neighbors from increase of the land.
For her household, she's not afraid of the snow,
Their clothes silk and scarlet, their smiles have a glow.

With kindness and wisdom no idleness of time,
The light of a candle, the voice of a chime.
Others do well, but thou excellest them all,
With blessings and praise, each day she stands tall.

Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain,
With fear of the Lord, from evil she'll refrain.
Unselfish, and loving, she's a queen every day,
Listen and learns from what others say.

Her works will praise her, in the palace she's known,
In the home where her husband sits on a throne.
She's a woman of virtue, her price is untold,
Above rubies and diamonds, silver or gold.

Read Proverbs chapter 31

"YOU CAN'T BE TIRED, YOU ONLY WORK ONE HOUR A WEEK..."

David Decker

"The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright; words of truth...And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh."
(Ecclesiastes 12:10,12).

Preaching is work. The study, the memorization, the actual delivery of the material, as well as the many other duties assigned to preachers today, are just as

demanding as secular work. Read Mark 6:31-34.

Preachers get tired. Sometimes very tired. At the end of a Sunday filled with teaching, preaching and other duties often the last gasp of energy the preacher has left is spent on the phone reviewing the day's work with concerned members who call. Preaching is truly not a one day a week job.

Follow your preacher one day. Go where he goes and do what he does. Go to the building and study for hours. Field the phone calls, write the articles, handle

continued on Page 4

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ

1501 6th Avenue

Jasper, AL 35501

DID JESUS TURN WATER INTO WINE?

Occasionally a member of the Lord's body who enjoys drinking beverage alcohol socially will argue his liberty to do so using John 2:1-11. This chapter records the first of Jesus' earthly miracles, the turning of water to wine. The argument is simply that Jesus authorized the moderate use of beverage alcohol for social reasons when He made this wine for the wedding of Cana of Galilee.

The text says, "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do *it*. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare *it*. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now. (John 2:1-11)."

Jesus turned water into wine. Some have gone to great lengths to discuss methods of fermentation and the possible alcohol content of the wine, and that is an interesting study. But that still does not hit the nail on the head. The real question is this: *Did Jesus make an intoxicating beverage for that feast?* The answer is, certainly not!

Keep in mind that the Greek word for wine in the chapter is *oinos*. While we generally think of all wine as intoxicating beverage, the word "wine" in the Bible can represent either an intoxicating or non-intoxicating beverage. The context must reveal the meaning. It is clear that some wine in the Old Testament is fresh grape juice and nothing more. Consider the word wine (Hebrew, *Tiyrowsh*) in these passages: "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Proverbs 3:10) Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing *is* in it: so will I

do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." (Isaiah 65:8)

Now back to the question. It is clear that Jesus turned barrels full of water into wine at a marriage feast. The guests had already consumed a substantial quantity of the host's wine at the time. Was that intoxicating wine? If so, and they were filled with it, then we must assume they were at least somewhat intoxicated. Was that the kind of festive scene before Mary's eyes when the "handmaiden" of the Lord asked Jesus to get more wine for the guests? Certainly not.

Furthermore, if the wine created by Jesus was an intoxicating beverage, consider the quantity. Jesus didn't make a few dainty airline bottles to hand out. He made barrels. If that wine was indeed an intoxicating beverage, Jesus was clearly encouraging that group to become as intoxicated as they liked. Would Jesus help people get drunk?

John 2 does not support the "moderate" drinker's contention that "social drinking is acceptable because Jesus turned water into wine." Jesus, who kept the Old Law perfectly without sin, knew what the Bible said in Proverbs 23 about intoxicating beverages. "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty...Who hath woe? who hath *sorrow*? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Proverbs 23:20-21, 29-35).

Hear what Jesus teaches about those who would encourage others to sin: "Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." (Luke 17:1-3).

Jesus did not turn water into an intoxicating beverage. Mary did not ask Jesus to give people barrels of intoxicating beverage. She asked Him for sweet grape juice, and our Lord furnished the guests with that drink.

TRUTH CONQUERS ALL

Johnny Ramsey

The grand finale of the Bible, the glorious book of Revelation, clearly demonstrates the victory of the saints of God and the conquest of Christianity over sin and shame. The triumphant nature of the gospel is the joyous exclamation of the wondrous closing stanza of sacred writing. It is a pulsating conclusion of the New Testament and a powerful ending to Scripture! Years ago I wrote a short poem depicting the result of the victory of Jesus over Satan:

Jesus is coming-My destiny to seal
Jesus is coming-I know that He will
Jesus is coming-In His presence may I stay
Jesus is coming-O Glorious Day

In fact, the last chapter of the Bible shows us that what we lost in Adam we gain in Christ because paradise lost is now paradise regained through obedience of the Lamb of God (Revelation 22:14).

Peace and mercy and grace abound through the gospel of Christ!

The last book of the Bible is carefully divided into four parts.

Chapters 1-3:	Introduction and letters to the seven congregations of Asia.
Chapters 4-11:	The 7 Sealed Books
Chapters 12-20:	The Great Battle between God and Satan
Chapters 21-22:	The Conquest of Christianity over Rome

In these dramatic scenes Christians are encouraged to hold to truth and holiness--regardless of the pressures of a decadent world--and ultimately heaven will be their home. One eloquent poem reminds us:

My eyes have seen God's glory;
My ears have heard His voice...
And every gift He gives me,
Makes my heart rejoice!

In the cadence of Isaiah's tribute to the righteousness of the Creator the Revelation reflects the

same adoration:

And one cried unto another, and said,
Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of host: the
whole earth is full of his glory.

Isaiah 6:3

The eternal purpose and plan of the Lord meshes the problem of sin, the power of the Devil and the surpassing love of a Savior that defeated Satan at Calvary and set the captives free (Ephesians 4:8; Colossians 2:15; John 12:31-33). R. J. Rogers wisely wrote:

Sometimes it would be easy, Lord,
To give in to defeat,
To Let Old Satan have his way,
Admitting I am beat.

But somewhere deep inside of me
I hear Your gentle voice,
That circumstance is not excuse
And victory is a choice!

Truth has always been the partner of purity and hope. Without it our dreams will never come to fruition. Emotions can deceive us and vain religion will condemn us. Error that tickles our fancy can never save our souls. Truth has a high price tag but it offers great and lasting merchandise. Buying truth and selling it not is the challenging message of Proverbs 23:23. Through the difficult days of intense persecution Christians endured at the hands of the Caesars it would have been easy to compromise but the end result would have been disastrous! A great gospel song should remind us of the last real lesson of the Bible:

Crowns and thrones may perish
Kingdoms rise and wane
But the church of Jesus
Constant will remain...

Verily, **TRUTH CONQUERS ALL!**

the administrative tasks that come up, visit the hospitals, nursing homes, and homes of members who need their hand held and/or a sympathetic ear, sit in the office and listen to heartbroken spouses pour out their pain in the hope of receiving answers and wisdom. See how you feel when you finally "clock out" at quitting time.

Jesus called the work of God "labor" and those who do it "laborers" (John 6:27; Matthew 9:27-28; 20:1-16). Paul implies to the brethren both at Galatia and Thessalonica that doing good often brings "weariness." (Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13).

Preachers are not the only laborers, but they do

labor. It is a wonderful work, a joyous work. But it is work. Its days are very often tiring and taxing. Members need to consider that the preacher needs rest, relaxation, renewal, and the time and space that these require just as much as the members themselves do.

Follow your preacher one day. You will see how rewarding and challenging his work really is. You will have a greater appreciation for how the Lord felt as He spent His days ministering to people. And, you will be tired when you finally go home for the night.

MOST OF A MINUTE - HOW WE LOVE OUR CHILDREN

I was reading a periodical recently and came upon a list of teenagers' answers to this simple question: "How did your parents demonstrate that they loved you?" The answers will force us as parents to some serious self-evaluation. Here are some examples: "My daddy used to take me to work with him for the day and show me off to his fellow workers." or "Mom drew cartoons on my lunch bags and put notes in them." or "When my dad comes home from work, he immediately finds me and talks with me and asks how my day was."

Now, for those of us who are parents, these insights are profound. The way we express love isn't by giving

our children things. We express that genuine "stick with you the rest of your life" type love when we give our children our time and ourselves.

You know, I've heard retired folks regret their past in regard to their children, but I've never heard one report spending too much time with them. Titus 2:4 says for older women to teach the younger to love their children.

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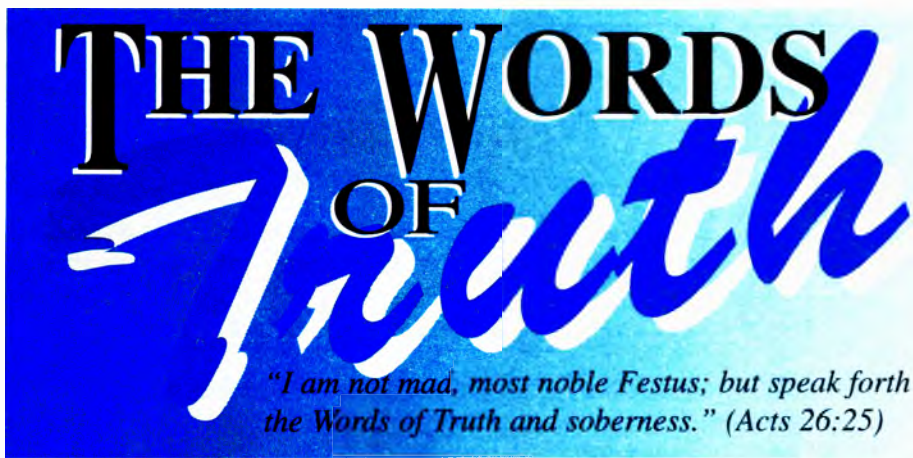


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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

THE PRODIGAL SON
 THEY'RE THE PREACHER'S KIDS
 THE BOOKS WILL BE OPENED
 WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD?
 NATHANAEL

Vol. 34 No. 20

May 30, 1997

THE PRODIGAL SON

Johnny Ramsey

Volumes have been written concerning the wasteful boy of Luke 15. The three major characters in that famous parable of Jesus have captured the fancy of millions of people since the first century. Many fail to realize that the spotlight in that story is actually on the elder brother who represented the resentful attitude of the Pharisees Christ was rebuking on that occasion. They were unconcerned with the lost estate of others and were extremely selfish in spiritual matters. Such folk could understand the tragedy of a lost sheep or a lost coin but were oblivious to the value of souls that were far from the Lord. Their trust was in uncertain riches rather than in the living God (I Timothy 6:17). Like Jonah of old they really did not want their political or religious enemies to repent and come back to Jehovah! Though the father of both boys would run to meet the wayward son, the elder brother pouted and truly wished his brother was still in the pig-pen of iniquity. When we cannot rejoice that lost men are found or when the spiritually dead are revived we stand in the shadow of that older brother and in the darkness of hell! Robert Burns was very perceptive in this regard:

"Nothing is so fatal to religion as indifference, which is, at least, half infidelity."

Luke, chapter 15, tells us that though there was great joy in heaven there would be none by the Pharisees who were impenitent, unfruitful, ungrateful and self-righteous. Those with only outward religion would be exposed because their love for lost souls was zero.

"THEY'RE THE PREACHER'S KIDS..."

David Decker

"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it."
 (Proverbs 22:6).

The truth about preacher's kids is that they are kids. They are somebody's children. They are to be

"Throw out the lifeline to danger-fraught men
 Sinking in anguish where you have never been."

To stand aloof while lost mankind perishes is as foreign to God's will as is polygamy. The religious elite, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, who passed by on the other side (Luke 10) had the same basic problem of selfishness.

There are five fundamental lessons contained in the marvelous and pulsating parable before us now.

- (1) Each one is a creature of choice.
- (2) Sinful living does not satisfy.
- (3) True repentance is powerful.
- (4) Our reward is greater than we deserve.
- (5) Inward sin is tragic indeed!

The younger son demanded his inheritance and chose a path that took him far from home and God. Like all accountable beings he could and did choose such a course of action. Later, after sin and degradation took its toll he chose to come back to proper conduct and his father's home. Those who teach predestination have a hard time with this simple point in this familiar story Jesus told. Yes, we are creatures of volition (Lev. 1:3; Joshua 24:15). Things certainly go better when God is in charge but some people have to learn this eloquent point after many bitter tears. The prodigal would never have had to feed swine at home but, free to do as he pleased, he wound up in the pig-pen of broken dreams.

loved and taught and given the right example. They go to school, they face peer pressure, they struggle with their "identity", and eventually they grow up. Just like all other kids.

Because the preacher's role in the church is so visible his children may come under microscopic

continued on Page 4

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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THE BOOKS WILL BE OPENED

Have you ever considered the books which are to be opened at the judgment? There is no end to the numbers and varieties of books written by men. Relatively few of them are of any interest to the general public when they are fresh from the press. Fewer of them enjoy a sustained value for very long. Even the books of men considered world classics or inspired writings will never leave this world. They will burn with other works of men (II Peter 3:10). They are men's books and are thus limited.

Now consider the books of God. John the revelator wrote Revelation 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

Just what are the books? The Scriptures suggest three:

First, the book listing the names of the redeemed. When the seventy disciples returned to Jesus in Luke 10, they were happy and amazed that they were able to exercise miraculous power over the demons. Jesus let them know that such rejoicing was somewhat immature, and that there was a greater reality before them. Their names were written in the book of life. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

Is your name written in the great list of the redeemed? This is not simply the list of those who have been born of woman. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). You must be born into the family of God. That birth occurs when you are baptized. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). That Christian must then strive daily to live faithfully before Christ. If he leaves the body of Christ, the church, and thus becomes unfaithful, his name will be removed or "blotted out" of the book of the redeemed. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels"

(Revelation 3:5). The book of the redeemed is also mentioned in Philippians 4:2-3 where Paul wrote, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life."

Second is the Bible. Jesus Himself made this clear when He pointed to the judgement day and said, "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). Surely with eternity before us we can make time to be serious Bible students. Remember that it is through such study that we can gain God's approval (II Tim. 2:15).

And third, the book of deeds will be opened at the judgement bar of Christ. The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Imagine that! Our entire life, good and bad, laid bare for the Lord to examine at the judgement. Such a reality makes draws us to repentance. How gracious and merciful is our God. Those sins which have been washed away by the blood of the Lamb, are forgotten forever, and we will not face them on that great day. Hebrews 8:12 says, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Hebrews 10:17-18 says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

We are born. We live. We die. One day we are called to the judgment bar of Christ. Our eternal destiny will be determined by the contents of those three books. Surely such a truth will further motivate us to be faithful Christians. As Christians we have no reason to fear the judgement, for it will afford us the opportunity to hear our sweet Lord say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34).

WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD?

J. C. Choate

We know that in this world that we are accountable to many. That includes our parents, those for whom we work, the law of our country, and to our government. Above all, we are accountable to God.

To be accountable means that we are responsible for our conduct, the things we may say, our debts, paying our taxes, and such like. To God we are accountable for our physical and spiritual lives. Paul said, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). In other words, we will all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ some day to receive the things done in the body, according to the things done, whether they be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Although we speak of all being accountable to God, who does "all" include? We know in this physical life that infants and children are not expected to pay taxes or to be responsible for many other things. Even if a child commits a crime, and a serious crime, the law takes into account the age of this person and whether he is old enough to recognize the seriousness of his action. Certainly no court or judge would ever hand down the death penalty to a child even though he had killed someone.

In spite of the fact that much of the religious world advocates that even babies inherits Adam's sin, we must understand that the Bible teaches no such thing. Surely sin cannot be inherited as one would inherit a disease. The scriptures say that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). The writer goes on to say, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son" (Ezekiel 18:19). Such is to say that each is responsible for his own actions.

But what about Adam's sin? Adam was held responsible for his wrong doing, as well as Eve, and the same has been true of each person since that time. We have enough of our own sins to be accountable for without being held responsible for the sins that others have committed. With Adam's sin, death did enter the world, and physical death was passed upon all of mankind, but spiritual death comes only when a specific person commits sin or engages in wrong doing.

But doesn't Paul say that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)? That's true, but if you will take the time to read the context you will find that those he speaks of as being sinners were those who spoke lies and were shedding innocent blood. That means that he is speaking of adults or those who are old enough to know right from wrong. Such people are sinners

but not infants and children who are still too young to know what is good and what is bad.

Accountable people in God's word are those who are old enough to hear God's word, to understand it, to believe in the Lord, to repent or turn away from their sins, to confess with their mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and to be baptized or buried in the waters of baptism for the remission of their sins (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6; Acts 17:30; Matthew 10:32; Mark 16:16). Those who are too young to do these things are not sinners but are seen by God as being pure in heart and without sin. They are spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 18:1-5, and he said that one must become like them in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

But don't small children sometimes do things that are very bad? They do, but it is often as a result of imitating some adult. Regardless, he would not be conscious of his wrong doing and would not be punished for his deed by any court, and certainly the Lord would not hold him responsible for his actions.

Then the question arises about the conversion of households or families in the book of Acts. We read of Cornelius and his household. Lydia and her household, the Philippian jailer and his household, and other households, or families, obeying the Lord. It might be reasoned that surely there would have been babies and children in those families, and in such cases, did not they obey the Lord with their older brothers and sisters and parents? It is true that no doubt there were infants and children in such families but when it speaks of a family obeying the Lord, it would of necessity refer to the members of that family who had reached the age of accountability as being the ones who obeyed the Lord. Those would have been the ones old enough to hear and obey the gospel themselves. No one could have obeyed for the younger ones.

So the answer to the question, "who is accountable to God," would obviously be those who know right from wrong, those old enough to understand God's will, to realize that they are now sinners, and that they need to obey God so they can be saved from their sins.

Are you accountable to God? If you are reading this article, and you understand what is being said here, then no doubt you are accountable and you need to obey the Lord if you have not already done so. If such be true, you are encouraged to obey the Lord now that you may be saved. Our prayer is that you will do just that, and that you will do that now.

scrutiny. Even though other families in the congregation have children that are allowed to "sow their wild oats" and it is chalked up to and explained away by their youth, sometimes the preacher's children are skewered and verbally scourged for behavior that is no different. The double standard is frequently present, but it is never fair nor right.

Children, regardless of what their parents do for a living, are to be brought up in the nurture and training of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). They are to be disciplined and corrected (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; Hebrews 12:5-11). Their character is to be molded in ways that are not overly harsh nor abusive (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).

Preachers should not neglect their children by allowing themselves to be so caught up in and manipulated by the demands of church work that

they are never at home. A trusted preacher friend once told me, "I used to feel guilty if I didn't go out (evangelizing) every night...Now I feel guilty if I do." If a preacher is also a father he has a responsibility to train his own children (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). To "succeed" as a preacher while failing as a father would be a very hollow accomplishment indeed.

Your preacher's kids are every bit as "normal" as your own. They are to be encouraged, led in the proper way, and prayed for. They need their daddy's time and attention just like any other child. They need a solid, stable home life just like any other child. And, they need the same Lord and Savior in order to get to heaven that anyone else does. Let us please be careful not to expect more from them than God does.

MOST OF A MINUTE - NATHANAEL

There is an interesting character called Nathanael in John 1 of the Bible. When his friend told him that the Messiah was Jesus, he was cautiously skeptical. After all, anyone could up and say they were the Christ, but that didn't make them so. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming He said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Nathanael asked how Jesus knew him. Jesus said, "...when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael immediately said, "Thou art the Son the God." Wherever that fig tree was, it was so private that

Nathanael knew Jesus couldn't have known he was there without a miracle.

You know, Jesus knows where you are today. Does that reality make you uncomfortable, or secure? I suppose that depends on whether you are living as a faithful Christian, or as a runaway from right living.

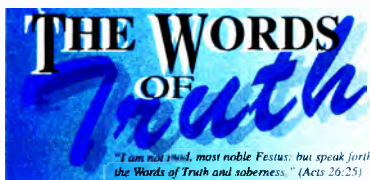
I hope that if Christ's presence bothers you that you will get out of the sinning business and start living right. And if I can help, give me a call.

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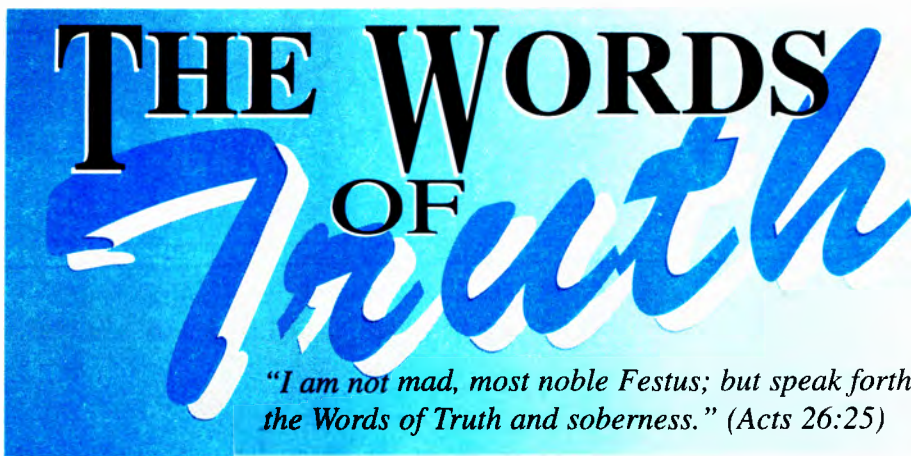


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Vol. 34 No. 21

June 5, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

ACTS 20:7 AND TRANSLATION
CATS, BY NATURE
WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?
HOW TO TELL WHEN YOUR
GETTING OLD

Acts 20:7 and Translation

Mel Futrell

The question of which Bible translation/version to use has been a pressing problem for Christians, for religious people, period, for several decades now. And that is putting it lightly. Although this article will not address that issue directly, some suggestions will be implied herein as we approach the theme indicated by our title.

The verse in question is Acts 20:7 and reads from the King James version thusly:

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight.”

Most of us, if not all of us are intimately familiar with these words spoken and recorded by the inspired penman Luke. This passage and its immediate context are of great importance to modern Christians for a variety of reasons. Not the least of which is its crystal clear affirmation concerning the day upon which first century Christians met to participate in the Lord's supper. This is not the only reference to Christians assembling on the first day of the week, but it is probably the fullest account of such. We have relied heavily on this verse through the years and I believe rightfully so. So what is the problem? The problem surrounds the translation of this verse (Acts 20:7) in at least two 20th century versions: today's English Version also known as Good News for Modern Man and The New English Bible.

The TEV was published by the American Bible Society in 1966, with the entire Bible coming out in 1976. The New English Bible was first proposed by the general Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May 1946 but wasn't published until 1961, with the entire bible following in 1970. Now, please understand there is nothing wrong per se

with new translations of the Bible. But when these versions take unwarranted liberties with the Greek or Hebrew texts that is another matter altogether. It is this abuse of Acts 20:7 by both the TEV and the NEB that we concern ourself with now. Please not the rendering given by both versions.

“On Saturday evening, we gathered together for the fellowship meal, Paul spoke to the people and kept on speaking until midnight, since he was going to leave the next day.” [TEV]

“On the Saturday night, in our assembly for the breaking of bread, Paul, who was to leave next day, addressed them, and went on speaking until midnight.” [NEB]

I assume that you immediately see the difference between most translations of this revealing verse and what the above versions say. What right did the translators of the TEV and the NEB have to change what was the first day of the week to them to what is the seventh day of the week to us? My answer is no right! The Greek text must be understood and translated as referring to the first day of the week then and now! I checked three Greek texts and they all had “mia ton sabbaton” which literally means (one of the week). Language authority A.T. Robertson said of this verse:

“Either the singular (Mk. 16:9) sabbatou or the plural sabbaton as here was used for the week (sabbath to sabbath). For the first time here we have services mentioned on the first day of the week...” [Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 3, 1930, pp. 338-339] (Emphasis mine-M.F.)

To these Christians it was the first day of the week. The fact that they measured their days

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CATS, BY NATURE

The Colley house has been recently blessed with a litter of kittens. Nine-year-old Hannah likes to think of the tiny closed-eyed pets as her grandchildren, and tends to them faithfully. Oh the sweet and simple delights of childhood!

But I've been watching too. It is a marvel to see the natural motherly instincts of a cat caring for her first litter. How did she know to seek out a private place for the birthing? Where did she learn to patiently care for her offspring's every need? Why do their cries bring her immediate attention while she ignores those of other cats? She knows by instinct, and the Architect of instinct was God. when Almighty God answered Job's questioning in Job 38-39 He spoke of animal instinct: "Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds (cows, GC) do calve? Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn, they go forth, and return not unto them?" (Job 39:1-4)

Did God also plant instinct in humans, a deep sense that one course of action is correct, and another incorrect? Have we, like the animals, also been somewhat "programmed" with instincts of what is right? The answer is yes. this is not to say that a man may ignore the Bible and be saved because he laid back and did what came "naturally" to him. We will indeed be judged by the New Testament, (John 12:48, II Cor. 5:10). And yet we have some instincts of what is natural and good.

Paul argued that we should know some things are wrong because they are not natural. Consider Romans 1:26-31:

"For this cause god gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the **natural use** into that which is **against nature**. 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.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, **without natural affection**, implacable, unmerciful" (Romans 1:26-31). (Emp. mine, GC).

Commentators generally agree that "without natural affection" in verse thirty-one refers to the ungodly but common practice among the heathen to expose and otherwise put to death their infants. Albert Barnes for example, describes how various nations practiced infanticide. It is noteworthy that Paul appeals to that which is *natural* in his argument for the truth of God.

In these matters, homosexuality and infanticide, doing that which is "natural" is held up as doing that which is according to God's will. Likewise that which man may do against nature is against God.

In the six days of creation God made things and creatures which do His will perfectly. When He said, "Let there be light," the light responded. when God said "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together," the water responded. And so it was with the firmament, the plant life, and the sun, moon, and stars. Man was different. He was given the choice of service or rebellion. Yet it has always been the case that living away from God's will, against God's "nature" had led to man's downfall. the advocates of abortion and homosexuality today will see dark days. They have chosen a path of darkness which is, according to the Word of God, against nature.

May we all strive daily to live in perfect harmony with God's will and never against Him.

Why Was Jesus Baptized?

Matt. 13:13-15; 21:23-27 - by Jason Roberts

Our sacred text affirms, "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized for thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him."

Why was Jesus baptized? Was it because he had sins that needed remission? After all the bible does teach us that baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; cf. 22:16). In fact Jesus himself said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Peter recognized the truth of this statement when he penned, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21)

The Bible teaches us that Jesus was one "who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), "who did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth:" (1 Pet. 2:22), who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). If our Lord was baptized because he had sins that needed remission, then that implies that he had transgressed the very law of God (1 John 3:4), but he said, "...for I do **always** those things that **please** him. (John 8:29b, emp. added JRR). If our Lord would have committed sin, he would be in need a savior, and he who needs a savior cannot be one.

Jesus gave us the reason as to why he allowed John to baptize him. He said to him, "suffer (allow) it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to **fulfill all righteousness**? the word fulfill (pleroo) means to fill up, to complete. The same word is used when Jesus referred to the Law of Moses in which he came to fulfill (Matt. 5:17).

The word righteousness is also found in 1 John 3:7 in the context of obedience, "he that **doeth righteousness** is righteous." It means attaining that inward character or quality of being just, or right with God. Did Jesus fulfill this quality of righteousness? The prophet Isaiah testified in the affirmative. He wrote in view of the death of our Lord, "He (God) shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall **my righteous servant** justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11). The apostle Paul, and his testimony in view of his own death, clearly reveals this, "For

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have found a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, **the righteous judge**, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). When Paul was in Athens he said that Jesus would "judge the world in **righteousness**" (Acts 17:31). If the idea of course is quite clear. It is inconceivable for a righteous person to receive a crown of righteousness from someone who wasn't righteous. John, in writing about Christ being the propitiation for our sins, identified him as "...Jesus Christ **the righteous**." Therefore he met the qualifications of being the satisfactory sin offering for the sins of humanity. Indeed, our Lord's character exemplified a life of righteousness.

In Matt. 21:23-27 another reason is given as to why Jesus was baptized. In this text we have the account of Christ teaching in the temple. The chief priests and elders question the authority of His teaching (v.23). Jesus responds by asking them a question, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or men? (v. 24). Jesus, in effect, had them on the horns of a dilemma. They were unable to answer His question, but by implication they knew that the baptism of John was divine in its given nature.

But if Jesus had not been baptized they would have had "Him" on the horns of a dilemma. They would have looked him straight in the eyes and said, "well if the baptism of John is by the authority of heaven (God) then why haven't you submitted to it?" Consequently the credibility of Christ would have been diminished beyond measure.

The chief priests and elders knew that "all of God's commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172), and that's why Jesus said that his baptism was to "fulfill all righteousness." (Matt. 3:15). Doing the commands of God makes one righteous. Jesus said, "...for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29b).

using Jewish time (evening to evening), rather than the Roman time of the present day (midnight to midnight) doesn't alter the truth that it was Sunday to them, the Lord's day, the first day of the week. I am well aware that many "religious" people in our day don't give a rip on what day we take the Lord's supper. But to those of us who desire to keep His commandments (John 14:15) it makes all the difference in the world. We today, like those of the first century, have authority for eating the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:20) on one day and on e day only-the first day of the week. Saturday or seventh day observance of the Lord's supper won't cut the mustard with God. And the TEV and the NEB are deceiving and wrong for wording the phrase "Saturday evening" and "Saturday night" respectively.

At the heart of this problem and most translation problems is one's philosophy of translation. The translators of the TEV and the NEB opted for a dynamic equivalence or thought equivalence philosophy, which places less emphasis upon a word for word exchange. A formal or literal equivalence philosophy, where when possible, a word for word exchange is made, is to be preferred. All translations are not equal! And those which endeavor to follow a more literal approach to the translation process should be sought out.

Acts 20:7 and many other verses have been twisted by the translators of some modern versions. May we always maintain fidelity to the Word of God.

MOST OF A MINUTE - HOW TO TELL WHEN YOU'RE GETTING OLD

How can you tell when you're getting old? As one older gentleman put it, "Everything hurts, and what doesn't hurt, doesn't work. You need glasses to find your glasses; your back goes out more than you do; you have too much room in the house and not enough room in the medicine cabinet; your children begin to look middle-aged, and the little gray-haired woman you help across the street is your wife.

Don't become discouraged. Remember that

God has purpose for your life—all of your life. And that gray hair? Wear it with joy, not grief. The Word of God says,

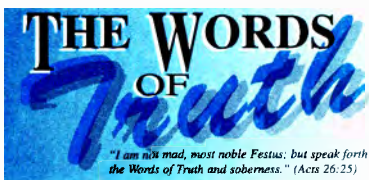
"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." (Prov. 16:31). This is the first time in your life that you had the opportunity to show an example of an old person who remains strongly dedicated to Jesus Christ.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 22

June 12, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**"GOD, ARE YOU LISTENING?"
"I HAVEN'T SEEN THE PREACHER
THIS WEEK..."**

**TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A
REAL MAN**

**THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AT THE
COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CHRIST**

"GOD, ARE YOU LISTENING?"

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

Jason R. Roberts

Someone has well said that, "prayer is the pipeline of our faith to God."

What a blessed privilege (Eph. 1:3) to access the throne God and to know that he is ever near to hear us in our time of need.

For some, it may seem otherwise. They, at times, feel like God is far away. They pray, and, feel as if it is of no avail. Their prayers begin on earth and seem to never leave the ground to heaven above. They often wonder if God is really listening. Is He? God, are you listening to the prayers of your children?

Notice how our verse answers this question. First of all, the verse says that God is **able** to do something. He is **able** to do what we ask or think. Second, God is not only able to do what we ask or think, but He is able to **all** that we ask or think.

But not only is He able to do all that we ask or think, third, He is able to do **above** all that we ask or think. But is just gets better and better. Not only is He able to do above all that we ask or think, but fourth, He is able to do **abundantly** above all that we ask or think. But not only is He able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think, He fifth, is able to do **exceeding** abundantly above all that we ask or think!

What a marvelous privilege it is to pray to our heavenly Father, knowing that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. This verse ought to serve as a motivator for us to get down on our knees and pray deeper, richer and with a sense of fervency. Yes, God is listening, and yes, He is answering. The real question for us is, in view of all this, are we

"I HAVEN'T SEEN THE PREACHER THIS WEEK..."

David Decker

"...I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." (Matthew 25:36).

Visitation, and the opportunity for ministry that visiting provides, is every Christian's duty before the Lord (Matthew 25:34-46; James 1:27). We all should be visiting and fellowshiping with members of our own congregations, and especially with those who are in need. Visiting is therapeutic, enjoyable, and one avenue for building closeness and brotherly (phileo) love among members of the church.

Preachers should visit. They are often expected to, or assigned visitation as a duty in their job

description. But, the truth is, preachers should visit because they are Christians, not because they are preachers.

Preachers should take any opportunity that they have to visit in fellow church member's homes and to have church members into their homes. Preachers should visit those in jails, prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, mental institutions, orphanages, and in any other place where there are people who need the gospel or who need the gospel or who simply need encouraging.

Preachers who do not visit evidently do not understand that God will hold them accountable for this in judgment. Preachers who wait for people to "come to the building" to get the gospel

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 6th Avenue
Jasper, AL 35501

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A REAL MAN

Romans 1:21-32 shows that when people leave God out of their knowledge they sometimes lose their sense of identity. Men forget what it means to be a man, women forget what it means to be a woman. In America right now we are seeing the results of such weakness in the fight for homosexual rights, in the women's movement, as well as other key areas.

For this article let us consider the characteristics of a real man. That is exactly what Paul is expressing when he writes to Titus in Titus 2:1,2; 6-8. Read these verses. What does it mean to be a man? In some circles the respected man is one who is a drifter, an immoral man with little responsibility, who lives in the freedom of the moment. He lives on the wild side. Others think of a real man being one who is physically strong. Still others think of one who is wealthy and therefore powerful.

A great challenge of the 90's is to adopt the right definition of a brave, real man; A leader. Sadly, in America, many have been convinced that character isn't too important in men who would be leaders. "If a man can lead, then what he does in his private life is of no importance." That is false. A man of weak character will never be a truly great leader, for he can never be fully trusted.

In Titus 2:1-2; 2:6-8, there are ten significant characteristics which men should possess:

1. He is never drunken. He is sober. Some would be impressed with the strength of a man who could drink beverage alcohol and still appear to be in control. Yet the real man stays away from alcohol. He knows what it has done to many men before him. He needs to think clearly, and to be a drinker runs counter to God's will for him. Real men don't need beverage alcohol.

2. He knows when to be serious. He loves to laugh, but he knows when to be serious. He is worthy of respect for his character. He is honorable. His personality is not superficial. He is grave.

3. He practices self-control. "Temperate" describes one who curbs his desires and

impulses. Americans desperately need this teaching today. We sometimes have placed little value on self-control. We give birth control to our teens. Some wives accept the fact that their husbands wander. We make excuses for drunkards. The underlying message is that people must have the object of their desires. To deny our desires is somehow cruel and unnatural. Real men, however, are temperate. They know that failure follows unrestrained indulgence. They practice self-control.

4. He is a man of deep faith. He is "sound of faith." Faith here means "conviction of the truth." Sound means "solid and dependable." This man has strong conviction that God exists and is our Creator. He believes that Jesus is the Messiah, the One through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the church. He believes the Bible is God's word and the lamp unto our feet (Psa. 119:105).

5. He knows what it means to love someone. Charity means love. He knows that real love doesn't rejoice in sin, but in the truth (I Cor. 13:6). He loves his wife as his own body (Eph. 5:28). He shows love to his children by bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). He loves the church. (I Pet. 2:17).

6. He is not a quitter. The word patience suggests steadfastness and endurance. This man has his goals in focus, and stays on course. *Strongs Lexicon* says of this point, "in the New Testament the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings." He is a man of principles.

7. He is a clear thinker. Soberminded. This word is different from the earlier one in verse two. This is sober minded in the sense that he accepts and doesn't fight the truth, whether in reference to himself or to others. To be sober implies that he accepts and believes God's will to always be right and never wrong.

8. He is not afraid of hard work. This phrase, "showing thyself a pattern of good works," is primarily directed to Titus; yet, it was

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THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AT THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CHRIST

Benny Hester

When some among us decided that they should have fellowship with the denominations, we were shocked. Since then, we have become amazed at the lengths some of these apostate brethren have taken their congregations. Their first step was to divide and split the congregation they attended, and form their own. After the flood-gates were opened, shocked and amazed would hardly be the words to describe faithful brethren's reactions.

Recently, I received a bulletin of the Community Church of Christ in Hendersonville, Tennessee. This church was a result of a split with the faithful brethren in Hendersonville. The date of the bulletin is September 10, 1996. I would like to quote from an article in this bulletin, entitled ATONEMENT SERVICE.

"The Shepherds have given their blessing for us to celebrate the Day of Atonement again. This year, the special meal and service will be Saturday, September 21, 1996. The meal will begin at 5:15 P.M. and the service will begin at 6:30 P.M. Instead of a bring-a-dish meal, the meal will be prepared here this year. The cost will be \$3.00 per adult; \$1.50 for children under 10; no charge for children under 5. No family will pay more than \$10.00. Tickets for the meal will be on sale until noon Friday, September 20. NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT THE DOOR.

To prepare our hearts and minds for this cele-

bration, we will have the Lamb's Book of Life for everyone to sign again. It will be taken into the Holy of Holies by two of our Shepherds on the night of the service."

The mind simply reels! How did they come to obtain the "Lamb's Book of Life?" What is within their "Holy of Holies?" The lost ark of the Covenant? Can the "Shepherds" trace their blood-line back to Levi? If not, are they of the Melchizedek priesthood?

In the same bulletin, Kyle Gott, the youth minister invites everyone to attend a service at the First Baptist Church at Hendersonville. He states, "If you have any friends who will come, this could be the night they make a decision for Christ."

Brethren, this is the end result of perverting the Gospel of Christ. What must be done to stem the tide of liberalism? As preachers and elders we must do as Paul told Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." (2 Tim. 4:2). We must be able to recognize those who would, ..."by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Rom. 16:18). May we ever be willing to, ..."contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3). We must not allow these wolves in sheep's clothing to scatter the flock.

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A REAL MAN, *continued from page 2*

something which he was to teach to others. It is therefore for us all. Some men are lazy. They don't want to work in the church. They don't want to make a living for their wife and family. A real man is involved in good work, and he stands up for good work. He really believes in it!

9. He is serious Bible student. In doctrine he shows uncorruptness, gravity, and sincerity. He knows that he cannot go to heaven without learning, believing, and abiding in Christ's doctrine, (II John 9). He sets aside time in his busy schedule to read and meditate on God's word. He knows that only through study will he be able to please God (II Tim. 2:15).

10. He controls his tongue. From his mouth comes "Sound speech that cannot be condemned." There is speech which can be condemned: taking God's name in vain, offensive gutter talk, lying, gossip, angry words spoken in haste to hurt another, etc.. The real man speaks words of truth, kindness, compassion, hope and encouragement. He works to taste his words before speaking them, (Eph. 4:9).

May God help us rear our sons to be real men.

have totally missed the emphasis of the Great Commission and mission work altogether (Matthew 28; Mark 16). However, preachers are not alone in this.

Elders, deacons, men, women, young people, all Christians are commanded by God to visit others. All Christians are expected by God to be kind, good, benevolent, compassionate and anxious to do good to others (Galatians 6:10; Titus 2:11-14). This includes being interested enough in others to go and seek their company for the purpose of fellowship and ministry (Acts 15:36).

Instead of complaining about how little the

preacher visits, or sitting back and waiting for someone else to visit us, let’s each of us go today or tonight and visit someone. It should not take a “program” to get this done, nor should it be left exclusively to the preacher. He might need a visit every bit as much as you do.

MOST OF A MINUTE - MY VIEW OF THE BIBLE

If you had to put into one sentence of the Bible, what would it be? Interestingly enough, the answer to this question is crucial, because it will have a bearing on everything you do in your practice of religion.

If it’s just a good book, like the works of Shakespeare or Milton, then its influence on my religion may be very great or very small, depending on my own personal preference.

But if, on the other hand, it’s verbally inspired of God, then it has more than just a passing relationship to my religion. It determines what I practice in religion!

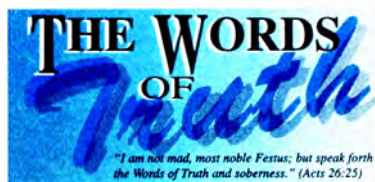
In the church of Christ we insist on Biblical authority for what we do and teach in religion. The Bible is His book. And why shouldn’t we let it determine how we worship? After all, we claim to be worshipping Him and not ourselves.

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THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF
SPIRITUALITY (NO. 1)

CAN A CHURCH WITHOUT
ELDERS HAVE DEACONS?

PERFECT LIKE HIM?

ARE YOU READY?

PREACHING TO PEOPLE IN JAIL

Vol. 34 No. 23

June 19, 1997

THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUALITY (NO. 1)

Robert Taylor

INTRODUCTION

It usually is wise to define terms of a title. By Bible I have reference to God's Word--the Old Testament and the New Testament. Doctrine is teaching, instruction or the impartation of truth. Spirituality refers to one who is spiritual in character, quality or nature. Far too many people form their whole concepts of what true spirituality is from the doctrines and commandments of men, from their own imaginations or what others ingrain into them and not from what the Bible teaches with courageous clarity.

FALSE VIEWS OF SPIRITUALITY

Pretended piety or feigned devotion is not spirituality as set forth in the Bible. This is what Herod the Great claimed before the Wise Men from the East relative to finding and worshipping the child Jesus (Matthew 2:7,8). The Pharisees majored in this as we see in Matthew 15; Mark 7 and Matthew 23. More than once it was necessary for Jesus to unmask their hypocrisy showing that they were wolves in sheep's clothing (Cf. Matthew 7:15-20). The religious world is full of such pretense of piety and feigned devotion in our time.

The person is not spiritually-minded who constantly parades his assumed piety before others and is always telling others how deeply spiritual he really is. Spirituality is not a talk game, a bragging session with self as center. Instead, it is motive and mission; it is language and life; it is attitude and action. All the foregoing are based on Biblical essentials.

The person is not spiritually-minded who appears to be very religious on Sunday but lives like the devil and his disciples the other six days of the week--a Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekle kind of person. A person is not spiritually-minded who feigns goodness when with righteous people but wants to be in the very middle of

things when with a carnal crowd--talking and acting just like the irreverent do.

A person is not spiritually-minded who teaches falsehood instead of truth. Many people consider the Pope, Billy Graham, Robert Shuller, Charles Swindoll and even Jimmy Swaggart as spiritual giants in our day. The Pope is the very personification of egregious Catholic error en masse. Billy Graham is not going to tell people what to do to be saved and tell them that only in the Lord's church can redemption be found. He is not going to condemn the evils of denominationalism. He will not present what the Bible says about true Bible finals. He will not condemn mechanical music in worship as being sinful. He will not rightly divide the Scriptures as touching what came from Moses and what began with Christ and Christianity. Shuller and Swindoll are not going to present the gospel of Christ and it alone. Swaggart is not going to tell the religious world what is wrong with the perils of Pentecostalism. Many among us feel that the Jubilee speakers each July in Nashville are the very epitome of spirituality among churches of Christ. The 1997 schedule of speakers for this Change Agent scenario is a list of Who's Who Among Liberal churches of Christ during the 1990's. The sermons, lectures and writings of these men reek with fatal error. Spiritually-minded people do not propagate soul-damning falsehood as Jubilee consistently does.

(Editors note: The "Jubilee" is a lectureship held in Nashville, Tennessee each year. It is well known for speakers who are interested in promoting the "change movement" in the church of Christ. Please follow brother Taylor's future articles as he develops the theme of Spirituality. GC)

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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CAN A CHURCH WITHOUT ELDERS HAVE DEACONS?

