

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"A monthly magazine set to declare the whole counsel of God."*

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## Talking Things Over

G. R. L.

### FORGIVING SINS ISN'T EASY

You commit a sin and God forgives you. Why does He do it? Here are some of the answers I have received:

"He promised to forgive."

"I confessed my sin and repented."

"God is a God of love; He doesn't hold things against a person."

"I am His child and He loves me."

There is a certain amount of truth in each of these answers, but the really vital truth is completely missing. Many Christians seem to have only a foggy idea of what the forgiveness of sins is all about. Sin against God is kind of like unintentionally stepping on a friend's toe. An apologetic, "Oh! I'm sorry!" makes everything all right. But it isn't all that easy.

### GOD IS HOLY

Sin against God—the smallest sin, a single thought—is a capital crime against the Holy One. A law enforcement agency that didn't pursue and prosecute criminals would arouse the righteous wrath of the citizenry. Should we then expect a righteous God to smile benignly at our peccadilloes and say, "That's all right. I know you didn't mean it." A just judge cannot acquit a man proved guilty, and a just God cannot dismiss a guilty sinner without dealing with his sins. The penalty must be paid. God has pronounced sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." That sentence must be executed—or God is not God.

Thank God, that sentence *has* been executed, at Mount Calvary! "God has laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). The full load of our guilt was laid upon the Lord Jesus; He bore the penalty for us and we are free! The blood shed at Calvary has been accepted by God as the full payment for our sins—past, present, and future. Every forgiven sin is forgiven because of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not the Baby Jesus who saves, and it is not the Holy Spirit who takes away sin. Neither is it an understanding, beneficent Father. Rather, it is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. To bear away the least of my sins cost Him His life. When I cry, "Father, forgive!" I hear the reply, "Certainly, my child, but I grant it at the cost of the life of my Son."

With such an earth-shaking, heaven-rending event before us, how can we rush through the Lord's Supper in six minutes? We need—week after week after week—to make the sufferings of our Savior the subject matter of our prayers and praises and meditations. There at His table together we wonder at His love, and the depths of depravity from which He saved us. We rejoice at our position of privilege with Christ in the heavenly places, and stand in awe at the judgment He bore to take us there. We worship Him who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and remember that He emptied Himself of His glory for the death of the cross.

#### "THE LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD"

Take away the blood of Christ and all you have left is religion—mere words and forms. Nothing in the Bible has any meaning if we delete the cross. We hear liberalism sometimes denounced as a "bloodless theology"—but I hear some bloodless preaching from evangelical pulpits, too. No, these brothers don't deny the blood atonement, but when they go to talking about salvation, somehow they manage to mention everything except the blood that cleanses from sin. "Without the shedding of blood, there is *no remission of sin.*" And without the preaching of that blood, there is no gospel—no salvation. Brother, what message do you preach?



I would recommend a rather recent book by Robert Coleman, *Written in Blood* (Fleming H. Revell Co., 1972). This is a devotional study of the blood in the scriptures, with questions, etc., suitable for class use. 128 pp., paper \$1.50, cloth \$3.50.

## The Ministry of the Stepladder

A Chicago bishop the other day preached to a street crowd from a stepladder straddled in the Loop. The novel pulpit served the double purpose of forming a convenient elevation for the speaker and securing publicity for a commendable bit of religious enterprise.

Of course, there is nothing new about such work. It is, in fact, the original form of Christian propaganda. Jesus was a street and wayside preacher. His followers did most of their evangelizing in the open. Paul found the market place an excellent forum for the presentation of truth. The indoor meetings of the early church were largely gatherings of believers. It was not expected that the unconverted would seek out the teachers of the new faith in its places of assembly. The teachers were expected to seek out the unconverted. And this apostolic spirit—this spirit of those who felt themselves commissioned and dispatched to carry the good tidings of God's concern for human life to men and women everywhere—has always marked the periods of highest spiritual vision and energy in the history of the church.

It is not clear gain that we have today a Christian faith which finds part expression in great temples where worship is made com-

fortable and attractive, where physical ease and aesthetic enjoyment are among the essential provisions. Spiritual enervation has been one result. Selfish religionism has been another. The men and women who have the message the world needs gather beneath vaulted ceilings, and, in the soft light of stained-glass windows, sing their hymns of praise, repeat their prayers, listen to the discourse and hope that some day the heedless, but heart-hungry throng outside will come in and be converted.

The hope is vain. With every passing year it becomes more clearly evident that a walled-in gospel cannot save the world. The church must get back to the original methods. If a fishing boat or the crumbling stone circle of a well was good enough rostrum for the Master, a step-ladder or a soap-box should be good enough for any of His followers. "Street preaching is undignified," says the eminently respectable churchman, to whom religion is more or less a luxury. But, if memory serves us, Paul, when he listed the fruit of the Spirit, did not include dignity.

The first syllable of the word gospel is "go." "Go" is the first word of the marching orders which Jesus left for His followers. Before the church can make much impression by saying, "Come!" it must make a bigger impression by obeying "Go!"

And this street-preaching work is essentially work for the layman. The multitude knows the minister is paid to advocate God's way of life, and that discounts his message with many. The layman appears in a more disinterested role when he mounts the impoverished pulpit. It is a good thing to have a bishop talk religion in LaSalle Street; it would be a better thing to have a banker. If religion is to be brought back again into everyday life, into the life of the street and the mart, laymen must do it.

Lawyers, financiers, merchants talked patriotism during the war; why shouldn't they talk religion? Let them talk it, not in terms of theology, but in terms of experience. Let them make its application to the problems of the week day task, to the temptations of office and shop, and street, to the questions which are concerning men and women in industry, in citizenship, in social customs. If religion cannot stand this sharp contact with life, there is something wrong with it. If the individual cannot face his fellows in his faith, there is something wrong with him.

\* \* \* \*

The above was an editorial in the *Louisville Herald* written about fifty years ago, and quoted in the September, 1922, *Word and Work*. The W&W pointed out that the editor of this Daily is a Jew, and that it is rather remarkable that such able and earnest words, and withal so timely and merited a jolt, should be handed out to Christendom from such a quarter.

In the light of so much criticism that is being "dished out" from every quarter of today's church, let the servants of God take good notice.

—J. W. Blaes

*Prayer was the turning point in his life and in Jewish history; we can learn from his example in our praying.*

## **Nehemiah, the Man who Prayed**

John White

Nehemiah was a Jew who served King Artaxerxes as cupbearer. His greatness might never have been known but for his decision to return to Jerusalem (at that time a miserable community of Jews who had returned from exile in an attempt to resettle their former capital).

In this story Nehemiah tells of hatred and treachery beaten back by courage, resourcefulness, and faith. At the end of it the timid cupbearer, who trembled (with good reason) at the thought of begging leave from his royal master, is seen as one of God's giants.

Nehemiah was spiritual, yet he did not have his head in the clouds. And he was organized. At the same time, he was a realist and a man with vision. He knew how to face fanatical opposition without getting things out of perspective. The twentieth century could use several Nehemiahs.

Take his prayer life for instance. The book begins and ends in prayer. Nine of his prayers, most of them short, spur-of-the-moment cries to God, are recorded. His first prayer, which occupies most of chapter 1, is a more solid affair. In a way it is not only a prayer but also the turning point of Nehemiah's whole life. It is more. It is a turning point in Jewish history.

A friend of mine once said, "I learned to pray by being invited to pray with certain old prayer warriors. To hear them pray was an education."

Unfortunately, we cannot pray *with* Nehemiah. What we can do is overhear him as he prays, trying to discover the secret of this historic pleading.

His prayer causes problems. Some of them (for instance, the problem of why he confessed other people's sins) are peculiar to the prayer itself. Others are personal problems about prayer that bother us afresh as we listen to Nehemiah praying.

To start, there is the matter of emotion. Nehemiah was under emotional stress. He "sat down and wept, and mourned certain days" (Neh. 1:4). Maybe the age he lived in was a more emotional age than ours. Be that as it may, the emotion was there, and was an integral part of the prayer.

People go to one of two extremes about emotions in the Christian life. Some stress it too much, while others seem to think that the slightest bit of it is profoundly unhealthy. "Christianity is faith, not feelings," they tell us.

