

THE WORD AND WORK

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

Wm. Robert Heid, Editor

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God's Family

W. R. H.

Jesus Said It First

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two."
Mt. 5:41

A dear elder from the Piedmont Church in Dallas was present in Louisville on Easter Sunday, and was kind enough to bring to us at Portland our evening message. In a persuasive and impressive sermon, he developed the above text and its surrounding verses showing how practical and effective this instruction is in the life that is dedicated to Christ Jesus. I do not seek to review the lesson in detail, but to share some of the blessing that I received from hearing it.

Jesus began this part of His sermon on the mount by saying; "Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil, but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other, also." I can imagine how the rank and file of Jewish citizens cringed at this word. It is totally foreign to the natural man. Even today, among Christians, this is a very bitter pill to take in study of the word, and many members of the church admittedly do not plan to follow it. I doubt that many of us would even think of the passage in time to properly apply it, if we were suddenly struck on the cheek or sued for our overcoat. Likely we would rather rise to defend our person and our sacred honor.

But, Jesus was teaching the "Jesus way," not the way of the law of Moses. And it is true today, that many of us would prefer to be under law than under grace—grace that might finally woo us into walking the path of our Master.

The fact that our Lord included this new and revolutionary teaching in His first sermon, should challenge our consideration. Was He just saying something to be different? Was He trying to shock the sensibilities of His hearers to evoke an argument? No, He knew already what they thought, as He knows the nature of all of us. He gave this instruction, not as a couple of verses to fill up the 5th chapter of Matthew, but as a formula for living a better quality of life. Knowing that we are a gregarious creation, He was giving a new key that would open the door to better personal relationships.

Some of the blessings that await us when we believe and practice this instruction are:

1) Immediate improvement at work. The employer-employee relationship would have a secret ingredient that would enrich it in every way. Greed and suspicion would give way to mutual trust and loyalty, in short time.

2) Church life would quickly show the benefits, as we would be able "each to count the other better than himself," and a tide of brotherly love and liberality would flow throughout the congregation.

3) Social activities would take on a new glow, as we found ourselves speaking to others from a standpoint of equality and appreciation, rather than the previous skeptical, competitive mentality that is so common to the nature of fallen man.

4) Marriages would become glorious partnerships where each partner was trying to out-love and out-serve the other. Selfishness, harshness and cringing would be done away. Even here on earth, "all things would become new!"

Thinking about the many heart-breaking marriage experiences that we hear of today, why would we not give some special consideration to a word from Jesus that promises to alleviate this situation? If there are some "second miles" that are available to us, would it not be well for us to know it, and then to experience the benefit that Jesus knew would ensue from this kind of action? Surely so! Let us look for some of those second miles in today's marriages.

For the Man to:

- Account that his wife's pleasure is more important than his own.
- Give honor to his wife as the weaker vessel, hence, lift her burden.
- Share in the toil and care of the children.
- Share in the teaching, discipline, and example for the children
- Be glad that his wife is, his equal partner, spiritually and mentally.
- Provide unexpected kindnesses and tokens of love, often.
- Praise her, as a woman that feareth Jehovah. (Prov. 31:30)

For the Woman to:

- Fear (respect sincerely) her husband.
- Be adorned in a meek and quiet spirit like the holy women of old.
- Be careful (concerned as to) how to please her husband.
- Give diligence to understand her husband's inmost feelings.
- I think that the apostle Paul summed up all of this when he said, "He that loveth his own wife, loveth himself." (Eph. 5:28).



Ernest Lyon is a professor of music at the University of Louisville, and an elder and minister of the Highland Church of Christ in Louisville.



THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

“Faith in the All-Powerful God”

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” (Romans 4:18-22, NIV)

The passage quoted here from the New International Version is one of the many marvelous passages in the book of Romans that show the greatness of the power of God and how true faith depends completely on the power and faithfulness of God. There seems to be some possibilities of disagreement on the exact translation of this passage, for some versions say that Abraham did not consider his body and Sarah’s womb and others say that he did consider those things of flesh just enough to realize the impossibility on the human plane of his becoming a father of a child by Sarah, but not to doubt it but to put his trust where it should be—in the power and faithfulness of God to do exactly what He said He would do regardless of the impossibility on the fleshly plane. The NIV, it seems to me, expresses exactly what Paul is saying, as I just expressed it. Ask Abraham’s body that question (if this were possible) and it would have answered, “I can not possibly father a child.” Ask Sarah’s womb and the reply would come back, “Don’t be foolish—that is impossible.” But God said He would make it possible and carry it out, so Abraham disregarded what his and Sarah’s bodies said and believed the God Who made those bodies—and everything else in the universe. And so Sarah became a mother at age 90 and Abraham a father at 100. Our God is truly the “God of the impossible.” Praise His Name!