A man who holds the office of deacon has important work. Put yourself in the shoes of those Grecian widows whose needs were met by the first seven deacons and you will understand, (Acts 6:1-6). Or read the qualifications of the deacons in I Timothy 3:8-13, and be impressed with quality of the man God wants for this office. He must be a man who is serious minded about serious matters. He is a man who not greedy, whose faith is genuine, who has shown himself to be worthy of trust. He must be a good father, and be married to a woman who is a sober-thinking Christian. The work of a deacon is clearly one of the most important jobs a man will ever do.

Philippians 1 begins with the words, "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.." From this and other passages we learn that a church which is fully and scripturally organized will have elders and deacons. There are three possibilities in this matter of organization in the church: A church may be scripturally organized, with elders and deacons, as we have already noted; But a church may also be scripturally unorganized, that is, a group of people may truly be a church of Christ even before they are able to have elders or deacons. Acts 14:23 says, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church..." These Christians made up a church before they had elders, and therefore a group of Christians today who have no qualified men to ordain as elders, can still be the true church. Naturally they will ordain elders when they are able.

Suppose however, that a church has no men who are qualified to be elders, and yet they have men who desire the office of deacon. Would it be right to have deacons where there are no elders?

Some might observe that in Acts 6 deacons were selected before we hear of any elders in the church of Jerusalem, and yet that argument is weak. We do not know that they didn't have elders.

To have deacons in a church without elders is at best in very poor judgement, and will almost surely create problems. A church without elders must still make decisions--decisions about the meeting house, paying bills, securing someone to preach, church discipline and so on. Without elders it is wise to call a meeting of the men for this purpose. Suppose deacons have been selected. When time comes to express views and make a decision, will the deacon be apt to feel he has a bigger voice in the matter than another member? After all the office of "deacon" would be the only office held in that church. When it came down to making a decision, would his opinion carry more weight?

Furthermore, when members need to seek leadership in the church will they be prone to naturally seek out the deacon as they would an elder if such existed? Will they look to the deacon as if he had some authority in the church? Remember that no authority is ascribed to the deacons except that which is delegated to them. They are not elders. They are deacons, and deacon comes from a Greek word meaning "one who executes the commands of another" (Strong's Lexicon, #1249).

To thus alter the system God has designed would make us unscripturally unorganized.

Consider one more point: A man in a church without elders cannot do one more job as a deacon than what he can do as a regular member. Not one. That being the case, why make him a deacon and risk the many thorny problems associated with such an arrangement?

A church without elders should wait until men are ordained as elders to select deacons.

PERFECT LIKE HIM?

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Matt. 5:48

Jason R. Roberts

There are several passages in the Bible, that when read, immediately arrest one’s attention. One such passage is found in Matt. 5:48 where Jesus dropped a bombshell in the world for Christian living. A third of the way into His sermon on the Mount He said, “*Be ye therefore, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*”

Now naturally the mind quizzes, “How in the world can someone be perfect like his heavenly Father is perfect? You cannot get as perfect as God. You cannot get as Holy as God. You cannot get as wise as God.” Yet, the verse indicates that not only is it possible for us to be perfect like God, it is imperative that we do so.

What does it mean to be perfect like our heavenly Father is perfect? A careful analysis of the word perfect will help us. In both instances in Matthew 5:48 the word means, “that which is brought to its end, finished, full grown or mature” (Strong’s #5046). For example, an acorn has not reached its full potential, its maturation, until it becomes a mighty oak tree. It is then that the acorn has reached its end, or purpose. Likewise a Christian has not completely culminated, reached his purpose, until he

is full grown or mature in Christ. It is then and only then that he becomes perfect like his heavenly Father is perfect.

But how does this process of perfection, maturity, come about? There is only one way, and that is with the preaching of the Bible. Paul understood this principle when he penned, “*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, (complete, fitted for apt use) thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17, emp. added). Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, “*Whom (Christ) we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*” (Col. 1:28). The word “perfect” in this verse is the same word found in Matt. 5:48.

How can man be perfect in the eyes of the very One who is perfect? By someone preaching Christ unto them. Man is incomplete, immature, hopeless, and lost outside of Christ. In Christ he is complete, mature, full of hope, and saved because of the perfection the Bible provides.

ARE YOU READY?

Jim Gillaspie

Steve was a good man. He was dependable on his job, respected in the community, and good to his family. He never spoke a cross word, never cheated anyone, and never held a grudge. Everyone said he was a perfect gentleman. Whenever there was a crisis or a need, Steve was there to help. Whenever the community needed volunteers or money, he was always first in line. There’s just one thing Steve didn’t have time for, and that was the church. His parents had taken him when he was a little boy, but that was years ago. Somehow that habit just slipped away. It was not that he didn’t believe in God, for he did. He just never took the time to get to know Him. And there were some questions that troubled Steve, like - “why do the evil prosper and the innocent suffer?” Or, “why do bad things happen to good people?” And, “why did the people he loved have to die?”

The fact that he had no answers to these questions somehow gave him comfort in his spiritual neglect. After all, he was a good man.

Then the day came when Steve had to die. The manner in which he died is not nearly as important as the condition in which he died, for Steve died unprepared to meet God. When he takes his turn before the judgement bar of God (2 Cor 5:10), he will be lost - eternally lost! A kind man, but lost! A generous man, but lost! A good man, but still lost! And not just Steve, but many other GOOD men and women will stand before God and hear “I never knew you, depart from me...” (Matt 7:23). It’s not that they didn’t believe in God. It’s not that they were mean and evil people. They just never took the time to get to know God’s message to man (2 Tim 2:15). They never took the time to obey His will (Matt 7:21). They never took the

time to attend worship (Heb 10:25), or teach others (Mark 16:15), or serve faithfully (Rev 2:10). So GOOD people will be lost. And there will be no joy in Heaven when judgement is pronounced. Joy in Heaven is caused when a sinner repents (Luke 15:7), not when one is condemned. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet 3:9). Jesus gave His life on Calvary so that people might be saved, not lost (2 Cor 5:21)! If only they had been ready!

What about you - are you ready? The apostle Paul was. In Acts 21:13 he said "...I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for

the name of the Lord Jesus." Paul so lived his life that he was ready at any time to meet his Creator. Honestly examine your life right now, and see if you are ready. It doesn't matter if you just "used to be" or are "going to be." What counts is today (2 Cor 6:2)! Are you ready now? "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40).

The family sat in stunned silence as the preacher began the funeral: "Steve was a good man..."

MOST OF A MINUTE - PREACHING TO PEOPLE IN JAIL

Do you think it is a good thing to teach the Bible to people who are in jail? I do, and the reason has to do with freedom. Not physical freedom--I doubt that studying the Bible will have much effect on the length of anyone's sentence--but spiritual freedom.

Think with me of things which can never be locked up in a cell; things which will always be free to travel at will.

Take prayer for example. Prayer knows no boundaries of time or distance. Even locked in a cell

a man or woman who is a Christian and knows how to pray can pray for loved ones in the next town or next state. They can pray into the future too--for children yet unborn, for their own lives after being released. In John 17 Jesus prayed for future generations who would believe in Him.

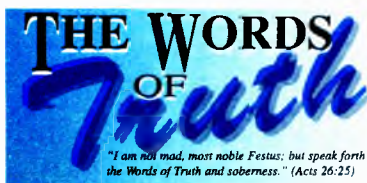
A cell serves a good purpose in holding those who must be removed from society. And yet it cannot imprison hopes and dreams, memories, concern for others, or prayers.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
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REPLACEABLES

Vol. 34 No. 24

June 26, 1997

THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUALITY (NO. 2)

Robert R. Taylor

In the previous article I defined the terms of our title and referred to some false views of spirituality. More needs to be said on this vein of thought.

The person is not spiritually-minded who refuses to be a soul winner or a soul reclamer. The former refers to those who refuse to teach and encourage alien sinners to obey the gospel initially. The latter refers to those who refuse to influence backsliders and apostates to return to the faith they have abandoned. Relative to the latter work Paul wrote in Galatians 6:1, "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." Here is a direct link between spirituality and reclaiming the erring back into the fold of spiritual safety. As per Proverbs 11:30 the winner of souls is wise. The clear implication is that the one who refuses to win souls is unwise. Being unwise, he cannot be spiritually-minded.

The person is not spiritually-minded who seeks to lead the church into digression and apostasy. We have been plagued with this all this century; we still are. But there is one major difference between now and the period a few years back. Earlier, most of our brethren were Biblically literate and were well fortified against the conspiracies of false teachers. Now, it is vastly different. So many of our members are Biblically illiterate and happy in being such. As such they become easy, willing victims for the suave Change Agents to come along and lead them down the primrose path into total apostasy. Such naive people think they are being fed truth when, in reality, they are being fed on a diet of falsehood coming and going. Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, Lynn Anderson and their cronies in spiritual crimes against the church of the Lord Jesus Christ are totally lacking

in true spirituality. Tragically, they will destroy any vestige of it in anyone who follows them into deeper and deeper forms of falsehood. We need to apply Matthew 7:15-20 to such people. They need to be marked as per Romans 16:17,18. We need to adhere to Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

The person is not spiritually-minded who is filled with strife, envy and is divisive. Paul wrote of such in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" The Corinthian people were far from being spiritually-minded while so engaged in carnality.

The person is not spiritually-minded who refuses to make the Bible his/her sole norm, standard or pattern in religion. This gets the whole religious world of Catholicism, Protestantism, the cults and the occults. It gets the so-called World Religions who castigate the Bible coming and going. Such people do not accept at all such powerful passages as John 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:16,17 and 2 Peter 1:3. The Bible is not enough for such people.

The person is not spiritually-minded who is a follower of men and a wearer of human (party) names. The Corinthians were doing this with the names of Paul, Cephas or Peter and Apollos. Some were calling themselves after Christ but even these may have been among the condemned and especially if they were saying they would not hear Paul, Peter or Apollos but ONLY Christ.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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REFUSING THE PREJUDICES

In John four, Jesus engaged in a conversation which was strained with prejudice. Perhaps the woman of Samaria grimaced as she asked, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9)."

The Samaritans were considered a mongrel race. Half Jew, half Assyrian. They had been planted in this place called Samaria by the Assyrians 700 years before (II Kings 17:6, 24,26,29; Ezra 5:1,9,10), and generally accepted the first five books of the Bible. Oddly, they were expecting the Messiah to make Samaria, not Jerusalem, His seat of government.

Jesus showed no signs of discomfort brought on by prejudice. He spoke kindly to the woman, and somewhat pointedly at times. He made it clear that He was her Messiah as well as the Messiah for the whole world. He didn't respect man's barriers. "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, 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)."

Some people today propose quotas to balance America's race inequities. For example, employers couldn't simply hire those who they felt could best do the job. They would be required to meet a legal percentage of women employees, black employees, etc. But quotas contain a logical hot potato for those who support them. In an effort to stop discrimination, they *practice* discrimination. Clearly there would be occasions when a more qualified individual would not be hired because a less qualified person was needed to fill the quota. Besides, even when the quotas are filled to the letter, the prejudices remain. To treat our actions without treating our hearts is a useless exercise.

The answer to sinful prejudices has always been the same: Jesus Christ. When people truly follow the Lord's lead, they shed the garments of hatred and treat people the way they themselves would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12). How can we be pleasing to the Lord today in reference to this question of prejudice? Here are four suggestions:

1. Keep the law of kindness in your tongue. Proverbs 31:26 says of the virtuous woman, "...in her tongue is the law of kindness." "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiv-

en you (Ephesians 4:32)." 1 Corinthians 13:4 says, "Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up..."

2. Accept and adopt into your character what God's word commands in Galatians 6:10. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

3. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. (Romans 12:17)."

4. Remember that Jesus died for people of all races. This is the greatest equality of the ages, and no prejudice of man will shake it. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-28)." The golden text of the Bible will always read the same: "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)."

5. Take the heart of God in dealing with people. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For is ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:44-48)."

6. Be soul-conscious. A man, regardless of nationality, has a soul. As Christians, we are bound and privileged to do what we can to help save that soul. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19)."

CONQUEST OF CHRISTIANITY - THE BOOK OF REVELATION, PT. 1

Colby McWhorter

Before the dawn of time God planned to utilize His Son to redeem sinful man. Satan, that serpent of old, the deceiver of the world, was cast to earth to ensnare men in sin. He is characterized by wickedness and complete imperfection, symbolized by the numbers 666 in Revelation where 7 designates ultimate perfection. Sin is lawlessness, or a transgression of God's law (1 Jn. 3:4), sin separates a man from God, the Creator (Is. 59:2), and sin unrepented of leads to eternal separation from God and punishment in hell (Jas. 1:15; 1 Jn. 1:7-10; 5:17; Mt. 25:41). From Adam and Eve to the present all men struggle and war within themselves to determine their course in life, and, unfortunately, all men choose paths that lead them to sin (Rom. 3:23). This fact makes all men unworthy to reign with God in heaven, and should condemn us all to the place prepared for the devil and his angels. According to the law "all things are purged by blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22), but "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). So, the million dollar question is, "What can wash away

my sin?" "Nothing but the blood of Jesus", is the hymnist's answer to this most important interrogative, as well as the Bible's (Heb. 9:12-14). Jesus Christ lived a perfect life, shed His blood for the remission of *our* sins, and was raised the third day to make it possible for *us* to be righteous in God's eyes. He did what we could not do, He defeated sin and Satan though subjected to great bodily harm and Satan's deceptive schemes. He endured the fires of pain, agony, and rejection. Jesus entered the strong man's house and plundered his goods (Mk. 3:27), it was His purpose to do so (1 Jn. 3:8), and by doing so "He who is in you is greater than He who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4). This sacrifice of Jesus makes it possible that all who follow Christ can also defeat sin and Satan, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4). This is the story of the book of Revelation, Christians overcoming Satan, self, and sin by imitating the perfect example of Christ, who has already conquered the adversary and washes our sins away with His blood.

WATER SALVATION

Bob Duncan, Adamsville, Alabama

Down through the years, as faithful preachers of the gospel have pointed men to the Scriptures for the answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" those in the denominational world have accused us of believing in "water salvation." Because we insist in saying just what the Bible says about the matter, we have been accused of thinking baptism is an act that earns salvation. *Until recently*, I have never known a member of the church of Christ who thought such to be the case.

We have been careful to point out that God has attached conditions to certain promised blessings, and those conditions have to be met, or else the blessing would not be received. Naaman would be healed of his leprosy, if he would wash in Jordan seven times (II Kings 5:10). The first born among the Israelites would not be harmed when God smote the firstborn of the Egyptians, if the the Israelites would sprinkle the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their houses (Exodus 12:12-13). The walls of Jericho would fall down before the army of Israel, if Israel would march around the city once a day for six days, and then seven times on the seventh day (Joshue 6:1-5). The blind man would receive his sight, if he would go and wash in the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-7). We would not say any of these earned the blessings they received by meeting the conditions set forth. But we do recognize they had to meet the conditions set forth in order to receive the promised blessings.

So it is with God's plan for saving sinners; he has set forth certain conditions which must be met in order for the sinner to be forgiven. Jesus stated certain conditions of pardon for the alien sinner when he gave what we refer to as the Great Commission:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15-16).

No, the sinner does not earn forgiveness by being baptized, and it is not the water that saves him. Christ, by means of his death on the cross, pardons sinners who meet his conditions of pardon. All who are pardoned in this manner are said to be saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Recently, however, some of my own brethren are inadvertently teaching that baptism is a meritorious work. They say the Bible teaches baptism is a condition of pardon, and that the purpose of baptism is "for the remissions of sins" (Acts 2:38). They teach also, however, that one who denies baptism is a condition of pardon, but who was baptized thinking he had already been pardoned, is nonetheless saved. "After all," they say, "he was baptized to please God."

This idea, were it true, would mean baptism is an act of merit. It would truly be water salvation. It would mean a man obtains salvation by accident, that is, he wasn't really seeking salvation, but got it anyway by being baptized for a reason altogether different. Tell me,

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if you can, why would not that make baptism an act of merit? Remember, he was not trusting in the Lord to save him, for he thought he was already saved. But baptism saved him anyway. I must confess there are some of my brethren who now believe in water salvation.

The commands of God are divided into two categories, (1) moral and (2) arbitrary. The moral commands are those commands which, because of the very nature of the case, commend themselves to our reasoning. Commands such as, "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," and "Honor thy father and thy mother," are commands that fit into this category. We can see the value in them.

But arbitrary commands are those for which we can see no logical reason, that do not commend themselves to our own ingenuity, and which we obey simply because of our faith in and respect for him who gave the command. The Israelites sprinkled blood on the doorposts in obedience to an arbitrary command. Naaman washed in Jordan seven times in obedience to

an arbitrary command. Joshua and the Israelites marched around Jericho thirteen times in obedience to an arbitrary command. The blind man washed in the pool of Siloam in obedience to an arbitrary command. In each case God provided the promised blessing to those whose trust in him was implicit, and which was demonstrated in their obedience to a command for which they could see no reason other than the fact that God commanded it.

Baptism is an arbitrary command. Because the world can see no logical reason for it, it rejects baptism as being essential, and insists sinners are saved without it. We are now being asked to believe by some of our own brethren that God will save those who exalt their own wisdom above the wisdom of God, refusing to believe what God said about baptism and salvation, and while following their own system of righteousness, happen to be baptized for some reason of their own. That's water salvation, pure and simple. If not, why not?

The psalmist wrote: "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right" (Psalm 119:128). Amen!

MOST OF A MINUTE - REPLACEABLES

I love the story of the newly-married husband coming home from work to find his young bride crying in the kitchen. "Why are you crying honey?"

She said, "The dog ate the biscuits I made for your supper."

He put his arms around her and said, "Don't worry about that dear. We can always get a new dog."

Funny as that story is, it does remind us of an

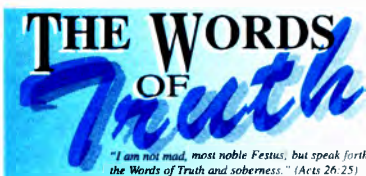
important point. Some things in life are replaceable, and some are not. Consider your soul for example. You only have one, and your soul, which is the essence of you, will exist forever in a place of bliss or torment. Eternity. It is for this reason that Jesus asked the most penetrating question: "What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt 16:26).

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

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**"GOOD NEWS!"
I'LL NEVER COMPLAIN ABOUT
THE RAIN AGAIN
THE WOMAN AT THE WELL
"SHE'S THE PREACHER'S WIFE..."
WHAT THE CHURCH MUST DO TO
BE SAVED
NOT ON SUNDAY NIGHT**

Vol. 34 No. 25

July 3, 1997

"GOOD NEWS!"

Neal Pollard

A Christian husband and wife sit at the kitchen table reading the morning paper when the wife moans, "Everything I'm reading is violence, immorality, deception, or graft!" The husband, planning to console his wife about the reality of society, looks down at his section of the paper and says, "But, sweetheart, I have the front section. Where are you reading about all of those devastating things?" Her reply is, "The comic strips!"

Though the above is an exaggeration of the truth, it *can* at times seem as though there is an avalanche of news about the ills and degradation of societies throughout the world. Movies about catastrophes and tragedies are in vogue. The leading stories for so long have centered around morbidity in some form. Depressing, disheartening, and diabolical story lines saturate people's lives everyday. Someone, by way of observation, is caused to ask, "Is the media and society obsessed with bad news because it is so prevalent or is bad news so prevalent because the media and society are so obsessed with it?"

Is there not any good news anymore? If one turns to the world for the answer, he will probably hear a negative answer. But, turning to the Lord, one is quickly confronted with the subject of "good news!"

In Jesus' public ministry, He came to people filled with misery and all too aware of bad news and preached good news to them (Matthew 11:5). As His hope-filled message must have seemed improbable to them, He was compelled to exhort, "repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). The Lord never intended that His message of good news should be a secret. In authorizing His disciples' mission, Jesus commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Everyone deserves to

hear the good news!

The ancient disciples took Jesus' command to spread the good news quite seriously. Philip and many other saints took this exciting message throughout the Samaritan community (Acts 8:25). Nearly 500 miles from there, it was told by Paul and Barnabas in Derbe and Lystra (Acts 14:6-7). It would be told across two bodies of water and over 1000 miles from that region of Lycaonia in Rome (Romans 1:16). It is little wonder that Paul, representatively, would exclaim, "...*be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, **and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven...***" (Colossians 1:23, emphasis NP). This good news was too valuable and too wonderful to tuck away and review only in the worship assemblies.

Why is this good news of the gospel so important? It centers upon the grace of God (Acts 20:24). This means that God did something for man that man needed, and that something was to provide reconciliation for the sins every individual inevitably commits (Romans 3:23) but for which he can do nothing of himself to atone. The good news is that God made Christ, who did no sin (cf. Hebrews 4:15), to be sin *for every person in this world* so that any individual who obeys the terms and conditions set forth in the good news (cf. Hebrews 5:9) can be made right with God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

While sin is a weight (Hebrews 12:1), the news lightens the burden (Matthew 11:28-30). While sin causes heartache and grief (Psalm 31:10), the news brings joy (Romans 5:11). While sin destroys and separates (Isaiah 55:8-9; Ecclesiastes 9:18), the good news offers new life, reparation, and restoration (Romans 6:4; Galatians 6:1).

Many people in desperate need of good news

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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I'LL NEVER COMPLAIN ABOUT THE RAIN AGAIN

As we were riding along the other day my wife Cindy, who is a great Bible student, smiled and asked, "Do you know what angels eat?" It had to be a trick question. Perhaps a ploy to get me to take her out for lunch. I knew the punch was coming.

But I was wrong, and her question was legitimate. The passage is Psalm 78:24-25, and it says, "And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full." When God sent manna to His people for forty years: Exodus 16:35, "And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan." Exodus 16:15 says, "And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat."

It is difficult to imagine that manna is angels' food in the sense that angelic spirit beings actually eat physical food. Perhaps the meaning is that angels were employed by God in the distribution of the manna to His people. Whatever the case, one thing is clear: Manna was an obvious example of God's unmerited favor and mercy. God sent it. They didn't earn it, plant it, sweat over it, or cook it. They sim-

ply gathered manna and ate. God's rich blessing was expressed in a method as plain and pure as a mother putting milk in a baby's mouth.

But the people were not always grateful. Read from Numbers 21:5-6: "And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is not bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." God did not take their ingratitude lightly. In fact, their ingratitude drew His wrath. How could they complain against God? How could they bite the hand that fed them?

Surely we see the present-day application. Manna and rain are alike in almost every way. Listen to Jesus: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:45). Both rain and manna are necessary to sustain our lives. Both are unearned. Both are simple manifestations of God's existence and loving kindness. Simple.

I have decided to never again complain about the rain.

MOST OF A MINUTE - THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

In John chapter four Jesus happened to come upon a Samaritan woman who was drawing water from a well. He asked for a drink and began a conversation. After a few minutes He said, "Go call your husband and bring him here."

She responded, "I have no husband."

He said, "That's right, you don't. In fact, you have had five husbands, and the man you are living with now is not your husband."

He was right. That woman was living the

consequences of bad decisions and broken dreams. In John 8 Jesus met a woman in similar circumstances. He said, "Go, and sin no more." Jesus calls living with someone outside of marriage, "sin". Yet, in Hebrews 13:4 the Bible calls marriage "honorable." Are you living right now in an honorable relationship, or are you living in sin?

Let's get back to the Bible. That's where the right answers are kept.

“SHE’S THE PREACHER’S WIFE...”

“Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?”

(1 Corinthians 9:5).

She is a woman of grace, manners, and virtue (Proverbs 31:10-ff). She possesses inner and outer beauty (at least to her husband). She is a spiritually minded servant of the Lord and a helper to her husband (Genesis 2:18,20). Her title is “preacher’s wife.”

Priscilla comes as close to her as any parallel in scripture (Acts 18:2, 18,24-26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19). She is forever by her husband’s side as he does his work and lives his life. She shares in his concerns, his joys, his challenges, and in his failures. She sees a side of the preacher that often no one else does except the Lord. And like the Lord, she loves her preacher in spite of his shortcomings.

She has heard his jokes, his illustrations, his outlines, his articles, his “soapbox” tirades, and his one-liners. She knows when to laugh and when to keep silent, what’s funny and what isn’t, what the congregation will respond to and what

they will reject. She has a wisdom about such things, as well as countless others, that is far beyond her years.

She must keep her home, help rear her children, and serve God just like any other Christian woman (Titus 2:3-5). She is not a paid staff member of the local church. But, she realizes that the congregation will evaluate her performance just as regularly as it does her husband’s. She is correct in her conviction that the person she should mostly be concerned about is the Lord (Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1).

Preacher’s wives (along with the rest of his family) often live in glass houses, under microscopes, on center stage, in the spotlight, and before the public eye. More importantly, though, preacher’s wives are no different from other wives in that they live before an omniscient and omnipresent God in heaven that will one day be their only judge (Hebrews 4:13; Romans 14:10).

The preacher’s wife is a Christian woman who is serving the Lord and helping her husband and family go to heaven. She would do these things no matter what her husband did for a living. There is no higher calling for her than this.

We applaud her sincere and diligent efforts.

WHAT THE CHURCH MUST DO TO BE SAVED

Johnny Ramsey

1. **Develop Elders Who Can Convict The Gainsayer.** This, of course, is required of spiritual overseers (Tit. 1:10). We must honor the qualification: Apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), if shepherds of the flock are ever capable in fending off wolves (Acts 20:28-30).

2. **Train Brilliant Young Men To Boldly Preach The Gospel.** We must give the best we have to the Lord’s service. Elders, preachers, parents and Bible teachers must begin now to inspire, instruct and instill within alert young men the urgency of preaching the Word.

3. **Practice Church Discipline Constantly And Consistently.** In order to preserve truth and strengthen the children of God there must be, as the Bible directs, *discipline* within the body of Christ. When bishops of the local church allow the name of the Lord to be degraded and scoffed at by worldly, insincere members it sets the church back for years.

4. **Demand A Much Higher Moral Tone.** Sadly, we are not *teaching* and *preaching* and *practicing* the high standards we once did. Immodesty and adultery can be found in our midst as well as in

the world. Let us stop compromising and start living for Jesus.

5. **Do More Teaching On Church Identity.** A generation ago gospel meetings were conducted to introduce our neighbors to New Testament principles of worship, doctrine and organization. Some of our own children seldom, if ever, hear lessons on instrumental music, the Lord’s Supper, church membership and organizational structure. Just a few more years of our failure to be *distinctive* and we will preach ourselves right out of the picture!

6. **Preach The Bible And Not Emotionalism.** The one commodity we have to offer the world is the pure message of the Lord. When we resort to playing on people’s emotions and becoming “response crazy” we walk the ancient road of insincerity and sectarianism.

7. **Above All. Be Christ-Centered.** When Christ is the point of focus we will proclaim His message, follow His example and obey His commands. Nothing short of that can save the church.

are out there anxiously waiting to learn that there is great reason and purpose for their lives. Aimless and hopeless, they need the gospel. That New Testament Christians have possession of the good news is a blessing unto themselves (1 Peter 1:18-21). But, the same gospel would be a blessing gladly received by so many good hearts who simply have yet to hear it (cf. Acts 2:41).

Bad news seems to be snowballing into an ever-threatening avalanche of terror and unrest. Yet, much more powerful in this life and the life to come is the powerful good news of Jesus and His love! When more and more people hear the good news of the doctrine of Christ, less and less bad news will pervade. Truly, the gospel brings lasting hope to individuals and can bring such to whole societies (Ephesians 2:11-22). Though many reject it, let the church renew its aim of getting out the good news! How many will consequently find eternal joy?

NOT ON SUNDAY NIGHT

Gus Nichols

I love the church that Jesus bought
And know that it is right.
I go there Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.

I love to sing the songs of God
Such worship must be right,
This I do on Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.

I love to hear the gospel too
It gives me pure delight
I hear it Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.

God bless our preacher too,
And give him power and might
And put a sinner in my place
On next Sunday night.

I'd go thru mud, even snow,
Do anything that's right ---
To be at church on Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.

Let the others be on hand
To worship God aright.
But I want my easy chair,
And comforts Sunday night.

I know I need more strength
To keep me in the fight,
For help I come on Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.

True, the church can save the world
If its light shines bright.
I help it shine on Sunday morn
But not on Sunday night.

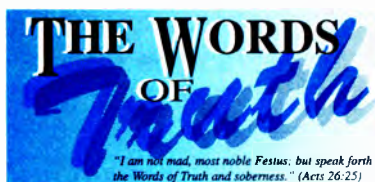
Yes, all of us must die
I hope I will be going right -
So may I die on Sunday morn
And not on Sunday night.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 34 No. 26

July 10, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**THE CONQUEST OF
CHRISTIANITY -
THE BOOK OF REVELATION
PART 2
THE CHANGE MOVEMENT AND
MAX LUCADO
TIMOTHY McVEIGH**

THE CONQUEST OF CHRISTIANITY - THE BOOK OF REVELATION PART 2

Colby McWhorter

The setting of Revelation was late in the first century when the Roman Empire was at the pinnacle of its power. Christians had already suffered greatly at the hands of the Jews, more so under the heavy hand of tyrannical Nero, and soon they would feel the fiery wrath of despotic Domitian. Many Christians compromised their faith either in complete apostasy, falling down to worship Caesar in order to participate in commerce, they tolerated sin as some of the seven churches to whom the book was addressed did, and they lived in fear of swift and merciless torture at the hands of the Romans. The apostle John was in exile on the island of Patmos for the cause of Christ when he penned this letter, and he was blessed with a heavenly vision that simulated the situation on earth -- Satan and his cohorts trampled God's people underfoot, the Roman Empire had the upper hand, the ascendancy. The Christians do have a blessing in prayer because heaven's door is wide open to the praise and petition of the saints -- Christ knows and cares. As the narrative unfolds, the faithful children of God, though poor and persecuted, apparently defeated, the Christians finally do, by the power of Christ, gain the victory over worldly, wicked empires and triumph eternally over the devil. Christians today are blessed to have such a grandiose, glorious story of conquering the world and attaining the eternal reward we all long for.

God's people have always been at war, whether it was physical or spiritual depending on the circumstance. Noah fought immoral, ungodly people to save them from the flood (Gen. 6), Abraham battled five wicked kings to rescue his kinsman, Lot (Gen. 14). Joshua led the nation of Israel against the debauched Canaanite peoples.

Disciples of Christ are not engaged in physical conflict (Jn. 18:36), but in a spiritual melee (Eph. 6:12), and we have spiritual armor and a spiritual sword (Eph. 6:13-17) to fight against Satan, who strives to devour men's souls. Many times, as in the case of early Christians, the devil employs the evil, wicked men and governments of this world to erode the cause of Christ. Revelation 17:14 describes this effort, "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." The debased elements of the earth fight against Christ and His devotees, but ultimately He is the pinnacle, the zenith, the superlative, the Lord, the King, and those who follow after Him can and will reign with Him.

The Roman empire, in all its earthy pomp and glory, was realistically only a tool of the devil, a perverse, wicked nation. Depicted as Babylon the Great, Rome truly mimicked the ancient nation's ungodly folly. Just as Babylon enslaved the Israelite nation, Rome imprisoned the children of God in a world of persecution, torture, and death. Babylon eventually fell to the Medes and Persians, and Rome faced the same end, "for her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" (Rev. 18:5). Even though they were more blessed, perhaps, than any other secular kingdom in history - they had convenience, luxury, money, excellent education, and a quasi-democratic government - yet they squandered it on base, lustful, and wasteful things. They were given opportunity to repent, but, as most men do, they were too prideful and ignorant to heed the words and signs of God, even horrible, devastating plagues. The Roman empire,

continued on Page 4

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 6th Avenue
Jasper, AL 35501

THE CHANGE MOVEMENT AND MAX LUCADO

Throughout the last few years the *Words of Truth* has contained many articles showing the error of what has been called the "Change Movement" among churches of Christ. The major thrust of this divisive and popular movement is to turn the church of Christ into a denomination. Although believing the truth of Scripture would prevent that from happening, the change agents have used their imaginations to skirt around these passages in their sermons and writings. Often they simply ignore them.

To those bent on changing the church into a denomination, what God's word says about baptism is a tall hurdle. After all, Jesus and the Apostles taught clearly that baptism is *essential* to one's salvation, and the vast majority of denominations teach the opposite (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, 1 Pet. 3:21, etc.). Change agents must draw people away from the truth on baptism to clear the way for the church of Christ to melt together into the great sea of denominations. Some seek to do this by arguing that so long as a person is baptized, any baptism will do. The person doesn't have to know it is for the remission of sins for it to be so. Thus, (according to this thinking), a man who believes he is saved, and is then baptized to join a denomination, is none-the-less pleasing and acceptable to God. Another will argue that we just make too much of what a person must do to be saved, that what a man may do does not contribute one whit to his salvation. One preacher (and change agent) from the church of Christ, in a joint worship with the Methodist church, told people to come down the aisle and "surely someone among us can meet your needs." Therefore if one wanted to be saved the "Methodist way" he could, or if he wanted to be saved the "church of Christ" way he could. By this logic however, however we choose to gain God's approval and forgiveness will do, and God's word is fairly irrelevant. Yet, the Bible still says there is only one baptism. Only one (Eph. 4:4).

Some self-styled "change-agents" have yet taken this to another level altogether. There is a large lectureship in Nashville Tennessee each year called the "Jubilee." This is the Mecca for the leaders of change and division in the church of Christ. This year's colorful advertising magazine bills Max Lucado as the "Featured Speaker." As they read the following radio transcript, God's people will be shocked and saddened to know what brother Lucado taught about the necessity of baptism. In these lines he opposes what Jesus taught us, "He

that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16)." He opposes what Ananias taught, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16)." He opposes what Peter taught, "Then Peter said unto them, 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 Ghost," because he tells people that baptism is performed after one is already saved. According to Max, baptism has nothing to do with a man's salvation. Yet, the Bible still reads, "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 Pet. 3:21)."

Please do not take the change movement lightly. This is serious, and is dividing churches all across the country.

The following is an excerpt from a broadcast on Radio Station KJAK, Lubbock, Texas, December -- 1996. Brother Lucado speaks first:

You can be sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor ruling spirits, nothing now and nothing in the future, no powers, nothing above us, nothing below us, not anything else in the world will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You see, in God by virtue of your adoption, you have a divine affinity, you have eternal security, and you have a golden opportunity.

I cannot imagine an orphan turning down an opportunity to be adopted. With one decision, with one raising of the hand, with one agreement to leave the orphanage, that person all of a sudden goes from being abandoned to being claimed, from having no name to a new name, no future to a new future, he leaves the orphanage, and enters the house of the father.

That's what God offers you. No quiz, no examination. All you have to do is to say "yes" to the Father. And many of you have done that. But I have a hunch that not all of you have. I have a hunch that there are a few of you listening, even now, and God is using this to pull on your heart. The Holy Spirit is informing you of something that you have never really heard before - and that is, that God is ready to be your Father. Maybe you never understood that the invitation was for everyone. Maybe

THE CHANGE MOVEMENT AND MAX LUCADO, *continued from page 2*

you thought that you were unworthy. Maybe now you do understand. God will make you worthy, and the invitation is for you. And all you have to do is to call Him Father. Just call Him Father. Just turn your heart to him right now as I am speaking. Call him you Father. And your Father will respond. Why don't you do that?

"Father, I give my heart to you. I give you my sins, I give you my tears, I give you my fears, I give you my whole life. I accept the gift of your Son on the cross for my sins. And I ask you Father, to receive me as your child. Through Jesus I pray. Amen."

ANNOUNCER:

And friend, if you prayed along with Max Lucado just now, here on UPWARDS, we want to welcome you into the family of God. We hope you will contact us and share your personal testimony. If you are already a believer, we thank you for praying for these new brothers and sisters in Christ.

Because Christmas is an excellent time to receive God's gift of salvation, and whether you are a new believer or perhaps a veteran of the faith, Max Lucado has prepared and uplifting new printed resource. He has titled it "WHEN THE ANGELS CAME DOWN". You want a copy for yourself or perhaps to share it with a loved one about whom you may be concerned spiritually. With your December donation of any amount to UPWARDS, you may request a personal copy. The place to write is UPWARDS, Box 5860, San Antonio, TX 78201. Or if you like you may phone us toll free for added convenience, and it would certainly speed up the opportunity. The number is 1-800-822WORD.

Next week we will take a break from our series title THE GREAT HOUSE OF GOD, giving way to an uplifting selection of holiday lessons specifically designed to help you grow stronger in your faith. As with today's study, each of these lessons is available on extended audio cassette. The title of this week's series WHEN YOUR HEART NEEDS A FATHER. Every tape contains an additional bonus message from Max on the reverse side. Cost is just \$5.00 for each additional cassette.

Again, our ministry mailing address is UPWARDS, Box 5860, San Antonio, TX 78201. And the new publication we are offering currently is WHEN ANGELS CAME DOWN. Don't miss out on yours. If you'd like to call us toll free, the number is 1-800-822-9673.

ANNOUNCER:

Max Lucado returns with a special word for those who received the gift of salvation just moments ago in prayer.

MAX LUCADO:

Today is the first day you've ever prayed a prayer like that. Could you do me a favor? Could you write me a letter? I don't have anything I am going to ask from you. I do have a letter I would like to send to you, I'd like to give you a word about the next step or two. I want to encourage you to find a church, I want to encourage you to be baptized, I want to encourage you to read your Bible. But I don't want you to do any of that so that you will be saved. I want you to do all of that because you are saved. You see, your Father has a great life planned for you, and I want to tell you about it. Give us a call, and drop me a note. And, thanks my friend, for making the greatest decision of your life. I'll be back on Monday. I hope you will be, too.

MOST OF A MINUTE - TIMOTHY McVEIGH

What about Timothy McVeigh? Two observations:

1. The Bible does indeed support a government's right to carry out the death penalty. Romans 13:4 says that the enforcer of civil law "bears not the sword in vain." -- and the sword is clearly a lethal weapon.

2. I am distressed at the almost unnoticed transition of Mr. McVeigh's lawyer. Before the conviction, he claimed that Timothy was innocent, that he didn't do it! Now, after the conviction, he says, "yes he did it, but he has been a good man up to now."

--Wait! Shouldn't someone ask this lawyer

why he lied the first time? Did he not know all along that Timothy had done this? Is it really his duty to claim a client is innocent even if he knows he is guilty?

I suppose there are a number of things I don't understand about our justice system. But I know that the greatest judgement, the judgement by Jesus Christ, will be much clearer. 2 Corinthians 5:10 -- "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

therefore, fell due to internal corruption and external invasion; they rotted from the inside until they were a hollow shell of immorality and were destroyed by more powerful nations. God annihilated the Romans because of their sorry stewardship, "For in one hour such great riches came to nothing." And every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, "What is like this great city" (Rev. 18:17-18). The other members of society were stunned when they viewed the rapid demise of Rome. It seemed as if Rome was there one day and gone the next. They were the epitome of power and strength, but, as always, strength built on anything but godliness is a mirage, a farce, for the King of kings and Lord and lords must be glorified and obeyed. John's vision reveals that all the kingdoms of the world will eventually be Christ's kingdoms, a great comfort for weary saints in the first century.

The Christian's role in this spiritual engagement is that of the footsoldier. Every army has far more privates than it has commanders; the privates obey the orders given by their leader, and

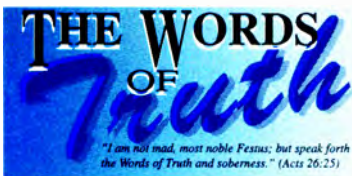
follow him into battle. Christ is our commander-in-chief, He is the King and we are the servants, He leads us by example into the fracas, and gives us victory. We cannot lose with Christ on our side, for He will rule all nations with a rod of iron and bring the wrath of God on them. Too many Christian soldiers are distracted and chase after other soldiers in the army, follow other men's false doctrine. Even John the apostle was reprimanded for falling down to worship an angel. God and Christ are the only objects of worship, and the only authority to be followed, for only the Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, riches, honor, glory, and worship. In ancient days, and even in recent history before television, songs glorifying the actions of soldiers in war were popular (Judg. 5; II Sam. 18:7). Those who are faithful to Christ, the general of the army, until the end will be worthy to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Men are obligated to follow the orders of the captain of our salvation because He is coming quickly to judge how faithful we have been, and no one will be able to withstand His wrath for insubordinate soldiers.

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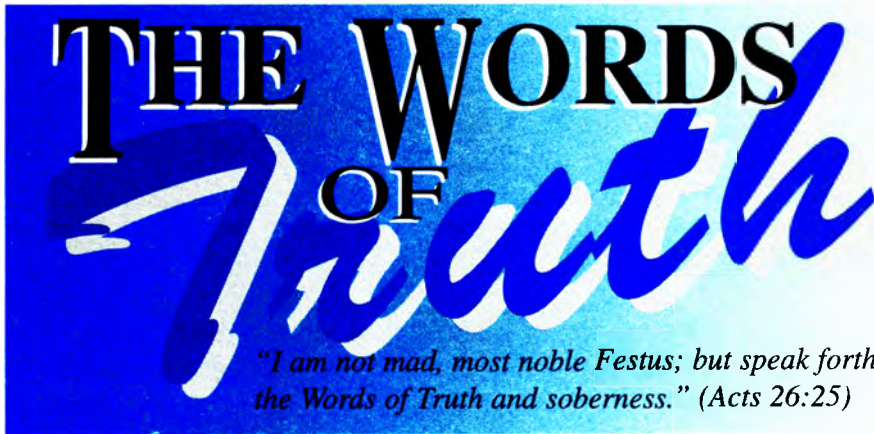


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TO BE MARRIED TO GOD
CONQUEST OF CHRISTIANITY
THE BOOK OF REVELATION, PT. 3
PAUL THANKED GOD WHEN HE
REMEMBERED
THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF
SPIRITUALITY (NO. 3)

Vol. 34 No. 27

July 17, 1997

WORDS OF TRUTH LECTURESHIP
SIXTH AVENUE CHURCH OF CHRIST
JASPER, ALABAMA
AUGUST 6-8, 1997

Theme: AS GOD WOULD HAVE IT

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6

7:00 P.M. -- Jim Boyd ----- "The Defense of the Gospel as God Would Have It."

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7

9:00 A.M. -- Flavil Nichols ---- "Marriage As God Would Have It."

10:00 A.M. -- Mark Posey ----- "The Role of Women As God Would Have It."

11:00 A.M. -- Bob Duncan ----- "Music In New Testament Worship as Go Would Have It."

1:00 P.M. -- Neil Myers ----- "Church Discipline As God Would Have It."

6:30 P.M. -- Singing

7:00 P.M. -- Dan Jenkins ----- "The Church of Christ As God Would Have It."

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8

9:00 A.M. -- B.J. Clarke ----- "Teaching Grace And Salvation As God Would Have It."

10:00 A.M. -- Mike Winkler ---- "The Eldership As God Would Have It."

11:00 A.M. -- Tom Holland ----- "Baptism As God Would Have It."

1:00 P.M. -- Vance Hutton ---- "Church Unity As God Would Have It."

6:30 P.M. -- Singing

7:00 P.M. -- Wendell Winkler - "Respect For The All-Sufficiency of The
Scriptures As God Would Have It."

Fellowship Meals -- Thursday & Friday Nights -- 5:00 P.M. in the Ark Room

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ

1501 6th Avenue

Jasper, AL 35501

TO BE MARRIED TO GOD

God's efforts at communicating His will and heart to man have been magnificent. The greatest expression of His love is Jesus on earth; the greatest expression of His will is the Bible. And yet, in so many ways, even today, God shows us His great concern and hopes for us. For example, ask, "how does God view and love His people?," and then consider that we are to Him as a wife is to her husband.