Yet feelings surely are an evidence of life. Dead people and unconscious people feel nothing. Perhaps confusion arises because emotions have sometimes gotten out of hand or have been given the

wrong place. We cannot live our Christian lives without emotion. After all, joy and peace are both emotions. It is just that feelings are secondary to more important things. My feelings are secondary to more important things. My feeling of love wilts when I look at it; it blossoms anew when I look at my wife.

I once asked Mrs. James O. Frazer, the widow of J. O. Frazer, author of *Behind the Ranges*, what she did when she felt completely lacking in emotion and had no desire to pray. "I pray just the same," she said, "those are times I most need to pray."

She was right. Yet I cannot help wishing I could be moved to pray like Nehemiah was moved. The question is, Where did his emotions spring from?

I believe they came from two sources. First, he longed for the glory of God and the well-being of God's people. "These are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand!" he cried (Nehemiah 1:10). In contrast, we can get upset about a member of our own family, but we do not care very much about the glory of God.

Second, he was keenly conscious of reality. It was the vivid picture in his mind of the burned walls of the city that upset him. Suppose you are wandering aimlessly near the seacoast. You are perfectly calm. Suddenly you realize that you are about to step over a cliff and plunge hundreds of feet to your death. You recoil in terror. Your knees become weak and you feel as though you are about to vomit. You are filled with conflicting emotions—horror at your narrow escape, and gratitude that you opened your eyes in time. Where did these emotions come from? Simply from a vivid awareness of reality.

And it is so in spiritual things. Emotions spring from an awareness of reality. If sin fails to horrify you, that is because you do not realize what sin is. If your heart is unmoved at the thought of the glories of Heaven and the mercy of God, it is because they are not real to you. Concern yourself with facts. Ask the Holy Spirit to make reality real to you. Your emotions will take care of themselves.

Another problem haunts me as I read through Nehemiah's prayer. From where does he get his faith? He does not actually mention faith, yet faith is woven into the very fabric of the prayer. Is there anything in the prayer itself that tells us? I think there is.

For one thing there is his idea of God: "the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments" (Nehemiah 1:5). You can really only have faith in someone in the degree that you know them. In particular you must know two things about them: that they are *able* to do what you want, and that they are *willing* to.

I felt terribly worried about an operation my wife was to have. Who could I trust to do it? Then I remembered the "chief." When I was a student, I had assisted him. I had watched his deft gloved hands flawlessly perform the most intricate operation. He never

seemed ruffled or upset however great the crisis. He was kind. At once I knew whom I could trust. He could and he would.

These are the two attributes that Nehemiah saw in God. "The great and terrible God" can do everything. The God who "keepeth covenant and mercy" will do anything. Nehemiah doubted neither His power nor His kindness.

But if Nehemiah's faith was based upon his knowledge of what God is like, it was made perfect by his knowledge of what God had promised. He quoted God's promise, "Remember I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses" (Nehemiah 1:8). The promise clinched his faith.

In *Pilgrim's Progress* Christian and Hopeful were caught by Giant Despair, and flung into his dungeons in Doubting Castle. Their spirits were very low. Suddenly Christian remembered a key named "promises" that was in his bosom. Pulling it out, he found that it opened every door that led from Doubting Castle. Giant Despair died of apoplexy as he saw the Pilgrims escaping. Nehemiah knew how to use the key of promises to escape from his doubts.

Other problems are peculiar to the prayer itself. Why, for instance, did Nehemiah confess other people's sins as though they were his own? "I . . . confess the sins of the children of Israel . . . which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments" (Nehemiah 1:6,7).

Daniel did the same in his prayer. Few men have been more upright than Daniel. Yet he prayed, "We have sinned . . . neither have we hearkened" (Daniel 9:5,6). In a sense the sins were neither Nehemiah's nor Daniel's yet in both of these great prayers, the prayer warriors identified themselves with the people for whom they were praying. They did not pray, "Oh, Lord, forgive them," but "Oh, Lord, forgive us."

True they had more of a community sense than we. Yet this does not rob the lesson of its importance. In a way they anticipated what Jesus did when He waited in line to be baptized. He had not sinned. He was identifying Himself with sinful humanity.

As a medical student I once missed a practical class on venereal diseases. Because of this I had to go to the venereal diseases clinic alone one night at a time when students did not usually attend. As I entered the building a male nurse I did not know met me. A line of men were waiting for treatment. "I want to see the doctor," I said.

"That's what everybody wants, stand in the line," the male nurse said.

"But you don't understand. I am a medical student," I protested.

"Makes no difference. You got what everybody else got. Stand in the line," the male nurse repeated.

In the end I managed to explain to him, but I can still feel the sense of shame that made me balk at standing in line with men with V.D.

Yet, this was the very attitude Jesus shunned as He waited to be baptized. It was the attitude that made Nehemiah's prayer a truly great prayer. Will we ever learn to pray for people unless we identify ourselves with them?

Another thing that puzzles me about Nehemiah's prayer is its length. You can read it in two minutes. Yet Nehemiah himself said, "Hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night" (Nehemiah 1:6). Some scholars estimate from a comparison of the dates in chapters 1 and 2 that he was in prayer for about 40 days. Whether this is true or not, Nehemiah spent a long time in prayer.

It is certain that he did not simply repeat over and over the same two-minute prayer during this period. This would be "vain repetition," the thing that Jesus condemned. Maybe the prayer that has been left to us was the end result of his long wrestling in prayer—a kind of jewel born in the heat and pressure of a long period of prayer.

How long should we go on praying, to be sure our prayers are heard? In spite of His commendation of short prayers, Jesus Himself passed whole nights in prayer. Does the length of time we spend in prayer affect the answers we get?

Everyone who prays knows that praying is not just asking and receiving. I begin to ask and I sense that something is wrong. The Spirit of God turns the course of the conversation. I want to talk to Him about Mrs. Green. He wants to talk to me about my sin. I want to talk to Him about Africa. He wants to talk to me about my next door neighbor. I come armed with a list of subjects to talk about. He comes to me with one thing that He wants me to do. It is only in the hours of quiet waiting on Him that He is able to sort out the confusion in my mind, showing me how He really wants me to pray.

It was probably like this with Nehemiah. Let us put ourselves in his place for the moment? How would we have prayed? "Oh, Lord, please help the poor brethren in Jerusalem. Help them not to be discouraged because the walls have been broken down. Help them to remember that their God is strong, much stronger than their enemy."

Aren't you being rather hypocritical, Nehemiah? If I am so strong and powerful, why don't you ask the king's permission to go to Jerusalem yourself and build the walls? It is nice of you to pray, but it would be much nicer for you to go.

It may be that a hundred earnest requests collected and withered on Nehemiah's lips before he had the courage to utter the one request that God was waiting for him to utter. He knew full well the danger he ran if he were to ask the king's permission to go to Jerusalem. Yet finally the words came, "Prosper I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man" (Nehemiah 1:11). This one simple request was the climax to his mighty prayer.

—In *The Truth*





# But Suppose We're Wrong

Alex V. Wilson

## I. ABOUT CHRIST'S IMMEDIATE COMING

At a crucial moment in England's history, Oliver Cromwell sent an urgent appeal to Parliament: "I beg you, by the mercies of Christ, *consider that you may be mistaken!*" That is wise advice for each of us. Recently I read some similar words, which had been spoken at a prophecy conference where premillennialists and non-millennialists met and studied in an atmosphere of brotherliness:

It might be good for the moment if we would assume that we are wrong. It is always good for a person to try to think how things would be if it should turn out that he is mistaken. We may all be wrong. Probably we are all wrong in some respect or other.

Of course we should have convictions, and not be like wishy-washy Charlie Brown. But along with our convictions, based on our own study, we should have an open-minded attitude and be willing to reconsider, change, and grow. After all, sincerity is no guarantee of correctness. Many times sincere, godly Bible teachers have been wrong in some respects. For instance, Neatby, in his *History of the Plymouth Brethren*, says,

If anyone had told the first Brethren (during the 1820's) that three-fourths of a century might elapse and the Church be still on the earth, the answer would probably have been a smile, partly of pity, partly of disapproval, wholly of incredulity. Yet so it has proved.

And more than seven decades have passed since Neatby wrote those words in 1901! He went on to show that their mistaken assumption led to a lack of long-range planning in some ways.