Now all of this was not written just to give us a record of one of the great men and one of the great women of faith, but it was written to show us the true nature of saving faith. Abraham’s trust was that God would do what He said whether it was “possible” or not—possible by fleshly standards or by any human reasoning. That is exactly the kind

of trust we need to have. It is human nature to believe that every thing we get comes by earning it if it is worthwhile. So, if salvation is the wonderful thing we know it to be, we must earn it, at least in some measure. To believe that God gives it to us without any cost to us is quite “unnatural.” But then to be told that the finest man that has ever lived and the worst man that has ever lived can come and get that salvation on exactly the same terms puts our faith to a real test. And that is what God wants. It seems impossible to the world that a Jewish man born to a carpenter, living in a lowly city nearly 2000 years ago, never traveling more than a few miles from his home town and never attending any kind of school, having become recognized as a teacher and then rejected by his own people and then crucified in a kind of uneasy agreement between the Jews and the Roman government—it is just too much for the human mind to believe. That is the situation, however. As bad as you may even imagine I am and as good as you may imagine that you are—we both must come to trusting God to provide our salvation by the One Who was crucified and we must believe that He was crucified even though He was the Son of God and that God showed His approval of all of this by raising Him from the dead. Paul says it so well later in Romans (10:9): “because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Have you really placed your trust in God, truly believed that Jesus is Lord and that God proved He saves by raising Him from the dead? If not you are lost, “without hope and without God.” I urge you to quit asking God to look at your good works when He wants you to look at what Christ has done for you and believe it. William R. Newell well expressed it when he said, “It is ominously bold presumption, when God is calling all to behold His lamb to be found asking God to behold your goodness, your works.” It is impossible by human terms for you to become a child of God. Just believe God when He says He will make you His child. Come to Christ and be born into God’s family. If you will believe what God is telling us in Romans you will truly come to Him. Follow in Abraham’s steps and believe God has no limits to His power and no limit to His love.

Alex Wilson is a missionary in the Philippines.



Baptism: God’s Command, Man’s Interpretation

Alex V. Wilson

All *bona fide* Christians are our brothers or sisters. We should acknowledge them as such, and work together with them whenever it is 1) practicable, and 2) possible without compromising vital Biblical

truth. Such were the opinions we set forth in recent articles. Probably many readers would be inclined to agree with such a view, *if* we mean cooperating with fellow-believers who are immersed followers of King Jesus.

But we mentioned groups like the Gideons and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, and those organizations do not limit their membership to immersed believers. So how can we defend participating in those and similar ministries? Does not such participation in itself compromise vital Biblical truth? Perhaps even last month some readers exclaimed to themselves, "Aha! I knew it would lead to this—I could see it coming in those earlier articles. He's downgrading the importance of baptism! Next thing you know he'll say it doesn't matter."

Whoa-hold on! You're jumping to wrong conclusions. In fact, my desire in this article is just the opposite. Any open-minded reader of the New Testament can easily see that our Lord orders everyone who turns to Him to be buried with Him in baptism without delay. No doubt 99% of *Word and Work's* readers are very familiar with the many Scriptures that plainly teach this. But for the sake of the 1%, here are some of the basic Scriptures on the topic of baptism: Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-41; 10:44-48; 16:29-33; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21.

Objections

Some folks don't like the teaching of those passages. They either neglect such verses or try to explain them away. A man once told me, "There isn't a single drop of water in Romans chapter six." He believed it refers to baptism in the Holy Spirit rather than water baptism.

Other people say to us, "Oh, that's just the way *you* interpret those verses. You Church of Christ people see baptism everywhere, and you mis-interpret the Bible to make it fit your ideas." For this reason, we would like to share with you quotations from several competent Bible scholars who are not from "the Restoration Movement" or any "Church of Christ denomination," as people sometimes put it. These quotes may be useful to share with people who claim we mis-interpret such passages as those listed above.

Quotations

F. F. Bruce, world-renowned New Testament scholar and author, on Romans 6: "Listen, Paul says; 'do you not remember what happened when you were baptized?' From this and other references to baptism in Paul's writings, it is certain that he did not regard baptism as an 'optional extra' in the Christian life, and that he would not have contemplated the phenomenon of an 'unbaptized believer'. We may agree or disagree with Paul, but we must do him the justice of letting him hold and teach his own beliefs, and not distort his beliefs into conformity with what we should prefer him to have said.

"In apostolic times it is plain that baptism followed immediately upon confession of faith in Christ. The repeated accounts of baptism in Acts gives ample proof of this. Faith in Christ and baptism were, indeed, not so much two distinct experiences as parts of one whole. . . ." (*Romans*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary).

Richard Dowsett: "No serious reader of the Bible can honestly pretend that baptism does not matter. It is mentioned more than eighty times in the New Testament. . . . Jesus commanded the disciples to baptize all those who became Christians (Matt. 28:19), and so it is hardly surprising to find the apostles speaking about baptism in their evangelistic messages and counselling (Acts 2:38; 8:36-38). In the New Testament, baptism was always administered to all who made an intelligent profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, at the time of their conversion, and not months or years later. The early Christian attitude to baptism is well illustrated in Rom. 6:4, where it is likened to a funeral or burial. Just as a funeral always followed close upon death, so baptism followed close upon conversion. A delayed baptism was as unusual as a delayed funeral. Baptism is not graduation to stage #2 in the Christian life. It is enrolment—always associated with the beginning of life in the fellowship. A burial settles it for everyone that a person is really dead and gone. So baptism, in the apostles' thinking, made it clear that a person had really just died to sin and was now alive to God." ("Baptism," a paper published by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of the Philippines).