This is not just a New Testament idea. God saw Israel that way too. Isaiah 54:5 says, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called." Isaiah 62:5 says, "...and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

Jeremiah also describes God's relationship to His people this way: Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the band to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 31:31-32).

The book of Hoses depicts an effort to communicate using the marriage comparison. God was willing to go to great lengths to express His heart to His people who were gradually leaving Him for Baal and Ashtroth. He instructed Hosea the preacher to portray in his own life what was happening between God and His people called Israel. And the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, *departing* from the LORD" (Hosea 1:2).

Gomer was her name, and Hosea did indeed marry her. The name means "completion." She was full of idolatry, and ripe with wickedness. Her daddy's name was Diblaim, or "double layers of grapecake," and expression meaning one wholly given over to sensuality. Though Gomer bore three children to Hosea, she was soon drawn back into the arms of her sinful life and resumed her harlotry. Now read Hosea 3:3 and see how this sad affair was simply and effort on God's part to get His message to Israel: "Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend, yet an adulteress, according to

the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine." Hosea went to the seller of slaves and bought Gomer back after her sinful pleasure was long gone.

How does God love us today? The same way. Christians, who make up the body of Christ, are His wife. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

In Ephesians 5 we are treated to a full measure of this thought. We learn that the church is the Lord's wife. So real to life is this church/wife relationship with the Lord, that we learn how to treat *our* wives by His pure example! The Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. (Ephesians 5:25-28)." Read all of Ephesians 5:22-23.

John speaks of Christ's bride in Revelation: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife (Revelation 21:9)." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17)."

How does God feel today when we leave faithfulness and get back into sin? The same way He felt in Hosea when Israel went whoring after other gods. What do you call a Christian who leaves faithfulness to follow worldliness? An adulterer. By going back into sin he is breaking the marriage vow he made with God at baptism. That's why James wrote, "Ye adulterers and adulteress's, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

This is a lot to think about. How should we respond when we realize that we, as Christians, are actually *married* to the Lord? In two ways.

continued on page 3

TO BE MARRIED TO GOD, *continued from page 2*

First, we marvel at His love for us. He wants to nurture and cherish us (Eph. 5:29). He loves us with a strong and abiding love.

Second, we learn that sin hurts our God. Deliberate, conscious sin is betrayal of His trust and our commitment. We must be devoted in our love for God, to love Him as Jesus taught us, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind...(Luke 10:27)."

And one more thing. When we disappoint God, He wants us back. God told Hosea to find Gomer, the adulterous wife, and buy her back (Hos. 3:1-5). Bring her home Hosea. Let her know you welcome her repentance. That personifies our God. He wants us close to Him. He wants us to come back home when we've strayed. He wants to forgive (II Pet. 3:9). We must not break His heart. After all, we are married to Him.

CONQUEST OF CHRISTIANITY

THE BOOK OF REVELATION, PT. 3

Colby McWhorter

Revelation is replete with words describing a day of final judgment for all men. The entire Bible is a reminder of this, and a guidebook on how to properly prepare ourselves for eternity with God in heaven. This is why it is so necessary that we imbibe the principles of the book and practice them in daily life. These teachings are a bitter-sweet pill to swallow, for we know the great salvation that is available to all, yet we also realize that most men, including family and friends, will not submit and obey. God will judge the works of all men, and condemn sinners to hell with the devil and his angels, while the faithful will reign with Him in glory forever. The punished will experience pain and suffering with the most heinous people to ever live, and those who inherit the new heaven and new earth will have God to wipe every

tear from their eyes. This is why it is so important to make sure our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, for, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). Our works on earth prove our love, dedication, and faithfulness, "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). Revelation is truly a literary wonder, a liferaft in the midst of the stormy seas of life, the conclusion of the New Testament and the Bible, the final word on how to die as a Christian to reign with Christ forever.

MOST OF A MINUTE - PAUL THANKED GOD WHEN HE REMEMBERED

Visiting the jail makes me think of the Apostle Paul who wrote much of our NT from prison. He wasn't there for some gross immorality, but for preaching Christ. In Acts 16 Paul sat with his friend Silas in a prison in Philippi. His feet were bound in stocks, his back bleeding from a cruel beating. Yet, Paul wasn't wallowing in self pity. In a few short hours in fact, Paul had taught his jailer the Gospel, and that man was baptized to be saved.

Later, in Philippians 1:3, Paul wrote to the church in Philippi and said these loving words:

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

"Wait Paul! You were beaten and imprisoned! How can you thank God when you remember that!" He would answer, "Sure I thank Him. You see, what I do in Christ is more important than I am."

You know, you can have that same great purpose in your life, if you serve the same great Lord Jesus Christ. As one man put it, "You don't really live until you have a cause for which you are willing to die."

THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUALITY (NO. 3)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

In the two previous studies the focus was primarily on who is not spiritual. Stressed therein were false views of spirituality and yet views that are very prevalent in our lax and loose society. This part of our overall study was largely negative. The remainder of the articles will be in the positive category. Dealing with topics both negatively and positively bears good fruit in Bible study.

TRUE VIEWS OF SPIRITUALITY

(1) The person who is IN Christ is spiritual. This is the excellent equivalent of being a Christian. Paul had much to say relative to true spirituality in Romans 8. The chapter is begun with a reference to being in Christ, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (v. 1). There are about 170 references in the Pauline writings to being in Christ, in Him, in Christ Jesus, in the Beloved, etc. Paul was exceedingly fond of this expression; it was rich in meaning to him. It had length, depth, height and breadth to him. No man can be spiritual who is not IN Christ.

(2) The person who is free from sin is spiritual. Paul wrote in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." In Romans 6:17,18 he had stressed the HOW of their freedom from sin. They had obeyed that form of doctrine delivered to them. It is amazingly amazing that many today stress how spiritual they are while at the same time downgrading obedience. The Change Agents are notorious in poking fun at those of us who emphasize gospel OBEDIENCE.

(3) The person who minds the things of the Spirit is spiritual. So stated Paul in Romans 8:5 wherein he penned, "For

they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." Just where do we learn the things of the Spirit? The answer is quite simple--in the Book which He inspired. He communicates with man in NO other way.

(4) The person who is at peace with God and is subject to His law is spiritual. Paul wrote in Romans 8:6,7, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Coming to peace with God means we come on His terms and not on ours. Note also that spirituality is linked with life. Life is in the Son as John wrote in 1 John 5:11,12. In one of the most familiar of the famed "I Am" declarations in John's gospel record Jesus stressed with force and finality, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Minus Him there is no going, no knowing and no living. How vastly vital He is to all of us. Again, it is amazing that many who lay claim to great spirituality are antagonistic toward law--any law! Yet in the very midst of a discussion on spirituality Paul mentions the "law of God." In Romans Paul wrote much about grace but he knew that law did not eliminate grace and that grace did not remove law from Christianity. We do not hear much about the law of Christ and the law of God, the very same system, from the Change Agents anymore. They are big on grace and little, VERY LITTLE, on law and its strict requirements. I find this so strange. The leading Change Agents now once preached that God has a law and it must be obeyed. Then they knew that salvation is both divine and human in scope.

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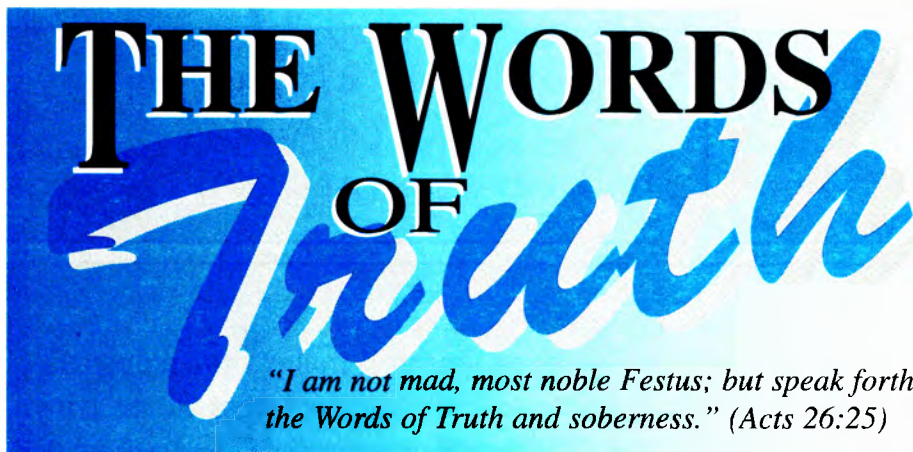


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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

WORDS OF TRUTH LECTURESHIP
A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
MIKE'S BITE
THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF
SPIRITUALITY (NO. 4)
"ATTEMPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE"
SUMMARY OF 2 CORINTHIANS

Vol. 34 No. 28

July 24, 1997

WORDS OF TRUTH LECTURESHIP
SIXTH AVENUE CHURCH OF CHRIST
JASPER, ALABAMA
AUGUST 6-8, 1997
Theme: AS GOD WOULD HAVE IT

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6

7:00 P.M. -- Jim Boyd ----- "The Defense of the Gospel as God Would Have It."

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7

9:00 A.M. -- Flavil Nichols ---- "Marriage As God Would Have It."

10:00 A.M. -- Mark Posey ----- "The Role of Women As God Would Have It."

11:00 A.M. -- Bob Duncan ----- "Music In New Testament Worship as Go Would Have It."

1:00 P.M. -- Neil Myers ----- "Church Discipline As God Would Have It."

6:30 P.M. -- Singing

7:00 P.M. -- Dan Jenkins ----- "The Church of Christ As God Would Have It."

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8

9:00 A.M. -- B.J. Clarke ----- "Teaching Grace And Salvation As God Would Have It."

10:00 A.M. -- Mike Winkler ---- "The Eldership As God Would Have It."

11:00 A.M. -- Tom Holland ----- "Baptism As God Would Have It."

1:00 P.M. -- Vance Hutton ---- "Church Unity As God Would Have It."

6:30 P.M. -- Singing

7:00 P.M. -- Wendell Winkler - "Respect For The All-Sufficiency of The
Scriptures As God Would Have It."

Fellowship Meals -- Thursday & Friday Nights -- 5:00 P.M. in the Ark Room

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 6th Avenue
Jasper, AL 35501

Dear Readers,

As you might imagine, around here we are gearing up for our annual Words of Truth Lectureship for 1997. This year's list of topics immediately arrests the attention of all who enjoy studying God's holy word. Please pay particular attention to the front page of this issue and notice the speakers we have lined up to preach. Every one is faithful, talented, and well able to present a great lesson

on his topic.

We hope you will make your plans to attend one or all of these lectures! Come with an open Bible and an open heart and enjoy this time with us. If we can be of any assistance to you, please call.

I hope to see you there.

Glenn Colley

THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUALITY (NO. 4)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

(5) The person who has the Spirit of Christ is spiritual. No other person is or can be. Paul stressed in Romans 8:9, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Contrary to the thinking of many among us, this verse does not establish a mode but states a fact. The entire Godhead indwells the Christian. God indwells us as per 1 John 4:15; Christ indwells us as per Colossians 1:27; the Spirit indwells us as per this verse just quoted. Do they indwell us literally, actually, personally, bodily? Many are ready so to affirm. I once knew a man who claimed he had all Three of the Godhead dwelling personally and actually in him. He would frequently speak of "We four"-- a reference to his own spirit, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all literally and personally in him. I told him one day that if the Lord chose to come back during his life, he would not have to come from heaven but simply step out of this individual and presto He would be here! Christ dwells in us by faith, faith comes by hearing God's word as per Romans 10:17. Hence, Christ indwells us by the word of truth. That is how the other two likewise indwell us. In fact, it is the only way that one person can indwell another. A parent indwells a son or daughter as the teaching, ideals and examples of that parent move and mold that child. "I surely can see a lot of your Dad or Mother in you" is a frequently heard statement today. Yet that par-

ent does not actually, bodily, personally or literally indwell the child under consideration. Obviously, we cannot be spiritual unless we are moved and molded by the will and wishes of Him who is the captain of our salvation.

(6) The person is spiritual who is maturing as a Christian -- not remaining a spiritual babe indefinitely as were the Corinthians. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" The panacea to this proverbial problem, one still very much with us, is spiritual growth. Peter wrote, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:...But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen" (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). Paul wrote to the saints of the most high God at Ephesus and stressed, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

(7) The person is spiritual who walks in the Spirit, is led of the Spirit, lives in the Spirit and sows to the Spirit. All these expressions are found in Galatians 5,6 and in the very context where Paul emphasized what spiritually-minded people are to

do as per Galatians 6:1. Respectively, these passages read, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh...But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law...If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit...For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 5:16,18,25; 6:8). To walk in the Spirit is the same as walking in the light of which John spoke in 1 John 1:7. To be led of the Spirit is to live as He directs. To sow to the Spirit means we are sowing the seeds of truth into our lives.

Change Agents imagine themselves to the very epitome of spirituality. Yet Paul stressed that to be led of the Spirit means one is not under the law--the law of Moses. Is it not amazingly amazing that some of the Change Agents who are so big on spirituality and think they have a super abundance of it now tell us that they can think of NO instance in which the law of Moses has been abrogated or removed? Quite obviously, they and Paul are not on the same wave length about the law of Moses and whether it is still binding on Christians during the gospel dispensation. It is NOT!

"ATTEMPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE"

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6:7

Jason R. Roberts

Throughout the ages men have tried to deceive the very one whom Isaiah addressed as being "*wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom*" (Isa. 28:29b, ASV). They have attempted, through various schemes, to "pull the wool" over God's eyes as it were. Our text indicates this can never be the case. It is impossible for man, as wise as he is, to behave in such a way that God will be found blinking while viewing man's sins. "*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth...*" (2 Chron. 16:9). "*Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him...*" (Heb. 4:13).

The verse begins, "*Be not deceived...*" The word "deceived" means to cause one to wander into sin and error" (Strong's, #4105). The same word is used by James, when, after discussing the anatomy of sin (James 1:13-15) he says, "*Do not err, my beloved brethren*" (v. 16, emp. added, JRR).

The verse adds, "*...God is not mocked.*" The

word "mocked" means "to turn up one's nose at, to sneer at, deride" (Strong's #3456). Literally, Paul says, "*Do not think you can turn up your nose sneeringly or in contempt against God and get away with it.*"

The verse ends, "*for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*" The divine principle of sowing and reaping is not only seen in the physical realm (Gen. 1:11), but also in the spiritual realm. If a man sows to the flesh he will reap corruption. If a man sows to the Spirit he will reap an eternal reward.

Men may cleverly try to mock God. The Bible teaches that their attempts are futile. In reality they are attempting the impossible. Many will be deceived in this life, and when the "Lord of the harvest" returns (cf. Matt. 9:38; Luke 10:2), the harvest of sin will indeed be plenteous and they'll be lost. "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked...*"

MOST OF A MINUTE - MIKE'S BITE

This whole thing about Mike Tyson biting off part of Holyfield's ear has been amazing and a little humorous. More than one person has laughed at the irony involved. I mean, you can pound a man's face, and knock his brains out in the ring, but you can't bite his ear. Such are the rules of boxing.

People make their own rules and set their own boundaries around just about

every thing in life, and to tell you the truth, it doesn't always make sense does it? That's one reason I'm going to always trust in God and His word the Bible. I know in so doing I won't go wrong. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life..."

My sympathies to Mr. Holyfield and his ear.

SUMMARY OF 2 CORINTHIANS

2 Corinthians--Paul's True Apostleship--Reaction to 1st Letter

Johnny Ramsey

1. God Of All Comfort Sustains Us in Tribulations
2. Discipline Works
3. The New Covenant
4. Gospel In Earthen Vessels
5. His Love Compels Us!
6. Unequal Yoking

7. Godly Sorrow + Repentance
- 8-9. The Contribution
10. Wrong Comparisons
11. The Trials of Paul In The Gospel
12. True Apostleship
13. Examine Yourselves

Undoubtedly the two great lessons we learn, in a practical way, from this book, are (1) Paul's great faith in God and (2) His insatiable love for the church and for the souls of men. In this second episode we see the undermining work of the false teachers and we find a strong defense for Paul's Apostleship. In between exchanges of thought on these points by the peerless apostle unto the church in Corinth we find many pertinent and thrilling lessons for us in this modern age. One of the inspired teachings that constantly projects itself in this treatise is the stubborn fact that should Paul be a false apostle the Corinthians were then in a bad fix for they had been "espoused to Christ" by Paul himself (2 Corinthians 11:2 and 1 Corinthians 4:15). The

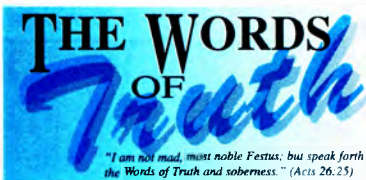
apostle was anxious to hear from Titus who was to bring news of the Corinthians reception of the first epistle. Chapter seven is a tender scene portraying this concern. It was a real tragedy that these carnal brethren were so exacting with their benefactor as to need a letter of commendation (2 Corinthians 10:15). He uses every conceivable method to coax them to accept his Apostleship and to get them to be more useful in the Lord's vineyard. Irony, ridicule, compliments, exhortation, reward, punishment-these are Paul's tools. The example of other Christians, his own sufferings, Christ's sacrifice, God's love and their own ability should spur them on to greater heights in the service of their King.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

LIVING FOR JESUS
THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST
THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF
SPIRITUALITY (NO. 5)
KING OF KINGS
THE CHURCH AND BABY
DEDICATIONS

Vol. 34 No. 29

July 31, 1997

LIVING FOR JESUS

by Johnny Ramsey

How would you explain or describe the life of a Christian? There are 21 epistles in the New Testament dedicated to this matter. Romans through Jude contain classic data on the subject of Christainity translated into human conduct. We are richly blessed with such clarity of information in practical language for daily existence in the midst of a vile world that is insensitive to holiness and purity. Not many people in our age typically exhibit the desire to glorify God in the devotional words of Psalms 96:1-2.

O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day.

The essence of a life devoted to Christ is a deeply grateful heart that will gladly submit daily to a closer walk with God (Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1-2). There is an old and challenging song to remind us:

I am so wondrously saved from sin,
Jesus so sweetly abides within,
There at the Cross where He took me in;
Glory to His name!

Once we realize how vain and futile life would be without the Savior we will seek ways to magnify Deity. The power and grace of the Lord reminds us of a bulwark verse in Revelation:

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. Revelation 1:8

How could we be so foolish as to launch out into a dark world devoid of the sacred light of His marvelous guidance? A compelling hymn captures this sentiment perfectly:

Without Him I could do nothing;
Without Him I would surely fail.

Without Him I would be drifting
Like a ship without a sail.
Without Him how lost I would be!

Perhaps no other Bible chapter better gives the gist of the solid sojourn of the Christian to the degree and depth of Romans 12. This dynamic section reminds us that followers of Jesus lead a **sacrificial, surrendered, selfless** and **satisfying** life before God and men. The high ethic of the gospel system leaves no room for conceit, laziness or retaliation. We focus on serving the Lord and helping those about us. Living for Jesus forbids self-pity and mercenary goals. The redemption of the lost becomes our magnificent obsession. Trivial matters fade and spiritual emphases naturally engulf our waking thoughts. Producing the **fruit of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22-23) subdues the carnal activities that overwhelm the vast hordes surrounding us. We are seekers of treasure far beyond silver and gold due to the enormous value of souls.

The rich dividend for the man who truly seeks God's kingdom first is the glorious improvement it produces in his own walk on earth. Someone wisely stated:

The highest reward for man's toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it.

Peace passing understanding permeates the pilgrimage of those who follow Christ even when persecution enters their lives. Any noble endeavor is worth the consequences such action brings. It is far better to escape tribulation because of cowardice.

Living for Jesus may mean we will someday die for Him. Revelation 14:13 emphatically tells us that will be the epitome of blessedness. There is no way that a faithful Christian can lose. These 21 epistles-Romans through Jude-beautifully show us the splendid hope that our Redeemer grants us!

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 6th Avenue
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THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

For some time now there has been a controversy rumbling among some preachers in the church over how the Scriptures should be viewed. The science of interpreting scriptures is called hermeneutics. Two major schools of thought are:

1. That the New Testament comprises our law for today and we are obligated to apply its teaching to our lives. In the New Testament God expresses His grace to us by teaching us how we may please Him and gain His approval.

2. The New Testament is not a blueprint for our lives and shouldn't be viewed as such. It is rather a love-letter from God. Not a law to be obeyed, but a love-letter.

A key passage in this controversy is II John 9-11 where we read, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed; For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Those who take the "love-letter" position about the Bible often maintain that the "doctrine of Christ" in II John is not the doctrine which Christ preached, but rather the doctrine about Christ, i.e. the truth that Jesus is God's Son, and that He was God in the form of a man. By this reasoning, anyone in any denomination who professes faith in Jesus, is approved of God because they believe these things. They do not hold to all that Jesus taught or to what His apostles taught, but they all agree that Jesus is God's Son.

The doctrine of Christ includes the truth about His deity and death, but it comprises a much bigger picture. His doctrine *is* who He was, but it is also the fullness of what He taught, and we are thus obligated to abide in that doctrine. You might even call it being under a law.

Consider what the scriptures say about Christ's doctrine. As you read these verses, ask yourself, "Is the doctrine of Christ the doctrine about Christ, or the doctrine which He taught?"

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had

ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 7:28).

After asking Jesus about the resurrection of the dead and hearing Jesus teach eternal truth, we read these words, "And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 22:23).

Mark 1:22, "And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."

Mark 12:38, "And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces."

Luke 4:32, "And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power."

After the death of Jesus, the Apostles continued preaching the doctrine of Christ. The early Christians, as we today, continue to live according to that teaching. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

The Hebrew writer helps us with this question in these words: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (Hebrew 6:1,2).

Incidentally, in these seven verses which clearly show that the "doctrine of Christ" was the doctrine which He taught, the Greek construction is the same as is found in II John 9-11.

Jesus gave us His New Testament as a blueprint for our lives. Is it a love-letter? Perhaps in some ways. It is certainly a reflection of His wonderful, divine love. Yet it is more than what is commonly meant by a love-letter. We must abide in His doctrine if we are to be one with God. When we, by His wonderful grace, abide in the doctrine of Christ, we have God's sweet approval.

THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUALITY

(NO. 5)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

(8) The person is spiritual who majors in the fruit of the Spirit of which there are nine precious ingredients or qualities of the soul. Paul wrote of them in Galatians 5:22, 23, and just after he had finished depicting the repugnant works of the world or of the flesh, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." How can there be true spirituality in the absence of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance? In truth there cannot be. This is God's measuring device determining our degree of spirituality.'

(9) The person is spiritual who is diligently adding or supplying the Christian Graces to his life. Peter wrote, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-11). There is NO way a person can be spiritual who refuses to add the Christian Graces to his/her life.

(10) The person is spiritual who wins souls initially and reclaims them when they go away. Spiritually-minded men were given the Great Commission initially in

Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:47. Its heartbeat was conversion of souls. The book of Acts is the apostolic execution of the Great Commission. By the end of Acts, as per Romans 10:18, the gospel had gone to the ends of the world. But not every convert stayed converted. Some erred and digressed from truth. Spiritually-minded people have the awesome obligation to reclaim these. Paul wrote in Galatians 6:1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.'

(11) The person is spiritual who seeks the things above--not the things below. Paul is very much to the point on this when wrote, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Brother G.K. Wallace once preached in a gospel meeting in a mid-western state. The weather was very hot. Their wheat crop had been excellent and some of them were rolling in money. They were disinterested in the gospel he was preaching. Finally he told them, in essence, "You people have so much money you do not want to go to heaven. It is so hot that you are not afraid of going to hell." The bottom line was that their hearts were set on earthly matters--not things above. Conditions often prevail like this in times of great prosperity. Many in the church are in this category today and thus are filled with lukewarmness and apathy.

.P.O. Box 464 • Ripley, Tennessee 38063

MOST OF A MINUTE - KING OF KINGS

Perhaps sometimes folks who aren't Christians marvel at the way Christians view Jesus Christ. He's our Lord and the center of our world. The descriptions of Jesus in the Bible paint Him nothing short of awesome. For example, 1 Timothy 6:15 says that Jesus is "the king of kings and Lord of lords". That means that if you took all the kings of all generations and put them in one great assembly, Jesus would be king over

them! If you took all who wore the title "lord"..."

Acts 4:12 speaks of Jesus this way: "Neither is there salvation in any other; there's none other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved."

Would you like to hear more about being a follower of Christ? Give us a call.

THE CHURCH and BABY DEDICATIONS

Mel Ferrell

For several years now I have been collecting material on baby or children's dedications. These baby dedication services are generally held on Sunday mornings in the worship assembly and constitute what I believe to be an unauthorized activity. We'll say more about that in a moment. In the past decade our brethren have begun to engage in this **denominational** practice with some frequency. Indeed, I know of several congregations of our people who have conducted these. But, because I had been unsuccessful in obtaining audio tapes of the proceedings I have held off writing about and critiquing this practice until now. Recently though I came into possession of a tape of the June 28, 1988 children's dedication service held at what was at that time the Belmont Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee. The tape begins with a man and woman leading the congregation in song with instrumental accompaniment clearly distinguishable. The following transcription of the children's dedication service will provide you with a sampling of this current practice among some churches of Christ:

"Today is our dedication day for children. So would those of you who have children whose names are already been given to me bring them up right now. And if uh, you, uh, didn't then if you'll just be sure that you write the child's name down and all that when you come up. To my knowledge we have uh, let me see if I can get them all now...**[At this point the speaker begins calling out the names of parents and children coming forward-M.F.]** Our Lord loved children, He saw them as guileless. Their mouths the Psalm is said in Psalm 8 are full of praise. **[Baby cries out]** That little crying is full of praise. He blessed them, he took them into his arms and blessed them. He said see that you do not despise any of these little ones. Do not offend them. It would be better for a millstone to be hanged around your neck and for you to be cast into the deepest sea than for you to despise one of these. God's spirit lives within them.

They, as we, have angels to guard them. Their angels do always behold the face of our Father, the Lord himself said. It is appropriate that, therefore, children are brought before the Lord as Hannah did Samuel, as Joseph and Mary did Jesus, as you always did in the Old Testament times. To dedicate them to hold them up before the Lord - and say 'Lord, you are giving to us but they are yours; we dedicate them to you.' To me it is much like a marriage ceremony. So, I like, I believe that I should always ask parents and so I do that right now to you parents and grandparents in the case of _____ and their little, and their grandchildren. To commit to the Lord before God that you will do what Deuteronomy 6 says you do - you to do. That you will talk to them as you walk along the way, as you rise in the morning, as you go to bed at night, as you get up and you lie down, as you eat your meals together, that you will train them in the admonition and the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is that your intention and do you commit before God to do that? **[You can barely hear the parents say yes - M.F.]** Then we just speak a blessing on them as you are saying...**[At this point the speaker bursts out in singing "Jesus Loves the Little children" and the congregation follows very shortly thereafter. The song being ended, the speaker resumes after a brief pause with the following prayer - M.F.]** "Father, we commit these children to you. We praise you Lord. We bless them in Jesus name and we bind upon them, the parents, your blessing that says, Blessed is the man who fears the Lord who finds great delight in his commands. His children will be mighty in the land. Each generation of the upright will be blessed.' In Jesus name, Amen...Good, praise God."

It may be the case that someone who reads this article will respond, well what is wrong that? It's just a harmless dedication! But is it, brethren? And may I respectfully say that is the wrong question. The proper question is, what is right with it?! I remind you that logically speaking, the burden of proof always rests with the individual or group that is advocating or introducing some change. Therefore, those advocating and introducing baby dedications as a **function** of the church are obligated to show proof that such is authorized in and by the New Testament.

continued in next weeks issue

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THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 34 No. 30

August 7, 1997

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NAVIGATING THROUGH LIFE
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THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUALITY (NO. 6)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

(12) The person is spiritual who seeks to do all to the glory of God. Paul spoke about this in the closing verses of 1 Corinthians 10 wherein we read, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (vs. 31-33). The selfish person will not do this. He/she is out for number one and all others are of little importance. The selfless saint majors in what Paul inculcated in this directive. Selfishness and spirituality have nothing in common; selflessness and spirituality have much in common. They are holy handmaidens.

(13) The person is spiritual who wants to do, and does not seek to do as little as he/she can get by with in religion. Relative to what we ought to be doing in our Christian pilgrimage a person is a total stranger to spirituality who is still asking, "DO I HAVE to do this, or DO I HAVE to do that"? I cringe when I am asked the question by one who has long been in the church, "Do I have to attend any service other than the one on Sunday morning?" When asked that question I feel just like a Texas elder who responded by saying, "I did not know there were any services that any Christian ever WANTED to miss!" We should NEVER miss a service because we want to miss it but only when it is impossible to be in attendance, such as a serious sickness. Many miss on Sundays due to feeling somewhat bad but with the same bad feeling will go to work the next Monday and will not think about missing a workday.

(14) The person is spiritual who wants to go to heaven in the next world. Heaven is a place of rest and he wants to go there (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 4:9; Revelation 14:13). Heaven is described as having many mansions and the spiritu-

ally-minded person wants to go there (John 14:1-3). Heaven is described as eternal life and the spiritually-minded person wants to experience such from judgment onward (Matthew 25:46). Heaven is a better country and the spiritually-minded person desires to go there much like Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob did in the verses depicted in Hebrews 11:8-16. Heaven is a realm of righteousness and the spiritually-minded person wants to be there for a never-ending stay (2 Peter 3:13). Heaven is a new place and the spiritually-minded person wants to go there (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1,2). Heaven is a holy city and the spiritually-minded saint desires to go there (Revelation 21:2). Heaven is as a bride prepared for her husband--beautiful and radiant--and the spiritually-minded person wants to go there in the next world (Revelation 21:2). Heaven is where the Godhead is and there the spiritually-minded desires to go (Revelation 21:3; 7:13-17). Heaven is a realm where all tears are wiped away, where there will be no more death, where sorrow and crying will never occur and where there will be no more pain. For these the spiritually-minded saint sighs and longs (Revelation 21:4). Heaven will be for all the redeemed from patriarchal times, from the Mosaic Dispensation, and from the gospel age. For such eternal associations and never ending fellowship the spiritually-minded person desires to be among that noble number who go marching into the new Jerusalem, the holy city, the realm that is fairer than day.

CONCLUSION

Let us ever aim at true spirituality--not a man-made version of such that is all shadow minus any and all substance.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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A CURE FOR ABSOLUTOPHOBIA

John Leo, who writes regularly for *US News and World Report*, recently reviewed two articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. One is by Robert Simon who has taught on the college level for twenty years. Mr. Smith observes that while he has never met a student who denied that the Holocaust happened, he often sees something far more distressing: students who acknowledge the fact of the Holocaust but can't bring themselves to say that killing millions of people is wrong. Simon reports that 10 to 20 percent of his students feel this way. Usually they deplore what the Nazis did, but their disapproval is expressed as a matter of taste or personal preference, not moral judgment. "Of course I dislike the Nazis," one student told Simon, "but who is to say they are morally wrong?"

According to Mr. Leo, "Over dosing on nonjudgmentalism is a growing problem in the schools." These articles in *Higher Education* say that "some students are unwilling to oppose large moral horrors, including human sacrifice, ethnic cleansing, and slavery, because they think it seems obvious that no one has the right to criticize the moral views of another group or culture."

The article continues, "... (there is)... a general problem of so many students coming to college 'dogmatically committed to a moral relativism that offers them no grounds to think' about cheating, stealing and other moral issues. Simon calls this 'absolutophobia' (fear of absolutes)--the unwillingness to say that some behaviour is just wrong. Many trends feed the fashionable phobias... All we can have are clashing perspectives, not true moral knowledge. The pop-therapeutic culture has pushed nonjudgmentalism very hard... By saying that one opinion or moral stance is as good as another, we can call attention to our own tolerance, avoid antagonizing others and just get on with our careers."

We see examples of this so-called absolutophobia all about us. Among many circles it is clearly more popular to be fervently tolerant than to stand for what is really true and right. This phenomenon is elbowing its way into the church of Christ today. Those who have studied the change movement among churches of Christ refer to the idea as the "New Hermeneutic". "Hermeneutic" simply means the science of interpreting scripture. In other words, those who propose a new hermeneutic suggest that

those of us who believe the Bible is a blueprint and law for our lives have been viewing the Bible wrong all these years. They propose a new, gentler, more tolerant approach. Their approach however, is borne of absolutophobia. In their view, anyone who says, "This is truth, and they who hold the opposite view are in error," is misguided and wrong. To illustrate, consider the recent (1-12-97) statement from one of the elders of a large Birmingham church of Christ during their Sunday morning worship assembly. "...In this regard, the elders do not believe that any single approach to God's word is exclusively better than all others. That is, no hermeneutic, new or old, should be used to condemn, directly or implicitly, all others. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "That he that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." As Christians, we have the freedom to interpret God's word as we see fit, and we expect our beliefs to be respected. So it's not our right and it's not our intention to impose any specific hermeneutic on this group. It is our right to ask for unity and understanding and forbearance." (I'd be happy to mail the entire statement to anyone who requests a copy, GC).

Think of the implications of such a broad "we can't really know truth" statement. Several years ago I debated a homosexual preacher over live radio who claimed he was following faithfully his interpretation of the Bible. Is his approach to scripture to be respected? I have a number of good friends who believe baptism is to join a denomination, and not for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Is their approach to scripture to be respected? The Pope of Rome has an approach to scripture. While we should treat all men with kindness and respect, are we to respect his approach to scripture? Are all people going to heaven, just different ways?

Jesus wants you to know that truth--definitive truth, real truth--is here for you in His word. He said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Does that mean we have all the answers to every spiritual question? No. But we do have the answers relative to what one must do to be saved and please God in this life. In fact, the human race is responsible for knowing and obeying the truth. II John 9-10 says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in

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A CURE FOR ABSOLUTOPHOBIA, continued from Page 2

the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed." John 12:48, "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."

II Thessalonians 1:7-8, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If you've found yourself buying into the new hermeneutic, turn back before it's too late. Repent of your "absolutophobia" and get back into the word of God. That is where God's heart is revealed to mankind. That is where God is showing you His grace right now: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). Jesus said, "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).

MOST OF A MINUTE - NAVIGATING THROUGH LIFE

The other day my family and I were driving through the mountains early in the morning before the fog was melted away by the sun. Remember what it was like the last time you had to try to maneuver through a thick, dense fog? I could only see a few feet beyond the end of my hood. And then, an unexpected help appeared. The man in front of me had his lights on and was making good progress. I paced myself with him and kept one eye on his red taillights for help in which way the next turn went.

Sometimes, for us all, life and its future seem heavily blanketed with fog. I don't know what's going to happen the next hour, much less the next day or week. When that happens, where do we look for guidance? There are plenty of people who would have us follow them, but their information of the future probably isn't any better than ours. Listen; Here's the light to follow: Psalm 119:105, speaking of God, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my pathway".

ANGELS

Mike Benson

"Where did the angels come from? Were they created beings or are they eternal?"

The Bible has a great deal to say about angels. Please study the following passages:

1. Angels existed BEFORE the earth was formed. God asked Job, "Where were you *when I laid the foundations of the earth?*...When the morning stars sang together, and all the *sons of God shouted for joy*" (Job 38:4,7). Note that the sons of God "shouted for joy" WHEN God laid the foundations of the earth. Note also that Adam was not made until the sixth day of creation. "Who, then, were those sons of God? Without a doubt, they were angels." 1

2. But they did not exist from eternity; THEY WERE CREATED by God. "*You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things on it..the host of heaven worships you*" (Nehemiah 9:6). Angels have not always been in existence; God created

them along with all the host of heaven. "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! *Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! ...Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created*" (Psalm 148:1,2,5). According to this passage the angels were created. Consider also Colossians 1:16,17; John 1:1-3.

3. WHEN were they created? "The answer to that is a deduction from studying scripture. Since angels were created, and since they were there to shout for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth, it seems a reasonable conclusion to say that angels were created sometime by God before He began the creation of the world. To go further than that is to speak where we have no authority to speak." 2

1 Rex A. Turner, Sr., "Angelology," **Systematic Theology**, p. 67.

2 Edward P. Myers, "The Origin and Form of Angels," **A Study of Angels**, p. 11.

THE CHURCH and BABY DEDICATIONS

Mel Futrell - continued from last week

Likewise, biblically speaking, we must have the authority of Christ for all we do in religion (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11). Let me save someone some time; one will look in vain for New Testament authority for either baby or children's dedications.

Without a doubt, Christians should pray for one another, for each other's family, etc. (1 Timothy 2:1-3; James 5:16). But what business does the local church have in dedicating children? Even though we have just noticed an actual children's dedication service, perhaps we should define the term "dedicate."

dedicate - *adj.* 1. to set apart and consecrate to a deity or to a sacred purpose. *The ancient Greeks dedicated many shrines to Aphrodite* [Websters Unabridged Dictionary, 1992, p. 377]

Our point for including this definition is that baby dedications, as per the above, mark the beginning of a religious or sacred period of devotion. But this isn't something

the local church can do for any child. Christian parents would be wise to determine, prior to the birth of their children, to bring those children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). And every child upon reaching accountability before God should, if they would be saved, "dedicate" **themselves** to God thru obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22). But again we say, no where in Scripture is there any intimation that the local church is involved in this so called dedication.

Is this not just one more practice our liberal brethren have borrowed from the denominations and run into the church? Can we continue to sit on the sidelines and not oppose this practice and other infringements to the purity of the church? So many brethren have already compromised the truth and sadly don't even realize it. My brethren, these things ought not so to be (James 3:10).

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING!

Johnny Ramsey

The Greek word of church was "ecclesia" which meant "the called out." Members of the church of the Lord were called out of the world of darkness into the glorious light of Truth as Colossians 1:13 and 1 Peter 2:9-11 clearly state. When impurity and nonchalance entered the body of Christ, various New Testament passages demanded disciplinary action against the evil ones. It makes sense to keep the church pure and uncontaminated as Romans 16:17 and 1 Corinthians 5:13 affirm. It would be unnatural to allow sin to overwhelm the spiritual body of our Lord.

Just so, the faithful child of God, in "providing things honest in the sight of all men" (Romans 12), will pay his debts, supply his own needs and be a shining light for righteousness (Phillippians 2:15). One of the real blessings an

ardent follower of the Master possesses is peace of mind and a clean conscience (Phillippians 4:7 and Acts 24:16). Christians will be busy teaching others "the unsearchable riches of Christ" and will even manifest a love for their enemies and an abiding trust in God that will puzzle those who would be critical of New Testament Christianity. It is good therapy to follow the Bible way in day by day living in this wicked old world! As 1 Peter 5:7 declares, so let us walk:

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you".

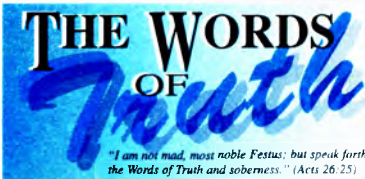
It makes sense -- in this life -- to turn one's destiny over to the Saviour for *He will never leave us nor forsake us* (Hebrews 13:6).

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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

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THE SINNER'S PRAYER
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THE GOSPEL'S POWER

Vol. 34 No. 31

August 14, 1997

A PREACHING HERITAGE

Mel Futrell

Over 1900 years ago the greatest preacher to ever walk the earth, with the exception of Jesus the Christ, said to the Corinthian brethren:

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

(1 Corinthians 9:16 KJV)

What Christian preacher has not contemplated those sobering and sublime words of inspiration without likewise saying with the apostle, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel"? Brethren, what a debt we owe to those who have gone before us as "ministers of the New Testament" (2 Corinthians 3:6). Not the least of which are those mighty men of the word who proclaimed the good news in the decades following the establishment of the Lord's church. Every gospel preacher among us should seriously consider the great sacrifices, hardships, and sufferings these men endured for the cause of Christ (e.g. 2 Corinthians 11:16-33).

Even within the last 200 years here in America and abroad have preachers done without, suffered abuse, and generally hazarded themselves that some might "obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:10). This isn't said to engender pity but rather respect for those preachers of yesteryear. And I for one know I have it easy, in many ways, because of the labors of "faithful men" before me (2 Timothy 2:2).

In a special way I feel a debt of gratitude due to my personal preaching heritage. I am referring to the fact that my great grandfather on my dad's side of the family and my grandfather on my mother's side of the family were both gospel preachers. How I wish I knew more of their lives

and experiences-but a few things I do know, I put down in print for you here.

My great grandfather, James Daniel Futrell, was born February 14, 1866 in Greene County, Arkansas. He was one of three children born to Jephtha and Lavinia Armina Futrell. Jephtha, his father, had served during 1861 in the Civil War. Daniel was converted at an early age and at the age of twenty-one was married to Eliza Jane Morrow. The two would live together as husband and wife for 61 years until his death July 3, 1948. To this union would be born 12 children, 8 of which would survive to adulthood. My Pa Futrell, who is alive and well at the grand age of 87 and who provided me with most of this information, was the eleventh of those twelve children.

The late brother Boyd E. Morgan paid tribute to my great grandfather in his book titled, Arkansas Angels. The following is just a sampling of that piece:

"Bro. James Daniel Futrell was an individualist. Rugged, self-sacrificing and determined he became a legend in Greene County...His father died when he was ten years old and Daniel immediately resolved to take a man's place and help his widowed mother and younger brother Marion. He set about the man's task of farming and succeeded in the task. Daniel began preaching and though above 40 years old, he preached for forty years...Most of his preaching was confined to Greene County, though he preached occasionally over in Missouri...He was never known to accept pay for his preaching service and only once did he allow anyone to buy gasoline for a preaching trip. He gave much food, money,

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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THE SINNER'S PRAYER

Prayer is such a privilege for God's child. There are 511 occasions in the King James translation when the word "prayer" or its derivative is used. Various passages indicate that the answer to prayer is reserved for those who love the Lord. The Proverb writer taught, He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be abomination*, (Proverbs 28:9)." A man whom Jesus healed declared, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth, (John 9:31)." The only possible exception to that seems to be in the case of a penitent alien sinner who asks help in finding the truth. Consider that this is probably the case in Acts 10 as the Bible says of Cornelius, "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said unto him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God" Acts 10:1-4.

It must be understood that there are some things prayer will not do. For example, James said that when people ask "amiss" for things to fulfill their sinful lusts, God will turn a deaf ear, (James 4:3). We also know that God will not grant our prayer for forgiveness when we fail to forgive others, (Matt. 6:14-15).

Prayer will not save the man who is not a Christian. Prayer will not make him a Christian or put him into the family of God. One cannot simply call God "Father" in prayer and thus be God's child. One must obey the gospel in baptism to be born into God's family. Paul taught this in Galatians 3:26-27 when he wrote, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

People today are commonly told to pray the "sinner's prayer" to receive salvation. Please be impressed with the fact that not one single conver-

sion example in the New Testament shows anyone ever being told to pray the sinners prayer to be saved. Not one.

Consider three New Testament individuals who were praying people, but who were not saved when they prayed.

First, the conversion of Saul. When Ananias was sent by the Lord to assist Saul in his conversion to Christ, he found Saul praying (Acts 9:11). Saul had just been confronted by Christ, and stricken blind. He now knows that Jesus is God's Son, and as he sits in Damascus, he neither eats nor drinks. What does he do as he sits for three days? He prays. Did his prayer save him? No, it didn't. Observe that later, as Paul was reflecting on his his conversion, he quoted Saul's teacher, Ananias, as saying, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). He needed to have his sins washed away because they had not yet been forgiven--and that despite the fact that he had been sitting and praying for three days.