Could we possibly be repeating their error? Now, don't get me wrong. Don't gather wood for a heretic-burning, yet! I certainly believe in and hope for Christ's soon return, and just recently preached about various signs that seem to indicate its nearness. There are many such signs: Israel, the Common Market, the ecumenical movement, the boom in sorcery and even Satanism (see Rev. 9: 20-21), etc., etc. It may be that our dear Savior will call us to Himself before this issue of *Word and Work* arrives in your mailbox. If so—glad Day!

But, on the other hand, suppose that the trends which we see developing take longer to finalize than we imagine? Just suppose, though it seems unlikely, that the Church still has another ten years to serve the Lord on earth—or even twenty-five years—or even . . .??

Yes, it seems highly unlikely. Yet listen: "Intelligent students of prophecy understand that the end of the present state of things must be close at hand." Those words were written by Gratton Guinness 84 years ago! Again: "The fall and ruin of the world will shortly take place." Lactantius penned that sentence in the early 300's A.D.! Once more: In 1937 Charles Trumbull wrote,

The difference between this present day and earlier generations, when some of God's people have mistakenly supposed that the Lord's return was at hand, is simply this: in our generation for the first time since Christ ascended to heaven, all the predicted major signs of the end of the age are synchronizing. One or more of these signs have occurred in earlier generations; never before have they all occurred simultaneously, as we see them today.

Thirty-five years ago he said that, and the present age has not ended yet. Surely his statement could be made today with much more support than when he made it. Yet even now let us avoid dogmatism. Most of all—and here is the major concern of this article—let us not allow our expectation of Christ's soon return to retard our missionary planning. It ought to do just the opposite, of course. But the thought may subtly come to young people, "I'd like to be a foreign missionary; however, I would need at least a couple more years to finish my training, and then language-study would take another year or two before I could really accomplish much. But Jesus is bound to return before then, anyway, so it seems foolish to start. . . ." In this and other ways, Satan will try to make our expectation of Christ's coming backfire on us.

Our Master said, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and *then* the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). So, as an old saying goes, let's *live* as though Christ will return today, but let's *work* as though He won't be back for one hundred years. Maranatha! To the work!

## "Something New"

This thing,  
Writing,  
It's new to me.  
I know as much of it, Lord,  
As I know of Life  
In you.

I always thought,  
At least was told,  
That one writes to  
Fill the need of sharing.

But now,  
As I start  
On this new tangent of mine,  
I sense that this is but the secondary,  
Not the necessary part.

I feel impelled  
To try this thing,  
Not so much to enlighten,  
Or even share with another.  
But Lord,  
I'm confused . . . .

Can you help me, Lord? \*

Where to begin?  
That is the first  
And perhaps the last issue.  
Christ in me?  
Such a mystery!

Yet,  
If it is so,  
and I know it is . . .  
Then what is your purpose Lord,  
In laying hold of me?

To preach,  
Teach,  
To be a layman's layman?  
The Spirit in my heart  
Says it must be more.  
Yet,  
They say it is  
My duty Lord.

Duty?  
Teach me what it means.  
It must be  
Directed only to you  
I know.  
But they have confused  
And made even that hard.

What would you have of me Lord?  
My first venture in writing  
Has led me  
No further than this?  
I'm no clearer  
Than when I first sat down.

That is what I mean Lord.  
How is Life in you?  
Oh, how I need  
For you to lead.  
I certainly find  
No answers in my head.

Ah, Revelation!  
Having put down the pen,  
Sending a few disturbed prayers heavenward  
While preparing for bed,  
It came.  
How sweet!

Does a child  
Fulfill a duty  
When from his mother's  
Womb he is born?  
Must that baby  
Understand it all  
Before he begins to live  
The life he's been given?

Does the mother  
Ask for anything,  
Except that her child  
First begin to breathe  
And then,  
Naturally,  
Each step of life to follow:  
To eat, to walk, to talk,  
To think, to grow?  
Ah, to grow!

But, here, I think  
The parallel runs thin.  
The child of man  
With each new experience,  
Learns to be  
Less and less dependent  
On the one  
Who gave it life.

But one who finds himself  
A child of God,  
With each new  
Spurt of growth,  
Is more and more dependent  
On the Author of Life.

Duty, perhaps, is required of us,  
At the least as unprofitable servants,  
But . . .  
As sons,  
All that is required  
is LIFE!

—Fred W. Schott

# *Precious Reprints*

## **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

R. H. Boll — 1935

There are believers who hold that it is every Christian's great privilege—yea, his greatest need, to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Until that occurs (they say) he does not know anything as he ought to know, about prayer, about power in service, about a holy life, about love, joy, peace, zeal for the lost, and Christlikeness in general. So that the baptism of the Spirit becomes the prime desideratum, once a man has become a Christian. For that he should seek and pray and wrestle in prayer until he obtains it from God. How does he know when he has obtained the great gift? Some hold that it is always manifested by a speaking with tongues, citing Acts 2 and 10 in proof. They hold, however, that this is not the same as "the gift of tongues" of 1 Cor. 12 (though those who hold this position generally believe in the "gifts" also) but a brief initial manifestation in evidence that the baptism of the Spirit has taken place. Others do not insist on such an evidence, but believe that the proof of the baptism is experiential—in mighty inward floods of joy and love toward God and man, in spiritual uplift, new desires for God's word, new power in his work and service. Needless to say that these are things the average Christian lacks and wants; and the desire for such a new life of freedom and power in the Lord leads many earnest souls to give ear to such teaching concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

But when we turn to God's word to test these teachings we are at once impressed by the absence of reference to it. If the "baptism of the Spirit" is so supremely important to the Christian (as it must be if the claims are true) why does the New Testament, especially in that part of it which is directly for the Christian's instruction, have so little to say about it? Why in all the epistles written to Christians is there not so much as one passage that says a Christian could or should or might or ought to be baptized with the Spirit, or that he should seek and pray for such a thing? In all the range of the apostles' teaching to Christians there is but one passage that appears to mention the baptism of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13) and there it refers to the initial incorporation of Christians into one body, the church; not to any subsequent gift bestowed upon members of the church. If the matter stood as the Spirit-baptism advocates represent it, we would expect earnest and repeated exhortations to Christians to seek for the baptism of the Spirit, urging them to cease not to rest until they had obtained such an all-important gift. Why is there nothing said to that effect? Why has not God told us such things?

I would urge this weighty fact upon the attention of those who hold that teaching. It is the peculiar danger of those who bank on experiences to set them above the teaching of God's word where the

latter seems to clash with the experience. But if this comes under the eyes of any who yet hold the word of God supreme, let such ask themselves why that word preserves such a silence on a subject which to them forms the central point of thought and teaching.

Every man who is a Christian at all has the Spirit (Romans 8:9). And his possession of the Spirit can be enlarged. He can be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). He can be strengthened with power by the Spirit in the inward man, and be "filled unto all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19). Faith, prayer, self-surrender to God (Romans 12:1) give the Spirit fuller scope in His gracious workings. But none of that is ever called "the baptism," nor is there in that anything that cannot be accounted for by the normal growth and progress of the Christian life. For this indeed let us seek. But why use such terms as "baptism of the Spirit" to designate that?

# PROPHECY

Edited by Dr. Horace E. Wood

## Why Study Prophecy?

W. Ross Rainey

To anyone who knows anything at all about the Bible, it should be evident that we are living in prophetic times wherein the stage for God's future program is rapidly being set for the fulfillment of long-promised events. One look at this restless, warring, sin-sick world around us is evidence enough that we are living in the "last days" of this age of grace (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1-9).

What is prophecy? Actually, the meaning of the term may be said to be three-fold, being (1) a *for-telling* in the sense of bearing a message or revelation *for* God, such as Haggai who was "the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message" (Haggai 1:13); (2) a *forth-telling* or the actual proclamation of the message itself; and (3) a *foretelling* or proclamation of future events. In a more restricted sense the word has reference to future events from the time of their utterance, prophecy having been briefly defined as "history written in advance."

While there are groups of Christians which have given the prophetic scriptures their proper place and emphasis in preaching and teaching, the Church as a whole has neglected them. As a result, various cults and "isms" have developed which have not only given undue emphasis to prophecy, but have mixed in a great deal of error with their teaching, and this, to the confusion and delusion of multitudes (e.g., "Jehovah's Witnesses," "British-Israelism," "Armstrongism").