Michael Green, well-known evangelist, scholar, and author in Britain: "The apostles challenged men to do something about the message they had heard. . . . Men must do three things. They must first and foremost repent, change their attitude to their old way of life, be willing to let go their sins. . . . Together with repentance goes faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . The third condition incumbent upon all who wanted to begin the Christian life was, of course, baptism. It was the seal both on God's offer of forgiveness and the Spirit, and on man's response to that offer in repentance and faith. It signified entry into the Christian society. . . . (The New Testament makes) it abundantly clear that baptism and conversion belong together; it is the sacrament of the once-for-allness of incorporation into Christ. In the early days of the Church, baptism was administered straight away on profession of faith and repentance. The Philippian jailer was baptized without delay; so was Paul himself; so were the Corinthians; so was the Ethiopian eunuch." (*Evangelism in the Early Church*; Eerdmans).

Again, in another book, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (an excellent volume, also published by Eerdmans), Green writes as follows. "The New Testament knows nothing of believers in Jesus who do not get baptized. Neither does it know anything of Christians who get themselves rebaptized. For baptism is the sacramental expression of Christian initiation. . . . (Baptism) is associated with repentance, entry into the Kingdom, forgiveness of sins, reception of the Spirit, and union with Christ in his death and risen life. It appears to be the expression in an outward ceremony of the new birth, justification, becoming a son of God; it is the mark of the new life.

"Many Evangelical Christians see justification by faith as the very antithesis of the sacrament of Baptism. Paul sees them as the outside and the inside of the same thing. Baptism, like justification, is *done for us*. No man can justify himself. No man can baptise himself. In

contrast to the proselyte baptism of the Jews when the candidate washed himself, Christian baptism is always in the passive. It is something done for you by another, as if to remind you that your salvation is entirely a matter of grace, and not something to which you make any active contributions. Secondly, baptism, like justification, is *once for all*. It is unrepeatable. . . . Thirdly, baptism, like justification, speaks of incorporation into Christ. At the end of Galatians chapter 3, in successive sentences Paul can say 'Christ came that we might be justified by faith,' 'In Jesus Christ you are all sons of God through faith,' and 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ' (verses 24, 26, 27). Being justified by faith, becoming sons of God, and being baptised into Christ are three ways of describing the same thing—the beginning of the Christian life. . . .

"Luke appears quite uninterested in providing a theology of Christian initiation. Those who have gone to him for tidy theological schemes have been disappointed. Sometimes reception of the Spirit follows baptism (e.g. Acts 2:38ff); sometimes it precedes baptism (e.g. Acts 10:44-48); and sometimes a man is baptised who has no part nor lot in the Christian thing, and whose heart is still fast bound in wickedness (Acts 8:21). As Augustine realised, baptism sometimes precedes regeneration, sometimes follows it, and sometimes never leads to it for lack of faith." (pages 128-133).

James Stifler, Bible teacher of a former generation, writing on Rom. 6:1-4, says: The Christians in Rome "died to sin, the hour of that death being the time when they entered the waters of baptism. . . . Baptism involved, among other things, oneness with Him in His death to sin. In the ordinance they declared their acceptance of Him as Saviour and so came 'into' Him.

"But must it not be said that Paul has now abandoned his theme, salvation by faith, in substituting the word 'baptism'? Why did he not say, 'All we who believed into Christ, believed into His death'? The difficulty arises from the modern wrong conception of the New Testament meaning of the word 'baptism.' The New Testament writers never separated it from the faith which it embodies and expresses. It is the fixed sign for faith. Hence Paul can say that Christ was 'put on' in baptism, and Peter does not hesitate to declare that 'baptism doth also now save us.' To refuse to be baptized is to reject God, and the opposite is to accept Him (Luke 7:29-30). Every one of these passages—and there are more like them—would teach salvation by a rite, salvation by water, but that the word for baptism is used as a symbol of faith. Faith so far is not one thing and baptism another; they are the same thing. The faith that accepted Christ in Paul's day was the faith that showed its acceptance in baptism. The water without the preceding faith was nothing. The faith without the water could not be allowed. Believers were baptized into Christ or they were not considered to be in Him."

What I Practice, What I Recognize

So Scripture clearly tells us to teach and practice baptism, though *always* in the context of God's *grace* and Christ's *cross*. In an article

reprinted in *Word and Work* (Aug. 1975), A. Christianson gives a fourfold summary of Scriptural teaching: 1) Baptism is commanded in the Great Commission. 2) The word means immersion. 3) Various passages show there is a relationship between baptism and salvation. 4) There were no unimmersed Christians in the primitive church.

But Christianson then goes on to make further observations which are relevant to our present study. He points out what he calls a "second line of Bible teaching," as follows: 1) The attitudes of faith and repentance have *always*, from Adam till now, been essential for salvation, but the outward actions required to *express* those attitudes have varied from age to age (animal sacrifices of the patriarchs; Levitical offerings and the Day of Atonement under the law; baptism now). The attitudes are more basic than the actions, apparently. "2) A man's heart-attitude toward God may be right even if the outward expression of it is unknowingly deficient. . . (Rom. 2:26-29). 3) God gave Cornelius and his household the gift of the Holy Spirit before they were baptized (Acts 10:45-47; 11:17). . . . That was an exception to His usual practice, . . . but God's Word records that He has made exceptions to His rules on a number of occasions." The writer then lists about eight other examples recorded in Scripture of God in His sovereignty allowing exceptions to his requirements. The article concludes,

In the light of these things, especially the two lines of Biblical teaching, I distinguish between what I practice and what I recognize. I *practice* immersing without delay those who repent and trust in Christ, upon their confession of faith in Him as divine Lord and Savior, for such is the Bible's command and precedent. At the same time I *recognize* there are a number of unimmersed disciples of Jesus who are Christians, for they trust in Him, seek to obey Him and to the extent of their knowledge do obey Him in everything.