Second, the conversion of Cornelius. This man is unredeemed, and lost in sin. That fact will surprise some because he calls God "Father." He is serious about his religion, and practices his faith every day. Read the biblical description: "...A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always, (Acts 10:2)." Did God hear him pray? Yes, in a sense mentioned earlier. Did God save him from his sins when he prayed? No. Cornelius was told by an angel to call for Peter to come and teach him what he ought to do (Acts 10:6). In chapter eleven, as Peter explained to others what happened, he said of Cornelius, "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" Acts 11:13-14. Since only a lost man needs to be saved, Cornelius, as devout and prayerful as he was, was lost. When he obeyed the gospel he became a saved man. Peter "...commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord, (Acts 10:48)." Peter

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A CURE FOR ABSOLUTOPHOBIA, continued from Page 2

commanded that because Jesus had taught, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" Mark 16:16.

Third, the conversion of Lydia. Paul first encountered her at a place of prayer, and we can certainly thus assume that she was a praying woman. "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" Acts 16:13-14. Note the important order in which

these events occur. She was a worshiper of God; She heard Paul and Silas preach the gospel; Her heart was opened. The gospel, remember, is the power of God unto salvation, (Rom. 1:16). Observe that Lydia, like Saul and Cornelius, was a praying person, yet still lacked salvation and needed to be baptized, (Acts 16:15). We admire her eagerness to worship and pray to God, and yet we know that she could not be saved without the true gospel, (Gal. 1:8).

Don't put faith in something God has never endorsed. Don't put stock in what is commonly called the "sinner's prayer." Prayer is precious and good, but it was not designed to save a lost man who is outside of the body of Christ.

MOST OF A MINUTE - SALVATION TAKES STUDY TIME

A few short years we couldn't imagine a world run with computers, and today, we couldn't imagine a world without them! And we aren't stopping there. The computer you purchase today will be obsolete tomorrow. A major objective in technology is more speed. We want what we want instantly. And this doesn't just apply to computers. We have instant tea, instant potatoes, and TV's that warm up instantly. People have instant relationships. TV evangelists promise instant salvation, just as

fast as you can write a check. Almost any new hot car can accelerate from zero to a speeding ticket in seconds.

But, you know what? Some things can be hurt when hurried. Like your decisions about the Lord. Nothing replaces time spent with God's word, the Bible. Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to show thyself approved of God..." Haven't you got the time for the most important reading in this world?

A PREACHING HERITAGE, continued from Page 1

and goods to those in need and supported the church generously...I heard him preach and his flow of speech was smooth and he spoke plainly, simply and from his heart. He was a great exhorter on Christian principles and Christian living." [College Bookstore and Press, 1976, pp.41-42]

Recently, I had the privilege of spending an afternoon with my Pa and Mamma Futrell who shared with me many family memories. I was told by my Pa that his father preferred to refer to his preaching as "talks", and that he made these talks, for the most part, in Greene and Randolph Counties in Northeast Arkansas. He was born, as noted earlier, in 1866 the year Alexander Campbell died. And was always a student of

Campbell's writings. When my great grandfather began preaching at the turn of century he went on horseback or in a horse and buggy. When he quit preaching in 1946 he was getting around to make his talks in either a 1944 or 1945 half-ton Studebaker truck. He died before I was born and I was born on his birthday. I wish that he knew that his great grandson had made a preacher.

Brethren, our debt to past preachers of the gospel is an enormous one. The battles they fought, the ground they broke, and the strides for truth they made have made our job of preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8) a bit easier. And for that we are most grateful. Would to God, that every Christian preacher should regularly reflect upon our preaching heritage.

THE GOSPEL'S POWER

Johnny Ramsey

In Acts 18:8 we read these sterling words:

"Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized."

Praise God for Truth and for good and honest hearts. The glad tidings can reach even into the dens of iniquity. In Acts 19 and 20 the focus is upon the city of Ephesus and the mighty power of God's word as opposed to shallow trinkets of idolatry set forth by the silversmiths. Ephesus had in its environs one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was the magnificent marble temple erected to the worship of Artemis or the goddess Diana. In open conflict the gospel of Christ dominated the scene. In fact, so successful was the message of the Cross that many objects previously used in idolatrous devotion were burned in the streets of Ephesus and....

"Mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

Many ungodly objects should be burned today that the shining light of Christianity might be more clearly seen. The citadels of error must be confronted in our spiritual warfare as we use "the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17). We do not engage in carnal combat over spiritual matters but we do fight the good fight of faith under the glorious banner of God's dear Son (I Tim. 6:12).

In Acts 20:32 Paul bids farewell to the elders of Ephesus in a poignant speech of brilliant oratory sincerely shared with loving comrades in the Lord. Let us never forget the tie that binds us together.

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Individual rates are \$20.50 per year. All bills payable to Words of Truth, 3051 McQueen Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107

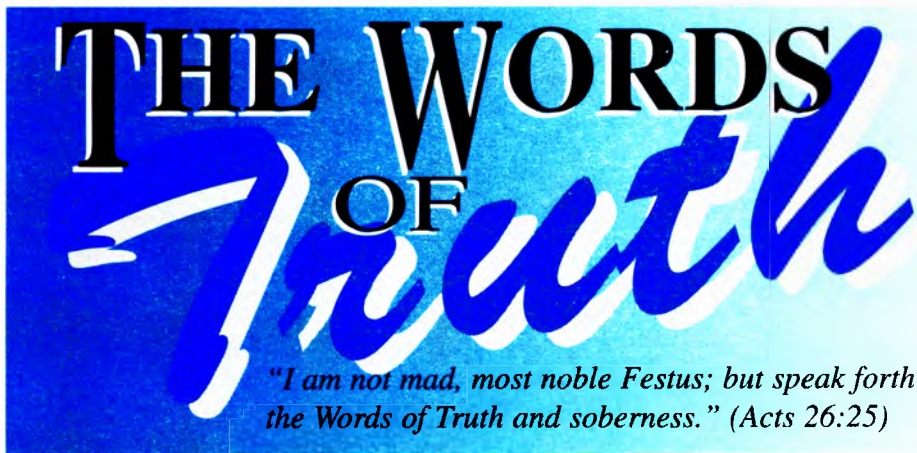


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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

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 IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY.....?

Vol. 34 No. 32

August 21, 1997

A PREACHING HERITAGE - PART 2

Mel Futrell

My grandfather, Frank William Gould, was born November 8, 1907 in Vienna, Illinois. He was one of 10 children born to William and Flora Gould. Frank was baptized by brother Ira A. Douthitt on September 1, 1929. And on July 13, 1932 he was married to my nannie, Ann Corzine, of Dongola, Illinois. Frank and Anna would live together as husband and wife for 62 years until his death July 28, 1994. To this union would be born 3 daughters. The oldest of which is my mother Frances Ann Futrell.

My Pa Gould began his "local work" in Christopher, Illinois in 1934 and preached the gospel for 62 years. During this time he worked with 8 different congregations in Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, and Tennessee, helping to establish congregations at Cypress and Anna, Illinois. It would be his pleasure as a Christian preacher to baptize his father, mother and several others of his family in to Christ. As well as being my grandfather, he was our preacher at the Pyburn St. Church of Christ in Pocahontas, Arkansas on 2 different occasions during my lifetime. It was his preaching that I remember most growing up. I still have notes from his sermons tucked away in a couple of Bibles in my study. Add to that the 700 gospel meetings he conducted in 16 states, and the fact that he preached during his lifetime over 28 different radio stations and you have just a glimpse of how busy he was. I remind you that gospel meetings in his day were not the little 3 or 4 day affairs we now have. I find it amazing that at one point in his life he held 50 gospel meetings without a break.

As a preacher F.W. Gould was prepared, precise, and prompt. His personal religious library totaled about 800 volumes, with which he was intimately familiar. Countless hours of Bible study and reading manifested itself to one who heard him preach or sat in one of his classes. He could quote from memory much of the New Testament and he never went to the pulpit with notes. It was my Pa more than any other single person who encouraged me in my memory work and discouraged me on the use of notes in preaching; although I

still use a note or two now and again. These were not matters he bound on others but did feel strongly about them himself.

Not only was he a preacher and teacher, but also a writer and debater. He had a special interest in the book of Hebrews and studied the book exhaustively. The late brother Franklin Camp wrote of Frank:

"I was in a meeting in Pocahontas, Arkansas. Brother Frank Gould was the preacher. He taught the adult class on Sunday morning. His lesson was on Hebrews. He gave an outline to the class. It was truly a rich study in Hebrews. Later he came to Shades Mountain and taught Hebrews in a V.B.S. He quoted the entire book while teaching the classes. During the meeting he showed me some other material he had. It was so rich I suggested he put it in print. He was not interested, so I asked him if he would allow me to include some of it in The Word of Life. He agreed for me to use it. One section of this book is this material. It includes the entire outline on Hebrews. This section is worth the price of the book. [The Word of Life, Vol. 1, Proclamation Press, n.d., p.i] Likewise, Frank wrote two fine tracts, one titled "Nuts" For Mormons To Crack and another refuting the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses. He did have one public debate with a Baptist named James Ivy in Pocahontas, Arkansas sometime in the early 1950's. But I have been unsuccessful in getting any details concerning the debate.

F.W. Gould and his generation of preachers, as well as the generations before him, certainly did not preach for the money. Brethren, it was not there. The truth is, I make more money in a week for preaching the gospel than he made in several months of preaching under what were difficult circumstances at times. Gone are the days, at least in America, when preachers received chickens, pigs, and garden produce as payment for their spiritual services. Gospel preachers today in the United States should be mighty thankful for the great sacrifices past preachers made to see that their generation heard the gospel. It seems to me

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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NON-CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD

A good study for you will be found by looking up all the references in the Bible to the word "world", or "worldly." The world seems so friendly, so charming, so harmless, and yet the Bible warns that there is a sense in which world is a deadly enemy. We need to be aware and beware.

When speaking of the evil world we are not referring to the earth itself. Acts 17 states clearly that the Lord made the world and everything in it. There is nothing evil about the creation. Nor are we speaking about the people of the world. John 3:16 begins, "For God so loved the world..."

What does the Bible mean then when it says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" 1 John 2:15? The world here refers to a system, or an order. We speak of the world of sports, the world of industry, the world of finance. What we mean is that these matters have an organized system to them. Likewise, the Bible speaks of the system called "the world," which is the world of wickedness, and we must set our hearts against that world.

Want to know more about the world?

This world, or system, has a prince. He is Satan. Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out" John 12:31. We read in John 14:30, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." That's why 1 John 5:19 says, "and we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." That literally means to "sleep in the bosom or lap of." Who can separate us from the love of God? Romans 8:35-38 says that no one can. Yet that makes no reference to a man *himself* separating from God. 1 John 2:15 says that if we love the world the love of the Father is not in us. When I choose the world I reject God's love. Cartoonists have depicted the devil with a red suit and tail. But he is real, and we'll do well to fight him, (James 4:7).

This world has a philosophy, an enticing network of ideas and values that Satan has skillfully constructed to attract you to him. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:12 that the inspired writers have not received the "spirit of the world," but the spirit of God. The wisdom of this world is said to be foolishness with God, (1 Cor. 3:19). Paul calls it the "fashion of this world" in 1 Corinthians 7:31. The world's philosophy with reference to Christianity is to ignore and belittle. With reference to marriage, it is that biblical homes have little value. With reference to proper roles in the home, it is feminism. With reference to sexuality, it is hedonism. With reference to wealth it is materialism. With reference to the doctrine of Christ it is liberalism.

This world has a purpose, and that purpose is to oppose Christ. Jesus said, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" John 7:7. In John 15:18 He said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

This world has a people. Any friend of Jesus is going to be an enemy of the world. The opposite is also true. Hear James: "Ye adulterers and adulteress's, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Now you are better informed about the reason John wrote, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" 1 John 2:15. If you haven't already, please make a deep commitment to yourself and to your God that in the words of Paul you will "...Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" Romans 12:1-2.

MOST OF A MINUTE - PARADISE INGREDIENTS

Have you ever stopped to consider just simple man's basic needs really are? It's a good thing to consider because it ties you down to remembering just how blessed we really are.

When God put Adam in the garden of Eden, God opened paradise. That moment Adam didn't know it, but he was as close to heaven on earth as any man would ever get. But stop and think a

minute about what Adam had there in paradise. God gave him a wife, a home, and a job--caring for the garden. And you know what? Many of us--who aren't always so happy or thankful--also have those wonderful things.

1 Thess. 5:17 Says, "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks." You know, we may just be better off than we figured.

that we can do no less as we warm ourselves over the fires they built.

The most important day of my life was a cold night in February of 1974, when F.W. Gould baptized me into Christ. He encouraged me as a student and preacher of the word and will forever be in my memo-

ries. I feel fortunate to have had such a rich preaching heritage on both sides of my family. My debt of gratitude runs deep to both James Daniel Futrell and F.W. Gould, with whom I share the necessity of preaching the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16).

THE EXAMPLE OF EPAPHRAS

Neal Pollard

Apparently, Epaphras lived in what is now Turkey somewhere on the south bank of the Lycus River valley around Colosse or Laodicea. There were several communities in this vicinity having congregations of the Lord's people. In fact, the area might be called the ancient "Bible Belt" of Asia.

As God guided the process of assembling the inspired, written New Testament, the doctrine of Christ revealed by the hands of penmen like Paul was quickly spread as inspired epistles (letters) were shared among the large number of congregations meeting in Asia minor, eastern Europe, as well as back west in the regions of Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa. In these epistles were innumerable commands, new revelations, examples for conduct in worship, and principles to be drawn from illustrations and biographies. Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting were all done through these different avenues.

One of the men of whom the Spirit moved Paul to speak who is somewhat obscure to most Bible students is Epaphras. Mistaken by some to be the Epaphroditus lauded by Paul in the book of Philippians, Epaphras is nonetheless worthy of imitation for several reasons.

Epaphras Agonized Over His Brethren In The Posture Of Prayer. In tones of commendation, Paul writes, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12). What Paul says he was doing was fighting for them in prayer. He not only prayed for them, but did so with great fervor.

It would be interesting to know often and how many individual Christians not only mention the church in their prayer, but who plead for and beseech God for their brethren before the mercy seat. What did Epaphras want God to grant his fellow servants? He apparently wanted them to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 2 Peter 3:18). He cared whether or not they were faithful and growing. He proved that devotion by prayer. How thrilling to think of even one Christian brother or sister who takes a list of specific Christians with them to the throne room of prayer, speaks their names before the Father with sincerity, and pleads to Him on their behalf. Is that why James assures the Christian, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16)?

Epaphras Had An Overflowing Desire For His Brethren. Paul, in the epistle to the Colossians, further says of Epaphras, "For I bear him record, that he hath a

great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis" (Colossians 4:13). His heart was with God's people! Epaphras was a Christian who loved the brotherhood (cf. Hebrews 13:1). The word translated "zeal" in Colossians 4:13, in its original language, denotes either a passionate emotion for good or evil, and it depends on context. The context clearly shows that Epaphras possessed that good kind of zeal which drew him to be devoted to his brethren.

In practical terms, what will one do for brethren for whom he has such feelings? When a brother is in error, will he not seek him (James 5:19-20)? When a fellow Christian is lonely or discouraged, will he not lift him (Hebrews 12:12-13)? When another Christian stands for the truth, despite the world's criticism, will he not boldly praise him (1 Corinthians 11:2)?

Epaphras Was A Loyal Servant Of His Brethren In Christ. Paul wrote, "As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ" (Colossians 1:7). Lipscomb holds that Epaphras founded Colosse church of Christ (*Volume 4*, 252). Having possibly even opened the doors of his own home, Epaphras undoubtedly loved the Lord's church and made himself available to them. As a "minister", Epaphras served the brethren. Being "faithful", he steadied the church by his conviction. Being "of Christ", he showed the Lord's people how much He meant to him.

Jesus taught both the greatness of servitude (Matthew 23:11) and the importance of loyalty (Matthew 24:25). Loyalty to Christ must inevitably manifest itself in serving others (cf. John 13:12-17). Maturity in Christ leads one to that conclusion, when love is perfected to the point that the child of God strives, within its congregation, to promote the spiritual health and growth of others. Epaphras must have so tasted the Lord (cf. 1 Peter 2:3).

The brethren were with Epaphras in his prayers, his heart, and his duty. Paul praised him to individuals (cf. Philemon 23) and whole congregations (cf. Colossians 1:7; 12-13), obviously because he was a fruit-bearing branch in the vineyard of Christ. More Christians who imitate the prayer life, the love, and the servanthood of Epaphras, with reference to the church, will help to promote the biblical unity (John 17:20-21) and brotherly love (John 13:35) so stressed by the Savior.

ABRAHAM'S BOSOM

"The Bible says that when Lazarus died, he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). What does this mean?"

This is an interesting Bible question; Consider these points:

1. A good commentary on this passage is John 13:23. "Now there was leaning [reclining] on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." The RSV says, "One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus."

2. To appreciate Luke 16:22 we need to understand the culture and customs of Bible times. "The Roman custom of reclining at meals was common among the Jews. "Such positioning placed one in the bosom of the neighboring person" (Holman Bible Dictionary, p. 10). "In that ancient culture, people did not sit in chairs

around a table as we do today. Rather, the table was low to the floor and the guests 'reclined' on pallets by the table. If one was an especially honored guest, he reclined next to the host, and so, in the idiom of that day, he was said to be 'in the bosom' of his host" (Wayne Jackson, Notes From The Margin Of My Bible, Vol. II, p. 31)

3. Christ is described as being "in the bosom" of the Father (cf., John 1:18); this suggests a close relationship.

Thus, when the Bible says that Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom, it simply means that upon his death he was taken to a realm of great honor. "Because Abraham was the founder of the Hebrew nation, to be honored with his intimacy was the highest bliss" (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, p. 6).

IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY.....?

Hoss Harris

During our recent Vacation Bible School my wife and I were afforded the opportunity to teach the 4 and 5 year old class. While some "old salty" veterans chuckled to themselves, they patted us on the back and said, "Go ahead, you'll do fine."

As it turned out, it was a blessed experience. I'll never forget the night we were memorizing John 14:15, ("If you love Me, Keep my commandments".) All of them were doing fine jobs as we were going from one child to the next. Then I got to Jason. "Jason, can you tell me our memory verse?" With "bow tie" over to one side, "cowlick" at full mast, and all 271/2 pounds standing at full attention, he said, "If you love me, keep my **manners!!!**"

I paused for a moment, started to correct him, but

instead I started thinking. Out of the mouth of babes! Little Jason went to the heart of the matter and put his finger right on the pulse of every Christian. If you love me, keep my manners. That's what so many scriptures in our Bible really refer to. It's all about manners, not only at home, but at work, school or any walk of life. Do we thank the Lord for all he has done for us (1 Tim. 4:3-4)? How about our speech, is it seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6)? What about those around us, (James 2), how are we doing on forgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15)?

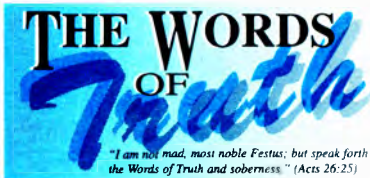
Yes, John 14:15 says "If you love me, keep my commandments." But it wouldn't hurt to write (manners) out to the side.

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"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

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THE SEDUCTIVE ENEMY
DO YOU BELIEVE WHAT
YOU DON'T SEE?
PREACHING FROM ACTS 8
OLD AGE IS WHEN?

Vol. 34 No. 33

August 28, 1997

THE SEDUCTIVE ENEMY

Neal Pollarsd

According to the inspired Paul, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). Context reveals that every person experiences at least one birth through the lineage of Adam. The spiritually reborn are only those who become obedient to Christ (cf. John 3:18; Hebrews 5:9). Everyone has at least one birth and at most two (1 Peter 1:23). Likewise, everyone faces at least one death, barring Christ's return during their lifetime (cf. Hebrews 9:27), but can experience a "second death" (Revelation 20:14). The bible reveals that such a death is tasted by the accountable, "alien" sinner (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1,5) and the one who returns to the world (John 15:4; 2 Peter 2:20-22; 1 Timothy 5:6).

Sin is the cancerous enemy that kills in either case. Those who have yet to obey the gospel are dead in sin, separated from God and spiritual life (Isaiah 59:2). Naught but obedience to the plan of salvation can new life begin (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christians who succumb to worldliness and return thereunto die again (James 4:4). Only by sincere, genuine repentance can restoration and revival occur for God's children (cf. Acts 8:22). Key to spiritual survival is recognizing a deadly component inherent to sin.

James says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Examine this seductive enemy known as "lust so as to learn to avoid its "death trap."

Lust Reflects the Producer. Jesus warned, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). A desire for whatever is ungodly and in violation of God's will cannot come from heaven (James 1:13). It was the devil who appeared to Christ in the wilderness, tempting Him

with variegated enticements (Matthew 4:1-10). Likewise, the peddling, pandering, and exposure of the flesh, the flaunting and panting after material things, and hunger for power and self-glorification originates in the darkest depths of perdition. A sober reflection upon this truth might well deter much of the lusting that now pervades.

Lust Infects The Heart. It pollutes the stream of the mind. Paul says lust makes the mind unclean while it dishonors the body (Romans 1:24). His apostolic peer shows the utter delusion of the "heart-sick" lustful one whose end is torment (2 Peter 3:3ff). Yet another inspired testimony reveals the divine judgment which shall fall upon those who walk after their own lusts, whose hearts have been tainted with its ugliness (Jude 16). It is lust that produces those inordinate affections (Colossians 3:5).

Lust Disconnects The Conscience. What causes one to be past feeling (Ephesians 4:19)? What corrupts and distorts one's concept of wholesomeness (Ephesians 4:22)? What traps the poor soul in the vicious, endless cycle of depravity (2 Peter 1:4)? What leads one stumbling through life, guided by sensuality (Jude 18;19)? Lust disconnects one's moral compass from righteousness!

Lust Projects The Pleasures. Without doubt, sin is pleasurable (Hebrews 11:25). The power of lust is the way it magnifies this while deflecting any consequences (cf. Colossians 3:5; 1 Timothy 6:9; Titus 2:12). When one can only see sinful pleasure and cannot see the wrath of God against it, one is led away without self-restraint (cf. 2 Timothy 3:6; Ephesians 4:14). Remember the beauty of escaping a life enslaved to temporary pleasures, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3). The succeeding verses in Titus 3 reveal the genuine, true pleasure possible only when one follows the Lord! Thrill-seekers are disappointed in this life and disqualified for eternal life!

Lust Affects The Body. The center of gratification is the body. It is sensual pleasure that lust promises to appease. Lust says, "Obey your body" (Romans 6:12). Lust says, "Supply the wants of

continued on Page 3

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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PREACHING FROM ACTS 8

It is a sad mistake for preachers to stop preaching from some chapters because they feel the passages have in the past been overworked and are not too familiar. The danger in that lies in the youth who may miss valuable underpinning in his faith because he wasn't old enough to understand the preaching of the passage when it was done.

One such familiar passage is Acts eight. Let's revisit this wonderful and important text from verses 26 through 39, and find some pearls for consideration.

The work of the Holy Spirit is interesting in the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. After preaching to the people of Samaria and viewing their baptisms, Philip returned to Jerusalem. There the angel told Philip to go South toward Gaza, and he quickly complied. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot (vs. 29)."

I Timothy 4:1 says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly..." In the case of the Ethiopian, He backed off. there was no more intervention. His work involved getting the preacher of God's word to the student. After that, the power of God in the conversion process rested solely in the Gospel and the human teacher of that Gospel.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Romans 1:16).

I Corinthians 1:21 says, "...It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

I am impressed with Philip. Selected as one of the seven deacons in Acts 6, Philip was always eager to do more and more in service to his Lord. After the death of Stephen, and the increasing power and fury of Saul, the Christians in Jerusalem were scattered (Acts 8:4). The penman of Luke focuses his sights on Philip and notes, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them (Acts 8:5)." This chapter is Philip's crowning tribute. His name is used fourteen times. After the conversion of the Ethiopian, we only read of Philip once more, in Acts 21:8: "...and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. The same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." His work began with serving tables. In Philip we see a fine example of a man willing to work in any capacity presented to him. Whatever the job, he wanted to serve Jesus!

Philip preached Jesus. That is a simple, all-encompassing description. He preached Jesus. Let all the world learn from this deacon a mammoth truth: To preach includes preaching obedience to the gospel! When we preach Jesus

and leave out the necessity of baptism, we have broken ranks with men like Philip. Jesus taught, "...go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you alway..." (Matthew 28:19).

Now consider the Ethiopian. Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, had placed this man in charge of her treasure. She trusted him. When men set their hearts on pleasing God, it has always made them more honest with their fellow man. (The converse is also true). The trip from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, where this man wanted to worship, was between 1000 and 1200 miles. A man who would make sacrifices like that to worship the true God and study His will, would make the perfect treasurer.

Because he was a Eunuch, he faced restrictions from God. Deuteronomy 23:1 says plainly, he "shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord." However, from Acts 8 we learn that the eunuchs could be proselytes, or converts to the Jewish law.

When Philip joined the Ethiopian's chariot, he heard him reading from Isaiah 53 about the suffering Christ. From this passage he "preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35). but have you considered that only three chapters later, in Isaiah 56, we read these words, "Neither let the eunuch say, "behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep My sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of My covenant; Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

Had the Ethiopian read this? Was he combing through Isaiah to learn more about this closer relationship to His God? We are not told. What we do know, however, is that this good man from Ethiopia heard the gospel of Christ that day, and was baptized into his Lord. When the Ethiopian said good-bye to his beloved teacher, "he went on his way rejoicing." For now, you see, he is privileged to wear that everlasting name. Now he has a place in the house of the Most High! He wears the name of Christ. He is a Christian.

May the word of God be planted in the hearts of people like the Ethiopian until the Lord comes again. May conversions like the one from Acts 8:38 happen over and over again. And may we who wear Christ's name remember that conversions come when we like Philip open our mouth, begin with the scriptures, and preach Jesus.

your body" (Romans 13:14). Lust says, "Follow the inclination and bent of the body. If it feels good, then just do it" (Ephesians 2:3). Lust says, "Indulge in what pleases your body" (2 Peter 2:18). Those who give in to lust give in to self and deny God. Such a one is worldly-minded, and certainly is not other worldly-minded (cf. Matthew 6:19-21).

Lust Rejects The truth. Peter teaches, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; But as he which hath called you in holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16). When one serves lusts, one has withheld his service from the King of Kings. In effect, those submissive to their own lusts shoves away God's hand of mercy

in deference to the base things of the world. It is a choice between two masters (Matthew 6:24). Those who choose lust reject Christ.

Praise be to God that the lusts of this world can be defeated! However, the fight against it is a lifelong battle, a diligent, vigilant, and daily struggle to do right while avoiding the transient temptations of ungodliness. Each day, one must choose the right Master (cf. Joshua 24:15). But, remember that the end of lust is sin and spiritual death (James 1:14-15). The end of those who successfully overcome their lusts is the fruits of righteousness and the peace of God (Colossians 3:12ff). It pays, now and eternally, to reject the enticements of wickedness.

DO YOU BELIEVE WHAT YOU DON'T SEE?

Mike Benson

When we are first introduced to Thomas, we find him to be something of a determined, and yet pessimistic disciple of our Lord (Jn. 11:16). When he is presented to us a second time, Thomas seems confused and somewhat impatient (Jn. 14:5). In his third appearance, we see perhaps the most revealing snapshot of his character (Jn. 20:24-29). John identifies Thomas as Didymus (Jn. 20:24): Thomas, which is Aramaic; Didymus, which is Greek - both mean "twin." One of the twelve; Judas had committed suicide. He was not present with the other when the Lord came on resurrection Sunday. The reason(s) for his absence the previous week are not explained; it could have been any combination of factors (ie, disappointment, embarrassment, the need for solitude, fear, etc.) Whatever the case, we must be cautious about judging as to why he was not with the group.

Observations from the text:

1. Not seeing and not believing (unbelief without sight). Jn 20:25

The ten told Thomas they had seen the risen Lord. The verb said indicates that they "kept saying to him" that Jesus was alive; this is not surprising. That which we deem "fantastic" or "hard-to-believe" we usually feel the need to repeat. Our assumption is that re-telling the story will somehow enhance its believability. Ironically, the other apostles, at one time also refused to believe. They refused to believe the testimony of Mary and the other women (Mk. 16:11; Lk 24:11). Note the words, "idle tales," idle talk, nonsense; used in medical language of the wild talk of the sick during delirium. To believe Jesus Himself until after He showed them sufficient evidence (Lk. 24:33-43; Mk 16:14). I am not sure that it is fair to brand Thomas as more skeptical than his peers; the term "doubting" could have also applied to the other men. None of them believed until they actually saw the risen Christ.

Thomas refused to believe without visual as well as tactile evidence. In the Green there is a double negative: "I positively will not believe!" He did not say "If I see...I will believe," but "Unless I see...I will not believe." Thomas might be best characterized as hard-headed and obstinate. But we should be cautious in our criticism of him; in order to accept any

position, some degree of reasonable inquiry is necessary. Contrary to popular belief, Christianity is not a religion of blind acceptance. Thomas' problem was not only that he definitely rejected the apostle's testimony, but that he also made such unreasonable demands. One commentator suggests that "it was nothing short of madness for Thomas to refuse the cumulative testimony of the apostles." It is no less madness for people to reject the apostle's inspired testimony today (cf, 2 Pet. 1:16; 1 Jn. 1:1; Jn. 20:30-31).

II. Seeing and believing (belief because of sight). Jn. 20: 26-28

The group met the following Sunday; Jesus made His second appearance (Jn. 20:26). "Eight days" according to the Jewish method of reckoning referred to one week. John is careful to note that the conditions at this assembly were the same as the previous Sunday (Jn. 20:19). Note: Sunday, inside, doors shut (for fear of the Jews), Jesus' greeting ("Peace to you"); with one notable exception -- Thomas was present on this occasion.

The Lord was aware of the fact that Thomas required decisive evidence (Jn. 20:27). So he offered Thomas his tests of faith. This is not the only occasion of where such a test was granted (cf. Judg. 6:36-40). The text does not indicate if Thomas actually touched Jesus; apparently, sight alone was sufficient (Jn. 20:29). He then urged Thomas to stop being an unbeliever but become a believer -- literally, "stop becoming disbelieving." Jesus did not say that Thomas was faithless, but that he ran the risk of ultimately becoming so (cf. Heb. 3:12). Note the play on words, "Apostos", or faithless, is not so much a worthless, untrustworthy person, as one who has settled down into an abiding condition of unbelief; and pistos is not simply "believing," but 'trustworthy,' 'trusty,' and 'trustful' (Pulpit). Jesus was saying, "Do not be faithless, but faithful!" This explains the problem of unfaithfulness in the church today. Unfaithfulness is a symptom of unbelief. The problem is not a lack of evidence, but a lack of conviction! At any rate, this undeniable evidence caused thomas to exclaim, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28). Here is a climax of the

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entire Gospel. Every narrative points on to this unchallenged utterance. From the wedding at Cana to the raising of Lazarus, from the testimony of the Baptist to the awful tones of intercessory prayer, every discourse, every miracle, points on to this superlative conclusion, not breathed in loving accents by the enthusiastic Mary, not sounded forth by the rock-like apostle, not whispered in awe-struck affection by the beloved disciple, but wrung from the broken heart of the man who had said, "Unless...I will not believe" (Pulpit).

III. Not seeing and believing (belief without sight).
Jn. 20:29

Jesus blessed Thomas for this sight-based faith. It was imperative that Thomas be convinced since Jesus would not be able to present the same tangible evidence to all men of all ages. Thomas would be an ambassador for Jesus. Special circumstances necessitated this special occasion. Whenever Thomas met an unbeliever he would be able to say, "I once thought as you do and I insisted on hard evidence;" he could then confirm his preaching with a miracle.

Jesus then pronounced a higher blessing upon those who believe without seeing. Many claim that they would believe if they had the same advantage as Thomas -- "If we could not see him, it would be much easier to believe..." (cf. Jn. 4:48). In reality, we can have a better concept of Jesus than if we had actually touched and seen Him. Though we all would live to see Jesus in person, through eyes of faith we can see Him from an enhanced, perspective (ie, fulfilled prophecies; his life, work, teachings, miracles, changes lives, the establishment and spread of the church). If we will not believe and obey Jesus based upon the evidence we have from Scripture, then we wouldn't obey Him if we saw Him! (Our faith is better (ie, deeper and stronger) to us if we can believe without touch or sight (cf. Heb. 11:1; 2 Cor. 5:7).

Conclusion

Eddie Whitten once observed, "The components of true faith consist not in the eyes to see, nor in the hands to touch, but in the ears to hear, the heart to believe, and the mind to respond" (Rom. 10:17; 91-10; Acts 8:37-38). Thomas made the ultimate confession. Will you? (Jn. 20:28).

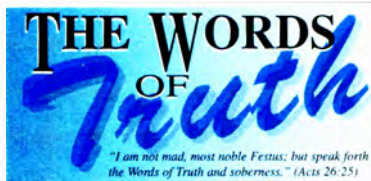
MOST OF A MINUTE - OLD AGE IS WHEN?

There was a marquee-type sign board in my neighborhood the other day which carried an interesting bit of wisdom. It said, "old age is 15 years older than I am." I didn't really understand it until I realized that that's exactly how I perceive old age!!

This demonstrates how limited man is in his understanding of time. For example, how long is a long time? For example, how long is a long time? 10 years? 20 years? More? You see, our problem is that we are limited in our perception of time.

Look at God's perspective. 2 Peter 3:8: "...be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

God is eternal, and there's a part of every man and woman that is also eternal. It's our soul. Allow yourself often to ponder eternity, the realm of forever. And then spend some time with God's word to learn how to live through eternity with Him. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).



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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

REDEMPTION
THE HUMBLE STRONG ONES
MARRIAGE AND THE BIBLE
GNATS AND CAMELS

Vol. 34 No. 34

September 4, 1997

REDEMPTION

Johnny Ramsey

When the Master promised "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" he opened up vistas of beauty and joy forevermore.

"In the land of fadeless day
Lies the city four-square
It shall never pass away
And there is no night there."

Truly, how marvelous the golden street of glory shall be!

By far the most important event in the history of the world was the death of our Lord at Golgotha. The truths emanating from Calvary enrich our sojourn upon the earth and give us hope in the days that lie ahead. The willingness of God to send Jesus to take our place and bear our sins in His body upon the tree (I Peter 2:24) enriches our very souls. To contemplate such matchless love overwhelms us even as the writer of the hymn declares:

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

This is the purpose and goal of the New Testament--the redemption of mankind.

When honest seekers (John 7:17) obey genuinely, from the heart, the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:16-18) they become new creatures in the Lord (II Corinthians 5:17). No passage tells it better than 2:12 of Colossians:

"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

The next verse bountifully and beautifully informs us that we were thereby made alive from the spiritual death of sin that once engulfed us. Having been forgiven of past transgressions, through the shed blood of the Lamb of God, at

Calvary, we stand on holy ground though living in a vile and wicked world! It is significant that Galatians 3:27 ties all of these passages together:

"For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ."

The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth (John 16:13) and the message, thus revealed, convicted men of sin, righteousness and judgment to come (John 16:8). This gospel teaching told the story of Christ's death, burial and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:1-4). In Romans, chapter six, we find a perfect illustration of salvation in the first century. When a man becomes dead to sin, as he is buried with Christ in baptism and is raised to walk in a new life, he then becomes dead unto sin and alive unto God and thereby becomes a servant of righteousness! Through the message of the Spirit, as his body is washed in pure water (Hebrews 10:22), the new birth has been consummated. It is, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

"The washing of water, by the word."

There are those who look upon all of these Bible passages as technical matters with no spiritual significance. However, throughout the sacred Scriptures we find the blending of God's commands and man's sincere obedience. Noah was commended because he explicitly obeyed "all that God commanded him" (Genesis 6:22). The exact compliment is paid to Moses for the same reason (Exodus 40). Disciples of Jesus were told to do "whatever He tells you to do" (John 2:5). Our blessed Savior asks a pertinent question in Luke 6:46,

"Why call you me Lord, Lord and do not the things that I say?"

Christ straightforwardly stated in John 8:24,

"Except you believe that I am he you

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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The Humble Strong Ones

Hopefully all of us know good and godly men who occupy the office of bishop (i.e. elder) in the church. These men are great examples to the flock. They lead and guard us throughout our years. They are there to teach and nurture us when we are unlearned babes in Christ, correct us when we sin, and encourage us when we are discouraged.

The elders work requires balance. They are not to be "brawlers" (I Timothy 3:3), yet they are to "convince those who speak against the truth" (Titus 1:9). They are to be of good reputation in the community (I Timothy 3:7), able, willing, and known to teach the word of God (I Timothy 3:2), and at the same time good husbands and fathers in their homes (I Timothy 3:4). To suggest that these and other qualifications are unreasonable is to question God Himself, for His word clearly teaches that men can and should meet these fine qualities.

First Peter 5:3 says of these church leaders, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." Some erroneously use this verse to teach that the only authority elders have is in the realm of their godly example. This doctrine seeks to remove God's authority, for He designed the work and authority of elders. They are "Presbuteros," or overseers (Acts 20:17). They are "Episkopos," or those who are charged with seeing things are done right (Acts 20:28). Elders who fail in these duties are letting God down and should do better or resign. The cause of Christ is too important to be damaged by elders who refuse to do their best.

What First Peter 5:3 teaches is a spirit which should live within all elders of the churches of Christ. It is the key ingredient in the leadership character which directs and

tempers the man. It is humility.

This shining characteristic of humility is seen in a variety of leaders in the Bible. Though dead, they still speak volumes of encouragement to leaders today.

- Exodus 3:11 -- "And Moses said unto God, Who am I, and I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

- Judges 6:15 -- "And he (Gideon, GC) said unto Him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

- I Samuel 9:21 -- "And Saul answered and said, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?"

- I Samuel 18:18 -- "And David said unto Saul, who am I? And what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the King?"

- I King 3:7 -- Solomon: "And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father, and I am but a little child. I know not how to go out or come in.

- Isaiah 6:5 -- "Then said I, "Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

Elders, do you see?

May the Lord give us more godly men who know and love the Bible, who know and love the Lord, and who know and love the flock.

Lead us home brethren, lead us home.

REDEMPTION, *continued from page 1*

shall die in your sins.”

In Mark 16:16 belief and baptism are requirements prior to salvation. In Luke 13:3 we are reminded by the Redeemer that repentance is required lest we perish! And, in Acts 2:38, on the very day the church became a reality, sinners were told to “repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” In Acts 2:41, we read that those who gladly received the glad tidings of salvation were baptized and the Lord added them to the church. Jesus made it clear to Nicodemus in John 3:5 that a person must be born again **of water and of the Spirit** in order to enter the kingdom of God. We have a perfect commentary on that passage in Acts 8:12...

“But when he believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

It is significant that the first time our Lord mentioned the church He called it the kingdom also (Matthew 16:18-19). The culminating action that brings us into the church or kingdom is baptism (Acts 2:41; John 3:5). Also, in many of Paul's inspired writings the church is referred to as the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). Therefore, the synthesis of such teaching can be viewed in First Corinthians 12:13.

“For by one Spirit were you all baptized into one body.”

Friends of Jesus should love His commands. Did not Christ say in John 15:14,

“You are my friends if you keep my commandments.”

Whatever He tells us to do (John 2:5) should be our utmost desire if we are sincere in our avowal of friendship (I John 2:4).

“Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.”

The terms of admission into the Savior's domain are simple and clear. Let us rejoice in the eloquent surroundings of God's love and hasten to be faithful members of that spiritual body, the church, made possible by the blood of the Lamb (Acts 20:28). Years ago, in my hometown congregation, an older brother would lead a stanza of this hymn:

“Break down every idol
Cast out every foe
Now wash me
And I shall be whiter than snow.”

Our blessed Lord made it clear in Revelation 3:1-5 that unless members of the church cleanse their garments by purging sin out of their lives they would have their names written in the book of life blotted out by the Lamb of God! Heaven demands moral purity.

Salvation in the Master also delivers us from the vanity of sorry people and place us in the company of the best folk on earth. Will it not be marvelous throughout eternity to be far away from the filth and sordid things of this mundane sphere (Revelation 21:8)? We can have a foretaste of glory divine here and now by walking in the light with the saints of God on earth (I John 1:7). The sensuality of our humanistic society is becoming even more debauched and vile. Such evil (I John 5:19) makes good people yearn for a purer environment. Heaven was made for folk who look for better things (Hebrews 11:16; Phil. 3:20-21).

From the moment we enter the Lord and thus partake of a quality of life that is of eternal consequence (John 17:3) we eagerly look forward to that place where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary be at rest (Job 3:17). Therefore when this earth is rolled up like an old garment and cast aside (Hebrews 1:11) the loyal followers of the Prince of Peace shall know assuredly that salvation in the Lord was truly the pearl of great price.

MOST OF A MINUTE - MARRIAGE AND THE BIBLE

One of the most frightening trends of our modern society in America is the inclination that so many have to divorce from their mates and dissolve their marriages. For some tragic reason, the people of the last generation failed to instill the sanctity of the marriage vows in the hearts of the new generation. The sad end result is that a huge percent of our children are being reared by one parent with whom they live, and simply pampered by the other parent who they visit.

What's the problem? Well, the problem real-

ly isn't that divorces are too easily granted; the real problem is that marriage vows are too carelessly made.

May we never doubt that the One who created us also knows the best way for us to live. And, may we always remember that the Bible is His way of telling us that way. “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” (Matthew 19:9)

GNATS AND CAMELS

Neal Pollard

An older Christian woman scolded a new convert when she excitedly related to her that she had “witnessed” to her best friend about her newly-formed faith and life in Christ (note: *there is no true sense in which a Christian living today can be a “witness” to validate by evidence anything about our Lord-- John 15:27; Acts 1:8; Acts 22:15; a Christian today is restricted to an unwavering faith that all the Bible says about Jesus is true*). However, three weeks later the more “mature” Christian was spotted by the babe in Christ lying half-clad on the beach and sipping a drink with an umbrella in it that she assumed must have been alcoholic. While the babe may have had no business being somewhere where others dress immodestly, she had the misfortune of seeing a phenomenon first recorded centuries ago.

A song leader once angrily halted a hymn he was leading in worship because some of the brethren were “dragging” it. After delivering a short discourse to the congregation, he pertly resumed his task. This same brother is not shy to share with anyone who will listen that he sees nothing wrong with instrumental music in worship, and he would joyfully remain in any congregation which decided to start using them.

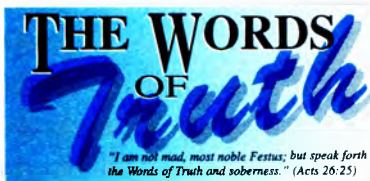
One family “switched membership” when the preacher at a given congregation came across perhaps a bit too strongly when preaching on the subject of hell. They felt it too strong and damaging. Their sensitivities were offended. A teenage daughter of another family at the congregation had spent the night of the same weekend as a guest in the home of this insulted family. That evening, according to the guest, the family rented an R-rated movie, complete with nudity and profanity.

These fictitious examples, loosely based on true events, could be multiplied. They are examples of something about which Jesus warned when He rebuked the religious hypocrites of His day, saying, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:23-24).

What imagery! They sucked in a camel trying to stave off a gnat. The Pharisees paid their tithes carefully and faithfully, yet they omitted requirements and violated commandments the transgression of which caused a far greater harm.

What is the point? Do we need to be careful not to use denominational jargon? Do we need to sing with enthusiasm? Do we need to be sure and preach the truth in a clear spirit of love? *Absolutely!* Jesus told the Pharisees they “ought...not to leave” the tithing “undone.” His anger against the Pharisees was that, in their hypersensitivity with regard to less impacting things, they had transgressed the law on basic moral and doctrinal precepts.