Many unsaved people have a veritable mania for reading, hearing and discussing prophetic subjects, but because they do not know

the Lord they have no genuine understanding of God's Word (1 Corinthians 2:14). Then, too, there are some Christians who seem to be taken up with nothing but prophecy, having little regard for the rest of the Bible. The attitude of these, coupled with the uncertain sound trumpeted by the Church, causes many believers either to neglect prophecy or to avoid it altogether.

Basic to every reason that may be given for studying prophecy is the fact that no less than sixteen books in the Old Testament are prophetic with between fifty and seventy-five percent of it prophetic in character. One twentieth of the New Testament is prophetic, making almost one-fourth of the entire Bible prophetic. To neglect or avoid prophecy, then, is to end up with a considerably abridged Bible.

In view of the preceding comments let us now consider seven valid reasons for studying Bible prophecy:

1. *It concerns our Savior* (Acts 10:43; Revelation 19:10)

The Lord Jesus Christ is the primary subject of the Scriptures, and that He is the theme of the Old Testament is confirmed by Christ Himself (Luke 24:25-27,46; John 5:39). Thus, as Revelation 19:10 declares, He is also the subject of prophecy, for the very spirit of the prophetic Word is to testify of Jesus.

Referring to the Lord Jesus, Eric Sauer has said: "He is the crown and shining star of all prophecy" (Eric Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, p. 155). Dr. Sauer has further stated: "The Old Testament tells *what* Christ is, the New Testament tells *who* He is, and in such a way that it becomes manifest that he alone knows 'Jesus' who recognizes Him as the 'Christ,' and he alone knows who the 'Christ' is who knows that He is 'Jesus.'" So do the two Testaments correspond to the chief names of the Redeemer; the Old to the name of His vocation, Christ, the New to His personal name, Jesus; but both are inspired by one Spirit and explain each other." (*Ibid.*, p. 156).

2. *It confirms our faith* (2 Peter 1:19)

Fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest evidences that the Bible is indeed God's Word, not man's. Concerning Christ's first Advent alone, not to mention the prophecies concerning Israel and the Gentile nations, there are over 300 Old Testament prophecies, all of which have been fulfilled to the letter. At least twenty four Old Testament prophecies regarding the events centering upon the Lord Jesus Christ's death were fulfilled within a twenty-four hour period at the time of His passion (cf. Matt. 27:46 with Psa. 22:1; John 19:24 with Psalms 22:18).

Regarding Christ's Second Advent there are over 300 New Testament prophecies and, on the basis of fulfilled prophecy concerning His First Advent, there is no question but what every detail regarding His Second Advent shall be fulfilled to the letter.

3. *It corrects our thoughts* (2 Timothy 3:16)

Have you ever felt like the Psalmist in Psalm 73:2-16? I have! The balance of the Psalm discloses the Lord's answer to the problems

and perplexities which surround us through the Psalmist's own experience. A knowledge of prophecy enables the believer to know what the Lord's overall purposes are, and with confidence and certainty he can look to the One who holds the future, knowing that some day all evil shall be justly judged, all sin will be put down forever, and Christ shall be enthroned throughout His creation. It is the Word of God that will keep our thinking on the right track, remembering that almost one-fourth of that Word is prophetic.

4. *It cleanses our lives* (1 John 3:3)

"That blessed hope" should have a practical cleansing effect in our daily lives. Living in the light of it should, and will, prompt confession of sin, weed out unbecoming conduct and conversation, and deliver us from those "weights" which hinder our running well in the race set before us (cf. John 17:17).

5. *It compels our service* (Revelation 20:11-15)

To contemplate from God's prophetic Word what it means for the lost to perish without Christ compels us to serve with our Lord in every possible way to get out the gospel message, for the time is short wherein we may do His work down here (cf. John 9:4; Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5).

6. *It conforms our ways* (Colossians 3:1-4; 2 Peter 3:10-14)

The Apostle Paul's consuming ambition is expressed in Philipians 3:10, the last line reading, "being made conformable unto His death." He elsewhere expressed God's great purpose for His saints, and that is, that we "might be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). The study of prophecy, and especially those passages concerning Christ's future glories, will help us to conform our ways to His that we might be true ambassadors for Him in this world and become more like Him (cf. 1 John 4:17). Christ's interests and coming glories should be our supreme interests as those who represent Him. We should seek to "follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21), which will mean a minus sign thrust through the upright "I" of self (cf. John 12:24; Galatians 2:20; see Romans 12:1-2).

7. *It comforts our hearts* (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Apart from such prophetic passages as 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 it would be a sad and grim task indeed to stand by the graveside of a loved one in Christ with no certainty of the future order of things, and always left wondering what will take place in that coming day. Such a glorious and classic passage as this dispels all doubt, filling the heart with comfort and cheer, yes, even joy midst sorrow.

Perhaps there is no more fitting capstone to our brief study of this highly important and practical subject than the words of the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:19: "The word of prophecy was fulfilled in our hearing! You should give that word your closest attention, for it shines like a lamp amidst all the dirt and darkness of the world, until the day dawns, and the morning star arises in your hearts" (J. B. Phillips trans.).

—In *Ministry in Focus*



# Guilt and Forgiveness

Billy Ray Lewter

The sense of guilt is said to be the most important problem in the development of civilization. Nothing else is so destructive and so crippling, either to individuals or to society.

According to the dictionary, guilt is an emotional feeling associated with the realization that we have broken an important social, moral, ethical, or religious regulation. Guilt is a social problem and is studied by sociologists; guilt is a psychological problem and interests psychologists; guilt is related to physical illnesses and is an important subject for medical specialists; and guilt is a religious problem that concerns theologians, ministers, and teachers. In other words, guilt is a human problem, the greatest that is faced.

Guilt is a difficult subject to write about, because almost anything that could be said to stir the conscience of those who are indifferent and insensitive, could certainly overwhelm those who already feel condemned, and could cause them to sink deeper in despair. But it's a problem we all face, and must deal with.

In beginning a study of guilt, the first thing we need to do is to distinguish between several types of guilt.

First, there is "appropriate" or normal guilt. This is a guilty feeling over some definite action that clearly contradicts a person's conscience. It may or may not actually break a law; it primarily arises from an individual's conscience. As an example of moral guilt, after David's sin with Bathsheba, and having her husband, Uriah the Hittite, moved to the front lines of the army where he was killed, David's guilt began to destroy his life. He was still king, and had all of his wealth and privileges, but in Psalm 32 he tells how his conscience was tearing him apart. He said, "My body wasted away, my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer." Three times in Psalm 51 David referred to his broken spirit. This is normal guilt, and follows a definite breaking of an individual's standards, whether or not a law is involved.

Psychologists usually distinguish another type of guilt, which they call "inappropriate" or "neurotic" guilt. This is a guilt that comes from the thoughts rather than from specific acts. The whole conflict is internal, but it has the same physical or mental effect as the actual occurrence of something wrong would have. Psychiatrists usually treat this as a result of an overstrict conscience and they try to help their patients reduce the power of their conscience to punish and control them. This is considered to be a matter of "guilt feelings" rather than any actual guilt.

As Christians, our first thought is that this may be a harmful approach, since it often ignores actual guilt on which the "guilt feelings" may be based. However, there is such a thing as "inappropriate" guilt for Christians to consider, even though this is not what the social scientists mean by their definitions. When a Chris-

tian has been forgiven by God, and continues to feel guilty, this is certainly unnecessary and inappropriate. Brother Boll used to talk about being "slaves to our conscience," in other words being always condemned by our conscience. Some people have gone forward in church over and over for minor faults, and many times for the same problem; but they never really feel free from this slavery to their conscience. They never feel forgiven and accepted. This is certainly inappropriate, as we shall see later.

A third type of guilt is often called "existential" guilt. This is the feeling we have when we examine ourselves and reflect on the difference between what we hoped to do and what we have actually done, between what we hoped to be and what we actually are. This is a deep sense of discouragement, but does not usually lead to any illness, and may even have a constructive effect and lead to an increased creativity in thoughts and relationships. T. S. Eliot, the British bank executive who wrote poetry at night, once said,

It's not the feeling of anything I've ever done,  
Which I might get away from, or of anything in me  
I could get rid of—but of emptiness, of failure  
Towards someone, or something, outside of myself:  
And I feel I must—atone—is that the word?