Personally I feel this last distinction is very important. If it is valid, then let us neither modify our *practice* because of what we recognize, nor forsake the above-mentioned *recognition* because of our practice. To modify our practice would be compromise of God's truth. To forsake the recognition would result in isolating ourselves from fine brethren and important ministries which the Lord is using for His glory. Those of us who participate in trans-church organizations are tempted to do the former. Those who minister in our churches only are tempted to do the latter.

Immersing converts upon their confession of faith in Jesus Christ is very important. Acknowledging as brethren all of our Father's children is very important. Can we not do both?

Carl Kitzmiller is minister of the Oakdale, Louisiana Church of Christ and writes the Sunday school lessons for Word and Work Lesson Quarterly.



Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

How can you have a church without elders? My Bible says they appointed elders in every church.

There is no doubt that *fully organized* churches of N. T. times did have elders and deacons. In Phil. 1:1, the apostle Paul addresses the church at Philippi: "To all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons." "Bishops" is another name used for those who are also called elders in the N. T., the latter being the name we more frequently use today. Perhaps the term "bishop" is not used as often today because it can be confused in the modern mind with a position unknown in the N. T. but which is a part of certain ecclesiastical hierarchies. The term simply means "overseer," and oversight of the congregation was the work of N. T. elders (1 Pet. 5:1-2). The various congregations of Christ in N. T. times were independent in government and did not have a human supra-organization of any kind exercising powers over them. The apostles exercised a certain limited oversight in the earliest days until works could be started, but their efforts were directed toward establishing self-governing, self-sustaining congregations. The highest human officers other than the apostles were the elders of the local congregations. These had authority in their own congregation but not over others. Elders, of course, had oversight of the church and exercised their pastoral responsibilities as under shepherds of the Great Shepherd. They were not a law unto themselves but were subject to and exercised their authority under Christ. We repeat that fully organized congregations in N. T. times were under the oversight of elders, assisted by deacons, and we most definitely assert that churches ought to be so organized today when that is possible. This is the ideal arrangement, and it ought to be a normal arrangement in N. T. churches. Any attempt to bypass, replace, or improve upon this arrangement for the governing of the church stands condemned if we are going to be faithful to N. T. teaching and example.

The same N. T. that gives us the above also gives us certain requirements for those who are to serve as elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9). Not all Christians can qualify. There are some very good, faithful Christians who for one reason or another may not meet the qualifications. This does not mean they are not useful servants of God in other ways, nor does it deny them proper function-

ing in the Body of Christ. Some of the qualifications deal with matters over which the individual may have had little or no control (e.g., a man and his wife might be childless through no spiritual failure at all). Again, some because of bad marriages or home situations before becoming Christians may be disqualified, in spite of an otherwise good development. It is a sad commentary on the spiritual conditions of our day that far too few men who are capable of developing to the point of meeting the qualifications are interested in doing so. Our point here, however, is that having elders and deacons is a matter of greater concern than merely naming someone to the positions—anyone whom God's people might choose. There are qualifications which must be considered.

Now what is to be done if, for whatever the reason, there are no men qualified for these jobs? Does that mean that a church cannot exist? Is there a vital part, necessary to the life of a church, that these fill, or is having elders and deacons a very desirable but not absolutely necessary thing? A human body may manage reasonably well without an arm or a leg. The loss of these would be a handicap, but, with adjustment, life could go on. On the other hand, the loss of an organ such as heart or liver would be fatal. We are not left to opinion in the matter. On the completion of the evangelistic phase of Paul's first missionary journey, he returned to the cities where he had preached and had left disciples (Acts 14:21ff). Churches had been established in these places, but they were not as yet fully organized. On his return he visited these churches and appointed elders in every church. They had experienced as churches without elders for whatever time had elapsed between his first visit and his return. In Tit. 1:5, Titus was left in Crete to "set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city." When we realize what a church is—a body of believers belonging to Christ—then we will realize that a church can exist before it is fully organized. Ideally that time ought not to be long, but it will have to be as long as is necessary to have qualified men. Be sure that Paul, Titus, or whoever else in the N. T. times led in the appointment of elders did not appoint unqualified men on the assumption that it is better to have unqualified men than none at all. Remember that some of the early conversions were of Jews well versed in scripture, possibly active in the synagogues, already developed as leaders of men, morally clean in keeping the law, etc. In other words, men could be found for appointment as elders who were in great measure prepared before their conversion to Christ.

The absence of elders and deacons is therefore more in the nature of a missing arm or leg. It is not ideal, is not desirable, is not the choice a person of sound mind would make. But if for some reason that situation exists, then it does not make the individual any less than a human being. Instead there has to be an attempt to get along without those members as best one can. The absence of elders and deacons does not mean that a church is not a church. It does mean that we have to compensate in some way for the lack.