A “bug net” to prevent the entrance of relatively less consequential sins into our lives is a must! But, in fighting the gnats, let us not be guilty of letting a camel-sized sin go down our moral palate or of ingesting a doctrinal error that will mean sure, spiritual death. Our sober vigilance needs to be focused on both the so-called “small” sins and “big” ones, too. Gnat-sized pet peeves cannot so distract us that camel-sized iniquities undo our influence and eternity! Be careful what you swallow!



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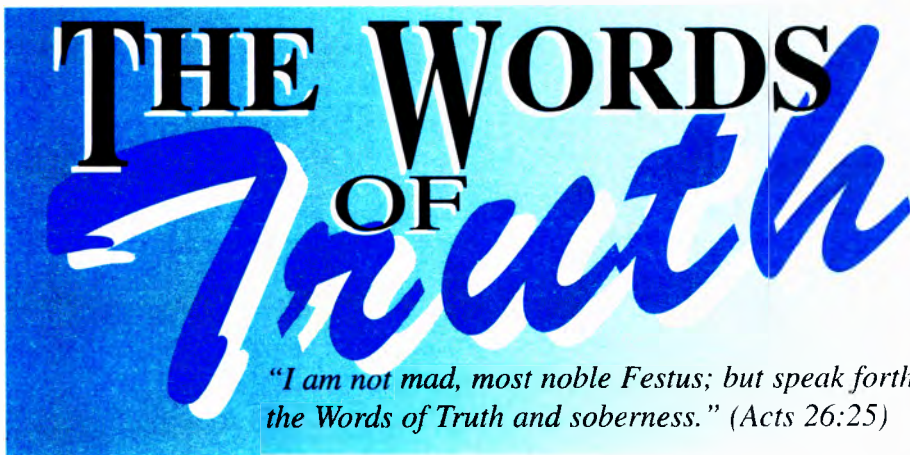
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Vol. 34 No. 35

September 11, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
**ARE YOU OVERDRESSED
IN PRAISE OF
HOMEMAKERS: PSALM 113
WHEN CHRIST SHOWED ME
HOW
IS CREDIT WRONG?**

Are You Overdressed ?

Neal Pollard

Have you ever been dressed wrong for an occasion? That is socially uncomfortable, whether you came dressed too casually or too formally. No one likes the potential awkwardness of such a scenario.

It is a sin to be underdressed. Immodesty is condemned, both by passage (1 Timothy 2:9-10) and by principle (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Galatians 5:21). But, did you know that it is possible, in a spiritual sense, to be *overdressed*? Some are figuratively clad in that which they ought not be. Consider the following.

You May Be Wearing A Cloak You Ought Not Wear. In Bible times, a cloak was the upper garment one wore over a coat. It was of this that Jesus spoke in Matthew 5:40. Cloaks are also known as mantels or robes (cf. 1 Samuel 28:14; Luke 15:22). There was certainly nothing wrong with owning a cloak. Yet, Bible writers use the word in various, figurative ways to warn some of their need to shed that which they ought not be doing.

Paul taught that one must get rid of the **cloak of covetousness** (1 Thessalonians 2:5). He defended his mission and work, rightly claiming to have done right for the right reason. He points out that, while it might be possible for one to do right for vain reasons, such is not usually the case. How tragic if someone would do right for wrong, ulterior motives! But, there have been occasions when some have served Christ adorning this "cloak of covetousness." In foreign missions it has been reported from time to time, especially in impoverished areas, that men have obeyed the gospel and become missionaries just to be financially supported by American churches and given comparatively large salaries. Bible teachers, training young men to preach, rightly warn, "Do

not preach to live! Live to preach!"

They mean that it is a covetous act to preach merely to make a living. Some have professed getting baptized just to be in a better position to receive benevolent help from the church. Anyone who serves Christ just for gain or benefit has on the cloak of covetousness.

The Bible further emphasizes that one must get rid of the **cloak of maliciousness** (1 Peter 2:15-16). Peter says Christians are free! Indeed, this is true. One who obeys the gospel is free from sin (Romans 6:18), free from the old law (Romans 7:3), and free from spiritual death (Romans 8:2). One may question, "Is the Christian free to commit sin?"

Paul, by inspiration, answered that long ago in Romans 5:30-6:2. His emphatic answer is "no way!" A Christian is not free to sin. Apparently some thought that Christian liberty meant the liberty to break God's will. A few years ago, a young preacher was driving another preacher to an appointment. During the course of the trip, he popped an "acid rock" music cassette tape into his radio. Then, he lit a cigarette. His traveling companion, appalled, asked him what he was doing and why. His reply was, "Hey, this is my Christian liberty." The young man's Bible knowledge was woefully anemic. Anytime a Christian believes he is free to commit sin -- that God somehow excuses it -- he is too cozy in this cloak of maliciousness. He had better take off that mind set. Paul wrote, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

One is also admonished, in a general way, to get rid of the **cloak of sin** (John 15:22). Jesus refers, in this verse, to those who would ultimately

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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In Praise of Homemakers: Psalm 113

A woman in her twenties, who I had never met, once discussed a problem with which she and her husband were wrestling.

It was easy to say, hard to handle. He wanted children, she did not. It was that simple. She asked me about the Scriptures. Was she *required* to bear children?

I told her that throughout the Bible, Old Testament and New, God views motherhood and homemaking as a gift He gives to women. The position is held in high and sought after esteem. Rachel cried, "Give me children or else I die!" Eve was commanded with her husband to "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth..." The Proverb writer penned, "Her children arise up, and call her blessed" (Proverbs 31:28). Isaiah wrote, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?", and, "As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you" (Isaiah 49:15; 66:13).

Unwanted children should not be conceived. However, I was troubled by the fact that this young woman had somehow suppressed the natural maternal female instinct and was sacrificing her happy home in the process. To her, not having children was that important.

I told her that God praises motherhood. Wives who do not want to be mothers did not learn the idea in the Bible. God's word teaches the opposite. We need God's guidance desperately today, for feminism is gradually (and obviously) eating away at people's appreciation for what God says about the role of wife and mother in the home. Consider and embrace what God says about motherhood in passages like Titus 2:4-5: "The older women to teach the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

Or, 1 Timothy 5:14, in the context of a discussion of caring for widows, Paul writes, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

Young women, do you love the things God

loves? Do you live the way He wants you to live? Notice that, according to these last two passages, living contrary to these teachings is described as blasphemy against God's word, and giving occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

The idea of mother hood and homemaking is belittling to some. It grieves the heart of God when a young woman is embarrassed by the question, "What do you do?" and she answers with head held low, "I'm a homemaker and mother."

Women should *PRAISE* God for homemaking! Women should *PRAISE* God for the honor of being a mother! Don't take my word for it; read from the inspired word: "Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the lord, praise the name of the Lord...He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord" (Psalm 113:1. 9).

Let the world keep their low regard toward motherhood and homemaking. They have schooled our girls well in "I can't be fulfilled just caring for my home. These last thirty years have changed our young mothers. But some things will never change. The need babies and young children have for their mothers to be close doesn't change. These sweet mothers and homemakers today are not God's down-trodden, but on the contrary, the ones to whom God has bestowed tremendous blessing!

The mother who rears her children in the way they should go is perhaps the most valuable teacher in any church. I believe that's what Paul meant when he wrote, "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (1 Timothy 2:15).

Our children are precious. They are gifts from our God. "Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of the..." (Psalm 127:3-5).

murder Him. They hid their sins behind a cloak of shallow righteousness. They were playing church and Jesus did not like it at all! He does not like it anytime Christians pretend to be righteous on Sunday, but who are merely wearing the hypocrite's cloak.

You May Be Wearing A Crown Of Pride (Isaiah 28:1-3). While pronouncing judgment on the nations, Isaiah points out why judgments were set down. The Ephraimites were going to fall because of their pride. They, like the Edomites (cf. Obadiah 3), had lifted themselves up with their pride and thought themselves impervious to everything (including God's judgment). Wearing, thus, the crown of pride, they were overdressed!

The Bible constantly warns of the sin of pride. Pride causes people to mistreat the less fortunate (Psalm 10:2). Pride hides one to his need of God (Psalm 10:4). Pride causes division, strife, and hurt feelings (Proverbs 13:10). Pride deceives one into thinking he is self-sufficient (Jeremiah 49:16). Pride hardens the heart (Daniel 5:20). Pride ruins one's character and spirituality (Mark 7:22).

Who would hope to have God's grace who persisted in pride? Pride blinds one to the need of doing right while also blinding one from the wrongdoings of his life. As someone once said, "Don't let your pride become inflated-- you may have to swallow it someday!" Truly, all who have the crown of life in their spiritual wardrobe need to throw it away!

You May Have On Defiled Garments. Sardis had church members who did (Revelation 3:4-5). Christ warned that only those wearing spiritually clean clothes would have their names in the Book of Life. So what was it about Sardis that made Jesus imply that many there were wearing spiritually dirty clothes?

They had a good reputation, but they were not

living up to it (Revelation 3:1). They had quit working short of completing the spiritual goal (Revelation 3:2). They were not vigilant (spiritually alert)(Revelation 3:3). Is it not frightening that these were basically good Christians who had slipped into being satisfied with their spiritual lives, despite deficiencies? The net result of their complacency was that they were spiritually dirty. As in the symbolic imagery wherein Joshua, the High Priest, could not stand before the Lord in his dirty outfit (Zachariah 3:3-4), no Christian can stand before Christ spiritually soiled due to returning to sin. The Bible, making closing remarks about heaven, says, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth..." (Revelation 21:27).

The hope is that fallen Christians who come back to Christ and again walk in the light-- where His blood cleanses -- will not have their name blotted out of the book of life! One can overcome "easy chair" Christianity. One must do so, removing the dirty garment of lukewarmness. Anything that keeps Christ from having first place in a Christian's life is like a dirty shirt or pair of pants and it must be washed by faithful repentance and a commitment to thereafter walk in the light.

You May Need To Remove The Veil Of Unbelief (2 Corinthians 3:13-16). In one of the chapters most clearly teaching the abrogation of Moses; Law, Paul refers to a certain veil. This veil of which he speaks is one that covered the whole head and face. It represents "a very complete covering."

Paul laments that the Jews were so hard-hearted that they had been made blind by the Law and could not see Christ. They were spiritually calloused. They just were not going to be changed. Is that not the saddest picture of the entire Bible?

MOST OF A MINUTE - WHEN CHRIST SHOWED ME HOW

Remember back when you were a child and were learning so many things for the first time? It was easier back then when an adult not only told you what to do, but also showed you how to do it.

Jesus does that for us if we will only pay attention. When I want to know how to be a better husband, I can read Ephesians 5, and see Jesus' great example as a husband.

When I've been wronged, and I'm having a hard time with holding grudges and hate in my heart, Jesus shows me how to get through it and forgive in Colossians 3:13.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:21, "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

Here were the Jews, God's special people with whom He had been intimate for thousands of years but who would not see Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Law! They were too blinded by their religion to see the true religion of Christ.

Today, people have a veil of their hearts, too. They may even hear Gospel sermons, have their hearts race in hearing "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and acknowledge knowing what to do to be saved. But until they turn to the Lord and obey the gospel, they are more than calloused. They are **lost!**

Just because one attends the church revealed in the New Testament as the one and only one for which Christ shed His blood (cf. Acts 20:28) does not get one's ticket stamped for heaven. Paul says the veil which condemns one is removed

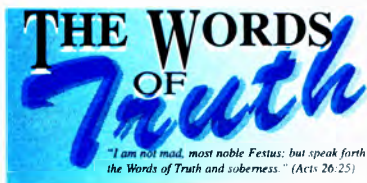
only when one turns to the Lord. So what was true about Judaism for some in Corinth is true of anything today that would keep one from obeying the Gospel and must be shed!

How can Christians assure themselves of "wearing" that with which Christ is truly pleased? Let them adorn the doctrine of God (Titus 2:10). Let them put on the armour of light (Romans 13:12), the Lord (Galatians 3:27), the new man (Ephesians 4:24), the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:11ff), and the holy attributes of Colossians 3:12-14. Let them be clothed with humility (1 Peter 5:5) and righteousness (cf. Psalm 132:9). Then, despite the world's reaction, God's children will know that they are "dressed" in a way that pleases Him.

MOST OF A MINUTE - IS CREDIT WRONG?

In our credit-crazed society there is a verse that sometimes troubles Christians who use credit. It is Romans 13:8 where the Bible says, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Does this prohibit me from having that car loan, mortgage on the house, or that credit card? The answer is no. In that arrangement, you pay a monthly portion of debt, plus interest, as you have agreed. In that agreement, when

you make that payment at the beginning of the month, you don't owe a cent more until time for the next payment. But wait: bear in mind that this verse *does* teach that it is wrong for me not to pay my debts as I have agreed to do. On time. The minute I violate my agreement to make my payment, on time, I owe money in a sinful way. I need to ask forgiveness of the one I owe, and pay the debt as promptly as possible. After all that's only honest.



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THE WORDS OF Truth

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

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MERCY FOR PREACHERS

Can We KNOW?

MARY WAS HUMAN

KING JESUS

Vol. 34 No. 36

September 18, 1997

WHAT IS THE CONSCIENCE

J.C. Choate

The scriptures speak any number of times about the conscience. The scriptures tell of the scribes and Pharisees bringing to Jesus a woman who had been taken in adultery. According to the law of Moses she was supposed to be stoned to death. They probably thought Jesus would release her and then they could accuse him of not keeping the law. But Jesus simply stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground. Then he said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Then it says, "And they that heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord: And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:7-10).

The enemies of Christianity laid their hands on Paul in Jerusalem, and would have killed him had it not been for the Roman soldiers. After speaking for himself before the crowd and to the Roman Centurion, the chief priests and the Sanhedrian council were called in, "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). Of course Paul, himself, had previously been a persecutor of the Lord's people, and now he was being persecuted by his own Jewish brethren, but he declared that at all times he had done what he had done in all good conscience.

Paul said in Romans 9:1, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my *conscience* also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." Concerning obedience to our government, he says, "Wherefore we must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for *conscience* sake" (Romans 13:5). In I Corinthians

8:7 he speaks of those who have a *weak conscience*. Then he speaks of a *seared conscience* in I Timothy 4:2, or a dead conscience, because one has gone against what he knows is right or wrong so often, and of a *defiled conscience* in Titus 1:15, that is, where one has begun to mix error and truth in his thinking and way of life.

You can see from these verses that the conscience is spoken of often in the scriptures and is described as being in different conditions. But what is the conscience? The dictionary would define it as having to do with the heart, mind, and soul. It is the knowledge accumulated from infancy, on which one relies to make judgments or decisions concerning whether to believe something or not to believe, or whether to do something or not to do it.

There are many people who advocate that all that matters, even in religion is that one not oppose the feelings of his own conscience. There is a flaw in this reasoning, however, which must be pointed out. The conscience approves or disapproves, on the basis of the knowledge which has shaped it. If a person has been taught all of his life that a lie is the truth, his conscience will agree. For example, if one has been taught that "faith only" saves, he will have a good conscience concerning that doctrine. If he has been taught that one church is as good as another, he will himself teach that doctrine, in all good conscience. And so on with everything else. In other words, one's conscience either approves or disapproves on the basis of what he has been taught and what he has come to believe.

In order for a person to have a good conscience in a scriptural sense, his conscience must be knowledgeable of God's word, and then when he acts on that knowledge his conscience agrees that he has done the right thing. If one is governed by a conscience that is void of a knowledge of God's will, even though he may have a "good conscience" in

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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MERCY FOR PREACHERS

I suppose every occupation has its own peculiar characteristics; good points and bad, strengths and weaknesses. In my estimation, however, there is nothing so wonderful and challenging as preaching the Gospel. To spend your working years declaring God's word to people is a noble and high honor. Yet the challenges are deep and perilous. A man who is truly a Gospel preacher will take his work seriously, not with a heart of pleasing the people, even though he would like to do that, but with primary determination to please the Almighty God.

As Paul's pen wrote the words of the Holy Spirit in First and Second Timothy, he gave preachers a long list of duties. Ponder the importance and depth of a few of them: A preacher is to pay no attention to fables of men (I Tim. 1:4); he is to fight the good fight of faith (6:12), and war a good warfare (1:18); he is to hold the faith with a good conscience (1:19); he is to exercise himself unto godliness (4:7); he is to be an example of the believers (4:12); he is to pay careful attention to himself and to his doctrine (4:16); he is to charge the rich in this world not to be high-minded (6:17); and he is of course to preach the word when it is preferred by the people, and preach the same when it is disdained by the people.

The apostle Paul knew that a man--even a preacher--could fall from grace, and that was ever present in his mind. He knew that while striving and struggling daily to save the souls of others, if his life wasn't in harmony with God's will, he would be lost himself. Hear his inspired words: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:27).

Recently, while I was preaching in a Gospel meeting in Collierville, Tennessee, one of the elders of the fine church there made an interesting observation about Paul's writing. Brother Webster remarked, "In Paul's letters there is a difference in his salutations. When he is addressing churches, he wishes for them grace and peace. When he is addressing preachers,

he adds 'mercy'." Observe the point:

"Paul...Unto the church of God which is at Corinth...Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 1:1-3 KJV)."

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace *be* to you, and peace..." (Ephesians 1:1-2).

"Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi...Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:1-2).

Now, hear Paul open letters to Timothy and Titus:

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which* is our hope; Unto Timothy, *my* own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Timothy 1:1-2).

"Paul, a servant of God...To Titus, *mine* own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 1:1-4).

According to Strong's Lexicon, the original Greek word for mercy meant, "kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them." Then, "Of God towards men; in general providence; the mercy and clemency of God in providing and offering to men salvation by Christ."

Apparently Paul, a Gospel preacher, guided by the Holy Spirit, saw a special need for mercy in those who set out to be public proclaimers of God's word. Perhaps he wanted to remind preachers of the fact that they too need mercy. Whatever his reason, as one who is striving with many others to please God as I preach, I am most grateful.

WHAT IS THE CONSCIENCE, *continued from page 1*

believing and doing what he does, his conscience is misleading him. For example, Peter said, "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" (I Peter 3:21). Peter is saying that one is being baptized to be saved, and of course that is based on his knowledge of God's will, that he believe in God, repent of his sins, and confess Christ as the Son of God, as this and numerous other passages of scripture emphasize. The inspired writer also says that this is not done to physically take a bath, to cleanse the body of dirt, but in order that one might have a good conscience toward God. If a person knows what the Lord requires, how can he have a good conscience unless he does what God has commanded?

If one has been taught that it is wrong to take strong drink, to steal, or to do other bad things, but he does them anyway, he is going against what he has been taught--he is going against his conscience and that causes him to feel guilty and condemned. The conscience, in this way, may be a safeguard against bad behavior, and on the other hand it will encourage one to do those things which are right.

But let it be stressed again that in spiritual matters the only time one can "follow his conscience" and be right is when the conscience is governed by God's word. Without that knowledge, even though the conscience may approve of his actions, it is misleading him. Don't allow yourself to be deceived. Read and study the Bible to know what God wants you to do. Do that and then you will have a good conscience, but not until.

Can We KNOW?

Mike Benson

"Do you believe it's possible for a person to really know the truth? There are so many opinions about what the Bible teaches, I sometimes wonder if truth is attainable..."

You have asked an extremely important question. With your indulgence, permit me to ask some questions in return. Consider:

*How can a person be expected to **OBEY** (Hebrews 5:8,9) Christ if he is incapable of knowing what constitutes obedience to Christ? See also I John 2:3,5.

*How can a person be expected to **ABIDE IN** (John 8:31) the word of Christ if he is unable to learn and know Christ's teaching?

*How can a person be expected to **PROVE** (I Thessalonians 5:21) what the Bible says if the truth cannot be distinguished from error? See also I John 4:1.

*How can a person be expected to **CONTEND** (Jude 3) earnestly for the truth if the truth is unattainable?

*How can a person be expected to **TAKE HEED TO** as well as **CONTINUE IN** (I Timothy 4:16) the truth if the truth cannot be known?

*How can a person be expected to **BEWARE** (Matthew 7:15) of false teachers if there is no discernable way of telling whether or not they are teaching error? See also 2 John 7.

*How can a person be expected to **SPEAK** (Ephesians 4:15) the truth in love if he is unable to differentiate between truth and error?

Yes, we can know truth. The Bible says, "**And you shall KNOW THE TRUTH, and the truth shall make you free**" (John 8:32; see also 2 Timothy 3:13-17).

MOST OF A MINUTE - MARY WAS HUMAN

This latest issue of Newsweek magazine has on it's cover a beautiful painting of Mary, mother of Jesus. The Catholic church is in a type of pregnancy about to birth a brand new doctrine. They are considering proclaiming Mary a Co-Redeemer along side of Christ. The pope himself has on a number of occasions referred to Mary as being equal with Christ Himself as our redeemer. To do such of course, is to show that they have no genuine allegiance to the Bible as God's word, for the Bible

clearly says in I Timothy 2:5 that there is "...one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." To then elevate Mary who was, according to the Bible, only human, to being equal with Christ, is pure, unadulterated blasphemy. Nothing less.

I hope you will be an avid student of the Bible. Jesus, our true Redeemer, said, "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.

KING JESUS

David Macy

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" Matthew 2:12. The wise men were guided from an eastern country to the birthplace of Jesus by a star which appeared in the heavens. The star first guided them to Jerusalem where they questioned King Herod about the young child. The inquiries of these wise men greatly disturbed Herod. Evidently he thought this young king was a threat to his own kingdom. He assembled all the religious leaders together and demanded to know where Jesus was to be born. When they answered Bethlehem, he instructed his distinguished visitors to find the young child and bring him word so he could go and worship him. When the wise men left Herod's presence they were guided by the star to the house where Jesus was. When they entered the house they found Mary and her young child, and they fell down and worshiped him. After this spontaneous worship they gave him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. It was an eastern custom to present gifts when you entered the presence of royalty. These wise men recognized Jesus was not an ordinary king because they did not give ordinary gifts. Gold is the most precious of all metals, frankincense was made from the gum of an Arabian tree, and myrrh was an expensive perfume which was also

made from the gum of an oriental tree. The testimony of the wise men, their worship and their gifts vividly point out the kingship of Jesus from the very beginning of his life here on earth.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" Isaiah 9:6. Isaiah prophesied that the government would be on the shoulders of Jesus and gave some beautiful names by which he would be called. The word "Wonderful" indicates something which is amazing and marvelous and our King was the most marvelous and amazing man who ever walked on the face of this earth. A counselor is a confidential advisor and Jesus advised all his subjects through his words which are found in the New Testament. King Jesus is called the mighty God because he has prevailed and conquered, and he will continue to prevail and conquer until all his enemies are crushed beneath his feet. He is called the everlasting Father because he is actually the Father of all eternity. Jesus is truly the Prince of Peace. He is the source of all our blessings and the giver of our peace. Those who are not subject to his loving rule never experience the refreshing, sweet streams of his peace which passes all understanding. How could we ever praise and honor King Jesus enough?



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THE WORDS OF Truth

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Vol. 34 No. 37

September 25, 1997

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THE MAN BORN BLIND
CHRISTIAN FRUIT
NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIAN
LIVING
ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Johnny Ramsey

Although many people consider the church of the New Testament unimportant, we find in studying the Bible an inseparable yoking of Christ and His spiritual body--the church (Colossians 1:18). In fact, in Acts 8:1 and 9:4 we learn that to persecute the church is tantamount to opposing the Lord. In Ephesians 3:21 God is said to be glorified *in the church by Christ Jesus!* The church, over which the Savior rules as head (Ephesians 5:23), is "the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23). Paul told the Ephesian elders, according to Acts 20:28, that Jesus "purchased the church with his own blood." When men obey the teachings of the gospel they receive remission of sins through the blood of Christ and thus are added to the church of the Lord (Acts 2:38-41). Christ has absolute authority over the church; therefore whatever He desires in worship, doctrine, organization or life must be honored. For, we are subject to Him (Ephesians

5:24). This is the exact reason churches of Christ do not use mechanical instruments of music in worship. The head of the church said *sing* (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) and it makes sense to do what He *tells* us to do (John 2:5) and not those things men *want* to do. We observe the Lord's Supper each "first day of the week" just as Acts 20:7 illustrates. We have no earthly headquarters and each congregation is self-governing under the guidance of the Scriptures (Hebrews 12:23; Acts 14:23; I Peter 5:1-4). This makes sense to folk committed to following the Bible and the authority of Christ in the church. Such a position makes the Lord's cause unique in doctrine, design, deportment and destiny. Christ's church, built upon His divine power, must be kept pure and scriptural until our Redeemer comes again (Matthew 16:18 and Ephesians 5:27).

Let Us All Study the Bible More

THE MAN BORN BLIND

Mike Benson

As Jesus neared the end of His earthly ministry, He was met with growing devotion as well as growing opposition. Because of His teaching, many of the Jews believed in Him (Jn. 8:30). By contrast, some Jews -- especially the Pharisees, were determined to kill Him (Jn. 8:37, 58-59).

John chapter nine opens with Jesus passing by and seeing a blind man (Jn. 9:1). The man suffered from congenital blindness. Of the six examples of Jesus healing of the blind, this was the only case of one *born* blind (cf, Matt. 9:27-31; 12:22-23; 15:30-31; 21:14; Mk. 8:22-26; 10:46-52). The man himself admitted to the unique

nature of his healing (Jn. 9:32). He seems to have been a familiar figure in Jerusalem (Jn. 9:8). In this passage we observe three practical questions:

I. **WHO** is to blame? (Jn. 9:2-3).

The man's plight provoked the disciples to ask, "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" (Jn. 9:2). *Rabbi* meant "teacher." As students they desired instruction from The Great Teacher. However, as evidenced by their question, they labored under a common misconception.

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CHRISTIAN FRUIT

To get the most out of this article, first read John 15:1-11.

These words were apparently spoken by our Lord as He and His apostles were walking toward the garden of Gethsemane. The previous chapter ends with the words of Jesus, "Arise, let us go hence."

The key thought of this passage is clearly spoken in verse five where Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

These few verses have been treasured, oddly enough, by those wishing to find Biblical support for the concept of denominationalism. As you know, they have a hard time of it with passages such as First Corinthians one, in which Paul speaks clearly in commanding no division, and that we should be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). They maintain that when Jesus describes Himself as the vine and says, "ye are the branches," He is using branches to describe different churches and doctrines. But this scripture has nothing to do with various churches or with God approving denominationalism. Bear in mind that Jesus defines the application of His illustration when He says in verse six, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered..." A *man is a branch*, not a church or body of people. The branches are you and me.

Now let's learn some lessons.

1. Every member of the body of Christ, which is His church, is personally responsible for bearing fruit. Verse two says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." May none of us feel that we are pleasing God simply because we worship with a faithful, active church or because we are part of a Christian family. We must *each* bear fruit as Christians.

What is Christian fruit? Let's look through some passages which define fruit and see what we find. The fruit which Christians must possess is the fruit of:

A. Holiness. "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:22).

B. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

C. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:5-8).

D. Teaching and encouraging the saints. The apos-

tle Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippians 1:22,24, "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I know not...Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

E. The contributions Christians make to the work of the church. "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Philippians 4:17).

F. Righteousness. "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:18).

Secondly, every faithful Christian will experience purging in his or her life. Again, verse two says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." This is referred to in Hebrews twelve as the "chastening of God" which will come to those God loves. How does God chasten or "prune" His children? He chastens us through Gospel preaching which reproves, rebukes, and exhorts us (II Tim. 4:2). He chastens us with the correction we receive from our brethren when we sin, (Gal. 6:1, II Thess. 3:6). He chastens us by permitting us to face hardships and losses in life, knowing that the trial of our faith "worketh patience" (Ja. 1:3)

Thirdly, only Christians can bear fruit which is pleasing to 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. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (Jn. 15:4-5). Others may perform noble deeds, but they will not gain God's approval in so doing. Their good deeds are not truly to the glory of God if they aren't truly giving the credit to God by how they live.

Fourthly, a man who is "in Christ" and thus saved, can live in such a way as to lose his salvation and be lost. Jesus said, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (Jn. 15:6). Those who believe "once saved always saved" will often dismiss present day examples of people who were faithful and became corrupt by saying, "They were never *really* saved, they just appeared to be." And yet, the lost one here, who is to be cast into the fire, is one who didn't *abide* in Christ the True Vine. That he ceased to abide in the vine implies clearly that he was once *in* the vine. He wasn't pretending, he really was *in* Christ! Yet he didn't abide there, and he is thus lost. The same principle applies of course to people today who become Christians and then fall from grace.

Finally, all that Jesus taught here, with all its demands and warnings, is taught out of love. We may mistakenly think that love means letting us do as we will. We may think of God, "If He really loves me He wants me to be happy." Yet, in His infinite love, Christ teaches in this text that we are simply to obey Him. If we ever hope to see heaven we must stay connected to the vine, which is Christ Jesus.

Abide in Him. Without Him you can do nothing. With Him you can live forever.

It was widely held among the Jews that suffering, especially blindness, was due to sin. "There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity" (Rabbi Ammi). The disciples evidently accepted this view, but in the present case were confused as to its application; in their minds this was an "either-or" situation. There was real difficulty in seeing how a man could have sinned before birth. On the other hand, how could a man bear such a punishment for the sin of his parents? One commentator observes, "The disciples did not look at the man as an object of mercy but rather as a subject for a theological discussion." Indeed. The disciples found it much easier to discuss an abstract subject like sin, instead of ministering to the concrete needs of the blind man.

Jesus responded by saying that neither the man, nor his parents were responsible (Jn. 9:3). By that He did not mean that neither the man nor his parents were sinners, rather, that his blindness was not some sort of penalty administered by God because of a specific sin in their lives. Some suffering is, in fact, a consequence of parental sin (Ex. 20:5,6; 2 Sam. 12:7-14). Some suffering is caused by personal sin (Prov. 13:15). Some suffering can be attributed to Satan (Job 2:7; 2 Cor. 12:7). But some suffering is totally unrelated to sin; this was such a case.

Jesus also pointed out that God hadn't deliberately made the man blind so that, years later, He could perform a miracle. Rather, "God overruled the disaster of the child's blindness so that, when the child grew to manhood, he might, by recovering his sight, see the glory of God in the face of Christ" (F.F. Bruce). Jesus taught the disciples that instead of wrestling with the origin of the blindness, they should focus on the miracle to be performed and its attendant blessings.

II. **WHAT must be done?** (Jn. 9:4-5).

Jesus stressed both "we" and "must" in relation to the works of God (Jn. 9:4). The ASV reads "we" instead of "I"; the disciples were to share, as in a partnership, the responsibility. "Must" conveyed the idea of compelling necessity. Jesus was sent in order to do the works of God (ie, to open spiritually blinded eyes - Jn. 3:17; Isa. 35:5; 42:7). The metaphors "day" and "night" stressed an urgency, Jesus' time on earth was limited.

Jesus then emphasized His deity by the statement, "I am the light of the world." When Jesus made a claim to be divine, He often supported it with a miracle which was similar to the claim (cf, Bread of life--Jn. 6:10-14,35; Resurrection and the

life--Jn. 11:25,43-44; Light of the world--Jn. 9:5). In this case, He would bring light to the eyes of the man born blind. The purpose of the miracle was to prove Him to be the Son of God and to produce faith (Jn. 9:35-38; 20:30-31).

Guy N. Woods once remarked, "Insofar...as the world accepts Christ, He is its Light; and it continues in darkness when His teaching is not received." I am told that in the United States somebody goes blind every twenty minutes. It is far worse to be spiritually blind (cf. 2 Pet. 1:9; Rev. 3:15-17).

III. **WHEN is there blessing?** (Jn. 9:6-7).

Jesus proceeded to cure the man (Jn. 9:6). On one occasion Jesus cured a blind man by spitting on his eyes and then touching them (Mk. 8:22-25). Some in the ancient world believed in the curative power of saliva. However, Jesus' saliva had no immediate relationship with the healing itself. Sometimes He healed at a distance, at other times by a touch, or by a word; on this occasion He made a clay. In every instance the medium employed was the proper one for the person involved.

He then instructed the man to and wash in the pool of Siloam (Jn. 9:7). "Siloam" meant *sent* likely because its water's came from a higher source; Siloam is the LXX translation of the Hebrew Shiloah. John saw Jesus as the Sent One (ie, the spiritual Siloam -- Jn. 9:4). The blind man received his sight as he washed in the pool of Siloam, but he actually received it through the power of the Sent One.

The blind man washed as he was told. Even though his eyes had been anointed, the healing would not have occurred had he not obeyed the Lord's command to wash. The command was a test of the blind man's faith (Jn. 9:11,15). Where conditions are prescribed, they must be met, before blessings can be bestowed (cf. 2 Kgs. 5:10-14; Acts 2:38).

Conclusion

Questions from John 9:1-7: Who is to blame? (*No one*). What must be done? (*The works of God*). When is there blessing? (*After obedience*).

The result of the blind man's healing was that he believed (Jn. 9:38,25) and obeyed. We should do likewise (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 20:30-31; Mk. 16:16).

NEW TESTAMENT Christian Living

Johnny Ramsey

Man is by nature a worshipful being. Wherever the knowledge of God and Christ has not gone, man pays homage to a mountain stream or a babbling brook. Indeed man must worship something. It might be the sun, moon or stars - but man will bow down to something or someone. The only true object of man's devotion is God. Some religious groups however, worship mere men. One of the largest groups on earth openly pays honor to one that they term "the Vicar of Christ on earth." But he from whom they claim succession (Peter), said very pointedly to one who would worship him, "Stand up for I myself am a man." (Acts 10:26).

We are not even supposed to worship angels. The beloved John was instructed by an angel he had tried to worship to "worship God" (Rev. 22:9). Jesus told Satan, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). So beloved friends, we must realize that Jehovah is the object of our devotion.

Not only does the Bible teach us whom we are to worship but it sets forth how we are to pay homage to the Lord. Some people have the mistaken idea that we can worship any way

that we so desire and still please God. But Jesus said, "God is spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). When Jesus said we must worship with the proper spirit he evidently had in mind such requisites of worship as humility, sincerity and reverence. The publican's prayer in Luke 18 is indicative of this, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." An arrogant, haughty man cannot worship acceptably. By worshipping according to truth the Lord meant that we must have authority in the Word of God for all that we practice in our worship. In John 17:17 we read that God's word is truth. Therefore, friends, if we cannot find a "thus saith the Lord" for the worship we engage in we are not fulfilling the divine dictates concerning our devotion to God. The early Christians met on the first day of the week to sing spiritual songs, to pray, to read the holy scriptures, to give of their monetary means, and to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42, Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19, I Corinthians 16:1-2, Acts 20:7). Any addition or subtraction from this divine pattern does not have the sanction of the Lord.

May God help us to return to "the old paths and walk therein."

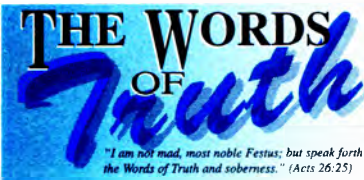
MOST OF A MINUTE - ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD

Genesis 5:21 says, "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselan: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters."

Did you catch that? Enoch walked with God *after* he became a father. I suppose many young fathers can relate to the shock of being a dad for the first time. To have someone who is so totally dependent on you and your wife is a powerful force and should be taken with a sober, level head, and a

heart that humbly turns to God for guidance. When Manoah, Samson's dad, learned his wife was with child, he prayed, "Teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born" (Judges 13).

Young man, are you about to be a father soon? Then stand up straight, shoulder your responsibility. Provide for your family financially, emotionally, and most of all, spiritually. Be the spiritual leader of your home as your young family draws ever closer together in submission to the Almighty God.



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The Elders
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1501 Sixth Avenue
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THE WORDS OF Truth

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

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October 2, 1997

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Christ Changes Us

Johnny Ramsey

I once read a fascinating story of a tramp who bought a beautiful vase for eleven cents at an auction. This was every penny he had. In his messy shanty across the tracks, the new possession looked terribly out of place. The man was wise enough to keep the vase and lose his old lifestyle. The precious possession demanded that the vagabond ways of the past be scrapped. So he cleaned up the place. Jesus can do the same for us, if we are discerningly perceptive. We should heed the admonition, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11). The letter to the Galatians closes by challenging us to be a new creation as we put to death the old carnal man of sin and shallow endeavor (Gal. 5:17-18; 6:14-15). Sadly, some bring all their old baggage with them. To pursue godliness while clinging to the world will always result in misery (James 3:9-10).

We must allow Christ to change our attitude, actions and affections, if heaven would be our destination. We should leave far behind us rebellion, sensuality and laziness, once we enter the kingdom of God. Not enough teaching is done concerning responsibility and spiritual growth and fruit-bearing in the lives of Christians. Many babes in Christ are non-conversant on loyalty, fidelity and commitment. We work diligently to convert, but are not as incessant on stressing those matters that pertain to spiritual maturity. When we work on our attitude, we begin to realize that we were saved to serve and not be carried around on ivory beds of ease. We should take up our cross daily and follow the Lord who sacrificially gave up the glory of heaven to save us (Luke 9:23; Heb. 2:9).

Our attitude will develop us into soul-winners for Jesus rather than demanding that we be pampered by others. We will be so busy in helping others that we will have no time to feel sorry for ourselves. Complaining will be crucified as we rejoice in the redemption of folk we personally taught and brought to the Savior. We will be those who take the good news to the lost and ring the message out over land and sea and many can be free! Our affections will be upon things above and not on emphasizing the mundane matters of carnality (Rom. 8:6). Those shallow joys of the past will be left far behind us as we now have a different and better perspective on the use of time, talent and money. Christianity definitely rearranges our priorities.

Because we follow Jesus, we no longer view others as those who can help us gain status, but we deeply yearn to help save their souls. The fleeting wealth of earthly honor fades and the glory of God pervades our thinking. The lust of worldly lore passes from our minds as we now, in Christ, have an insatiable appetite for spiritual progress in the direction of heaven.

*There is a habitation
Built by the living God,
For all of every nation
Who seek that grand abode.
O Zion, Zion, when shall I dwell in thee?*

Yes, our loving Redeemer can change our attitudes, affections and actions to make this life and the world to come a much brighter arrangement. May we allow the beauty of Jesus to be seen in us!

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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DID DAVID TEACH WE ARE BORN IN SIN?

In the course of David's heart-felt prayer for forgiveness, apparently in reflection of his sins with Bathsheba, he wrote this:

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5).

Few verses have been the focus of as much perplexity as this. What does he mean? In his commentary on the verse, Adam Clarke writes, "I believe David to speak here of what is commonly called original sin...as my parts were developed in the womb, the sinful principle diffused itself through the whole, so that body and mind grew up in a state of corruption and moral imperfection."

Matthew Henry, on the same verse, agrees with Clarke as he speaks for David, "Lord I have not only been guilty of adultery and murder, but I have an adulterous murderous nature; therefore I abhor myself." Later he writes, "it is to be sadly lamented by every one of us that we brought into the world with us a corrupt nature, wretchedly degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude; we have from our birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both. This is what we call original sin, because it is as ancient as our original..."

Sadly, the NIV has mis-translated this verse this way: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Such mis-translation seems influenced by the positions held by Clarke and Henry and others.

Although, admittedly, one might take this verse by itself and assume that he was born a sinner, we must not take this verse independent of all others, for all the Bible is inspired, and the Old and New Testaments teach that we are not responsible for any sins but our own. Do we carry the guilt or "stain" of Adam's sin? Was I formed in the womb in a "state of corruption and moral imperfection?" The answer is no. The Bible teaches that we are responsible for no one's sins but our own.

Ezekiel wrote, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity

of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20).

The apostle Paul wrote, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10). It can't be both ways. Either we are guilty of only our own sins, or we carry the guilt of someone else's sins as well. Paul answered this question clearly with emphasis.

It is one thing to say that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), but it is quite another to say that we carry the guilt of someone's else's sin, "Original sin," through our formation in the womb.

Those who hold to the "original sin" idea are faced with, among other things, a sticky problem in those who die as babies. If babies are born in sin, and they die before their first birthday, are they not all destined for hell? If they say such babies are not bound for hell, then where do the scriptures teach how they are saved? They cannot be scripturally baptized for the remission of sins, because repentance must precede baptism, and they are too young to repent (Acts 2:38). They are too young to believe that Jesus is God's Son, and Jesus taught, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). People in sin who don't repent will perish: "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" (II Peter 3:9).

The truth is that babies don't need to be saved because they aren't born lost. They don't have sin, not of their own, nor of Adam. They are safe. That is why Jesus could encourage people to become converted and be as little children. He knew they were not born black with sin, but were rather safe, having no sin. Jesus said, "Except ye be converted, and become as

continued on page 3

Our Spirit

Mike Benson

"Where does a person's spirit come from? When exactly does a person's spirit leave his body and when does he receive it? Please explain."

Since the immortal (Revelation 6:9) soul (Matthew 10:28) or spirit (Ecclesiastes 12:7) is a person's most *valued* possession (Matthew 16:26), these questions deserve special attention. Consider:

1. **The spirit comes from God.** The scriptures teach that God is "*the Father of spirits*" (Hebrews 12:9), "*the God of the spirits of all flesh*" (Numbers 16:22), and that it is He who "*forms the spirit of man within him*" (Zechariah 12:1).

2. **The spirit is separated from the body at death.** "...*The body without the spirit is dead...*" (James 2:26). See also Acts 7:59, Luke 8:55.

3. **The spirit is "knit" to the body at conception.** Since the body *without* the spirit is dead, it follows then that the body *with* the spirit is alive. And since an infant's body -- small as it may be -- is *alive at conception* (nine months before birth) we must conclude that God gives the soul at this time.

DID DAVID TEACH WE ARE BORN IN SIN?, *continued from page 2*

little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2). How could He say that if they were lost?

Now, back to Psalm 51:5. What *did* David mean by this?

He meant that his mother dwelt in a sinful world, and that she brought him into a sinful and sin-filled world. To illustrate, we read in the New Testament from the sinners at Pentecost, "And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born" (Acts 2:8). These people weren't born *speaking* the language of their people, but were rather born where people commonly spoke the language.

Having said that, now observe that in David's case this is true in a general sense, and perhaps also in a specific sense. Consider this possibility: In Genesis thirty-eight, Tamar deceived Judah into thinking she was a common harlot, and negotiated with him for her sinful services. She thus conceived and bore by him illegitimate twins.

Back in Deuteronomy twenty-three we read this about illegitimate, or bastard children, and the sin of their conception: "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 23:2).

When we read the family tree of David in Matthew chapter one, we count and find that Jesse, David's father, was the tenth generation from Judah, the father of Tamar's illegitimate children.

"And **Judas** begat **Phares** and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat **Esrom**; and Esrom begat **Aram**; And Aram begat **Aminadab**; and Aminadab begat **Naasson**; and Naasson begat **Salmon**; And Salmon begat **Booz** of Rachab; and Booz begat **Obed** of Ruth; and Obed begat **Jesse**; And Jesse begat **David** the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias" (Matthew 1:2-6 emphasis mine, GC).

Thus, in Psalm 51:5, David may have been making reference to the fact that his people for the past ten generations had been bearing the curse placed on Judah. Although David was not born guilty of sin, he nonetheless knew that he was born into a sinful world, and into a sinful family.

We will be judged by own actions, not those of others.

EXAMPLE

Author Unknown

It is all vain to preach of the truth
To the eager ears of a trusting youth
If, when the lad is standing by,
He sees you cheat and hears you lie.
Fine words may grace the advice you give,
But the youth will learn from the way you live.

Honor's a word that a thief may use.
High sounding language the base may choose.
Speech is empty and preaching vain.
Though the truth shines clear and the lesson is plain:

If you play false, he will turn away.
For your life must be square with the things you say.

The longer you live you will find this true;
As you would teach you must also do,
Rounded sentences, smooth and fair,
Were better not said if your deeds aren't square.
If you'd teach him to live his very best,
You must live your life to the self-same test.