Then, a fourth type of guilt which must be added to normal guilt, and to inappropriate guilt, and to existential guilt, is what can be called True guilt, or Real guilt. Again social scientists usually fail to accept this. Paul said in Romans 3:23 "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"; and in 5:12, "death passed unto all men, for that all sinned"; and in 14:12. "So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God."

All men are actually guilty before God, regardless of whether or not they feel guilty. Their feelings don't alter the reality of their personal standing under the condemnation of a Holy and Just God.

So the big question in the study of guilt is not whether we are guilty or not-guilty, nor even the cause of our guilt, but "What can we do about our guilt?"

One way of handling guilt is to blame others for our faults and failures. For example, Hitler, while looking over the ruins of a town his armies had destroyed, said, "How wicked these people must have been to have made me do this." After the sin in the Garden of Eden, Adam answered God and said, "The woman whom thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Very often we do the same thing. We blame our parents, or our husband or wife or our present circumstances for our failures, instead of recognizing our own guilt and responsibility in the matter.

Another common way of handling guilt is the attempt to punish ourselves for what we have done. Many people, even Christians, either consciously or unconsciously, try to punish themselves in order to make up for something they have done. This often leads to self-condemnation and self-hate. Some people are never able to accept themselves or to forgive themselves, and deep inside they hate themselves. It seems that the only satisfaction they have is in those moments when their sense of justice is being satisfied by some form of punishment.

A third way of handling guilt is by resignation. At times, probably most of us feel like shrugging it off with a "so what!" and give up trying to change. "That's just the way I am so I might as well accept it and make the best of it. Besides no one else is perfect either."

Still another common way to attempt to overcome our guilt is to do enough good things so that the bad things might be balanced out. The trouble with this is that a person can never do enough good to make up for the bad, and he can never undo the *effects* of what he has done. A good friend in the Philippines, a very devout Roman Catholic, and a very successful business man, once said to me, "I am tempted to believe in re-incarnation. A person simply doesn't live long enough in one life time to make up for all the wrong he has done."

Then a fifth way of handling guilt is one which may also be a part of the other methods, that is, the attempt to hide it from others. Jesus said of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:5 "Their whole lives are planned with an eye to effect." And this is true today, even for Christians; we try to impress others with a spirituality and maturity and humility that we do not actually possess. We feel that God and others expect us to act in a certain way, so we do all we possibly can to keep them from thinking we are not all that we should be. And sometimes we have kept this up so long that we have even fooled ourselves. It's very hard to be open and honest, even with God. We find it hard to believe that even God will accept us, just as we are, without seeming to be something different from what we are.

Well, surely, there must be another way, a positive way, to handle guilt. This is what Paul was seeking in Romans 7:24, "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" And this is what Paul found, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (8:1).

The process given in the Bible for dealing with guilt begins with the realization of our personal guilt and responsibility, and the fact that there is no way that we can deliver ourselves from this burden. This recognition of our guilt is the first step toward receiving the freedom and forgiveness that Paul found. T.S. Eliot, in another poem, said, "You think I suffer from a morbid conscience, from brooding over faults I might well have forgotten. You think I'm sickening; I'm just recovering!" In other words, when our conscience begins to bother us, that's a good sign; it's the first step toward recovery.

Then, the next steps beyond acknowledging our guilt and responsibility, are to confess our faults and turn from them in true repentance. Proverbs 28:13 says, "Whoso confesseth them and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy." 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And James 5:16, "Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." And of course for those who have never turned to Him the first time, Peter says, Acts 2:38, "Repent ye and be baptized every

one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

So instead of putting the blame for our condition on somebody else; or trying to punish ourselves; or giving up in resignation; or trying to balance it out with good deeds; or trying to hide it from God and others; we must be honest and sincere in facing our guilt, in confessing it to God and maybe to a few significant people involved in our lives, and then with the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit turning away from the cause of our guilt in true repentance.

God then assures us of His forgiveness and acceptance. All barriers are removed. There is no need for any further feelings of guilt. And the really good thing about it is that God's forgiveness is not dependent upon whether we feel forgiven, but upon His promise. We may be aware still of our sins and failures; we know what we have done, and it is sometimes difficult to forgive ourselves; but there is now no condemnation, we are forgiven and accepted by God because Jesus paid for our sins and because we have acknowledged our dependence upon Him. God's forgiveness is complete and final, and He will never hold these things against us anymore. Psalm 103:12 tells us, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." And Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins." In Ecclesiastes 9:7 we are told "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, for God hath accepted what you have done." And in Mark 5:19, "Go home to your own folk and tell them what the Lord in his mercy has done for you."

This is the most wonderful news in the world, for the most serious problem in the world, our guilt!

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## Missionary Messenger

*"Greater things for God"*

Dennis Allen,

Hong Kong,

June 1.

I arrived in Hong Kong on May 29. There was a large group of the brethren at the airport to greet me. It was good to see them all again.

Fortunately I was able to get a room at the Y. for the short time I am to be here. The congregation has gotten along quite well during our absence considering all the circumstances, but not without problems, of course. The young people are quite active and zealous. They are in charge of the Sunday School at Shun Ning Road and also at the rooftop school and in visiting the sick on Sunday afternoons. The nursery and the roof top school are still continuing. The

principal of the roof top school is willing to continue another year in spite of the present difficulties. (Free tuition in government schools causes the number of students to decrease.) Our school has 110 students while the school opposite ours has only about 30. If we stop operation the roof top has to be returned to the Government.

There is a problem of adequate leadership for the congregation but we are praying the Lord will raise up His choice.

I thoroughly enjoyed the days spent in Alaska with Winston and Irene and the brethren there. They are already reaching some of the children of the neighborhood and are looking forward to getting a building program started soon.

It was also a blessing to be with Alex and Ruth and to see many of the Filipino and Chinese brethren whom I had not seen in 11 years. There were four baptisms the week I was there—fruits of the efforts of the Filipino brethren.

Addie Brown,

Salisbury, Rhodesia,

May 22.

I appreciated Bro. Linscott's article in the March Word and Work on The grace of receiving.

Bro. Robert Garrett is doing well. He was out yesterday most of the day in meetings. He seems to have had a speedy recovery.

Bro. Robert Gill has been back in Rhodesia for some time. He preached here at Waterfalls last night.

Shichiro Nakahara,

Shizuoka, Japan,

June 8.

The rainy season has already started much earlier than usual this time which has slowed it down quite a bit for the children to come to Sunday school when we are making a special effort to draw more new ones into our program, and so we aren't making too much progress so far for which we are indeed sorry. Another barrier lying ahead of us always is the fact that so much school activity is going on even on Sundays in addition to their going to places where they can get additional study helps by tutors. This is one of the greatest obstacles that keep many children from coming to Sunday school. In order to enter a better graded school children must make good grades and must succeed in all the examinations given; they have to study hard and spend more time in learning each subject well. This trend is sweeping all over Japan and it makes us even more difficult to reach them with the Gospel. But we must continue our efforts which may be in vain but believing in the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

For the very first time since she became a Christian Annette gave a very nice talk to an assembly before children separate into classes. She expressed her desire to serve as a Sunday school teacher in one of the smaller children's classes, however, we thought it to be a little too much for her at this time, and we have decided to provide her with as many opportunities as we think she is able to handle in order to get herself better acquainted with speaking or giving Bible lessons in our presence so that we could direct and lead her in a way that we should think it right and profitable. Probably

about this time next year she may be able to do what she is supposed to in a separate class situation without our direct help or guidance. We are indeed happy over it and give glory to our Lord for bringing her up this far. We wish you to remember her in your prayers, too, so that she may be led into further service to the Lord in many areas of life.

J. M. Forcade,

Salisbury, Rhodesia,

June 5.

Before we left the U. S. in January we bought a French Peugeot station wagon which we have been trying to get shipped to Durban ever since. About two weeks ago we received notice that it would arrive in Durban on May 17th, and made hurried preparation to go down and get it during the school holiday while the children were away. But when the local A. A. teletyped their office in Durban they learned that it would not arrive until May 31st. We cancelled our train reservations to Durban, bought a tire for the borrowed car we have (it belongs to S. D. Garrett who is in the U. S. now), and left about 7:30 Sunday morning of May 14 for Gatooma, about 90 miles away, for worship. There I was invited to speak to the African congregation. As soon as we could after the services we left for Bulawayo eating the lunch that we had brought on the way.