No group of people can perform well or exist for long without some kind of leadership or organization. Even in those cases where

some suppose leadership does not exist, there is often a natural leadership that arises. Some are more dominant than others. Certain natural or developing spiritual abilities begin to manifest themselves. Certain ones by common consent provide a measure of leadership. Now it is a mistake when there cannot be qualified elders to designate these leaders as "elders" or to give them such a position, for in that case we are in reality appointing as elders men who are not qualified to be elders. Such a leadership should know that they are only a "make-do" type of leadership until qualified men can be found. If elders must be careful not to be dictatorial, "lording it over . . . the flock," how much more those who are less qualified need to be careful not to act without the consent of the congregation. In these situations N. T. evangelists or preachers seem to have exercised more authority than in those cases of full organization. This was probably because under given situations they represented the most capable leadership. Of course, if a preacher is very young and inexperienced, this might not be the case. The N. T. does not spell out in detail what is to be done until elders and deacons can be appointed, but it does indicate that churches can exist in less than a fully organized state.

In practice, we have those churches which have existed for years without elders and deacons. The situation may have existed for so long that there is little attempt or concern for changing it. This is sad. There ought to be a real concern for encouraging men to develop and qualify. There ought to be a real concern for moving on to the ideal. But let us beware of "quickie" solutions; the problem is not solved by appointing unqualified men.

What does it mean to hold a straight course in the word of God?

This expression is found in the marginal reading of 2 Tim. 2:15, ASV. I do not know how many translations may use it in the text. The Greek word translated "holding a straight course" appears only here in the N. T. It means literally "to cut straight," hence, to hold a straight course, to make straight, to handle aright. M. R. Vincent in his *Word Studies* comments: "The thought is that the minister of the gospel is to present the truth rightly, not abridging it, handling it as a charlatan (see in 2 Cor. 2:17), not making it a matter of wordy strife (ver. 14), but treating it honestly and fully, in a straightforward manner."

The expression carries to my mind a reference to sailing a course through the seas. The sailors of N. T. times were not as well equipped as are those of today in setting out on a course and arriving at the destination by following a straight course. Holding a straight course suggests that kind of craftsmanship that speaks of qualifying experience, keeping one's eye on the goal, not veering either to the right or to the left, staying on the right path without wandering about. It means the same thing when speaking of the study of and the application in life of the word of God. It means staying on course, not wandering about, moving straight on to the goal of understanding the will of God.

It does not take a lot of discernment to realize that much doctrinal error is the result, not of total wilful denial of what the word teaches,

but instead is more in the nature of veering off course. Such turning aside may be caused by indifferences and carelessness, or by a variety of distractions. Like a dog following his master, we may proceed generally in the same direction but take a lot of little side trips, sniffing at this, curious about that, and then we go off chasing a rabbit. Error can come from veering to one side or the other, putting too much emphasis on minor things and too little on major things, running after every passing attraction rather than holding a straight course in the word of God.

113 N. 6th St., Oakdale, La. 71463

Jack Blaes preaches at the Antioch Church, Frankfort, Ky. and teaches at the Portland Christian School in Louisville.



Viewing the News

Jack Blaes

TELL CITY, INDIANA PARENTS OBJECT TO some assigned reading given their children. The book under question is John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. A *New York Times* reviewer quoted on the book cover says of it, "...sure, raucous, vulgar Americanism." Sparking the controversy are J. D. and Lois Williams of Tell City whose 15-year-old son brought the book home from school and pointed out passages containing coarse language. When he said that he didn't want to read it, Mrs. Williams agreed that he would not be forced to read it. Mrs. Williams called her son's English teacher who agreed that he could be excused from the assigned book, and would be given a different one to read. Later, some citizens prepared a petition to the board demanding that books "containing profanity and suggestive remarks" not be used in school. School superintendent William J. Wilson responds that it is important that students be given a "broad and comprehensive program," so "the school must resist these kinds of forces ... You get into an encroachment upon academic freedom. That is contrary to the first amendment." The Tell City-Troy Township School Corp. had a policy to respect a pupil's request for

a different book to read if the teacher's choice was offensive to him for a personal reason. The policy states that "censorship of books shall be challenged in order to maintain the school's responsibility to provide information and enlightenment." "No parent or group of parents has the right to determine the reading matter for students other than their own children." Selection by the official school board or whoever does the selecting is not censorship, but when parents disagree with their selection, they are faced with the accusation of being "censors". There were other courses and reading materials uncovered as not being desirable by some of these parents. Note that this is a Middle-America, non-urban school. Imagine what is going on in many schools where no one is getting "nosey."

THE NEW YORK TIMES FOR FEBRUARY 2, 1978 reported of a Foreign Policy Association meeting: "One of the few things on which the far right and far left agree is that American foreign policy is essentially the product of powerful men with interlocking ties to the proper corporations, foundations and universities. A reception scheduled tonight at the Regency Suite in the

Pierre Hotel is unlikely to allay suspicions along that line. For many of the 200 invited guests—among them, Dean Rusk, Henry A. Kissinger, McGeorge Bundy, Theodore C. Sorenson, John J. McCloy, plus Nelson, David and John Rockefeller—are indeed paragons of the American foreign policy establishment.” And the *New York Times* should know. The first major project of the Foreign Policy Association was to bring about the United State’s diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union. It has never ceased to be the champion of Communist expansion from the beginning. It consistently recognizes anti-Communism as the real enemy. Last July Secretary of State Haig addressed the Association with praise for its contribution to the success of American foreign policy. Now someone should inform Mr. Haig that if our Foreign Policy has been a success, those who sent Mr. Reagan to the White House a year or so ago are not aware of it.

