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STRONG CHURCHES

Neal Pollard

Everybody wants to be a part of one, but not many are willing to do what it takes to be a part of one. The Lord wants His congregations strong (cf. Ephesians 6:10). He has given a pattern to help His children accomplish this. What, then, are some qualities making for strong churches, by divine standards?

INFORMATION. Congregations need to be informed of current avenues both scriptural and available for spreading the gospel. That may be technological advances, methods of evangelism, or media choices currently popular within the community.

Congregations need to be informed of current events. Knowledge of the culture is indispensable to reaching it (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:20-22). Did not Paul keep abreast of Athenian culture (Acts 17:28) and Cretian culture (Titus 1:12)? However, the same inspired apostle warned that no Christian need partake in the sin of a culture to know it (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14ff)!

Congregations need to be informed of current religious movements. This is true of the religious world in general and within the church. There are trends and beliefs which come into vogue and are blindly accepted by a large population of folks. As Christians fight the devil for their hearts and souls, we must know the enemy to defeat him (1 Peter 3:15; 5:8). Unscriptural trends infiltrate the church, too (Jude 4; 2 Timothy 3:6; Matthew 7:15; et al). This can certainly be overdone and one can get consumed with "getting the goods" on false teachers, but strong congregations get information so as to be able to bear up against "every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14).

EDUCATION. Imagine a body without a backbone. This is the picture of a congregation without a solid Bible school program. Paul admonishes

Christians to "give attention to reading" (1 Timothy 4:13). "Handling aright" God's Word is essential (2 Timothy 2:15). Congregations which give attention to providing a comprehensive study of the Bible aid in children's and adults' collective goal of "growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Structure is important. Writing or finding a curriculum that is fresh, non-repeating (how often are great portions of the Bible neglected while the story of Moses or Noah is told annually?), and practical helps put backbone in the congregation. **ORGANIZATION.** When one thinks of church organization, two things come to mind--leadership and programs. In the area of programs, how organized is the congregation? Are as many needs as practically possible being addressed? How efficient is the congregation at preparing for and undertaking projects and activities? Poor record keeping and/or poor communication assassinate the good works in which a congregation must be involved (cf. 1 Timothy 6:18).

What about the leadership of the church? How strong is it? One defined a leader as an individual with two characteristics: "First, he is going somewhere; second, he is able to persuade other people to go with him." Apply this to church organization. The church can be no stronger than its elders (1 Peter 5:3). When they are godly and industrious, the flock will usually follow suit. The opposite is true, too. They must be good "delegators." What about the deacons? Do they know their area of work? Is it clearly defined? Are they aided by a host of volunteers? Where a congregation is truly, scripturally organized, the Lord has a strong body of believers in that place.

INTEGRATION. Here is another concept having

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FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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THE GLORY OF PREACHING-Part 2 of 3

Should we, as some argue, de-emphasize the role of preaching in our worship assemblies? Doing so would be to downplay that which God has elevated. In this discussion, it is important to make a distinction between the preacher and the message. As we observed in the last article, God chose a title of honor to describe those who would proclaim His message to the world. But that does not mean that God exalts preachers above other Christians. In fact, He only uses the word "preacher" four times in the entire New Testament (Romans 10:14; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11; 2 Peter 2:5). But He specifically refers to the *act* of preaching or the *message* of the preacher over 130 times! It is as if God is saying, "The man himself should not be exalted; his message, however, is to be held in high esteem."

It is difficult to read the Bible and avoid the fact that preaching is a significant element in God's scheme of redemption. Before time began, God had in His mind His plan for saving man (Ephesians 3:10,11). Throughout the Old Testament, we clearly see His scheme unfolding. We see Jesus typified in the feasts and the animal sacrifices which accompanied them. The prophets give us brief glimpses into God's mind as they speak of One who was coming to be born of a virgin, mistreated by man, and ultimately killed by crucifixion (Isaiah 7:14; 53; Psalm 22:16). God's plan is one that offers to us release from life's greatest debt and haven from its most frightening danger. As the angels observed God's plan unfolding (1 Peter 1:12), surely they wondered, "How is God going to reveal His plan to the world?" Had we been observing, we might have guessed that He would disclose the gospel through a medium that would be stimulating to man's emotions. Or perhaps he would publish it through means that would appeal to the world's great intellects.

The way was *prepared* through preaching by John

Interestingly enough, though, He chose preaching to reveal His wonderful plan. Just a few hundred years before the "fullness of the time was come" (Galatians 4:4), Malachi prophesied that one would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6). His would be the voice of one crying in the wilderness, preparing the way and making the paths straight for the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3). When John the Baptist came to fulfill his mission, he came--not acting or performing--but "*preaching* in the wilderness of Judaea" (Matthew 3:1). God chose to prepare the way for His Son through the act of preaching.

The way was *proclaimed* through preaching by Jesus

When the time came for Jesus' ministry, He began just as quietly as His predecessor: He "began to preach" (Matthew 4:17). Jesus' ministry was characterized by public preaching and teaching. At least 38 times the gospel writers state specifically that Jesus was teaching or preaching. As someone observed, "God only had one Son, and He was a preacher!"

The way was *perpetuated* through preaching by the apostles

Just before He ascended back to the Father after having completed His mission, Jesus told the eleven apostles to go to all the world and "preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15; cf. Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:47). Shortly after those words were spoken, the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and the Lord's church began with a sermon (Acts 2). The dynamic, early church was characterized by teaching and preaching. Peter and John "preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). The apostles were put in prison for "teaching" (Acts 5:25). After they were beaten for preaching, Luke tells us that "daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). After heavy persecution in Jerusalem began, many of the disciples who were scattered abroad "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Early evangelists, such as Philip, Paul, Timothy, and Barnabas, traveled throughout the world *preaching* the message of Jesus (Acts 8:5; 13:5, 38; et al.).

After the church *started* through preaching, was *spread* through preaching, it was *strengthened* through preaching. When Paul returned to congregations previously established, he "confirmed" them by preaching to them (Acts 15:36ff.). In fact, when Paul saw a vision of a man saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9), he assumed the Lord's message was that He wanted Paul and his associates to *preach* in Macedonia (Acts 16:10). Evidently, Paul believed that preaching could help people! In his writings to the Corinthian Church, Paul vehemently defended preaching (1 Corinthians 9; 2 Corinthians 11). He told the church at Rome that he was ready to preach the gospel to them (Romans 1:15). This fact is clear: preaching played a vital role in the strengthening of the early church. Should we take it upon ourselves to downplay its importance in edifying and confirming congregations today by making it insignificant in our services?

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multiple meanings. First, is every individual integrated properly in the work of the church, their unique talents used to the greatest good?

Second, is everyone accepted equally regardless of age, race, economic status, education, or occupation? One brother was a member of a large congregation that was so cliquish that everyone sat in the part of the auditorium that reflected his or her own age and background. He said that nobody hardly ever "crossed the fence" to reach out in any way to those different from themselves. How tragic! Artificial barriers to fellowship will destroy a congregation's influence and effectiveness.

PARTICIPATION. Some churches may be dead and not even know it (cf. Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22). Where a few try to do the work God requires of an entire congregation, they burn out and the church's "candle" burns low (cf. Matthew 5:16). Good, scriptural programs merit enthusiasm and support. None are exempted. Strong churches are active, involved churches. There is mass partici-

pation reflected in attendance, giving, evangelism, and other such gauges of great works.

VISITATION. Here is one watershed move churches make to become strong. When a visitation program is put into place, visitors get the notice they need. Contacts for Christ are thus made. House to house fellowship is enhanced (Acts 2:46). Newcomers are made to feel welcome. Non-Christians are made to feel cared for. Weak Christians are encouraged. The ones visiting are built up in the faith. Visitation is every Christian's responsibility (Matthew 25:34-40)! In turn, it is one sure way to build a strong church.

There are no magic potions or spells which will conjure up a strong church! Strong churches emphasize information, education, organization, integration, participation, and visitation. In all things, they glorify God and respect the authority of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:16-17). May more and more congregations cross the plain of mediocrity and settle upon the mountain top of excellence (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:7).

ALCOHOL

Thomas F. Eaves, Sr.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine. Those who go in search of mixed wine" (Proverbs 23:29-30). Alcohol inhibits one's faculties (Proverbs 23:33-34). Alcohol anesthetizes (Proverbs 23:35).

Alcohol misuse is involved in approximately,

1. **30%** of all suicides
2. **50%** of all homicides
3. **68%** of all manslaughters
4. **52%** of rapes and other sexual assaults
5. **48%** of robberies
6. **62%** of assaults
7. **49%** of all violent crime

Alcoholism quoted by *The Tennessean*, Sunday, September 14, 1997, p. 3F).

Alcohol is the cause of much tragedy in our society:

In 1995 and 1996; highway fatalities hovered around 42,000 each year, reversing a trend earlier in the decade when fatalities dipped to fewer than 40,000 annually. Of these fatal crashes, alcohol was involved in slightly more than 40 percent, or approximately 17,000 deaths each year in 1995 and 1996 (*Sheriffs*, January-February 1998, p. 17).

Each one of these deaths affected more lives than the one killed. There were: husbands, wives, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. The tragedy of death by alcohol is tremendous!

Consider these quotes:

How many alcohol-impaired driving incidents occur in the United States each year? While no one knows the accurate number, the best estimate to date is over 123 million annually, according to a study published in the January 1997 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* (*Sheriffs*, January-February, 1998, p 17).

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Of the 5.3 million convicted adult offenders in prison, jail or on parole or probation in 1996, 36% reported they had been drinking at the time of the crime for which they were convicted, the report estimated (*Herald-Citizen*, Cookeville, Tenn., Monday, April 6, 1998, quoting a report from the Justice Department).

ALCOHOL IS A DRUG! Ethyl alcohol found in beer, wine, and whisky is a depressant drug

which dulls the inhibitions, and decreases the powers of self-evaluation and rational control.

What is the answer to this great problem?

"Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly" (Proverbs 23:31; Habakkuk 2:15; also Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:18). If you never take the first drink you will never become an alcoholic or an abuser of alcohol.
SAY NO TO ALL DRUGS!

WHY THE PROPHET WEPT

By: Duane Patton

When Jeremiah considered the great sin of his people his heart melted within him (Jeremiah 9:1-2; 14-17). He knew God's wrath would consume Judah for their transgressions as his eyes grew faint and failed him for the tears he wept. "Let my eyes flow with tears night and day, and let them not cease" he prayed. God had dealt with the sins of the virgin daughter of Zion in a fierce way, for they "trusted in lying words that cannot profit" (7:8).

Their sins withheld good from them (Jeremiah 5:25) as they "bent their tongues for lies" (9:3). They "rejected the word of the Lord" (8:9) and

"went backward and not forward" (7:24). As much as Jeremiah didn't like it, he had to accept the fate of his fellow countrymen. He knew they didn't have to go captive (3:6-14) or suffer, but he understood God's justice, and wept bitterly for his people. For they were "accustomed to do evil" (13:23) and forgot their God (13:25). He cries still: "Return now ever one for his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good," according to the word of the Lord (18:11). "Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; look, and behold our reproach." (Lamentations 5:1)

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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. 36 No. 2

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January 14, 1999

AN EXAMPLE FOR CHRISTIAN YOUNG PEOPLE

Ben Wright

Editor's Note: The following thoughtful article was written by Ben Wright, who recently began work with the Sixth Avenue congregation. We are blessed to have Ben and his wife, Jincy, to come and work with us. They are fine Christian servants, and certainly much glory will be brought to God's Name because of their efforts.

Over the last decade, there has been much talk about role models for our young people. Various athletes have said they do not want to be role models and some others have stepped forward and claimed to be role models. Young people need role models desperately. However, they need them to come from the right place.

Young ladies need older Christian women to step forward and be willing to be examples. Young men need older Christian men to answer the challenge. Paul directed Titus to preach this very thing to the Creteans (Titus 2:2-5). If this does not take place, the Lord's precious church will suffer.

As a minister working with young people, I must find role models to whom the youth may look. I do not believe there is a better example for children and teenagers than the young man Timothy. Many outstanding young people are found in the Bible, but Timothy stands out among that group.

One character trait that causes Timothy to stand out is his study of God's Holy Word at a young age. In 2 Timothy 3:15, Paul commended Timothy for knowing the scriptures from childhood. We need young people that study their Bibles. The only way that their faith will grow is through a study of God's Word (Romans 10:17). One day our young people will grow up, leave home, and their faith will be tested. If they are

found wanting, then they will fall away.

Why did Timothy study the scriptures? He did so because of a godly mother and grandmother. Friends, until parents and grandparents take an active role in the lives of our young people, no effort put forth by elders, deacons, preachers, or concerned Christians will do any good. Parents must encourage, support, and promote an atmosphere of study in the lives of their children.

It is wonderful to see a young father take his toddlers into his lap and read a portion of the Bible to them. However, too often this activity ends when the children can no longer sit in his lap. Families need devotional time together. In the latter part of Ephesians 6:4 Paul states "...but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This devotional time will not happen by accident. A family must set aside time for God's Word. Only when the Bible is stressed at home will the work of a youth worker be successful.

Another character trait seen in young Timothy that set him apart from others is his willingness to put the things he studied into action. The faith that Timothy had was not one without works. Timothy showed his faith by his works (James 2:18). He was willing to go and to preach and teach the gospel to others.

The church needs active young people. When older Christians see teens working, it encourages them to work. When young people feel they are doing well it excites them and causes them to want to do more. On door-knocking campaigns, it is common to hear Christian teenagers talk about how good they feel when exhorting members of the community to come to VBS, or to sign up for a Bible correspondence course.

Youth workers do not need to be babysitters.

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FROM THE EDITORS

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THE GLORY OF PREACHING-Part 3 of 3

Perhaps the most disturbing element in the current trend away from preaching is what it reveals about the perception of some toward preaching's *message*. When Paul wrote that he was ready to preach the gospel to the Christians at Rome (Romans 1:15), he immediately stated his rationale: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (1:16). Why did Paul want to preach to those who were already Christians? Because he recognized that the gospel was God's power to salvation--i.e., it would build the Roman church up in the faith (Acts 20:32). He elaborated on this idea in his defense of the preaching (lit., "word") of the cross in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25:

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God....For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

In Corinth many Christians had apparently become enamored with human philosophy and as a result had allowed themselves to be deceived into thinking that perhaps human wisdom was worthy of more honor than God's wisdom. Paul counters by asserting that the message of the cross may

appear foolish to carnally-minded people, but it is actually God's means of salvation: "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." If we de-emphasize preaching, then by extension we de-emphasize the cross. When we no longer proclaim the word of the cross, we take God's saving power away from the people who need it.

When we remove ourselves from the preaching of God's word, it takes from us God's means of maturing His children. When Paul addressed the Ephesian elders, he concluded by saying, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). The word sanctifies us (John 17:17) and "effectually" works in believers (1 Thessalonians 2:13). It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" so that we may be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Hebrews tells us "The word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (4:12). Ultimately, it saves us (James 1:21).

In view of the above facts concerning God's word and its power when preached, why would we want to diminish its role in our services today? Let us make sure to give each aspect of our worship to God the emphasis it deserves, always giving Him glory through song, prayer, communion, and giving. Let us also be certain to give the proclamation of His word its rightful place and let it accomplish the end for which it was sent (Isaiah 55:11).

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Marvin L. Weir

The Bible claims to be inspired. Do you believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures? Can we prove the Bible is inspired? Does it matter? These are questions that need honest answers. It is futile to discuss the resurrection, heaven, hell, sanctity of the home, marriage, the Lord's church, or any other Biblical subject with one who rejects the inspiration of the Scriptures. If one believes in the inspiration of the Bible he will accept and obey God's commands and be guided by a "thus saith the Lord." If one does not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures he refuses to recognize there is a divine standard or pattern by which all mankind will be judged.

The Scriptures themselves testify of divine inspiration. The inspiration we have in mind is that which is "God-breathed." The word is found one time in the New Testament. Paul says, "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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17--NKJV). The concept of inspiration means that the words came from God--not man! The apostle Peter gives us additional insight by saying, "knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20, 21). Thus, God makes it abundantly clear that the Scriptures did not come from the wisdom of man.

Common sense and logic affirm the inspiration of the Scriptures. The Bible is a book of marvelous unity. One may not consider this too significant until he realizes that the sixty-six books of the Bible were written by 40 men over a period of 1600 years! There has never been a proven contradiction and the Bible is always relevant and thus never needs revising. This marvelous unity is outstanding testimony to the inspiration of the Bible.

Information contained in the Scriptures that man has discovered in recent years proves divine inspiration. Astronomers did not know of the "empty space" in the north several hundred years ago. But in the book of Job is found the statement that says, "He stretcheth out the north over empty

space; And hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). Modern day science now marvels at the fact that their high powered telescopes reveal no moving planets or shining stars in the "empty space" in the north.

There was a time not so long ago when seamen did not know all that they know today about the "paths in the sea." Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873) was a sailor in the U.S. Navy who became very interested in pursuing the academic side of his profession. His zeal for academics led him to become Superintendent of the Depot of Charts and Instruments in 1842. Although chided by his colleagues, Maury's belief and trust in the Holy Scriptures never wavered. He believed this universe had a Designer and was intrigued by such passages as Psalm 8:8 that mentions "the paths of the seas" (also Psalm 107:23-34; Ecclesiastes 1:7). His statue in Richmond, Virginia, portrays this "pathfinder of the seas" with a Bible in one hand and charts of the seas in the other hand. What a contrast to those today who look for opportunities to reject God! Only by divine knowledge did David know so long ago about the "paths of the seas."

We all remember from history how that before the sailing of Columbus many people believed the earth to be flat. As the saying goes, "In the year 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." But Isaiah, God's spokesman some 750 years before the birth of Christ, said of God, "It is he that sitteth above the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in" (Isaiah 40:22). How did Isaiah know this great truth if God did not reveal it to him? Such knowledge did not come from the wisdom of the world.

It is as the Psalmist said, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God..." (Psalm 14:1). The wise man Solomon said, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; But the foolish despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). There can be no doubt about the inspiration of the Scriptures for one who is sincerely searching for truth. But this is the great problem of mankind--most would rather make secure their feelings and opinions with a lie than to know the inspired truth!

AN EXAMPLE FOR CHRISTIAN YOUNG PEOPLE, *Continued from Page 1*

They need to be planners and organizers of activities that will stimulate their youth to bigger and greater things in the kingdom of God. Fun activities need to be planned. Every age group needs recreation but this should not be our main focus.

Again, this comes back to parents being involved. Ball games and social events should not take precedence over church activities. Parents must stress the importance of working for the

Lord. Without this help from the home youth work is very difficult.

Timothy is a great example to young people. He studied the Word and he put what he studied into action. We need young people like Timothy in the Lord's church today. I am convinced we can have many Timothies if parents and families will get involved. May God continue to bless our young people as they grow in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."

CRITICISM -- HELP OR HURT?

Mike Winkler

A critical disposition plagues many of us every day. It is so easy to exalt ourselves while we proudly pick at others, crippling and often destroying their enthusiasm and productivity for God. Before we express criticism of others, let us first:

(1) PAUSE AND BE SURE THAT OUR HEART IS RIGHT. Ask, "Am I really helping or hindering?" (Matthew 7:1-2 + Ephesians 4:29).

(2) EXAMINE OUR OWN LIVES TO SEE THAT EVERYTHING IS IN ORDER. Ask, "Am I being honest and fair to criticize another when corrections are needed in my own life?" (Matthew 7:3-5).

(3) PUT OURSELVES IN THE OTHER PERSON'S

PLACE. Ask, "How would I be doing if I were bearing his/her burden or laboring in his/her place?" (Romans 15:1-2).

(4) REMEMBER GOD'S MERCY TOWARD ALL MEN. Ask, "How often have I bowed before God to plead for grace and mercy when I have failed?" (Matthew 18:21-35 + 6:12-15).

(5) REMEMBER THE HURT WE FELT THE LAST TIME SOMEONE CRITICIZED US. Ask, "How can I delight in inflicting the same hurt upon another?" (Matthew 5:44-48).

Today, diligently strive to follow the admonition of James who said, "Be slow to speak" (James 1:19).

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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. 36 No. 3

January 21, 1999

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN
AND THE BIBLE
"LORD, HELP US TO BRING UP
OUR CHILDREN AS CHRISTIANS"

THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE BIBLE - PART 1 OF 3

Eddy Gilpin

"There are approximately six million Masons in the world - four million of them in the United States...." Since this is the case, it is safe to assume that Masonry has an influence on society in this country as well as the entire world. Any organization boasting such a membership, which does anything at all, will of necessity have an influence. From the standpoint of the Bible, then, it is a necessity for the Christian to determine the direction of his influence in such an organization in order to conclude whether his being a member of such will harm his influence for the cause of Christ. If his being a member of such is in opposition to his being a member of the body of Christ (His church), naturally he cannot maintain membership among the Masons. But, is this the case with Freemasonry? In this series of articles we should like to examine some evidences from and about Masonry, compare them with Bible teachings and determine if a Christian can be a Mason. The question of the compatibility of Masonry and Christianity has been addressed many times, by many people resulting in conclusions for both sides of the issue. Thus, this article will not settle the matter for all time and for all people. However, it is hoped that some of the items presented will be beneficial to those who might be struggling with the issue.

The Masonic Lodge is being addressed in this article because it serves as the basis for most other lodges (Moose, Elks, Eagles, National Grange, etc.), after which, by comparison, they seem to be patterned.² Much good has been and continues to be done through the charitable efforts of the Lodge. The Shriners' Burn Centers are perhaps the best in the world. However, a Christian must look beyond the mere deeds done by a particular group in his efforts to determine its Scripturalness. Again, in its own defense, Masonry contends that many famous Americans have been Masons. Men such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, William McKinley, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman are said to have graced its membership. Altogether it is claimed that fifteen presidents have been Masons.³ Again, however, it must be noted that the endorsement of any and/or all men of a particular group or activity does not within itself mean that a Christian can likewise endorse such a group or activity. His means of judgment of such must be God's Word, the Bible. And so it becomes a matter not of what is done by the Lodge, nor the notoriety of its membership (past or present), but the comparison of its foundational principles which will deem it worthy of the Christian's wholehearted support, or relegate it to an organization which must be spoken against (Ephesians 5:11).

The first order of business in examining the Masonic Lodge should perhaps be the defining of some terms relative to it. In his book *General History, Cyclopedia and Dictionary of Freemasonry*, Robert Macoy (a 33rd degree Mason and author of several Masonic works) defined "Freemasonry" thus:

The definitions of Freemasonry have been numerous, and they all unite in declaring it to be a system of morality, by the practice of which its members may advance their spiritual interest, and mount by the theological ladder, from the Lodge on earth to the Lodge in heaven.⁴

There are a number of explanations given in Masonic sources for the inclusion of "Free" in Freemasonry. Some of these are: 1) Operative Masons worked in free stone (stone which could be carved) and thus were originally called "free-

stone masons;" 2) They were free men and not serfs or slaves; 3) They were free from the regulations usually placed upon members of trade guilds.⁵

The phrases "Operative Masons" and "Speculative Masons" should likewise be defined. An "Operative Mason" was one who actually worked in stone in medieval times. Macoy refers to Operative Masonry with these words:

Masonry, in its character as an operative art, is familiar to every one; as such, it is engaged in the application of the rules of architecture to the construction of public and private edifices. It abounds in the use of technical terms, and makes use of implements and materials which are peculiar to itself...At first operative Masonry existed simply as an art of building.⁶

Concerning "Speculative Masonry," Macoy states:

It is the popular theory that the operative Masons were the founders of the system of speculative Masonry, in which they applied the language and ideas of their art of building to a spiritual and religious sense...Speculative Masonry, now known as Freemasonry is, therefore, the scientific application and the religious consecration of the rules and principles, the technical language and the implements and materials, of operative Masonry to the worship of God as the Grand Architect of the universe, and to the purification of the heart and the inculcation of the dogmas of a religious philosophy.⁷

Thus, it is clearly seen that it is not the "application of the rules of architecture to the construction of public and private edifices" (Operative Masonry) that is under consideration when one speaks of modern Freemasonry. Rather, it is the latter definition of "the scientific application and religious consecration of the rules and principles...of operative Masonry to the worship of God" (Speculative Masonry) that is being considered.

As seen, modern Freemasonry is the application of the language, tools and principles of operative Masonry "to the worship of God as the Grand Architect of the universe, and to the purification of the heart and inculcation of the dogmas of a religious philosophy." Simply stated, then, Masonry is the use of the "tools of the trade" of stone masons as symbols of moral truths and religious practices. Thus, the use of such items as the square, the compass, the gavel and others is quite prevalent. While the stressing of moral truths and the practice of one's beliefs sound good on the surface, when one examines Masonry he cannot allow himself to be duped into thinking that "the end justifies the means." Clothed within the symbolism and workings of Masonry are matters in which a Christian cannot participate. For example, in his book *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, Albert Pike (a noted Masonic authority) states concerning the first of the three degrees of Blue Lodge Masonry that the "Christian" candidate for this degree is symbolic of "man, after the fall." He states: "In this condition of blindness, destitution, misery, and bondage, from which to save the world the Redeemer came, is symbolized by the condition of the candidate, when he is brought up for the first time to the door of the Lodge." In the ritualism of this first degree (Entered Apprentice), Pike states that the "Worshipful Master" of the lodge is "a symbol of the Redeemer" to the initiate in that initiation rite.⁸ Can a Christian

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FROM THE EDITORS

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“LORD, HELP US TO BRING UP OUR CHILDREN AS CHRISTIANS”

“Lord, Help Us To Bring Up Our Children As Christians.” This expression was used in a prayer in a worship service at the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ recently. The simplicity of this request struck me with force. I have thought of it many times since.

My thoughts turn to many Christian parents whose children are faithful and loyal to Jesus Christ. My thoughts also turn to many Christian parents whose children seem to be far away from God. If you will do a survey of the children who have grown up where you worship, you will be impressed by the number who are active in the church and also by the number who have drifted away. Are more of our children turning away from the “faith once for all delivered” than in past generations? History shows that this has been a problem in each generation. It seems to become acute in an age of great change.

The Bible emphasizes parental responsibility. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15). “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul” (Proverbs 29:17). “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

What can we do in addition to praying for wisdom to guide our children? May I timidly make these suggestions.

1. Avoid the mistake of thinking that religious faith is transmitted by heredity.
2. Avoid relying on too many regulations which may seem good, but which may be unworkable in your family.
3. Try to make faith more personal than institutional. Take time to discuss your faith with your children informally and in private.
4. Stress love. If we communicate everything else and fail to be a channel of strong, warm, living love, we will fail.
5. Cultivate practical Christianity. Let your children participate with you in showing hospitality.

6. Encourage your children. Look for every sign of improvement and let them know that you expect them to do good and do right.

7. Practice forgiveness. Children must make mistakes to learn to walk, read, or live maturely. As we expect God to forgive us, we should have homes that are full of forgiveness for each other. Also, be sure to ask forgiveness of your children when you have wronged them.

8. Be as consistent as possible in your discipline.

9. Be concerned with them as whole persons. It is easy to think we are doing our part in providing housing, clothing, schooling, etc.

10. Be consistent with your use of money and your faith.

A great preacher of the last generation startled his congregation one Sunday by rushing into the pulpit and declaring breathlessly, “We’re being invaded! Our country is being invaded!” He went on to say, “Already the invaders are moving on Washington. Within a short time they will be in control of radio, the newspapers, every major means of transportation, and even business and industry. Soon they will have taken over everything in our country. And what’s more, we are completely powerless to prevent it.” Then he asked, “Who are these invaders?” After a dramatic pause, he answered, “They are our children.”

As you and I contemplate this rather unusual beginning of a sermon, we cannot help but agree that this preacher was right. He and most of his contemporaries are gone, and we, a younger generation, occupy their places. And we cannot but recognize the fact that soon we also shall be gone and our children will be filling our shoes. All of this serves to point up the importance of training the young properly. No church, no family, no enterprise, no nation is secure unless it trains its young to carry on. No matter how great the gains of one generation, everything can be lost in the next generation. So, in a very real sense, it is survive or perish in the training of our children. For the survival of our nation and everything worthwhile that is in it, and even more especially for the survival of Christianity and the church of our Lord, I am deeply concerned with the proper rearing of our children.

THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE BIBLE, *continued from Page 1*

make such mockery of truth?

By means of further explanation of Freemasonry, especially for those who know little about it, let us note briefly the terminology concerning the "degrees" in the Masonic system. In the United States Masonry is represented by the Blue Lodge of three basic degrees. These are: 1) Entered Apprentice; 2) Fellow Craft; 3) Master Mason.⁹ Thus, the Blue Lodge is the basis of Masonry in this country (U.S.A.). The expression "Blue Lodge" is said to have originated from two theories. The first theory is that operative masons thought the blue sky to be symbolic of the purity of God, which should in turn cause them to strive for greater purity in life whenever they beheld it. The second theory holds that shortly after "Speculative Masonry" (again, modern Freemasonry) came into existence, the color blue was substituted for white as the official color of the first Grand Lodge of England.¹⁰ At any rate, Blue Lodge is the basis upon which Masonry operates. After one reaches the degree of Master Mason, he can choose to go in one of two fields, or he can choose neither and remain a Master Mason. He may choose to pursue York (or American) Rite or Scottish Rite Masonry beyond the basic Blue Lodge.¹¹

York Rite Masonry consists of 10 degrees beyond the Blue Lodge, which are divided into three categories. These are:

- 1) Degrees 4-7 which comprise the "Chapter." They are the "Capitular Degrees" of Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master and Royal Arch Mason.
- 2) Degrees 8-10 which comprise the "Council." They are the degrees of Royal Master, Select Master and Super Excellent Master.
- 3) The third grouping is called the "Commandery" (which claims to be "Christian").¹² It contains the Order of the Red Cross, Order of Knights of Malta and, the highest degree, Order of Knights Templar.¹³

The structure of Scottish Rite Masonry is somewhat different, being built around four groupings. These are:

- 1) The Lodge of Perfection, which has eleven degrees (4-14). These are called the "Ineffable Degrees."
- 2) The Council of Princes of Jerusalem, which has two degrees (15,16). These are called the "Historical Grades."
- 3) The Chapter of Rose Croix is likewise composed of two degrees (17,18). These are called the "Philosophical Grades."
- 4) The Consistory contains the final 14 degrees (19- 32). These are called the "Traditional and Chivalric Grades." The often heralded Thirty-Third (33d) Degree is called the "Official Grade." It is strictly honorary. *[Note-In order to be a candidate for the Shrine (A.A.O.N.M.S.), one must be a 32d degree Mason or Knights Templar. This degree is Muslim oriented and has a Muslim death oath.]¹⁴

There are some side orders in Masonry that will be listed in passing, as space will not permit their being fully examined. These are: Tall Cedars of Lebanon of the U.S.A., Mystic Order of Veiled Prophets of the Enchanted Realm (Grotto), Knights of the Red Cross of Constantine and Acacia Fraternity. Female organizations affiliated with the same are: Order of the Eastern Star, White Shrine of Jerusalem, Order of Amaranth, Daughters of the Nile and Daughters of Mokanna.¹⁵ Others include DeMolay (for boys 14-21 years of age), Job's Daughters, Rainbow Girls and Daughters of the Nile (for the daughters of Masons).¹⁶

Another matter basic to an understanding of Freemasonry is its history. Masonry itself claims its origin to be great antiquity. Albert Pike stated the following concerning Masonry's role in history:

The true Mason...knows that both books and the antique symbols of Masonry are vessels which come down to us full-freighted with the intellectual riches of the Past; and that in the lading of these argosies is much that sheds light on the history of Masonry, and proves its claim to be acknowledged the benefactor of mankind, BORN IN THE VERY CRADLE OF THE RACE.¹⁷
The legend of the columns, of granite and brass or bronze, erected by him [Enoch], is probably symbolical. That of bronze, which survived the flood, is supposed to symbolize the mysteries, of which Masonry is the legitimate successor-FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES THE CUSTODIAN AND DEPOSITORY OF THE GREAT PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS TRUTHS, unknown to the world at large, and handed down from age to age by an unbroken current of tradition, embodied in symbols, emblems, and allegories.¹⁸
...the true primitive religion...was no new religion, but the reproduction of the oldest of all; AND ITS TRUE AND PERFECT

MORALITY IS THE MORALITY OF MASONRY, AS IS THE MORALITY OF EVERY CREED OF ANTIQUITY.¹⁹ (All emphasis mine-EG).

Others have spoken of it in terms of its longevity as well. "Some Masons claim that Masonry is of divine origin."²⁰ In the Masonic Burial Service (adopted by the Grand Lodge of Texas in 1921), it is stated that "This white apron (or lambskin) is the emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason; MORE ANCIENT THAN THE GOLDEN FLEECE OR ROMAN EAGLE." It is further claimed that the Masonic Lodge preserved the Bible through the dark ages.²¹ Masonry reveals to prospective members and new initiates that its present organization owes its history to the building of Solomon's Temple. It is claimed that there were "close Masonic ties" between Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre, as Hiram provided wood, carpenters and masons to Solomon in his efforts.²² The Holy Bible-Masonic Edition states concerning the Lodge's probable antiquity, "It is admitted that Masonry is descended from the ancient mysteries. These were first arranged when the constellation Leo was at the summer solstice. Thus, THE ANTIQUITY OF MASONRY WAS WRITTEN IN THE STARRY HEAVENS"²³ (Emphasis mine-EG). And, finally, notice this quotation from Robert Macoy:

Anderson, Preston, and many other Masonic writers claim for the order the highest antiquity. Preston is particular in his expressions as to the origin of the institution by saying: "FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE WORLD, WE MAY TRACE THE FOUNDATION OF MASONRY"²⁴ (Emphasis mine-EG).

Are these claims of antiquity true? Not in the least. Noted Masonic authors have themselves admitted that the true history of Freemasonry can be traced no further back than the early 18th century. Notice the following quotations from some of these authors:

Various Masonic writers have endeavored to trace the history of Masonry beyond such records, charters and constitutions as have been accepted and verified, with little more than conjecture for evidence. To discern the origin of the present Institution as a growth from the guilds or trade-unions existing prior to 1700 A.D., is justified by neither fact nor reason. No such germ could develop into such flower and fruitage.²⁵

Modern Freemasonry dates from the year 1717 when four existing Lodges met together in London to form the first Grand Lodge.²⁶ Neither Adam, nor Nimrod, nor Moses, nor Joshua, nor David, nor Solomon, nor Hiram, nor St. John the Evangelist, nor St. John the Baptist belonged to the Masonic Order. It is unwise to assert more than we can prove, and to argue against probability. There is no record, sacred or profane, to induce us to believe that these holy and distinguished men were Freemasons, and our traditions do not go back to their days.²⁷

The fact remains that Freemasonry owes its organization to two men of the early 18th century, Dr. James Anderson (a Presbyterian "clergyman") and Dr. John Theophilus Desaguliers (a French Huguenot turned Anglican), who convinced others of like mind to form a select group.²⁸

It has been claimed by some that Masonry is a religion. In consideration of this it should be asked if Freemasonry makes that claim for itself and noted that if it is a religion it is a false religion. It should also be stated that one's circle of knowledge about Masonry has the prospect of being enlarged. In other words, even those who are Masons do not claim to know everything about it. If in this or any other study evidence is shown which one has never before seen, it does not necessarily mean that such is not true. It could possibly mean that one has just never advanced that far in his knowledge of Masonry. There are some matters which are reserved only for those who reach the higher degrees. These matters are not revealed to those who have only attained the basic degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason. Concerning the Royal Arch (of Enoch), the 13th degree of Scottish Rite, Albert Pike stated: "There are profounder meanings concealed in the symbols of this Degree, connected with the philosophical system of the Hebrew Kabalists, which you will learn hereafter, if you should be so fortunate as to advance. THEY ARE UNFOLDED IN THE HIGHER DEGREES"²⁹ (Emphasis mine-EG). Thus, if one who is a Mason claims some of these matters not to be true based upon his experience as a Mason (no matter how long he might have been such), it does not mean that these matters are not true. It just means that he has not advanced far enough to have yet been exposed to them. The vast majority of Masons reach only the 3rd degree (Master Mason) and have little idea what is involved in the higher degrees. But, ignorance of such falsehoods does not make one free from the consequences of being associated with them. If Masonry is a religion, one who is affiliated with it is a part of a false

THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE BIBLE, *continued from Page 3*

religious system (and, thus, in opposition to God's Word) whether he realizes it to be a religion or not, whether he sees it as a religion or not, or whether he practices it as a religion or not! Now, let us address this issue.

Listed below are several quotations from renowned Masonic sources concerning whether it is a religion or not. Remember as you read these, that they are not what outsiders are saying about Masonry, but what Masonic authorities say about it themselves. (All emphasis in quotations mine-EG).

Books TO BE OF RELIGIOUS TENDENCY IN THE MASONIC SENSE, need not be books of sermons, of pious exercises, or of prayer. Whatever inculcates pure, noble, and patriotic sentiments, or touches the heart with the beauty of virtue, and the excellence of an upright life, accords with THE RELIGION OF MASONRY, and is the Gospel of literature and art.³⁰

Every Masonic Lodge is A TEMPLE OF RELIGION; and its teachings are INSTRUCTION IN RELIGION.³¹

MASONRY IS A WORSHIP; but one in which all civilized men can unite...³²

THE RELIGION, THEN, OF MASONRY IS PURE THEISM...³³

I consider Freemasonry is a sufficiently organized school of mysticism to be entitled to be called a RELIGION.³⁴

It is true that Freemasonry is THE PARENT OF ALL RELIGION.³⁵

I boldly aver that FREEMASONRY IS A RELIGION, yet in no way conflicts with any other religion, unless that religion holds that no one outside its portals can be saved.³⁶

We have one dogma, a belief in God, but this is so firmly established as the principle foundation-stone of the brotherhood that no one can ever be admitted a member of an English-speaking lodge without a full and free acceptance thereof. In all reference to Deity, God is reverently spoken of as the Great Architect of the Universe...Upon this foundation-stone we construct A SIMPLE RELIGIOUS FAITH.³⁷

We now come to the core of the matter. What is THE RELIGION OF FREEMASONRY? It is THE OLDEST OF ALL RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS, DATING FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL...We worship and believe as a first principle in the fullness of the Godhead of which OTHER RELIGIONS see only in part.³⁸

But Freemasonry has a wider influence and power, and far greater facilities for the accomplishment of its benevolent purposes; and besides, it looks out over all of life and embraces all the possible circumstances of man. MORE TRULY HERE THAN ANYWHERE

ELSE IS REALIZED THE CHRISTIAN IDEAS OF LOVE, UNION, AND BROTHERHOOD...We do not hesitate, therefore, to say, that WE REGARD FREEMASONRY AS THE TRUEST EXPRESSION OF THE MIND AND THOUGHT OF CHRIST THIS AGE IS DESTINED TO WITNESS. Christianity is its central idea, and at the same time the foundation and corollary of our temple. Nay, MASONRY IS CHRISTIANITY.³⁹

Some attempt to avoid the issue by saying that Freemasonry is not a religion but is religious, SEEMING TO BELIEVE THAT THE SUBSTITUTION OF AN ADJECTIVE FOR A NOUN MAKES A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE. It would be as sensible to say that a man had no intellect but was intellectual or that he had no honor but was honorable...Freemasonry certainly requires a belief in the existence of, and man's dependence upon, a Supreme Being to which he is responsible. WHAT CAN A CHURCH ADD TO THAT, except to bring into fellowship those who have like feelings? THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THE LODGE DOES...It is said that Freemasonry is not sectarian, by which is meant that it has not identified itself with any well-known sect. But, IF IT HAS A RELIGIOUS CREDO, MAY IT NOT, ITSELF, CONSTITUTE A SECT TO BE ADDED TO THE OTHERS...Nothing herein is intended to be an argument that Freemasonry ought to be a religion; our purpose is simply to determine WHAT IT HAS BECOME AND IS.⁴⁰

From these quotations (and others could be listed), it can be seen that Masonic authorities claim that: 1) Masonry is "a religion;" 2) Its lodges are "Temples of Religion;" 3) Its teachings are "Instruction in Religion;" 4) It is "a worship;" 5) It is "the parent of all religion;" 6) It is "a simple religious faith;" 7) It is the "oldest of all religious systems;" 8) It is "the truest expression of the mind and thought of Christ this age is destined to witness;" 9) That it "is Christianity;" 10) The Lodge does exactly what "a church" does; and, 11) It is a sect that needs to be added to "the others." Can any honest individual read such quotations and have any doubt as to the intent of Masonic doctrine? Can any rational thinking person read such quotations and still say that Masonry does not claim to be, is not, a religion? To ask these questions in the light of the foregoing quotations is to answer them. This study would need to go no further in its efforts to determine whether Masonry and Christianity are compatible. But, lest some say such evidence is still inconclusive, we shall see more.