MOST OF A MINUTE - CARING FOR THE WIDOWS

There's a special segment of our society which is sometimes ignored by us, but is closely watched by God. They are the widows. Did you know that part of my service to God as a Christian is showing care and concern for widows?

Consider these verses which reflect this:

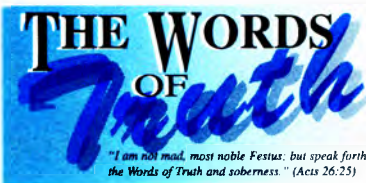
"Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry" (Exodus 22:22-23).

"Honor widows that are widows indeed" (I Timothy 5:3).

"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).

So, hurry up! Find you some widows you can help, and get with it!

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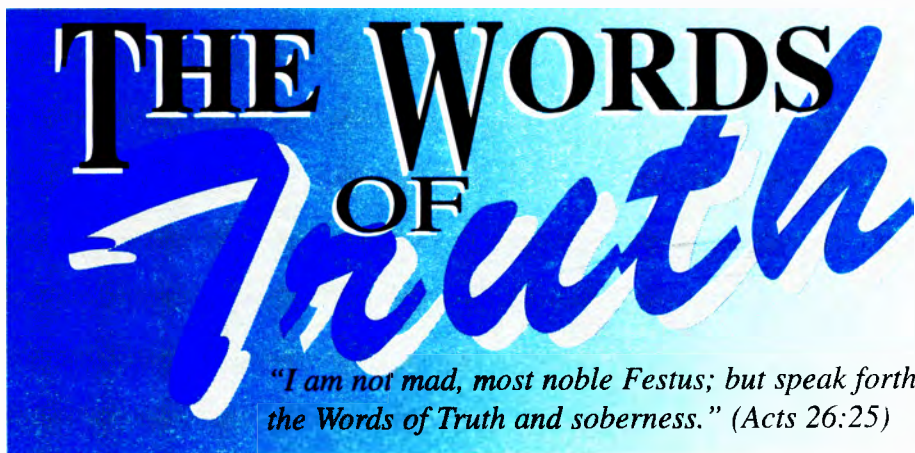
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Vol. 34 No. 39

October 9, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

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JOB'S COMFORTERS

The Great Decision

A Word to Preachers

LISTENING TO ROOSEVELT

The Last Days

J.C. Choate

The prophets of God spoke of the last days. Isaiah said, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2, 3). Micah makes a similar statement in Micah 4:1, 2.

Coming over to the New Testament, as recorded in Acts 2, we have the apostles gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost as the Lord had instructed (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8). Then the Holy Spirit was poured out on them as promised in John 14:26. As a result they began to speak in the languages of those present from nations throughout the world. The people were amazed and thought perhaps they were drunk, "But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and harken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh..." (Acts 2:14-17).

The Hebrew writer declared, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by

whom also he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1,2). Also, Paul wrote Timothy, "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affections, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Now as we can see from the several verses quoted, the various writers speak of the last days and of the different things that would take place during these days. First of all, we might ask what days are under consideration, when they were to begin, if we are living in those days now, what would take place during those days, and how long they would last.

Please note that the Old Testament writers spoke of the last days as being in the future. Then after the death of Christ, the writers of the New Testament speak of these days as being in existence. You will note that we quoted from Peter on the days of Pentecost, and he quoted from Joel, saying that which was taking place at that time was that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, and he said that the Lord would pour out his Spirit on all flesh in the last days. Evidently the last days began with the death of Christ. In other words, there had been other great periods of time, such as the patriarchal age and the Mosaical or Jewish age, and with the death of Christ, a new age would begin, and

Continued on Page 3

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ

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JOB'S COMFORTERS

The book of Job is good reading. Reading it isn't simple or quick, but deeply interesting. This is naturally true because it is part of God's revealed word to man and teaches priceless truths about the suffering of the righteous; but it is also true because of the personality of the book. Reading the first two chapters puts the reader in the position of knowing what the characters in the book do not know: that Job's suffering is not due to his rebellion, but rather to a trial of his faith. God believed in Job. He was willing to put Job's faith to the fiery test of suffering. Through most of the book however, Job's friends swirl about him with their theories. They believe that such suffering is always the result of grievous sin. Job disputes their theories. He doesn't claim perfection, but knows he hasn't fallen into unrighteousness.

Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, never tripped on to the right answer. Job knew they were wrong in their assessment, but he didn't know the answer either. In Job 16:1 he "answered and said, 'I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end?'"

Job was right. They were miserable comforters.

Sometimes we are miserable comforters too, but for a different reason. Interestingly enough, Job's friends were good at something we are often poor at doing. Upon seeing Job's suffering, they surmised that he was living in sin, and was experiencing the result of God's displeasure. After the silence of shock upon seeing Job's disease, these three begin a relentless persuasion for Job to repent. They were wrong about his sins, but to their credit, they loved God and Job. There is no motive in their arguments except concern for the welfare of Job's soul.

They made their mistake out of ignorance of God. They had an incomplete revelation. God had not yet revealed Himself in a complete way, and they were basing their view of Job on supposition. I Corinthians 13:9-12 makes us reflect on times like these by saying, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. for now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known..."

Today we have the complete word from God (Jude 3, II Peter 1:3). But do we go to our brothers and sisters in sin and encourage them to repent as Job's friends did? Usually we do not. We have instruction to

do so: "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 (Gal. 6:1)."

Why are we so hesitant to talk with our wayward brothers or sisters about their soul? There are a variety of reasons. We fear rejection. Perhaps the close friendship will be irreparably damaged. Perhaps the person will become angry and say hurtful things. Perhaps he will find other friends who will comfortably ignore his sin. Perhaps this friend and brother will respond as did David to Nathion, "I have sinned against the Lord..." (II Samuel 12:13), or on the other hand, he might respond like Ahab did to Elijah "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? (I Kings 21:20)."

Sometimes we are hesitant because we have little confidence in our knowledge of the Bible. We are afraid that we might correct someone and later learn that we are the one who was wrong.

Other times we fail in this because we recognize our own weakness. We know we are far short of perfect, far short of what we would like to be. We fear that we won't say the right words to keep us from sounding "holier than thou." Ironically, the stronger Christian a man is, the more aware he is of his sin. The agnostic reprobate can sin without batting an eye. The strong Christian cannot. He has put to death the old man of sin (Rom. 6), and cannot sin without the pain of conscience.

While these excuses for never approaching a brother or sister with their sin may seem strong, they are only excuses! We are commanded to confess our faults one to another (James 5:16). Christians are not policemen in their relationship with one another. Furthermore, most Christians are not elders, charged with overseeing the flock. However, there are times when we will have an influence no one else may have. We should use that influence for Christ.

When the sins are from one Christian to another, the offended brother is to go privately to his brother and ask him to repent (Matt. 18:15-17). When someone in the church is living in sin, the faithful are to go to the weak brother and encourage his repentance (Gal. 6:1).

Interestingly enough, Job's friends were miserable comforters because they operated on a limited revelation from God. We may be miserable comforters because we imagine all sorts of reasons why we should not talk to brothers and sisters about their soul.

Go in love. Speak kindly. Encourage supportingly. Let us help one another to go to heaven.

that would be the Christian age. This would be the last great age before the return of Christ, and therefore that means that the last days refer to that period of time from the death of Christ until the Lord's return, which will bring to the end of the Christian age and all things as we know them. That also means that we are living even now in the last days.

Other things would take place during these last days. It would be during this time that the apostles would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that the gospel would be preached for the first time in fact, that the church would be established, that the Christian age would flourish, that God would speak through his son, Jesus Christ, that the New Testament would be given to man in written form, that Christ would come again, as well as many other great events.

Paul also warned that in these last days perilous times would come. It would appear from the things listed that would characterize this period of time that man has always had to contend with these sins, but perhaps he had in mind that things would deteriorate to the point where these acts would be much worse than before. But whatever the state of man during this time, it should be remembered that man is in sin, is lost, and is in need of salvation, and Christ is the one and only savior. Let us therefore respond to him by faith and obedience so

we can be saved and be a part of his family. In this way we can be saved and have the hope of eternal life and spend our life in an effort to take the gospel to the rest of the world.

Some take the last days to mean only "a few days" literally left before the Lord's return. Actually the last days have been going on for almost two thousand years. How many more days it will include we have no way of knowing. The Lord could come today or a hundred years from now, or a thousand years, but who knows? Only God knows (Matthew 24:36). The point is, all of these days left before the Lord's return, whatever their number, are said to be the last days. Again, regardless of the number of days we have left before the Lord's return, they will be few in comparison to eternity. We need, therefore, to prepare for the Lord's return, and with his coming the bringing to an end of these last days. At this point all will be resurrected, the heavens and earth as we know them will be burned up, the judgment will take place, the wicked will be cast into eternal torment, and the righteous will be taken to heaven to live with the Lord forevermore. All we have then are these last days to prepare for eternity. Let us use these days wisely. There will be no second chance.

The Great Decision

Johnny Ramsey

In the French Revolution, Lafayette was dismissed from the army, declared an exile and a price was placed on his head. This great hero was captured while trying to escape to America and was imprisoned in Germany. He was offered freedom if he would join in a plot against France. Even though ill and threatened with a long confinement should he refuse to cooperate, Lafayette boldly replied: "Never! I am still Lafayette!"

There are times that children of God should express the same heroic courage. To the tempting wiles of the Devil we must firmly answer: "Never! I am still a Christian!"

The line of least resistance produces crooked rivers and spineless Christians. Whatever the occasion and whoever the tempter may be we must never contaminate the will of God with mundane provisions. It is never right to do wrong (Romans 3:8, Galatians 6:8). The one great decision of life is thus reduced to this question: "Shall I serve the Lord or carnal desires?" Once decided we have virtually settled the course of our destiny. Once decided to the Lord's advantage (and above all, our own) there is but one reply to any device of the Devil: "Never! I am still a Christian!"

Through the tempter in efforts bold,
Or in subtlety as of old,
Should essay to allure my soul,
I'll never forsake my Lord.

A Word to Preachers

by Bobby Key

The preacher of the gospel should not be overcome with material things. He must not lose sight of spiritual values. It is unwise to turn aside after things that perish while neglecting the great things that will outlive him.

One is a hireling who preaches simply for what he can get out of it from a financial standpoint. I am afraid for the preacher who is forever seeking better and more comfortable quarters; bigger and better churches, and bigger and better salaries. It is true that the laborer is worthy of his hire, but the servant of the crucified Master ought not to be a seeker after luxury.

Preachers of today have it so much better than those of yesterday. Almost one hundred years ago, brother James A. Harding said to a young man, a student in the old Potter Bible School, Bowling Green, Kentucky, "Frank, I want you to hitch up the carriage and drive me to the depot. I must leave for a Meeting."

When this young man stopped in front of the Harding home a little later, Mrs. Harding was inquiring how her husband expected to buy a ticket without money. That good servant was heard to reply. "I'll go as far as I can." The trip into Bowling Green was made without further word of ticket or money.

Soon after entering the little city, a man waved for the carriage to stop, explaining that for some time he had desired to have fellowship with Harding in spreading the gospel of Christ, and handed him a twenty dollar bill. At the depot he purchased his ticket, turned to Frank, and placing every bit of the change in his hand, instructed that it be given to his wife.

Harding then boarded the train and continued his journey to some favored place to tell of Him who said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33) - Miami, OK

MOST OF A MINUTE - LISTENING TO ROOSEVELT

Do you sometimes feel that people don't really listen to what you are saying?

The story is told of Franklin D. Roosevelt who had such a feeling. Every day a number of dignitaries would come to see him and talk with him, but didn't seem to care much to listen to him. So, one day he decided to test the visitors. As people were filing by him and talking, he would say, "Yesterday I murdered by grandmother." Most people never even responded, and apparently didn't pay any

attention. Finally, the Japanese ambassador came by, and upon hearing the statement says, "Well, Sir, I'm sure she had it coming."

Listen: if you ever get to feeling that people aren't listening to what you have to say, remember that God always listens to what His people have to say. John 9:31 says, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

Pray. He will listen.

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THE WORDS OF Truth

MEMPHIS

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 40

October 17, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

EMOTIONALISM
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EMOTIONALISM

Chuck Webster

James Dobson tells a story about a high school in a small Oklahoma town that produced a series of terrible football teams (Focus on the Family, 1990). They usually lost the important games and were invariably clobbered by their arch rivals from a nearby community. Understandably, the students and their parents began to get depressed and dispirited by the drubbings their troops were given every Friday night.

Finally a wealthy oil producer decided to take things into his own hands. He asked to speak to the team in the locker room after another devastating defeat. What followed was one of the most dramatic football speeches of all times. The businessman offered a brand-new Ford to every boy on the team and to each coach if they could simply defeat their bitter rivals in the next game.

The team went crazy. They howled and cheered and slapped each other. For seven days the boys ate, drank, and breathed football. At night they dreamed about rumble seats and touchdowns. Finally, the big night arrived. Excitement was at an unprecedented high. The coach made several inane comments, and the boys charged onto the field, where they were demolished 38-0. In spite of high emotions and a tangible goal, it could not replace weeks of undisciplined, lackluster practice.

It is simply impossible for emotion alone to bring about long-lasting results. That holds true not only for football teams, but also for churches and individual Christians. A talented preacher can stir a crowd's emotions and lead them to vow greater faithfulness to Christ. He can vividly describe the horror of hell and motivate church members to tell their friends about Christ. He can graphically depict Calvary's terrifying scenes, and

fill the aisles with penitent sinners. He might move a church's conscience and persuade dozens to sign up for a new program. *But it won't last...* Unless it's grounded in firmly held convictions. Often emotion stimulates initial obedience, but in order for long-lasting dedication to result, it must be followed by solid grounding in the faith. Peter's message convicted his hearers, and after baptism they "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:27-42). Emotion without knowledge leads to a Christian's being "carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). Like the stony-soil Christian, he or she receives the word "with joy," but that joy lasts only a short while, and life's struggles easily undermine that emotion (Matt. 13:20-21).

There's nothing wrong with emotion in religion. God wants every aspect of our beings, including our emotions, to be submitted to Him (Matt. 22:37). But along with loving God with all of our heart, we must love Him with all of our *mind*. Paul writes, "I *know* whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12). "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Let's be excited about our faith. In fact, let's be so thrilled about serving Christ that 100 soldiers couldn't prevent our telling others. But let's always remember to ground our emotion in something more substantive and lasting than feelings. Let our faith be grounded in God's truth, because we know it will never die.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Max Lucado Speaks in Washington

The church of Christ is undenominational. It always has been, because the scriptures teach that we can and must know the truth with reference to people pleasing God and going to heaven (Jn 8:32; II Jn 9-10; Jn 12:48; I Cor. 1:10-13, etc.). The major doctrine one must accept in order to be denominational in his thinking is that all religions which profess some allegiance to Christ, are heaven bound regardless of their beliefs and practices. Catholics have an earthly head to the church; Methodist sprinkle babies and call it baptism; Baptists baptize people but tell them it has nothing to do with salvation; and on and on. Yet, one who is denominational believes all are saved anyway. This major belief, which is necessary to denominationalism, is unscriptural, and in essence makes the Bible mostly useless. After all, according to this, most of it can be completely ignored and transgressed and folks still have God's approval. Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Thus the church of Christ is not denominational. It cannot be because Christ is not denominational. He never said "join the church of your choice." He said, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:9)."

This is the main reason I oppose the change movement among the churches of Christ today. It is about denominationalism, and converting as many members of the church to this disposition as possible. The rest of this article will show an example of denominationalism in its purest form.

The man who led the Nashville Jubilee, the foremost lectureship of the change movement among churches of Christ today, Max Lucado, spoke on October 4, 1997 at the Promise Keeper's rally in Washington, D.C. My heart breaks as I sit and read the transcript of his speech. C-Span presented his credentials as follows: "Max Lucado, Oak Hills Church of Christ, San Antonio, Texas, Senior Pastor".

I do not have room here to print the entire transcript from Max's speech at Promise Keeper's. If you would like to read it all for clarifi-

cation, or to see if I have unfairly taken his words out of context, call or write and I will send the entire script free of charge. Here are some excerpts:

Max Lucado's speech begins: "I want you to think about where you attend or have attended for quite often. And on the count of three I want all of us to say the name of our religious heritage, denomination or name of church. Will you do that with me? On the count of three I'd like to hear it from you. One, two, three." (Crowd noise). "Did anybody understand anything that was said? Now on the count of three I would like for you to shout with me the name of the Savior who has redeemed your soul, Jesus Christ. One, two, three." (Crowd: "Jesus Christ!") "We are...amen...(pause for applause). We are at a very important point and the reason we are here today and that is to ask the Almighty God to unite His church. We are asking this afternoon for the miracle of millennium. The watching world has never seen the united church..."

"So how can we unite the church? Let us be very clear in our answer. We cannot. We cannot unite the church. There is no man among us who has the wisdom to disentangle our problems and our conflicts. There is no solution or committee among us that can successfully unify God's people. Unity is not the work of men it is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Almighty God. Harmony is not the result of persuasion, it is the result of a visit from heaven and that is what we are about to request. We are about to request an unparalleled, unprecedented visit from heaven that from this day on the church would have a new day and that the watching world would see a united church... Jesus accepts all who come to the cross adding no other requirements save his sufficient sacrifice. Have you added any requirements to the cross?"

"Have there been any occasions in which you have categorized or pigeonholed religious groups unfairly, in which you have made blanket summaries about entire denominations or groups, if so at this hour, confess to God that you apologize for defaming the body of Christ..."

continued on page 3

Max Lucado Speaks in Washington, *continued from page 2*

At three intervals in Max's speech, different men came to the microphone to lead the huge group in prayer. First an unidentified native American, then at another time David Caistro, the Senior Pastor in New Covenant Ministries, then later, Michael Timmis, a Catholic from the Promise Keeper's Board of Directors.

May I offer some questions and observations?

1. When the Christians in Paul's time were divided ("I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, I am of Apollos..." I Corinthians 1:10-13), Paul taught them an answer that is different from Max's answer. Paul, by inspiration wrote, "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another" (I Corinthians 4:6). Paul told the Christians that to stop the disunity they would have to go back to what is written. Yet, neither Max nor his co-speakers in this discourse even mentions the Bible. To speak of the Bible very much would destroy the Promise Keeper's event. This is Bible-less religious unity. What if some teacher began reading and explaining Ephesians 4:1-6 where God's word says "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in 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?" Would the Holy Spirit, through His inspired words, bring about the kind of unity they want?

2. What would Max do if one of these 700,000 men came to him to ask him what one must do to be saved? He would presumably say exactly the same as most of the "Protestant" teachers there, that a man must accept Jesus as his Savior and then pray for salvation. In the recent past, Max has taught "prayer salvation" on radio, and many have heard. To teach what Jesus (Mark 16:16), Peter (Acts 2:38, I Peter 3:21), and Paul (Gal. 3:27-28) taught would cause major controversy. Yet, one will do better to believe the Lord and His apostles rather than Max and his supporters.

3. What Max is teaching, and the direction the change movement is taking, is that we can be faithful Christians even if we ignore the doctrines of the Bible, so long as we agree to be unified in one religious body with people of all faiths. That, dear reader, is denominationalism, and is opposed to the doctrine of Christ.. The

Bible warns, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (II John 9-10).

The gentleman who prayed at the last break of Max's speech, Michael Timmis, prayed this as the speech was concluded: "Father we recognize that we do have doctrinal differences and that they have existed since the first days of the church but Father we will not let these differences destroy our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ and we know Father that this applies to Protestants of all persuasions; it applies to the Orthodox church, it applies to the Roman Catholics of which I am one. It applies to all who truly believe and love the great creeds and confession of the church. So Father from this day forward as we leave here, let us look upon it and say "Behold how they love one another. They must have been with Jesus Christ, amen." Max and the others then left the stage.

4. We are clearly to love everyone. The Bible teaches that Peter loved Cornelius, but he taught him the truth and commanded him to obey Christ. Stephen loved the Jews, but he taught them that they must repent. Paul loved the Corinthian church, but he taught them to quit wearing men's names and be united in one mind. Love in Christ has never meant saying or implying that a man who preaches and practices a religion in conflict with God's written word is pleasing God with his religion. We must humbly teach and encourage those who are misled by the doctrines of men, and not just stand around boasting of how much we love one another.

The change movement among churches of Christ is a mighty hurricane of destruction. It destroys the unity and peace of churches of Christ. It robs people of the faith that comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), and replaces it with something that is of men. Many great Christian families are now estranged because of the movement. Rivers of tears have been cried. Apparently our generation is not so different from so many which have gone before.

May we boldly and courageously stand on the Rock of Ages until the storm has passed.

MOST OF A MINUTE - THINK ON THESE THINGS

Some think these days we have too many initials to remember. I mean, you have the CIA, the IRS, the PIS, the TBS and the DMV. Have you heard the initials PMA? It simply stands for "positive mental attitude." The value of PMA in our lives is seen in the fact that we're often as happy as we make up our minds to be, and when we have that positive attitude, we perform better at our daily tasks. From a spiritual standpoint, thinking on good things is so

valuable for doing right. That's what Paul wrote by inspiration in Philippians 4:8, "Whatever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, 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. "Today, let's work to think on good things.

EVERY

"Why do members of the church of Christ eat the Lord's Supper every Sunday?"

Thank you for this important question. Let's go to the Scriptures for an answer:

1. **The apostles of Christ were guided into ALL TRUTH.**

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth..." (Jn. 16:13a).

2. **They ate the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day** (cf, Rev. 1:10) --**Each first day of the week.** Consider:

- The disciples were commanded to observe the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-28; cf. Lk. 22:17-19).
- Christians were commanded to assemble *every Sunday* (1 Cor. 16:2; cf. Heb. 10:25).
- The *purpose* of the assemblies was in order to partake of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20, 33) and therefore remember His death (cf, 1 Cor. 11:26, 24).
- The first century church observed the Lord's Supper

according to the apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42). *NOTE: The Greek article (the) proceeding "bread" is not present in the English, but is present in the Greek text. The article indicates that a *special* [unleavened] bread is under consideration (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16).

- The apostolic practice was the first day of the week (*"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..."* Acts 20:7), the *same* day of Christ's Resurrection (Lk.24:1-3, 46, 21).
- 3. **Members of the church of Christ are only trying to follow the New Testament Pattern.** Since there is not a week that passes that does not have a first day, Christians partake of the Lord's Supper on this weekly occasion, according to the apostolic example, and in so doing, remember the sacrifice of Christ on their behalf.

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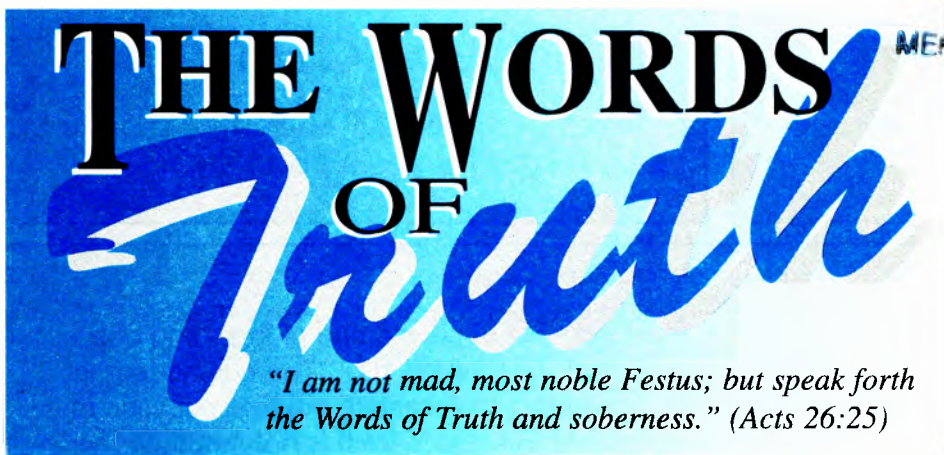
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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
SPEAK IN TONGUES TODAY?
TWO WAYS TO FEAR GOD
THE WAGES OF SIN
CAVING IN TO THE "CLOUT" OF
HOMOSEXUALITY

Speak In Tongues Today?

"Do you believe that people can speak in tongues today like they did in New Testament times?"

This is a popular question. but rather than ascertaining my opinion on this subject, let's see what the Bible has to say about it:

1. **Modern "tongues" are different from those which we read about in the New Testament.**

Notice: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they [i.e., the apostles] were all filled with the Holy Spirit *and began to speak with other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2-4). **Question:** Were these "other tongues" incoherent, unintelligible sounds (as we often hear today), OR were they actually foreign languages?

What does **the Bible** say?

"...The multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak **in his own language**. Then they were all amazed and marveled saying to one another, 'Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? *And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born...We hear them speaking in our own tongues* the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:6-8, 11b.). Consider:

- The apostles (who spoke on this occasion) were all from Galilee (Acts 2:7; 1:11).
- By contrast, those listening to the apostles were from at least fifteen different countries (Acts 2:9-11).
- And yet the Bible says, "*everyone heard them speak in his own language*" wherein he was "born." **Question:** What exactly did the people hear? Babble? Ecstatic utterances? Incoherent sounds? OR did they hear languages?

What does **the Bible** say?

"Now when they (i.e., the people) heard this (i.e., the gospel preached - Acts 2:14-36), they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do' " (Acts 2:37)? Obviously the people heard **WORDS** which brought conviction to their hearts.

While many sincere people *believe* they speak in tongues today, the Bible clearly teaches that this does not occur (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Remember: *Bible tongues were actual languages; modern tongues are merely incoherent sounds*. There is nothing miraculous about incoherent sounds. However, it is miraculous when an individual (like an apostle) begins to speak in a language which he has never previously studied. **THIS IS WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**. Speaking in tongues was not a matter of speaking babble, nor jabber, nor gibberish, etc... Rather, it was the ability (under guidance of the Holy Spirit) to speak in a language which was *known* and *understood* by an audience (cf. Acts 10:46), but *unknown* to a speaker. I.V.E. Howard, "What Was Speaking In Tongues?", *Speaking in Tongues*, p.3.

2. The need for speaking in tongues no longer exists. My father was a carpenter for many years. Whenever he started to build a house, I noticed he would always use a scaffold. The scaffold made it possible for him to work on a house at different levels without having to go up and down a ladder. In addition, it served to **SUPPORT** his weight as well as his tools during a given job. But when the house he had been working on was finally completed, the scaffold was removed. Why? Because *it was temporary; it was no longer needed. It served its purpose UNTIL the house was finished. Upon completing the structure the scaffold was taken down.*

Likewise, when the Lord's church was in its early "building" stages (1 Cor. 13:11) and New Testament was not yet in written form, tongues were employed

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Two Ways To Fear God

Occasionally teenagers will have a sticker fixed to their car which says, "No Fear." They aren't fooling me. I've seen the face of such a teen as he was being pulled over for speeding!

Of what things are you afraid? Generally speaking, fear is one of our unsettling emotions. Yet the study of fear in the Bible is intriguing and will draw you closer to God. The word is found 363 times in the Bible. Consider, for example, the birth of the Lord. It seems that all those who came in contact with this event felt fear. Observe what the angel said to various ones. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God" (Luke 1:30). "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:20). "And the angel said unto them, (the shepherds, GC), Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10).

There are two kinds of fear in the Bible. It is God's will that you possess one or the other. One is best suited for you. What are they?

The first is the fear made for people who aren't Christians. They are of an accountable age and mentality, but they just haven't felt the need to study the Bible and submit to the will of Christ. Jude writes and teaches, "And of some have compassion, making a difference; And other save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 22-23). Fear of hell is a legitimate motivation for obeying God! We read in Hebrews 10:31 "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." God really wants people who are outside of His covenant/church to be afraid of vengeance and punishment. If you are not a faithful Christian right now, you should fear eternity. Paul writes in Second Thessalonians 1:7-8. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." To choose to not obey the gospel places one in a fearful situation!

You should be aware that Jesus came to give people freedom from such fear. The fear is actually what draws us to Jesus. When we fear hell we crave forgiveness. "For God hath not given us the

spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7). "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:18). A Christian does not have to fear hell so long as he walks in the light as a faithful child of God. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). Want relief from the fear of eternity? Repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). Then know that your sins are forgiven and God will remember them no more!

Having said that, there is another kind of fear. This one is for Christians, and it is quite different. Hebrews 12:28 says, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." This is not the terror of hellish punishment, but rather a reverential awe of Almighty God. It is what we sense about God, for example, when we marvel at the design and complexity of the human body: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made Marvelous are thy works; and that my knoweth right well" (Psalm 139:14). It is that reverence which daily motivates us to keep striving to live the Christian life because we know He is there and is all powerful. This is the tie that binds our hearts together in Christian love. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). That fear of God is a magnet that pulls us together in unified reverence for God. This is the heart of a Christian as he studies with an unbeliever. The apostle Peter wrote, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15).

There are two kinds of people in the world, saved and lost. There are two kinds of fear. We would do well to enhance the appropriate fear in our lives, and let it draw us even closer to the Almighty God.

as a sort of scaffold to SUPPORT (i.e., confirm), the preaching of inspired men. Note: "And these signs will follow those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons; *they will speak with new tongues...* And they went out and preaching everywhere, the Lord working with them *and confirming the word through the accompanying signs...*" (Mk. 16:17, 20; cf. Heb. 2:3,4; 1 Cor. 14:22). One author well states:

"The gift of tongues and other miraculous abilities were 'signs' designed to convince unbelievers of the heavenly origin of Christianity. Such signs were never intended to be an end within themselves, but were the means by which God authenticated the messages of those who proclaimed his Cause."²

Thus, tongues had a specific purpose in the early church, but they were temporary (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8-10) and *limited* in their duration (Ephesians 4:11-13; Jude 3). They supported gospel preaching UNTIL the time the New Testament was fully revealed and recorded. **Question:** Do we still need tongues to help confirm truth and convince us of the deity of Christ? No. We have what people in New Testament times did not; we have the New Testament in completed form. Note: "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but **these are written that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30,31).

¹Confirm. "To make firm, establish, strengthen."²Wayne Jackson, "Can Christians 'Speak in Tongues' Today," *Christian Courier*, p. 33.

3. The Holy Spirit promised that tongues would cease. Note: "...But whether there are prophecies, they will fail, *whether there are tongues, they will cease*, whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophecy in part. But when that which is in perfect has come, that which is in part will be done away" (1 Cor. 13:8-

10). **Question:** *Do tongues still exist today, or have they ceased as the Spirit promised? Consider:*

- If tongues still exist today, why then do foreign missionaries have to learn the language of the people to whom they will preach?

- Since we know that Bible tongues were intelligible human languages, why do those who claim to speak in tongues today employ translators when they go on foreign campaigns?

- If the gift of tongues still exists today, then who don't all of the other miraculous gifts also exist? Mark. 16:17,18 mentions the ability to cast out demons, speak in tongues, take up serpents, drink anything deadly and heal the sick. If tongue speaking still exists, what about poison drinking?

- Since "that which is perfect" (i.e., the perfect law of liberty or New Testament - 1 Cor. 13:10; Jas. 1:25) has come (Eph. 4:11-13; Jude 3), what need or purpose is fulfilled by the continuation of tongues today?

- Since the ability to transmit miraculous gifts was imparted through the laying on of the apostles hands, and since all of the apostles are dead, by what means does a person acquire the gift of tongues today (cf. Acts. 8:12ff)?

- Since the New Testament provides a Christian with ALL that he needs for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17), what value could tongues have today? If ALL has been provided, what more can there be? To teach something in tongues which the New Testament already has revealed is unnecessary. To teach something in tongues which the New Testament has not revealed is unauthorized (Gal. 1:6-9). To teach something in tongues which adds to the New Testament is unscriptural (Rev. 22:18).

MOST OF A MINUTE - THE WAGES OF SIN

Every morning people fill the highway with cars as they make their daily trek to work. They go to work to get what they need--wages. They know through working they will accomplish that goal. Yet, Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Wages are generally good, and people get into sin figuring that the end result will be good, but they are deceived.

A couple found two theater tickets in an envelope taped to their front door with no note. They

had no idea who had been nice enough to give them this gift. They went and enjoyed the performance and returned to find their house robbed. There was a note left which read, "Now you know."

Live for Christ. You can live in sin, but if you do you won't like the wages in the end. The devil promises an instant heaven, and ultimately gives an eternal hell.

Caving In To The "Clout" of Homosexuality

Maxie B. Borem

For the past several years I have tried to awaken as many people as possible to what I believe to be the far-reaching ramifications of the homosexual "stranglehold on America" that is fast coming upon us. Indeed, the pro-homosexual movement has gained momentum to this point in time beyond what I had imagined! The homosexual "agenda" has been pushed and promoted, first subtly and then openly, by people in powerful positions in the entertainment industry and in the political arena. The "politically correct" thing nowadays is to ballyhoo one's tolerance by jumping on the bandwagon for "homosexual rights." I predict that, if things continue as they are presently going, in time more and more laws will be enacted by liberal legislatures that will accord many advantages to homosexuals and make it virtually impossible to oppose their "agenda."

In most every daily newspaper of any size one can read articles such as the following: (1) In religion, many denominational churches are changing toward a more favorable view of homosexuality. For example, in August of 1997, papers reported the "annual general assembly of the Presbyterian church (USA)" voted to change their constitution to support fidelity "in all relationships," instead of the former wording, "fidelity between a man and woman in the context of marriage and chastity outside of marriage." This is clearly perceived as broadening the definition of "acceptable relationships." Also, more and more denominational churches are debating the "issue" of homosexuality, and some are approving homosexuals being "in the ministry." (2) Again in August, papers reported a lawsuit in New Jersey, filed by the ACLU, against the State of NJ, for disallowing two homosexuals to adopt an 18-month old boy. The move to legitimize "homosexual marriages" is being zealously promoted throughout the nation, having been given impetus by recent developments in Hawaii.

Television is becoming the catalyst to saturate America with

the idea that homosexuality should be socially accepted. This fall, there are slated to be approximately 30 characters on TV programming that will be portraying lesbians, homosexuals, or bisexuals! Notice how, when a "foot gets in the door" (remember "Ellen's coming out" last season?), it opens "the floodgate." You can be assured that these characters will be portrayed in a favorable light, designed to break down inhibitions and resistance.

Anyone who speaks up against this avalanche of pro-homosexual propaganda is labeled a bigot and a hate-monger. Through such intimidation most dissenting voices have already been silenced. But faithful Christians must not be silenced! We must speak up and TRY to inform people that homosexuality was and is condemned by God. Read Genesis 18:20; and the contexts of 19:1-24; Leviticus 18:1-5, 22-30; 20:7-16, 22-23. Please observe that homosexuality was designed by God as an abomination! In like manner the New Testament teaching is equally clear that homosexuality is wrong and sinful! Consider Luke 17:29, II Peter 2:6-8, and Jude 7 concerning Sodom and Gomorrah--the biblical account of those wicked cities is where the term "sodomy" is derived. Sodomy has always been viewed as grossly immoral and even "criminal" in our society by the vast majority...that is, until the last few years, during which time the "sodomy laws" have been ignored or stricken from the books. Further, read the context of Romans 1:18-27. How much plainer can language be? Also note 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Greek scholars affirm that the phrase "abusers of themselves with men" refers to homosexuality.

If Christians do not speak up so as to be heard, and we fail to write to people who can do something about the situation, what will the future hold for our children and grandchildren? Think about it, and act!

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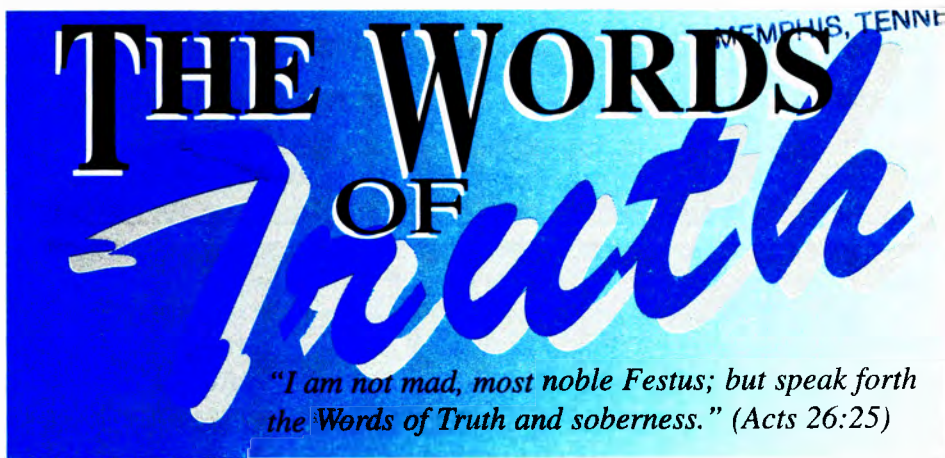
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Vol. 34 No. 42

October 30, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

DEFY LEGALISM: DRESS CASUALLY FOR CHURCH
PROMISE KEEPERS
GOALS FOR BETTER HOMES
WHO IS A SLUGGARD?

DEFY LEGALISM: DRESS CASUALLY FOR CHURCH

Maybe this particular church had a problem with overstuffiness, or perhaps it wanted to "make a statement," but whatever the reason, it printed the above words on its church sign. The problem with it is not what it says about dressing for worship; it's what it implies about legalism. It seems that "legalism" has become the catch-all term for people who hold strictly to God's word. A "legalist," in their minds, is anybody who thinks there's a right way and a wrong way. Take, for example, baptism. We believe that the Bible teaches baptism for the remission of sins and that a sinner is a sinner until he or she obeys God. Not so, we're told--that's legalism. Or they often bring up worship. We believe God has authorized us to worship Him in certain ways and anything more or less is displeasing to Him. Can't be, they say--that's legalism. Those of this persuasion often equate legalists with Pharisees, saying that Jesus reserved His harshest criticism for legalists. But think about this: Did Jesus *ever* condemn anyone for trying to obey God's word? Did Jesus *ever* rebuke anyone for trying to do only that which God authorizes and nothing more? If we study the bible, we'll see a sharp distinction between true disciples and legalists. Notice the contrasts: **Earning versus Obeying**: Jesus hates self-righteousness. He often criticized those who thought they somehow *deserved* salvation because of outward signs, a godly heritage, or token obedience. The Pharisees were notorious for placing their destiny in themselves, rather than in God. "We're Abraham's children...we've been circumcised...we perform all the right rituals...*God owes us salvation.*" But God said that one's relationship to Abraham is unimportant (Matt. 3:9), circumcision alone has never saved anybody (Rom. 2:28, 29), and "just going through the motions" makes Him sick and tired (cf. Isa. 1:13, 14). A "Christian" legalist might say, "I've been baptized...I come to church every Sunday and take the Lord's Supper...I don't swear or drink or lie...*I deserve to go to heaven.*" Not by a long shot. "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do" (Lk. 17:10). *Nobody deserves to go to heaven.* We can't do

enough good deeds to cause God to owe us salvation. The preacher can't baptize us enough times to make us so good that we should be saved.

But here's where so many stumble and fall. Just because we can't do anything to deserve salvation doesn't mean that we can't do something to obey God and be saved. Just as Noah didn't earn his deliverance from the flood (yet he obeyed), and the Israelites didn't earn Jericho (but they obeyed), we don't deserve to go to heaven (but we must obey). Take those in Acts 2, for example. After being convicted of their sin, they cried out "What shall we do?" If so many religious people are right today when they say we don't have to obey God to be saved, Peter should have said, "Absolutely nothing. God doesn't expect you to do anything, because if you were to do something, you'd be earning your salvation. Just sit back and accept salvation." But that's not what he said. He told them to obey God: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Did they earn their forgiveness of sins? No. Did they deserve it? Absolutely not. It was the gift of God's grace. *But God expected them to obey Him.* that's obedience, not legalism.

Teaching versus Doing. A second major point of contention with the Pharisees was their hypocrisy. They generally had a good understanding of the law and were capable teachers of it, but their knowledge didn't translate into practice. They taught it, but didn't live it. Look at Paul's sharp criticism: "Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?" (Rom. 2:17-22). In other words, "Practice what you

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Promise Keepers

A number of times people have asked me about my opinions of the Promise Keeper's, a nation-wide organization for men promoting religious unity and godly leadership in husbands and fathers. What is the appropriate attitude toward the organization, its events and its causes? How should we feel about an organization which on one hand promotes an exciting array of family values and integrity, while on the other hand clearly ignores God's word regarding the characteristics of Christ's church? What are we to make of this? Should we publicly scoff while we privately rejoice? No. that is a Biblical approach to matters such as this, and we will be happier having adopted this approach.

While we must stand against evil, including false doctrine (Gal. 1:8), it is not wrong to be thankful for the good which exists in people and organizations. Such thankfulness does not have to weaken our disapproval of their error. Consider Acts 10:1-2: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." Remember dear reader, that Cornelius was a lost man because he was not a Christian. He was devoutly religious, yet not a Christian, and therefore he desperately needed to be saved. The Bible clearly teaches this about him in Acts 11:13, when Peter related the story of Cornelius' conversion, "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send me to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." Do you see that Cornelius needed to

be saved? He was a seriously religious man, yet he was not saved because he had not believed Christ and obeyed the gospel. There are many like him today. All who are religious yet haven't obeyed the Gospel of the New Testament are like Cornelius.

But notice something else: Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, observes and seems to compliment the good characteristics in this lost man. He was devout, he feared God, he was benevolent, and he was a praying man. While this is not enough to save a man, and he is still lost at this time, it is still impressive. Furthermore, it is not wrong for the Holy Spirit to express appreciation for these biblical qualities.

Now back to Promise Keeper's. It is appropriate for us to appreciate the good messages regarding fatherhood, being good husbands and fathers, paying our debts, etc., coming from this organization. To do so doesn't have to imply approval of their denominational errors.

Will I attend Promise Keeper's? No. I won't attend because it is a religious organization with religious assemblies which has an agenda teaching and practicing unscriptural doctrines. I won't condone or imply endorsement of that with my presence. The good they speak unfortunately rests in a basket of false doctrines.

Yet at the same time I am thankful to hear that large numbers of men are getting serious about family and honesty. Our neighborhoods need that desperately. If we must live in a world in which the devil is prince, we should be thankful for the Corneliuses of the world. The world would be unbearable without them.

preach!" The clear application to us is this: We teach the importance of restoring the New Testament church. Have we restored their evangelistic fervor, or just their five acts of worship? We preach about God's high standard of morality. Do we practice high morals in our own lives?

The fact is--God demands both. He wants us to teach what is right, and then illustrate those lessons with actual examples in our own life. The issue on which Jesus criticized the Pharisees was not that they taught the importance of obeying the law, but that they taught and didn't do.

So the next time we're called legalists, let's try to determine how they're using the word. Are they saying that we believe in following the Bible closely? Tell them we appreciate the compliment. but if they're saying we're trying to earn our salvation or we teach and don't practice, let's step back and take a look at our lives and make sure we're following Christ. Obeying God...teaching others...living right...that's not legalism; that's discipleship.

Chuck Webster

WHO IS A SLUGGARD?

Neal Pollard

Sloths are tropical mammals who live a relatively long life (sometimes more than ten years), almost all of which is spent hanging upside down in trees. They move slowly and deliberately from limb to limb, touching the ground only when necessary. In fact, they seem to dislike the ground so much that, when placed there, they simply lie on their back and are practically unable to crawl. They sleep during the day and the most noise they make is an occasional whine (Funk & Wagnall's). They burn as little energy as possible, and are slow in doing that. The term "slothful," obviously borrowed from observers of their habitat, has become synonymous with laziness and indolence.