* * * * *

U.S. AMBASSADOR JEANE KIRKPATRICK, may her tribe increase. What did she do this time? Well, she didn’t like the tone of a document drafted by delegates from 93 “non-aligned” nations under the chairmanship of Cuban Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca. It accused the United States of aggression in downing two Libyan planes off the North African coast after they fired on the U.S. aircraft last August, and of attempts to destabilize the Marxist regimes in Cuba, Granada, and Nicaragua. Ambassador Kirkpatrick sent a letter to 40 countries asking them to explain their support for a document filled with “base lies and malicious attacks upon the good name of the United States.” She further stated that the document “has no more claims to being truly nonaligned than does the Permanent Mission of Cuba which issued it.” Also of concern to Mrs. Kirkpatrick was the absence of criticism of the Soviet Union “in a year which sees a continuing military occupation of Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Chad.” About 15 sent replies which said that “these vicious lies are not an accurate reflection of your Government’s outlook.”

* * * * *

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT, RICHARD L. LESHER is in Mr. Reagan’s corner. In a letter to all

members of Congress he said that his organization and its 225,000 members were concerned that some of the alternatives being offered to the Reagan program, especially those calling for higher taxes, “raise a very serious risk of undermining the president’s economic recovery program.” The Chamber earlier, through its chief economist, Richard Rahn, recommended that Congress suspend for one year increases in entitlement programs which account for 60 percent of the budget. A little game you may play is to find out how many of your friends who are much interested in our government know anything about entitlement programs. Sixty percent, that’s a lot, but what are they?

WHERE WAS “TIP” (O’NEILL) WHEN WE NEEDED HIM? The Chamber of Commerce gives the following comparative statistics: the present Administration proposes in fiscal 1983 to distribute each dollar as follows. —43¢ for direct benefit to individuals. 29¢ for national defense.. 13¢ for national-debt interest. 11¢ for grants to states and localities. 4¢ for other federal operations.

This spending program compares with President John F. Kennedy’s as follows: In his first year JFK spent the tax take as— 46¢ of every dollar for defense while 27¢ was spent for benefits to individuals.

* * * * *

IS THERE A MEDIA ELITE? Research conducted by Robert Lichter of George Washington University and Stanley Rothman of Smith College indicates rather strongly that there is. In a report on their research in *Public Opinion*, they say their findings raise questions about journalism’s qualifications as an “objective” profession.” This study involved interviews with 240 journalists and broadcasters working for the most influential media outlets. 54% count themselves as liberals. 19% describe themselves as right of center. But when they rate their fellow members, 56% say the people they work with are mostly on the left and only 8% on the right. Overwhelmingly, these people vote for Democratic candidates in presidential elections. 68% believe the government should substantially reduce the income gap between rich and poor. However, nearly to a man they oppose nationalization of major corporations. And they are fav-

orable to the fundamental capitalist tenet that people with greater ability should earn more than those with less. 28% would overhaul the entire social order through a "complete restructuring of its basic institutions." The same proportion say that all political systems are repressive because they concentrate power and authority in a few hands. **Public Opinion** opines, and I'm in their corner, that these select opinion makers are "out of step with the public."

KENNESAW, GEORGIA, population

7,000, passed an ordinance to require all heads of household to maintain a firearm and ammunition. Some citizens are exempt from this requirement, among them those who conscientiously oppose use of firearms as a result of religious doctrine or belief. Mayor Purdy sincerely believes that the knowledge that citizens are armed and legally permitted to protect themselves in their homes will deter criminals from preying on them. Sounds psychologically sound to me.



What Happens When You Die?

Dr. David R. Reagan

If you had asked me that question several years ago, I would have given you a pathetic answer.

I would have told you that when you die your soul goes to sleep and remains unconscious until the Lord returns. At the return of the Lord, your soul is resurrected and judged, and you are either consigned to Hell or allowed to enter Heaven. My conception of Heaven was that of a spirit world where the saved spend eternity as disembodied spirits, floating around on clouds, playing harps.

A MISTAKEN VIEW

Needless to say, I couldn't get very excited about all that. I sure didn't like the idea of being unconscious for eons of time. Nor could I develop any enthusiasm for the prospect of being a disembodied spirit with no particular identity or personality. And the idea of playing a harp for all eternity was downright scandalous, for I had been taught that instrumental music was an abomination!

You can imagine, therefore, the sense of shock I felt when I started studying Bible prophecy and discovered that all these ideas of mine about life after death were foreign to God's Word. But my shock quickly gave way to exhilaration when I discovered what the Lord really has in store for me.

THE BIBLICAL VIEW

I learned from God's Word that when those of us who are Christians die, our spirits never lose their consciousness. Instead, our fully conscious spirits are immediately ushered into the bosom of Jesus by His holy angels. Our spirits remain in the presence of Jesus until He

appears for His Church. At that time, He brings our spirits with Him, resurrects our bodies, reunites our spirits with our bodies, and then glorifies our bodies, perfecting them and rendering them eternal.