EDITOR'S NOTE: End notes will be included at conclusion of series.

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

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN
AND THE BIBLE PART 2 OF 3
COULD ONLY APOSTLES IMPART
MIRACULOUS GIFTS THROUGH
THE LAYING ON OF HANDS?

Vol. 36 No. 4

January 28, 1999

THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE BIBLE - PART 2 OF 3

Eddy Gilpin

The question of the god of Masonry has likewise been raised before. Masonry claims that its reference to "The Great Architect of the Universe" is merely a synonym for the one true God of the Bible. But is that the case? Again, we quote Masonic writers concerning this matter. (All emphasis mine-EG).

All prayers in Mason lodges should be directed to the one deity to whom ALL MASONS refer as the Grand Architect of the Universe.⁴¹

As Masons, we believe in God, the Father, Almighty. As Christian Masons we may believe in a symbolical triune essence, and that Jesus Christ is His Son, Our Lord. As Moslem Masons we are equally entitled to believe that Mahomet is His prophet. With these subsidiary and secondary beliefs Masonry has nothing to do, giving her members a perfect liberty to INTERPRET THE GODHEAD AS THEY PLEASE.⁴²

I for one can never understand how anyone who takes an exclusive view of Christ as the only complete revelation of God's truth can become a Freemason without suffering from spiritual schizophrenia.⁴³

It [Masonry] reverences all the great reformers. It sees in Moses the Lawgiver of the Jews, in Confucius and Zoraster, in Jesus of Nazareth, and in the Arabian Iconoclast, Great Teachers of Morality, and Eminent Reformers, if no more...WE UTTER NO WORD THAT CAN BE DEEMED IRREVERENT BY ANYONE OF ANY FAITH. WE DO NOT TELL THE MOSLEM THAT IT IS ONLY IMPORTANT FOR HIM TO BELIEVE THAT THERE IS BUT ONE GOD, and wholly unessential that Mahomet was His prophet...To every Mason there is A GOD...⁴⁴

Notice from the foregoing that the prayers offered in every Masonic Lodge are offered to "the one deity to whom ALL Masons refer as the Grand Architect of the Universe," and, that Masonry includes in that definition of the "Grand Architect of the Universe" whatever interpretation its members see fit to include. Thus, the "Grand Architect of the Universe" is NOT the God of the Bible, but an all-inclusive god of universalism. The Mason is forbidden to say that Allah is different from Jehovah and that Mohammed was no more a prophet than Joseph Smith. Yet, all of these are included (as is Jesus) under the 'umbrella god' of Masonry,

the "Grand Architect of the Universe." While it may be true as stated that "To every mason there is a God," it is also true that to Masonry that being includes any and every form of whatever and whomever any among its membership deems worthy to be worshiped. Thus, it is NOT the God of the Bible that Masons address when they refer to the Grand Architect of the Universe.

Further, it should be noticed that the god of Masonry has a name besides that of "Grand Architect." In his book *The Brotherhood-The Secret World of the Freemasons*, Stephen Knight states: "...the assurance given to candidates that the name Great Architect of the Universe can be applied to whatever Supreme Being they choose is worse than misleading: it is a blatant lie...Two-thirds of Freemasons never realize the untruth of the line they are fed as to the identity of the Great Architect, because it is deliberately kept hidden from them."⁴⁵ He goes on to state that "The true name, although not the nature, of the Masonic God is revealed only to those Third Degree Masons who elect to be "exalted" to the Holy Royal Arch."⁴⁶ He reveals further not only the name of this god, but also its origin. He states:

In the ritual of exaltation [to the Royal Arch- EG], the name of the Great Architect of the Universe is revealed as JAH-BUL-ON- not a general umbrella term open to any interpretation an individual Freemason might choose, but a precise designation that describes a specific supernatural being- a compound deity composed of three separate personalities fused in one. Each syllable of the "ineffable name" represents one personality of this Trinity:

JAH= Jahweh, the God of the Hebrews.

BUL= Baal, the ancient Canaanite fertility god associated with licentious rites of imitative magic.

ON= Osiris, the Ancient Egyptian god of the under world."⁴⁷

In his brief survey of Masonry, L. James Rongstad stated the following concerning Jah-bul-on:

The Mason in the Royal Arch Degree (York Rite), a degree through which the Knight Templar is to pass on his way to the supposed "Christian Degree," has another secret name revealed to him at his initiation ceremony. The name of the True God, "re-discovered," is "Jah-Bul-On." This is the

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FROM THE EDITORS

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COULD ONLY APOSTLES IMPART MIRACULOUS GIFTS THROUGH THE LAYING ON OF HANDS?

Through the years, the Lord's church has had numerous discussions on various subjects with denominational people, but perhaps no topic has been debated more widely than the work of the Holy Spirit. Various aspects have been disputed, but especially those concerned with if and when miracles ceased. In this debate, our brethren have often used the following argument (among others): (1) Only apostles could lay hands on others and thereby impart miraculous gifts (Acts 8:14ff.); (2) When the last apostle died, and the last person upon whom an apostle had laid hands died, miracles would cease; (3) The last apostle died near the close of the first century; (4) Therefore, miracles could have continued no longer than sometime around the close of the first century. This conclusion, however, hinges on the first assertion, i.e., that only apostles could impart miraculous gifts through the laying on of hands. In their attempts to defeat this argument, some have cited as evidence Acts 9:17,18 and 1 Timothy 4:14 which they claim prove that men other than apostles imparted the ability to work miracles through the laying on of hands. Do these passages merit their conclusion?

Acts 9:17,18: "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

Their argument goes as follows: (1) Ananias was not an apostle; (2) He laid his hands on Saul; (3) He told Saul he had been sent there for two purposes: so that Saul would receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit; (4) Saul immediately received his sight; (5) Saul must have simultaneously received the Holy Spirit; (6) Saul subsequently worked miracles; (7) Therefore, a non-apostle imparted miraculous gifts to Saul through the laying on of hands.

The weakness, though, of the above argument lies in the fifth assertion: i.e., Saul simultaneously received the Holy Spirit with his recovering his eyesight. Acts 8 appears to establish clearly the manner in which miraculous gifts were imparted. Many Samaritans obeyed the gospel at the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:12), but yet none of them received miraculous gifts. Implied in the text is the fact that they had been Christians for sufficient time for the news to have traveled all the way back to Jerusalem to the apostles' ears. Upon hearing that the Samaritans had "received the word of God" (8:14), the apostles sent to them Peter and John, who, when they arrived, laid hands on them, and "they received the Holy Ghost" (8:17). Luke explicitly records something that was obvious to Simon, and evidently to all present: "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on

whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (8:18,19). If Philip had been able to impart miraculous gifts to these Christians why had he not done so? And why did the apostles see fit to send Peter and John to do something that Philip could have done? It seems clear that only the apostles could impart miraculous gifts; Philip, on the other hand, though he could work miracles, could not pass on that ability to others. This power rested exclusively with apostles.

Additionally, in the context of Ananias' coming to Saul, Luke records Jesus' instructions to Ananias: "...Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight" (Acts 9:11,12). The Bible says that Ananias laid his hands on Saul for only one purpose: "that he might receive his sight." Two things were certainly accomplished as a result of Ananias' coming to Saul: he received his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit. But the latter is not said to have happened when Ananias laid his hands on Saul. In view of the clear evidence suggested above, there is no reason to believe that it happened simultaneously with Saul's receiving his eyesight. Certainly, Paul's receiving the Holy Spirit was dependent upon Ananias' coming, because it was during this discussion that Paul learned what he needed to do to become a Christian (Acts 22:16). But to argue that he received the Holy Spirit through Ananias' hands is to assert what the text does not say.

Furthermore, the apostles were promised that they would be baptized in the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:5). Paul clearly became an apostle (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; et al.), and as such he had the ability to work miracles and to perform the "signs of an apostle" (2 Corinthians 12:12). It seems clear that he must have been baptized in the Holy Spirit just as the other apostles. It follows, then, that he received his baptism directly from heaven and not through man's hands (cf. Acts 2). This conclusion would harmonize with Paul's vehement denials elsewhere of any ties to the apostles early in his ministry as well as his assertions that he was not dependent upon any man for the gospel that he preached (Galatians 1:1ff.).

If Paul received miraculous gifts through the laying on of Ananias' hands, it would violate as well the time that the Holy Spirit was given in other conversions. In every conversion in the New Testament (with the single exception of Cornelius and his household) where both water baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit are mentioned, the Bible records that the Holy Spirit is given after water baptism. In the case of Cornelius, it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to be given before water baptism to convince the Jews that Gentiles could enter the church. But with the general rule being that the Holy Spirit is given after baptism, it would seem odd that Paul would receive the Holy Spirit before

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THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE BIBLE, *continued from Page 1*

Royal Arch Mason's "Trinity." "Jah" is an abbreviation for the Hebrew name of God JAH-WEH, or JEHOVAH. "Bul" or "Bal" is the name for the Assyrian deity, and is mentioned throughout the Old Testament as "Baal" or "Baal-peor." (This is the idol God told the Israelites to avoid at all costs). "On" is the Egyptian sun god.⁴⁶

The above quoted Stephen Knight likewise published the reaction of Albert Pike (the often quoted Masonic authority) upon his learning of Jah-Bul-On. He states: "He was disquieted and disgusted by the name, and went on: 'No man or body of men can make me accept as a sacred word, as a symbol of the infinite and eternal Godhead, a mongrel word, in part composed of the name of an accursed and beastly heathen god, whose name has been for more than two thousand years an appellation of the Devil.'"⁴⁹ But, Mr. Pike, accept it or not, the fact that you are a part of the Lodge makes you accountable to all its precepts. The same is true also for all members of the Lodge. Can it even be imagined, then, in one's wildest dreams that a Christian can be a part of such?

Knight reveals the reactions of some Royal Arch Masons to whom he spoke (as he states, no less than fifty-seven of them) when he mentioned Jah-Bul-On. Notice his report:

Most of them spoke quite freely, explaining with out hesitation their views, reactions and answers to the criticisms and queries I raised. However, all but four [of the fifty-seven- EG] lost their self-assurance and composure when I said, "What about Jah-Bul-On?" Some, although they had previously told me they had been exalted to the Royal Arch, and therefore must have not only received the lecture on the name but also studied the passages and enacted the ritual relating to Jah-Bul-On, said they had never heard of it. In most cases the interviewees very rapidly brought the meeting to a close when I asked the question. Others laughed unconvincingly and extricated themselves from having to reply by jauntily saying such words as, "Oh, that old chestnut," and passing quickly on to some other subject, normally going on the offensive with something like, "Why are you so interested in Freemasonry in particular? Why don't you look into Christianity or something? Why do people always pick on Freemasonry?" -thereby diverting the conversation from the course I had plotted. If I insisted on returning to Jah-Bul-On, almost invariably the interview would be unceremoniously terminated. Others said that although they had heard of the word, they did not know what it meant. To them it meant God, and previously erudite Freemasons, with a precise knowledge of every other aspect of Masonry we had discussed, suddenly became vague and claimed ignorance of the most central of all Freemasonic subjects.⁵⁰

Again, let it be asked of the member of the church (or anyone for that matter) who is a member or is perhaps contemplating membership in the Lodge, "Can you, in all good conscience, uphold such teachings knowing what the Bible says concerning such?" And, let it also be said again, that very few of those who are Masons know of or understand this aspect of Masonry, because it has not been revealed to them by the Lodge. Thus, their denial of such based upon their knowledge of Masonry is not conclusive evidence that such is not true. But, again, does their ignorance of Jah-Bul-On or any other aspect of this religion safeguard them from

the consequences of belonging to such in the eyes of God? Certainly not! (See Ezek. 3:18). Ignorance is not a shield against punishment for wrong.

Next in our survey of Masonry, let us look at the prayers that are offered in Masonic Lodges. Notice these quotations from Masonic authorities concerning prayer:

In the opening of the lodge, THE GREAT ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE MUST BE WORSHIPED, and his blessings upon the work about to be done must be supplicated; at the same time, prayer should be offered for peace and harmony in the closing of the lodge.⁵¹ (Emphasis mine- EG).

The chaplain of the masonic lodge who prays as the voice of the lodge DOES NOT PRAY IN THE NAME OF THE CARPENTER OF NAZARETH OR THE NAME OF JEHOVAH or the name of Allah. HE PRAYS TO THE GRAND ARTIFICER OR THE GREAT ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE. Under that title men of all faiths may find each his own deity. FAILURE TO MENTION ANY DEITY BY NAME IS NOT DENIAL, BUT MERELY THE PRACTICE OF A GRACIOUS COURTESY, so that each man for whom prayer is offered can hear the name of his own deity in the all inclusive title of Great Architect.⁵² (Emphasis mine- EG).

More quotations could be given, but these will suffice to show that Masonic prayer ritual is not in accordance with the Bible. Notice from these quotes that prayer both opens and closes the lodge meeting. But, to whom is that prayer directed? Not Jehovah God. For it is expressly stated that the chaplain does not pray "in the name of the Carpenter of Nazareth or the name of Jehovah." To whom, then, is this prayer directed, and by whose authority is it offered? It is to the "all inclusive" Great Architect of the Universe which, admittedly, is not "the Carpenter of Nazareth," "Jehovah" or "Allah," but a being that is inclusive of them all. The Bible reveals that prayer is to be offered to God the Father through His Son Jesus. It is in the name of (by the authority of) Christ that prayer is to be offered. (Note Colossians 1:3; Romans 1:8; Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 3:12; Proverbs 15:29; John 9:31). Notice also that it is said that the reason no specific name is mentioned is it is "the practice of a gracious courtesy, so that each man for whom prayer is offered can hear the name of his own deity in the all inclusive title of Great Architect." What a mockery of prayer! A Christian does not have the right to extend such "gracious courtesy" in the mockery of prayer. Surely it can be seen from this that a child of God can have nothing to do with this work of the devil.

Although Masonry makes great claims about its basis on and in the Bible, its attitude toward the Bible leaves much to be desired. The following quotations (again, from Masonic authorities themselves) reveal the attitude which Masonry has toward God's word. (Emphasis mine- EG).

The Bible is used among Masons as a symbol of the will of God, however it may be expressed, and therefore, WHATEVER TO ANY PEOPLE EXPRESSES THAT WILL MAY BE USED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE BIBLE... Thus in a lodge consisting entirely of Jews, the Old Testament alone may be placed upon the altar, and Turkish Masons make use of the Koran. Whether it be the Gospels to the Christian, the Pentateuch to the Israelite, the Koran to the Musselman, or the Vedas to the Brahmin, IT EVERYWHERE MASONICALLY CONVEYS THE SAME IDEA - THAT OF THE

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THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE BIBLE, *continued from Page 3*

SYMBOLISM OF DIVINE WILL REVEALED TO MAN.⁵³

The Kabala alone consecrates the alliance of the Universal Reason and the Divine Word; it establishes, by the counterpoises of two forces apparently opposite, the eternal balance of being; IT ALONE RECONCILES REASON WITH FAITH, - it has the keys of the past, the present, and the future...THE BIBLE WITH ALL ITS ALLEGORIES, EXPRESSES IN AN INCOMPLETE AND VEILED MANNER ONLY...⁵⁴

A number of others could be added to those

above, but these suffice in revealing Masonic thought concerning God's Word. According to Masonry, the Bible is merely "a symbol" of God's will and, thus, whatever one chooses to convey that symbol to him is God's word. Hence, the Bible is merely "a symbol among symbols" rather than the complete revelation of God to man (Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). It is also seen that in the eyes of Masonry "the Bible...expresses in an incomplete and veiled manner only." Incomplete? Can anyone who claims to be a child of God give credence to such a system as this?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Endnotes will be included at conclusion of series.

COULD ONLY APOSTLES IMPART MIRACULOUS GIFTS THROUGH THE LAYING ON OF HANDS?

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baptism, as would necessarily be the case if he received Him at the same time that his sight was restored, since Luke writes that his sight was restored before his baptism (Acts 9:18). In light of the above facts, there is no reason to conclude that Ananias imparted miraculous gifts to Saul. At some point after his water baptism, Saul was baptized in the Holy Spirit, thereby giving him miraculous gifts as well as the ability that all the apostles apparently had: to impart miraculous gifts through the laying on of his hands (2 Corinthians 12:12; 2 Timothy 1:6).

1 Timothy 4:14: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

The argument of some is as follows: (1) The presbytery gave Timothy a miraculous gift through the laying on of their hands; (2) Certainly not every member of the presbytery was an apostle; (3) Therefore, some non-apostles could impart miraculous gifts through the laying on of their hands.

In this verse, however, Paul uses the Greek preposition *meta*, which means "with, after, behind" (*Strong's*). In commenting on this passage, A.T. Robertson wrote, "Here again

meta does not express instrument or means, but merely accompaniment," equating it to the occasion in Acts 13 when the brethren at Antioch formally set apart Barnabas and Paul for their mission campaign by laying hands on them (*Word Pictures*, vol. 4, p. 581). Guy N. Woods suggested that:

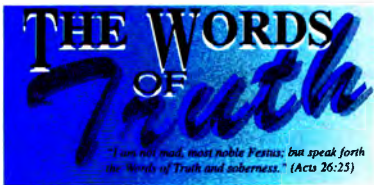
The presbytery (the elders) did not, and could not, transfer the gift to Timothy. It was done "through" (*dia*) the laying on of Paul's hands "with" (*meta*) the accompaniment of the elders. Paul did it; the presbytery sanctioned the action. This distinction is very clear in these Greek prepositions (*Questions and Answers*, p. 63).

Timothy's gift was in him *by means of* Paul's laying his hands on him (2 Timothy 1:6), and the eldership "sanctioned Paul's action and accompanied it *with* the laying on of their hands" (Hugh Fulford, *What Do You Know About the Holy Spirit?*, Ed. Wendell Winkler, p. 254). Thus, no difficulty exists.

With a close examinations of Scripture, the apparent exceptions of Acts 9:17,18 and 1 Timothy 4:14 to the rule set forth in Acts 8 are laid to rest. The New Testament is consistent, and the argument set forth by our brethren stands.

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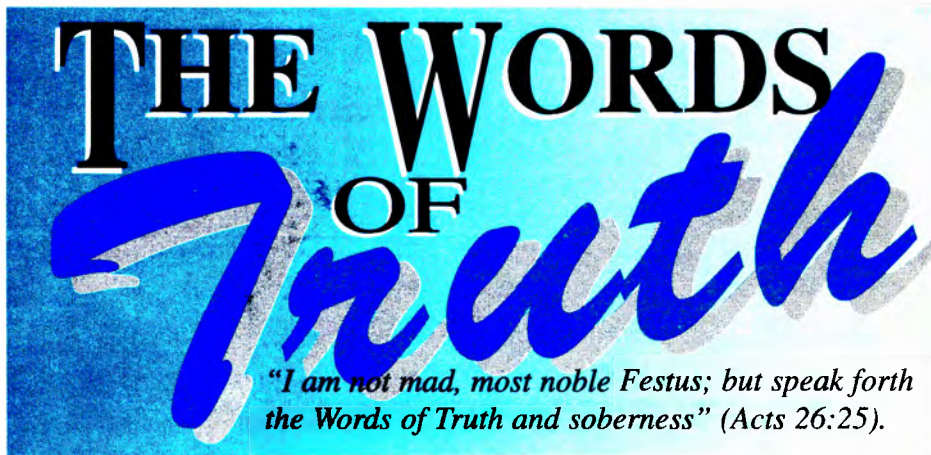
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February 4, 1999

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THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN
AND THE BIBLE PART 3 OF 3
TEMPTATION

THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE BIBLE - PART 3 OF 3

Eddy Gilpin

Yet another area of concern about Masonry is the oaths which one must take for the varying Masonic degrees. Notice some of these and, as you do so, ask yourself if such vows are in accordance, in any sense of the word, with the word of God. (All emphasis mine-EG).

I _____, of my own free will and accord in presence of Almighty God and this right worshipful Lodge...hereby and hereon, do solemnly and sincerely promise and swear I will always hail, forever conceal and never reveal any of the secret arts, parts or points of the mysteries of Freemasonry...all of which I solemnly and sincerely promise and swear to keep and perform the same, without any equivocation, mental reservation or secret evasion of mind whatever, **BINDING MYSELF UNDER NO LESS A PENALTY THAN OF HAVING MY THROAT CUT FROM EAR TO EAR, MY TONGUE TORN OUT BY ITS ROOTS, AND WITH MY BODY BURIED IN THE ROUGH SANDS OF THE SEA, A CABLE'S LENGTH FROM SHORE,** where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, should I ever knowingly or willingly violate this, my most solemn obligation as an entered apprentice, so help me God and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same. (Oath of an Entered Apprentice).

(The following quotations are in part, listing only the penalties for violation.)

...Under no less penalty than that of **HAVING MY BODY SEVERED IN TWAIN, MY BOWEL TAKEN THENCE, AND WITH MY BODY BURNED TO ASHES, AND THOSE ASHES SCATTERED TO THE FOUR WINDS OF HEAVEN,** so that there might remain name, trace nor remembrance of so vile a wretch as I would be, should I ever knowingly or willingly violate this, my most solemn obligation, as a Master Mason, so help me God, and keep me steadfast in the due per-

formance of the same. (Oath of a Master Mason).

[Note: Prior to this oath, the inductee holds the top half of a human skull which is filled with wine.]

This pure wine I now take in testimony of my belief in the morality of the body and the immorality of the soul and may this libation appear as a witness against me both here and hereafter-and as the sins of the world were laid upon the head of the Savior, **SO MAY ALL THE SINS COMMITTED BY THE PERSON WHOSE SKULL THIS WAS BE HEAPED UPON MY HEAD, IN ADDITION TO MY OWN,** should I ever knowingly or willingly violate or transgress any obligation that I have heretofore taken, take at this time, or shall at any future period take in relation to any degree of Masonry or order of Knighthood. So help me God. (Oath of Knights of Malta, one of the so-called Christian degrees).

...And in failure of this my obligation, I **CONSENT TO HAVE MY BODY OPENED PERPENDICULARLY, AND TO BE EXPOSED FOR EIGHT HOURS IN THE OPEN AIR, THAT THE VENOMOUS FLIES MAY EAT OF MY ENTRAILS, MY HEAD TO BE CUT OFF AND PUT ON THE HIGHEST PINNACLE OF THE WORLD AND I WILL ALWAYS BE READY TO INFLICT THE SAME PUNISHMENT ON THOSE WHO SHALL DISCLOSE THIS DEGREE AND BREAK THIS OBLIGATION,** so help me God and maintain me, Amen. (Oath of 10th Degree, Scottish Rite).

...In willful violation whereof I may incur the fearful penalty of **HAVING MY EYEBALLS PIERCED TO THE CENTER WITH A THREE-EDGED BLADE, MY FEET FLAYED AND I BE FORCED TO WALK THE HOT SANDS UPON THE STERILE SHORES OF THE RED SEA,** until

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FROM THE EDITORS

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TEMPTATION

God says a great deal about the temptations which men face. God himself does not tempt any man (James 1:13) nor will he allow Christians to be tempted above what they are able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). The rich will fall into abundant temptation (1 Timothy 6:9). Temptations can become testings which make us stronger and hence are blessings for which we ought to thank God (James 1:12). God will deliver the faithful out of temptation (2 Peter 2:9).

But the finest teaching from God on the subject is found in the example of Christ meeting and conquering temptation (Matthew 4:1-11). He was tempted in every point at which mankind is characteristically tempted and yet did not sin. This is the path we should follow in meeting temptation.

1. JESUS WAS TEMPTED TO USE HIS POWERS SELFISHLY FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT Alone in the wilderness and with physical hunger just like all of us would experience, Satan asked why he did not turn the stones into bread and satisfy that hunger. That he could have done so is evident. That HE DID NOT is the proof of his victory. His powers were for greater use than meeting a temporary personal need. Every man faces the temptation to use his gifts and talents selfishly, to always look out for "number one" or to inquire of every opportunity, "What's in it for me? What can I get out of it?" Such an attitude might even surround a man's ability to proclaim the gospel of Christ. That a man has a right to be paid for such work God surely teaches but to refuse to use such ability unless one gets paid for such use is sinful.

In this temptation Jesus is also proving that the way to victory and success is through reliance on the spiritual rather than the physical. He is preparing for his public ministry. By supplying bread to the multitudes he can attract an immediate and sizable following. God's work, however, must be built on a different foundation and measured by a different standard. He is not paying or bribing men to follow him; he is demanding their sacrifice. What method will characterize his work? The emphasis is on the spiritual! "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God." When will my brethren learn that it is the cross, not

loaves and fishes which will attract true disciples? (Cf. John 12:32). When will we begin to feed the starving masses the true bread?

2. JESUS WAS TEMPTED TO ATTRACT THE MASSES THROUGH SENSATIONAL ACTIONS. "Why don't you prove your claims by casting yourself off the pinnacle of the temple?" he was asked. This he could have done as simply as anything else. BUT HE DIDN'T. A work dependent on sensational-mongering is doomed to failure. Legion is the number of religionists both inside and outside the brotherhood depending on sensationalism to attract attention. No depth of dedication is built on so cheap a foundation. The gospel is its own attraction and anything else is belittling and cheapening. But many have no faith in the power of the simple gospel to attract.

Jesus' reply also shows the folly of recklessly testing God: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Too many are always in a situation that almost dares God to come to the rescue. Such is not faith; it is doubt looking for proof. Those who depend on sensationalism do not trust God--they distrust him.

3. JESUS WAS TEMPTED TO COMPROMISE. "The price is too high; the demands are too strict; the outlook is too idealistic; the position is too rigid." It is the same old song and dance man has faced since time dawned. Satan and his fellow travelers have always resented the position of Christ and the saints. "You are too hard on sin; you shouldn't condemn the sects; you have to compromise a little to influence others" and so the story goes. You can never defeat wickedness by compromising with wickedness! The day the banner of Christ is brought down to the level of the masses is the day the battle is lost. The world must be lifted to the standard Jesus set. We must remember, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve."

Take this example to heart and profit by these examples. Man cannot bribe others into following Christ; the victory is to the spiritual. Neither can God's work be truly advanced through sensationalism. And the Truth must never be compromised. Herein is victory.

THE LODGE, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE BIBLE, *continued from Page 1*

the flaming sun shall strike me with livid plague, and MY ALLAH THE GOD OF ARAB MUSLIM AND MOHAMMEDAN, THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS support me to the entire fulfillment of the same, Amen, Amen, Amen. (Oath of the Shrine A.A.O.N.M.S.). [Recall that near the beginning of this article it was stated that the Shrine is a Muslim-oriented degree with a Muslim oath.]

In light of the foregoing, does this appear to be something in which a Christian could participate; or, rather, does it not seem to be more along the lines of Satanism? Even though such oaths *might* never be carried out, can it be said to be in accordance with Christian character to make such vows? Never!

In the final aspect of this investigation of Freemasonry let us look at various quotations from Masonic sources and, since they do so, basically let them speak for themselves. (All emphasis mine- EG).

Masonic symbols are but working tools by the use of which we are seeking TO FORM OURSELVES INTO PERFECT STONES for that building which is to be our eternal home. ⁵⁵

Masonry is not a religion but Religion. ⁵⁶

In the early church, AS IN THE SECRET DOCTRINE, THERE WAS NOT ONE CHRIST FOR THE WORLD, BUT A POTENTIAL CHRIST IN EVERY MAN. Theologians first made a fetish of the impersonal Omnipresent Divinity; and then tore the Christos from the hearts of all humanity in order to deify Jesus; that they might have a godman peculiarly their own.

[Note-It is admitted that in "the secret doctrine" (Masonry) is the idea that there is not "one Christ for the world, but a potential Christ in every man. However, it is not true that this was the case in "the early church."]

Freemasonry is A RELIGION UPHELD BY THE MOST HIGH GOD. ⁵⁸

Acacian- a term signifying a Mason who BY LIVING IN STRICT OBEDIENCE TO THE OBLIGATIONS AND PRECEPTS OF THE FRATERNITY IS FREE FROM SIN. ⁵⁹

[Note- Yet, the majority of Masons will tell you that Masonry does not teach salvation through the lodge.]

...All truths are Truths of Period, and not truths for eternity... ⁶⁰

[Note- Truth is truth, in all places and for all time. It is absolute and not relative.]

NO HUMAN BEING CAN WITH CERTAINTY SAY, in the clash and conflict of hostile faiths and

creeds, WHAT IS TRUTH...WHATEVER ONE FIRMLY AND CONSCIENTIOUSLY BELIEVES IS TRUTH TO HIM. ⁶¹

[Note- Jesus said, "And ye shall KNOW THE TRUTH, and the truth shall make you free. Truth is NOT subjective.]

...We know not what is the truth. ⁶²

[Note- John 8:32; 17:17.]

No man is responsible for the rightness of his faith; but for the uprightness of it. ⁶³

The doctrines of the Bible are often NOT CLOTHED IN THE LANGUAGE OF STRICT TRUTH, but in that which was fittest to convey to a rude and ignorant people the practical essentials of the doctrine. A perfectly pure faith, free from all extraneous admixtures, a system of noble theism and lofty morality, would find too little preparation for it in the common mind and heart, you admit prompt reception by the masses of mankind; and TRUTH MIGHT NOT HAVE REACHED US, IF IT HAD NOT BORROWED THE WINGS OF ERROR. ⁶⁴

With all this evidence (and there is much, much more) revealing that Masonry and Christianity are diametrically opposed, how can anyone claim that one can exist faithfully as a member of both the Masonic Lodge and the Lord's church? Dear reader, Masonry is a religion, a false religion, based on paganism and sprinkled with just enough Bible terms to convince the unlearned of its "Christian" influence. Convincingly the question of whether or not a Christian can allow himself to be an influence for the church and the Masonic Lodge has been answered; and that answer is a resounding NO! "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

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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:

THE SIN OF PRIDE
HOW DID GOD HARDEN
PHARAOH'S HEART?
WHY IS IT WRONG TO WORRY?
A VISIT TO BETHANY

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February 11, 1999

THE SIN OF PRIDE

Ben Wright

When one thinks of sins, pride is not usually at the top of the list. However, it is at the top of God's list. "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A **proud** look (emp. mine BW), 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). We can see from this passage God hates the sin of pride. Solomon stated, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate" (Proverbs 8:13).

Pride can have a devastating effect upon our relationship with God in many ways. This sin caused the Jews to be carried away into captivity. The Israelites had turned from following God because they thought they knew what was best for them. They were lifted up with pride and had forgotten that all the riches, land, and prestige given them had come from God. The pride of God's people brought tears to the great prophet Jeremiah:

Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken. Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive (Jeremiah 13:15-17).

The great king Nebuchadnezzar found out the hard way about God's hatred of pride. He had been warned in a dream from God about being humble, but he did not heed Daniel's interpretation of that dream. He stood in his palace and began to extol his own greatness and while the words were still in his mouth a voice from heaven told him that he had lost his kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men and ate of the grass of the field for seven years. His lesson from God caused him to write these words: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37). Daniel told the next king why this had happened to his father, "But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened with pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him" (Daniel 5:20).

It cannot be stressed enough, GOD HATES PRIDE! The inspired writer James had to deal with this problem when he was inspired to write his epistle. James quoted Solomon when penning, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (James 4:6). The Greek word for "resisteth" that the Holy Spirit chose to use was a military term. It comes from the word *antitasso* which means "to set in battle array." This verse is stating that God does battle against those who are prideful! God brings every bit of His wrath to bear against the sin of pride. In our effort to live godly lives, pride must be removed in order to be pleasing to God.

To teach humility to the apostles Jesus told them that: "If any man desire to be first, the same will be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). What Jesus wants is for his followers to realize that the way up is down. Christians are not to desire the chief places in order to be seen of men. The story is told of a very wealthy man who invited many honored guests to his home for a meal. He placed his richly decorated chair at one end of the table and left the room. As the guests came, he watched them position themselves as close to his chair as their own self-worth would allow. When the man came in, he promptly picked up his chair and place it at the other end of the table.

As we begin this new year, may we endeavor to remove selfish pride from our lives and become as "a servant of all." This will help the Lord's church to grow immeasurably.

FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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How Did God Harden Pharaoh's Heart?

God's sending the ten plagues upon Egypt has no doubt fascinated many of us since we were children. Who hasn't wondered what it would be like to have millions of frogs everywhere -- in your bedroom, your bed, your oven, your cooking pans (Exodus 8:3)? And then to have them all die at the same time -- Moses really understated the matter when he said simply, "and the land stank" (Exodus 8:14). What would it be like if all the dust in the country turned to lice? Or if all the drinking water turned to blood? This is a story that has intrigued us all since we began to hear it in Sunday school years ago. In this Bible story, God made a statement with which many have struggled: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them" (Exodus 7:3-5). With only a cursory reading of that passage, we might think that God forced Pharaoh to disobey Him. In fact, many who hold a Calvinistic view of God have made that argument. But to determine how God hardened Pharaoh's heart, we need to consider first the overall thrust of the Bible, and then this apparent difficulty will vanish.

Several important biblical principles are abundantly clear. First, God never forces man to do anything against his own will. Contrary to what some teach, we do not have to do anything we do not want to do -- a fact that has been true since the beginning of time. When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden He gave them specific instructions concerning what they could and could not do. Yet, He did not make their decisions for them. When Eve was tempted by the serpent God did not intervene to keep her from sinning. Did He want her to sin? Of course not! He chose not to stop her because He made human beings, not robots. God has always encouraged us to choose the right way, but He has never forced us (Deuteronomy 30:15ff; Joshua 24:15; Proverbs 1:29; 3:31). Our service, worship, and obedience as well as our disobedience and sin will be by our own choice. No one can make us do anything against our will.

Second, God cannot even tempt man to sin, much less cause him to. Notice what James wrote: "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" (James 1:13). It is against God's divine nature to tempt man to sin. A perfectly holy and just God causing man to commit an unholy action is a contradiction of terms!

Third, God loves man and wants him to be saved. Surely if there is any theme in the Bible which is repeatedly emphasized it is God's love for man. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Is it possible that God could send His only begotten Son to earth to suffer and die for man's sin then turn right around and force man to sin (John 3:16)? Surely God's love and desire for man to be saved prohibits His causing him to sin.

Fourth, God can look into the future, know how men will react to certain circumstances and use those events to His glory without causing them to happen. For example, God knew that Jesus would be crucified thousands of years before it happened. He told the serpent in the garden that Eve's seed (Christ) would bruise Satan's head (Genesis 3:15). That prophecy was fulfilled at the cross. Peter clearly states that the crucifixion of Christ was according to God's predetermined plan "[Christ], being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Peter could not have called an action of God a "wicked" thing; but that is exactly what he did if we are to equate foreknowledge with the removal of man's free will. But the fact that God foreknew an event and even predetermined how it would fit into His sovereign plan does not mean that He forced the participants to carry out certain actions. It would violate God's equity if He had demanded that men crucify Jesus and then condemned them for doing something in which they had no choice.

Now, understanding that God always allows man to have free will, that He never tempts anyone to commit sin, that He wants all to be saved, and that His foreknowledge does not imply His directly causing something, we turn our attention to the matter of Pharaoh, which becomes clear. The Bible plainly states that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3, 13; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14: 4, 8). But the Bible also asserts that Pharaoh hardened his own heart by telling this heathen ruler to do something he was not willing to do. He told Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt -- something Pharaoh absolute-

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How Did God Harden Pharaoh's Heart?, *Continued from Page 2*

ly did not want to do. Yet, at the same time, God never took away Pharaoh's free will. Egypt's ruler could have obeyed God at any time if he had chosen to do so. But he chose not to, and that is how he hardened his own heart. He refused to submit his will to God's will. God, because of His omniscience, looked into the future and knew how Pharaoh would react to this situation. Pharaoh was a worldly king who cared nothing for the God of heaven. God chose to use these circumstances to show the Egyptians and the Israelites His great power and glory. He never forced Pharaoh to disobey Him, Rather, He used a heart that was already hard to accomplish His will.

Does God harden hearts today? Certainly. But He does so only indirectly through the effect that His word has on the hearts it touches. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged

sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). When God's word contacted those present at Pentecost, it "pricked" their hearts, creating in them the desire to be saved (Acts 2:27). When the same word met Stephen's accusers, these hearers were "cut to the heart" (Acts 7:54). Instead of their hearts conforming to the intent of Stephen's message, they became like stone, causing them to search for stones to kill God's servant. The difference in the responses of Acts 2 and Acts 7 lay not in the message, but in the nature of the hearts. We should be concerned with making sure our hearts are such that they become soft and pliable when confronted with biblical precepts.

Why is it Wrong to Worry?

Roger Johnson

A writer once entitled his best-selling book, "**How to stop worrying and start living**" -- which might be a good title for this article. Is there a need among Christians for a study on worry? There is little doubt about the fact that there is, for most of us spend far too much time worrying either about something that happened yesterday, or about something that is almost certainly going to happen today, or about some other thing that may or may not happen tomorrow.

With our Bible open before us, let us consider some reasons why Christians need not worry.

WORRY IS DISHONORING TO THE LORD.

When we worry we doubt God, and nothing dishonors God so much as when His people fail to believe and trust Him. Jesus said, "**Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own**" (Matthew 6:24, NASB). This admonition is preceded by a reminder of God's loving concern and care for His children which is the basis of our trust in God. Therefore, why worry, knowing that God will provide all the necessities of life? The Christian should not worry about anything for we have a God who truly cares for us (Philippians 4:6; 1 Peter 5:7).

WORRY IS DAMAGING TO OURSELVES.

There is nothing that works greater havoc in our lives than persistent, continual, gnawing worry, fear, and anxiety. How often has it been said that it is not work that kills, but worry--and how true

this is! Worry damages us mentally and physically, but it is also damaging spiritually. Worry will rob us of peace and power and will place a barrier between ourselves and God. Worry paralyzes the Christian's walk. Prayer and thankful supplications to God enable us to enjoy a peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:6-7).

WORRY IS DETRIMENTAL TO OTHERS.

How effective can we be in evangelizing the lost if the world looks at us and sees us full of unbelief, worry, and fear? On the other hand, when in the midst of trial and strain a Christian manifests a quiet confidence in God, what a great proclamation this is to the world! How calm Jesus was on the eve of His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. As a result, even a Roman soldier was compelled to confess, "**Truly this was the Son of God**" (Matthew 27:54). Don't you think a life lived with complete trust in God would have a positive impact upon others?

When we worry we play right into the hands of Satan. How pleased he is when he sees us worrying instead of trusting God! Worry is a prayer to the wrong god. It is utterly useless and is a foolish, nonsensical, and impractical pastime of people. It has never lifted a single burden, solved a single problem, or dried a single tear. Prayer is the supreme remedy for worry, for prayer taps into the unfathomable resources of God. Therefore, "**...cast all your anxiety upon him...**" (1 Peter 5:7).