We arrived in Bulawayo barely in time for the evening service there. After the evening service we had a very enjoyable evening in the home of Brother and Sister Will Short, who have been in Africa about 50 years. Visiting in their home were their two sons and families so we were invited to spend the night with the Smith family.

Monday morning we went down into Bulawayo, and bought a secondhand tire, stopping by the Rhodesian Information Center so we could spend Monday night at Victoria Falls. It is indeed a majestic work of nature, and we were glad to visit it. We saw the statue of David Livingstone who discovered the falls in 1855. Monday evening we finally were able to get in touch with Elaine Brittell, a long time missionary friend, by phone. We had no visas to enter Zambia, and most people thought we might have difficulty getting in. But we prayed about the matter and went to bed for a good night's rest. The roar of the falls did not even keep us awake.

Tuesday morning about 9 we made tentative arrangements with Elaine Brittell to come across the Zambezi River to meet us at the immigration office to see what could be done about our entering Zambia. The Rhodesian Officials readily gave us the needed permission and papers but warned us we might have difficulty with the Zambian Officials. We approached the Zambian Officials hopefully, and the Lord moved them to let us in without undue delay. It was late in the evening before we started to Kalomo, about 80 miles away, where we were to spend the night, and it became very cold in the back of the pick-up before we arrived.

Wednesday morning I was invited to speak to the chapel students, about 200. In the afternoon we visited the small dispensary which is being operated by Brother and Sister Alvin Hobby. That

evening we saw some film strips at one of the African congregations.

Thursday morning we drove back to Sinde Mission, about 20 miles from Livingstone. They had a 4:30 p. m. service at which I was invited to speak. We spent the night with the Berryhill family. Friday we crossed back into Rhodesia and spent the night in the Game Reserve. Saturday we spent the night with the Shewmakers at Bulawayo. Sunday morning I spoke at one of the congregations in Bulawayo, and after eating lunch we drove back to Salisbury somewhat worn but thankful to God for the trip. Monday all the children arrived safely back to the home, and we are now back at the daily routine of caring for them and teaching.

Elaine Brittell,

Livingstone, Zambia,

April 30.

School closed the 14th. The following week was Women's Meeting at Mukuni, using 2 Corinthians 5:17 as the theme. Many came and were blessed studying God's word together. This past week was Secondary Girls' Meeting at Sinde with 13 staying here, besides Sister Sibili and Sister Namadula, wonderful Christian women who helped teach with Iris Elder and Beverly. Three Christians came and helped me cook, others brought gifts also. Next year, Lord willing, will be another girls' meeting to study another book of the Bible—this year was Colossians. In August, Lord willing, we'll have a Primary Girls' Meeting, just after the Women's Meeting at Kabanga. Please pray God will bless students and teachers to gain more knowledge, and greater zeal to walk worthily and bear fruit daily.

T. W. Hartle,

Capetown, South Africa,

May 16.

Thanks for the cutting telling of the wonderful love, that funds are coming in towards the purchase of our car. We are certain that the Lord is going to see to it that we get this car, so much needed, although our old one is still doing well, having gone 172,000 miles in 8 years.

Our Bro. Robert Gill returned back to Cape Town from Salisbury during the month of April to get his car from the U.S.A. We were privileged to have had him preach to us, at our regular services; he also attended cottage meetings and film strip classes, and his brief association with us for a week was both encouraging and uplifting.

Cottage meetings are becoming the "by-word" by many families: "When are you coming to have a meeting in our home again, Bro. Hartle?" Praise the Lord for this. And with all the classes conducted by other of the brethren, we are in anticipation, looking forward to precious souls being baptized soon!

As a family we would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the East Jefferson Street church and the Borden church for their concern and love expressed in their gifts towards the obtaining of another car. May the Lord bless you abundantly in return. We thank our Brother James E. Leach who so kindly made this appeal; glory to God! We are praying to the Lord that the needed funds for the car might materialize

# Questions Asked Of Us

Carl Kitzmiller



Should Christians keep Sunday as the Sabbath and avoid working on that day?

The people of Israel kept the Sabbath or the seventh day of the week as a requirement of the Law (Exodus 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-17; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). It was a law given only to them, and it had significance for them. It was a sign between God and the children of Israel (Exodus 31:17). On the Sabbath they were to do no work. Jesus showed that acts of mercy and certain necessary work were never forbidden by the Sabbath law (Matthew 12:1-14), but He lived under that law and kept the Sabbath. With the establishing of the New Covenant, the Law, including the Sabbath, was taken away (Colossians 2:14). In the New Testament church the first day of the week became a day set apart for worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2), this having been the day of the Lord's resurrection, the day of some of His significant appearances to His disciples, and the day on which Pentecost and the birth of the church fell. Christians no longer had any obligation to keep the Sabbath, although it is probable that many Jewish Christians may have continued to do so for a time. The Sabbath was never part of any commandment given to the people of the New Covenant, however; nor is there any indication that any of its features other than its use as a day of worship were "transferred" to the first day of the week.

In more recent times there have been many who have regarded the first day of the week as "the Christian Sabbath" and who have applied many of the old Sabbath regulations to Sunday. The two days should not be confused, however. The Sabbath is still the seventh day, or Saturday, and Sunday is not the Sabbath but the first day of the week. Our calendars still show this distinction, and the Orthodox Jew still observes the Sabbath (Friday sunset till Saturday sunset). Some of the modern sects are correct in insisting that Saturday, not Sunday, is the Sabbath, but they are incorrect in insisting that Christians have a responsibility to keep it.

The question becomes, then, how should one "keep" the first day of the week? The New Testament does not specifically say except to indicate that the keeping of days is not a feature of the New Covenant (Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:9-11), and that the first day of the week was used for worship by the early church. Certainly we should participate in the appointed times of worship on that day with the saints of God. One may conclude from the



designation, "the Lord's Day," that it should be spent for the Lord as much as possible. Nor is it wrong for us *if we can and wish to do so as enlightened children of grace to refrain from most work and unnecessary activity on this day*. It is a recognized blessing when society as a whole observes this as a time of decreased activity, thus enabling the Christian to be free for worship and other Christian activity. The loss of this attitude toward the day in most urban areas is really no blessing. As a matter of mere human wisdom there is something to be said for the day "off" each week, the change of pace that such a use of Sunday provides.

We need to be careful that we do not reduce Sunday observance to a sort of legal matter and bind it upon ourselves and others, as some continue to do. On the other hand, the Christian who understands that he is not under the Sabbath law should realize that a somewhat modified observance for the first day of the week may be wise, even from the standpoint of avoiding offense to some who are not clear in their understanding.

Does your church have something similar to the Roman Catholic confession?

It is not totally incorrect to speak of "your" church or "my" church if we understand the greater truth that it is the *Lord's* church which is presented in the New Testament and a church or congregation is "ours" only in the sense that we thus speak of our relationship with it. We assume the one asking the question intended simply to inquire about the beliefs and practices of those with whom I ordinarily worship.

As I understand the Roman Catholic confession, there is a confession to the priest of the specific sins of which one is guilty, and this is done because it is believed that only through the priest's intercession can those sins be forgiven. The New Testament, however, places no man between the Christian and God so far as forgiveness is concerned. Each individual Christian is a priest, able to intercede through the great High Priest, Jesus Christ, to God (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5-6; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:1-28, especially v. 25; also chapters 8, 9, and 10). There was a selected body of men in the Old Testament who served as priests and whose activity in offering sacrifices and intercession was necessary, but this is not the case under the New Testament arrangement. As believers in Christ we should approach God directly through Christ for ourselves. We may pray one for another, and may seek to have others pray for us, but this in no way sets aside the individual approach to God for one's own need of forgiveness. When Simon sinned after his conversion (Acts 8:9-24), the inspired instruction to him was, "Repent . . . and pray . . ." (v. 22).

From time to time there are those who may go before the assembled church to make a confession of sins, but this is not done with the church or the preacher filling the role of a priest. The New Testament teaches that if we have sinned against our fellows we are to go to them and be forgiven (Matt. 5:23-24) as well as seeking forgiveness from God. In sinning a Christian may have brought reproach on the church, and his public confession of

wrong doing may be to ask for their forgiveness while he also seeks God's. Or in the public confession he may be asking the congregation to pray with and for him (James 5:16).