We return with Him to Heaven in our glorified bodies where we are judged for our works to determine our degrees of rewards. When this judgment is completed we then participate in a glorious wedding feast to celebrate the union of Jesus and His bride, the Church.

WITNESSES OF GLORY

At the conclusion of the feast, we burst from the heavens with Jesus, returning with Him to the earth in glory. We witness His victory at Armageddon, we shout "Hallelujah!" as He is crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and we revel in His glory as He begins to reign over all the earth from Mt. Zion in Jerusalem.

For a thousand years we participate in that reign, assisting Him with the instruction, administration, and enforcement of His perfect laws. We see the earth regenerated and nature reconciled. We see holiness abound and the earth flooded with righteousness and justice.

At the end of the Millennium we witness the release of Satan to deceive the nations. We see the truly despicable nature of the heart of Man as millions rally to Satan in his attempt to overthrow the throne of Jesus. But we will shout "Hallelujah!" again when we witness God's supernatural destruction of Satan's armies and see Satan himself cast into Hell where he will be tormented forever.

We will next witness the Great White Throne judgment when the unrighteous of all ages are resurrected to stand before God. We will see perfect holiness and justice in action as God pronounces His terrible judgment upon this congregation of the damned who have rejected His gift of love and mercy in Jesus Christ. The evil will receive their just reward, and Jesus of Nazareth will be fully vindicated as every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord.

WITNESSES OF A NEW CREATION

We will then witness the most spectacular fireworks display in all of history. We will be taken to the New Jerusalem, the eternal mansion prepared by Jesus for His Bride, and from there we will watch as God renovates this earth with fire, burning away all the filth and pollution left by Satan's last battle. Just as the angels rejoiced when God created the universe, we will rejoice as we watch God superheat this earth and reshape it like a hot ball of wax into the New Earth, the eternal earth, the paradise where we will live forever in the presence of God.

What a glorious moment it will be when we are lowered to the New Earth inside the fabulous New Jerusalem. God will come down from Heaven to dwell with us. He will proclaim: "Behold, I make all things new." Our eternity will begin. Death will be no more. We will see Him face to face. He will wipe away all tears. We will be given new names. We will have a personal relationship with our Father and our Brother, Jesus. We will exist as individual personalities encased in perfect bodies. And we will grow eternally in knowl-

edge and love of our infinite Creator, honoring Him constantly with our talents and gifts.

Now I can get excited about that!

THE WORD vs TRADITION

Isn't it amazing how far we can drift away from the Word of God when we stop reading His Word and start mouthing the traditions of men? As I kept making one discovery after another in God's Prophetic Word that ran contrary to what I had been taught in Church, I began to wonder where such strange ideas as "soul sleep" have come from.

It didn't take me long to discover the source. Ideas like "soul sleep" and the "resurrection of the spirit" (as opposed to the body) come right out of Greek philosophy.

THE WORD vs GREEK PHILOSOPHY

The first attempt to mix the concepts of Greek philosophy with the teachings of God's Word came very early in the history of the Church. The attempt was called Gnosticism.

The Gnostic heresy arose among the first Gentile converts. It arose because they tried to Hellenize the scriptures; that is, they tried to make the scriptures conform to the basic tenets of Greek philosophy.

The Greeks believed that the material universe, including the human body, was evil. They believed that the release of the soul from its entrapment in an evil body was a good thing. The ultimate reality, according to their thinking, was the spirit world. Because the material world is so evil, they looked forward to its complete dissolution.

These views are diametrically opposed to Hebrew thought, as revealed in the Bible. To the Hebrew mind, the world was created good (Gen. 1:31). The goodness of the creation was corrupted by the sin of Man (Isa. 24:5-6). Even so, the creation still reflects the glory of God (Psalms 19:1), and someday the creation will be redeemed by God (Romans 8:18-23).

GNOSTICISM

As you can see, when the first Gentiles were converted by the Gospel, their Greek mind-set immediately collided with some of the fundamental teachings of Christianity. "How could Jesus have come in the flesh if He was God?" they wondered. The flesh is evil. God is holy. "How can He who is holy be encased in that which is evil?"

In short, because they viewed the material universe as evil, they could not accept the Bible's teaching that God became incarnate in the flesh.

Their response was to develop the Gnostic heresy that Jesus was a spirit being or phantom who never took on the flesh. There were many serious theological implications of this concept, for it meant that Jesus never experienced physical suffering or death upon the cross and that He did not experience a bodily resurrection.

That is why the Gnostic heresy is denounced so strongly in scripture. In I John 4:1 we are told to test those who seek our spiritual

fellowship by asking them to confess "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (I John 4:2). John repeats his warning in his second epistle when he writes: "many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist." (II John 7)

THE AUGUSTINIAN CORRUPTION

About 400 AD a remarkable theologian by the name of St Augustine attempted to Hellenize what the scriptures taught about end time events and life after death. Augustine was very successful in his attempt. His views were adopted by the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD and have remained Catholic dogma to this day. Unfortunately, his views have also been adopted by the vast majority of the Protestant world, including the mainline Churches of Christ.

Because Augustine had been a Platonic philosopher before his conversion, he could not accept what the Bible taught about the end times and life after death. For example, the Bible says the saints will spend eternity in glorified bodies on a New Earth. Such a concept was anathema to the Greek mind of Augustine. If the material world is evil then the material world must cease to exist when the Lord returns, he reasoned.