A VISIT TO BETHANY

David R. Pharr

Up in the West Virginia panhandle, just a few miles from Wheeling, lies the quiet village of Bethany, the place where Alexander Campbell lived, preached, wrote and was buried. Bethany College, which is now affiliated with the Disciples of Christ denomination, has restored the Campbell home and the old Bethany meeting house. Across from the "Campbell mansion" is the Campbell Cemetery, where are buried many notables of restoration history.

When last we visited Bethany, the courteous young lady who served as our guide expressed a mistaken notion which is typical of the thinking of Disciples of Christ and others. In telling about one of Campbell's sons marrying an Episcopalian, she explained that at that time it was unthinkable for one to marry outside his faith, especially in view of the fact that Campbell himself was "the founder of a faith."

Alexander Campbell did not start a new religion. His efforts were in opposition to any religion started by any man. The church he preached was the church founded by Christ. The sign over the doors of the building in Bethany where Campbell preached still says "Church of Christ." He was a powerful advocate of New Testament Christianity and is remembered for his work in urging a return to Biblical principles, but he founded no denomination. Disciples of Christ claim a heritage from him, but there is little similarity between the principles he taught and their theology and practice.

Looking past the erroneous interpretations of the hosts, however, a visit to Bethany stirs the heart as one reflects on the emphasis and progress made by Campbell toward undenominational Christianity and the restoration of the ancient order of the New Testament church.

The cemetery was called God's Acre. It is a quiet and peaceful spot wherein lie the remains of Alexander, his father Thomas Campbell and many family members. Other famous names of the

restoration are found on the tombstones. For all the great and good things done by these, they were nonetheless mortal. Our faith does not have its origin in one whose grave can be visited, but in the One whose tomb is empty.

The Bethany meeting house is apparently just as it was when Campbell and his contemporaries preached in it. Standing by the pulpit, I tried to imagine some of the sermons that might have been preached. What would have been great and good in those sermons, however, is no different from what is great and good in a sermon today. Pulpit styles may have changed, and there may be few mental and rhetorical giants as was Campbell, but the only thing that ultimately matters about a sermon is whether it effectively sets forth the truth of God.

As far as I know, in the present town of Bethany there is no congregation that worships after the New Testament order, as did Campbell and his brethren. Nor is there one that shows the same reverence for the Bible authority. Though Bethany College was founded by Campbell in 1840, it has long since abandoned its heritage. Its theology is modernistic. The Bethany Memorial Church, just a short distance from the old meeting house, is affiliated with the liberals of the Disciples denomination.

It is often observed that the church is always "one generation from apostasy." The point is that if the rising generation does not know and respect the truth, all emphasis on scriptural faith and practice can disappear. A visit to Bethany can remind us of this. A little over a century later, this lovely little village where so much truth was once preached and published, it appears that much of that truth has been forgotten. There is no church of Christ (as far as I know) in the very town where the restoration plea was once sounded so powerfully. The lesson of history is that we must never take the truth for granted. The call of history is that we be forever vigilant.

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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:

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SPENDING A DAY WITH JESUS
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO
PREACH JESUS?**

Vol. 36 No. 7

February 18, 1999

PRESSING ON!

Johnny Ramsey

We dare not attempt to prove our positions by restoration guidelines or commentaries written by our heroes but by "thus saith the Scriptures" (Romans 4:3; Psalm 119:11). What some brother said at a lecture-ship, worship or in a periodical has no divine authority to guide the church of our Lord. The Scriptures alone, under the authority of Christ (Matthew 28:18; Acts 20:32), should be our standard always. Although all things that pertained to life and godliness were revealed by the Spirit through the Apostles, it involved a period of nearly 70 years from the time Jesus promised the Apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit. All of the truth was not revealed all at once. That explains why such matters as the eating of meats, Judaism and the return of Christ were not as clear immediately as they now are to us who have full access to all Scripture at the same time. We are indeed blessed to hold within our hands a copy of the whole Bible. The impart of John 16:13, in its fulfillment, is a genuine benefit to mankind today. Surely, in deep gratitude, we should search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11) study ardently (2 Timothy 2:15) and share the message with others (1 Peter 3:15). We should fervently sing:

Give me the Bible, all my steps enlighten,
Teach me the danger of these realms below;
That lamp of safety o'er the gloom shall brighten,
That light above the path of peace can show.

Christians should praise God mightily for the revelation of Truth made possible by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles.

In John 16:16-22, the Master taught the disciples concerning His death, burial and resurrection. Of course they did not fully understand the crux of the matter until afterwards. Back in John 2, at the start of His personal ministry the Messiah had predicted the resurrection by saying: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."

His followers thought Jesus referred to the Temple being rebuilt by Herod, but later understood that He spoke of "the temple of his body." In John 16, on the very same subject, our Lord told the Apostles they would soon be saddened by His leaving, but that mourning would soon turn to joy. These words were indicative of the sorrow the Apostles felt when Jesus died (Mark 15:10) and their exuberance when He arose (John 20:28). As Romans 1:4 affirms so these scenes are reflected: Christ was proved to be the Son of God by power in His resurrection from the dead! In a well-known hymn Robert Lowry contributes these glorious words:

Death cannot keep his prey
Jesus, my Savior!
He tore the bars away
Jesus my Lord!
Up from the grave he arose
He arose a Victor from the dark domain
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Christ burst asunder the bands of death; the gates of Hades could not hold Him (Acts 2:24; Matthew 16:18). Truly sorrow was turned to joy!

In verses 23-24 of John 16 we learn a valuable lesson concerning the power in the name of Christ. Paul informs us in the second chapter of Philippians that our Savior has a name that towers above all other names. In Colossians 3:17 we are commanded to do all things by and through the powerful name of Christ. And in an unsung verse, Ephesians 5:20, we are shown that early Christians prayed to the heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. In John 16:24 these words ring out: "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

This is not a certain formula that will make our petitions miraculous, but a spiritual concept that permeates our relationship with God. All that we do in Christianity is bounded by the authority or power vested in Christ by virtue of His mediating on our behalf (1

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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SPENDING A DAY WITH JESUS

Christ affected the world more than any person who ever lived. Yet, he lived only thirty-three years. What did he do to have such a great impact? How did he spend his life? How did he spend a typical day? We do not know specifically because the inspired record does not tell us of complete days in his life. We can calculate that in his thirty-three years he lived a few more than 12,000 days. Some 1200 of these were in his active ministry, yet the events in all four of our gospel narratives occurred on less than fifty different days of his life.

The apostle John reflects his own feelings in regard to the severe limitations on the events of Christ's life that he was permitted to tell in his narrative. In John 20:30-31 he says, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." The final sentence of the gospel of John reads, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25). We can know what Christ did on various days and it is possible to piece together some of these to see what might have been a typical day in the life of our Lord.

Jesus Took Time For Private Devotion

A careful reading of the events in Christ's life indicates clearly that he often slipped away from the crowd that followed him and even from his own disciples in order to spend some quiet time in prayer and communion with God. For example, we read in Mark 1:35-38, "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him; and they found him, and say unto him, All are seeking thee. And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next town that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth."

Surely this is a suggestion for all of us. If Christ needed quiet times in which to meditate and pray surely all of us need those quiet devotional times even more. Several times it is mentioned that he spent a part of the night, or even sometimes the entire night, in prayer. It appears in Luke 6:12-14 that he spent the night in prayer before naming his twelve apostles to their great work. One of the tragedies of our modern world is that we are so rushed that we have little time for devotional periods, little time for meditation on spiritual matters and prayer to God.

Jesus Helped People

Perhaps the most obvious thing we would learn from spending a day with Jesus would be his deep concern for the needs of people. In Mark 1:29-31, we read, "And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell him of her:

and he came and took her by the hand and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." Another example reads: "And there cometh to him a leper, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And being moved with compassion, he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean" (Mark 1:40-42).

In the second chapter of Mark we read about Christ healing the palsied man whose friends lowered his couch through the ceiling into the house where Jesus was surrounded by people to such an extent that it was not possible for them to enter through the door. Christ healed this man so that he was able to walk and take up his bed and carry it away. Over and over again Christ healed people who were deaf, or blind, or lame. He even raised the dead on at least three occasions.

Here is another incident which shows his concern for people. "And they were bringing unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them" (Mark 10:13-16).

Surely this suggests to us that in our busy schedules of today we ought also to find time to help those who are in need. We need to be concerned about widows, orphans, the sick, and the aged. There are emergencies that arise in people's lives which should not go unnoticed or untended by those of us who would follow Christ. The Christian is one who cares and he shows that care and concern by helping those who are in need.

Jesus Taught

In following Jesus throughout a typical day we would undoubtedly find him talking with many people under many different kinds of conditions. We might, for instance, hear him deliver what we would call something of a sermon, as he did on a mountain near Capernaum in the long ago. This "Sermon on the Mount" can be found in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, and constitutes the heart of the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus. Almost the entire twelfth chapter of Mark is also devoted to Christ's teachings. It is there that he answers the difficult question, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" His answer, after asking for a denarius that he might examine this commonly used coin, was a question, "Whose is this image and superscription?" When they answered that it was Caesar's he continued, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:13-17).

He also was faced with the question of which one would be the husband in the life to come of a woman who had been married seven times. His answer was, "Is it not for this cause that ye err, that ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God? For

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PRESSING ON!, *Continued from Page 1*

John 2:1; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). Because of His death on our behalf the door of heaven is wide open to receive our petitions in every time of need (Revelation 4:1; Hebrews 4:16). Praise God for such open concourse with the halls of heaven. When faithful children of God ask, seek and knock (Matthew 7:7) according to His will (1 John 5:14), we can expect a closer walk with our Creator. Let us avail ourselves of the privileges found within the mighty name of Christ. What an abiding consolation it is to know that in the darkest hour the Light of the world—Christ—is available to us (John 8:12; 1 John 1:7). Yes, Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). The very One who overcame Satan, sin, death, Hades and Hell has promised that we too can overcome and then come over to live with Him forevermore (Revelation 3:21; John 16:33).

In the grand conclusion of John 16 we find some of the richest promises our blessed Redeemer ever

gave to His loyal servants. In essence Jesus told the Apostles that He was not alone and they need never be lonely either! Paul, in the last paragraph of inspiration he ever wrote, made it clear that though men had forsaken him under pressure of Roman persecution, the Lord had stood by to bolster him in the midst of trials. It takes courage to be a Christian, but it is certainly worth it! Let us find comfort in the beauty of John 16. Let us follow Jesus home to glory!

I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the heavenly sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.

These things help us to keep on the upward way to a place called heaven wherein all things will be new!

SPENDING A DAY WITH JESUS, *continued from Page 2*

when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as angels in heaven" (Mark 12:24-25).

In this same remarkable chapter he also answered the question, "What commandment is the first of all?" His answer was, "The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:28-30). His whole life was spent in teaching and preaching. The thirteenth chapter of Matthew contains the several parables concerning the kingdom which he was to establish. The center of his purpose was in revealing a new way of life to men and in making it possible for him to live that life through his redemption.

Jesus Challenged Men

In the sixth chapter of Luke we find the account of Jesus calling twelve men to be his apostles. We do not have all of the details, but in each case it appears that Jesus challenged those men to leave whatever they were doing and to follow him in his spiritually centered work. Matthew 9:9 tells of his calling of Matthew Levi who was sitting at the place of toil collecting taxes. Matthew accepted the challenge and followed. Luke 5:1-11 tells the story of the calling of Peter, Andrew, James and John. Christ performed a miracle in supplying an abundant catch of fish, after which Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Christ replied, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." The story ends with the words, "And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him" (Luke 5:8-11).

When we associate with Jesus through the pages of the scriptures we also will be challenged and let us hope that we will accept the challenge to center our lives in Christ and his Cause, as did these early disciples. Let us also hope that as we mature

in our Christian understandings that we also may challenge others to live on the same exalted plane which Jesus lived and about which he taught. Christianity is a life of challenge—accepting challenges and passing them along to others.

Jesus Lived An Exemplary Life

In Mark 7:37 we read the verdict of some of the people who heard Jesus, "He doeth all things well." In John 7:46 we read the explanation of the soldiers who were sent to arrest Jesus but came back empty-handed, "never man so spake." In Hebrews 4:15 we are reminded, "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Our Lord lived a sinless life. While we may not reach that level of perfection, let us strive to live in such a way that our lives also are not subject to Satan and to unrighteousness. Let us be as clean and pure as we can be in thought, word and deed. As we follow Christ may our lives be models for others to see and may they be the means of causing others to want to follow Christ. May it be possible for us to say with Paul, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Jesus did not do many of the things that we do. He did not fly in an airplane. He did not talk by long distance telephone. He did not dictate letters. He did not own property. He owned no stocks and bonds. He wrote no books. He never finished college. But, he left the greatest influence on mankind for good of any person that has ever lived. Greatness lies in simple things. Let us fashion our days in such a way that our influence will be felt upon others and in the right direction. Our hope is that as we have tried to visualize what it would be like to spend a typical day with Jesus, we have seen something of the pattern of life that our days should follow.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PREACH JESUS?

Ben Wright

My wife and I were sitting in a Bible class one Wednesday evening and we were shocked at some things we heard. The one statement that really jumped out at me was, "we need to quit worrying over what other congregations are doing and just preach Jesus." I agree that we do not need busybodies, trying to find out what every congregation in the area is teaching. We do not need a watchdog mentality in the church. However, I do believe the brother that made this statement is mistaken about what it means to preach Jesus.

Throughout the religious world the phrase "just preach Jesus" is bantered about daily. The question then arises: "What does it mean to preach Jesus?" Some say that it means preach the man and not the plan. A study of God's inspired word clearly refutes this idea. Well, what does it mean?

I feel that the best place to find out what this phrase means is in Acts 8. The great disciple Philip went to the city of Samaria to preach. Luke, by inspiration, wrote that Philip "...preached Christ unto them." Philip preached boldly and performed miracles which caused many people to give heed to his words. What did Philip preach that so captivated this audience? We find the answer to this question in verse 12: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

Three things taught by Philip are mentioned in this passage. The first item mentioned is the kingdom of God. Philip preached about the one true church! I realize that to some this is an antiquated thing about which to preach, but this is the very thing that caused people in Samaria to stop and listen. Jesus and His church are inseparable. This kind of preaching will offend some people. That is not something

pleasurable to do; however, it must be done. Christ established one church (Matthew 16:18), bought one church (Acts 20:28), and is married to one church (Ephesians 5:23-30). No one can truly preach Jesus and not preach about the one, true church.

The second item that Philip addressed is the name of Jesus Christ. There is no greater name than the name of Jesus. One must know who Jesus was and is before he or she can obey Him. I know that preaching about Jesus offends some people today. There are many groups that do not believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God but that does not mean we stop preaching about Jesus and His authority. People cannot be saved without the name of Jesus. "Neither is there salvation in any other: For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The third subject Philip preached is baptism. Someone may stop reading here and say "what in the world does baptism have to do with preaching Jesus?" You nor I can separate the Man from the plan. Later on in this chapter Philip preaches from Isaiah to the Ethiopian eunuch. The Ethiopian stops the chariot when he sees water and asks to be baptized. Please show me where baptism is mentioned in Isaiah 53. It cannot be done. Despite that, the eunuch still was baptized. Why? Because as verse 35 points out, Philip preached to him Jesus. Friends, baptism cannot be left out when preaching Jesus.

When Jesus is truly preached, the church, Jesus' identity and authority, as well as baptism will not be left out. Philip was inspired by God to preach these very things. They might offend some but this has always been the case. Let us always strive to preach Jesus the way that Philip did.

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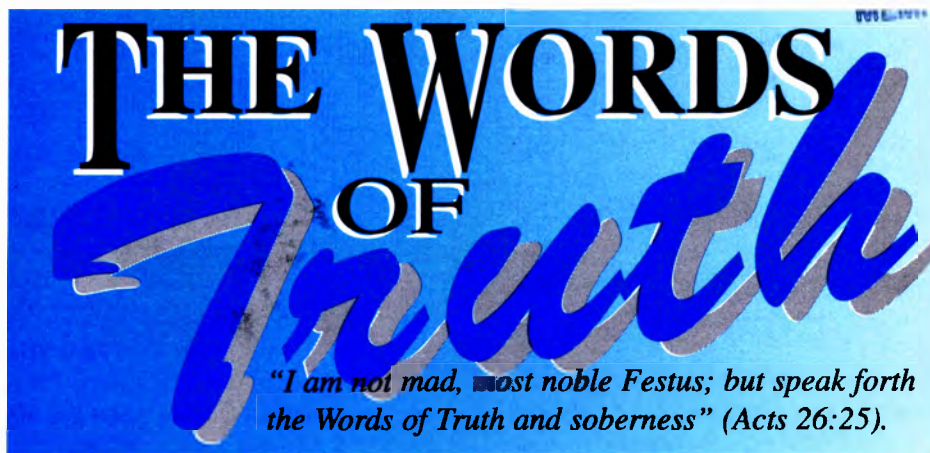
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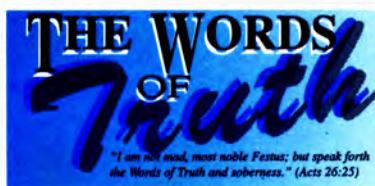
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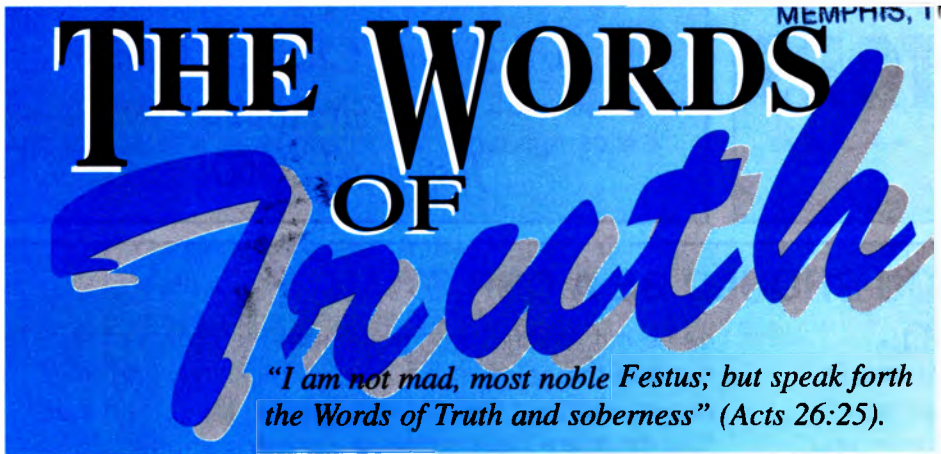
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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

HOW TO REMAIN FAITHFUL
THREE REASONS WHY YOU
SHOULD BE A CHRISTIAN
WHAT WENT WRONG?

Vol. 36 No. 9

March 4, 1999

HOW TO REMAIN FAITHFUL

Johnny Ramsey

Living in a shameful and rugged world is definitely challenging to Christians. Only the dedicated soldier of the Lord can survive. Evil men seem to be getting worse and ungodliness runs rampant in the streets of our nations. In the whole wide world sensuality is the order of the day. Dozens of our own brethren overwhelmed by sin, return to the gutters of iniquity and wallow in the mire of hedonism. Pandering to the flesh is common while devotion to God is rare indeed. What a sordid climate surrounds us and beckons us to join in the unrestrained folly of evil allurements. An old hymn brings to mind the sweet refuge available to us:

From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat:
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat...

What would we do in these wicked days if we could not lean upon the Savior?

A heart of unbelief was the one sin that plagued the Hebrews as we learn in 3:12 of that rich book of the New Testament. Many were on the verge of apostasy and needed fervent exhortation to remain loyal to God lest they draw back to perdition (10:38). Someone has poignantly reminded us...

Opportunity knocks but once
While temptation leans on the doorbell...

There are several pertinent points that should help us to remain faithful regardless of obstacles Satan erects. Let us be on guard and zealously pursue these golden steps to fidelity:

(1) Keep Our Eyes On Jesus:

When we never focus on Christ we lose sight of the only way to heaven. All others fade into oblivion when we see Jesus (Hebrews 2:9 and 12:2) in all His resplendent beauty. Looking back to sin and carnality caused Lot's wife to perish (Luke 17:32). We need to develop spiritual maturity by following the steps of the

Lord even though they may take us on a difficult, but rewarding journey. Doing what we like might give us freedom but liking what we do is happiness. And, we will find more joy in the Master's cause than elsewhere!

O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? (Deuteronomy 3:24).

(2) Never Neglect Bible Study:

When we overlook or ignore the pulsating power of Scripture we rob ourselves of a brilliant life-support. In every area of spiritual advancement we can find practical advice in the Bible. One of the first steps into apostasy is to quit studying the sacred text. When we are too busy to open the good Book we take a giant step back to the world. No one can learn the Bible for us and there is nothing that can build up our integrity and steadfastness like a thorough excursion down the pathway of divine knowledge. Sadly, some folks seem to think that what they learned years ago is enough. Thus, they do not continue to add more texts and a deeper understanding of God's revelation. Apostasy looms just around the corner for those content with past laurels.

Past experience should be a guide post,
not a hitching post.

Remember always that education costs less than ignorance.

(3) Be Optimistic:

We should always rejoice in the pleasures and challenges of Christianity. To look for trouble and failure often causes us to find problems rather than victory in Jesus. Some seem to depart from the gospel before they grow much at all due to a pessimistic

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FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

*Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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THREE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD BE A CHRISTIAN

The apostle Peter wrote in I Peter 3:15, "...Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you."

We as Christians are interested in you who are not children of God; we would like for you to be just as we, except perhaps even more so. We would like for you to know about the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving power. And I would like to give you at this hour three reasons, given in God's word, why you should be a Christian.

Life On Earth Is Uncertain

In Luke 12 our Lord tells us about a very prosperous farmer. At one harvest season this man's land brought forth bountifully. As he looked round over his fields he began to realize that his barns, his present buildings, would not hold the fruits of his land, and so being a good farmer and a good businessman, he said to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But we are told then that God said to this man, "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" Of course, the Lord was condemning covetousness here. He was teaching against the materialistic philosophy and attitude toward life. But, yet, at the same time, He is telling us today of the uncertainty of life upon this earth.

What is tomorrow? At the very best it is a hope, a figment of man's imagination. There is no such thing in reality. The writer James said in James 4:13-15, actually belittling us who say, "I am going to do this and that tomorrow," "Come now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city and spend a year there and trade and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will we shall both live, and do this or that." Someone has said, "Today is yesterday's tomorrow, tomorrow's yesterday."

The great man of patience, Job, at the very height of his hardship and suffering, after he had lost every material possession, all of his loved ones in his immediate family except his wife, and

as he sat afflicted with boils from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, in sackcloth and ashes, realized that life is a fleeting thing, and said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle." In Job 14:1-2 again he declared, "Man that is born of a woman, is of a few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."

Death and Judgment Are Sure and Certain

Another reason God's word gives us for being Christians and living the Christian life is that death and judgment are sure and certain. In Hebrews 9:27 we are told, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment." The entirety of the New Testament speaks to the effect that there will be a day of reckoning, that there will come a time when you and I must stand before our Maker and give an account for the deeds we have done in this body. And it points certainly to a life after death.

The great apostle Paul, when discussing the resurrection of Jesus Christ, basing the entire Christian system upon that one fact of history, says in I Corinthians 15:19, "If we have only hope in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable."

Again, our Savior in John 5:28-29, following the performance of a miracle, and the great amazement of the people over the miracle which he had performed, says, "Marvel not at this; for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."

God points out, in His word, that punishment for the wicked will be most sure and severe. In Matthew 25:41, our Lord in telling of the great day of judgment and of the putting on the left hand those who have not lived righteously and on the right hand those who have, says, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels."

Although the punishment assigned the wicked is severe, on the other hand the promises to the righteous are overwhelming; they are not within the comprehension of man. Paul says in I Corinthians

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HOW TO REMAIN FAITHFUL, *continued from Page 1*

approach to life. **Christ will me His aid afford** is the first stanza of a great gospel song that agrees with Romans 8:28 and Psalm 124:8.

He healeth the broken in heart, and
bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the
number of the stars; he calleth them all
by their names. Great is our Lord, and
of great power: his understanding is
infinite (Psalm 147:3-5).

Do not look for problems and pitfalls but rather emphasize the sovereignty and providence of God. Put the Lord first in your life and all you need will be supplied (Philippians 4:19). Seek the glory of Christ and not your own!

(4) Look For The Best In Others--Especially Brethren:

Associating with devout people can be a very practical aid in withstanding error and apostasy. But, when we become unduly critical and look only for mistakes in the conduct of others we lose ground on the road to heaven. Each one of us falls short of our goal of constant righteousness so we need to be charitable in our evaluation of our brethren. When we go through life blaming someone else for our problems we will not mature as I Corinthians 14:20 demands. Stressing our

own obedience would serve us better on the highway of holiness.

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).

(5) Realize The Sorrow Apostasy Brings:

If anyone contemplating departure from Christ would honestly observe the empty vanity of others who have left the church to return to the world they would quickly see how barren apostasy really becomes. No peace, joy or fulfillment abides in the heart of a person who gives up the very best in life for the garbage of mundane matters. Divine words bring this sentiment to light:

Receive my instruction, and not silver;
and knowledge rather than choice gold
(Proverbs 8:10).

We dare not give up the sublime arrangement of heaven for the pig-pen of Satan.

Let us go on to perfection rather than departing from the living God!

THREE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD BE A CHRISTIAN, *continued from Page 2*

2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

As Jesus stood talking to His disciples, as John records in the fourteenth chapter of His gospel, He realized that they were saddened over the thoughts of His going away and so He said to them, "Let not your heart be troubled: 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 come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

A Sinner Is Neither Prepared for Death Nor For The Judgment

The third reason, and perhaps one of the most important, that God gives in His word for being a Christian, is that the sinner is not prepared either for death or to meet his Savior on the day of judgment.

In Isaiah 59:2 the prophet again says, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your

God, and your sins have hid His face from you so that He will not hear."

Again, in Romans 6:23 the apostle Paul repeats one of the most universal, fundamental and oldest of God's laws to man, "The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

Know then that in God's word there are three outstanding reasons why every single person ought to be a Christian. They are: (1) life is uncertain; (2) death and judgment are sure; (3) a sinner is not fit to meet his Savior in the day of judgment.

I would like to ask you at this time to consider just two questions and ponder these in your minds: where will you be one hundred years from today, where will you be a thousand years from today, ten thousand? You will be somewhere, doing something, because you are an eternal soul. If at this very moment your life were taken from you, where would you spend eternity? Remember, our Savior said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is His invitation to you.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

"Ye were running well, who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 6:7)

Roger Johnson

What a wonderful thing it is when anyone is truly converted! But how inexpressibly sad it is when one who has been converted turns back, becomes lukewarm, or loses his first love. There were those in the Galatian churches who had been turned aside by false teachers who had sought, and succeeded, in getting them into bondage to the law. If you are not presently faithful to the Lord, what has gotten in your way to hinder you?

Was it the inconsistency of professing Christians? Then, learn that Christ is our example and the One in whose steps we should walk (1 Peter 2:21). You see, your trouble is that you have been looking to other Christians and following their example, and perhaps you have put them on a pedestal. Then, when you have discovered that they are not as perfect as you had thought, you have been disappointed and discouraged. There is only One whom we can set up as our example, and that is our Lord Himself.

Was it misunderstanding or opposition? Many a person has obeyed the gospel only to face the malignity of family members and friends, and the test has been so severe that some have become discouraged and "given everything up." The Lord expressly told us it would not always be easy to live for Him (Matthew 5:11-12). But, is it not a great privilege to suffer with Jesus (Acts 5:41)?

What did hinder you? **Was it the pull of the world?** Then listen to 1 John 2:17: *"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abideth for ever."* It is impossible to love the Lord and the world at the time (1 John 2:15). That was the trouble with Demas (2 Timothy 4:10) - he was hindered by a love for the world. People who succumb to the pull of the world are not properly acquainted with Jesus.

Is there anything which you are allowing to hinder your relationship to God? Is it really worth it?

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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. 36 No. 10

March 11, 1999

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
SNAKE BIBLE--FAITH OR FOLLY?
SACRIFICE
SUFFERING: MYSTERY OR
MINISTRY?
PINNING HUMAN ORIGINS ON
A FEW BONES DISCOVERED
WOULD YOU CALL A WOMAN
A COW?

SNAKE BIBLE--FAITH OR FOLLY?

David R. Pharr

Another person has died from a rattlesnake bite received at a religious service. A Kentucky man was bitten and the people with him refused to allow medical personnel to treat him. There are a few sects that practice the handling of poisonous snakes as a demonstration of their faith. When someone is bitten, they insist that they can rely on faith and prayer to provide healing.

Unfortunately, the newspaper account made the same mistake regarding Bible teaching as do the snake handlers. The report said, "Those who handle snakes as part of their religion base their belief on the New Testament book of Mark, chapter 16, verse 18, in which Jesus tells his disciples to spread the Gospel and that anyone who believes may take up serpents." The impression suggested is that the Bible actually teaches that believers should handle snakes.

The Lord did not declare that every believer would be able to do the signs named in Mark 16:17-18. We must not take verses out of context without regard for other Bible teaching on the same subject. Five "signs" are named in the text--casting out demons, speaking in tongues, taking up serpents, drinking poison, and healing the sick. It should be noted, however, that these signs were for the purpose of confirming the word preached by the apostles. Verse 20 makes it clear: "And they [apostles] went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." In Hebrews 2:3-4 we find that those who heard Christ (in person, the apostles) confirmed the teaching of Christ, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

Once while gathering wood for a fire, the apostle Paul was bitten by a viper without harm (Acts 28:2-6). Nothing indicates that this was intentional, however, and it was not in a church service. The fact is that there is not the slightest hint of any New Testament churches ever deliberately tempting God (see Matthew 4:5-7) by handling serpents, whether in wor-

ship or in other places. Those who handle snakes as a religious service have no scriptural authority. What is assumed to be their scriptural authority is actually a misapplication of the passage.

Snake handlers are somewhat rare. What is interesting, however, is that there are other sects that claim the other signs of Mark 16:17-18 without indulging in the serpents or poison. They make the same mistake as the snake handlers, of course, in that they think the promises of the text apply today. Because they fail to take into consideration the entirety of the New Testament teaching on miraculous signs, they do not understand that these things ceased when the Scriptures were completed. What is inexplicably inconsistent, however, is that while they claim the tongues and healing miracles, they reject the snakes and the poison. (Really it can be explained. They know the snakes and poison are dangerous!) If these are bitten by a serpent or accidentally swallow poison, they will seek medical attention. But if the miraculous signs are for today, why do not our Pentecostal friends claim all of them--not just the tongues, but also the serpents?

We do not engage in either snake handling or tongue speaking. This is not because of a lack of faith, but rather because we truly believe what the Bible teaches about the purpose and end of miraculous gifts. It is interesting that there is no specific statement regarding the cessation of the serpent and poison signs, but the Bible is specific that tongues would cease. Those gifts were necessary during the time when the doctrine of Christ was being revealed and the written word was being completed. The apostles knew, however, that the time was coming when those gifts would cease, while faith, hope, and charity would continue. "Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge [miraculous knowledge], it shall vanish away . . . And now adideth faith, hope, charity, these three . . ." (I Corinthians 13:8, 13).

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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SACRIFICE

"For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." (2 Corinthians 8:3-4)

Do we really know what sacrifice is? Consider this story.

Two well-to-do Christians, a lawyer and a merchant, joined a party that was traveling around the world. In Korea one day they saw a field by the side of the road; and in the field, a boy pulled a crude plow while an old man held the plow handles and directed it through the rice paddy. The lawyer was amused and took a snapshot of the scene. "That's a curious sight," he said to the missionary, who was their interpreter and guide.

"Yes," was the reply. "That's the family of Chi

Noui. When the church building was built, they were eager to give something, but they had no money; so they sold the only ox they had and gave the money to the church. This spring they are pulling the plow themselves."

The lawyer and the businessman were silent for moments. Then the businessman said, "That must have been a real sacrifice."

"They did not call it that," said the missionary. "They thought it was fortunate they had an ox to sell."

The two tourists did not have much to say, but when they reached home, the lawyer took the picture to his minister and told him about the incident. "I want to double my contribution to the church," he said. "And give me some work to do. I have never known what sacrifice for the Lord really means. I am ashamed to say that I have never given anything to Him that really cost me something."

SUFFERING: MYSTERY OR MINISTRY?

Roger Johnson

One of the "hard to be understood" mysteries of life is the mystery of suffering. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the presence of so much suffering in the world presents great moral and ethical problems. The question often pondered is, "If God is omnipotent and full of love, why does He allow so much suffering in the world? Why doesn't He alleviate the problem by exercising compassionate power over the causes of suffering?" Agnostics and atheists use the problem of human suffering as justification for doubting or denying the existence of God. No doubt many Christians have wrestled with the same questions since the child of God shares the sufferings and trials that are common to mankind. There is no immunity from these merely because we are Christians. In reality, sometimes we experience suffering and trials by virtue of the fact that we are Christians (see Matthew 10:25; John 15:18-19; Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 4:12-13; Psalm 34:19).

Rather than perceive human suffering as an incomprehensible mystery, the Christian should view it as an invaluable ministry. If God has a purpose in allowing suffering and trial in the experience of His children, what is it? Consider the following reasons why God allows us to suffer.

To prove the reality of our faith (1 Peter 1:7). God allows us to suffer to see if our faith is genuine. It is when

our faith is tested that it is deepened and strengthened.

To discipline and educate us. As a loving father disciplines his children, so God, by allowing us to suffer, disciplines us for our good (Hebrews 12:7-11). Through this process we learn the value of obedience (Hebrews 5:8).

To prove to us the sufficiency of His grace. If we are not careful, pride and self-exaltation will destroy our usefulness for God. Suffering humbles us and makes us dependent upon Him (2 Corinthians 12:9).

To make us long for heaven. While we should enjoy our earthly pilgrimage, God does not want us to so love this world that we lose our desire to be with Him in heaven. The pain and suffering we see and experience create a yearning for a place like heaven (Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

To qualify us to help others (2 Corinthians 1:4). One who has experienced trials and tribulations in life is in the best position to comfort the suffering.

The Bible says, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12). Let us not dwell upon the mystery of suffering but, by the grace of God, let us rejoice in the ministry of suffering.

PINNING HUMAN ORIGINS ON A FEW BONES DISCOVERED

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

On December 9, 1998, headlines were made in USA TODAY, and other newspapers as well, relative to a recent bone find in South Africa. Tim Friend authored the article for USA TODAY. The title was "3-million-year-old bones offer hope on human origins." The lead paragraph read, "The most complete skeleton yet of the distant human ancestor known as australopithecus has been discovered in a cave in South Africa and is expected to unlock many mysteries surrounding human origins, scientists report today." The second paragraph is equally revealing and revolting, "'We've got the upper and lower jaw, making it the most complete skull been found with a skeleton,' says Ronald Clarke of the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa." They date it as being 3.2 million to 3.5 million years old. Those elated with its find are ecstatic relative to its importance. Required will be more additional study before the full importance is ascertained. Before this find there had been the discovery of Lucy in 1974. Only 40% of this skeleton was found. They feel most fortunate indeed because this recently found one "contains foot and ankle bones from both legs and is the first to reveal how human ancestors walked more than 3 million years ago. (Is it possible that they might have walked by putting one foot in front of the other?) It also is the first to have an upper and lower jaw and upper and lower teeth." (Parentheses--RRT) MY, MY, MY!!!

MY OBSERVATIONS ON ALL THIS

Their age assessment is of interest and amusement. They throw around billions of years in seeking to ascertain the age of the Universe. Then they throw out hundreds of millions of years in seeking to determine the age of the very first forms of life. In human assessments of antiquity they throw around a few millions of years. It reminds me of something that happened in the eastern part of Tennessee many, many years ago. Bones of a very large creature were unearthed. It was ascertained that the bones came from a very huge creature, one much larger than any inhabiting that area. Scientists (???) were called in to assess the age of said bones. They estimated the age to be some 70 to 80 thousand years. Much publicity was given this find. The oldest citizen of the area heard about it and went forward with his own account. He said when he was a little fellow

a circus came to their area. In that circus was an extremely large elephant. The elephant died while there and they buried it in the very place where these bones were unearthed. The bones were not yet a full century of age but the scientists assessed them to have been 70 to 80 thousand years of age. I would say they missed accuracy just a bit! This current find is not any more accurate than this Tennessee find was several years ago.

We already know the origin of human beings. Moses wrote of origins in Genesis 1 and 2. He was not an eyewitness or an ear witness of human origins but all Three of the Godhead were. They prompted him to write how man and woman came about to be. God made man and woman as per Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7, 18ff. Jesus endorsed this in Matthew 19:4,5 and in the opening verses of Mark 10. In reality it was the Second Person who created all things, man and woman included as per John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17 and Hebrews 1:2. Even if we could find the bones of this really first man and really first woman, we would not know of their origin minus revelation--the Bible. Bones in a South African cave do not furnish us with the GRAND HOW of human origins. Revelation does this in Genesis 1,2. Since God cannot lie and evolutionists can and do lie with ease, is it not far, far, FAR better to accept what the God of truth says relative to human origins (Cf. Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2)? Time and chance did not form and fashion Adam and Eve; time and chance did not form and fashion the South African whose bones have now been unearthed. Time and chance have not formed the Universe nor any of the varied forms of life therein. Time is not our maker; chance is not our builder. God is!

Exodus 10:8-11 is an inspired commentary on Genesis 1 and 2. Moses, by Inspiration, affirmed, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is..." This allows NO GAP theory of millions or even billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The Universe is five days older than man; man is five days younger than the Universe. We live on a young earth--not a very ancient one. Man has been here just a few thousand years--not a few million. Genesis is factional; evolution is fictional. Why reject the former which is truth and accept the latter which is guesswork to the nth degree and then some?

WOULD YOU CALL A WOMAN A COW?

Clyde H. Slimp

Would you call a woman a cow? I hope not! But here's a fact: God did just that. In Amos 4:1-2 he issued this rebuke: "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring now, that we may drink!' The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness: 'Behold, the days are coming upon you when they will take you away with meat hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks'" (NASB).

Bashan, the most fertile part of Gilead, was associated with prosperity and animal husbandry (cf. Psalm 22:12). In this passage, the wives are compared to fat cows basking in lazy indulgence. They are rebuked severely for their selfishness and enjoyment of wealth gained by oppression. And while they were quite satisfied with themselves, God said meat hooks would be run through them and their families. Now *that* is a "reality check." There is often a discrepancy between what man thinks and what God thinks. God's opinion is the one that counts! God tried to startle them out of complacency and sin by using graphic language that would conjure up in their minds the horror of being hoisted up by a large fishhook.

He went on in Amos 4 to upbraid the men too, citing five examples of discipline intended to cause Israel to repent. God had caused them to be hungry, withheld rain, sent scorching wind and mildew,

sent a deadly plague and had overthrown Israel. Five times the conclusion is repeated, "Yet you have not returned to Me, declares the Lord." In due time, God brought them low for their sins.

We look back and are puzzled. We ask questions like these: "Why were they so stubborn? Didn't they believe God would follow through with punishment? God was so patient--why didn't they repent?" It just doesn't make any sense!

And we're right: it makes absolutely no sense. But examining ourselves is better than shaking our heads at them. They should serve to remind us that God still means what He says. He is patient toward us, not willing that any of us should perish, but rather that we should repent of our own sins and receive his blessings (2 Peter 3:9).

Our world needs to hear there is something worse than seeing your family carried off on meat hooks. Burning in hell forever is the only future most in our world can expect. God is being patient and offering salvation, and we must get the word out while there is time. We must consider ourselves as well, being honest when appraising our own spiritual condition. We know from the "cows of Bashan" episode that God will be honest, even when the truth is harsh and pointed. The truth hurts, in order that we may avoid the greater, eternal "hurt" of being cast away from the Lord's presence.