As a rule, in these confessions before the church there is no detailed confession of specific sins but a general statement to the effect: "I have sinned against God and the church," or "I have not been faithful," or "I have gotten away from God," etc. A preacher (or whoever is in charge of the service) in no way acts as a priest to pronounce or to withhold forgiveness but is only a spokesman to the congregation for the person. In severe case, when disfellowship has been practised or seriously considered, a specific confession of sin may be sought by the elders or leaders with the intent of avoiding trickery or deceit, but the concern in such a case is for genuine repentance.

No preacher, church, or individual can grant forgiveness except to the extent that they have been sinned against, and no preacher, church, or individual can withhold forgiveness with God when repentance has been genuine. Human beings may withhold forgiveness, but if we have properly sought their pardon this can in no wise keep God from forgiving. Hence, it should be evident that the New Testament practice is quite different from Roman Catholic confession.

I find Sunday School a terribly boring experience. Is there something wrong with me?

Possibly so! For a correct evaluation, however, a great deal more of information would be needed. Individual cases would not be the same.

It must be admitted that Sunday School classes can be boring experiences. In the hands of an unprepared, untalented, and uninformed individual posing as a teacher even the soul-stirring accounts of the Bible may lose some of their interest. Add the fact that some Sunday School classes are not *Bible* classes at all, and the situation is worsened. Some churches have shown entirely too little concern for a good teaching program.

Though having admitted some church failure, we do not suppose this accounts for all the dissatisfaction many voice. Many objections are nothing less than an effort to justify non-participation. Down over the years God has used a number of people with few talents to have a great deal of influence for Him. With all the failures, Sunday School classes have promoted great good in many lives. I've noticed that the ones who participate regularly seem to know a great deal more about the Bible and Christian truths than those who justify non-participation. The child, young person, or adult who regularly attends and studies the Bible will find that very mediocre classes provide more help than not studying at all.

It is often true that classes are boring when I am bored—or uninterested—or sleepy—or preoccupied. Many a Sunday School class would be measurably improved if those present had not been up till the wee hours of the morning watching the late movie, attending a party, or engaging in some other such like withdrawal from the body's reserves. Again, just as the most appetizing food does not

appeal to one who is not hungry, so the best of presentations may be boring to those who do not hunger and thirst after righteousness. The avid Bible student will probably glean much of interest even from a very inept presentation. The very scraps and crumbs may be food for the hungry, and mere beans and bread may become a sumptuous meal. Perhaps we sometimes expect too much and have dull appetites.

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## The Throne of Grace

John R. W. Stott

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. —Hebrews 4:14-16 R.S.V.

At the center of the universe, outside and independent of it, yet controlling all its affairs, is a throne, God's throne. And this throne is a "throne of grace." This is a remarkable expression, because it is a combination of apparent opposites. A throne is a symbol of sovereignty. It stands for absolute power and resplendent glory. It speaks of one who rules with authority, whose will no creature dare resist, whose word no man dare disobey. The throne of God inspires reverence and awe. "The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble!" When Isaiah saw the Lord upon His throne high and lifted up, he immediately sensed his uncleanness and cried "Woe is me, for I am lost." When Ezekiel saw the throne of God, bright as sapphire, and the Occupant of the throne an indescribable figure of burning fire and light, he was utterly overcome and fell prostrate on his face. Nevertheless, God's throne of glory is also a throne of grace, of unmerited favor and kindness. The power of His throne is never arbitrary; it is always exercised in love.

To this throne of grace we are exhorted to draw near. Our King is not like an ancient despot of the Orient, remote and fearful, corrupted by power, unpredictable and often cruel in His judgments. Our King is not even like the revelation of Himself in the Old Testament days when the Temple stood, inaccessible in His purity, dwelling in the Holy of Holies behind the veil. No. He is seated on a throne of grace, inviting His people to draw near. Let us ask two questions: why should we draw near, and how dare we?

### 1 REASONS WHY WE SHOULD DRAW NEAR

The exhortation to us to come is "In order that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

First, we are offered mercy to cover our past offenses. We have sinned, and incurred guilt, and need forgiveness. We can neither forgive our own sins, nor secure our forgiveness. Mercy alone can reach us. Every sinner whose eye has been opened to see,

and whose conscience has been awakened to feel, the gravity of his sins, has recognized this simple truth. His language is like David "Have mercy upon me, O God." It is at the throne of grace that we can obtain mercy.

Secondly, we are offered grace to help in time of need. Once we have received mercy, we still pass through many times of need. Only grace from God's throne can sustain and strengthen us—grace to resist temptation and to endure trials; grace to be brave in sorrow, pain, loneliness and bereavement; grace to persevere when the going is hard. It is at the throne of grace that we can find grace to help in future need.

## 2 GROUNDS ON WHICH WE MAY DRAW NEAR

How do we know that we shall be welcome and not turned away? How dare we come with boldness? What is the meaning of the *therefore* let us draw near? The answer is that God's throne is a throne of grace, and that Jesus Christ is there at the Father's right hand. There are three things about Jesus Christ which reveal the grace of God's throne.

### a. He lived on earth

"For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" verse 15. Although He is called the "Son of God" in verse 14, He took flesh, and in it shared our trials and temptations. He was tempted in all points as we are. This cannot be pressed literally, for He did not endure the precise temptations of a woman (since He was a man), or of an old person (since He died before the age of 35) or of a twentieth-century factory worker in London (since He lived in an agricultural community in first-century Palestine). Nevertheless, *in principle* He was tempted as we are. He endured the fierce onslaught of every kind of temptation. He was tempted to assert Himself, to doubt and disobey God, and every temptation is a variation on this theme.

So He is able to sympathize. He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (A.V.). Or, as J. B. Phillips puts it, "We have no super-human high priest to whom our weaknesses are unintelligible. He Himself has shared fully in all our experiences of temptation, except that He never sinned."

### b. He died on the cross

This is why He is called our "high priest." "Priests" are people who offer sacrifices. The great function of the Old Testament priests was to administer the sacrificial system. Jesus Christ is called a priest because He offered Himself as our one sacrifice for sins for ever. Because of this, if we repent and believe in Jesus, God remembers our sins no more.

### c. He has passed through the heavens

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the

heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" verse 14 R.S.V. He who lived and died on earth, was raised from death and exalted to heaven. The person who reigns at the right hand of God is the person who lived and died on earth. He has carried with Him into heaven the benefits of His life and death, the sympathy which He gained by His life and the salvation which He won by His death. He is able to sympathize now because He suffered then; He is able to save now because He died then. These are the grounds on which we may draw near with boldness.

Why is it that people do not seek out a friend in time of need? It is usually for one of two reasons: either they say "he would not understand" or "he could not help." In other words, they question their friend's sympathy or ability. But Jesus Christ has both. His temptations on earth have given Him the deepest sympathy with us, while His sinbearing death on the cross has given Him the absolute ability to save.

I urge you to come to the throne of grace, and to draw near. Christ Jesus is no hard, unfeeling, impotent ogre who would turn you away. He feels for you and with you in your infirmities. He knows, He understands, He cares. He can come speedily to your aid. No stain is so indelible that He cannot erase it, no sin so black that He cannot wash it, white. No temptation or trial is so fierce that He cannot sympathize, and no burden so heavy that He cannot bear it with you. Then why do we not come?

*Some people are indifferent.* It is an immense privilege to be invited to come to God's throne, but they despise and neglect it. Would you win a prize to visit Greece or Italy and never go? Would you receive an invitation to Buckingham Palace and turn it down? Then how is it that God can grant us access to His throne and we do not avail ourselves of it?

*Some of us are too proud.* We rule our own lives. We rather fancy ourselves as little kings, with a throne of our own to sit on, a crown to wear and sceptre to wave. We need to come down off our throne; there is another throne to which we must draw near.

*Some of us are too busy.* Our lives are cluttered up with lesser things. The cares, riches and pleasures of this life, or even good and noble works choke our Christian lives. But how can we do the work of God and neglect the throne of God?

*Some of us are too shy.* We have not the courage to come. This is not becoming modesty, however; it is rather sinful unbelief. Have we a high priest who sympathizes and a throne of grace, and still we hold back? We are told to come with boldness; our diffidence is an offense to Christ.

There is no need to wait for a summons, apply for an audience or book an interview. He bids us draw near; let us come and keep coming.