The slothful or sluggard man is condemned in many places in Proverbs. God treats laziness with contempt. God says the sluggard is so lazy that he buries his hand in his food and won't even bring it back up to his mouth (Proverbs 19:24; 26:15)! Since he knows all the answers, he has

no need for work (cf. Proverbs 26:16). Notice how the inspired proverbs describe the "sluggard."

He Has No Initiative (Proverbs 6:6-11). The slothful man is described here as one who lacks the ambition to work, the foresight to plan, and the desire to provide necessities. He is the one who constantly needs a fire lit under him. He cannot conceive of the idea of being a "self-starter." No doubt, he will have difficulty finding and keeping employment. He will constantly seek the easy way out. He is lethargic. To such, Paul says, "Awake thou that sleepest..." (Ephesians 5:14). A Christian should never lack determination, for there is great purpose in Christ and His love should motivate one to action (Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 3:10-11).

He Is Unreliable and Irresponsible (Proverbs 10:26). He cannot be entrusted with a task. His word means little. His effort is sub par. The verse says, "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send

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MOST OF A MINUTE - Goals For Better Homes

For those of us who are married and want to stay married, goals are very important. Husbands and wives need the glue of a united purpose to keep them cemented together. Now, consider this: Good marriage isn't just found in finding the right person, but also in being the right kind of person. Every husband and wife should personally determine to make this marriage happy and thriving.

I suggest you spend some time with Bible passages like Ephesians 5 for your goals in marriage. "Wives," Verse 22 says, "submit

yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Then in Verse 25, he turns to the husbands and says, "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church..." He goes on to say, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."

This just goes to show us once again, the best source for marriage advice is God - the One Who started this marriage business in the first place.

him." Are there not a few sluggards in the church, who promise their involvement, who pledge their support, who talk up the church's plans, but never or irregularly produce? They cannot be counted on to faithfully attend the services. He says and she promises, but people quickly learn not to expect of them. However, the sluggard should remember, "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37). Too, Jesus says, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16,20).

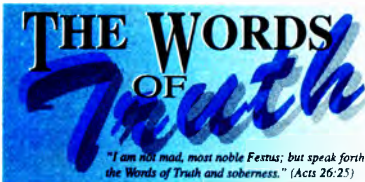
He Had Rather Wish Than Work (Proverbs 13:4). Verily, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing..." He is long on cravings, short on diligence. Therefore, he spends his life in a dream world. Someone said, "If wishes were horses then beggars would ride." The lazy man is a poor steward of his time (Ephesians 5:16) and his mind (Proverbs 4:23). "For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there are also divers vanities; but fear thou God*" (Ecclesiastes 5:7).

He Wants Benefit Without Investment (Proverbs 20:4). In other words, the lazy want something for nothing. As this proverb teaches, the sluggard goes hungry because he won't hitch up the team in plowing season. He wants to eat, but he doesn't want to toil for it. Paul said that the

sluggard, refusing to work, should not be allowed a spot at the table. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12). What about churches who want growth without evangelism? What of individuals who want success without self-discipline? Anything worthwhile requires effort!

There may be a bit of sluggard in everyone. The tendency to slough off our duty to the Lord is always a temptation near at hand. The devil surely will use idleness to try and defeat the cause of Christ. What sagacity is found in doing with all the might what the hand finds to do (Ecclesiastes 9:10)!

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THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 34 No. 43

November 6, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?
NOT UNDER BONDAGE
WHOSE FAULT?
HOW TO ENTER THE CHURCH

What is Christianity?

by Johnny Ramsey

The grandest slogan I have ever heard is the one that challenges us to "go forward -- Back to the Bible!" Truly, we must consider the days of old as we seek the old paths (Psalms 77:5; Jeremiah 6:16). Leaving God's landmarks just as He set them is a wise decision (Hosea 5:10). Let us always remember that in Christianity "if it is new it is not true and if it is true it is not new" because the system of faith was once for all time delivered in the first century (Jude 3). We need to skip Rome, Constantinople, London -- and all other earthly headquarters --and go all the way back to Jerusalem, Acts 2, Pentecost and the pristine beauty of New Testament Christianity! We shall not even desire to restore the Restoration Movement or exalt Campbell, Creath or McGarvey. Back to Christ, the Apostles and the pure Word of God will be our plea. The heart of Christianity is found in Colosians 1:27:

"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Since the seed of the Kingdom is God's precious word (Luke 8:11); John 15:3) we will not search for Truth in the creed books of men or the decisions of religious synods or mandates of ecumenical councils. Human hands have never touched the eternally purposed church of the Lord (Ephesians 3:9-11). It was too much for the wicked Jeroboam to go back to Jerusalem (I Kings 12:28) and millions today are not content with the old Jerusalem gospel either! The gospel age is not dependent upon traditions and customs of men nor is our loyalty to a periodical, school, editor or pulpiteer. We are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10) and the blessed, inspired Scripture (II Timothy 3:17). We are not interested in the original teachings or stance of Luther, Calvin, Wesley or Campbell but in the proclamation of New Testament oracles (I Peter 4:11). We desperately need to get back to Christ, the Bible, purity of life, zeal in evangelism, generosity in giving and a daily life of devotion and service (Mark 10:45). Our blessed Savior demands the best we possess (Luke 9:23) in a commitment to spiritual excellence.

NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

Nineteen centuries ago Christ and His apostles began a system of spiritual power that encompassed the earth and blessed the world. The pure religion of the Savior -- once established--has never vanished from the human scene even though the darkness of the ages often has dimmed its pristine beauty. Daniel 2:44 affirmed the perpetual status of the kingdom and Matthew 16:18 promised its glorious establishment. In spite of persecution by Rome, jealousy of the Jews, economic poverty and a startling message, the gospel of Jesus swept the ancient world by storm.

The ardent zeal of devoted servants of the Lord emblazoned a noble page in the volume of ancient history. The spiritual army of the Lord made many valiant conquests for the Captain of their salvation (Hebrews 2:10). Shining as lights in the midst of a perverse generation (Philippians 2:15) early Christians took seriously the task of "living soberly, righteously and godly" (Titus 2:12). The simple organization of the Lord's church made clear its autonomous government. Adhering strictly to divine principles of self-governing procedures set forth in Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5-6, Acts 20:28-30 and I Peter 5:1-4 there was no need for earthly headquarters, bureaucracy or hierarchy.

In Philippians 1:1 we read simply of elders, deacons and all the saints. Worship in the first century church of our Lord was to be conducted in "spirit and in truth" as John 4:24 clearly stated. Reverently, as the Scriptures directed, the body of Christ "continued steadfastly" in the homage the apostles taught (Acts 2:42). The first day of the week was especially set aside for the Lord's Supper and the contribution (Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:1-2). Nineteen centuries ago the church Christ established, by His shed blood, was strong in its exposure of error (II Timothy 4:2-4), as well as its proclamation of truth (I Tim. 3:15) and especially in ardent evangelism.

Acts 5:42, 8:4 and 12:24 tells us of the daily teaching that caused "the Word of God to grow and multiply." Christians of that era prayed boldly and fervently (Hebrews 4:16; James 5:16) even as they joyously

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Not Under Bondage

One of the most frequently discussed passages concerning the marriage, divorce, and remarriage question, is I Corinthians 7. Great emphasis has been placed on verse 15 where Paul writes, "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace."

I have never been able to believe that "Not under bondage" meant that the believing mate, now abandoned by the unbelieving mate, could divorce and remarry. Unless we broadly assume that the unbelieving mate has taken another and committed adultery, we are left with an apparent contradiction to what Jesus taught in Matthew 19:9: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. And whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Is Paul adding to or changing what Jesus said? I don't believe so.

When verse 15 is considered in light of the verse which follows, an interesting point emerges. Consider that there are two common schools of thought regarding "not under bondage." They are:

1. "Not under bondage" means the abandoned, believing mate is free to divorce and remarry.
2. "Not under bondage" means that if the unbelieving mate refuses to live with his believing mate, and demands that she choose between living the Christian life OR living with him, and threatens to depart from her is she chooses Christ, the believer is not obligated to obey his wishes in order to keep him. She remains unmarried and committed to Christ.

Now look at verse 16: "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Whatever is true about "Not under bondage" (vs. 15), must fit with verse 16! Our explanation MUST harmonize with the believing mate, left behind,

proceeding with the idea of saving the unbeliever. With that in mind, look again at the aforementioned two possibilities:

1. In this scenario, the abandoned believer completely severs the ties to the unbeliever by divorcing and remarrying another. This seems to me an unlikely possibility, since the believer's objective (verse 16) is to SAVE the unbelieving husband or wife. What connection could this action possibly have with saving the unbeliever?
2. In this scenario, the believer says to the unbeliever, "You may threaten to leave me if I do not agree to forsake my Christianity, but Christ means too much to me. I hope we can remain together, but if we can't I must be faithful to my Lord."

Doesn't this harmonize better with verse 16? As Peter teaches in I Peter 3:1-6, when a believing wife is married to an unbelieving husband who won't listen to the preaching of the word, he may STILL be won by watching the godly, committed life of that Christian wife.

This interpretation also harmonizes with verses 12-14: "...If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him..." No doubt one reason the believers in these verses are to remain with their mates is from verse 16 also: "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

She will not have a chance of saving him after becoming the wife of another man. She has severed her ties. However, if she remains married to him, devoted wholly and firmly to Christ, desiring reconciliation with her husband, she will demonstrate to her husband the consecrated life of a true disciple; and that's a strong influence.

MOST OF A MINUTE - Whose Fault?

Judith Martin, a syndicated columnist, has written two books on etiquette: "Miss Manner's Guide to Rearing Perfect Children," and "Miss Manner's Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior." Now, putting pieces in newspapers and writing two books doesn't necessarily make any person an authority, but she does have something good to say.

When asked who is to blame for ill manners -- parents or the schools, Ms. Martin replied, "The Parents. We have tried to dump the teaching of citizenship, manners and morals on the schools, even

though they are virtues which should be learned at home...Schools should not be expected to succeed where parents fail."

Would it surprise you to know that this is much like God's attitude? He pointed His finger at daddies in Ephesians 6:4 and said, "Provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nature and admonition of the Lord." Parents are still responsible.

People who wonder where this younger generation is headed would do well to consider where they came from.

What is Christianity?, *continued from Page 1*

sang praises unto God (Acts 16:25; Colossians 3:16-17). Christianity was life! Paul said:

"For Me To Live Is Christ."

Today, sadly, we often live beneath the standard of New Testament ideals; we coast along with a convenient facsimile of Christianity that really does not demand much of us. A building, a pulpit, a classroom, a teacher and a preacher pretty well sum up our concept of what Jesus died for. But, conversation, conviction, commitment, dedication, loyalty and sincerity demand much more of us. A genuine life of enrichment

awaits those who absolutely want to be New Testament Christians. We will never win many souls for our Redeemer until we fully surrender our wills to the Master. Then, when we submerge our identity into the greater cause of salvation, our songs will be richer, our prayers more spiritual, our influence more meaningful and our lives more heavenly. Men will then know we have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). More than anything else New Testament Christianity is just what Paul wrote in Galatians:

"Christ Living In Me."

How To Enter The Church

The church of the Lord, which includes all those purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), is also designated as the body of Christ (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22), and the family in heaven and earth (Eph. 3:15), its members being children of God (Rom. 8:16, 17). That process by which we are united with the body and born into the family must be the same means by which we enter the church.

The phrase and practice of "joining the church" is unknown to the Bible, and the matter of "opening the doors of the church" is even more foreign to the Scriptures. Christ, the good shepherd of the flock, which is the church (Acts 20:28), is the door. No one enters but by Jesus Christ! To enter by Christ, the door, certainly demands that we enter by his authority, for all authority is given unto him (Matt. 28:18), and by his requirements; for no man comes except he be drawn, and he is drawn by teaching (John 6:44; Rom. 10:13-17). Furthermore, Christ, who has all power, gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom, the church (Matt. 16:19), and Peter opened the doors of the church at Pentecost to the Jews (Acts 2), and at the house of Cornelius to the Gentiles (Acts 10). The doors have not been closed since, and certainly could not be opened when they are already open. In scriptural facts, God adds to the church (Acts 2:41. 47:5:14; 11:24) when we have met the requirements for entrance.

The Requirements of Christ

Surely no one doubts the right of Christ to make the terms of admission, since the church belongs to him and all authority is given to him. Hence, our interest is: What does he require? He is the door, and we must enter in harmony with his will.

Faith is required. Jesus said: "If ye believe not that I am he, he shall die in your sins" (Jn, 8:24). Again: "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). We must believe, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Faith is the first step toward righteousness (Rom. 10:10), and, necessarily, the first step toward the church.

Repentance is commanded. Christ requires that we must "repent," or "all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

Repentance is a change of will (Matt. 21:28-31) and leads to life (Acts 11:18). It is but reasonable that God now "commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

Confession of Christ is urged. Peter set an example (Matt. 16:16), for which Christ pronounced him blessed, and Christ himself promised that "whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 15:32; Luke 12:8). Confession with the mouth leads to salvation (Rom. 10:10), and must, therefore, precede the saved state.

Baptism is enjoined. Christ, being baptized himself, has plainly set our example (Matt. 3:13-16). Baptism was the first act on beginning his short life's work. His last instruction (and surely we have respect for his last words) were: "Go,...preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15, 16). "Go,...make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19, 20). These are the requirements of Christ.

Baptized Into The Body

The church is the body, and the body is the church. In one Spirit (or by the authority of the same Spirit) we are "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). To be in Christ is to be in his body, and we are "Baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27). One cannot enter any church claiming Christian faith without baptism of some sort. Christ, the door of the flock, requires baptism on our part to enter his own body, the church.

Born Into The Family

The church is the family of God, and certainly it is by birth that we enter the family, naturally or spiritually. We cannot enter the kingdom of God, the church, without rebirth. To be born again is to be born of the water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5). Let "Spirit" mean Spirit and "water" mean water. We are begotten by the Spirit, the word of God (1 Cor. 4:15;

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How To Enter The Church, *continued from page 3*

James 1:18; Luke 8:11), and we come forth from the watery grave a newborn creature (Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 3:27; 2 Cor. 5:17). Thus we are born both of water and the Spirit. When we are born again, we have no need to join the family -- we are already in it. When the Spirit by his words leads us to be baptized into the body of Christ, the family of God, we are then children of God and should never join anything else.

The Apostles Understood This

Peter, to whom the keys of the kingdom were given, understood the requirements of Christ, and so in opening, as it were, the door to the assembly of God, uttered this command: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). What Peter bound on earth is bound in heaven (Matt. 16:19); therefore, repentance and baptism are bound in heaven! When an entrance was permitted the Gentiles (Acts 10), Peter "commanded them to be baptized" (verse 48). He understood the will of Christ. He taught that we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27); that we are baptized into the body (I Cor. 12:13); and that we are buried with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-6). Certainly the act of baptism, according to Paul, was to be preceded by faith (Eph. 3:12) and repentance (Acts 26:20). He also urged confession in the strongest terms: if we do not confess Christ here, we will be forced to do so at the end of the way (Phil. 2:11; Rom. 4:11). Others understood the terms. Philip required faith and baptism on the part of the eunuch (Acts 8:35-39), and Ananias urged a believing, repenting Saul to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).

Obeying The Gospel

Christ made the necessary sacrifice of his own precious blood; he is the one door to fellowship with God; he has given all authority; he has given the simplest but most representative requirements. God gave his only begotten Son; Christ died, was buried, and arose again; the Spirit revealed, and it is ours to obey!

God will take vengeance on those who obey not the gospel (2 Thes. 1:8, 9). There is but one gospel, and the wrath of God is wreaked on those who change it (Gal. 1:6-9). Those who are changed from servants of Satan to the servants of righteousness have "obeyed from the heart" a form of that gospel (Rom. 6:17). The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4). We cannot obey the doctrine, but we can obey a form of it -- and that is done in baptism (Rom. 6:3-6). To obey the form without faith would not please God. To be baptized without repentance would not be acceptable. To fail to confess Christ will bring his denial of us before God. Our conclusion must be: By faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (on our part), and the blood of Christ (on God's part), we enter God's family, the body of Christ, the church of the Lord, God doing the adding (Acts 2:47).

--L.O. Sanderson (Gospel Advocate, December 23, 1937)

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ANNOUNCEMENT FOR ASSOCIATE MINISTER POSITION

The resignation of Jason Roberts (to accept work with the Knight Arnold congregation in Memphis, Tennessee) leaves a void in the preaching staff of the Sixth Avenue congregation. If you are interested, or know someone who is interested in being considered for this job opening, please submit a resume to:

The Elders
Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 Sixth Avenue
Jasper, Al 35501

THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 44

November 13, 1997

Doesn't This Really Concern You?

Bruce R. Curd

An event takes place each week in almost every city, town, village and hamlet in America which should cause each of us great concern. What is it?

We live next door to each other. We do business with each other. We go to school together. We work together. We play together. We belong to the same clubs and cooperate on community projects. We rally to each other's needs when illness or tragedy strikes. We have in common the problems of inflation, energy shortages, crime, rebellion, etc.; We laugh, we talk, we love, and we care because we are neighbors.

Yet, when Sunday morning comes, we segregate ourselves and go our separate ways because we are religiously divided. People who have so much in common throughout the week cannot be together on Sunday because of religious differences. And, while some contend that "it doesn't matter," not many would even consider changing religious doctrines so that we might be united.

Friends, all of this should bother us no end because we all know that such is contrary to the teaching of the Bible, the perfect will of God. Jesus prayed that we might all be "one" (John 17:20, 21). The apostle Paul commanded that God's people "speak the same things and that there be no divisions..." (I Corinthians 1:10). David, the sweet psalmist of Israel wrote, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 122:1).

Can't we all agree that the only thing which will please our Creator is to be united upon his divine word? Let us all lay aside our human opinions, notions and biases, and allow God alone to be the spokesman in matters of religion.

Instead of the divided state of affairs, which alienates families and friends, should we not seek to restore New Testament Christianity as we find it in the Bible? If we will all believe and do what first century Christians believed and practiced, we will be what they were, only "Christians." In fact, if we do

everything that God commands, we will not be divided up into the hundreds of sects and parties known today. It takes something more than the Bible to produce these human organizations. As Jesus faced the ordeal of the cross, he prayed, "Neither pray I for these (his apostles) alone, but for them also which shall believe in me (that includes the rest of us) through their word (the apostles' word); that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they (all future believers) also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20, 21).

A British lawyer once remarked, "The world does not believe because it does not believe that the believers believe." How true he was! John Mott, founder of the YMCA, wrote, "The price we are paying for a divided Christendom is an unbelieving world." O, how badly the religious world needs to be united--all peoples speaking the same thing and doing the same thing in matters religious. Then the world could be evangelized in less than one generation. But because of the divided state of affairs, many millions will be lost and such division will have been the prime cause.

In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, "Not every one 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." Friends and neighbors, it is not enough to be religious; We must be right religiously if we would please our heavenly Father. In this great passage our blessed Lord teaches that just being religious is not enough. It cannot save. We must obey God! And all who really and truly obey God will do the same things in religion, unity will result, and the prayer of our redeeming Savior will be answered.

Dear reader, think on these things. They have been written in the spirit of the one who died for us and who wants to live in our hearts.

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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**DOESN'T THIS REALLY
CONCERN YOU?
WHAT ABOUT HELL?
THE SIN OF JEROBOAM
THANKSGIVING
WILL ALL GOOD PEOPLE BE
SAVED?**

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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What About Hell?

A recent article in the religious section of the Birmingham News was about hell. Though not a pleasant subject, it is obvious that people have a large variety of opinions about the pit called hell. Here are some quotes from the article:

But damnation isn't what it used to be. Hell doesn't play well in growth-conscious churches or among feel-good baby boomers. "It is more of an absolute idea than baby boomers are comfortable with," said Robert Wuthnow, a sociologist at Princeton University. "We like to believe in the second and third and fourth chance."

These days, even fundamental churches that believe in eternal punishment in a physical hell play down the concept. "The thought of hell does not seem to motivate people to either serve God or accept Christ as their savior," says Bruce Kelpp...

E. Von Clemans, associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Fort Lauderdale... embraces the current psychological notion of hell as a separation from God. Salvation is peace of mind, even positive thinking. Damnation is fears, depressions, doubts, feeling bad about yourself.

"In a sense," he says, "it is eternal. God does not overrule our decision to reject Him. But it is not without hope because God is always waiting and anxious for us to accept His love and grace, and I think that offer extends into the after life."

Moslems disagree on whether hell is a location or a state of mind, but they agree on its temporary nature. "God's mercy is so comprehensive that it overcomes His anger, Which means that people will be saved by divine mercy and end up in heaven," says Ibrahim Abu-Rabi, professor of Islamic studies at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

Orthodox Jews believe all souls go to hell, but not for more than a year, according to Rabbi Solomon Schiff.

Perhaps it is noteworthy that throughout the lengthy article there was not one scripture reference offered.

Consider some Bible references on the subject of hell and damnation, and what they plainly

teach:

1. II Thessalonians 1:7-9

A. When the Lord returns He will take vengeance on them that know not God, and those who have not obeyed the Gospel.

B. Those miserable souls will be punished with everlasting destruction.

C. Those souls will be forever away from God's presence and His glory.

2. Matthew 25:31-46

A. When Jesus returns He will separate people into two different groups. On His right hand will be the saved. On His left will be the lost.

B. To the lost He will say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

C. The punishment will be "everlasting."

There are other passages to consider, (Luke 16, John 5:28, etc.), but these make some powerful points.

Now raise with me an important question: Is teaching on hell inappropriate for our day? Be careful how you answer. Consider first Jude 22, 23: "And of some have compassion, making a difference. And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire..." This statement is given in the form of instruction. Religious teachers who fail to teach about hell and motivate people with its fearful images, are in violation of this passage.

We do not believe that the subject of hell should be fed as a steady spiritual diet to the neglect of other important Bible themes and motivations. It is important, however, to tell people the truth about damnation. They have the right to know. How much better for people living in sin to "see" hell now through their mind's eye while listening to a sermon, than to see it for the first time when entering the tormenting home of the Prince of darkness. We must love the sinner enough to do all we can to keep him from hell. It is torment. It is eternal.

No wonder the Hebrew writer penned, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3).

The Sin of Jeroboam

G. F. Raines • Newton, Miss. 39345

Jeroboam was the first king of Israel after the division of the kingdom (B.C. 982-961).

Jeroboam "devised of his own heart" a system of worship that deviated in many ways from the worship that God had authorized, and persuaded the ten tribes to accept it (1 Kings 12:25-33). Because of his presumption, Jeroboam is referred to as the king who caused Israel to sin (2 Kings 23:15).

Presumptuous (unauthorized) worship has always been an abomination in the sight of God.

Many acts of worship which are prevalent in the religious world are as presumptuous as the system of worship which Jeroboam originated; for example, the use of instrumental music, the burning of incense, and the use of "holy water." There is just as much authority in the New Testament for either of these innovations as there is for the others, and there is none for any of them!

The book of God plainly tells us that vocal music (singing) is the kind of music that God has authorized to be used in Christian worship. The apostle Paul says: "And be not drunk with wine, where in is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18, 19).

"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." (Col. 3:16).

The Holy Bible also says:

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deut. 4:2).

"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto

his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:5,6).

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

The sin of Jeroboam (presumption) is more widespread today than it was when Jeroboam was still living and active.

The psalmist David said:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Psa. 19:7-13).

MOST OF A MINUTE - Thanksgiving

Let me wish you a Happy thanksgiving. I hope the memories of this day will remain a joy to your heart for many years to come.

It's funny, you know, when we think of thanksgiving, we usually think of how many blessings we have -- and that's good. but being thankful has more to do with my heart than it does with my bounty. For, you see, folks in the ghettos often express deeper gratitude for what they possess than the folks in the ivory

palaces. My heart is the key to thanksgiving. In addition, it's a truly healthy heart that moves me to think of and compare my blessings with the many who are less fortunate -- instead of the few who are more fortunate.

Let's remember today what the apostle Paul said, "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks." 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).

Will All Good People Be Saved?

Many times we have heard people say, "God will save all good people." This implies that there are good people in all churches who will be saved. It also implies that there may even be good people who have never been members of any church who will also be saved. Will all good people be saved? What does the Bible say?

The Bible teaches that one can never be good enough to be saved by his own goodness. If people could be saved by their good deeds, then it would not have been necessary for Christ to die for our sins. The Apostle Paul wrote: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Paul also wrote: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).

Even the very best people, who have lived long enough to know the difference between right and wrong, have sinned: The Bible says: "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one...for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:9, 10,23).

In chapter 10 of the book of Acts, we read about a man named Cornelius. Cornelius was a very good man. He was also a very religious man, but he was not saved. Please notice the Bible's description of this good man: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always" (Ac. 10:1,2). Please observe that Cornelius was a worshiper of the true God and had taught his family also to fear God. too, Cornelius was a man of prayer. He was also kindhearted and generous for "he gave much alms to the people." In spite of his

faith and good deeds, Cornelius was not saved. He was told by an angel of God to "Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Ac. 11:13, 14).

Will all good people be saved? The answer is "no," for even the best people have sinned and just one sin can keep a person out of heaven. John wrote, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27). The only way to remove sin is by the blood of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:5). This is done in our obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We read in Acts 22:16, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

All good people will not be saved. Neither will all religious people be saved. It is not enough to be religious, but one must be right religiously. Jesus said: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13). He also said: "Not every one 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" (Matthew 7:21).

Not all good people will be saved. Those who will be saved are those who humbly submit to our Lord Jesus Christ in obedience to His gospel and who ever after live for Him doing His will. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8,9).

Dear reader, have you obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ? If you have not, you are lost! Please obey Christ today. "Arise, an be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." --Rod Rutherford, Truth For The World, Website; <http://www.tftw.org/>

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**DARKNESS AND LIGHT
DOES "UNEQUALLY YOKED"
ALWAYS APPLY TO MARRIAGE?
THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-
CONTROL
WALKING IN THEIR SHOES
OUR HOPE IS IN HEAVEN**

Vol. 34 No. 45

November 20, 1997

Darkness and Light

by Johnny Ramsey, Arlington, Texas 76011

Wherever the apostle Paul preached the glorious gospel (Tim. 1:11), he fulfilled the purpose Christ had when He called him to be an apostle: "To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18). It is particularly impressive, in view of the unconcern of so many today in regard to studying the Bible, that the Holy Spirit thought it important enough to record these challenging words in Acts 17:11, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." The nobility of the Bereans lives on through the centuries as a model for faithful Christians and a rebuke to those philosophers who think Bible study is no longer in vogue among the people of God! Of the Bible, Cowper wrote,

A sacred glory gilds the page,
Majestic as the sun.
It gives a light to every age,
It gives but borrows none.

In Acts 18:8 we are forever reminded of the dynamite power of the gospel of Christ. Yes, even in the most prolific sin city of the first century, "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Praise God for the truth, and for good and honest hearts. The glad tidings can reach even into the dens of iniquity. In Acts 19 and 20 the focus is upon the city of Ephesus and the mighty power of God's

word as opposed to shallow trinkets of idolatry set forth by the silversmiths. Ephesus had in its environs one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was the magnificent marble temple erected to the worship of Artemis, or the goddess Diana. In open conflict the gospel of Christ dominated the scene. In fact, so successful was the message of the cross that many objects previously used in idolatrous devotion were burned in the streets of Ephesus, and "mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:20).

Many ungodly objects should be burned today that the shining light of Christianity might be seen more clearly. The citadels of error must be confronted in our spiritual warfare as we use "the sword of the Spirit, the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). We do not engage in carnal combat over spiritual matters, but we do fight the good fight of faith under the glorious banner of God's dear Son (1 Tim. 6:12).

Paul bade farewell to the elders of the church of the Lord in Ephesus in a poignant speech of brilliant oratory sincerely shared with loving brethren. He closed with these words, "And now I commend you to God, and to the word his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Every Christian should count Paul's entire speech in Acts 20:17-35 as required reading often. It is nothing short of superb!

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Does "Unequally Yoked" Always Apply To Marriage?

It has long been my view that II Corinthians 6:14 can, but doesn't necessarily apply to the marriage of a Christian to an unbeliever. The verse says,

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?"

What is prohibited here? Does this teaching forbid a Christian from marrying an unbeliever? Would it further forbid a believer from staying married to an unbeliever? These are good questions.

First, examine key words. "Unequally yoked together" comes from one Greek word, "Heterozugeo." This is the only time the word occurs in the New Testament. Thayer says of this word, "Yoked with a different yoke; used in Leviticus 19:19 of the union of beasts of different kinds, e.g. an ox and an ass...to have fellowship with one who is not an equal."

It is important to see that what Paul is forbidding is not being yoked together with unbelievers, but rather being unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

Consider then, this interpretation: Paul is teaching that while we naturally interact with unbelievers in a variety of ways, we must not give any unbeliever the authority to command us to do wrong. The Lord must always be our Master. The picture of being unequally yoked would be one in which the believer was yoked together with a larger, stronger unbeliever who could guide the union at will.

This interpretation makes good sense. If Paul was forbidding ALL relationships or covenants with unbelievers, not only would it be wrong to marry one, it would also be wrong to become a business partner with one or even DO business with one!

Having said this, let's raise this question: *Can* it be a sin for a Christian to marry an unbeliever? The answer, using this verse alone, would have to be yes. When the believing mate gives the unbelieving mate the permission to lead him or her into unrighteousness, the believer has sinned. He or she is unequally yoked to that unrighteousness, the believer has sinned. He or she is unequally yoked to that unbeliever. Those of us who have been part of the church for many years have seen this scenario played over and over in the lives of

Christians who married unbelievers and then soon forsook the Lord and His Church. All Christians must be married to Christ first, and our allegiance belongs to Him.

This is the situation Paul had in mind in the first Corinthian letter, chapter seven. In verse 13 he penned, "And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

Is the believing wife to leave her unbelieving husband? No. Are they really married in the eyes of God, and therefore their children legitimate? Yes. Suppose the unbelieving husband bitterly resents the believing wife's Christianity and decides he can't live with her and her righteousness. Is she under bondage to his wishes? Must she follow his ungodliness? The Apostle answers no. If he feels he must depart, let him. That believing wife must remain faithful to Christ even if it means her husband leaves. Incidentally, this situation would not free her to remarry. (I Corinthians 7:10-11).

I do not consider the Christian's decision to marry a non-Christian a wise decision. Hard days will likely follow. However, if you are married to an unbelieving mate, I want to encourage you to commit to memory I Peter 3:1-2:

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation by the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation (Faithful Christian lifestyle, GC), coupled with fear."

Hold to the unchanging hand. Seek the conversation of your unbelieving mate, and never give up. Let your mate know that following Christ is the most important goal in your life. One day you may enjoy the warm embrace of the husband or wife as they leave the refreshing waters of baptism. That is my hope and prayer.

The Importance of Self-Control

G. F. Raines • Newton, Miss. 39345

It has been well said that, "A man's conquest of himself dwarfs the ascent of Everest." (Eli J. Schleifer.)

The Book of God says:

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32).

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Prov. 25:28).

Although Noah was unable to control his environment in the wicked world before the great flood, he controlled himself so perfectly that he "found grace in the eyes of the Lord," being "a just man and perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6:8, 9).

Although Joseph was unable to control his environment in ancient Egypt, he controlled himself, being spiritually strong and steadfastly resisting the lust of the flesh (Gen. 39:1-12.).

Although Paul was unable to control his environment in the Roman empire, his great spiritual strength enabled him to control himself and "stand like a giant oak, unmoved during the storm."

Some of the greatest passages in the New Testament on self-control are in the epistles of the peerless apostle:

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (Cor. 9:27).

"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 to escape, that ye may be able to bear IT" (1 Cor. 10:13).

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,

temperance; against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Peter says that if we lack self-control we are "blind, and cannot see afar off" and, consequently, cannot enter "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:5-11).

To have self-control and thus overcome temptations and avoid sin, we must have knowledge of and reverence for the word of God and pray earnestly for God's strengthening help (Matt. 4:1-11; 26:37-42).

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa. 1:1, 2).

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:17, 18).

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psa. 119:9).

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16).

MOST OF A MINUTE - Walking In Their Shoes

I heard recently of an experiment to help youngsters understand what it's like to be elderly. One girl had to put uncooked beans in her shoes and walk several blocks to experience the foot problems of some older people. A boy was asked to put Vaseline on his glasses, then to shop and pay for several items in a store, as would a cataract patient. Another youth was asked to wear ear plugs to experience the sensation of a hearing-impaired person. You can imagine the results without my

telling you. Those kids had a brand-new empathy for the elderly.

This illustrates beautifully what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 2:4: "Look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others." In other words, before I can be what Jesus wants me to be toward others, I must first, in my thinking, get out of me and into them. Isn't there someone around you today who could really use your understanding?

Our Hope Is In Heaven

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. (I Peter 1:3-4)". Peter praised God because he had given all the disciples of Jesus a new hope by his resurrection from the dead. They had given up all hope and their faith had completely failed when Jesus was condemned to death and was crucified on a cross, but his resurrection completely revived all their hopes and dreams. For this Peter was very grateful. This new and thrilling hope dwelling within the breasts of Christ's disciples was made possible by the abundant mercy of God and this is what makes possible our thrilling hope of heaven today. We certainly are unworthy to receive such a fabulous eternal home, but because God loves us and is infinitely merciful, caring, and compassionate, we will live in heaven and praise our Father forever and ever if we humbly try to obey his blessed will while we live here on earth. "Not every one 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" (Matthew 7:21). "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (Revelation 22:14)." Our heavenly home will be incorruptible, which means it will not perish and it will endure forever. We will not have to worry about rot, decay, or

expensive repairs while we dwell eternally in our mansions and bask in the sunlight of God's love. Our home will also be undefiled, unstained, and unsoiled. Anything on this earth eventually becomes stained and soiled at least to a certain extent. This is the reason we have cleaners for our clothes and house washers and painters for our homes. Our heavenly home will be completely pure and clean and uncontaminated by sin, filth, and corruption. In addition our eternal home will be unfading. It's beauty will never fade and it will never wither and die like the most beautiful plant you ever laid your eyes on. Won't it be wonderful to live forever in a place where nothing ever fades in beauty or deteriorates and decays? All of this and much much more is reserved in heaven for all of God's faithful children.

We cannot receive these fabulous riches and blessings in this life, therefore we must die to receive them. No wonder Paul wrote "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21)", and again, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you (Philippians 1:23-24)". We should live for Christ and be a blessing to our fellow men as long as we sojourn here on earth, but we should be longing for that beautiful home reserved in heaven. Are you ready for this? If we are really longing for heaven we will welcome the arrival of death instead of dreading and fearing it's chilly breath, because it will be the gateway to those fabulous mansions on high.

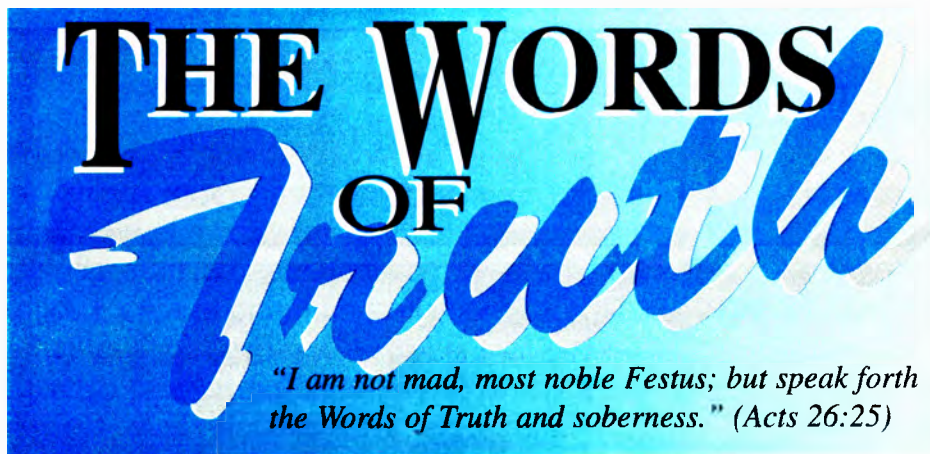
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Vol. 34 No. 46

November 27, 1997

Taking Stock

Neal Pollard

There was some stark news about the stock market, Monday, October 27. It was another "black October day" in the investment world. It was the greatest point fall in Dow history. Consequently, poor Bill Gates, Walmart heirs, and Warren Buffet lost over 3 billion dollars between them. As people were getting ready to peak over the 8000 mountain, this development was a complete surprise. Analysts didn't see it coming. The "bear" was making his appearance. The question then centered on how long the "bull" would hibernate.

Are you reminded of 1 Timothy 6:17, which says, "Charge them that are in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the loving God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy?" Now, the market will probably be prime for buying stocks in a couple of weeks, so that's not the point. The point is that man has true, unchanging riches available in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), though one day every material thing will be destroyed (cf. 2 Peter 3:10). That is what Jesus alludes to in John 6:27, when He warns, "Labour not for the meat which per-

isheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed." Jesus showed Himself to be the only enduring provision. Investing for our future on earth is wise, but let us not become so invested in material things that we give indication that here is where we're laying up our treasures (cf. Mt. 6:19-21).

What heavenly investments are you making? How much time, energy, and money are you depositing in that celestial account, in view of the great, coming "audit" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10)? Let us think soberly about what kind of eternal planning we're doing. There awaits a "crash" unlike those October debacles in '29, '87, or '97. For those who failed in life to "possess the possession of salvation" (cf. Obadiah 17), there will be no chance out in eternity for the situation to correct itself (Hebrews 9:27). Solomon truly said, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivereth from death" (Proverbs 11:4). "Riches are not forever" (Proverbs 27:24), eternity is (Matthew 25:46). Plan wisely!

Translator

Mike Benson

Back in early July I went to see good friends in Eastern Europe. The purpose of my visit was to support this Christian family in their missionary endeavors.

On more than one occasion I had the opportunity to speak with and teach members of the local congregation in Bratislava. However, all of my efforts were through the assistance of a Slovak translator since I was unable to speak in the local tongue.

Several months ago a local charismatic preacher told me he would be leaving soon for foreign mission work in South America. His last

preparation before leaving the states was to secure a translator, which was interesting to me. I inquired of my friend as to why he found it necessary to employ an interpreter since he himself claimed the miraculous gift of tongues. My friend could give no response.

Dear reader, my purpose is not to be unnecessarily injurious, but consider -- if miraculous speaking in tongues (i.e. speaking in actual foreign languages -- Acts 2:4, 6-11) still exists today, then why do foreign missionaries require translators? Think about it (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21).

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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If I Could Teach My Students Four Things

We should applaud good Bible class teachers. What they do may sometimes be perceived as advanced babysitting, but is so much more. It is actually the lofty role of teaching the truth to youth who are being daily shown and taught error by a sinful world. Those teachers are immensely important.

Our youth are the prize in a national conflict raging between the God-is and the God-isn't segments of society. And it is a battle. In home room they will pledge to the flag including the words, "...One nation under God..." but then later that day they will be taught in science class that creation is inconsistent with fact. Evolution, as taught in schools, ultimately portrays God as mere superstition and myth. We are grateful for Christians who teach in school, but even they know the battle we face. How sad that one must only speak of God with caution when teaching youth in our schools.

This emphasizes that parents are in what is arguably the most important role of their lives: rearing their children to be devout Christians in a world sometimes hostile to our faith. It also places a heavy duty on the shoulders of Bible class teachers. They have a few moments each week in which to combat the false teachings, and to anchor those children to life's greatest meaning. Those children have eternal souls which will exist forever in heaven or hell. Today's humanism, if they adopt its teachings, will send them to hell. Only Christ can bring them to heaven (Jn 14:6).

If I could teach my young students four things, they would be these:

First, Origin. The world discusses our origin and can only conceive of godless, mindless evolution. God's truth teaches us design and creation. Show those students that faith is not blind! Prove to them that God exists. Give them reasoning they can grasp and teach. They cannot be led to Christ without this conviction of origins. If society succeeds in robbing our children of their origin, it will also rob them of their destiny. The devil's procedure today is this: Deny God, call Him a superstition; Debase man, say he came from nothing; then, Deny morals. After all, if we came from some freakish big bang, or simply evolved from lower life forms, then we have no real standard for right and wrong.

I would secondly teach them Success. The world says that success involves things such as climbing the corporate ladder, achieving power in position, and of course, money. The devil has done well in so defining success. If someone were to say to you, "That man is really successful," wouldn't you assume he was speaking in terms of money or possessions? But God's people know that to measure success this way is absurd. We know people

who have money and lose it, have money and grow too sick to use it, or who have money and eventually die and leave it to someone else. We know some who have more money than most and are yet quite miserable. Money doesn't define success. Jesus taught, "take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Lk. 12:15)." Drill it into them weekly teacher. True success has but one definition: living your life and going to heaven. To miss heaven, no matter what else may be true, is utter failure.

Third, I would teach Purity. Teach them that when God says, "Thou shalt not," he is saying, "Don't hurt yourself." When He says, "Thou shalt," He is saying, "Help yourself to happiness." The world says to our teenagers, "You can have sex outside of marriage with no strings attached. We call it 'Safe Sex'." When the teens ask "What about unwanted pregnancy, AIDS, and guilt?" The world responds, "We will give you birth control and protection from disease, sometimes right there at school! We will give you abortion without parental consent. We will give you music and MTV and smutty movies that will make pre-marital sex accepted as normal in society so you won't feel guilty!" The truth which we must give them over and over is that society is lying to them. Sinful sex will never be safe sex. Tell them that if they eat their cake today they will have a crummy tomorrow. Beg them not to surrender their virtue on a fruitless search for love. The Bible lovingly teaches us to "Flee fornication (I Cor. 6:18)." Teach them that intimacy within marriage is right and healthy (Heb. 13, 4), and outside of marriage is sinful and wrong.

I would teach them Priorities. The world says that priorities ought to be with entertainment and work and school. God's teachers must tell the truth. Teach those children that God wants us to put His business first (Matt. 6:33). Read the genealogies to the students. You may stumble through the pronunciation of the long names, but don't stumble over how you teach the point to the students. The generations are rolling on. One generation passes, and is replaced by another. Ours is not the only generation, but is only one. Ours too will pass. Show them that after people have passed from this life it matters not whether they are farmers, lawyers, or auto mechanics. Ultimately all that matters is the answer to this question: Were they faithful to the Almighty God?

Bible class teachers, we admire and applaud you. Thank you for your hard work. Thank you for your careful Christian example that speaks even when you are silent. Thank you for what you mean to the lives of our children.

Difference

By Mike Benson

What is the difference between Holy Spirit baptism, water baptism, and the baptism of fire?"

This is an in depth question. Briefly, let us notice the following distinctions:

1. **Holy Spirit baptism was a PROMISE to representatives of all flesh (i.e. Jews--Acts 2; Gentiles -- Acts 10-11).** *"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, you old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days"* (Joel 2:28-29; cf. Matt. 3:11; Jn 1:33; Acts 1:2-5).

- It was not for all men (Jn. 14:17).
- It was an act of the Lord
- It was administered by the Lord (Matt. 3:11; Jn 1:33).
- It was administered in no name.
- It was given for the purpose of revealing and confirming the Word (Jn. 16:13; Heb. 2:4).
- It was not promised after Eph. 4:4-5.

2. **Water baptism is a COMMAND to all mankind.** *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matt. 28:19). *"...Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 10:48).

- It is for all men.
- It is an act of man's obedience.
- It is to be administered by men (Matt. 28:19.; cf, Acts 8:38).
- It is to be administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- It is to be administered as a condition of salvation (1 Pet. 3:20-21; cf. Acts 2:28).
- It is to continue until the end of the world (Matt. 28:20).

3. **The baptism of fire is a THREAT to all who are disobedient.** *"John answered, saying to them all. 'I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire'"* (Lk. 3:16-17; cf, Matt. 3:11).