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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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Vol. 36 No. 11

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LESSONS ON LOVE

Johnny Ramsey

Paul was most explicit when he sent Onesimus back to Philemon as "a brother beloved in the Lord." He urged the master of slaves to treat the new Christian in such a way to strengthen and never to weaken him. The life of brotherly love demands our best always. Personal pride must be crucified and slain as we strive for the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

Years ago, when I was ten years old, I saw a brutal fight between two grown men in our neighborhood. One nearly killed the other. They were brothers and their hatred was so evident it was scary. The world about us must wonder at the reality of our religion when they see the enmity manifested by some within the Lord's army. Sometimes we show more zeal and intensity in pointing out our brethren's problems than in bluntly exposing the errors of denominational folk. Speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) will be a blessing to saint and sinner alike. Hebrews 13:1 is a powerful challenge: "Let brotherly love continue..."

Since Christ pleased not Himself (Romans 15:3), we need to esteem others better than ourselves, too. We dare not sow discord among brethren because of an arrogant spirit and stubborn attitudes or motives. Some folk are renowned for healing rifts and spreading joy while others bring chaos and unhappiness wherever they go. When we lived in Australia we read of a dramatic action on the famous Sydney Bridge. A man went there late at night to commit suicide but he saw another man about to jump to his own death. The first man, forgetting himself, pulled the other man back to safety. The newspaper headline was simply put: "TWO WHO DID NOT JUMP." The way of love is self-effacing and loses itself in caring for others.

Let us notice a few hindrances to love:

Gossip	Proverbs 18:21
Selfishness	Romans 12:15 (Reversed)
Jealousy	Proverbs 14:30
Shallowness	1 Corinthians 3:1

Now, for some aids to brotherly love:

Get to know one another	Hebrews 3:13
Practice hospitality	1 Peter 4:9
Realize our own sin	Psalms 69:5
Look for the good	2 Timothy 4:11
Remember Christ died for you!	1 Corinthians 15:10

The life of brotherly love never ignores sin or error, but it does look for the best and strives to never be suspicious, or one who delights in exposing others. We use correction to prevent souls from being lost and the cause of Christ from being hindered (1 Corinthians 9:12,16). We cannot ignore untruth nor dare we "pass by on the other side" as the Priest and Levite did in Luke 10 when someone was in need. Brotherly love causes us to "seek peace and pursue it" as 1 Peter 3:10-13 demands.

In Galatians 6, we read of the three bears:

Bear your own burdens
Bear your brother's burden
Bear the marks of Christ in your body

When we live the sacrificial and joyous life of brotherly love we will obey the enthralling ideals found in Ephesians 4:1-3. Notice the component points of this challenge in a section of Holy Scripture:

1. Walk worthy of the lord
2. In lowliness and meekness
3. Forbearing one another in love
4. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...

When this lofty message is combined with our steadfast commitment of presenting our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12) the angels of heaven will rejoice and the world will take notice that we have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All His wonderful passion and purity;
May His Spirit divine all my being refine,
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me!

The life of brotherly love transcends earthly woes, heartaches and tragedy. Such a sweet fellowship between brethren overwhelms earthly kin who care not for things eternal. Jesus said that His family was made up of those who do the Father's will (Mark 3:35). We inherit, in Christ, by brotherly love, joy unspeakable and full of glory (Mark 10:30).

FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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NOW I KNOW MY ABCs

Editor's note: the following is fictitious, but I am afraid it describes the perspective of far too many parents. It is written in hopes that readers will follow closely and grasp the subtle, yet crucial, issue.

When our son was born, we bought him a rattle and ABC blocks to develop his coordination. We encouraged him to crawl and then walk before he was ready. When he turned three we got him a junior golf set and hoped we might have Earl Woods' touch and raise a Tiger. For Christmas it was a Fisher Price basketball goal so he could slam like Michael. We signed him up for Little League at age five and spent hours working on his batting, catching, and pitching. Who knows? He might be the next Mark McGwire. We spent countless hours going back and forth to practice, to games, to the batting cage. After all, it was worth it--little boys need to be good at sports. At age ten he got his first rifle and after many hours in the woods, he killed his first deer. Boy were we proud! He started on the varsity basketball team in the tenth grade. In spite of our busy schedules, we attended every game, cheering after each score and making sure everyone knew that was "our son." He was in the starting pitching rotation on the high school baseball team in his eleventh and twelfth grade years. He even batted over .400 both years! You couldn't have found a mom and dad who were any prouder of their son than we were. He had turned into quite an athlete.

But we wanted a son that was well-rounded, so we took care to try and develop him mentally as well. To develop his mental aptitude, we bought him all the right "toys" that increase attention and comprehension. Hoping to create within him a love for books, we read him dozens and dozens of books. In fact, both mom and dad practically had every Dr. Seuss book memorized. Books before naps, books before bedtime--who can count how many hours we read? But it was worth it. After all, he had to learn to excel academically to survive in this competitive world. By age two, he could sing the entire "Now I know my ABCs" song practically in his sleep! He could read by age four, and far surpassed most of his

kindergarten class at age five. We kept a close eye on him throughout his grammar school years, making sure he did his homework and studied for his tests. We kept in close contact with his teachers by attending every PTO meeting and going to every open house. Our efforts paid off, though. He made almost straight A's in every subject, joined the Beta club in his sophomore year, and was invited to join the Honor Society his junior year. At that induction ceremony, we were so tremendously proud of our "little boy." He was chosen to be included in the prestigious *Who's Who Among American High School Students!* It looked like he was going to be a success. His academic record led dozens of colleges almost to beg him to enroll. We encouraged him and praised him when he was awarded a full academic scholarship to study at a distinguished university.

But that's not all. We wanted him to be a "church-goer," so we took him to church almost every time the doors were open.

Now our son is a grown man. He still loves sports and is teaching his son the same things we taught him. He spends most of his Saturdays either in the woods hunting, in front of the television watching ball games, or at the stadium supporting his team. Our son is also a very successful businessman. After his college graduation he accepted the best of several job offers and has climbed steadily up the corporate ladder. That grandson of mine looks like he's got a pretty sharp mind too!

My son isn't faithful to the church anymore. I wonder why?

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4; NKJV).

THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH 2:2-4

David R. Pharr

It is a thrilling study to compare the way the prophets portrayed the gospel age that would come after them and the way those things have come to pass in the Christian age. The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, giving fragments of the gospel picture "at sundry times and in divers manners" (I Peter 1:10-12; Hebrews 1:1). Their "divers manners" included figurative language and symbolic descriptions. What is couched in figures and symbols is no less true than that which is expressed in literal terms. Prophecies and their fulfillment are one of the evidences that undergird our faith. They show us the mighty hand of God in shaping history so that in the fullness of time God would send forth His Son.

Without the Spirit's guidance the meaning of the prophets would continue to be obscured, but the light of the New Testament shines brightly upon them, and we can now see what once was even hidden from angels (I Peter 1:12; cf. Ephesians 3:10).

One should exercise caution, however, in determining which Old Testament prophecies have a New Testament fulfillment. When New Testament writers make specific reference to a prophecy's fulfillment, we need not question it, but what about prophecies that are not specifically mentioned? When an apostle says, "This is that" (Acts 2:16), we can be certain that it is what he says. But what about prophecies that are not cited in the New Testament? In some cases we may remain unsure because of the lack of New Testament explanation. In other cases, however, the context and content will show the gospel significance. Such is the case with Isaiah 2:2-4 (and the parallel in Micah 4:1ff).

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 unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to 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. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

This points to Pentecost, the church, and the Christian dispensation. The church was in the eternal purpose of God (Ephesians 3:9-10). In Peter's second sermon in Acts he spoke of salvation that had become possible in Christ and said that "all the prophets...foretold of these days" (Acts 3:24).

All recognize that Isaiah was a Messianic prophet. The apostle John quoted from him and declared that Isaiah had spoken of Christ, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him" (John 12:41). In a book that has a strong emphasis on the coming of Christ and the Christian age, it is only reasonable to identify prophecies with New Testament fulfillments when they clearly fit. Few passages so obviously fit as does the text before us.

The time of fulfillment is plainly declared--"the last days." The "last days" and similar expressions were used by the prophets to mean the close of the Jewish dispensation and the beginning of a new order. Peter declared that the "the last days" had come (Acts 2:16f; cf. Joel 2:28f; Hebrews 1:2). The prophecy did not point (as many suppose) to a time later than our age, but to the gospel age. "Last days" (and "latter days") prophecies were addressed to Jews in the Old Testament. They referred to

a time future to themselves, not to a time yet future to ourselves.

The "law" going forth from Zion and the "word of the Lord" from Jerusalem are poetic parallels, which refer to the same thing. The "Law" is not the law of Moses because that law went forth from Mount Sinai, not Mount Zion. "Law," as used here, is another term for the gospel system. Hebrews 8:8-12 shows that the new covenant is the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:31-34, which speaks of it as God's "laws." Some have mistakenly thought that New Testament teaching against a legalistic use of law in some way makes law itself a negative. Notice how that Isaiah showed that people would "walk in his paths" because "the law" would go forth.

Isaiah said this law would go forth from Zion--Jerusalem. Now, notice what Jesus said about this: "Thus it is written...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46ff). The place where this was "written" was in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4. If one does not believe that Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4 are pointing to the beginning of the church on Pentecost, he will either have to deny that Jesus meant that this was something that was "written," or else find another prophecy to which He was referring. Jesus knew that the prophets had named Jerusalem as the beginning place and that this fact was significant. The church was established, therefore, at the beginning of the "last days" when the "word of the Lord" went forth from "Jerusalem" (Acts 1:8; Acts 2), and "repentance and remission of sins" was preached in His name (Acts 2:38).

Since the time and place of fulfillment are certain, other points of the prophecy must be understood consistently. "The Lord's house" and "the house of the God of Jacob" refer to the church. The church is the "house of God" (I Timothy 3:15; cf. Hebrews 12:22f).

The "mountain...established in the top of the mountains" suggests strength and endurance. We are reminded of Daniel's prophecy of the kingdom of Christ in the symbol of a stone that "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:25). The church is a "kingdom which cannot be moved" (Hebrews 12:28).

Unlike the kingdom of the old Covenant, this house would be open to "all nations" and "many people." Though beginning at Jerusalem, the gospel would go to the "uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The church includes people of all nations (Ephesians 2:11-18).

The peace emphasis in verse four does not point to a time of universal peace among carnal nations. Instead it shows the peaceable nature of the kingdom/church of Christ. This would be in the "last days," which included the time when Jesus said there would be "wars and rumors of wars" (Matthew 24:6f). Those who would "beat their swords into plowshares..." are the ones who would come to "walk in his paths." This is not the nations of men, but the kingdom of God. This is the point Christ made in John 18:36-37. The "gospel of peace" (Romans 10:15) brings "peace with God" (Romans 5:1) and peace between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:15-17). To spiritually sensitive people, peace among carnal nations would hardly be preferred to that peace which is in Christ.

The text is a prophecy of the church and the Christian age. Each part has gospel significance. There was nothing prior to Pentecost, nor anything promised for the future, that matches the requirements of the text. It is a glorious prophecy of a glorious church (Ephesians 5:27).

THE SALVATION OF RAHAB (No. 1)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Introduction

Rahab or Rachab is mentioned in Joshua 1, 6; Matthew 1; Hebrews 11 and James 2. A total of eight verses mention her by name. Rahab or Rachab derives from a Hebrew word meaning breadth.

In her we witness a tremendous transformation from harlotry to holiness, from impurity to purity, from paganism to piety, from unbelief to belief, from beginning faith to a blossoming-out of great strength, from associating with idolatrous people to fellowship with Jehovah's people and from condemnation to salvation. Had she made a different choice when the two spies first came to her home, we would have never heard of her.

Was she really a harlot or just an innkeeper?

In commenting about this woman some are determined to lift any stigma from her past. Adam Clarke is of this number. He viewed her as a "tavern or inn-keeper" or "hostess." He does not think the two spies would have gone to a house of ill repute or that Salmon, an Israelite, would have married such a person. The Hebrew word, *zanah*, used in Joshua 2 and 6 means "to commit fornication, go a whoring." The Greek word used of her in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 is *porne* and means, "one sold, a seller, fornicator." Brother Guy N. Woods said of her in his par excellent commentary on James 2:25 that she was "a prostitute, a woman who sold her body for immoral purposes." But this is what she was--not her present condition in Joshua 2 and 6 when she befriended the spies and was saved, along with her family, from Jericho's destruction.

Summarizing the Details Set Out in Joshua 2

Joshua and the Israelites were still encamped on the eastern side of the Jordan River. He sent two spies on a secret mission. They were sent to Jericho, the first city Israel planned to capture in Western Palestine. They crossed the Jordan and went to the home of Rahab the harlot. She concealed them. Jericho's king heard of their presence in his city and inquired of Rahab pertaining to their whereabouts. She did not reveal their presence. She hid them upon the roof of her house. In her conversation with them she conveyed her belief in the one true and living God of heaven and earth. She expressed the fears and dread of her people toward Israel due to what they had heard was done to the waters of the Red Sea at the time of the exodus and what had been done to the Amorite kings--Sihon and Og. Her statements reflect a growing, admirable faith in this powerful God of the Israelite people. She had exhibited kindness to them in their concealment and extracted reciprocity from them inclusive of her father, mother, brothers, sisters, their families and herself. The spies spelled out the conditions on which they would honor her salvational plea. All those had to be situated in her house. One house in Jericho was not as good as another house! The scarlet cord of thread was to be hanged out the window of her house. This was their way of knowing to spare this house when the city would fall. In addition to all this, she was not to make known their presence or their business in the city. She acquiesced. She gave them escape instructions, which they followed to the letter of the law.

They returned with their report to Joshua. It was a faithful and favorable report. It was very reminiscent of the faithful and favorable report brought back to Moses by Caleb and Joshua forty years earlier. Joshua might well have been reminded of such. These men had done what they were sent to accomplish just as Caleb and Joshua had done what they were sent to do--spy out the land.

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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 SALVATION OF RAHAB (No. 2)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

HER SALVATION WAS SECURED BY:

Her faith in God and in what the faithful spies told her. In crystal clear language they told her in Joshua 2 that it would be conditional in nature. They demanded that she not betray them and the reason they were in Jericho (v. 14). They situated salvation in a specific realm—her house (vs. 18, 19). Required of her also was the placement of the line of scarlet thread outside the window of her house (v. 18). The spies warned her that if any member of her household ventured outside of her house during the capture of the city, the salvation of that individual would be forfeited. It was essential that she believe all this; it likewise was just as essential that each member of her family submit to the same belief. In verse 21 she said, "According unto your words, so be it." Her remarkable faith continued to be remembered by everyone in future times who read the book of Joshua in general and its second chapter in particular. When the Holy Spirit prompted Paul, the probable writer of Hebrews, to write the great chapter on those wonderful worthies of tremendously great faith, Rahab was included. Hebrews 11:31 informs us, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not (were disobedient-ASV), when she had received the spies with peace." Hers was not faith only. Throughout Hebrews 11 faith is uniformly followed by a verb of action. In her case she received the spies. Action was involved in her reception of the two spies.

By her works of obedience. We know she worked in this matter. James knew she worked and he wrote in James 2:25, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and sent them out another way?" She worked in receiving the spies peacefully; she worked in their concealment; she worked in protecting them from the Jericho authorities under orders from the king; she worked in giving them instructions for a safe departure from Jericho, where to go, how long to stay and when to depart to the eastern banks of the Jordan. She worked in alerting

her family—father, mother, brothers, sisters and others—to seek the salvational safety of her house during the coming siege by the Israelites. She worked in making sure the line of scarlet thread was outside her window. By no stretch of the imagination was hers a faith only approach. Had it been the writer of Joshua 2 would not have penned what he did relative to her. Had it been neither Paul nor James in the New Testament would have used her as an eloquent example of one who coupled faith and works. Had hers been a faith only approach she and her family would have perished in the Jericho siege by Joshua and his army.

Joshua 6:22-25 shows she was both a woman of faith and of works. The quartet of passages reads, "But Joshus had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had, and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel. And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. And Joshua saved Rehab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho."

Did faith pay for Rahab and her family? Did works of obedience pay for her and her family? The questions are rhetorical; they contain their own built-in answers. Rahab could teach our faithless and disobedient generation much about faith and the works of obedience. In fact, she could teach many members of the church much about faith and works and obedience. The account of her in the Old Testament is among the things "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

THE SALVATION OF RAHAB (No. 2)
PERFECT—JUST LIKE IT IS!
"...TO WASH WITHAL..."

FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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PERFECT—JUST LIKE IT IS!

At the foot of Jamaica's Blue Mountains lies a beautiful river, flowing with clear, clean, pure water, called by the natives the Rio Grande (obviously not the same as the river in Texas). Some distance from there is a different type of river. The complete opposite of the other river, this one looks repulsive; it is sort of a sickly-green color with a repugnant smell. But the natives know this river also to be the Rio Grande. Same river, but different quality. What happened? The river started out pure, cool, and refreshing, but when man added his impurities, it became contaminated and useless. Interestingly, and sadly, a similar thing has happened in religion.

Nothing is as pure and refreshing as every word that comes out of the mouth of God (Psalm 119:140; Proverbs 30:5). God's inspired word 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). He revealed to us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3) and promised to judge us by the words Jesus spoke (John 12:48). In other words, it is pure and clean, sufficient as it is without any modifications. Yet many have taken the Bible and distorted it either by adding their own opinions to it or by taking certain portions from it. Either act effectively takes God's word and contaminates it with things that are not from God.

Many denominational leaders have distorted God's word by forming creeds—written documents that explain that religious group's particular beliefs. But why are they necessary? If they add to the Bible, then they have too much. If they take away from the Bible, then they have too little. If they contain just the Bible, then why do we need them? Since the Bible contains everything we need to know about how to live the kind of lives that please God, how to be "perfect," or complete, and perform every "good work," then why would we need anything else? There is a principle throughout the Bible that

demands that we leave God's word alone. Deuteronomy 4:2 states: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." John writes: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19). The principle is, in other words, do not change the Bible by adding to it or taking from it. The person or denomination that does so is saying, in effect, "God, Your Word wasn't quite good enough—it needed just a few modifications." We must understand that God does not take such an attitude lightly. His Word is all-sufficient and inerrant. Anything we add to it or take away from it makes it impure and unclean. Yet...in spite of the serious nature of changing His Word, that is exactly what the denominational world has done. They have made God say what they wanted Him to say instead of what He said. This flippant approach to biblical interpretation has contributed to today's significant religious division. Why can we not simply take God at His Word and do exactly what it says—nothing more, nothing less?

A frightening trend is developing in some congregations of God's people. Some are forsaking the strong emphasis on patterning ourselves after God's word and instead leaning toward the innovations of those who are adding to and taking away from God's simple plan. The plea of the Lord's church has and always will be consistent: To avoid all creeds but the Bible. To do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names. To bind where God has bound and loose where He has loosed. To speak where He has spoken and be silent where He has been silent. In short, that means leaving the Bible as it is—pure and clean, with no hint of impurity.

"...TO WASH WITHAL..."

Eddy Gilpin

Having been brought out of the bondage of Egypt "with a strong hand" (Exodus 13:9), Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai in the third month of their journey (Exodus 19:1). While Israel was encamped at Sinai God delivered to Moses the law by which His people were to conduct themselves (Exodus 19:5, 6). This law contained not only the "Ten Commandments," but various and sundry other laws as well (Deuteronomy 5:29-33). At Mt. Sinai, Moses was also given instructions for the numbering of the people (Numbers 1:17-19). The number of able-bodied men twenty years old and upward, who were able to go to war, was 603,550 (Numbers 1:46). This number excluded the Levites, the infirmed, the aged, women and children (Numbers 1:45, 47-49). Thus, it has been estimated that between three and five million people departed from the land of Egypt on this eventful occasion. Yet another item which Moses was commanded to do was the constructing of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:1), together with all the furnishings to be contained therein (Exodus 25:10-40; 27:1-8; 30:1-33). Emphasis was given time and again that all these things were to be done precisely, as they were a "pattern" (Exodus 25:9, 40; 27:8). This "pattern" laid the foundation for the true substances, the actual items, which were revealed under the New Testament law of Christ (Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5). Thus, the need for precision on Moses' part can readily be seen.

As those items served as "patterns," shadows, types, there is in each of them an end result, a true substance, an antetype. Such a concept can easily be seen from a brief study of a few New Testament passages. In John 3:14 the Bible states: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." The Lord made reference to an occasion of rebellion by the children of Israel (Numbers 21:1-9). As a consequence of and in punishment for their rebellion, God sent serpents among the people. Those who were bitten by these serpents were doomed to die. Moses interceded on behalf of the people. As a result of this intercession, Moses was instructed to construct a serpent of brass and place it upon a pole. Upon its completion, all who had been bitten were instructed to look upon the brasen serpent. If they did so, they were healed. Jesus used this example as a "pattern" or type of His being lifted up upon the cross in order that mankind might be "healed" of sin. Hence, it is readily observed that the concept of

typology is indeed Biblically based. Numerous other examples of such could be given.

There are a number of shadows/types to be found in the Tabernacle and its furnishings. However, only one shall be emphasized at this time. Moses was given specific instructions for the construction of the laver and the placement of the same (Exodus 30:17-21; 40:30-32). It was specified that the laver was to be placed at the door of the Holy Place (Exodus 30:18; 40:11, 12). The laver thus rested in the Outer Court. The Outer Court of the Tabernacle is symbolic of the world. As only those circumcised (the chosen of God) could enter into the Court, so it is that the world is God's chosen today (John 3:16; Titus 2:11). Only the priests could enter into the Holy Place (Numbers 18: 1-7), which was itself a shadow of the church (Acts 15:16, 17; I Corinthians 3:16; Hebrews 9:1-12). Today, every Christian is a "priest" of God (I Peter 2:5-10). As was the case with the Holy Place, only "priests" (Christians) can enter into the church. The priests of the Tabernacle were given specific instructions concerning their preparation for entrance (Exodus 30:17-21). Even so, every individual who would be a "priest" (Christian) today is given specific instructions concerning his entrance into the church (John 8:24; Luke 13:3, 5; Matthew 10:32; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; etc.). Notice the foreshadowing of the Tabernacle specifics concerning this point.

Each priest had to wash in the laver before entering the Tabernacle (Exodus 30:20). Every individual who would "enter" (become a part of) the church must "wash" (through baptism) today (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:47). There is no other way by which one can enter "into Christ" (Galatians 3:27), thus into His body, the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23). More specifically, however, notice the instruction by God to the priests "to wash withal" (Exodus 30:18). Just what does this washing "withal" entail? How may it be determined (or defined) without the possibility of controversy?

One could determine a meaning for washing "withal" by asking men. Doubtless, if one were to take a poll of any number of people he could determine from that poll alone that washing "withal" means complete, thorough washing of all components of the object(s) or individual(s) under

Continued on Page 4

consideration. Would this not be the definition that most men would derive from the word "withal?" However, as should be the case with every Bible matter, one should not be concerned with man's definition of a word or words. He should rely only on God's definition. What, then, is God's definition (hence, the definition) of "withal"? Notice Exodus 30:19. Here, the Bible states that Aaron and his sons (the priests) were to "wash their hands and their feet." Thus, God's definition of "withal" is readily seen (i.e. their "hands and feet"). It can also be seen that a substitution of man's idea (definition) would take one beyond God's word; thus, in violation of it (Exodus 30:21). The consequence of such a substitution (as this verse states) is death to the violator.

Since the laver represents, or is a shadow of baptism, one should likewise look to God for the definition of baptism. As is the case with "withal," man would often give a different definition from what God would give. Man says that baptism is (or at least can be) a sprinkling of water on an individual or a pouring of water on an individual. Several prominent religious groups so teach. However, what is God's definition of baptism? If and when found, it should forever settle the issue. And, it can indeed be found. Romans 6:3,4 reveals that baptism is a "burial." Acts 8:38 reveals that it involves a going down "into the

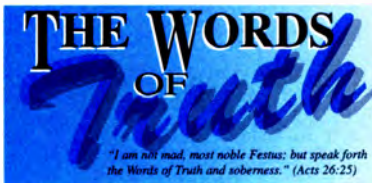
water." Therefore, God's definition reveals that baptism is a burial, an immersion, in water. And, as stated, when God's word is seen on a subject, any substitution by man involves a violation of God's law and brings the condemnation of God upon the violator.

It should also be noted that baptism involves more than the mechanics of an immersion in water. Although it is an immersion and water is the element, baptism also has design (the semblance of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ—Romans 6:3, 4), intent (salvation—Mark 16:16), reason (in order to obtain the remission of sins—Acts 2:38), purpose (to wash away sins—Acts 22:16) and result (puts one into Christ—Galatians 3:27). Man cannot substitute his own ideas concerning any of these particulars and gain anything save the condemnation of God. Immersion in water is essential to the salvation of one's soul and for his entrance into the true "holy Place," the church, the body of the redeemed (Acts 2:47).

God's plan for and the beauty of baptism can be seen even from Old Testament passages such as the aforementioned. His plan must be followed in order for its beauty to be realized. Otherwise, one is left merely with a human substitution, which brings about nothing but condemnation from the Lord.

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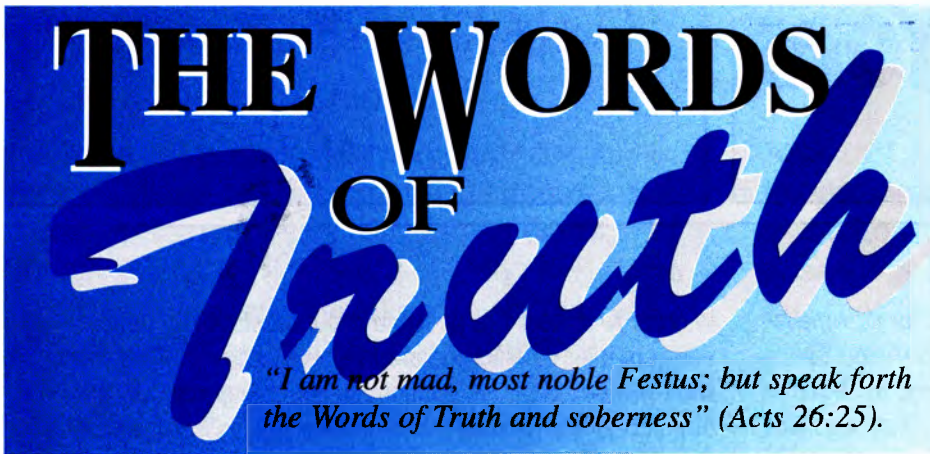
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THE SALVATION OF RAHAB (No. 3)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Later rewards of her faith and obedience

Initial salvation was not her only reward at all. She lost her home in Jericho, a city of pagans and idolaters. She gained a better home among the people of God who disdained both paganism and idolatry. Just subsequent to the departure of her and her family from doomed Jericho, they were left without the camp of Israel (Joshua 6:23). Yet two verses after the sacred scribe says that she was dwelling in Israel even to the day of the penning of this material (Joshua 6:25). In later years Ruth will marry into the family line that came from Rahab. Both of these women had much in common. Each came from a heathen background where idolatry was freely practiced. Each one married into the Israelite family. Each one was blessed with a son that would link with the Messiah's lineage. Each became a faithful servant of Jehovah and His Cause.

Allusion has already been made relative to Rahab's marriage into the Israelite family. We learn from the closing verses of Ruth 4 that Salmon was an ancestor of Boaz, Obed and David. No mention is made of Salmon's wife. But a passage in the New Testament tells us that Salmon married Rahab and by her helped to produce the Messianic line. Had she been faithless and disobedient as were her Jericho contemporaries, she would have perished with them; she would not have lived to meet and marry Salmon, an Israelite. Matthew informs us in Matthew 1:4-6, "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;..." Hezekiah and Josiah, two later kings of Judah who were great, good and godly, also came from the lineage of Rahab. She became an ancestress of many kings who ruled over the people of

God.

Of far greater import than David, Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah springing from her lineage would have been the King of kings and the Lord of lords coming from her family line. This would be the Mighty Messiah - the King over His Messianic Kingdom. The genealogies of both Matthew 1 and Luke 3 testify to the correctness of this momentous matter.

It is amazing what great good can come from wise decisions. She made the decision to receive the spies with peace. She made the decision to cooperate fully with them. She made the decision, like Moses before her, to cast her lot with the people of God. She made the decision to leave doomed Jericho and live among the people of God. She made the decision to adopt their faith in God. She made the decision to marry into the Israelite fold. She and her husband made the decision, with God's help, to have a child - a child that would provide a link in the Messianic chain of genealogy from whom the Messiah would come. Do you suppose down the line in later years she regretted giving up her lascivious ways in exchange for a life of faith, goodness, purity and service to both God above and her fellowman? Right decisions do not trigger regrets down the path of life. Wrong decisions do that very thing.

The decisions we make today will affect not only us but many others in years to come. That is why it is so imperative to obey the gospel as a young person, to marry well, to live a productive life and to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Decisions favorably or adversely affect life, death and eternity. Ruth made a great decision in Ruth 1; Rahab made some good and great decisions in Joshua 2. These two Old Testament women offer inspiration for each of us to make decisions that are wise.

FROM THE EDITORS

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DEAD OR ALIVE?

The Vietnam Veteran's memorial is striking for its simplicity. Etched in a black granite wall are the names of 58,156 Americans who died in that war. Since its opening in 1982, the stark monument has stirred deep emotions. Some visitors walk its length slowly, reverently, and without pause. Others stop before certain names, remembering their son or sweetheart or fellow soldier, wiping away tears, tracing the names with their fingers. For three Vietnam veterans - Robert Bedker, Willard Craig, and Barrall Lausch - a visit to the memorial must be especially poignant, for they can walk up to the long ebony wall and find their own names carved in the stone. Because of date-coding errors, each of them was incorrectly listed as killed in action (Larson). Dead, but alive...isn't that a perfect description of the Christian?

Before we became Christians, we lived self-satisfying lives. We did whatever pleased us - whatever fulfilled our needs. Our recreation, our jobs, our spare time - everything we did - was centered around self. But then one day we died. One day the gospel touched our hearts and we keeled over...as we submitted in obedience to the good news of Christ. Paul writes that when we "were baptized into Jesus Christ," our "old man" was "crucified" (Romans 6:3-6). We put him to death, buried him in that watery grave, and came out of that tomb a new man. At that point we became **dead to self**. As a result, we are no longer living to please self. We surrendered that freedom and are now willingly submitting ourselves as slaves to a new Master, Jesus Christ. Not slaves held against our will, but bond - servants who voluntarily surrendered ourselves to lives of service. That means that when our will conflicts with our Master's will, we do as He desires. That means that we have the attitude of Christ in the garden, as He prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). You might say we committed a kind of spiritual suicide...dead to self, but alive to Christ.

But another death is involved in the Christian live. Paul says that the old man is crucified so that "the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6). He continues by stating, "For he that is dead is freed from sin" (6:7). When we put on Christ we "died unto sin" (6:10). So not only must we be dead to self, but we must also be **dead to sin**. The apostle had just finished discussing the marvelous grace offered through Christ and how that although many "were made sinners" as a result of Adam's sin, many shall be "made righteous" through Christ (Romans 5:19). He stressed that the matchless grace of Christ could certainly overcome the effects of the sin of one man. Some of them might have responded to this discussion of grace by saying, "Well, we can just do whatever we want and let grace flow more freely! If grace is so wonderful and can cover every sin, why don't we just give it plenty of chances to work?" But,

in order to correct this possible misunderstanding, he answers their question before they even ask it. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (6:1). Does the liberty we enjoy in Christ mean doing whatever we please? "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (6:2). Having died to self, we must also die to a lifestyle of sin. As Christians we have turned our backs on the practice of sin, using our bodies as "instruments of righteousness unto God" (6:13). It certainly does not mean we are perfect, but it demands that we walk in the light, repenting of and confessing our sins as there is the need (I John 1:7-10). Dead to sin, but alive to righteousness.

Once we submitted ourselves to a new Master (death to self) and changed the course of our lives (death to sin), we also put to death one significant influencing factor on our direction of life: the world. Christians are **dead to the world**. Paul writes: "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 12:2). In other words, we do not let the world squeeze us into its mold. We don't let it dictate how we act. We refuse to allow the world to tell us what we need to be happy, to be successful, to be self-confident. We "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (I John 2;15). Our lives are transformed by the renewing of our minds, which is accomplished by letting God's word, the "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," be the influencing factor in every decision we make (Hebrews 4:12). That means we allow it to dictate the mate we choose. It serves as our "Marriage and the Family" guidebook. The Bible influences our career choice. It governs our work ethic. It guides us as we choose recreational activities. It is our acid test for all matters of right and wrong, whether moral, ethical, or spiritual. Our minds are completely renewed by what it teaches as acceptable, rather than by what the world holds up to be good or bad. In every aspect of our lives we allow a new set of values to guide our lives. Dead to the world, but alive to God's word.

With all this talk of death, some people might think we are rather morbid people. But that could not be farther from the truth, for we are alive and well in every important way. Concerning that which we serve, we are certainly dead to self, but we will live forever in our service of a new Master. Pertaining to our lifestyles, we are no doubt dead to sin, but we are full of a living righteousness through Christ. As touching our sphere of influence, we may be dead to the world, but our vibrant lives are guided by the living word of God, which will stand forever...Dead, but alive...the perfect description of the Christian.

WHAT IS "CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD"?

Eddy Gilpin

There are many profound utterances in the bible that have been defined and interpreted according to man's wisdom and not God's (1 Corinthians 1:27). The word of God says, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God...handling aright the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15-ASV). Thus, the word of truth can be handled wrongly since Paul admonishes everyone to handle it "aright."

One phrase that has been the target of such tenacious treatment is "calling on the name of the Lord." The phrase is mentioned three times in the New Testament. Twice it is used in a statement of fact and once in a statement of command. Those who mishandle the phrase and, thus, the command, inevitably do so by applying their own definition to the expression rather than allowing the Bible to express the meanings of the terms.

Many pass over the phrase lightly by saying that it means simply to call out God's name in some fashion. That is simply not the case. If a salesman were told to "call" on a client, he would not merely shout out the client's name. No one in his right mind would so handle such an assignment. Why, then, is all reason discarded as people so handle the same phrase in God's word?

Another might state that it means to "Accept Jesus as your personal Savior." This statement is a cancerous blight on our religious society. Nowhere does the Bible say "Accept Jesus as your personal Savior" - NOWHERE! Yet, men continue to use this conglomerate, catch-all clause as a convenient means of saying it doesn't matter what one does as long as he is "honest and sincere" and does that which resembles some form of some Bible teaching. Is this accommodative acclamation (which is not found in God's word) the answer to what "calling on the name of the Lord" has reference? Indeed it is not.

How, then, can the meaning of this phrase be ascertained? It is apparent that the Bible is its own best commentary. Man may and does err in his own personal assessment of spiritual matters. However, if one allows the Bible to be his guide in such matters, he need not fear following fallacy. Hence, the phrase "calling on the name of the Lord" must be so handled.

As was mentioned, this imperative is mentioned only three times in the New Testament. In

Acts 2:21 the scripture states, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The context of this passage is the quotation of the prophet Joel by the apostles on Pentecost. Joel declared this prophetically through inspiration (Joel 2:32). The apostles declared, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Thus, from that point on the promise was a reality. However, one cannot know what it means to "call on the name of the Lord" by looking at this verse alone. This is a statement of fact. It is not an inspired definition of what "calling on the name of the Lord" entails. To inject one's own personal idea of what this phrase means is to add to God's word and incur His wrath (Revelation 22:18-19).

Another instance in which the phrase appears is Romans 10:13. Here the scripture states, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Again, notice that this is a statement of fact. God's definition of "calling on the name of the Lord" cannot, from this one verse, be ascertained. One must look elsewhere.

The final occurrence of this phrase is found in the command given to Saul of Tarsus in the city of Damascus. Acts 22:16 declares, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Herein is a command given to Saul, but also to every individual who desires to be obedient to God. Here, also, is the inspired definition of "calling on the name of the Lord." It involves obedience to God through being baptized and washing one's sins away. Baptism is the culminating act through which one washes away his sins and calls on the name of the Lord.

Thus, "calling on the name of the Lord" (according to the Bible) is not "Asking Jesus into your heart," "Accepting Jesus as your personal Savior" or any other man-made, Bible-rejecting doctrine. God's definition of "calling on the name of the Lord" is being baptized and washing away one's sins. Complete obedience to the gospel is required by all (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 5:8, 9). The Bible refers to baptism as being that which: remits sins (Acts 2:38); puts one into the death (thus, the blood) of Christ (Romans 6:3, 4); puts one into Christ (Galatians 3:27); saves (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21); washes away one's sins, and affords his "calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

THE PARADOX OF OUR AGE

Levi Sides

We have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less common sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom and lie too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to our life, not life to our years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; we've done larger things, but not better things; we've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice; we write more, but learn less; plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait; we have higher incomes, but lower morals; more food but less appeasement; more acquaintances, but fewer friends; more effort, but less success.

We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication; we've become long on quantity, but short of quality.

These are times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships.

These are times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure and less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are the days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are the days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window, and nothing in the stockroom.

Indeed it is all true.

Think about it...read it again.

(Thanks to brother Neil Evans for sharing this challenging information.)

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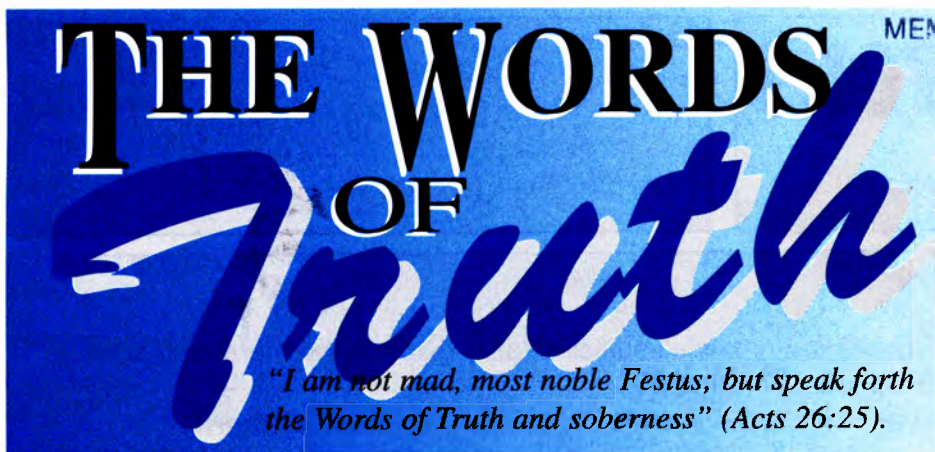
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Vol. 36 No. 14

April 8, 1999

THE SALVATION OF RAHAB (No. 4)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Lessons Learned

There can be no salvation minus faith. Rahab knew that to be the case. She had faith in the testimony she had heard of what God had done to the two Amorite kings - Sihon and Og. She had faith in what the spies told her. She had faith in the God they represented to her. She had faith in the plan they suggested for her salvation and that of her family. Her faith left a great imprint upon Hebrew history. This is proved by what the writer of Hebrews inscribed in Hebrews 11:31. She is therein listed among the faithful worthies of the Old Testament.

There can be no salvation minus works of obedience. Rahab knew that to be the case. So did James as he used her for an example, along with Abraham, as a person who coupled faith and works. From her initial reception of the spies with peace, in the hiding of them, in helping to secure their safe escape to the gathering of her family into her house wherein salvation was secured for each of them, we observe an eloquent exhibition of faith at work. There is no salvation for any of us minus works of obedience. There should be neither question nor quibble relative to this elementary truth of the New Testament.