# Viewing The News

**MISSIONARY DECLINE.** Latest figures show there are 32,000 North American Protestant and about 8,500 Roman Catholic missionaries in almost 200 foreign countries, according to an article in *The National Laymen's Digest* for May 15, 1972. That includes a decrease from 1,500 for the United Methodist Church in 1968 to 1,000 expected still on the field by the end of 1972. The only increases came in conservative churches not affiliated with the National Council of Churches. The Southern Baptists, for example, increased from 1,185 to 2,494 in two years. These increases have not offset the decreases in the liberal Protestant churches.

**THE RECENT** outcry among liberal churches against having government bonds and stock in munitions-making businesses revealed that some of the churches have been much richer in things stored up on earth than most people had realized. It is odd that when our country was fighting the Nazis those churches said nothing, but now that we are supposedly fighting communism (We are actually fighting some communists but helping communism) they have decided war is wrong.

**WOULD YOU** like for your children to take a new course reportedly being given in a California high school? It is entitled "Witchcraft-Occult," taught by a person who is reported to be a "dabbler in the occult." What is next in the government schools?

**AFTER A** four-hour debate, delegates of the United Church of Christ churches in the San Francisco Bay area reportedly approved the ordination of affirmed homosexual William

Johnson, 25, who hopes someday "to share a deep love relationship with another man."

**TWO UNITED** States Senators, Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Harold Hughes of Iowa, recently urged that the United States seriously consider re-establishment of some form of relations with our bitter enemy Cuba.

**ISN'T IT STRANGE** that the same people who are fighting so hard to make abortion for any cause legal in this country are also fighting to make capital punishment illegal? In other words, they feel it is all right to take the lives of innocent unborn children but not of confirmed criminals. Incidentally, during the period from July 1, 1970, through December 31, 1971, there were 278,122 legal abortions in New York—nearly six times the number killed in all the Vietnam War. The New York Legislature became alarmed and passed a bill to make abortion for most causes illegal again, but the governor of the state, Nelson Rockefeller, vetoed the bill. There are more abortions in one day in New York alone than there are convictions for the death penalty in many decades.

**IT IS INTERESTING** that those who are trying to unify Europe are also trying to unify all Protestant and Orthodox (including Catholic) churches in a "Europe Council of Churches." This is the first serious attempt that has come to my attention to make a foothold in the Common Market for the communists.

**IT IS STRANGE** how the old definition of treason as "giving aid and comfort to the enemy" seems to have been forgotten in governmental

circles. During the first three years of the present national administration, for example, the dollar volume of yearly exports from the United States to the Soviet Union alone has ballooned over 300 per cent, and during the past two years alone over 2,000 items have been removed from the Strategic Materials List and authorized by the Commerce Department, via a series of special export licenses, for sale to communist countries. Yet efforts to send money to American missionaries in Rhodesia meet with constant resistance in Washington. And Rhodesia is not an enemy but all communist countries are our enemies.

I DON'T IMAGINE you saw it in your newspaper (I didn't see it in mine), but on the day that Governor Wallace was shot, a close ally of Governor Wallace, General Edwin A. Walker, was arrested and thrown in jail because he was leading a prayer vigil for Governor Wallace in a city park in the Dallas area. But a few days later a group made havoc out of the main street of Portland, Oregon, wrecking plate glass windows, destroying private property and throwing innocent people into public fountains in a so-called anti-war demonstration. But there police stood by helplessly because they had been told by the interim mayor that they should do nothing to stop the demonstration.

DID YOU SEE that a monument depicting the Ten Commandments located on the lawn of the Metropolitan Hall of Justice in Salt Lake City was ordered to be removed by the City and Salt Lake County in a decree handed down by Judge Willis W. Ritter of the U. S. District Court? The judge foolishly reasoned that "A primary effect (of the monument on public property) is to advance the ideas of the Judeo-Christian religions and to inhibit the ideas of persons professing other religious beliefs or no religious belief." How the "inhibiting" is done the judge did not reveal!

POPULATION EXPLOSION? There was a drop of 15.5% in children under the age of 5 in the U.S.A. in the decade 1960-1970. The decrease in the six-month period of January through June, 1971, in New York City was 6% (with the abortion law

permitting murder of the unborn children).

SOME INTERESTING facts on population density: North America—26.6 per square mile; Africa—29.4; Asia—191.2; Europe—239.3; the U.S.A.—22; Taiwan—384. Colin Clark, a recognized British expert in agriculture economy in his recent book *Starvation or Plenty* says we have the ground and techniques now to support an earth population of 35 billion, over ten times the present population of the earth. And that is with our present ability without taking into consideration the developments that must come over the coming years!

CONCORDIA SEMINARY, Lutheran Missouri Synod, turned down guidelines calling for literal interpretation of all biblical passages and retained an Old Testament teacher who advocates higher critical views, according to a recent news story. About two weeks later, however, the teacher was fired and the agency that "accredits" seminaries put the school on probation for "lack of academic freedom." That phrase is gobbledegook for the right to destroy that is reserved for "liberals."

THE EQUAL RIGHTS amendment proposed as the 27th amendment to our constitution, is one of the most dangerous things brought up in a long time. Some little publicity has been given to the fact that this would require the drafting of women and endanger many laws protecting women, but no mass news media that I have read has pointed out that the Supreme Court of the U.S.A. has long ago ruled against "separate but equal" as permissible. As a consequence eventually there could be no public separation of the sexes in rest rooms, for a rather gross example of the upheaval this amendment could cause. Study the other possibilities yourself.

DID YOU READ about the policeman who was fired for becoming a Christian? On a vacation he was converted, quit smoking, quit drinking, and quit swearing. He was observed to read the Bible in public and sometimes asked colleagues to quit using the Lord's name in vain. His employer, the Spencer (Iowa) Police Department, fired him. The police chief said, "I felt when anyone has a complete reversal of character from one

week to the next, there is something wrong with him."

OUT OF SPACE for this month. Keep those clippings and questions

coming so we can run out of space every month! Send them to  
Ernest E. Lyon  
2629 Valletta Road  
Louisville, Ky. 40205

## NEWS AND NOTES

"They rehearsed all that God had done with them . . ."

Winchester, Ky.: The Lord is blessing our efforts at the Belmont Church of Christ. Just recently, we have had two to respond to share their joy for answered prayers. Three have recently been baptized into Christ: William, Stephen, and James Farmer. We trust that the Lord will always keep these brothers united in purpose and in the faith.

Brother S. D. Garrett shared some of his work on the mission field through slides, Sunday evening, May 28. It is a pleasure to have the Garretts in Winchester.

Southeastern Christian College students are missed greatly, while they are on their summer vacation. They contribute so much to our worship services during the school terms.—Dale Offutt

Frankfort, Ky.: Brother Robert Heid was with the Antioch Church, near Frankfort, for a week of meetings in April of this year. Interest ran high all through the week. Bro. Robert's messages were clear and direct to the heart of the matter. Most everyone expressed deep appreciation for the meeting. Two confessed their Lord, and obeyed Him in baptism, and one father made a public stand to draw closer to the Lord. We would like for more churches to get to know Bro. Robert as we came to know him during this week. To God be the glory.—Jack Blas

Nelsonville, Ky.: The Lord is blessing our meetings here. In general,

our morning meetings are emphasizing songs of praise and the Lord's table, rather than sermons. We have resumed the outdoor evening meetings at various homes on Sunday nights which were successful last summer.

Brother Al Vanderslik, of the Louisville Friends of Israel, presented a lesson on the Jewish Passover. Brother Earl Mullins is scheduled to hold our August meeting.—Robert Heid

### A CALL TO PRAYER

God has brought to my attention repeatedly how many times He saved Israel from their enemies, because Israel repented, turned back to God, and forsook idols.

I know that God does not expect the world to serve Him, nor obey Him, nor love Him, but He does His people. I also know there is a time when God shall reveal His Son, but can this time be prolonged?

Would it be possible for you to call God's people to prayer for America? Ask them to pray at a certain time each day—to look to God for deliverance, for cleansing, for a return to God, and simplicity?

How? What means? What better method than through the Word and Work. Please ask Bro. Wright and Bro. Ramsey to join your efforts—make a united appeal for melting of efforts. Any who share our concern may contact us at this address: Dave and Grace Ferguson, 2330 Laughlin Drive, Dallas, Texas 75228

His windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God.

—Daniel 6:10