- It will be for all rebellious men. (Rev. 21:8; cf, Matt. 13:41-42).
- It will be an act of the Lord's vengeance (2 Thess. 1:7-190).
- It will commence at the end of the world (2 Pet. 3:7).
- It will continue throughout eternity (Matt. 18:8; cf, 25:41; Mk. 9:45).

MOST OF A MINUTE - Our Conscience

One of the things which separates men from animals is our conscience. What is conscience? It is that faculty which decides upon the moral quality of one's actions and motives. If I speak to you of conscience, do you have happy feelings or do you feel ill at ease? I want to show you how conscience is one of your most valuable possessions, and it will help you to have a happy life. It is true that it hurts us when we go against what we know is right, but the opposite is also true. Our conscience will

give us peace and an inner contentment when we are doing what we know is right. In Hebrews 13:18 we read, "Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."

Let me challenge you to study God's word every day, learn what is really right, and then renounce everything in your life that places a strain on your conscience. You'll be a lot happier.

Beware of Hypocrisy

C. F. Raines

Darnel, which is thought to be the "tares" mentioned in one of the parables of Jesus (Matt. 13:24-30), looks so much like wheat that even experienced farmers cannot always tell the difference until the wheat ripens.

Two trees may seem to be almost exactly alike, whereas one may be sound and the other hollow and in the process of decay.

Two heads of lettuce may look very much alike but be quite diverse in nutritional value.

There is a metal called fool's gold that in appearance is sometimes so much like genuine gold that only assayers can tell the difference.

Some counterfeit money looks very much like genuine money. Analogously, many people today, like the ancient Pharisees, "outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within...are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23:28).

But in the day of judgment, our character will be seen as it really is, and will not seem to be what it is not. Let us be "sincere and without offense till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10); for the Book of God plainly says: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which

he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31).

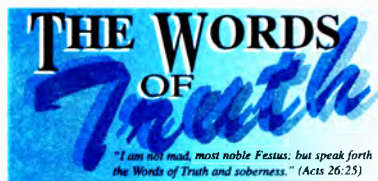
"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For god shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc. 12:13, 14).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ' that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"

(1 Pet. 2:1, 2).

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THE WORDS OF Truth

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 34 No. 47

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

THE WAGES OF SIN
CHRISTMAS AND THE ANGELS
CHILDREN RESPECTING
AUTHORITY
BEAUTY

December 4, 1997

The Wages of Sin

W.A. Holley

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"The gift of God is eternal life..." Gifts can be either conditional or unconditional. No gift is a gift unless it is accepted. A story is told about a certain man who was sentenced to hang until he was dead. Some of his friends managed to have his sentence commuted, but he refused to accept it, demanding his original sentence be carried out. He was executed.

Satan is the source of all man's desire and action contrary to the holy will of God. Satan is ever searching for those who will follow him (I Peter 5:8).

After God had created both man and woman Satan came into Paradise seeking to deceive them. Eve succumbed to his temptation and Adam her suggestion. We read, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6, ASV).

What devices did Satan use to lead Eve into sin? They are: Taste, sight, and sinful egotism. The Apostle John wrote, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:15-17, ASV).

The world mentioned in the foregoing quota-

tion has no reference to the earth where we live; rather, it refers to things of a sinful nature. We must realize that the love of material treasures and the love for God and His will and the way are wholly incompatible. Read these verses: Matthew 6:24; Romans 8:5; James 4:4; II Corinthians 6:17-18.

When Jesus was tempted, shortly after His baptism, Satan assaulted Him in the Wilderness with the same temptations he had used in the Garden of Eden: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the vainglory of life." Since Satan tempted Jesus Christ should not we expect him to tempt us?

Paul understood the power and influence of Satan's ministers (preachers). "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel: for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (II Corinthians 11:13-15, ASV). No false teacher ever announces himself as a false teacher. All of them claim to be ministers of God. Jesus talked about "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15). John the apostle urged that they be tried (I John 4:1-4). "Seducing spirits" are false preachers (I Timothy 4:1-5). Elders of the Lord's church and the members thereof should never listen to false teachers or preachers. Acts 20:28-32).

We recognize the seriousness of this charge: No denominational preacher, preaches the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!! Among churches of Christ we have some

continued on page 3

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Christmas and the Angels

In this holiday season we are accustomed to seeing angels of all varieties and sizes. Millions again this year will enjoy the antics of Clarence, the friendly angel in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Trees will often be donned with a beautiful angel at the top, wings outspread. But would you like to know more? Would you like to know the truth about angels?

First, some simple Biblical facts about angels: Angels are mentioned two hundred and ninety-five times in the Bible. Angels are created beings, for Psalm 148:1-5 says, "Praise ye him, all his angels; praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created."

There are many angels. Revelation 5:11-14 pictures "Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands..."

Only twice in the Bible do we learn the names of angels. One is Gabriel (Lk. 1:19), the other Michael, (Rev. 12:7). Angels are always masculine in gender, never feminine.

Angels are not married. Jesus taught, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30).

Angels have not always been faithful to God. There was at least some time in which angels could choose between righteousness and unrighteousness. Jude 6 says, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Frequently people speak of their guardian angel. There are verses which could lead one to believe they possessed such an angel (Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:13-14), but when held under the light of other passages and logic, that notion melts away. If we do have guardian angels, what exactly do they do to benefit us? Do they protect us from all harm? Do they protect us from temptation? No. We all know from experience that people--even God's most righteous--are not immune from harm or temptation.

Perhaps angels are dispersed to carry out God's providence (Rom. 5:8). However, God's providence doesn't require angels help so far as we know.

Do angels instruct us? No, the scriptures give us the total for instruction in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16).

Angels are used by God for four major tasks. They are these:

1. Messengers. During the miraculous age, angels were often dispatched by God in human form to deliver messages. In Judges 13:3 an angel in the form of a man appeared to Samson's mother. In Luke 1 Gabriel spoke to Zacharias regarding John's birth. Later in the same chapter Gabriel speaks to Mary regarding Jesus' birth.

2. Assistants

Angels have assisted in carrying the soul of the dead to a place of bliss: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried" (Luke 16:22). Knowing their great strength, this has an air of ceremony as they escort the dead to their happy resting place and reward. Remember that the angels rejoiced at Lazarus' penitent heart (Luke 15).

Angels have assisted in military triumph. We commonly think of angels as gentle, pleasant and sweet. We almost always picture or portray them as beautiful and female. Husbands are prone to call their wives "angel." Yet true angels are never described as female in the Bible, and are often described in a military position. Mark it down: No man has the power to fight like an angel. II Kings 19:35 says, "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."

Those two angels in Genesis 19 spoke with great confidence as they told Lot, "For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it" (vs. 13).

Our Lord overwhelmed us with the sense of massive power when He said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53).

One day mighty angels will assist the Lord in the judgment of all mankind. We read in II Thessalonians 1:7-8, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Matthew adds, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matthew 13:41).

Is it wrong to have figures of imaginary creatures scattered about during the holiday season? I think not, provided we don't start believing in people's imagination as we do in the truth of God's word.

"church wreckers," who are determined to denominationalize the Lord's church, viz, Rubel Shelly and his followers. Is it sinful for men to identify false teachers? Not at all! Paul wrote the names of Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus into the divine record (I Timothy 1:19-20; II Timothy 2:17-18). It is a grave sin to sow discord among the brethren (Proverbs 6:14-19).

Galatians 5:19-21, contains a long list of sins often committed by people who live today. Those who are Christians, under the pressure of temptation can sin so as to be lost. Some preachers argue that if one becomes a child of God, one cannot die in sin. Jesus, in John 8:24-27, denies the foregoing allegation.

Remember, sin always pays its wages. As one sows, so shall one reap (Galatians 6:79). When one uses his/her body to live the life of the fornicator, the drunkard, the thief, the murderer, one should expect to suffer for his crimes against God and himself. Often-times, we can see in the eyes and the face evidence of those who have lived profligate lives (Ecclesiastes 8:1). Brethren, have the courage to do right even if the whole world stands against you. (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

The Wages of Sin is enormously high. One man lost his house which cost \$150,000, his job which paid him \$100,000 per year, his family the value of which cannot be estimated, and his standing in the community.

Another example: In an interview that was

televised from Tutwiler Prison for women, a beautiful young woman was serving her sentence of drug abuse. When asked how much money she had to have to support her drug habit, she said, "Five hundred dollars each day." "How did you raise that kind of money?" she was asked. Her reply was, "Any way I could." Drug abuse makes monsters of its slaves!!

The wages of sin is death---spiritual death. It is not annihilation; it is eternal separation from God and all that is good. Remorse, however deep and sincere, does not cancel the penalty of spiritual death in hell. The same adjective used to describe the duration of the righteous is also used to describe the duration of punishment (Matthew 25:46; Romans 16:26).

Now, dear readers, would you like to live in a mansion, walk with the King, hear the angels sing, and be forever in the presence of Him who died that we might live?? If the answer is YES, THEN YOU MUST HEAR, BELIEVE AND OBEY THE TRUTH OF GOD. Read these passages, John 6:44-45; Hebrews 11:6; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32-33; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-38; Galatians 3:26-29; Revelation 2:10. Do it today, your tomorrow may never come.

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MOST OF A MINUTE - Children Respecting Authority

Consider the subject of respecting authority. Do you generally respect authority? That respect for God's authority is necessary if you and I want to see heaven. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." And in John 15:14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Now, a man or woman can learn to submit to God's divine authority at any time of life and I'm thankful for that fact. And yet, the best and easiest time to learn how to respect His authority is when you are a child and are learning from your parents. You see, all that a

little child knows about God is mamma and daddy. And as that child begins to learn, wise parents will teach their children to respect authority. "Honey, you will obey me because I am your mother." Parents like this believe in spanking when necessary too. They want their children to learn while it's easiest how to respect authority. Ephesians 6:1 said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right."

Beauty

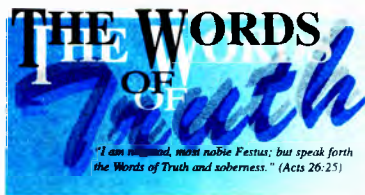
Mike Benson

Mrs. Brown always resented having to arrange her own hair and sew her own clothes, especially while her more "well-to-do" friends boasted of patronizing the finest shops in town. So, when the Brown's financial ship finally came in, Mrs. Brown wasted no time in getting a complete salon treatment, and buying a complete new wardrobe including the most stunning dress she could find. Thus attired in sophistication and expensive perfume, she presented herself to Mr. Brown for approval. "Well, what do you think?" she asked. "Honey," he said, "now you look like a million." "Really?" she ask

coily. "A million dollars?" "No," he said, "a million other women!" (James Drake, *Be Yourself, The Speaker's Handbook of Humor*, #335, p. 1621)

Ladies, the Bible says, "Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel, but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit..." (1 Peter 3:3,4). You know, any husband is proud of his wife when she is attractive, but **REAL BEAUTY** comes from the heart - not from the store. Think about it.

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Vol. 34 No. 48

December 11, 1997

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

WORKS

Special Music in the Church -
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My Husband Is Not Related To Me
The Goodness of God Leads To
Repentance

WORKS

Mike Benson

"I fail to understand why you teach that baptism is necessary for salvation when the Scriptures clearly teach that a person cannot earn or merit his salvation (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). Baptism is a work, and works cannot save. Faith alone is the means by which a sinner is saved."

There are at least three different kinds of works mentioned in the Bible: 1) works of **merit**, 2) works of **the Law of Moses**, and 3) works of **obedience**. It is important that we distinguish between them.

(Let me encourage you to read the following passages in your Bible, then carefully study the following questions).

Case study #1: The gift of Jericho - Joshua 6.

Did the Lord make any requirements of Israel (vv. 3-5)? Did any of these commands have to be carried out BEFORE Israel could receive Jericho? (If Israel had not followed the Lord's instructions, would she have still received the city)? According to the text, were any works of obedience necessary before the blessing could be bestowed? Exactly when did Israel receive Jericho -- the moment she believed, or after faith brought her to obedience?

Consider: Israel's obedience in no way entitled her to the city of Jericho. She did not earn Jericho by virtue of her meritorious endeavors, nor could she have boasted that her victory was due to her own prowess. *But the fact remains that until Israel obeyed (i.e., worked) she did not receive Jericho.*

Case study #2: The gift of cleansing - 2 Kings 5.

Did Elisha (the Lord's prophet) make any requirements of Naaman (vv. 10,14)? Did any of these works have to be fulfilled BEFORE Naaman could receive cleansing from his leprosy (vv. 9-14)? (If Naaman had not dipped in the Jordan seven times as the Lord commanded, would he still have been cleansed)? According to the text, was obedience necessary before the blessing could be bestowed? Exactly when did Naaman receive his cleansing -- the moment he

believed, or after faith brought him to obedience?

Consider: Naaman's obedience did not entitle him to be cleansed from his disease. He did not merit his cleansing by virtue of dipping in the Jordan. *But the fact remains that until Naaman obeyed (i.e., worked) he could not be clean.*

Case study #3: The gift of sight - John 9. Did the Lord make any requirements of the blind man (v. 7)? Did any works have to be carried out BEFORE the blind man could receive his sight? (If the blind man had not gone to the pool of Siloam and washed, would he still have received his sight)? According to the text, was obedience necessary before the blessing could be bestowed? Exactly when did the blind man receive his sight? The moment he believed, or after faith brought him to obedience?

Consider: The Lord was in no way obligated to grant sight to the blind man because he went to Siloam and washed. *But the fact remains that until the blind man obeyed (i.e., worked) he could not see.*

Case study #4: The gift of salvation - Acts 10.

Did Peter make any requirements of Cornelius and his household (v. 48)? Did any works have to be carried out BEFORE the family could enjoy forgiveness of sins (cf. Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21)? "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation whoever fears Him and WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS is accepted by Him'" (Acts 10:34-35; cf. Jas. 2:20-24; Matt. 7:21).

Consider: Did obeying Peter's command to be baptized mean that Cornelius and his family had somehow earned their salvation? Certainly not. *But the fact remains that until the family worked righteousness (i.e., obeyed) they could not receive the forgiveness of sins.*

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Special Music in the Church - Ephesians 5:19

Today good brethren often have questions about special music in our worship. By special they mean different from the traditional congregational singing of churches of Christ. Some churches now are having one man singing solo to the congregation, or perhaps a trio or a quartet performing for the church in worship. Some churches of Christ, we understand, now have their own choirs which perform during the worship assembly. Is this pleasing to God? There is but one way to find the answer. We can't call the Lord on the phone as we can one another. We can't use the postal service or fax line or E-mail to send and receive messages. God doesn't verbally and personally answer questions as He once did. But He has given us the answers regarding worship which we need! For this we are thankful. Without God's instructions revealed in the Bible, we would live our lives in aimless curiosity feebly trying to please Him. The Bible is the complete, authoritative, inspired word of God (II Tim. 3:16, Jude 3, II Pet. 1:3, Jn. 17:17). Through His word God teaches us how to worship Him, and then expects us to comply with His desires (Jn. 4:24).

The book of Ephesians was written to the members of the church at Ephesus. The first verse of this great book says, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus..." These truths, then, are applicable to individual Christians and to the church as a whole. Thus, the information taught herein about Christian worship is very valuable and interesting.

Consider Ephesians 5:19. It reads, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." This passage is similar to what the inspired apostle wrote in Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord."

By breaking down these phrases we can see more clearly what is and what is not permitted by God with reference to music in New Testament worship today.

1. "Speaking."

This shows that the music authorized in the New Testament must be vocal, and verbal. The Greek word for speaking is *laleo*, and is found 295 times in the New Testament. It is translated "speak, spake, say, told, talked, and preached." Therefore the music described here must be in words. What kinds of things would this, by implication, prohibit?

A. Instrumental music. Though some might prefer playing (on an organ or piano), the instruction specifies speaking in song. Colossians 3:16 says this must be singing which teaches and admonishes. A mechanical instrument of music can never speak, teach or admonish. Humans do that when they sing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to one another.

B. Humming, whistling, or clapping. None of these can be considered speaking or teaching.

2. "Speaking to yourselves."

This shows that our singing must be reciprocal. That is, people singing to one another. Since all are told to sing, (this teaching is for every member, 1:1), and to be "speaking to yourselves" therefore the picture is clearly congregational singing. There is not another scenario which will fill the bill.

What would this teaching prohibit by implication?

A. Worship assemblies in which a small group or choir of people sang while everyone else just sat and listened. According to Paul, everyone is to be singing.

B. Worship assemblies in which solo or small groups sang to the larger group while the larger group sat and quietly listened. Again, bear in mind that all are commanded to sing. While in a song which has a bass lead, then an alto lead, there may be momentary pauses between lyrical lines, yet those involved are still doing that which complies with "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs singing..." On the other hand, a setting in which one group sings the song while everyone else sits without singing is a violation of this teaching.

3 "in psalms and hymns and spiritual sings..."

This describes the lyrics of approved music. Psalms are scripture set to music. Hymns are songs of praise to God. Spiritual songs describe those which are designed around spiritual themes and which motivate singers and listeners to greater spiritual service.

4. "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

This is what we are to do with reference to music in worship. Sing! Make melody in your heart to the Lord. The true expression of Christianity is not a sigh, but a song. What, by implication, is prohibited by this teaching?

A. Playing a mechanical instrument for music in worship. Playing isn't singing. Furthermore, playing an instrument such as a piano or guitar, is making melody in and on something other than your heart as you were instructed.

B. Entertainment oriented music which, in reality, is to please our ears without serious regard for what is truly pleasing to God is prohibited here. We are to sing to the Lord as our praise teaches and admonishes other worshippers. The focus of our music is primarily to the Lord. When our worship has no higher goal than just pleasing the worshippers, that's how far up it will go. Worship to God was never intended to be cheapened into mere entertainment for other worshippers.

May our worship, whether public or private, be totally motivated by a sincere desire to please our God. *As Jesus taught*, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24).

God offers the free gift of salvation (Rom. 6:23) to all who will accept it, but certain conditions (i.e., works of obedience/righteousness) still have to be carried out before one can receive it. The Bible clearly teaches that the faith that saves is the faith that works/obeys. "By faith Abel **offered..**" (Heb. 11:4), "by faith Noah **prepared..**" (Heb. 11:7), "by faith Abraham **obeyed..**" (Heb. 11:6). "You see then that a man is justified by works, **and not by faith only**" (Jas. 2:24). See also 2 Jn. 8, Gal. 5:6; Phil 2:12; 2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 2:10, and Col 1:10.

You are correct in this: A person can in no way merit his salvation. But his faith must be followed by humble obedience (Heb. 5:9) in order to receive promised blessing. "He who believes AND IS baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16; c.f. Gal. 3:27, 28).

Incidentally, to exclude all works from the plan of salvation is to exclude faith itself, for Jesus affirmed that faith is a work (Jn. 6:29).

Take Heed Lest You Fall

G. F. Raines

The apostle Paul says: "Therefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

He similarly exhorted the Hebrews, saying: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12).

The prophet Isaiah declares that those who forsake the Lord will be "as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water" and "shall be consumed" (Isa. 1:28-30).

The Hebrews in the days of Isaiah departed from God when they "cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 5:24). God's children today depart from God when they cease to obey the gospel of Christ (Col. 1:23; 1 Pet. 4:17, 18; 2 These 1:7-9; Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10).

If you do not "continue in the faith," which is the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:11, 12, 23) you will be "moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23).

To continue in the faith, you must "add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowl-

edge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:5-11).

The word of God explicitly states that only those who have been born again are in the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5), and that, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire" (Matt. 13:1, 42).

Let us, therefore, "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:12-14).

MOST OF A MINUTE - My Husband Is Not Related To Me

The Bible gives us more valuable information about how to manage marriage than any other book. For example, Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Who would you say is closest? Mother and child or husband and wife? One wife was asked, "If you had

to lose your husband or your son, which would you choose to keep?" She said, "My son. That husband is no relation of mine." Actually she's right about one thing. That husband is not just related to you, he is a part of you, and you are a part of him. One flesh. Gentleman, if you are hurting your wife, you are hurting you. Be good to yourself and love your wife.

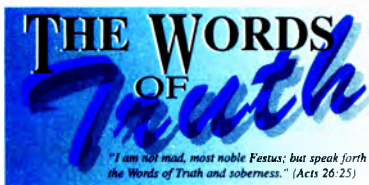
The Goodness of God Leads To Repentance

David Macy

God is forbearing and long suffering because he is good, and honest-hearted people are so moved and touched by His goodness that they are led to repent of their sins and journey to the cross for the cleansing blood. Salvation is not something people can be forced to seek even as much as we would like to sometimes because of our great love for them. They must be led by the goodness of God to repentance and salvation, otherwise their response is a shallow superficial thing, which will evaporate when hardships are encountered. But when a person is truly led by the goodness of God, the hardships and trials of life make him appreciate our loving heavenly Father even more, and they make him draw closer and closer to His loving breast. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalms 34:18). When a person has a broken heart and a contrite spirit, because of his sins, the Lord draws very near because of His wonderful goodness and mercy. The word here means broken to shivers. When you feel your heart has been broken into a million pieces in penance, because of your sin, at that very moment you are drawing nearer to God and He is drawing very near to you. We desperately need many such broken hearts because of sin in our great nation, and many bit-

ter tears because God's word has been disobeyed again and again. As long as people can hold their heads high and feel no heart pains while disobeying God's will, they will remain far, far apart from the Father of Mercies and the Giver of all good gifts. A contrite spirit is a beaten-out spirit, as you would beat out a piece of copper to increase its size, and make it more usable. Sometimes our spirits must be hammered and pounded with severe trials and insurmountable obstacles before we will truly repent and draw near to God and His marvelous goodness. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). To be pardoned by God, and forgiven of your sins, you must offer a sacrifice to the Almighty. The sacrifice is a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and our loving God will never despise or reject such sacrifice. Instead of despising or rejecting, He will draw close. This is when life takes on an entirely new meaning, and the cold, dark, miserable winter of sin is transformed into a beautiful heart, warming spring of righteousness and peace.

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Vol. 34 No. 49

December 18, 1997

How Do You Hear?

by Mike Benson

The new preacher stood at the door greeting members as they left the Sunday morning service. Most of the people were very generous in telling the new preacher how they liked his message. However, one man was not so kind. He walked up to the preacher and said, "that was a very dull and boring sermon." A few minutes later, the same man appeared in line and said, "I don't think you were prepared this morning." A third time the man appeared, this time muttering, "You really blew it, you didn't have a thing to say." The preacher could stand it no longer. So he went over to one of the deacons and inquired about the odd member. "Oh, don't let him bother you," said the deacon. "He's a little slow. All he does is go around repeating whatever he hears other people saying!"

While it is true the God will hold the preacher responsible for the way in which he handles the Word of God, may I suggest that it is equally true that God will hold the hearer responsible for the manner in which he *hears* the Word of God. Jesus said, "...Take heed how you hear..." (Lk. 18:8). The church is in the communication business (cf, Matt. 28:19-20). Effective communications require active involvement by sender (i.e., preacher), as well as receiver(s) (i.e., members of the congregation).

Many of us have been taught to speak effectively, but few of us have ever been taught how to listen effectively. Dear Christian, how do you listen? How do you hear?

I. The New Testament emphasizes *listening*

Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear, (Matt. 13:9). "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them" (Matt. 13:13-15). Jesus' audience had the faculties of attention and understanding, *but they did not give attention to what He said -- they did not listen* (cf, Heb. 2:1).

Paul wrote, "For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they

are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:13-17). Note the order and progression: sending -- preaching -- hearing -- believing -- calling. Note also that the event of hearing stands at the center between preaching and believing. Since faith comes by hearing, and the Jews had heard, how could the apostle explain their lack of faith? They really didn't listen. "Those by the way side are the ones who hear, then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and obey" (Lk. 8:12). H. Leo Boles observed, "These hearers do not care to believe; the word of God is good, the teacher is faithful in preaching it, but the heart is not prepared for it." Brethren, simply being in the audience on Sunday morning is not sufficient; we must really listen to what is being said.

II. Being a better listener should be a major concern of every Christian.

Many are *ineffective* listeners. Jerrie Barber tells the true story of a gospel preacher who heard nail-clipping during the course of his sermon. The sound of the clipping was disruptive to both preacher as well as congregation. Suddenly, the preacher discovered the culprit -- it was the song leader. But he wasn't clipping his fingernails, but his toenails!! Is it any less disruptive, any less disrespectful, when we busy ourselves by playing with children, talking, flipping through the song book, etc., during the time when God is speaking to us through the preacher (cf, 1 Cor. 2:4-5)?

Listening is WORK! Suggestions:

Before the sermon:

1. Come prepared to listen. Get adequate rest Saturday night. Establish a schedule and then use your time wisely Sunday morning before the worship assembly.

2. Pray for the preacher.

During the sermon:

3. Be alert and concentrate (cf, Jas. 1:19). TV has spoiled us; it has trained us not to think and to be bored by anything non-visual. What do you think about during the

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FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Hanukkah

Perhaps during the holiday season some of our readers hear about the Jewish holiday called Hanukkah, and wonder what it means and what is involved.

According to the World Book Encyclopedia, today's Jews refer to this eight-day observance as the Feast of Lights or Feast of Dedication. The word Hanukkah (sometimes spelled *Chanukah*) means dedication. It begins on the twenty-fifth day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, and usually falls in the month of December. The word "Hanukkah" is not found in the Bible but rather in the ancient, uninspired books called the *Apocrypha*. According to those writings, in the specific book called Maccabees, in 165 B.C. after a three year struggle, the Jews in Juda defeated the Syrian tyrant Antiochus IV. They held festivities in the temple in Jerusalem, and rededicated it to God. After cleaning the Temple of Syrian idols, they found only one small cruse of oil with which to light their holy lamps. But miraculously, the cruse provided oil for eight days. Judas Maccabaeus, the Jewish leader, then proclaimed a festival to be observed by the Jews.

During Hanukkah, gifts are exchanged, and contributions made to the poor. Each evening for eight days one additional candle is lighted on the Hanukkah menorah (or candelabra).

Did these things actually occur in 165 B.C.? Well, that a miracle of oil occurred cannot be proven (perhaps it did), but the history is certainly there to back up the rest.

Now to the more interesting part. Since Jesus was set to fulfill all righteousness, it seems obvious that He would attend the three major Jewish feasts while on earth: Pass Over, Tabernacles, Pentacost (Jn 2:23; Jn 7:2-37; Mt. 26:17; Mk. 14:12; Lk 22:8; Jn 13:1). And yet, we never hear of Christ attending Hanukkah. If it were a righteous act, why would Christ not attend? Why was the feast not commanded to us in the Bible?

Recently a Christian asked a question about how we should view Hanukkah today, and whether it would

be appropriate to wish Jews a "Happy Hanukkah." That's a good question, and the answer is that we should remember that Jews reject the Messiah today. They do not believe Jesus is Lord and Christ. They are anti-Christ, or against Jesus Christ. Let me show you what Hanukkah means to me. As you read, remember that Hanukkah is the "feast of dedication."

Lets read (John 10:22-23). "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter." And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, make thyself God."

People who follow Jewish custom today and reject Christ are not saved. If they are then our Savior lied in John 14:6. Furthermore the only Biblical mention of this annual celebration is in this passage -- one in which the Jews sought to stone our Lord, an in which they blasphemously deny that He is the Christ! Surely the Lord would not be pleased for me to wish a Jew happy Hanukkah, and I intend to refrain from the practice. I hope you will too.

MOST OF A MINUTE - The Christmas Mile Marker

During the holiday season of the year I find myself with a variety of emotions. Joy at the happiness of the time, a little stress at trying to get things going on schedule, and I also feel a little melancholy when I stop to think of how short the time has been since last Christmas. Christmas is one of those mile markers of life. Like birthdays, they are good because they remind us of something very important.

What makes us feel an urgency about doing good, about being the best people we can be, is

that we know we have a dead line. The years are galloping by, and I know it. This is not pessimism, its realism. Whatever good I can do, whatever noble deed I can accomplish, let me do it now, for I will not be here forever. Enjoy the holiday season, and remember to put the Lord first in your life, for that is the most important thing of all. Jesus said, "...You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you (Jn. 15:14)."

How Do You Hear?, continued from page 1

sermon? How nice a nap would feel? Unpaid bills? That pretty girl sitting in front of you? Dinner? The ball game?

4. Bring your Bible, paper and pen. Take notes and follow scripture references.

5. Be mature in your expectations of the preacher. Whatever his ability, no gospel preacher can be in peak performance every week. Neither can he in a single lesson treat everyone's special problem or favorite Bible topic. In a congregation of one hundred-forty plus, this week's sermon may not be applicable to you, but it may be just what the person next to you needs.

6. Listen constructively. Paul did not use excellent speech or wisdom. The power of his preaching was the Word of God!

7. Investigate. Study, think, reflect, judge, evaluate, consider, ponder, search, check (Acts 17:11).

8. Say "Amen."

After the sermon

9. Make genuine comments to the preacher; avoid those tired cliches. Your response tells the preacher vol-

umes about how well you listened to his sermon.

10. Ask questions. This may stimulate further preaching endeavors.

11. Suggest topics or passages for further study.

12. Apply what you have heard to yourself (Lk. 8:15)!. This is the most important step in listening; it is also the most difficult. Avoid the trap of thinking, "Boy, I sure hope George heard that lesson -- he really needed it."

Suggested reading. "Take Heed How Ye Hear," by C.F. Shirley, in God Hath Spoken. The Tenth Annual Southwest Lectures, edited by Bill Jackson, pp. 40ff.

Someone has said that it takes courage to stand up and speak. May I suggest that it takes equal courage to sit down and listen. Jesus said we should hear and listen (Lk. 8:18; Jn. 8:43).

It takes two -- the sender/preacher and the receiver/listener -- to make a sermon work. The preacher will do his best this coming Lord's Day. Will you do yours (Ezek. 33:31)?

The Bottom Line In Life

Keith Kasarjian

When we talk about the "bottom line" we are talking about what really matters, what it all boils down to. So, what is the "bottom line" in life? What is life all about? What is really important? The world offers many answers to this question, but true to form, they are incorrect. According to the Bible, however, the Day of Judgement is the bottom line in life. When all is said and done, that's what life is all about. In the final analysis nothing matters as much as "are you ready for the judgement?"

And yet there is much confusion concerning this great day. There are many "theories" concerning the judgement as to when, how, and what. But what does the Bible say? In John 5:19-30 Jesus reveals at least four facts concerning the judgement.

Judgement Fact #1 - It Will Happen

In verses 25, 28, and 29 Jesus uses definite terms in reference to the occurrence of the judgement. He never uses words like "if" or "maybe" but instead says "the hour is coming." And this is consistent with what the rest of the Bible says. Hebrews 9:27 promises the judgement just as sure as death. Romans 14:10 declares that we will all stand before the judgement seat of Christ. Also consult Matthew 25:31; Acts 17:30, 31; Revelation 20:12, 13; and Ecclesiastes 12:14 to see that the judgement is not a mere possibility but a certainty. In fact, the judgement is a theme that runs throughout the Bible.

Don't let the uncertainty of when the judgement will occur cause you to doubt that it will happen.

Judgement Fact #2 - Jesus will be Our Judge

According to verses 22, 26, 27, and 30 we are not left to wonder who will judge us on that final day, it will most certainly be Jesus. Once again, this is true to every other revelation concerning the judgement (Rom. 2:16; 14:10; 2 Tim. 4:1). The fact that Jesus will judge us gives great assurance to the faithful child of God.

We know Jesus will judge us in a fair, impartial manner. Aren't you glad you won't be judged by your enemies or critics? None of these will have any input into your eternal destination. Jesus is described as "the righteous judge" (2 Tim. 4:8), also it is declared that Jesus "will judge the world unrighteousness" (Acts 17:31). He has no hidden agenda and no axe to grind, only justice to be served.

Also, since we know Jesus will be our Judge, we know by what we will be judged. We have already been told. What could be more fair? No pop-quiz. No trick questions. The judging criteria has already been revealed. According to the Bible, we will be judged by 1) Our works (Matt. 16:27), 2) Our fruit (Jer. 17:10), 3) Our words (Matt. 12:36), and 4) Our secrets (Rom. 2:16; Ecc. 12:14). Since we already know what will be on "the test," how foolish we are if

The Bottom Line In Life, *continued from page 3*

we "fail!"

Judgement Fact #4 - Now Is The Time To Prepare

One will notice in verse 29 that we will be judged by that which can only be done now! Our death or the return of Jesus (whichever comes first) will mark the end of our preparation for eternity. This is the very reason you Bible says, "now is the accepted time behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

The judgement is coming, when we will be judged by the righteous Judge, and based on the judgement, we will make our eternal home in either Heaven or Hell. One prepares for the judgement by becoming a child of God and by remaining faithful to Him. Friend, won't you make preparation while you can? Are you ready for the Judgement Day?

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The Importance of Preaching

G. F. Raines

The importance of preaching is emphasized in many passages in the Book of God.

Noah in the world before the flood was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5).

Because of the preaching of the prophet Jonah, the people of Ninevah repented, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:10; cf. Jer. 18:7-10).

Paul says that it pleases God by the preaching of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:14-17) "to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21; cf. Rom. 10:12-17).

Faithful preaching of the gospel consists of a courageous declaration (Eph. 6:20) "in love" (Eph. 4:15) of "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

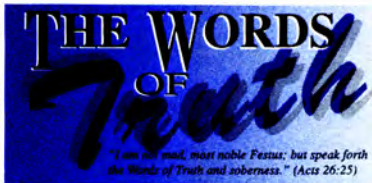
Sermons should be given before God for his approval, and not for the popularity of either the preacher or the congregation.

The apostle Paul unequivocally says:

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:8-10).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:2-3).

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).*

Vol. 34 No. 50

December 25, 1997

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Of Appearances And Associations

Neal Pollard

Some speak of moral and doctrinal purity as if the two are mutually exclusive. Some brethren emphasize doctrinal purity with vigor, yet almost completely avoid moral matters. Others treat doctrinal matters with the same indifference, though they take up moral causes with exuberance. Spiritual "soundness" includes "sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3, et al), a "sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7), the form of "sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13), being "sound in the faith" (Tit. 1:13), a "sound faith" (Tit. 2:2), and "sound speech" (Tit. 2:8). "Soundness", or spiritual healthiness or wellness, is taught as something requiring both personal conviction and public proclamation in the area of teaching and living. How can one know if he or she is sound? As Bill Cosby might say of Jell-O, "The proof is in the puddin'."

Please consider the following thoughts.

Things I Have Never Heard Christians Say

"I watch some NC-17 and X-rated movies. The pornography is not as bad in some of them as they are in others."

"Sure, I let my son march in that Gay Pride parade. He's not homosexual; so, what's the harm?"

"Yes...I went into the crack house, but I only smoked one vial of crack."

"We let our daughter pick up rattle snakes, and she's not been bitten yet."

"I am a member of a nudist colony, but I go to our meetings fully clothed."

"I go into brothels, but I never speak to the women there."

Things I Have Heard Christians Say

"I go to some R-rated movies, but only if they look really good. There was only this one/two bad scenes. Oh, and they used the word a couple of times. But, other than that..."

"Listen, I let my girl go to the prom during high school, but she does not dance. What's the harm?"

"I can go down to the local bar to meet people. At most, I'll have one drink...maybe two."

"We let our son take his girlfriend into his bedroom.

They close the door, but nothing has ever happened."

"I love going down to the beach. Even though I see men and women in *very* brief attire, what I wear is a lot more modest than I've seen them wearing."

"I love to flirt, but I'd never be unfaithful to my spouse."

Please do not miss the analogy. The two sets of examples are not exact parallels (i.e., crack is more deadly and is illegal whereas a single drink of alcohol is usually neither deadly nor illegal). The exact comparison is made between the effects both have upon one's Christian influence and the effects of such upon one's own soul.

What does God say to Christians who believe they can go where sin abounds, look at and think about sinful things, expose their hearts to sin, flirt with sinful situations, and maintain their "sound mind" and spiritual health? He says, "watch your example" (1 Tim. 4:12). He says, "guard your thoughts" (Matt. 15: 19-20). He says, "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Th. 5:22). He says, "choose carefully your company" (1 Cor. 14:33). He says, "flee fornication" (1 Cor. 6:18). How easily sloughed aside are these crucial passages!

When Christians begin rationalizing behavior that, at best, is deemed questionable by the rational thinking person, the process of apostasy is in full-swing. Falling away from God does not begin with murder, adultery, and theft. It begins more modestly. Remember, a tree starts as a seed or acorn. Likewise, full-blown separation from God begins with one small step toward Satan. Remember God's admonition, and "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5).

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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The Church Belongs to Christ

For this article to achieve its purpose, you must first affirm this premise in your mind: The church belongs to Christ. It isn't ours. We do not write its constitution or by-laws. We do not propose and enact amendments to its law. Christ owns the church, and paid dearly to buy it (Eph. 5:25). Sometimes we say of a man, "He broke the law of Christ." In reality, a man does not break Christ's law. A man may be broken on Christ's law, but the law always stays perfectly in tact, and the Lord has given us His law regarding His church.

And we in the church of Christ usually understand that principle. We typically stand for that principle with great and valid zeal.

When some of our friends who are members of other religions describe the way a man becomes a member of their church, we point out that the church is not ours, and the only way a man may enter Christ's church is according to Christ's law. Acts 2 reveals that a man must repent and be baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins, and is then added by the Lord to the church. Thus we in the church of Christ correctly teach that baptism is essential. Baptism into Christ to be added to the church is not ours to tamper with. The church belongs to Christ.

When some outside the church of Christ speak of their church government including a pope, or perhaps district/circuit overseers which rule over a number of churches, or a board of deacons with authority over the body, we kindly but firmly object. After all, the Bible teaches plainly how the church is to be overseen by men in the office of elder (Acts 20:27-28; I Tim. 3:1-7). We do not have the right to tamper with the Lord's design for the church. To alter His design would be to place our wisdom above His. Such would be a gross lack of faith and a sin. The church belongs to Christ.

When one of our friends in a denominational church speaks admiringly of their beautiful organ music in worship we kindly and gently teach that in the New Testament we only have authority to sing in worship. We point out that Colossians 3:16-17 teaches us to sing, and then teaches us that we need to have Christ's authority from the Bible for what we practice in our Christian lives: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admon-

ishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." "The church," we firmly say, "belongs to Christ."

Yet we are often inconsistent in the church of Christ. While we preach our principle of Christ's ownership, (and we should), we ourselves violate it when we fail to practice church discipline to its fullest. When an eldership fails to lead the church in obeying the clear commands of the Lord on any subject they are not fulfilling their duty. They are charged by the Holy Spirit in Acts 20:28 to be "overseers," a word meaning "one who sees to it that that which is done is done rightly." The command is so clear: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (II Thessalonians 3:6). Read I Corinthians chapter five. Who do we think we are to tamper with the Lord's way? The fact that church withdrawal of the impenitent is unpleasant is no excuse. To replace the Lord's way with our way in this matter is presumptuous. The church belongs to Christ, not to us. Perhaps we believe that in the 1990's the church will dwindle and not grow if we withdraw from the impenitent as the Bible teaches. Perhaps we believe that the better way to make the church grow is to make all discipline private and quiet and weak. Perhaps some believe that discipline has no place at all in the church of the 90's. Such reasoning speaks against God. Is the church not the Lord's? Has He not shown us His will in reference to this critical matter? Are we obeying Him, or are we putting our wisdom ahead of His? Suppose the church which does God's will in this matter doesn't grow (by the way, I believe it will grow, GC), isn't it much better to have a smaller church which does God's will than a larger church which is substituting their will for God's?

Elders, lead us. Repent first if you need to, but then lead. We can be the church of the New Testament, but only inasmuch as we follow the New Testament.

The church belongs to Christ.

MOST OF A MINUTE - Abram and Sarai

I am convinced that there are many times in life in which we could avoid foolish mistakes if we would just first sit back and say, "That's not God's way. That's not what He wants."

In Genesis 16 you find an impatient couple, Abram and Sarai. God had promised them a child in their old age, but it hadn't happened, and some years were passing. Sarai one day came to her husband and said, "I want you to have my baby with my handmaid Hagar." The first surrogate moth-

er was a servant. Abram foolishly agreed, and Hagar bore him a son called Ishmael. It was awful. Every person involved -- including poor Ishmael -- suffered grievously as a result of not doing things God's way. Are you making serious mistakes in your life right now? If so, then it's high time you stopped what you're doing and start asking "What would God want me to do about this?" And then obey Him. Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

The Resurrection of Jesus

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The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the basic fact upon which Christianity rests. Many years ago, Alexander Campbell said: "Only show me the man, who, on the testimony of the Apostles and prophets, believes that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and I will engage to show you a Christian, not only in faith, but in works. A belief in this fact is the fons et principium of Christianity -- the source from which the practice of all Christian virtues must be derived. This is the principle which leavens the whole mass -- this is the balm of Gilead, the cordial which calms, and cheers, and comforts the heart" (Campbell-Owen Debate, Mcquiddy Printing Co., Nashville, Tenn. 1946, p. 315).

Just as certainly as Jesus was raised from the dead, he was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Paul says he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (Matt. 16:16-19); and, obviously, God would not have raised an imposter.

Even the most ardent and determined enemies of Christ and Christianity admit that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb early in the morning of the third day after his burial. They say the disciples stole the body, but the fact that a Roman guard consisting of sixty soldiers guarded the tomb made it impossible for the body to be removed in such a way.

The soldiers were not all asleep at the same time, as the enemies of Christianity allege, because, as Benjamin Franklin, said:

"It was certain death, under the Roman military law, for a soldier to be found asleep while on guard. Then the guard was divided into different watches, and each watch only required to be on guard six hours at a time, involving no necessity for being sleepy while on guard. Then, it would have been marvelous for the entire watch to have fallen asleep at once, and so soundly asleep, as not to have been awakened by the rolling away of the stone from the entrance of the tomb, which was 'very great,' and the entire transaction of taking away the body! This is an incredible story" (The Gospel Preacher, Vol. 1, Thirty-Third Edition, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, Tenn., 1947, p. 17).

The fact that the tomb was empty proves conclusively that God raised Jesus from the dead. This sacred truth cannot be refuted by all the prej-

udice, sophistry, ingenuity, and learning under the vaset canopy of heaven.

"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:1-6).

After his resurrection and just before his ascension into heaven, our Lord gave to his apostles the Great Commission, saying:

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20).

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16).

"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46, 47).

In Romans 6:1-5, the apostle Paul says:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid, How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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 also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

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Can We Judge?

"How can you say that certain churches are guilty of teaching error? You can't tell people that they are wrong! Jesus said you are not to judge (Matt. 7:1)."

1. You are correct, Jesus did teach, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). However, the context of the passage makes it clear that He was not forbidding any and all judging, but rather harsh, hypercritical judging that refuses to engage in self-examination. "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck out of your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matt. 7:2-5).

2. Actually, Jesus **COMMANDED** a certain kind of judging. "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with **RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT**" (Jn. 7:24; cf, Rom. 2:5). The Greek word translated judge means "to decide, distinguish, conclude, condemn."

3. Note the following:

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15).

Consider: The very same chapter that begins with the words "Judge not," also requires that we distinguish between sheep and wolves in sheep's clothing. How can this be accomplished unless righteous judgement, based upon the Word of God (cf, Jn. 12:48; Psm. 119:172), occurs?

"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

Consider: How can a Christian know whom he should avoid unless he judges, with righteous judgment, as to whether or not an individual teaches a "contrary" (cf, 2 Jn. 9) doctrine?

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 Jn. 4:1).

Consider: It is impossible to try/prove the spirits without judging them in the sense of comparing their teachings with the Word of God and drawing a conclusion as to their rightness or wrongness.

"So speak and so do those who will be judged by the law of liberty" (Jas. 2:12).

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