Salvation is situated or located in the Lord's church for us just as surely as her salvation, and that of her family, was situated or located in the prescribed house. Salvation could not be found in the house where her father and mother lived; it could not be found in the house where her siblings lived.

One house was not as good as another house in Jericho. Her family might have argued to the contrary. But had they done so and acted accordingly, they would have perished with all the unbelievers and disobedient in doomed Jericho. One window in a house of Jericho was not as good as any other. The spies specified the window; it was the very one through which they had escaped. The line of scarlet

thread hanging out any other window would not have sufficed. One object hanging out of a window was not as good as any other object. It had to be the line of scarlet thread or the cord. One church today is not as good as another when the Lord's church is in the comparison. If manmade churches are the only ones in the comparison, I would label no objection to the oft expressed sentiment, "One is just as good as another." The Lord is coming back to save His body or His church as per Ephesians 5:23. All other religious organizations are going to be rooted up. As the inimitable Marshall Keeble used to say, "You better get out before rootin-up time!"

Salvation was in a uniform place - her house. There was not one house reserved for her salvation, another for her parents, another for her brothers, another for her sisters and another for any other members of her family. There was just one house, and one house only, wherein salvation could be secured when the Israelites came to capture Jericho - the house of Rahab the harlot. There is just one house in all the world today wherein our salvation from sin can be secured - the Lord's house, the church the prophets saw, the church Christ promised to build in Matthew 16:18, the one He did build in Acts 2, the one He owns and heads, the one to whom all the saved are added as soon as they obey the gospel and the one He proposes to save come final judgment day. For a surety this is where our membership should be placed initially and retained permanently.

Conclusion

We can learn much from this amazing woman in the Old Testament who shows in amazing fashion what faith and obedience can do in lifting one from sin to salvation, from paganism to purity, from harlotry to holiness and from degeneracy to dedication.

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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ALL AUTHORITY

Jesus had lived on the earth. He had been crucified on the Roman cross. He had been buried in Joseph's new tomb. He had been raised by divine power. Unto His witnesses He had given ocular, tangible, and audible proof of his resurrection. And now, before his ascension to the Father, Jesus says, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth..." (Matthew 28:18).

In the great moral and spiritual realm, Christ is supreme. In matters pertaining to religion, His word is final, His teaching alone should be heard. Unto His authority every work, deed, and thought should be brought into captivity (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Unto Jesus "all" **mediatorial authority** has been given. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). In the Christian era, it is the privilege of every child of God to go directly and immediately to the throne of grace in the name of Christ, without the aid or assistance of a human or angelic mediator (Hebrews 4:16).

Unto Jesus "all" **legislative authority** has been given. Since he has all authority to legislate or make laws for God's people, there is no such authority left for any man or any group of men. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Biblical instruction

is all-sufficient as a guide in the moral and spiritual realm.

Unto Jesus "all" **executive authority** has been given. He is the Lord of lords, and the King of kings. He alone has the divine right to rule and to reign in the hearts and lives of the sons of men. And since the risen Christ possesses "all" ruling and reigning authority, there is no such authority left for any man upon the earth or any angel in heaven.

Unto Jesus "all" **judicial authority** has been given. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). He alone has the divine right to sit in judgment on the souls of men and to determine their eternal destiny.

Unto Jesus "all" **authority over death and Hades** has been given. When the glorified Christ appeared to John on Patmos, He said unto him: "I am the first and the last, and the living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:17-18). Having "the keys of death and Hades," Christ has all authority over death and Hades.

Since "all authority" has been given unto Jesus, it is evident that no such authority is left for any man or group of men. Jesus has all mediatorial, legislative, executive, judicial authority and authority over death.

IMPORTANCE OF LOVING TRUTH

Johnny Ramsey

In 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, we come face to face with the urgency of putting God's will absolutely first in our lives. Nothing is more vital, precious and important than Truth. Jesus said in John 8:32 that this valuable commodity makes us free! When men have pleasure in sin and unrighteousness and develop an aversion or disdain for purity and Bible teaching, they set themselves up for strong delusion that causes them to believe a lie and be condemned. God will allow men to harden their own hearts when such spiritual fools are past feeling (Ephesians 4:19) with seared consciences (1 Timothy 4:2) and become

adamant in error (Zechariah 7:14). This is precisely why we dare not cultivate evil and error or allow Satan to get his foot in our door (1 Peter 5:8). Not even the first inkling of false living or untruth should be allowed to find lodging in our lives. We must flee immorality, abstain from evil and depart from iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19). Sin began with a lie (Genesis 3) and the Devil perpetuates his infamous cause through such nefarious schemes. We must, if we are wise, cultivate a longing loyalty for Truth and never compromise our principles or detour from the highway of holiness. If there is any truth on any subject - in doctrine, worship,

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IMPORTANCE OF LOVING TRUTH, *continued from Page 2*

morals or life - that we do not cherish we are on the verge of apostasy. May we long for Truth as the wild animal pants after water (Psalm 42:1).

Church Discipline

When all other means of exhortation and admonition fail to restore erring, wayward and indifferent members, the Lord has revealed the ultimate earthly arrangement to bring disobedient brethren back to the fold. In Romans 16:17, I Corinthians 5, Titus 3 and I Thessalonians 3, we are told to exercise church discipline to bring the wanderer back to the fold. First the apostle told the brethren in Thessalonica to warn the disorderly and later to withdraw from the disorderly! This is a military term that speaks of those who break rank or fail to march with the troops. Those who forsake the assembly fall into this category (Hebrews 10:25). There are many practical reasons for church discipline:

- (1) To warn the erring ones.
- (2) To bring them back.
- (3) To obey God.
- (4) To keep the church pure.
- (5) To let the world see the importance of

Christianity.

The last chapter of 2 Thessalonians also rebukes members who are lazy and indolent. The clarion call that says that those who will not work should not be fed proves that benevolence is not to be extended to everyone and Christianity deals with down-to-earth problems and challenges. The gospel is very practical. In view of the coming of Christ, which may come at any moment, we must be active, busy and fruitful in the Master's cause. The only way to be ready is to stay ready. Heaven is prepared for the prepared. Christ must be Lord of all or He will not be Lord at all!

Only truth can make us free as we carefully pursue a knowledge of God's holy word (John 8:31-32). Learning it comes first, but that is not enough. We do not really cherish the Scriptures until we put it into action in our lives (Hebrews 5:9). We cannot genuinely claim to stand up for the sacred text while we allow error to run rampant.

WHAT CHILDREN OWE THEIR PARENTS

Mark N. Posey

The parent/child relationship is very special. Virtually every culture, every society and every home is built on the ostensible truth and distinct idea that children are to respect and obey their parents. When this is absent, the culture, society and home will not survive nor exist scripturally. I certainly hope that all children everywhere will see the wonderful value of good parents. Therefore, what do children owe their parents?

1. Children owe their parents obedience. Paul said, "Children obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). Parents obeying children is unscriptural because God did not design the home in that way. Obedience on behalf of children is a command within the home, not an option. Paul places disobedience to parents in the category of sin (Romans 1:28-32). Children should obey their parents for it is the "right" thing to do! Paul uses the phrase, "this is right." However, a parent must be worthy of obedience. Children are to obey parents "in the Lord," that is, in those things which are consistent with the Lord and His word. Children must yield to the judgment

of the parent except where the parent contradicts God. Jesus was "subject" to his parents, which means He was obedient to them (Luke 2:51).

2. Children owe their parents honor. Paul said, "Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2,3). The word "honor" means, "respect." Paul is saying that there is a very practical reason for honoring your parents; you are promised a long and good life on earth because you will be warned of harmful things, bad habits, bad friends and bad decisions. However, honor goes much deeper than mere outward obedience. To honor parents means to love them, to regard them highly and to show them respect and consideration. It also involves financial support and personal care where necessary. While you may outgrow the command to obey your parents, you never outgrow the responsibility to honor them. Young people, never be guilty of disobeying or dishonoring your parents.

A DAY NOT SOON FORGOTTEN

James E. Haynes, Jr.

The portrait of Jesus hanging on a wooden, Roman cross hangs forever in the minds and hearts of faithful children of God. The echoes of His dying words mark the pivotal moment in the history of the world when the very Son of God exclaimed: "It is finished" (John 19:30). The innocent blood had been willingly shed and the expensive price for the sin of mankind had been paid. The Savior born to die had fulfilled His course. Shortly after this great exclamation the one at the foot of the cross would say, "Truly this was the Son of God!" Hence, a day not soon forgotten was eternally etched in the oracles of history.

Jesus, our Messiah, is a very unique individual. He did what no one else was qualified to do; He died for my sins. The great angelic hosts could not provide the necessary sacrifice. Ten thousand angels on ten thousand crosses could not do what Jesus Christ did for me! Hebrews 2:9 says, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." He died for the individual - He died for me. Certainly, this is a day not soon forgotten!

The effect of the cross is overwhelming. In addition to the removal of sins, the death of Christ causes Satan to tremble! Satan thought he had won the victory; however, he was sadly mistaken. For up from the grave He arose, He arose! No wonder Paul

wrote, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57). Satan was defeated by the worthy Lamb that was slain (Revelation 5:12). In view of the day not soon forgotten, Satan trembles!

There are truly precious promises to those that partake in the death of Christ. God speaking through Christ (Hebrews 1:2), has commanded the whole world to obey the gospel, to be born again (John 3:5). Upon being born again, the one obeying from the heart (Romans 6:17) is added to the glorious kingdom by God (Acts 2:41, 47). In the kingdom, the church, the child of God receives all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3)! Along the way we are assisted by Christ who is able to succor those who come to Him. Obedience continues to be required as the faithful child of God walks the narrow, humble, selfless trail to glory (Hebrews 5:8-9)! A trail that began on a day not soon forgotten.

This is just a brief look into a day not soon forgotten. The precious blood of Jesus Christ makes men and women free. Free from sin and ultimate death (I Corinthians 15:54-57)! The imagery of the innocent Son of God hanging between two thieves on a wooden, Roman cross makes me want to say, "What would I do, what hope would I have if I were to neglect such a great salvation?" A great salvation that began on a day not soon forgotten. Truly, thanks be to God for the victory that is found in Jesus Christ our Lord. May we never forget!

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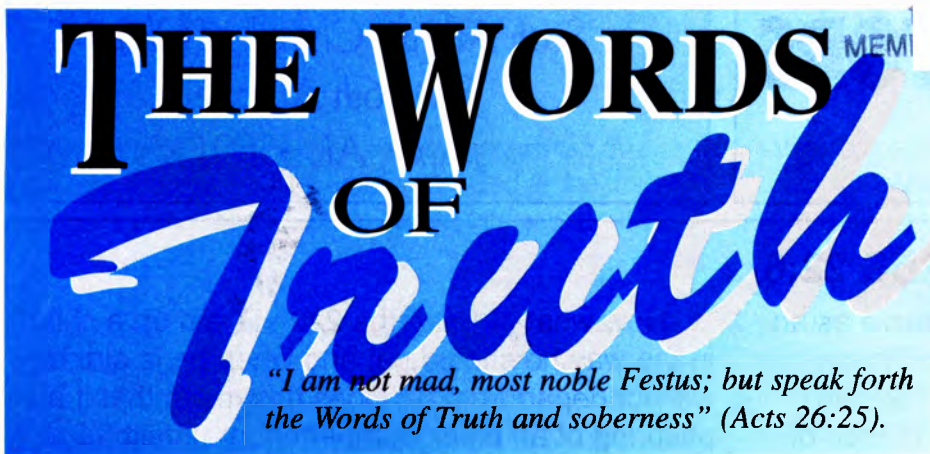
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Vol. 36 No. 15

April 15, 1999

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

LIABILITIES OF LIBERALISM
THE ELDER AND PROVERBS 22:6
NO HANDS BUT YOUR HANDS
THE COST TO BE LOST

LIABILITIES OF LIBERALISM

Tom Holland

Labels are means of identification important in communication. It is easier to label material objects and then identify those objects than it is accurately and adequately to label ideas, positions, or points of view.

Popular labels in politics and religion are "liberal" and "conservative." Because there are varying degrees of each of these labels a point of reference becomes crucial. Since we are concerned with religious labels, our point of reference will be the word of God. In the explanation of the "Liabilities of Liberalism" one should see the identification of religious liberals.

The first liability of liberalism is a limited view of God as revealed in the emphasis on God's wrath and justice. It seems ironic that appeals to accept God's grace would be made from Romans, because Romans says so much about God's wrath (Romans 1:18; 2:1-11; 5:9). Those with a true view of God behold both "the goodness and the severity of God" (Romans 11:22).

J. C. Macken in his battle with liberalism in the early part of this century observed that "the modern rejection of God's wrath proceeds from a light view of sin which is totally at variance with the teaching of the whole New Testament and of Jesus Himself" (*Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 131).

Contemporary authors Johnson, Hodge, and Luidens in an analysis of the declining membership in the Presbyterian Church said, "Lay liberals firmly reject the doctrine that God consigns anyone to Hell" (*First Things*, Vol. 31, March 1993, p. 16).

The second liability of liberalism is a distorted view of man. God should cater to man, meet his needs, make him happy, isolate him from pain, and help him to feel good about himself.

Dr. Larry Crabb has identified the problem in a book entitled, *Moving Through Your Problems Toward Finding God*:

Helping people to feel loved and worthwhile has become the central mission of the church. We are learning not to worship God in self-denial and

costly service, but to embrace our inner-child; heal our memories, overcome addictions, lift our depressions, improve self-images, establish self-preservation boundaries, substitute self-love for self-hatred and replace shame with an affirming acceptance of who we are (p. 17).

Jesus talked to men about taking up their cross and following him (Matthew 16:24). The old hymn says, "there's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me."

The apostle Paul challenged us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1).

The third liability of liberalism is a subjective and relativistic view of scripture as advocated in the so-called "new Hermeneutic." Instead of the old method of attempting to ascertain the truth of Scripture by contextual, linguistic, and comparative analysis, a new approach assures that a passage can mean one thing to one person, something different to another individual, but both are right! "Incredible," you say. Not if truth is relative and there are no absolutes. God's Son connected a knowledge of the truth with freedom from sin (John 8:32). An inspired apostle connected knowledge of the truth with salvation (1 Timothy 2:4). The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to use some interesting synonyms for "truth": "The faith" (1 Timothy 4:1-6); "good doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:6); God's inspired word (2 Timothy 3:16; 4:5); "sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:11).

Paul wrote about people who were ever learning but unable to come to a "knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

A fourth liability of liberalism is a narrow view of salvation. Man's salvation is viewed as an unconditional act of God. God's love, longsuffering, goodness, and grace are emphasized, but the necessity of man's response is either neglected or denied.

It is incredible that men will appeal to Ephesians 2:8,9 as proof that man is supposedly saved exclusively by God's grace, whereas Ephesians 2:8,9 makes salvation conditional. Salvation is by God's grace, but salvation is through man's faith. The faith chapter of the Bible, Hebrews 11, clearly demonstrates

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FROM THE EDITORS

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THE ELDER AND PROVERBS 22:6

The ability of a man, who would serve as an elder, is partially proven by his faithful household. "If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5).

He must have "faithful children not accused of riot or unruly" (riot or unruly = uncontrollable or insubordinate) (Titus 1:6). The point of both references involves the household of the elder. A man who does not exercise a healthy and controlling influence in the household would be a weak influence as an elder in the Lord's household.

It is certain that a man who manifests but little influence toward faithfulness to Christ in his household is not elder material. But what of the cases where elders' children naturally leave their father's household to form households of their own? Are we to judge the elder to be guilty or in fault when unfaithfulness, "riot or unruly" situations arise in other households? Is this a reflection on the qualifications of the elder?

Not necessarily. The Heavenly Father "nourished and brought up children" and yet "they have rebelled" (Isaiah 1:2). Does this reflect on God's ability and qualifications? Certainly not. It merely manifests that there are some situations in father-children kinmanship where the father is not in fault when children become unfaithful.

Now what of Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Does this mean that if an offspring of an elder is imperfect or unfaithful after leaving his father's household, he has been improperly reared and the father is proven to be disqualified as an elder? No. In the qualifications Paul does not make the father responsible for the acts of his children who are no longer in his household. As an elder does not have shepherd authority over those who are not in the local flock, so the father is not necessarily responsible for the misconduct of those not within his own household. If a man quits the church, severs his relationship with the congregation, or moves to another flock, the elder has no "rule" over him. Likewise when a son leaves his father's house to form another, his father no longer oversees his conduct.

Proverbs 22:6 is a general rule and is thus generally true. It cannot be understood in the sense of perfection. It has natural limitations. A Christian father will naturally teach his son not to sin, yet his son will sin (1 John 1:8). Proverbs 22:6 was written in a different setting and applied to a different situation than that involved in the instruction of Paul concerning qualifications of elders.

LIABILITIES OF LIBERALISM, continued from Page 1

that the faith that blesses man is the faith that obeys God!

Liberalism's assertion that salvation is wholly by God's grace poses an interesting dilemma: will all people be saved? If not, why not? Is God's grace inadequate? Does God not want all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)? So what is the problem? Did God arbitrarily predestinate the individuals whom he would save? How does that dogma square with John 3:16?

The fifth liability of liberalism is a denominational view of the church that "all denominations comprise the invisible church." How could that harmonize with Jesus' promise to build one church (Matthew 16:18), and Paul's inspired declaration that the body is the church (Ephesians 1:22,23), and that there is one

body (Ephesians 4:4) in which both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God (Ephesians 2:16)?

Liberalism gives many speeches about the love of God and the love we should have for one another. In the words of Shakespeare, "me thinks thou does protest too much." The hard truth is: liberalism does not love God (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). It deprives man of the blessing of God's love promised to those who obey Him (1 John 5:3). How much love is generated when friends are alienated, families are divided, and congregations torn apart?

Liberalism has too many liabilities for God-loving, respecting, honoring and Bible-believing people to embrace this enemy of both God and man.

NO HANDS BUT YOUR HANDS

Joey Sparks

(Editor's Note: The following fine article was written by one of our teenagers at Sixth Avenue and served as the text for his speech at the recent Lads-to-Leaders convention in Nashville.)

A little more than fifty years ago, the peacefulness of a quaint little town in Europe was ravaged by the devastating bombs of Germany. When the disastrous war was over, and the residents returned to rebuild their lives, they found almost total destruction. They saw factories, homes, and shops destroyed. As they searched through the rubbish, they found the remains of what once had been a statue of Jesus - the center of this religious little town. The townspeople quickly began rebuilding the statue, only to find that they had discovered every part of the statue - except the hands. Soon thereafter, they erected the statue in the center of the town square with a plaque beneath it, which read: "He has no hands but your hands."

What a perfect statement for the mission of every Christian! Think about it - "No hands but your hands"...When we were baptized for the remission of our sins, we became members of the church (Galatians 3:26-27) - the body of Christ - with Christ as the Head of the body (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23). When He was here, Christ's mission was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). But now Christ isn't here anymore, at least not physically. How is His mission going to continue? Will the lost be sought after? Will they be saved? We need to remember that as members of the body of Christ, or the church, we must carry the torch of the mission that He began. In other words, we must be "His hands." His mission, if carried out, will be completed by you and me. With this in mind, I believe the Bible sets forth at least three actions that must occur in order for us to be the hands of Christ.

First of all, we must study the Word. We can't go to church three times a week and attend Bible class regularly and hope to learn an adequate amount of information to teach the lost. Those are very important factors in learning what the Bible has to say, but we must make allowances to study God's word on our own. Peter commands us in 1 Peter 3:15: "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." We are to "grow in knowledge" (2 Peter 3:18), "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matthew 5:6), and "desire the sincere milk of the word" (1 Peter 2:2). How many of you have ever been around babies? Have you ever seen one that didn't let you know when was hungry? Of course not! It's in the very nature of a baby for him to want to eat. The same is true of the faithful Christian. He or she wants to "feed" on the Word of God. If we ever want to be teachers of the Word, we must first learn enough about it ourselves. We wouldn't expect a student enrolled in High School Algebra to teach a College Level Calculus class, or for a person uninvolved in athletics to coach a football team all the way to a championship. Just as is the case with these situations, how can we expect ourselves to teach others about Christ and eternal salvation without studying and learning the neces-

sary scripture given to us by God? We must study!

But it takes more than just knowing facts and verses, doesn't it? The second action in which we must be engaged if we are to be Christ's hands is that we must have the internal desire and excitement to teach it to others. Jesus states in John 6:45: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Anyone who comes to Christ will come only after he or she has been taught. As Paul writes in Romans 10:17, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The reason the early church grew so quickly was that every member took evangelism seriously. Luke tells us in Acts 8:4 that "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." A certain Mercedes Benz TV commercial shows their car colliding with a cement wall during a safety test. Someone then asks the company spokesperson why they do not enforce their patent on the Mercedes energy-absorbing car body, a design evidently copied by other companies because of its success. He replies matter-of-factly: "Because some things in life are too important not to share." You and I have something more important than a new design in automobiles. We've got something that's too important not to share. Are we sharing it?

The final and most important factor in teaching others the good news of the Bible is to live the word. Jesus Christ, the greatest teacher, both by word and by life, teaches us to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16). We are encouraged by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Notice that he says we are first to take heed to ourselves. We can't teach someone else something which we're not living ourselves. Living a faithful Christian life is the most important and most effective way of teaching what the Bible has to say to others. Edgar A. Guest stresses the importance of living the Christian life in the following poem entitled "I Would Rather See a Sermon":

I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day,
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely show the way.

The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear;
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear.

A fictional story is told of Jesus' returning to heaven after His death and resurrection. In a conversation with Gabriel, Jesus was asked by the archangel: "How are you planning to tell the world about the gospel and the salvation that is available to everyone?" Jesus responded: "I put it in the hands of twelve men, who are to teach others. Every subsequent generation will then teach the world around it. That's my plan." Gabriel then asked, "But what if that doesn't work? What is your other plan?" Jesus responded by saying, "I have no other plan."

We are His hands. We are His plan for seeking and saving the lost. Is it working?

THE COST TO BE LOST

Eva Nell B. Naramore

The cost to be lost is surely too great for the mind of man to fully comprehend, but if we do not "prepare for heaven," we will forever be in a place "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41)...there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 24:51).

The Lord said to Simon, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). We must watch therefore because Satan is as a roaring lion: "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Jesus is preparing for us a beautiful place. He said, "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" (John 14:1-2).

We must prepare for heaven by obeying the gospel, and continuing to live the Christian life.

The cost to be lost means that life on earth will be wasted without hope of life eternal in heaven, if we fail to fulfil our purpose. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God (Hebrews 10:31). "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). "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). It is not God's will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Read 2 Peter 3:9.

The cost to be lost means that we will never live any more with those we love so dear here on earth: Christians

and little children. There will be no more joy for the lost after this life.

We read in Luke 16:19-31 of a rich man: "and in hell he lifted up his eyes." We also read of a beggar named Lazarus: "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." The rich man, "being in torments," saw "Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." But he was told that, "there is a great gulf fixed," so that one could not go to the other. Then he asked that he be sent to his father's house, to testify unto them, lest they come to that place of torment. Abraham said unto him, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

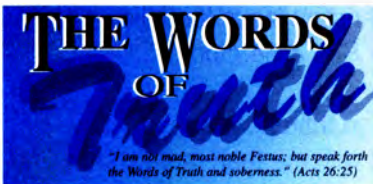
The cost to be lost means when the last breath is breathed, there will be no more hope. Time will have slipped away. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). "Behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

David knew the brevity of life. When he was in danger of being killed, he said, "Truly as the Lord liveth, and as my soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death" (1 Samuel 20:3).

If we obey the gospel as God planned, we have hope of eternal happiness. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

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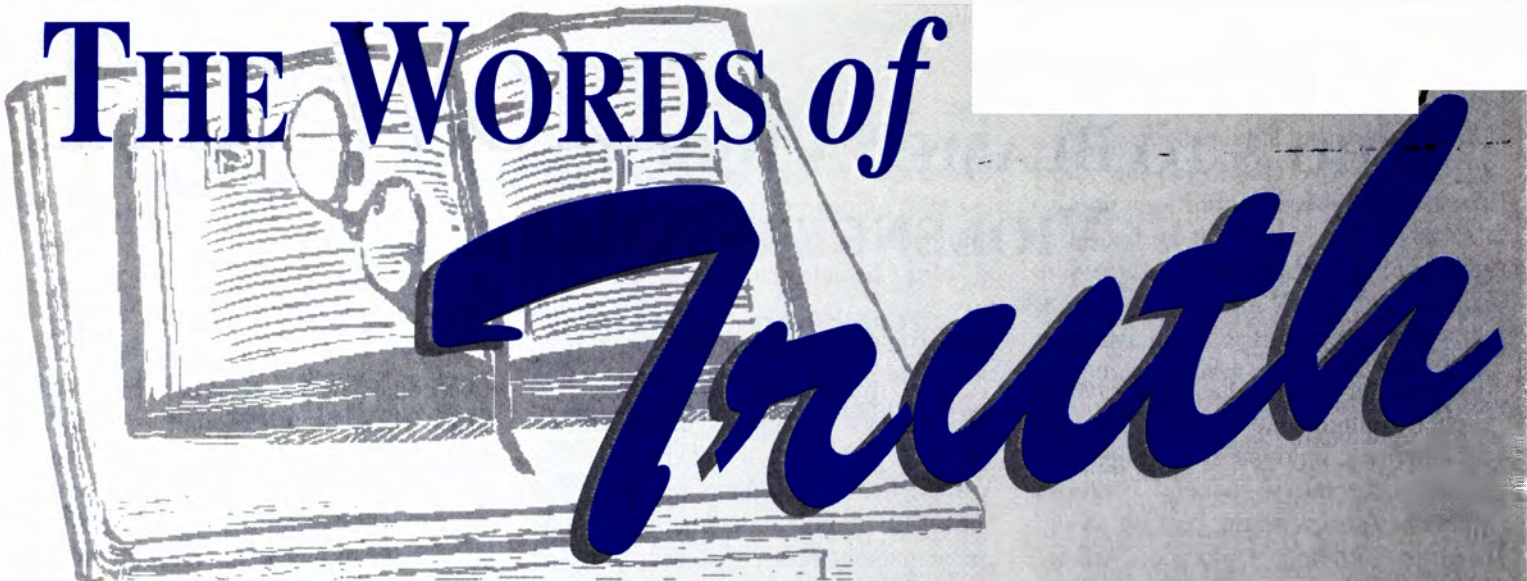
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THE WORDS *of* Truth

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

Vol. 36 No. 16

August 1999

The (New) *Words of Truth*

Chuck Webster

As you have probably already noticed, significant developments have occurred with *Words of Truth* since you received your last issue. We appreciate greatly your interest in this religious paper, and in this first article of the revised edition, we hope to explain the changes you have already noticed, and inform you as to what you can expect from us.

We commend you on your dedication to faithful biblical scholarship. Since 1963, the various editors, beginning with the highly esteemed brother Gus Nichols, working under the oversight of the elders of the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ, have attempted to provide well-written, thoroughly researched articles on timely, biblical topics.

Though the dedication to sound teaching has not changed and will not change, recent developments in the printing industry and in our brotherhood have created the need to make changes to the way we print and vend *Words of Truth*. Rising printing costs and the difficulty of finding printers who are willing to embrace the challenging task of printing a *weekly* publication make it difficult to maintain publishing *Words of Truth* on a weekly basis at a reasonable

cost to subscribers. Additionally, in the last few years there has been a significant rise in the number of excellent brotherhood papers that are available at *no charge*. These developments, taken together, necessitate a change. Two possible routes were considered: One, we contemplated increasing significantly the subscription cost of *Words of Truth*. Two, we considered changing *Words of Truth* from a weekly to a monthly publication, thereby reducing the costs considerably and allowing us to waive all subscription fees. This course would also allow us to increase the size of *Words of Truth* from four pages to eight, as well as to upgrade the quality of paper on which it is printed. After much prayerful deliberation, the elders of the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ chose the latter. Beginning with this issue, *Words of Truth* will be printed once monthly, will double in size, and will be available free of charge to all who request it.

We believe the above course is the best possible route to ensure the continuance of the storied tradition of *Words of Truth* and to help it influence

for good the greatest number of people. We hope that you will continue to read the printed articles as we seek to please God through the works of the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ.

As stated above, the delay you have experienced was caused by several factors. Over the past several weeks, we have been busy converting all printing matters from one printer to another, making slight changes to the appearance of the paper, as well as transferring our mailing list. But we are glad to say that we are now on schedule. You should receive your copy of *Words of Truth* at approximately the same time each month. Additionally, since we will begin personally managing the subscription lists, please contact us at the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ for all questions and concerns.

Most of all, we covet your prayers as we make this transition. We sincerely appreciate your support of our work. If you know of readers whom you think would enjoy reading *Words of Truth*, please refer them to us so that we may be able to influence more souls. Thank you for your dedication to God's truth, and may God bless you. WOT

WHO'S TO BLAME? A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

Chuck Webster, Editorial

It seems our country has been ravaged lately by unthinkable violence. The kind of atrocities that were in times past reserved for movie makers' contorted minds has struck again, rearing its ugly head in Littleton, Colorado; Atlanta, Georgia; and, most recently, in Pelham, Alabama. From young men who kill their classmates to disgruntled employees who slay their co-workers, these horrid acts have brought us to our knees as we cry out, "Why is this happening?" From D.C. to Hollywood, the question is repeated with increasing despair, "Who or what is to blame for these gruesome violence?" The fingers begin to point before the gunsmoke clears.

The blame that has captured the most media attention in recent days has certainly been directed toward gun-makers. The White House has called for sweeping moves to restrict the sale of guns and explosives, including raising the minimum age for buying a handgun from 18 to 21, limiting purchases of handguns to one per month and outlawing the possession of semi-automatic assault rifles by juveniles. Other gun industry groups concur. The NRA, in response, said the problem was not a lack of gun laws but lackadaisical law enforcement. Some agree with both sides, laying the blame at the feet of both loose gun control *and* lackluster security.

Others go a bit farther and blame the prevalence of violence in movies and television, citing a convincing epidemiological study by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* on the impact of TV violence (June 10, 1992). Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, naturally responds by rejecting any direct link between the increase in homicides and Hollywood violence. Along the same line, many see a relationship between the rising popularity among the youth of

violent, role-playing video games, in which the video game player puts himself in the role of a character who systematically slaughters anything that moves (including human beings). Video game manufacturers, of course, deny any responsibility.

But gun-, video game-, and movie-makers are not the only ones being accused. In a recent article in *USA Today* ("Good People Aren't Always Good Parents"), Karen Peterson cites a *Newsweek* poll that showed 70% of Americans cite a lack of parental oversight as a major factor in the killings perpetrated by our youth. Others suggest peer relationships as more closely linked to violent behavior.

Though the above appear to be receiving the most negative press, few are escaping this witch hunt unscathed. "Experts" point an accusing finger at a pop culture that glorifies violence, genetics, mental disorders, and educators. In the wake of the Littleton murders, some even blamed the parents of the other kids at Columbine--the teenagers who shunned these boys, belittled them, and made them outcasts.

It is terribly frightening and disheartening to watch our leaders recoil in the wake of these national tragedies. We see them search diligently for the culprit, leaving no stone unturned in their search for a scapegoat. But their search is in vain, for they are blinded by the society that shaped them. They cannot see the cause which is so evident; they are helpless pawns in the hands of the one who orchestrates these tragedies and who now laughs at the confusion and bewilderment that follows.

America's journey to Littleton, Atlanta, and Pelham began almost 3/4 of a century ago in Dayton, Tennessee. A twenty-four year old science teacher at Rhea County High School was persuaded

to become part of a court case that would result when he intentionally violated a recently passed state statute, which made it unlawful for any teacher in any educational institution supported by the public school funds "to teach any theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man descended from a lower order of animals." The famous Scopes Trial, better known as the "Monkey Trial," resulted. Though the result of the trial, largely a contest between two talented orators, William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow, was in favor of creationism (Scopes was fined \$100), evolutionists succeeded in painting creationists as pitifully ignorant and superstitious (Blackmore and Page, *Evolution: The Great Debate*, 1989). It was no surprise to many that the Tennessee statute was soon overturned, and evolution re-entered schools. . . . And we took one giant stride toward our present violent culture.

The removal of God from our schools, and His being replaced by the god of natural selection, is but a microcosm of what is happening in our country. For even though "the invisible things of [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen" (Romans 1:20), we have, like the world about which Paul was writing, abandoned Him and replaced Him with gods of our choosing. Read the following with horrified recognition of the applicability of Paul's words to contemporary America:

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to

birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 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 recompence of their error which was meet. 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, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Romans 1:21-32).

Three times in this text Paul uses the expression, "God gave them up . . ." (vv. 24,26,28). The idea appears to be judicial; that is, God's wrath "acts judicially to sentence sinners, and the first phase of that sentence is to just let the restraints go, and let them go the way of their own choices, turning them over to the uninterrupted course and its effect that their sinful choices will produce" (John MacArthur). Is it possible that God's patience with America is exhausted, and that He is allowing us to reap the consequences of our chosen path?

Once people abandon God, they struggle with an ethical moral system. What was once black and white becomes gray. Right and wrong become relative. The distinction between morality and immorality becomes blurred. Life is cheap.

Is it any wonder that a country now grounded in godless evolution holds life to be an expendable commodity? More than 1.5 million unborn babies are slaughtered each year in this country. Wayne Jackson cites several alarming beliefs of prominent Americans:

Sir Francis Crick, co-discoverer of DNA, has argued that newborn babies who do not pass certain genetic tests should be eliminated. Joseph Fletcher, the prominent "situation ethicist," contends that society is "morally obligated" to end the lives of those who are terminally ill. Dr. William Gaylin of Colombia University has suggested that the time may come when we will be forced to kill our elderly grandparents and/or eliminate some of our own children ("The Trashing of Human Life," *Christian Courier on the Web*, March 15, 1999).

When our country kills babies, argues for the legitimacy of mercy-killings, and speaks of a future where some of our less useful citizens may need to be "eliminated," perhaps it should not surprise us that some of our children who were raised in this life-debasing culture take what they have been taught one step further and kill those who have belittled them. Maybe we should not be alarmed when a daytrader becomes frustrated with his financial losses and bludgeons his own children to death. When we teach our youth they came from monkeys, why should it surprise us when they act like them?

Politicians, educators, and social scientists will continue their search, and, more than likely, they will establish significant links between something in our world and the violence we are experiencing. Perhaps it will be violent movies or video games, or perhaps it will

be the availability of weapons. Once they are convinced that the link is statistically valid, our legislators will respond by passing appropriate legislation that will be hailed as the "cure" for America's problems. . . . And they will fall woefully short. . . . again. Until our leaders recognize that it does no good to treat the symptoms--that the problem lies not in the availability of guns or even in the content of movies or video games, but in the cultural climate that removes our natural inhibition for violence by blurring the ethical standard. If we return to the standard that transcends our changing civilizations, the Bible, we will live in a world where right and wrong are clearly defined, and perhaps God will remove His wrath from us and allow us once again to travel the path of our forefathers.

Africa is home to a certain species of ant which builds extremely large ant colonies, some of which measure over forty feet wide and twenty feet high. The queen is housed somewhere far beneath the earth's surface, where she commands the millions of insects as they forage for food. The worker ants go out to distant places and bring food back to the colony. Interestingly, if while the workers are away the queen is molested, the workers, even though they are far away from the nest, become immediately nervous and uncoordinated. If she is killed they become frantic and rush around aimlessly until they die. Scientists have concluded that some kind of communication system between the queen and the other ants exists. If she dies, they all die.

Perhaps this illustrates well Paul's point in Romans 1. When man believes there is no God, all sense of orientation is lost, and he rushes around in a mad frenzy that ultimately ends in death. Our country has forgotten its Maker and as a result is completely disoriented. When tragedies such as the ones we have been experiencing strike, America rushes around in a delirium, pointing accusing fingers at everything but the twin culprits of infidelity and relativism. May God help us to return to Him and His word before the present madness ends in the death of our beloved nation. *WOT*

ACTS 2:38—NOT SO TOUGH

Wayne Jackson, Stockton, California

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The Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry maintains a web site that operates out of southern California. It is under the oversight of author and web master, Matthew J. Slick, B.A., M.Div. Mr. Slick is also an associate “pastor” and “elder” with the Wellspring Christian Fellowship in Escondido, California. [Note: In the New Testament, the titles “pastor” and “elder” represent the same role (cf. 1 Peter 5:1-2, where the verb “feed” (vs. 2) is a cognate form of the noun “pastors,” Ephesians 4:11).]

On his web site, Mr. Slick has articles dealing with a variety of topics. Some of them are commendable. Many of them, however, dreadfully distort New Testament truth.

Consider, for example, a piece titled, “Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation?” The author succinctly replies: “The answer is a simple, ‘No.’” He then addresses what he describes as “some of those verses that are commonly used to support the idea that baptism is necessary to salvation.”

We will not take the time at this point to review Mr. Slick’s entire article. Our attention will be confined to his discussion of Acts 2:38. He begins by quoting the passage:

Peter replied, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Our friend then muses: “This verse is a tough one.” It’s not so “tough”—unless one already has his mind abused with the notion that baptism *cannot* be a condition in the plan of redemption.

The gentleman continues: “It seems to say that baptism is a part of salvation.” It doesn’t “seem” to say it; it *actually* says it. He opines that this cannot be the case, though, for such a conclusion would contradict other scriptures. Our friend then seeks to employ a rather time-worn evasion in defense of his position—although his version of it may suggest that he really does not understand the nature of the original argument.

Mr. Slick attempts to sever the connection between the verbs “repent”

and “be baptized” (even though they are connected by the coordinate “and”) on the ground that the former term is plural in number, while the latter is singular.

According to him the sense would seem to be: “Repent [plural] for the forgiveness of your [plural] sins, and [separate from the foregoing] each of you [singular] get baptized [as a now-saved person].”

The gentleman appears to think that simply because there is a change in grammatical number, this somehow has disassociated baptism from repentance, and therefore distanced it from the phrase, “for the forgiveness of sins.”

This is a debate quibble hoary with age. It was ineffectively employed by Ben N. Bogard in his discussion with N.B. Hardeman more than sixty years ago. The eloquent Hardeman demolished the argument!

First of all, let us focus again on the *motive* behind this argument. Here is the difficulty for Mr. Slick and others of his theological persuasion.

The two commands, “repent” and “be baptized,” are joined by the conjunction “and.” It follows that if repentance is essential to salvation, so also is baptism. On the other hand, if baptism may be dismissed, repentance may be as well.

Since Protestants have already determined in their minds that baptism *cannot* be a requisite for salvation but that repentance is essential, this passage obviously “troubles” them.

Their challenge, therefore, is this: How may one divorce the obligation to “repent” from the command “be baptized” in this passage?

The above-stated grammatical contortion, based upon the differing verbal “numbers,” is their solution.

However, the argument is futile. It is a fundamental form of grammatical construction that a group may be addressed with a general command; and then, as a matter of emphasis, a second injunction may be issued to each individual within the group—both commands being equally obligatory.

Here is an example of this construction we hear frequently: “All

who are departing for San Francisco, approach Gate 3; each of you must have his ticket available for the agent.”

Let me follow up on this in a couple of ways. Several years ago I wrote a letter to F.W. Gingrich, co-translator, along with William Arndt, of the highly-respected *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957). This is the most authoritative Greek lexicon extant in the English language. The letter, dated February 12, 1968, inquired as follows:

Dear Professor Gingrich: Is it grammatically possible that the phrase “for the remission of sins,” in Acts 2:38, expresses the force of both verbs, “repent ye” and “be baptized each one of you,” even though these verbs differ in both person and number?

From Albright College, Reading, Pennsylvania (February 21, 1968), Gingrich replied:

Yes. The difference between *metanoesate* [repent] and *baptistheto* [be baptized] is simply that in the first instance, the people are viewed together in the plural, while in the second the emphasis is on each individual.

No credence can be given to the sort of argument made by Mr. Slick. But, as indicated above, some religionists—particularly our Baptist neighbors—have argued this position for years. In reality, though, they’ve been notoriously inconsistent.

I have before me at this moment a copy of the *Church Manual Designed For The Use Of Baptist Churches*, by J.M. Pendleton (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1955). In a segment which addresses the “subjects” who are appropriate candidates for baptism, Pendleton was attempting to explain why baptism *may not* be administered in the case of infants. In a consideration of Acts 2:38, he wrote:

The gospel was preached, the people were pierced to the heart, and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we

do?” Peter replied, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you.” No man will say that the command “Repent,” is applicable to infants, and it is certain the *same persons* [emp. added here] were called on to *repent and be baptized* (p. 84).

Pendleton’s concession completely devastates the argument of his Baptist colleagues.

But consider this additional statement from Mr. Slick, the director of the Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry:

Repentance is a mark of salvation because it is granted by God (2

Timothy 2:25) and is given to believers only. In this context, only the regenerated, repentant person is to be baptized.

A couple of observations must be made regarding this statement:

1. Repentance is a “gift” from God only in the sense that the Lord grants man the *opportunity* to repent (cf. Acts 11:18). That the sinner has the obligation to personally *do* the repenting is evidenced by the fact that he is *commanded* to discharge the responsibility (Acts 2:38; 3:19).

2. There is no biblical evidence whatever that “regeneration” is effected at the

point of repentance. That is Mr. Slick’s unwarranted assertion. In the text under consideration, “forgiveness of sins” *follows both* repentance and immersion; it does not precede either of these commands. The gentleman is simply wrong about this matter.

Our friend’s desire to defend the integrity of the Scriptures in various areas of apologetics is commendable. However, his egregious perversion of the divine plan of salvation undermines an otherwise noble effort. We can only hope he will restudy his position on the plan of redemption. WOT

ELIZABETH, THE MOTHER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

David R. Pharr, Rock Hill, South Carolina

The only specific information we have regarding the mother of John the Baptist is contained in the first chapter of Luke. Elizabeth was the wife of the priest Zacharias and was herself descended from Aaron. This was a righteous couple, “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (v. 6). They were no longer young and the sad disappointment of their marriage was that they were childless “because Elizabeth was barren” (v. 7).

The angel Gabriel informed Zacharias that his wife would bear him a son, that he would be named John, and that he would prepare the way for the Lord. In view of his age and the age of his wife, he doubted that such could be possible. But the angel confirmed the promise by making him unable to speak until it was fulfilled (vv. 6-22).

During the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, the same angel appeared to Mary to announce the conception and birth of Jesus. These women were kinswomen and very soon Mary traveled from Galilee to Judea to visit Elizabeth. Immediately upon her arrival, Elizabeth’s child “leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.” She then shouted a blessing on Mary, recognizing that she would be the mother of the Lord (vv. 39-45).

When Elizabeth delivered her son and it was time to name him, she insisted that his name should be John. This was the name given by the angel, but it seemed

strange to those who were present because it was not a family name. But when Zacharias was asked, he wrote on a tablet, “His name is John,” and immediately his speech was restored (57-65).

Though information about Elizabeth is limited, we can know enough to see that she was a very special woman and an example for others. Here are four points to remember.

She came to her marriage as a pure virgin. Zacharias and Elizabeth followed the commandments of the Lord blameless (v. 6) and this would have included instructions regarding marriage. There were specific requirements in the law that a priest was not to marry a widow, a divorcee, a profane woman, or a harlot (Leviticus 21:13-15). Elizabeth could never have married so well, nor would she have become the mother of the one of whom it was said there was none greater, if she had not kept herself pure.

She accepted life’s disappointments with prayer. It was felt that being childless was a “reproach.” Wives without children were thought to be failures (compare the case of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:11). But she held no bitterness against God. Specific reference is made to Zacharias’ prayer (v. 13). When at last she conceived a child, Elizabeth recognized that it was because “the Lord hath dealt with me” (v. 25).

She felt no envy over honor given to another. She understood that Mary’s

child would be “my Lord” (vv. 42-45). No doubt Zacharias had told her that their son’s life work would be to prepare the way for Christ. Elizabeth’s son would be secondary to Mary’s. There is a natural tendency for mothers to want and expect the highest honors for their own. Envy and jealousy often arise when one sees honor going to the child of another. Elizabeth recognized the greater honor being bestowed upon her younger “cousin,” but there was **no** jealousy, only the sharing of joy and thanksgiving to God.

She cooperated with the righteous wishes of her husband. He had been told by the angel that the child’s name should be John. Custom and the pressure of family and friends insisted on a family name. A lesser woman might have yielded to the pressure. But Elizabeth went against the crowd and complied with her husband’s wishes. Edersheim suggests the interesting possibility that at circumcision it was probably the custom to announce the child’s name by inserting it in a prayer of benediction (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*). If such was the case, and since Zacharias was unable to speak, Elizabeth may have interrupted their misguided prayer to insist, “Not so; but he shall be called John” (vv. 59-61). Such would have required courage, but especially faithfulness to her husband’s instructions and to the will of God.

WOT

THE NEW NAME

Eddy Gilpin, Salem, Virginia

“And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name” (Isaiah 62:2).

Newness excites us. The thought of receiving something new causes something to stir within us as we anticipate its reception. There is nothing quite like the smell of a new car. A newborn infant is the talk of his entire family. A new house is a source of great joy and comfort to its owners. A new job provides stability and the hope for a brighter future. Many things in this life cause a great deal of excitement simply because they are “new.” How much more should the things which will last beyond this life create excitement within us? The Bible reveals a number of things which are said to be “new.” Among the most prominent of these is a “new name.”

From the passage noted above (Isaiah 62:2), it can be seen that a new name was prophesied. Not only was it prophesied as being new, but it was also stated that it would be given by “the mouth of the Lord.” This fact alone reveals its importance and should cause us to desire a further examination into this very subject. As we do so, let us notice first the impact of this word “called,” as given in Isaiah 62:2.

The Hebrew word from which “called” comes is *qara*. Its basic meaning is “to call out; recite.” But, notice some other suggestions which can be applied to this word. *Qara* may be used to signify a specific name. “Naming a thing is frequently an assertion of sovereignty over it, which is the case in the first use of *qara*: ‘And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night’ (Genesis 1:5)” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*). This same idea of sovereignty is expressed in the fact that God brought the animals before Adam

so that he could call (the same Hebrew word *qara*) them. Man was to have dominion over all the animals (Genesis 1:28). Thus, the sovereignty of man over the animals is suggested in the fact that he “called” their names. In this same sense, God’s sovereignty over man is suggested in the fact that He would “call” His servants by a new name.

Another use of this same word is the calling of an individual or group to a specific task. Isaiah prophesied condemnation against Israel because she had failed to obey his “call” (Isaiah 65:12). That “call” suggests the responsibilities which were theirs, which responsibilities they shirked. In this same manner, the calling by God of His servants by a new name indicates, in the “calling” itself, responsibility on the part of the ones called toward the one who has called. Certainly the child of God is responsible to God. God has called him by a new name. The very fact that it was called “by the mouth of the Lord” suggests responsibility on his (the Christian’s) part.

Yet another use of this word is indicative of “sustained communication” (*Vine’s*, p. 48). In Genesis 3:9, the Bible reveals that God “called (*qara*) unto Adam.” As God had communicated with man, His creation, a number of times, this would indicate a continual kind of communication, a relationship. This same idea is expressed in that God would “call” His servants by this “new name.” Through His word, God is in continual communication with His offspring. He desires that we likewise communicate with Him (through prayer--1 Thessalonians 5:17). Thus, when God called this new name, within the calling of it itself, there is the idea of sustained communication with the one who would wear the “new name.”

Still another thought conveyed by this Hebrew word is that of a

summoning of someone or the mustering of an army (*Vine’s*, p. 49). In Judges 8:1, the word is used in this fashion. The men of Ephraim had a quarrel with Gideon because “thou calledst (*qara*) us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites.” They fully expected to be summoned, or gathered to the battle. In like fashion, in the calling of the “new name,” God summons us to join His forces and musters His army. One who takes upon him this new name so called by God becomes a soldier of the cross (2 Timothy 2:3).

Thus it can be seen that the fact that this “new name” would actually be “called” (*qara*) by the “mouth of the Lord” becomes significant when one understands the implications of that calling, inherent within the word. It conveys the idea of the sovereignty of God over man, the responsibility which comes with accepting the name, the communication (relationship) which accompanies the name and a summons to battle. It also reveals the specific nature of the name itself. It would be one given not only with God’s approval, but also by His authority.

The fulfillment of this prophecy by Isaiah is to be found in Acts 11:26. The Bible says “...And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Note that the word “called” is used in this passage. This becomes even more significant after having seen the significance of the Hebrew word mentioned previously. Some have contended that this “calling” of the disciples by the name Christian was done in derision by the enemies of truth. There are no grounds for such an assertion, as there is nothing contemptuous or deriding inherent within the name itself. Furthermore, the divine approval of this name is also seen in the fact that it is used by the inspired writers. In 1 Peter 4:16, the inspired

writer states: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

The phrase "on this behalf" is interesting in that, translated literally, it means "in this name." Again, the significance of the "name" is seen. One is to "glorify God in this name." In today's world, there are a number of individuals (women, in particular) who have begun the practice of hyphenating their names. Instead of Mary Jones, she is now Mary Smith-Jones, which is supposedly indicative of her being a more liberated individual. This same thing is done so many times in the religious world. One is not simply a Christian, but a "hyphenated Christian," this "kind" of Christian and that "kind" of Christian. Can such possibly be pleasing to God, the one who "called" the name "Christian" to begin with?

Can one possibly "glorify God in this name" when he does not even wear "this name"? Time and again, the Bible issues warnings against man's tampering with the word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18,19). Should this same prohibition not apply to tampering with the very name which God Himself has named?

The "new name" (Christian) comes without any garnishment or hyphenation. It gives glory to the Christ who died to purchase the pardon of him who wears His name. Its wearer is commanded, in turn, to give glory to God in the wearing of that name. The early disciples were called Christians; nothing more, nothing less, nothing in addition to it. This "new name" should cause excitement not only because it is

new, but, more importantly, because it was given by God Himself.

You can be just a Christian. Names extolling men, methods or movements are foreign to the Scriptures. By what name are you called? By obeying the gospel of Christ [through repentance (Luke 13:3), confession of His name (Matthew 10:32) and baptism into Him (Galatians 3:27) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)] you will become a Christian. What kind? you ask. Just a Christian; one who has been added to the church which Jesus purchased with His own blood (Acts 2:47; 20:28). Can that be said of the religious group to which you belong? Can these things be said of the name which you wear religiously? If not, these matters need to be corrected. We urge you to do so, and put on the "new name." WOT

TRUE WISDOM

Johnny Ramsey, Arlington, Texas

Friends in a wicked world urge us on to higher ground (Philippians 2:15). When we surround ourselves with those who have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13) we are indeed wise!

Good and honest hearts are absolutely essential if heaven would be our home. When we fail to love the truth of God's will we set ourselves up for eternal ruin. A careful reading of 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 will forever prove the essentiality of receiving with meekness the word of the Lord and viewing it as the apple of our eye (Proverbs 7:2). When men argue with their Maker concerning the commandments of Scripture that pertain to them, they are exceedingly unwise (James 1:22; Hebrews 5:9). In the Parable of the Sower in Luke 8 we indelibly learn that any other kind of soil is deadly. When we ignore the gospel or allow the cares, riches and pleasures of life to choke it out (Luke 8:14) we walk hand in hand with Satan.

Diligence in obeying **now** and not

delaying at all is another step away from torment and a positive step toward glory (Psalm 119:60). The time to obey (Hosea 10:12) is the moment we find truth. **Tomorrow** is the Devil's favorite argument because to be almost saved is to be altogether lost (Acts 24:25; Jeremiah 8:20)!

As strange as it may seem one of the greatest motivations for heaven is to consider the empty vanity of the Devil's mundane arguments. He has nothing genuine or upbuilding to offer. Broken hearts and dreams and lives are strewn across the path of his destructive ways (1 John 2:15-17). No joy, no hope, no purpose and no future sum up Satan's nefarious ways. Heaven is too sweet to miss and hell is too horrible to contemplate!

Romans 10:21 and 11:33-36 clearly tell us that if we are lost it will certainly not be the Lord's fault. His blessed Son invites all to come (Matthew 11:28-30), and the Bible provides the simple and

beautiful way of redemption (Romans 3:24). Several clear-cut examples of conversion are contained in Scripture (Acts 8:12; 8:26-39; Mark 16:16); so, if we are lost it definitely will not be the fault of the Savior. God desires that all be saved (1 Timothy 2:4) and that none perish (2 Peter 3:9). His grace, found in Christ (2 Timothy 2:1), teaches us (Titus 2:11) and should compel all honest souls to gladly respond with the humble words of Acts 9:6 . . . "Lord, what will you have me to do?"

There is vivid reality in the Bible doctrine of hell and also graphic teaching on heaven that is designed to cause us to spurn eternal punishment and press on toward a home in glory (Philippians 3:14). A merciful, heavenly Father warns us about the pain and anguish of everlasting torment and clearly depicts the joys of heaven because He wants us to be with the saints in glory on that beautiful shore. (continued on page 8)

To walk the golden street of that supernal realm will mean that I am a three-time winner. I shall have lived the best life on earth, missed hell and gained heaven. May we earnestly strive for the promised land and avoid the Devil's domain.

Someone has challenged us with this poem on hell. May its solemn words sink deeply into our hearts and minds. Let us so live that we will never hear the tragic words: "Depart from me, I never knew you!"

HELL

Hell! The prison house of despair, Here are some things that won't be there:
No flowers will bloom on the banks of Hell, No beauties of nature we love so well;

No comforts of home, music and song, No friendship of joy will be found in that throng;

No children to brighten the long weary night; No loving smile in that region of night;

No mercy, no pity, pardon nor grace; No water O God, what a terrible place!
The pangs of the lost no human can tell, Not one moment's ease--there is no rest in Hell!

Hell! The prison house of despair,
Here are some things that will be there:

Fire and brimstone are there we know, For God in His Word hath told us so:
Memory, remorse, suffering and pain, Weeping and wailing, but all in vain;
Blasphemers, swearers, haters of God, Christ rejecters while here on earth trod;

Murderers, gamblers, drunkards and liars, Will have their part in the lake of fires;

The filthy, the vile, the cruel and mean, What a horrible mob in Hell will be seen!

Yes, more than humans on earth can tell, Are the torments and woes of eternal Hell! (Author unknown).

WOT

The Words of Truth

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THE WORDS OF Truth

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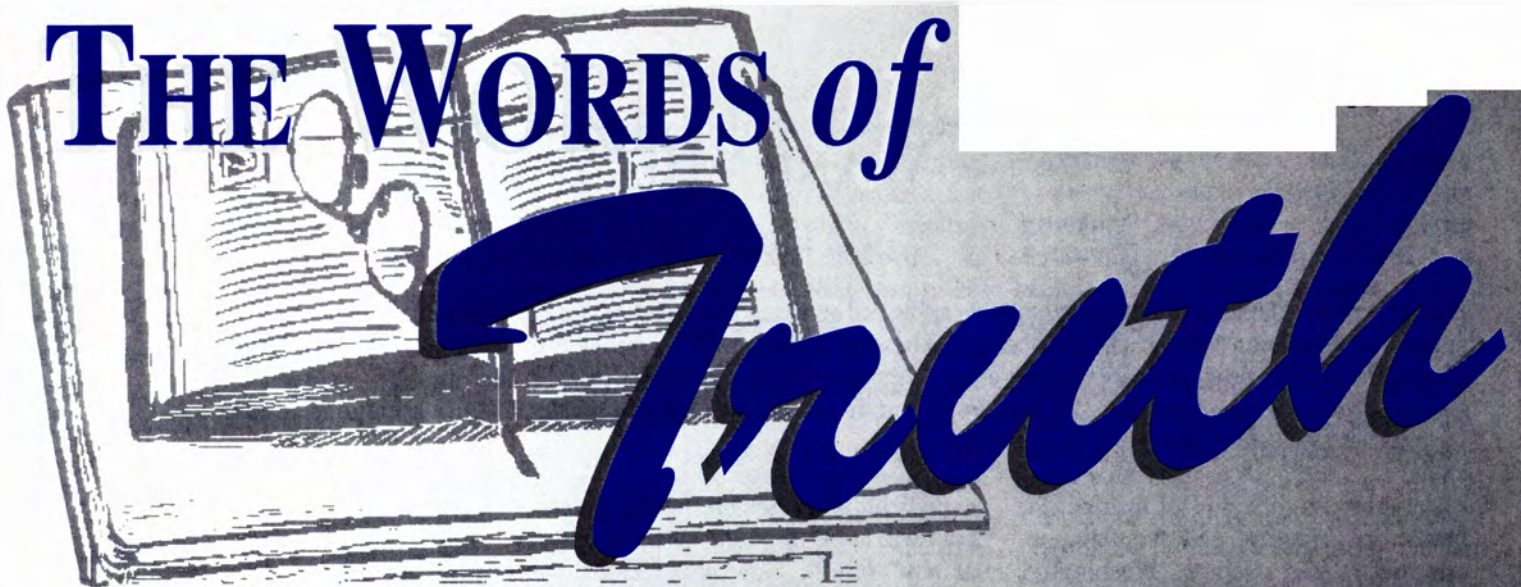
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"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).

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HE CAME FOUR MORE TIMES

Clyde H. Slimp, Adamsville, Tennessee

The elders of a congregation in Texas went to see a family who had stopped coming to worship. They expressed concern and told them they were being missed at church. The man explained that his wife had been sick lately. Then he added that they didn't have people over very often because they just "track up" the house. The elders knew he was referring to them, and left with heavy hearts. The worst tragedy of the situation was that their young son had recently been baptized into Christ, and their complacency would throw cold water all over his spiritual growth.

In the next ten years, that man came four more times to the church building. He came for his father's funeral. He was there for his mother's funeral. He attended his brother's funeral. And the fourth time he entered that church building was in a casket. It was his funeral.

To keep us from seeing a casket, Satan tries to shift our focus to our

carpet. If we are more concerned with the carpet getting dirty than we are with our soul being stained, then the devil has successfully riveted our attention on things of this world. John admonishes, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves 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 boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17, NASB). Carpet is here today and gone tomorrow, just a small part of a world that is passing away.

There is nothing that can be done with sheep who will not heed the pleading of their shepherds. But shepherds must continue to reach out in an effort to bring back the erring. All Christians must be faithful in the

task of warning their spiritual brothers and sisters when they are caught in traps of complacency, materialism, secularism and other lures of the devil.

In the work of exhortation, we must keep the closing words of James close to our hearts: "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins" (5:19,20). One visit could make the difference in the eternity of a family of souls. It is true that some will only come back for funerals, in spite of the encouragement they receive. Their final visit will likely be when they come in their own casket. But it is equally true that if we turn just one soul back into the fold, we will rejoice with him and with all of heaven on that day when we see the Lord coming in the clouds. *WOT*

WANNA BET?

Chuck Webster, Editorial

[Editor's note: Alabama state legislators have approved an amendment to our state constitution that would allow a government-sponsored education lottery. On October 12, Alabama citizens will be allowed to vote on this amendment. We believe that Christians should resist practices which are in contradiction to the Bible, so, with that in mind, we send forth the following thoughts for your consideration. We encourage you, if you are an Alabama resident, to use both your influence and your vote wisely in the next few days.]

“Gambling is the child of avarice, the brother of iniquity, and the father of mischief,” said George Washington. Benjamin Franklin wrote, “Keep flax from fire, and youth from gaming.” But, gambling proponents say, though these good men made direct statements against gambling, *biblical* writers and characters never directly opposed it. Such an argument is clearly flawed, though, for the Bible addresses many issues in *principle*, but not necessarily in *precept*. Gambling falls into the former category. Consider the following:

Gambling is addictive. In 1970, before the boom in racetracks, casino-building, and the proliferation of state lotteries, there were an estimated one million compulsive gamblers in this country. Today, according to a recent investigation conducted for the National Gambling Impact Study Commission (NGISC), some five million Americans are now classified as “pathological” or problem gamblers, while another fifteen million gamblers are in danger of slipping over the pathological edge. More than a million adolescents, ages twelve through seventeen, are severely addicted to gambling. The fallout touches more than sixty million family members, employers, employees, and friends of compulsive gamblers. There is something in the very nature of gambling that tends toward addiction: the winner becomes eager for larger wins, while the loser becomes desperate to recoup his losses (W. Jackson). Certainly the Bible clearly teaches that *anything* except Christ that brings us into enslavement is sinful. In 1 Corinthians Paul implies in principle this fact when he writes, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not

expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (6:12). How could Christians support any practice that consumes people’s lives and dominates their will?

Gambling violates the biblical work ethic. God has always honored and exalted work. In Genesis 3:19 God laid out the principle: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; . . .” “He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain *persons* is void of understanding” (Proverbs 12:11). Paul exhorted that man should “labour, working with his hand the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Ephesians 4:28), and that all men should work with “quietness” and “eat their own bread” (2 Thessalonians 3:12). Our country was built on the premise that if you work hard enough you can make a good, comfortable life in this great nation. Ironically, the same state that urges people to stay in school, seek job training, and persevere through hard work and sacrifice, also encourages the fatalistic belief that people’s lives can change dramatically if their numbers come up in the lottery (Mark Abramson). The Bible is really very simple in this regard: work to earn a living. Gambling directly contradicts that principle.

Gambling exploits the poor, young, and elderly. Listen to God’s prophets of old: “The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor *is* in your houses. What mean ye *that* ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the

Lord GOD of hosts” (Isaiah 3:14,15) . . . “Woe unto them that . . . turn aside the needy from judgment, and . . . take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and *that* they may rob the fatherless!” (Isaiah 10:1,2) . . . “If he beget a son *that* . . . Hath oppressed the poor and needy, . . . shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him” (Ezekiel 18:10-13). Promoters of gambling, however, violate God’s will concerning the vulnerable. They know that 90% of compulsive gamblers began in adolescence (*AAP News*, vol. 15, August 1999, p.7), so they have begun coupling casinos with theme parks to attract the youth. “Pediatric literature notes that teenagers are particularly susceptible to the immediate gratification and excitement that comes with gambling,” notes John Hill in *Theft By Consent* (p.15). More than 2.2 million adolescents are already either problem or pathological gamblers (*Estimating the Prevalence of Disordered Gambling Behavior in the U.S. and Canada*, Harvard Medical School). Gamblers with household incomes of less than \$10,000 bet nearly three times as much on lotteries as those with incomes over \$50,000 (NGISC). The Field Institute’s California study showed that just 18% of the population bought 71% of the state’s lottery tickets, and those who bet most heavily tended to be poor, less educated, and minority. In order to exploit the elderly, Maryland’s advertising industry went so far as to introduce a “Lottery on Wheels” campaign where gambling machines are actually taken to the seniors so they can play (this campaign was later abandoned because of opposition). The end result,

though, is this: Instead of assisting the poor and the elderly, gambling exploits them. It is the destruction of philanthropy. As illustrated above, God reserves some of His harshest words for such actions.

Gambling destroys families. Who would argue with the fact that the family is the fundamental building block of any nation? God Himself indicated that His creative work was not finished until the home was complete (Genesis 2:18ff.). Perhaps this pivotal relationship between the home, the church, and the nation suggests God's reasoning in making strict laws concerning the breakup of the home (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:3-9). Gambling interests, however, have little concern for the sanctity of the home. Among gamblers, family breakup and divorce rates are higher than the national average, perhaps because they squander all of the family's resources on their addiction. Paul wrote, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). When husbands and fathers bet, wives and children lose.

Gambling is built upon the sins of greed, materialism, and covetousness. The whole appeal of gambling is that we need more "things" in order to be happy . . . and that we can get rich quickly by gambling. Without this appeal to the covetousness of humanity, gambling fails miserably. Its very life-blood is idolatry. How many times has God warned His creation of the danger of covetousness, the catalyst of gambling? "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity" (Ecclesiastes 5:10) . . . "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" (Luke 12:15) . . . "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and

pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:9,10). Gambling is prompted by a spirit of discontent, the very opposite of Paul's inspired sentiments: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

Gambling is associated with many other sins:

- ◆ *Suicide* - A recent study in Australia found that 81% of gamblers surveyed considered suicide, and 30% attempted it at least once in a twelve-month period.
- ◆ *Violent Crime* - A Connecticut attorney says: "Central City, Colorado, had to more than double its police force after more than five casinos opened." The New Jersey Casino Control Commission Report in 1989 said that casino gambling is a magnet for street criminals, and they have had nothing but a huge increase in assault, rape, prostitution, and drug dealing. Las Vegas claims one of the nation's highest crime rates. Nevada lists the highest incarceration rate in the nation, and 40% of the felons jailed in Nevada are from out-of-state, indicating that states which operate gambling are simply inviting felons to enter their borders. In 1994, the FBI found that criminals in Las Vegas committed five times as many violent crimes as police were able to solve (the worst ratio of any large city in the United States).
- ◆ *Indebtedness* - One in every 66 households in Nevada files for bankruptcy--the highest rate in the nation. A study of financial liabilities accumulated by gamblers found that the typical addict is from \$53,000 to \$92,000 in debt. Gambling debts in New Jersey alone exceed \$514 million per year. This debt, in turn, pushes compulsive gamblers into forgery, theft, embezzlement, drug dealing, and property crimes. Congressman Wolf found that the insurance fraud directly attributable to gambling exceeds \$1.3 billion per year.
- ◆ *Drinking* - Nevada has the highest per capita consumption of alcohol in

the nation.

Could anything be *more* clearly opposed in every respect to biblical ideals than gambling? Paul wrote, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Ephesians 5:11).

Gambling violates the biblical principle of stewardship. Everything we have is on loan from God. "The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). "For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 50:10-12). The principle found in the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and reiterated often in Scripture (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:2) is that we must be good stewards of that which God has entrusted to us. Simply put, we will one day give an answer for how we have used everything God has given us, including our money. Can anyone argue that gambling is proper stewardship?

Gambling violates the Golden Rule. If none of the above were true, gambling would be sinful because it transgresses the highest standard of conduct ever given: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). One simply cannot gamble and wish the best for his fellow companions. As expressed in the title of a recent book, gambling is *Theft By Consent*.

It is amazing and alarming to note the rate at which our fellow Americans are willing to board the bandwagon of the latest fund-raiser, believing it to be the cure-all for our society's problems, from education to the economy. But even if gambling were conclusively proven to raise the funds its adherents suggest, Christians must remain firm in their stand against it. We claim allegiance to a higher standard and oppose all that contradicts its eternal principles. *WOT*

WHAT TO PREACH NEXT SUNDAY

Glenn Colley, Collierville, Tennessee

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, and motivational. As time passes in a particular congregation this becomes even more challenging, and demands deeper study. Some men may gradually lose 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, . . . ; 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.** "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" (1 Corinthians 15:1,2).
2. **Because the Gospel is for all people.** "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations . . ." (Matthew 24:14).
3. **Because we are obligated to preach the Gospel.** "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"

(Mark 16:15).

4. **Because every occurrence of the word "Gospel" in the book of Acts, the book of conversions, is about preaching the Gospel.** "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 8:25). "And there they preached the gospel" (Acts 14:7). "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 14:21). "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 15:7). "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 16:10). "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" (Acts 20:24).
5. **Because the Gospel is good news!** "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!" (Romans 10:15).
6. **Because the Gospel must be obeyed.** "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" (Romans 10:16). "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). "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?" (1 Peter 4:17).
7. **Because people become children of God through the Gospel.** "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" (1 Corinthians 4:15).

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

9. **Because preaching illuminates the truth.** "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" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

10. **Because there are some who preach to distort the truth.** "Which is not another; but there be some that 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 pleased 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" (Galatians 1:7-11).

11. **Because preaching the Gospel demands conviction of its truth.** "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Galatians 2:5).

12. **Because the Gospel offers men life and immortality.** "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" (2 Timothy 1:10).

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. WOT

THE GOD OF GOOD NEWS

Barry Grider, Austin, Texas

A few years ago, singer Anne Murray made popular a song that contained the phrase, "Sure could use a little good news today." Certainly all of us tire of hearing bad news. Just recently we have all bemoaned the unrest in Kosovo, the shootings in Atlanta and Texas, and the destruction caused by the hurricane on the east coast. There is constant concern over the economy, crime, moral values, and we yearn for just a little hope on the horizon. However, Christians should not despair, for our God is a God of good news. Even with regard to man's greatest problem, God has met him with good news. Sin is that which separates us from God. Isaiah declared, "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1,2).

Early in the dawn of human history, man violated God's will in partaking of the fruit which had been forbidden (Genesis 3:6). At that moment, Adam and Eve spiritually separated themselves from God. Jehovah would have been perfectly just to allow man to die and be lost in this sinful condition. God owed man nothing. Yet it was God who took the initiative to save man. While Adam hid from God, it was God who was seeking him. *The good news of the Gospel was preached that day*, for God said, speaking to the Devil, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). God had thus made a way for man's redemption.

The good news was also preached to

Abraham. In Genesis 12:3, the Bible records, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." How would all nations be blessed? Through the seed of Abraham, the Savior would come, Jesus Christ.

The good news was preached unto the shepherds abiding in the fields the night Jesus was born. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:8,10,11).

The good news was preached unto the Jews, even though they rejected it. Jesus the Savior, speaking concerning his Jewish brethren, said, "I am come that they might have life" (John 10:10). Again the Lord states His mission when He said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Yet John 1:11 tells us, "He came unto his own and his own received him not." Imagine the pain the Lord must have suffered, to go among His own kinsmen, with the greatest news the world could ever know, and be despised and rejected.

The good news was preached unto those in the first century. Even after the Lord had been slain on the cross, there was still hope for lost mankind. His death was that which made atonement for man's lost condition. Peter preached that good news in Acts 2, on the first Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection, when he said, "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" (Acts 2:38). The late great preacher N. B. Hardeman declared correctly, "to take baptism out of the plan of salvation is to take out the good news of the gospel." It is through the act of baptism that man can have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16) and be saved (1 Peter 3:21). The early Christians were so excited with this good news, they went everywhere preaching the Gospel (Acts 8:4).

The good news has been preached to those of us living in the twentieth century. Jesus said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). We should be thankful that the seed of the kingdom, His Word, took root and blossomed across this land of America; and that we have been the recipients of the blessings contained in this marvelous message. Through the preaching of men like brother Hardeman and a host of other valiant defenders of the cross, the good news of the Gospel has been declared among us. We should be thankful to parents and grandparents who have shared this marvelous message of redemption with us.

It is indeed sad that we become so distraught over the bad news in our land and throughout the world, and forget the good news concerning the salvation of our souls. Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). Christ wants to lift from us the only burden we cannot carry, and that is our burden of sin. Are you willing to accept this good news?

WOT

HOW TO PREACH SO AS TO CONVERT NOBODY

You don't want to be known as a negative preacher coming down hard on sin and making your hearers feel bad, do you? The world is too full of condemnation and stress as it is. What people need today is an upbeat message that reassures and gives some positive reinforcement to their lives. Here are thirty-six tried and proven rules that are guaranteed to keep the sinners in your audience comfortable and happy.

[The following is adapted from an article written by 19th-century preacher Charles G. Finney and published July 29, 1875. Some of the language may betray how many years have gone by since it was written, but preachers who follow these rules carefully can be as certain of converting nobody as were their predecessors of more than a century ago.]

The design of this article is to propound several rules, by a steady conformity to any one of which, a man may preach so as not to convert anybody.

Rule 1. Let your supreme motive be to secure your own popularity; then, of course, your preaching will be adapted to that end, and not to convert souls to Christ.

Rule 2. Aim at pleasing, rather than at converting, your hearers. Aim to make your hearers pleased with themselves and pleased with you, and be careful not to wound the feelings of anyone.

Rule 3. Give your sermons the form and substance of a flowing, beautifully written, but never-to-be-remembered essay, so that your hearers will say, "It was a beautiful sermon," but can give no further account of it.

Rule 4. Be sparing of thought, lest your sermon contain truth enough to convert a soul. Make no distinct points, and take up no disturbing issues with the consciences of your hearers, lest they remember these issues and become alarmed about their souls.

Rule 5. Avoid preaching doctrines that are offensive to the carnal mind, lest they should say of you as they said of Christ, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" and lest you should injure your influence.

Rule 6. Denounce sin in the abstract, but make no allusion to the sins of your present audience. Avoid especially preaching to those who are present. Preach *about* sinners, and not *to* them. Say "they" and not "you," lest anyone

should make a personal application of your subject.

Rule 7. Keep the spirituality of God's holy law, by which is the knowledge of sin, out of sight, lest the sinner should see his lost condition and flee from the wrath to come.

Rule 8. Preach salvation by grace, but ignore the condemned and lost condition of the sinner, lest he should understand what you mean by grace and feel his need of it.

Rule 9. Preach no searching sermons, lest you convict and convert the worldly members of your church.

Rule 10. Do not make the impression that God commands your hearers *now* and *here* to obey the truth.

Rule 11. Do not make the impression that you expect your hearers to commit themselves upon the spot, and give their hearts to God.

Rule 12. Leave the impression that they are to go away in their sins and consider the matter at their convenience.

Rule 13. Make no appeals to the fears of sinners, but leave the impression that they have no reason to fear.

Rule 14. Make the impression that if God is as good as you are He will send no one to hell.

Rule 15. Preach the love of God, but ignore the holiness of His love that will by no means clear the impenitent sinner.

Rule 16. Try to convert sinners to Christ without producing any uncomfortable convictions of sin.

Rule 17. Flatter the rich so as to repel the poor, and you will convert none of either class.

Rule 18. Make no disagreeable allusions to the doctrines of self-denial, cross-bearing, and crucifixion to the world, lest you should convict and convert some of your church members.

Rule 19. Do not rebuke the worldly tendencies of the church, lest you should hurt their feelings and finally convert some of them.

Rule 20. Should any express anxiety about their souls, do not probe them by any uncomfortable allusions to their sin and ill desert, but encourage them to assume their perfect safety within the fold.

Rule 21. Preach the love of Christ, not as enlightened benevolence that is holy, just, and sin-hating, but as a sentiment--an involuntary and indiscriminating fondness.

Rule 22. Be sure *not* to represent religion as a state of loving self-sacrifice for God and souls, but rather as a free and easy state of self-indulgence. By thus doing you will prevent sound conversions to Christ and will convert your hearers to yourself.

Rule 23. So select your themes and so present them as to attract and flatter the wealthy, self-indulgent, extravagant, pleasure-seeking classes, and you will not convert any of them to the cross-bearing religion of Christ.

Rule 24. Be time-serving or you will endanger your salary; and besides, if you speak out and are faithful you may convert somebody.

Rule 25. Lest your preaching make a saving impression, do not maintain a close walk with God, but rely upon your learning and study.

Rule 26. That your people may not think you in earnest to save their souls and, as a consequence, heed your preaching, encourage worldly expedients to raise money for church purposes.

Rule 27. Do not rebuke extravagance in dress, lest you should uncomfortably impress your vain and worldly church members.

Rule 28. Ridicule solemn earnestness in pulling sinners out of the fire, and recommend, by precept and example, a jovial, fun-loving religion, and sinners will have little respect for your serious preaching.

Rule 29. Cultivate a fastidious taste in

your people by avoiding all disagreeable allusions to the last judgment and final retribution. Treat such uncomfortable doctrines as obsolete and out of place in these days of Christian refinement.

Rule 30. So exhibit religion as to encourage the selfish pursuit of it. Make the impression upon sinners that their own safety and happiness is the supreme motive of being religious.

Rule 31. Make little or no impression upon your hearers so that you can repeat your old sermons often without its being noticed.

Rule 32. If your text suggests any alarming thoughts pass lightly over it,

and by no means dwell upon and enforce it.

Rule 33. Avoid all illustration, repetition, and emphatic sentences that may compel your people to remember what you say.

Rule 34. Avoid all heat and earnestness in your delivery, lest you make the impression that you really believe what you say.

Rule 35. Be tame and timid in presenting the claim of God, as would become you in presenting your own claims.

Rule 36. See that you say nothing that

will appear to any of your hearers to mean him or her, unless it be something flattering.

The experience of preachers who have steadily adhered to the above rules will attest to the soul-destroying efficacy of such a course, and churches whose preachers have steadily conformed to any of these rules can testify that such preaching does not convert souls to Christ. If souls are converted in congregations cursed with such ministry, it will be by other means than the preaching. WOT

GOD WILL OVERLOOK IT . . . JUST THIS ONCE

Todd Clippard, Hamilton, Alabama

Many Christians attempt to justify sin, particularly that of forsaking the assembly, by using the excuse listed above. When they have a family event, a decoration, or company in for the weekend, they forsake the assembly or stay at home to entertain, thinking to themselves, "God understands; He will overlook it just this once." Maybe a Christian has an opportunity to engage in what might be a "once-in-a-lifetime" recreational event (concert, ball game, a trip of some sort, etc.). Rather than seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), he or she rationalizes the situation, "God understands how much I want to do this. He won't mind if I miss Bible study or worship just this once." Is this the attitude one should have toward Him who gave His Son to die for our sins?

Jesus made perfectly clear what is to be our attitude toward Him and the Father, "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. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37,38). When Christians forsake the assembly, they set aside the cross they promised to bear when they obeyed the gospel. They also follow their own desires in spite of knowing what the Lord would have them do. God will not be relegated to second place in the life of the Christian (or anyone else

for that matter)! Any Christian thinking otherwise is in for a rude awakening at the day of reckoning and judgment. Don't fool yourself, there will be hell to pay on the part of those who act in such a manner.

In addition, some Christians believe it is perfectly acceptable to forsake the assembly so long as they assemble somewhere. While it may at some time be necessary to assemble privately due to a lack of a local congregation or due to unforeseen circumstances, some Christians assemble with denominational groups on Sunday morning and believe they have satisfied the command to assemble. Note what Hebrews 10:25 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is . . ." The assembling together is to take place with fellow Christians. Denominational bodies do not "fit the bill." I have seen some Christians assemble with unauthorized religious bodies on Sunday morning and then return to their home congregation on Sunday evening and partake of the Lord's Supper. This practice is unacceptable. If one may forsake gathering with the saints and with the Lord to assemble with denominational bodies once, one may do it every week.

The following is a test to see how the "just this once" excuse measures up against the plumb line of truth (Amos 7:8). Check all that apply:

_____ God overlooked Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit just that one time (Genesis 3:1-24).

_____ God overlooked the Israelites' creating and worshiping the golden calf, just that one time (Exodus 32:19-35).

_____ God overlooked Nadab and Abihu's use of unauthorized fire in the worship just that one time (Leviticus 10:1-3).

_____ God overlooked Uzzah when he touched the ark of the covenant because he had a good reason and he only did it once (2 Samuel 6:6,7).

_____ If we sprinkle water on a person's head and call it baptism, God will overlook it just this once (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:11,12).

_____ If we bring in a piano or an organ for the services, God will overlook it just this once (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16,17).

_____ If I cheat on my spouse and refuse to repent, God will overlook it just this once--and my spouse should too. (By the way, forsaking the assembly is the equivalent to spiritual adultery.)

The above unerringly proves the fallacy of the "God will overlook my sin this once" theory. We are commanded to take up our cross daily and follow after Jesus (Luke 9:23). Remember the closing words of the song, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" . . . "My cross I'll carry 'til I see Jesus, no turning back, I'll follow Him." WOT

SAINTS IN WRONG PLACES

Roger Johnson, Northport, Alabama

The sins committed by ancient Israel were recorded "for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:6,11). Many great men have failed God because they were found in the wrong places. In the form of a question, we introduce several of the "wrong places" where some great servants of God failed.

Are you on the slippery path of DISHONESTY, as was **Abraham** when he went down to Egypt (see Genesis 12:10-20)? Since his wife, Sarah, was such a beautiful woman Abraham feared that the Egyptians might kill him in order to have her. To prevent this, Abraham deceived them by telling them she was his sister. It was only a *half-truth* for Sarah was Abraham's half-sister (Genesis 20:12). We have a modern name for what Abraham did--situation ethics. This is the philosophy that says that one's ethics are determined by the situation in which he finds himself. Thus, one may lie, cheat, commit immorality, ad infinitum, if the situation "calls for it." However, God has always abhorred the practice of dishonesty no matter who was involved (Deuteronomy 25:13-16). Christians are to "provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Romans 12:17).

Are you giving way to IMPURITY, as did **David** when he walked upon a housetop and saw beautiful Bathsheba bathing (2 Samuel 11)? David yielded to lust, which then led to adultery, which gave way to further sin--murder! It all began when David was at the wrong place at the wrong time and he yielded to temptation. The Christian, whose mind should be on things above (Colossians 3:2), should avoid *anything* which tempts him to yield to unholy passions.

Are you sitting under the juniper tree of DISCOURAGEMENT, as did **Elijah** (1 Kings 19:1-18)? Elijah's great victory at Mt. Carmel was followed by despondency when he learned that Jezebel was out to kill him. He sat down under a juniper tree and prayed that God would let him die. Despondency frequently comes after a mountaintop experience, doesn't it? When it happens we want to crawl under our "juniper tree" and let the rest of the world pass us by. Remember, God is still on His throne and rules the world (cf. Psalm 42:5).

Are you sailing on the ship of DISOBEDIENCE, as did **Jonah** when he fled toward Tarshish (Jonah 1:1-17)? Jonah's prejudice prompted him to disobey God when he was told to preach in Nineveh. Is it possible that you are "on the way to Tarshish" when you should be "on the way to Nineveh"? Did you obey the Lord in becoming a Christian, but you have now boarded the ship of disobedience and are fleeing from your Redeemer?

Saints in the wrong places! Maybe we can learn something from people of the past and avoid some of their mistakes.

WOT

The Words of Truth

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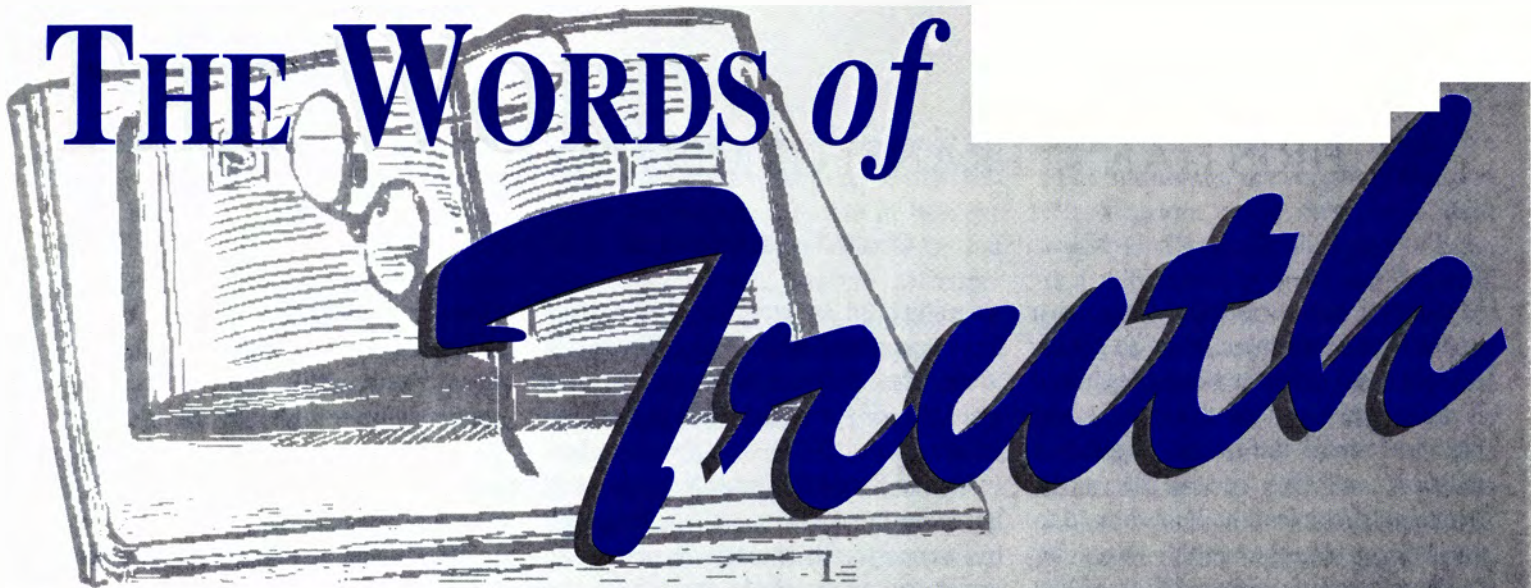
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"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).

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ORPHANED BY ERROR

Ray Dutton, Montgomery, Alabama

In Newport, Tennessee, five children were orphaned when their mother and evangelist father died after being bitten by poisonous snakes during a snake handling church service. Custody of the children was awarded to both sets of grandparents. The maternal grandparents sought sole custody because the other grandparents were also members of a snake handling church. The court's joint custody decision included a provision forbidding the children from being taken to any religious gathering where snakes would be handled (*The Montgomery Advertiser*, February 14, 1999).

Why did this couple die? They "believed" that Jesus would prevent any harm from coming to them. Surely no one would doubt the sincerity of people who believe so strongly in a doctrine that they would risk their lives and the future of their children to practice their faith. Yet, in spite of such great "faith," they *did* die, and their children were orphaned.

If, as some argue, God doesn't care about our "petty doctrinal differences," why did God let this couple die? The

truth is that men may be deceived into "believing" a thousand things, but just "believing" a thing does not make it so nor does it remove the consequences of believing a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

The young prophet of 1 Kings 13 believed the lie of an old prophet and was killed for his error. God's word was clear. "Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest" (1 Kings 13:9). After successfully delivering God's message to Jeroboam, the young prophet let down his guard. An old prophet deceived him into believing that God had changed His mind, "but he lied unto him" (v. 18). That very afternoon God interrupted the young prophet's meal with this message, "Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the

sepulchre of thy fathers" (v. 21, 22). Later that very day "a lion met him by the way, and slew him" (v. 24).

Does God want the death of the disobedient? God forbid! "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). He wants all of us to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Men are. God's Word is clearly understandable by those whose "will is to do his will" (John 7:17 RSV; Ephesians 5:17). If this were not true then God would be the evil one. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). Yes! A thousand times, Yes!

The tragic event in the life of a Tennessee family should make us stop and think. Is what I believe and practice in harmony with the will of God? All of us should heed Paul's admonition that we examine ourselves and prove ourselves to see whether or not we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). WOT

CHRISTIANS: TRANSFORMED, *NOT* CONFORMED

Chuck Webster, Editorial

My father makes fishing lures as a hobby, and I remember when he got his first jig mold. After he heated lead until it melted and became thin, he poured the lead into the mold, waited a moment, and then opened the mold. Amazingly, the lead had conformed to the shape of the mold. Irregular (nonconforming) pieces of lead had been shaped into a jighead. Notice the process: heat, then conformity, and finally solidity. What works very well for making fishing lures has also become one of Satan's favorite tools . . . for luring Christians into becoming like the people around us. He first applies the heat (the world's pressure), then he pours us into his mold (worldliness), and finally he solidifies our lifestyle (by letting us keep just enough spirituality to feel "religious"). Paul warned us of the temptation of conformity when he wrote: "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 12:2). In other words, don't let the world pour you into its mold.

But some say, "Does God really expect us to be different from the world? Isn't that sort of an antiquated idea?" The answers? Yes, He does, and No, it isn't. Here is why:

God's presence is within us. The pattern is always the same in scripture: God's presence demands that people act differently. In one sense, God is omnipresent, as the Psalmist indicated when he wrote, "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*" (Psalm 139:7,8). In another sense, though, God is present in special ways. For example, when God spoke to Moses from the

burning bush, He manifested Himself in an exceptional way. Accordingly, He demanded different behavior: "And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). The same was true with reference to the most holy place--the inner sanctuary of the temple--where God's presence symbolically dwelled. God had specific requirements concerning *who* could enter and *when*.

But someone might say, "What does this mean to us? We no longer live under the old covenant." Paul answers that objection: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Regardless of the view one takes on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we all must agree that God's Spirit dwells within us in *some* sense. The resulting conclusion must be that we must live, act, think, and talk differently from those around us.

We are God's possession. Our manner of life was decided for us when we gave our lives to Jesus--when we became His prized possession. Accordingly, another pattern in scripture is clear: when God possesses something, He expects that it be set aside for His use. Thus, the Sabbath Day, God's day, was *different* from other days of the week (Exodus 20:8-11; 31:14,15). The sons of Aaron were set aside for God's special use, and so were to live up to a *different* standard than the common Israelite; "they shall be holy unto their God" (Leviticus 21:6-8). Certain days and feasts were *different* from other days because they belonged to God.

On a much grander scale, Christians are owned by God. Peter writes:

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18,19). He also refers to us as a "peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9), a phrase which literally means a people possessed by another. The word translated "peculiar" in 1 Peter 2:9 is rendered "purchased possession" in Ephesians 1:14.

The implications of this fact are significant. Immediately preceding Peter's declaration of our being purchased by Christ's blood, he wrote, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). His argument runs like this: *Be different. Refuse to live like the world. When tempted to conform, remember who bought you . . . and remember the price He paid.*

There is no principle concerning the behavior of God's people that is repeated with more frequency and more force than the fact that God demands that His people live up to a higher standard, that we be different in every respect from a world that is diametrically opposed to God's ways. Yet in spite of that it seems that God's people, like the Israelites of old, are clamoring to be like the "nations round about us." This conformity is certainly occurring on the congregational level. When the denominational world caves in to the "Entertain me" mentality of our modern culture, many congregations of God's people soon follow with their own aesthetically-pleasing innovations. Is it merely a coincidence that we are seeing women's roles expanding in the Lord's church simultaneously with

feminism's increasing popularity in our country? Secular humanism and its accompanying relativism gained significant ground in the last few decades in America. Should it surprise us that its disdain for absolute truth has found its way into the preaching and writing of many among us? Many churches of Christ are no longer distinctive in the message they preach, clearly conforming in style and substance to modern culture.

But the temptation to conform has not stopped with our *theology*; it is influencing our *morality* as well. For those of us who are concerned about believing and preaching a distinctive doctrine, we must realize that God expects more than theological soundness to please Him. We need to recognize that membership in a "sound" congregation cannot be equated with

salvation. God has always expected His people to be different in more than just what we believe, but also in how we live. This difference extends to our dress, our speech, and our priorities. Some of us who are appalled at innovations in worship (instrumental music, drama, etc.) think nothing of dressing immodestly in public or watching television and movies with immoral content. Others among us recognize the sinfulness of denominationalism but then put material things, jobs, and recreation before the Lord's church. Some of us believe firmly in speaking where the Bible speaks and in condemning man-made creeds, but spend precious little time actually meditating on God's truth. Here is the point: God's people must be different from the world in more than just "sound doctrine." True disciples of

Jesus worship God, not things. We think spiritually. In everything God and His kingdom come first. In a dark world, God's people shed rays of light. In a culture torn by strife and violence, we interject the attributes of kindness and peace. Among people who seek contentment in fulfilling fleshly and material lusts, we find happiness in serving God. In a world that has enthroned self as god, true Christians seek to worship the one and only God.

In short, God's people are different. We're different because of God's presence *within* us and His possession *of* us. But if the only difference our neighbors see in us is *where* we go to church, perhaps we need to reconsider our devotion to God and His word. Remember--don't let the world squeeze us into its mold. WOT

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ADDED TO THE CHURCH

J.C. Choate, Winona, Mississippi

Most people talk about joining a church. This is something like joining a club such as the Lion's Club or the Rotary Club. In a case like this it is usually left up to the members to accept or reject the one seeking membership. This would mean that the members would have more to say about whether a person became a member of some particular church than the Lord would. There is another side to the picture, however, and that's the Lord's side or His part when it comes to being a member of the church, and this should be the thing that matters more than anything else if one really wants to be saved and to be a member of Christ's church.

First of all, we must understand that the Bible teaches that the Lord built one church and that church belongs to Him (Matthew 16:18). He is the Foundation of it (1 Corinthians 3:11), Head of it (Colossians 1:18), the Saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), and it wears His Name (Romans 16:16). The church is

His spiritual body, His family (1 Corinthians 12:27; 1 Timothy 3:15). Also, with Christ being the Saviour of the church He has the authority to say who can be a member or not a member. It is certainly not up to man to make such a decision. When one complies with the Lord's wishes by obeying His commands to be saved, it is the Lord Himself, not man, who is able to discern and know whether that person has obeyed from the heart. If he does so then the Lord saves him and adds that one to His church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38,47). If he does not, he is not saved or added regardless of what he claims or what anyone else says.

Another way of putting it, when one hears the word of God, it conceives in his heart, and in obedience to the Lord's commands of repentance, acknowledging Christ as the Son of God, and being baptized (buried in water) for the remission of his sins, he is spiritually born again or becomes a member of the Lord's family (John 3:3-

5).

No doubt we accept people as members of the church when they are really not. All we have to go by are the outward acts of faith, repentance, confessing Christ with the mouth as being the Son of God, and a burial in the waters of baptism for the remission of sins. Now when they say they want to be saved, and are willing to comply with these acts that lead to salvation, all we can do, once they have outwardly complied with these commands, is to accept the fact that the Lord has saved them and added them to the church. But only the Lord can look into one's heart and know the real motives that are there. Therefore, only the Lord can save one and add him to His church. As Paul wrote, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his, And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). WOT

PLEASE DO RESPOND

Jim Dearman, Houston, Texas

I once received a letter from a Houston area resident with specific questions about the church of Christ. The man, a member of one of the large denominations, stated that his Sunday class had been studying different religions, and that some specific remarks had been made about the church of Christ, which prompted him to write to me. His questions were similar to those which have been asked by many through the years about the church of Christ. He wanted to know if the church of Christ claims to be the one true church, and if only those in the church of Christ will be saved.

The gentleman then asked: "If you do indeed believe that only members of the church of Christ are going to heaven, could you show me in scripture where you find this, and can you give us documented proof that Jesus Christ established your church?" The man closed his letter to me with these words: "Please do respond." My response to his letter is included here. As of this time, I have not received any reply from him. However, I pray that he and the others in his class studied my response with an open mind, and with a determination to accept only what the New Testament teaches about the church, as well as all other matters.

Dear _____:

Thank you for your interest in knowing more about the church of

Christ. I am happy to respond to your questions, and I would be willing to discuss in more detail any Bible matters with you or your class.

In response to your question about salvation and the church, we simply accept what the Bible teaches on this, and all other subjects. In Matthew 16:18,19, Jesus promised to build His church, which He also referred to as the kingdom. The church (kingdom) was established on the first Pentecost day following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Some 3,000 souls became followers of Christ on that day by believing in Christ, by repenting of their sins, by confessing Jesus as the Christ, and by being buried in baptism for the remission of sins. This simple and essential plan of salvation, which is clearly taught in the New Testament, made them Christians, nothing more and nothing less, and they were added to the Lord's church on that day.

As we read the entirety of the New Testament, we find that all who became Christians did so by following the one plan for salvation already mentioned, and they were all members of the same church. Denominationalism did not exist, and has never been approved by God. As you stated in your letter, denominationalism, or Protestantism, came into existence at a much later time as an outgrowth of the Reformation. Jesus, in His last

hours on the earth, prayed for the unity of all believers, as recorded in John 17. He prayed that we would all be "one" as He and God are one (John 17:21). Denominationalism cannot achieve the unity for which Christ prayed. We cannot be "one" while teaching and practicing different doctrines concerning matters that affect our eternal destiny. Certainly to be united as God and Christ are united, we must agree on all essential spiritual matters. Salvation and the church are certainly among those essential matters. Are God and Christ "one" in doctrine? Of course they are. Therefore, we must agree to unite in that same manner. We cannot simply "agree to disagree."

The doctrine of God and Christ concerning the church is clear in the New Testament. There was one church established on Pentecost in Acts 2, in fulfillment of Christ's promise in Matthew 16:18,19. It was not a denomination. It was the church of Christ, also referred to simply as "the church" (1 Corinthians 1:18); as "the church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2; 11:22); and as "the church of Christ" (Romans 16:16). The reference in Romans is plural (churches of Christ) because Paul was referring to more than one congregation as he wrote. We wear the name "church of Christ" because it is among the Scriptural designations found in the New Testament for the church, and because it glorifies Christ as the

head of the church.

In Ephesians, an epistle that emphasizes the church, we find clear teaching on the nature of this all-important institution. In Ephesians 1:22,23, we learn that Christ is the head of the church, which is called His body. Thus, there is one head, but how many bodies? In Ephesians 4:4, we learn from inspiration that there is but one body, just as there is one Lord, one God, etc. Then, in Ephesians 5:23, we find that the saved must be in that body, which is the church established by Christ. This is clear Bible teaching.

An important question remains. How can that body exist today? The answer lies in following the New Testament pattern for the church clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Jesus established His church with a clear pattern for every aspect of it, including its work, worship, and organization. When we duplicate that New Testament pattern today, we have the same church that began in the first century. When a seed of corn is planted, it produces corn regardless of the time factor involved, and when one plants the pure Word of God, it produces the same crop in any generation--Christians, and Christians only.

The Protestant Reformation to which you refer was an effort to reform the Catholic Church, rather than to restore the church of the first century. The effort resulted in the formation of denominations, a further division in religious faith and practice. The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, condemned the very concept of denominationalism, which has its roots in elevating men and their doctrines, rather than in

being content to simply follow Christ. However, the restoration movement is vastly different from reformation efforts. In the restoration movement, men did not merely seek to *reform* existing religious institutions, but to *restore* the New Testament church. It is this restoration plea which has resulted in countless, sincere seekers of truth laying aside the creeds and traditions of men, and coming back to the New Testament for authority in all things. Such a return to truth is necessary to please God and to answer the Lord's prayer for the unity of all believers.

We simply plead with good people everywhere to unite on the one foundation, Jesus Christ, and His teachings. Belief alone, apart from obedience to the commands of the gospel, cannot save. The New Testament clearly teaches that it is salvation by grace through our obedient faith that brings remission of sins. That obedient faith involves our belief in Christ (John 8:24); our repentance from sin (Luke 13:3,5); our confession of Jesus as the Christ (Romans 10:9,10); and our burial in baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16). Then, we are added to the church of the New Testament, created anew in Christ, and we must continue doing the works which God has ordained (Ephesians 2:10).

As members of His body, the church, we are promised eternal salvation if we remain faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10). Works of merit, or works of the former Law of Moses, cannot save. However, all works are not eliminated. Ephesians 2:10 and James 2:24, along with the entire teaching of the New Testament, make that point very

clear to the Bible student who is "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). We must be subject to the authority of the New Testament alone in all things, because that is the Law under which we serve, and by which we will be judged at the last day.

Thank you again for writing. I hope the answers given and the Scriptures cited will be helpful to you as you study the Word of God.

Sincerely,

Jim Dearman

Perhaps this response will also be helpful to you, the reader, in answering your questions about the church of the New Testament. We pray you will be like the Bereans of old "... in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Denominationalism has been present with us for such a long time that many sincere people have accepted it as an arrangement which they believe must be pleasing to God. However, from the Scriptures we learn that the division which characterizes the religious world is not pleasing to the Lord. Jesus desires that we all be one, just as He and the Father are one (John 17:21).

We close this message as the gentlemen ended his letter: "Please do respond." Respond to the plea to lay aside all creeds and traditions of men, and to return to the Scriptures as the only standard of faith and practice.

WOT

THE OBEDIENT LIFE OF CHRIST

James E. Haynes, Jr., Bedford, Texas

There once stood a lonely tree just outside the city gates of Jerusalem. Upon it hung the very Son of the Ancient of Days. The very One that gave up the great wealth of heaven to walk among the men and women He loved so dearly (2 Corinthians 8:9). He is the One who walked in perfect purity and selflessness, despite the ever-clamoring voice of the tempter's call. His name is Jesus the Christ and His life is a perfect example of obedience that provided the world with great things (Mark 7:37).

His Obedient Life: Hope

Jesus' obedience provided the world with the hope of one day walking the golden street of glory (Titus 1:2). The sin of mankind had placed a huge barrier, a gulf, between God and His creation (Romans 6:23). However, Jesus the Christ, through His loving obedience to the Father's Will (Matthew 3:15; Luke 2:49, 52; Hebrews 5:8) was able to span the gulf with His precious blood. The innocent Savior hung among thieves, He was ridiculed, He was spat on, and He was mocked . . . all for a whole host of unworthy sinners. However, His willingness to die provided hope for a hopeless world (Hebrews 6:18).

His Obedient Life: The Perfect Example

Jesus' obedience provided the world with a perfect example. No one will ever fully match the mold of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible clearly paints a picture of all that He endured during His life's journey to the cross. A journey that was paved with tears and sweat as He battled against God's archenemy, Satan. This horrible harlot of hell tempted the Savior all throughout the Life of Christ (Luke 4:13). Thanks are to God that Jesus never ever sinned (Hebrews 4:15)! He obeyed the great eternal God of heaven in that He never sinned; therefore, qualifying Himself to be the sinless sacrifice (1 Peter 1:19) that was so desperately needed.

His Obedient Life: The Great Announcement

Jesus' obedience paved the way for the announcement of the great mystery. The great mystery that had been formed in the mind of the heavenly Father before the world began (Ephesians 1:4). For centuries it had been concealed and only known by God (1 Peter 1:12), but now the obedience of Christ allowed this great mystery to be revealed. The great mystery is that a Savior had died for the entire world. The

Lord's death and His church were not a happenstance. It was all done on purpose (Acts 2:23; John 17:4) in order to provide the perfect sacrifice so that mankind could be reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:20) back to God. The great gulf that had separated man from God could now be crossed, and access to God was made possible through the obedience of Christ.

His Obedient Life: Still Recalled

The perfect example of the obedience of Christ can still be reminisced in the pages of Holy Writ. As one looks into the loving eyes of the Savior hanging innocently on that cruel tree, the natural response should be, "Lord what will you have *me* to do?" The Savior has died, the example has been provided, and the mystery has been revealed. God has told us what we must do in order to be obedient to His will. Those outside Christ are told to be "obedient from the heart" (Romans 6:17; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:37,38). Christians are simply told, ". . . be faithful until death" (Revelation 2:10). May we all strive to follow in the footsteps of the "Source of our Salvation" (Hebrews 5:9) in loving obedience in an effort to please God (Galatians 1:10).

EVANGELISM

Johnny Ramsey, Arlington, Texas

I once was handed a little ten-page booklet entitled, "How to Sell Without Working." It was based upon the combined experiences of 25,000 salesmen over a period of twenty years. Every page in that pamphlet was blank because there just is no possible way to be a successful worker without work!

Brethren, there is no way to win the world for Christ without toil and sweat and tears. It takes work, prayer, Bible study, consecration, deep interest in others, and perseverance to get the job done. Years ago I read the most challenging illustration concerning the need for evangelism in all the world. A preacher, standing at the edge of a huge Chinese province, asked his guide how many people lived in that area who had never heard of Christ. Casually, the guide replied, "Ten million." Tears began to stream down the face of the evangelist as he thought of so many who had yet to hear the sweetest name on earth. At that moment an ancient wagon passed by driven by an aging coolie. The preacher noticed in the bed of the wagon some lamps with this inscription upon them: "Made in Connecticut, U.S.A." Choking with emotion he exclaimed, "We will send light for their homes but none for their souls." How tragic it is that western civilization has gone into more areas than New Testament Christianity.

The four major roadblocks to personal and world-wide evangelism are: lack of teaching, selfishness, worldly living and indifference. We cannot teach what we do not know. Our ignorance of the Bible can result in the loss of our soul as well as countless others that we should have taught. God once sent His people into captivity because of their lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6).

Selfishness is reflected in poor

contributions which hinder the progress of getting the gospel to the lost. A few years ago in an Oklahoma town a preacher friend of mine presented a sermon regarding the contribution. Afterwards, one of the elders remarked: "What would we do with the money if we had better collections? We are paying all our bills now." Can you imagine such a statement? Six billion people in the world yet all that man could think of was meeting the expenses of operating a small congregation in Oklahoma! Selfishness will cause us to waste our time on matters of lesser importance so that we will be unprepared to teach the Scriptures to others. It is impossible to effectively speak for Christ unless you have a thorough working knowledge of His word. The more we know about Jesus, the sooner we will "lift up our eyes and look on the field" to see the vast harvest of lost humanity that can be claimed for our Master (John 4:35). But we must first lose ourselves in the Lord's service. We must deny self to gain Christ (Luke 9:23; Philippians 3:7-9). The poet said: "I sought to hear the voice of God, I climbed the top-most steeple; But God declared: 'Go down again, I dwell among the people.'"

Worldliness is one of the quickest ways to nullify one's influence upon others. In a very powerful passage in Philippians 2:15-16, the apostle Paul instructs Christians to be blameless in the midst of wickedness. We are to shine as lights in darkness. In doing this we shall be "holding forth the word of truth." Our Savior mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount that men would learn to glorify the Father in heaven as a result of observing our life of purity and devotion. There is no hindrance quite so effective as hypocrites in the church. *We must practice what we*

preach. Notice the clarion tones of Philippians 1:27 (RSV): "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ."

But the greatest problem one faces in arousing interest in spreading the gospel is *indifference*. A lot of church members just simply do not care that thousands are dying out of Christ each year. If we really are concerned, we would do something about it. If you would teach your neighbor and if I would teach my neighbor--and if they would in turn teach theirs--the perpetual nature of the great commission would soon cover the earth (Matthew 28:19).

Many people have been won to Jesus through observing the kindness and love and purity of God's children. Each of us may be the only Bible some people read. Someone has written:

We are the sinner's gospel,
We are the scoffer's creed,
We are the Lord's last message
Written in the word and deed.
What if the line is crooked,
What if the type is blurred?

There is no proper time for us to relax or forget that we are servants of the Lord. Yes, take the name of Jesus with you wherever you go. It will bring untold joy into any life. May God help us to be faithful in discharging this grand responsibility. Eternity will be much brighter for countless thousands if we will "go everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). "Lead me to some soul today: Teach me, Lord, just what to say. Friends of mine are lost in sin, And cannot find their way."

Let us awaken to the painful cry of the lost and send the glorious light of the gospel to all creation under heaven!

WOT

PUBLIC READING OF SCRIPTURE

David R. Pharr, Rock Hill, South Carolina

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein (Revelation 1:3).

This opening beatitude of Revelation refers to the public reading of the book. In Bible times the public reading of Scripture had a significant place in their assemblies. According to Luke 4:16, it had been Jesus' custom in Nazareth to stand up and read in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Paul instructed that his epistles were to be read "in the church" (Colossians 4:16). When Timothy was told to give "attendance to reading," this probably referred to his public reading of the Scriptures.

In our times when everyone has a copy of the Bible, reading the Bible aloud may not seem so important. It happens too that when the Bible is read in church, the reading may lack emphasis, expression, understanding and reverence. We have sometimes endured such reading as seemed to be the recitation of mere words instead of making known the mighty word of God. More than once we have heard texts so misread as to reverse the meaning. Some reading is mumbling, and some read in haste as if to get it over as soon as possible.

In the time of Nehemiah and Ezra there was a great occasion when the book of the law was read aloud to the people. The people had such reverence for what they were about to hear that they stood up when the book was opened. Several capable men did the reading, and "they read in the book in the law of God **distinctly**, and **gave the sense**, and **caused them to understand** the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8, emp. added). WOT

The Words of Truth

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THE WORDS OF Truth

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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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THE POWER OF ONE

Flavil Nichols, Jasper, Alabama

During the war between the states, a young woman learned the truth and obeyed the gospel. Her sweetheart, J.H. Halbrook, was a confederate soldier. He was captured by the union army and kept a prisoner in Michigan until the war was over. He was given a ticket to Nashville, Tennessee, and \$2.50. From there, he returned to Centerville and found what was left of his home and family. He found his girlfriend and they were married. His wife studied the Bible with him, and he soon became a Christian. He thought the truth was so good and so simple that he began to teach and baptize many of his friends and neighbors. He began to preach, but he recognized his need for more training, so he came to the original Mars Hill Bible School, taught by T.B. Larimore. Upon completing his studies there, instead of going back to Tennessee, they moved farther south, coming into

Walker, Marion, Fayette, and Lamar counties in Alabama. One of his many converts was Charley Alexander Wheeler. His wife taught him to read from the Bible. Along with his wife, C.A. Wheeler obeyed the gospel and soon began preaching to others. He started more than 100 congregations and baptized more than 6,000 people.

But wait, the story is not ended! One of those 6,000 was my father, the late Gus Nichols! Twelve thousand were baptized under his preaching.

Among those baptized by Gus Nichols, no one knows, nor can know, how many began to preach "the glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:3,4); but I personally know several. I, Flavil Nichols, am ONE whom he baptized and whom he encouraged to preach the truth. And under my preaching, about *three thousand have been baptized*. A few

among them preach the gospel, also!

Only eternity can reveal the total results of the conversion of that one girl nearly one hundred and fifty years ago. The results are not yet all in! But this shows that TWENTY-ONE THOUSAND people have become Christians through this single thread in the fabric of her influence.

"Go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). YOU are important, too! Dear reader, if you go to heaven, others probably will be saved by you! "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:16). "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 6:16). Each ONE is very important.

WOT

CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE: WHY?

Chuck Webster, Editorial

Though we often think of church discipline as consisting solely of withdrawing fellowship, it actually includes all of the processes or means by which a congregation trains or educates its members to “walk in the light” (1 John 1:7). Paul charged elders to “feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28), which includes of course making certain the flock is fed a balanced, spiritual nourishment that will result in their knowing God’s will and growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). As in our physical families, church discipline involves two essential components: (1) instructive discipline; and (2) corrective discipline. The former consists of teaching (both public and private), encouragement, and example. The latter embodies those actions taken with respect to individuals who, whether intentionally or unintentionally, choose to disregard the law of Christ. With such believers, congregations must make every loving effort to restore, warn, and rebuke them, and, if no repentance occurs, withdraw fellowship from them (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).

But our present concern is, why do many congregations apparently ignore corrective church discipline? Though most congregations insist that their preachers preach against sin, why do they not enforce God’s message? Perhaps the answer lies at least partially in the fact that many simply do not understand the *purpose* of corrective discipline. Why, then, should we practice it?

If God had given no further explanation of *why* He chose to implement corrective discipline in His New Testament church, the first reason should be enough: **He commanded it**. Knowing our timidity and reluctance to point out the sins of others, the Holy Spirit evidently anticipated that many of us would ignore this command, and thus He used particularly intense language when discussing it. Notice Paul’s

wording: “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. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: . . . For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. . . . Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. . . . And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 7a, 10, 12, 14). Incidentally, the word translated “command” in verse 6 is the same word used by Paul in his address to the Athenians concerning God’s attitude toward repentance: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now **commandeth** all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). Would any among us teach that repentance is optional? In Paul’s admonitions to the Corinthians on how to deal with their erring brother, he again minces no words: “For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. . . . Purge out therefore the old leaven, . . . Therefore let us keep the feast, . . . I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: . . . But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. . . . Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1

Corinthians 5:3-5, 7a, 8a, 9, 11, 13b). Are we to gather from this language that God believes these matters to be optional? Again, Paul writes, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).

It is interesting that we would mark and avoid a congregation that did not preach and practice baptism, but we casually ignore a command that is issued in much stronger language. Isn’t it also ironic that many among us would never dream of bidding God speed to a false teacher who lives and preaches hundreds of miles away (2 John 9-11), but we bid God speed weekly to sinners right in our midst by ignoring their sin?

But God didn’t simply *command* it; He told us *why* He commanded it. The obvious purpose for corrective church discipline is **to restore the erring**. Paul commanded the Corinthians to withdraw from the wayward brother “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:5). Paul indicated in 2 Corinthians 2:6-8 that the church’s efforts had worked--the brother had repented. Our efforts toward restoring the erring, James tells us, are expended to “save a soul from death,” and to “hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19,20). Paul delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander “to Satan,” so that they would “learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:19,20). When we sever fellowship with a lost child of God, we hope that he may be “ashamed,” and that the shame will bring him back to Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:14). Some have argued that church discipline is harsh and unloving and violates the spirit of Christ. Such couldn’t be farther from the truth, however, because corrective measures taken by a compassionate congregation are motivated by nothing except a deep, abiding love for the soul of the erring one. Congregations which have ceased exercising their responsibility to restore

the erring and sever fellowship when necessary may offer excuses as to why they ignore God's command. The real reason, though, is that they don't really recognize the value of a soul in God's eyes (cf. Luke 15). When we love the souls of God's children, we *will* discipline them.

Removing the precious fellowship of Christ's body from erring members will not always bring them back; the allurements and pleasures of the world are too tempting for some. In such cases, though, church discipline still serves a necessary purpose: **it keeps the church pure**. Jesus "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" (Ephesians 5:25b-27). Paul was jealous over the church at Corinth with a "godly jealousy," intending one day to present her as a "chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2). If, then, Christ's body is to remain "chaste" and without "spot or wrinkle," there must be some means of maintaining that purity. The manner in which we are to preserve this purity is by removing unrepentant sinners from our fellowship. Paul wrote: "Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:6,7). The Pergamum church had within her midst those who held the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. For this sin Christ told her to repent--in part because that toleration allowed Christ's pure body to be violated (Revelation 2:14-16). We must never esteem lightly the premium Christ places on His body's remaining free from sin. Elders, to the best of their knowledge, need to be able to present their flocks to Christ in a chaste, pure, and holy condition. This can be done *only* if sinners who fail to repent of their sin are removed from fellowship.

Perhaps one reason that God wants to keep leaven out of His unleavened body is **to keep it from spreading**. Hymenaeus and Philetus needed to be disciplined, lest their word "eat as doth a canker" (2 Timothy 2:17,18). The word translated "eat" literally means growth or increase, but is here used metaphorically to refer to a gangrene that is spreading. Paul used graphic language perhaps to impress upon us the necessity of removing sin from our midst. He told Timothy: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Timothy 5:20). After God's severe act of discipline against Ananias and Sapphira, "great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11). This was clearly one of the primary purposes behind God's drastic measures against sin in the early church: to set the precedent that sin will not be tolerated. Imagine the difference in the body of Christ today if sinners were treated lovingly, compassionately, patiently, and yet, when necessary, firmly. Perhaps there would be more of a respect for the holiness that God demands, and more of a sense of fear of the consequences that will inevitably occur when we sin and refuse to repent.

Some fear that withdrawing fellowship will hurt the name of the church, that she will be viewed by the world as judgmental and unloving. Is that the case? Or is it perhaps God's will that the world know that the church is pure and that in Christ's body impenitent sinners will not be permitted? Notice what followed God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira: "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)" (Acts 5:11-14). Notice particularly the reaction of the

community: "the people magnified them" (v. 13). John MacArthur comments on this passage: "The practice of sternly dealing with sin helps maintain a pure church. People do not rush to join [sic] a church that will expose their sin. Discipline is thus an essential key to evangelism, because it purifies the church and keeps the shallow and merely curious away. It is startling to see churches today that will purposely not make sin an issue so as to attract the shallow and curious" (*Acts 1-12*, p. 162). When practiced biblically, church discipline does the opposite of what the fearful among us expect: **it magnifies and engenders respect for the name of the Lord's church**.

Should churches of Christ practice corrective church discipline today? Is there *really* an option? God's plan for His church is perfect in every way. His children today are part of a perfect body, not in the sense that they are sinlessly perfect, but rather that they are walking in the light of Christ, confessing sin as it occurs. When one of God's children commits sin, his brothers and sisters in Christ lovingly plead with him to repent. He will likely realize his error and tearfully confess sin and enjoy forgiveness. However, if the entire congregation begs him, warns him, and pleads with him, and he still refuses to repent, the church must withdraw its fellowship from him. In many cases, this action will bring about true repentance by the erring brother. He recognizes how much he cherished the fellowship and camaraderie that existed in the family of Christ and anxiously comes back to the Lord. If he does not, however, the corrective discipline still is successful. The purity of Christ's body is preserved. Other Christians are reminded of the penalties of sin. The community around the church is impressed with the fact that the church of Christ believes strongly in living pure, godly lives. Corrective church discipline, when practiced biblically by loving, compassionate Christians, is *always* successful. WOT

THE SALVATION ARMY: AN UNACCEPTABLE CHARITY

Todd Clippard, Hamilton, Alabama

There are many wonderful things about this time of the year. People walk a little lighter, an aura of cheer and good will toward others literally transforms the demeanor of some, and generous attitudes toward giving and charity are at their highest level. Most charitable organizations are worthy of our support, whether by making donations or by buying various items through them. However, Christians must be careful about where they make charitable donations. One in particular is the Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army was founded in England in 1865 by William Booth. Its original name was the Christian Mission. Booth wanted to take religion to those who might not be welcome in other churches, so he began a series of outdoor meetings designed to bring the less affluent into the church. He organized his group along military lines, assumed the role as “general,” and renamed the society the Salvation Army in 1878. In 1880, the Salvation Army “invaded” the United States.

Today, this religious group has over 18,000 religious centers in 90 countries and publishes its own paper, *The War Cry*. It conducts Sunday School along with morning and evening worship services complete with altar calls, and it holds additional prayer meetings at

other times of the week. All its officers, *both men and women*, are members of their clergy system and are trained and *ordained* by the Salvation Army. It continues to have a General, a National Commander, as well as Territorial Commanders.

The Salvation Army engages in many commendable works. Its outreach efforts provide shelter for the homeless, disaster relief for flood and hurricane victims, and programs to combat alcoholism. However, the same could be said about many other denominational groups, and we do not give our money to them. The Salvation Army, like all denominational groups, teaches a doctrine of salvation which will cause men’s souls to be lost. At the end of *The War Cry* is a section entitled, “The ABC’s of Salvation.” They are: Admit your need; Believe on Christ; and Commit yourself to Christ. No Christian can lend his/her support to that which is in conflict with the Bible (Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9-11).

The Salvation Army was established to do that which the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned to the church--make disciples of all nations through the preaching of the gospel to every creature (Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:15); this includes the poor (Luke 4:18; 7:22). The church is also to help

those in need (Matthew 25:34-36; Galatians 6:10; James 1:27).

One final thought, the **Masonic Lodge** and **Shriners** are two groups that are particularly active in fund-raising this time of year. In spite of what many “Christians” will tell you, *the Shriners and Free Masons are religious organizations which attempt to supplant the church*. It is a shame that so many members of the Lord’s church refuse to recognize this fact. The head of the local Masonic Lodge has as his title, “Most Worshipful Master.” It is impossible for a Christian to call another human being by that title and not be in violation of the scriptures, for Jesus said that God alone is worthy of our worship (cf. Matthew 4:10; 23:8-10; John 4:24).

Brethren, we must be very cautious in the works that we support financially outside the Lord’s church. Many local organizations *are* worthy of our consideration and support, but we must be diligent to make a proper discernment in this regard.

Ultimately, if we will all be more diligent in giving our time and money to the work of the Lord--praise, honor, and glory can be given to our God through the church. WOT

WHY DO THE WICKED PROSPER?

Johnny Ramsey, Arlington, Texas

An ancient Greek thought-provokingly said: “Life is a theater in which the worst people often have the best seats.” It is a strange phenomenon to many that evil men do *seem* to have the best of it. Even the Psalmist blatantly asked: “Why do the wicked prosper?” As the fifth seal was broken in the Apocalypse

John beheld martyrs who mouthed essentially that same ageless question. They wanted to know how long sinful men would dominate the affairs of earth! Any person, with average curiosity, has pondered this problem of life. The Bible is abundantly clear in telling us that the Creator graciously

bestows sunshine, rain, and bountiful crops upon all mankind (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17). What then is the answer to the riddle? Why do the ungodly prosper? Perhaps the following points will clarify the issue.

(1) **Do they really prosper?** I deny that sinful men actually have true prosperity.

The meek inherit the genuine pleasures of earth. Uncouth men like Al Capone may have acquired untold wealth, financially, but they lived in constant fear of assassination or imprisonment. In Capone's "roaring twenties" a humble milkman in Chicago could sleep better at night than the bootleg baron of America. Wicked men seldom know tranquil joys of the quiet, unadorned life. In many ways it is still true that the best things in life are free. Andrew Carnegie stated that "rich men seldom smile and never sing." There is another thought to ponder . . . *The real point is this*: What do the unrighteous miss in their all-out quest for material prosperity?

(2) **In what do they prosper?** It cannot be successfully affirmed that men of evil intent prosper in any worthwhile endeavor. Should they engage in charitable enterprise to cover their atrocities they rob themselves of the true joy of serving others in sincerity. They certainly do not prosper in building

homes that bless a community or in leading lost souls from darkness into light. Their influence is forever opposed to those dimensions of life that clearly bring the peace that passeth understanding (Philippians 4:7). When this earth and its works are burned up and dissolved they will realize the vanity of their emphasis in life (Revelation 18:17).

(3) **What is the duration of this prosperity?** Since the wicked prosper in earthly things and have no treasures "laid up in heaven" (Matthew 6:20) they must adopt the Epicurean philosophy of "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." But J. Paul Getty, one of the world's richest people, freely admitted several years ago: "I am miserable. You can just paint the town red so many times and get drunk just so many times. Then you sit at home alone and realize that money cannot buy happiness." A humble Christian, on a vegetable farm, doing the best he can do with what he

has, often has that elusive quality called happiness that escapes the grasping clutches of those whose love of money chokes them (Luke 8:14). In *Aesop's Fables* one can read these lines: "He that serves God for money will serve the Devil for better wages." Truly, "success" has ruined many a man!

(4) **Should the righteous really care?** In view of all that we have said it really reflects upon our Christianity for us even to concern ourselves with the rather selfish inquiry: "Why do the wicked prosper?" Surely we are not interested in that kind of prosperity. Longfellow's *Psalm of Life* has the classic reminder: "Life is real! Life is earnest! And the grave is not its goal; 'Dust thou art; to dust returneth;' Was not spoken of the soul." As John Wycliffe affirmed so we earnestly believe: "In the end, truth will conquer!"

WOT

MY DADDY IS A PREACHER!

A Tribute to Glenn A. Posey

Mark N. Posey, Decaturville, Alabama

[Editor's note: This historical note will be of interest to many of our long-term subscribers. Brother Glenn Posey and brother Gus Nichols began planning and praying about starting *The Words of Truth* in the fall of 1962. They originated, formulated, and circulated the first paper in November of 1963. In conjunction with brother Nichols, brother Posey went to many, many congregations and talked to the elderships about subscribing to the paper and receiving it in bundles. When it began, it cost five cents per issue, the price of a postage stamp. Brother Posey was the circulation manager at the beginning and later became the associate editor. He did much of the legwork taking it to Haleyville each week to be printed.]

The passage of scripture which reads, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" must be an important part of our every day life. Preaching the Gospel of our Lord is, by far, the most noble of professions and the one I have chosen to "profess" for the rest of my days upon this earth.

Many people have made an impact on my life; there have been those who have inspired me, those who encouraged me, those who have

humbled me and those who have loved me. There is, however, no other like my father; my daddy, the preacher! My father loves nothing more than "preaching the gospel to every creature." Preaching was lived before my very eyes every day of my childhood; what I heard in the pulpit is what I saw at home.

In this world of hypocrisy, we need people; preachers of the Gospel, who practice what they preach. I saw in my

daddy, very early in my life, what I wanted to become. The beautiful part is that he never changed or compromised what he preached or what he lived and I never changed what I wanted to become. As long as I can remember, all that I ever wanted to do with my life was preach the Gospel; I wanted to be like my daddy.

The rewards of preaching the Gospel are abundant! A preacher works with the best people, proclaims the

greatest message and serves the most awesome God. The example that we set forth is one that many will see. The example I saw of a preacher; his attitude, his actions and his thoughts, reflected only goodness and purity. I saw a life of servitude, of giving and forgiving, and of praise in a man who was strong and mighty.

In the wedding vows that my wife and I exchanged only twelve short years ago, my father said, "May your marriage be good and happy and the example of a Christian marriage so others may see

it and want to get married." Young men all over the world will be drawn to the profession of preaching the Gospel if they have good role models to look up to and admire. What an awesome responsibility lies in our words, our lives and our examples.

I want my son to be a preacher. He is only six years old as I write this article, but I know beyond all doubt that my example in word and deed is being watched every day. I know that if I live my life as my daddy did; one in which

the preacher in the pulpit and the preacher at home agreed, then I will set before him an example that is complementary to the preaching profession and a glory to God. May God bless all fathers as you live the life of goodness and purity to raise preachers of tomorrow.

Dad, thanks for showing me that the job of a preacher is the best job in the world. WOT

ARE YOU PUTTING GOD OR GOD FIRST?

Ben Wright, Youth Minister, Jasper, Alabama

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). God has always wanted His children to place Him above everything else. Jehovah is to have preeminence over all things. In the New Testament we are told, "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness ..." (Matthew 6:33). In other words, we are to put God above all else.

Man has within him the desire to worship something. It has been said that if all knowledge of God could be removed then man would invent something to worship. In studying the Bible and various histories of ancient civilizations, it is easy to see that this is true. The ancient Egyptians worshipped all manner of gods. The Roman and Greek cultures were heavily influenced by polytheism.

For us today this may sound silly, superstitious, and absurd. We may ask, "How could anyone worship an idol?" The only answer that I can think of is that a person who does this has no knowledge of God and is simply trying to fill the void that is in his life.

When thinking about idol worship we must remember that idols do not have to be carved from wood, stone, or some other material. In a book entitled

No God But God, Richard Keyes wrote a chapter (pgs. 29-42) in which he said, "Idols are not just on pagan altars, but in well-educated human hearts and minds" (Ezekiel 14). He goes on to say that an idol can be "anything that can substitute for God."

It shocks and saddens me to no end when I see people that claim to be members of the Lord's church putting their God first, whatever it may be. I look about the brotherhood and see so many wrapped up in secular things that continue to draw them further and further away from God.

Someone may say that when this occurs it is not idolatry. I respectfully disagree with that person and point them to the apostle Paul. By inspiration Paul stated, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, **who is an idolater** (emp. mine BW), hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:5). Paul states that any person who is covetous is an idolater. Any person who puts material things over the church is covetous and therefore is an idolater.

Too many Christians have put their businesses or jobs over their spiritual

well being. This is so dangerous. It sets the wrong example for their spouses and children, who, if you were to ask them, are the very ones for whom they have set God aside. It also shows those in the world that for which they are truly living, namely the possession of material goods.

It also pains me to see well-meaning parents let their children place the church on a lower rung of importance. Parents want their children to succeed, which every parent should want. But, when parents allow their children to miss the services and activities of the Lord's people for athletic or other secular events they are causing their children to think that those events can supersede the Lord. Allowing this to creep into the minds of young people is potentially soul damning.

It is my prayer that the Lord's people the world over will put Him first. When the Israelites turned to idols God's anger was kindled against them. He considered that spiritual adultery. Why should we think that would not be the case today as well? Friend, are you putting god or God first? WOT

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Jason Jackson, Stockton, California

Although the religious world of Christendom is one of tremendous division, there is general agreement that there was a church in the days of the apostles. Equally, there is agreement regarding the fact that the New Testament gives a clear picture of how the church began, and what it was like.

It ought to be obvious to every Bible believer that based upon the agreed facts above, we have a divinely approved pattern for what the church should be, and do, in any age. The New Testament gives a stern warning and condemnation for altering the gospel (Galatians 1:6-9), and it promotes contending for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

If we familiarize ourselves with the characteristics of the New Testament church, we will be equipped to discern the true and original traits from added, changed, or humanly devised ones.

Let's note some essential characteristics of the New Testament church.

(1) The church was built and purchased by Christ (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28). No one has the right to start a church as a divinely approved institution, unless he or she is qualified as being a perfect offering for the sins of its members, and is resurrected from the dead to prove his/her claims (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Christ, the Son of God, is the only one qualified, and He has established *His* church. There is no need, nor authority, for another (cf. Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23).

(2) The church, which belongs to Christ, began on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. Religious bodies that have their *origin* in Rome, Zurich, London, or any other place but Jerusalem, are ones that started in the wrong places. The Lord's church was founded by Him through the preaching of the apostles in Jerusalem, corresponding to Old Testament prophecy (cf. Isaiah 2:2-4).

(3) Only divinely appointed names were worn by the church. Such designations like church of Christ (Romans 16:16) and church of God (1 Corinthians 1:1) are scriptural names that describe the church as belonging to Christ and God. Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, One-Way Road To Heaven Church and such like, are names that are not found in the New Testament as descriptives of the church. (4) The New Testament church relied upon the authority of the apostles and inspired writings as its guide in all matters of faith and practice. Councils, synods, conferences, and referendums that decide doctrinal issues for a number of religious bodies, have no scriptural authority. Religious creeds, written or otherwise, must be abandoned.

(5) Union with Christ, which is one and the same as being added to His church (Acts 2:47), is clearly set forth in the New Testament. There is no mistake as to the method by which membership may be realized. An accountable person, who realizes that he or she is in sin (Romans 3:23), must out of faith in Jesus as the Son of God (John 20:30-31), repent of sin (Acts 17:30), confess (Romans 10:9, 10), and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). There is not a single case of conversion in the New Testament that can support the popular idea that baptism is not essential for salvation. The Scriptures flatly contradict that denominational dogma.

(6) The New Testament church functioned on the local level. Dioceses, regional organization, and the like, did not exist. The church of Christ in the first century had as its organizational structure elders (equally described as bishops, pastors, shepherds, etc.; cf. Acts 20:17, 28) in the congregations (where qualified men were found, cf. Titus 1:5). Deacons served under the oversight of elders.

(7) The worship of the New Testament

church was also a matter of authority, and not left up to the whims of men. They gave into the church treasury (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2) as worship and a divinely approved method of church finance.

As they met every Sunday they came together "to break bread" (Acts 20:7). [Note: The Greek text of 1 Corinthians 16:2 is fully rendered in the NASB, i.e., "the first day of *every* week"]. Acts 20:7 records that they "were brought together" (passive voice of the verb), which suggests their assembling was a matter not of their own choosing; rather, it was the commandment of the Lord.

They prayed (1 Corinthians 14:15), and they did so without the use of mechanical devices like the rosary, incense, and candles. Such items were introduced much later than the first century, without any scriptural basis.

The New Testament church sang spiritual songs, psalms, and hymns; they did so without the use of mechanical instruments of music (Ephesians 5:19). All attempts to find authority for the use of mechanical instruments in Christian worship (e.g., in the Old Testament, in Revelation, in *psalmo*, as an aid, or "no authority is really needed") have failed and been shown to be feeble attempts to "christianize" that which was not a part of apostolic teaching.

Preachers also taught the Word in the worship assemblies (1 Timothy 4:13).

As noted earlier, the New Testament gives a clear statement of what the church was. The church's origin was divine; it operated on the basis of divine revelation. Should the perpetuation of it be any less? The New Testament is the divinely revealed standard by which the church can continue to be what Christ designed it to be.

WOT

WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES

Levi Sides, Associate Editor, Jasper, Alabama

From the time that Adam and Eve sinned in Eden man has experienced tragedy. It may take many forms, two of the most prevalent being sickness and death. Tragedy affects different people in different ways--some become very emotional, while others remain quiet and calm. Some get over it quickly; others never get over it. No matter whether he is emotional or calm, the Christian is better equipped than anyone else to handle tragedy. There are several reasons why this is true.

The Christian has a host of fellow Christians who come to his aid in time of need. Now I am not referring to the so-called Christian who rarely ever attends any of the services and never participates in the work of the church, but rather to the one who is an active worker in a local congregation. It has been my experience that when the true Christian suffers a tragedy he is surrounded by his brothers and sisters in Christ who provide support, sympathy, and whatever else is needed. This is but an application of the command to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

The Christian realizes that his eternal reward will more than compensate for any suffering in this life. He will have the attitude expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: "Wherefore we faint not . . . for our light affliction which is for the moment worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen." When we set our affections on things above and seek to lay up treasures in heaven, we are able to say as Paul said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

The Christian has the precious promises found in God's word. "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die yet shall he live" (John 11:24). "Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

The Christian has an all loving and all powerful mediator, Christ, who is ever living to make intercession for us (1 Timothy 2:5). Our mediator understands our troubles and wants to help us (Hebrews 4:5).

Fellow Christian, in time of tragedy, show your faith by having a peace which passeth understanding, a peace which can only come by being a child of God and a joint heir with Christ.

WOT

The Words of Truth

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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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NO SERIOUS REGRET

Johnny Ramsey, Arlington, Texas

When time shall be no more and we look back upon our sojourn on earth, will we have cause for regret or moments of joy? It all depends on our decisions in life and the paths we chose to follow. The psalmist put it in proper perspective: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7).

Will we have nothing precious to remember (Nehemiah 2:20) and even die to no one's regret (2 Chronicles 21:20)? Or, conversely, will we die in the Lord and be forever blessed (Revelation 14:13)?

Joy without measure
Will be my treasure
Heaven holds all to me.

When we come to the end of the way we will soberly reflect upon our earthly existence and our eternal destiny. We dare not die in sin (John 8:21) and thus miss the golden street of glory. We would not desire to miss a glad reunion of the saints of God. Jesus once spoke of a person better off not to

have even been born (Mark 14:21). Such a tragedy dare not be ours to inherit! To find us on the broad road to destruction is too horrible to contemplate (Matthew 7:13,14).

Someday you will answer
the question of life . . .

What will the answer be?

An old gospel song haunts us and demands of us a closer walk with God. Indeed, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Here are some things we will certainly regret on Judgment Day:

- ▶ Failure to obey Christ (Hebrews 6:9).
- ▶ Poor choice of marriage partner (Amos 3:3).
- ▶ Stinginess in giving (2 Samuel 24:24).
- ▶ Wrong emphasis in life (Mark 8:36).
- ▶ Wasting talents (James 4:17).
- ▶ Failure to teach others (1 Timothy 4:16).
- ▶ Allowing bitterness to hinder us (Hebrews 12:16).

- ▶ Failure to encourage others (Matthew 7:12).
- ▶ Being unready for judgment (Matthew 26:10).

I shall not find joy in that final hour because "I have a feeling down deep in my heart," but only if our blessed Savior deems my life pleasing and obedient. Paul makes this very clear: "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Corinthians 10:17,18).

May we, therefore, so live and love and serve that when we look back to our time on earth we will have cause for no serious regret. The words of a hymn warm our hearts:

The cares of life come very fast
Upon my soul their shadows
cast
Their gloom reminds my heart
at last

Thou thinkest, Lord, of me . . .

May we always place a high
premium upon living for Jesus! WOT

CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE: WHO?

Chuck Webster, Editorial

Last month's editorial addressed the question, "Why should we practice corrective church discipline?" With the *why* established, we now turn our attention to the *who*: "From whom should the church withdraw fellowship?"

Church discipline, when practiced at all, is too often exercised haphazardly, or, worse, prejudiciously. But the Bible is very clear as to the identity of individuals who need to be disciplined. In fact, biblical writers give several clear examples:

- ▶ One guilty of immorality is to be delivered to Satan (1 Corinthians 5).
- ▶ One who causes division and sows discord and offenses among brethren is to be marked (Romans 16:17; Titus 1:9-13).
- ▶ One who refuses to work needs to have fellowship withdrawn from him (2 Thessalonians 3:6,14).
- ▶ One who trespasses against his brother and will not repent is to be treated as a heathen (Matthew 5:23,24; 18:15-17).

The above examples prove that we should withdraw fellowship from anyone who practices immorality, creates division, refuses to work, or offends his brother and will not repent. But are we to infer that these are the *only* sins that are punishable by withdrawal of fellowship? That conclusion is entirely unwarranted.

The situational factor that causes a sinner to be subjected to corrective church discipline is *not* the gravity of his sin. In God's eyes, an adulterer is classed with an envious person (Galatians 5:19-21), and the murderer

is no worse off than the fearful (Revelation 21:8). The variable that is constant in every biblical case where withdrawal is commanded is the *lack of repentance*. We are commanded to withdraw fellowship from sinners who simply will not repent, even after being lovingly confronted by their church family.

We must understand corrective church discipline as being intimately associated with fellowship with God. Notice the link John puts between horizontal and vertical fellowship:

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ . . . If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:3,6,7).

Fellowship with one another flows from fellowship with God. We have the same Father, so we're in the same family. In a very real sense, we do not determine whom to fellowship. We fellowship everyone whom God reckons as His faithful child. Once God severs His fellowship with one of His children, our withdrawal must follow, after we have taken every step to bring the sinner back.

When we recognize that our withdrawal occurs because of a severed relationship between a

believer and his God, we understand the identity of those who are subject to corrective church discipline. If a person has committed a "sin unto death" (unconfessed sin; 1 John 5:16; cf. 1 John 1:9), whether it is adultery, apathy, murder, gossip, or forsaking church services, our reaction should be the same: we must publicly recognize that the person, in spite of all our efforts to the contrary, has removed his fellowship from God, and thus we must withdraw our fellowship from him.

Our goal should be consistency, recognizing that all sin is an abomination to God. We dare not discipline the adulterer and allow the backbiter to go unchastised. It would be an injustice to withdraw from the one who has consistently forsaken the "assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25) and to shake the hand of the worldly, materialistic believer whose attendance patterns are more consistent. In God's eyes, can one sinner be *more* lost than another? Suppose in a congregation you have two impenitent sinners: one refuses to end an adulterous relationship; the other attends church only for Sunday morning worship. Presupposing that appropriate visits, admonitions, etc., have been made with each, does the adulterer have a greater need for church discipline than the other? Clearly not.

From whom should we withdraw fellowship? The Bible is clear in this regard: *any believer who sins and will not repent*. In so doing, he has severed his fellowship with God, and horizontal fellowship must likewise discontinue.

“GOOD-BYE, MY FRIEND”

Bert Thompson, Montgomery, Alabama

[Editor's Note: On December 6, we honored the memory of Bobby Duncan, a capable and effective preacher of the gospel, as hundreds gathered at the Adamsville Church of Christ for his funeral. Brother Duncan touched the lives of thousands through the years, having preached in Munford for three years, Adamsville for thirty-five years, Jasper for seven years, and throughout the brotherhood in gospel meetings and lectureships. During his time at Sixth Avenue he capably edited *The Words of Truth*, and so, in his honor, we print the following poignant eulogy prepared and delivered by Bert Thompson, a close friend of brother Duncan. We are confident it will touch your hearts as it did ours. You can contact brother Thompson at Apologetics Press, Inc., 230 Landmark Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117-2752, 334-272-8558.]

The year was 1975. I had just finished 3½ years of graduate school at Texas A&M University and accepted a position in the University's College of Veterinary Medicine. I was 25 years old, green as a gourd, “wet behind the ears,” and yet, in spite of all that, I was about to make one of the smartest decisions of my entire existence--a decision that would garner to me a friend, and a friendship, the likes of which few people on this Earth ever are fortunate enough to experience.

Several months before, I had begun subscribing to the weekly religious journal, *Words of Truth*, published by the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama and edited by the inimitable Gospel preacher who spent almost 43 years there, Gus Nichols. I was impressed with what I read in each week's issue and, although I never had met him, with everything I read from the powerful pen of the paper's renowned editor. “What a wonderful thing,” I thought, “to use talents such as those he possessed to teach people Truth via the written word.” That idea appealed to me. And so even though I knew--to use a biblical phrase--that brother Nichols was one “the latchet of whose shoes I was not worthy to stoop down and unloose” (Mark 1:7), I nevertheless boldly decided to write an article and submit it to him to be considered for publication in *Words of Truth*. He never saw that article. It arrived in his office the day he died.

When I read the announcement in the November 21, 1975 issue of Gus Nichols' death five days earlier on November 16, I grieved: for his family, at the loss of a husband and father; for the Sixth Avenue congregation at the

loss of so powerful a preacher; for our great brotherhood, at the loss of so wise a scholar and so valiant a soldier; and (selfishly) for myself, at the loss of so esteemed an editor--under whose tutelage a young neophyte such as myself never was to have the opportunity to work and to learn.

Little did I know, however, that my personal grief soon was to be assuaged by another editor who, I eventually would come to realize, was every bit as capable, and every bit as worthy of esteem, as the late Gus Nichols--who, in fact, had spent years training him to pick up the sword that he knew he one day would have to lay down. Weeks later, a letter from him arrived--unheralded and unexpected, but oh, so deeply appreciated. His name was Bobby Duncan. He had just been hired by the elders of the Sixth Avenue congregation to fill the pulpit left vacant as a result of brother Nichols' untimely death, and to assume the editorial helm of *Words of Truth*. At brother Nichols' passing, the Sixth Avenue elders wisely determined (no doubt due in large part to the fact that they wished to honor Gus Nichols' lifetime commitment to the congregation and to the journal) that *Words of Truth* should continue its longstanding tradition of teaching, upholding, and defending the Old Jerusalem Gospel--a tradition that it maintains to this very hour.

In the brief interim period between brother Nichols' death and Bobby Duncan's arrival at the Sixth Avenue congregation on Sunday, May 2, 1976, Flavil Nichols (who had been serving as associate editor) graciously agreed to serve as editor, yet willingly

relinquished that position when Bobby's first editorial appeared in the May 7, 1976 issue of the paper. On the first day in his new office, Bobby found my letter to brother Nichols, and the accompanying article I had sent with it, sitting on top of a pile of unopened mail on the desk to which Gus never would return after his entrance into the hospital for the last time. Bobby wrote me a letter to inform me of brother Nichols' passing, to thank me for the article [which I had titled, “The American Standard Version (1901): A Recommended Version”] and to tell me that he planned to run it in two parts in *Words of Truth*--which he did on May 21 and 28, 1976. Thus began his twenty-year journey of being my editor, my mentor, and most importantly, my friend.

At the request of his family, I stand here today to reminisce about, and rejoice in, a friendship that endured for more than two decades and that blessed my life, and the lives of countless others, in ways that I cannot begin to enumerate or explain in this brief eulogy. And although in the end my efforts here today may be feeble and my words may falter, I would like to talk to you about the quiet grace, the towering strength, the humble demeanor, and the Christ-like spirit of my mentor, Bobby Duncan. This eulogy is my symbolic way of standing at attention--with tear-filled eyes, a broken heart, and an indescribable sense of loss--to salute with honor our fallen comrade and to pay homage to my very special friend.

Although we had corresponded by letter on numerous occasions, I first had the pleasure of meeting Bobby

Duncan early in 1979. On his own, he had gone to the Sixth Avenue elders to ask them if it would be all right to invite me to present one of my new *Science & Nature* seminars for the congregation. When he called to extend the invitation for me to come during the weekend of January 27-29, 1979, I asked him why he had done this. To this day, I never have forgotten his deadpan response. With no emotion whatsoever, the voice on the other end of the phone said matter-of-factly, "Oh, I just wanted to see if you speak like you write. And if you can't, we'll never invite you back." Talk about putting on the pressure! During the long plane ride from College Station, Texas to Birmingham, Alabama, the thought kept swirling through my mind: "How am I ever going to pull this off?" Here I was--not even 30 years old--and I was going to be lecturing to an audience with Bobby Duncan, Flavil Nichols, and Franklin Camp sitting on the front row "grading me" on my performance. Not a pleasant thought!

In one way, however, I was glad to have the opportunity to meet Bobby because I had something "stuck in my craw" that I wanted to discuss with him face to face. Shortly after he published my very first article, I sent him another one--which he never got around to publishing. Or, to put it more bluntly--which he flatly rejected. As we drove from the airport in Birmingham to the church building in Jasper, I asked him why he hadn't published my article. He turned, looked at me, and said somewhat sternly: "Because it wasn't any good. You can do better." Ever the dedicated editor, he took his job--and mine--seriously. If you intended to run in his circles, or write for his paper, you had to "do better." My ego somewhat bruised, I returned home after the weekend speaking engagement and re-read the article that he had refused to print. He was right; it wasn't any good. He taught me a lesson I never would forget: I should work harder--and I could do better.

"Better" was the hallmark of his life. He was a better scholar than most. He was a better writer than most. He was a better preacher than most. He was a better dad than most. He was a

better husband than most. He was a better granddad than most. He was a better friend than most. He was, well, he was just **better!**

And because of that, I sought his counsel often. Late in 1979, Wayne Jackson and I decided to begin the work of Apologetics Press. We desperately wanted to produce biblically sound, scientifically accurate, and yet understandable materials in the fields of Christian apologetics and Christian evidences to help fill what we viewed as a serious void in our great brotherhood regarding such items. After much prayer and deliberation, I decided to resign my professorship in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Texas A&M in order to devote full time to this kind of work. But that required securing financial support. And so I called Bobby to ask his advice. He told me that if I would get on a plane and fly to Alabama right then, he would help me raise the support. I dropped everything, flew to Alabama, and stayed with him and Lois for three days, during which time he called elderships all around the Walker County area on my behalf. By the time I left, I had over half of the required monthly support raised--no thanks, I might add, to my own efforts. Almost every one of the congregations he called had agreed to help, such was the power of his recommendation and reputation. And today--twenty years later--many of those congregations (like Blackwater Macedonia, Adamsville, Cordova, and others) still continue providing the support that Bobby Duncan raised for my work.

Five short years later, in February 1984, I was in desperate need of his help again. This time, however, it wasn't financial aid, but spiritual advice, that I needed. I was struggling to write a booklet titled *Non-Denominational Christianity: Is Unity Possible?* to address the unorthodox and unscriptural positions of a well-known preacher in Montgomery at the time who was flirting openly with what eventually came to be known as the "change agent movement" within the church. I telephoned Bobby to ask if I could drive to Adamsville (where he was preaching at the time) to discuss

the book's contents with him. He graciously granted me an audience and reworked his otherwise tight schedule to assist me. In the end, he and Franklin Camp (whose guidance likewise turned out to be invaluable) spent almost an entire day helping me understand the critical facets of the new movement and working with me to iron out important concepts that they knew would have to be incorporated into the book if it was to achieve its goal of exposing and refuting the assault upon the Lord's church.

Fifteen years later, I still was seeking his advice and guidance--guidance upon which I had leaned often and that I had learned long ago could be trusted implicitly. Just a month ago, I began work on a series of articles on "The Origin, Nature, and Destiny of the Soul" to be published in *Reason and Revelation*, the monthly journal on Christian evidences published by Apologetics Press. Little did I realize, as I began my research, the "deep waters" into which I was about to wade. After completing the first two articles in the four-part series, I realized that I needed scholarship far greater than any I possessed to fine tune, evaluate, and improve the articles. I called Bobby and asked if I could send him the articles to proofread. As always, he graciously agreed to help. Less than a week later, he returned the articles--along with his ever-appropriate constructive criticisms and a hand-written note that read simply, "Good stuff; thank you for allowing me to have a part in this." Each and every one of his corrections and suggestions, of course, was incorporated into the final draft. Such was the nature of his scholarship--and his attitude of humility toward those working beside him in what he considered the greatest work on Earth.

It was because of such brilliant scholarship, and such an humble attitude, that in 1988 Wayne Jackson and I dedicated the third volume in our *Essays in Apologetics* series to him with this inscription: "To Bobby Duncan--whose preaching and writing labors have blessed the lives of countless thousands through the years, and whose support and encouragement

of this work have been gratefully received." It always was important to him to do everything within his power to encourage others in their work in the Kingdom, especially those who were younger and who needed a helping hand in both their own personal growth and their fledgling efforts on behalf of the Lord's church. Certainly, I am not the only one who has been the recipient of his beneficent influence. Truth be told, I suspect that if I were to ask those of you in this audience today whose lives have been enriched as a result of having known Bobby Duncan to raise your hands, a veritable sea of arms would fill the air. I, personally, know one young man sitting in this audience whose life never will be the same as a result of having come into contact, albeit briefly, with Bobby Duncan. A little over a year ago, I had the pleasure of studying the Gospel with an incredible twenty-year-old young man from the Montgomery area by the name of Sam Estabrook. Sam had what every teacher of the Gospel yearns for in a potential convert--an open mind and a tender heart. Upon learning what God had instructed him to do to be saved, he obeyed. On September 9, 1998 I baptized Sam into Christ, and a little over a month later he was able to begin working with us at Apologetics Press in the position of Operations Manager. As his spiritual growth began to blossom--and be increasingly evident to those around him--Sam was asked by Steve Housley, minister of the Eastern Meadows Church of Christ in Montgomery where we worship, to write a brief article for the weekly bulletin. He accepted, and wrote an excellent article titled "Has Man Seen God?" dealing with several Bible verses that critics have suggested contradict each other. Bobby Duncan saw that article and called me to inquire about Sam and his potential as a writer. A day or so later, Bobby wrote Sam a letter requesting his permission to publish the article in *Vigil*, the monthly journal (for which Bobby served as editor) published by the Adamsville congregation. Sam's article appeared in the September 1999 issue, and that article, plus another he co-authored,

appeared in the October 1999 issue of *Reason and Revelation*. Bobby, I happen to know (because he mentioned it to me just days ago), had jotted down on his list of "things to do" the task of asking Sam to write another article for *Vigil*--because he wanted to do everything he could to encourage this new Christian in his daily walk with the Lord.

And thus he began once more the process of taking under his wing another youngster--a fledgling writer whose talents he wanted to encourage and whose future he wanted to ensure--just like the one who stands before you today that he so methodically adopted, tutored, and cultivated 23 years ago. To thank him, last Friday I wrote him a letter. But just like that letter I sent to the editor of *Words of Truth* almost a quarter-of-a-century ago, Bobby Duncan never got to read it. Like my correspondence to Gus Nichols, it arrived on his desk the day he died. It--like my missive to brother Nichols--was found sitting on top of a pile of unopened mail on the desk to which Bobby never would return after his entrance into the hospital for the last time.

But that's quite all right, because in his heart he knew that I had spent the last twenty years attempting to repay him for what he had done for me and for my work. He knew that I understood what he was trying to accomplish with me, with Sam, and with so many others whose lives he touched during his all-too-brief 65 years in our midst. But more importantly, he accomplished what he set to do. Before he departed to receive his crown of glory, he was able to do two things to ensure that his life's work would continue. First, he trained those of us who are younger to follow in his footsteps. Like the apostle Paul, he could say to us--and mean it--"Imitate me as I imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Second, thanks to his never-ending diligence, his untiring study, and his careful scholarship, he has left behind an invaluable legacy--contained in more than 40 years' worth of sermons, editorials, articles, and manuscripts--that will continue to bless

the lives of thousands yet even unborn. And as those materials continue to be circulated and reprinted in the days, months, and years to come, truly it will be said of Bobby Duncan that he, "being dead, yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4).

Some of us owe him more than we ever shall be able to repay. My name is at the top of that list. But if we who now remain behind wish to honor our fallen friend, can we not best do so by living as he lived, teaching as he taught, and making the most of each day as a precious gift from God as he did? To Lois, Jill, Tim, and all of the extended Duncan family, I would like to say this. He taught us wisely, and loved us deeply. He spent his life sacrificing for us and setting a proper example for us. He stood for Truth and opposed error, yet he did so without becoming mean-spirited, hateful, or radical. His life was the epitome of balance, and our lives are richer by far for having known and loved him. Thank you for sharing him with us so unselfishly.

Today, each of us is overwhelmed by the grief we feel at the loss of our friend and our brother. We carry an enormous hollow spot within our hearts--a spot once filled with the reality of the presence of Bobby Duncan. Heaven's gain truly has become our loss. He was our special friend, and each of us looked forward to spending more of the future with him in the here and now. But let us be reminded today that because of God's bountiful grace, because of the willing sacrifice of His Son, and because of the lifetime commitment that Bobby made to his Lord, we still may look forward to spending more of the future with our special friend. Today, as we bid him farewell, we do so with tear-filled eyes and breaking hearts. Tomorrow, in God's eternal presence, we shall be reunited with him in joy amidst the city set foursquare, whose streets are paved with the purest of gold, whose gates are made of the most precious of pearl, and "whose Builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). For now then--but only temporarily--we say, "Good-bye, my friend."

CLAPPING IN WORSHIP

Glenn Colley, Collierville, Tennessee

I was recently asked to speak to an assembly on the subject of hand-clapping in worship. Does this practice, common in some churches, please God? Is it a non-issue to God? Does it anger God? Don't start your answer to the question by saying, "Well, I think God, . . ." You would be better served to begin by saying, "The scriptures which are relevant to this question are these-- let's look at them."

There are nine times in the Bible where clapping is mentioned. All of them are in the Old Testament. Several are figurative; for example, "Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together" (Psalm 98:8). One is to rejoice over a military victory delivered by God: "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph" (Psalm 47:1). One is to exalt a king: "And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king" (2 Kings 11:12).

There is no mention of clapping in the New Testament, neither in worship nor outside of worship. Therefore we first must observe that no one claps in worship today because God has revealed that He enjoys the practice. No one claps in worship today because he has read in the Bible that the early Christians clapped. Clapping in worship is done today because people like to clap.

Hand clapping is what we do,

typically around various forms of live entertainment, to show our approval or excitement. We clap when our team scores. We clap when the curtain closes at the High School play. We clap when an agreeable speech has been made. So why shouldn't we clap in worship to God? After all, there are moments of great joy; moments of deep approval at what has been said or done. The eating of the Lord's supper is a meaningful experience. Witnessing a baptism is a deeply happy experience. Some sermons really hit the nail on the head and say what needs saying. Shouldn't we applaud the preacher? Some songs have a lively beat which can be enhanced with clapping. Can't we clap if we so choose?

The answer is no. No, because it violates a Bible principle. It is this: What we do in worship to God must be authorized. Those things which are not authorized for worship don't belong in worship. Some might argue, "The Bible does not say *not to* clap hands in worship today." But God did not have to list all the possibilities of things man might think up to do in his worship. If we began teaching that anything we choose to do in worship is acceptable if the Bible doesn't specifically say "Don't do this," imagine what kinds of things might be called worship. Observe the latter half of the requirement for pleasing worship in what Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). To worship God

in truth can mean only one thing, and that is that worship must be practiced according to the revealed truth of God. Paul underscores that principle when he writes, "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. 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" (Colossians 3:16,17).

To use hand clapping with our singing, as a type of percussion (like beating a drum), is equal in principle to playing a musical instrument. God's word tells us that what God wants is not playing, but singing (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16). If we truly come to the worship assembly to please God above all else, we will do what He has asked of us, in the way He has designed.

To use hand clapping in worship as an expression of approval is also inappropriate in worship to God. Such reduces the worship to the level of an entertainment or sporting event. What is important about worship is not that *you* approve what is done, but that God Almighty approves what is done.

Worship is done to please God, not ourselves. Let's do what God has asked. When He has specified how a thing is to be done, let us do it that way. Let us never worship to please and entertain ourselves and suggest to God that He must accept it.

“NO GUILT” PREACHING

Todd Clippard, Hamilton, Alabama

A local denomination is advertising a contemporary worship service called “Soul Solutions.” It is being billed as “Contemporary Worship for the 21st Century.” Of this service it is claimed one will “hear positive, practical messages which encourage.” Another section of the flyer says “No guilt.” This “feel good about yourself” style of preaching dominates the religious scene today. While I have no problem with preaching “positive, practical messages that motivate,” one would do well to note what kind of preaching dominates the pages of God’s Word. Even a casual reading of the preaching of Moses, the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the preachers of the Great Commission reveals preaching designed to convict and correct, not caress and console.

Jeremiah is known as “the weeping prophet.” Because of this, one might think his message would be primarily one of consolation, but this would be an erroneous assumption. In Jeremiah 1:10, the Lord said to Jeremiah, “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.” What do we see about Jeremiah’s task in preaching? Four negatives and two positives. In Jeremiah 23:29, the Lord describes His word, “Is not my word like fire? saith

Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” In the face of scorn and mockery for preaching God’s word, Jeremiah said, “But His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and could not contain” (Jeremiah 20:9). Jeremiah was a preacher who “had something to say” as opposed to many of today’s preachers who “have to say something.”

The preachers of the New Testament were also “tell it like it is” preachers. John the Baptist began his preaching with a call to repentance (Matthew 3:2). His preaching disturbed his hearers as all of Jerusalem and Judea and the region round about Jordan went to him and were baptized, confessing their sins. Apparently, John’s preaching was a cry of warning against the wrath of God. Note these excerpts from our first exposure to John’s preaching: “Ye generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits meet for repentance . . . and now also the axe is laid at the root of the trees, therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Matthew 3:7,8,10). Don’t forget John’s indictment of Herod which cost him his life, “It is not lawful for you to have her” (Matthew 14:4).

In the first gospel sermon, Peter

twice accused his audience of the murder of the Son of God, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God among you . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:22,23,36). Peter’s preaching pierced the hearts of his hearers; it didn’t give them warm fuzzies.

Finally, look at the preaching of Jesus. He did not travel around massaging the fragile psyches of the people of His day. He began His public ministry with a call for change on the part of His hearers, “Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matthew 4:17; cf. Matthew 15:7-14). Repentance requires a change of thinking that results in a change of lifestyle. How can this be accomplished without some measure of guilt? Jesus’ preaching offended many of His followers, causing some of them to follow Him no more (John 6:66).

There is a place for positive preaching. The pulpit cannot be used to beat people down week after week, but there must be a balance of reproof and rebuking to go along with the exhorting (2 Timothy 4:2). This is the kind of preaching that saves the souls of men. WOT

THE SUFFERING OF JESUS AND COMMITMENT

Neal Pollard, Mechanicsville, Virginia

Jesus died an awful death. Ruthless assassins, terrorists, sadistic and serial killers, savage and perverted criminals all have received much more humane treatment. What Jesus endured at the cross can only be described as vicious. Consider the violent aspects of His crucifixion.

There was *physical torture*. He was scourged, beaten with a jagged whip (Matthew 27:27). He was fitted with a crown of thorns (Matthew 27:29). He was hit on the head repeatedly with a staff (Matthew 27:30). The soldiers struck Him with their hands (John 19:3). He carried His heavy cross until it fell on Him (John 19:17). He was nailed to a cross (John 20:25).

There was *mental anguish*. His countrymen hatefully yelled for His death (Matthew 27:25). Soldiers mocked Him and pretended to worship Him (Matthew 27:29). People hurled abuse at Him (Matthew 27:39,40). Religious leaders mocked Him (Matthew 27:41-43). The thieves on the cross insulted Him (Matthew 27:44). The Heavenly Father left Him alone (Matthew 27:46). His disciples followed Him, mourning and wailing (Luke 23:27).

There was *social embarrassment*. They stripped Him (Matthew 27:25). He was spit upon (Matthew 27:30). The soldiers gambled for His clothes (Matthew 27:35). He was watched like a sideshow (Matthew 27:36). They jokingly put an elegant, purple robe on Him (Luke 23:11). He endured great shame (Hebrews 12:2).

The sheer brutality of the crucifixion tells one how serious sin is! The proposal from heaven is, "Stop sinning and serve the Savior!" In the light of the cross, examine Heaven's every demand, command, and reprimand. What expectation from the Father or requirement from the Son is too great? Before answering, look back at the cross! WOT

The Words of Truth

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