Augustine solved the problem by spiritualizing what the Bible said. He taught that the "first resurrection" of Revelation 20 is the one experienced at conversion when a person is born again. The "second resurrection" of Revelation 20 is a resurrection of the spirit and not the body. And the "New Earth" of Revelation 21 is just symbolic language for Heaven. All of this, of course, is a blatant denial of what the Bible teaches.

Yet, incredibly, Augustine's views are held by most professing Christians today, both Catholic and Protestant. These pagan concepts are the very ones that I was taught as I was growing up in the Church. What I am saying is that most of Christianity today teaches Greek philosophy rather than the Word of God when it comes to the realm of prophecy.

THE FALLACY OF SOUL SLEEP

Take "soul sleep" for example. People have attempted to justify this non-Biblical concept by appealing to scriptures like I Cor. 15:18 and I Thess. 4:14. But the context of these scriptures makes it clear that the writer is using the word "sleep" to refer to the death of the body. When we die our bodies "fall asleep" in a symbolic physical sense. Our bodies cease to function, they return to the earth, and they stay there until the resurrection.

But the Bible makes it crystal clear that our spirit does not lose its consciousness at death. When Jesus was ready to die on the cross, he called out to God to receive His spirit (Luke 23:46). When Stephen was being stoned to death, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59) The scriptures add that after he had said this, he "fell asleep" (Acts 8:1), meaning his body died.

Paul says in II Cor. 5:8 that he would prefer to be "away from the body and at home with the Lord." In Phils. 1:21 he observes,

“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” He then adds in verse 22, “My desire is to depart and be with Christ.”

THE ABODE OF THE SPIRITS

The Bible teaches that prior to the resurrection of Jesus, the spirits of the dead went to a place called Hades (“Sheol” in the Old Testament). The spirits existed there consciously in one of two compartments, either Paradise or Torments. These two compartments were separated by a “great chasm,” possibly the “bottomless pit” where God has imprisoned the fallen angels who “left their proper dwelling” (Jude 6). This concept of the abode of the spirits of the dead is pictured graphically in Jesus’ parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

The Bible indicates that after the death of Jesus on the Cross, He descended into Hades in the spirit and declared to all the spirits there His triumph over Satan (I Peter 3:18-19 and 4:6). The Bible also indicates that after His resurrection, when He ascended into Heaven, Jesus took Paradise with Him, transferring the spirits of dead saints from Hades to Heaven (Eph. 4:8-9 and II Cor. 12:1-4). The spirits of dead saints are thereafter pictured as being in Heaven before the throne of God (See Rev. 6:9 and 7:9).

EVENTS AT DEATH

To summarize what happens when you die, if you are a child of God, your spirit is immediately ushered into the bosom of Jesus by His holy angels. Your spirit remains in Paradise, in the presence of God, until the time of the rapture. When Jesus comes for His Church, He brings your spirit with Him, resurrects your body, reunites your spirit and body, and glorifies your body, making it eternal in nature (I Cor. 15:35-38 and I Thess 4:13-18).

If you are not a child of God, then your spirit goes to Hades at your death. This is a place of torments where your spirit is held until the time for the second resurrection, at the end of the Millennial reign of Jesus. You are then taken before the Great White Throne of God where you are judged by your works and then condemned to the “second death,” which is eternity in the “lake of fire,” or Hell (Rev. 20:11-15).

The Bible makes it clear that none of us will have a second chance after death. Our eternal fate is sealed in this life. We can choose now to confess Jesus as Lord and receive the gift of eternal life in His blessed presence. Or, we can choose to confess His Lordship after death and receive as our just reward the judgment of the “second death.”

One thing is certain: “Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that ‘Jesus Christ is Lord!’” (Isa. 45:23 and Rom. 14:11).

Larry Miles, a member of the Portland Avenue congregation, is working in Cincinnati and has taken classes at Cincinnati Bible Seminary.



Studies in the Book of Acts

Larry Miles

The Days Prior to the Day of Pentecost

Acts 1:1-26

THE RISEN LORD UPON THE EARTH: ACTS 1:1-11

This book, like the Gospel of Luke, was written to Theophilus. He was probably a high ranking Roman official. Luke tells him, that Jesus, in His post-resurrection body, taught the apostles He had chosen. For the first part of chapter one, it is the eleven He is teaching. This was after the death of Judas Iscariot and before the selection of Matthias. Considering this teaching, we think back to the commission He gave them. The commission, which we call the Great Commission, is recorded in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16, and in Luke 24:46-47.

During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus made many appearances to His followers. Tom Thurman, minister of the Mason Church of Christ, in his book, *The Jesus Years*, gives this suggested chronology of the appearance of Jesus,

In and Near Jerusalem

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Appearance to Mary Magdalene | Mk. 16:9-11; Jn. 20:11-18. |
| 2. Appearance to the Other Women | Matt. 28:9, 10. |
| 3. Appearance to the Two Disciples
on the Way to Emmaus | Mk. 16:12, 13; Lk. 24:13-32. |
| 4. Appearance to Peter | Lk. 24:34; I Cor. 15:5. |
| 5. Appearance to the Ten | Mk. 16:14; Lk. 24:36-43;
Jn. 20:19-25. |
| 6. Appearance to the Eleven | Jn. 20:26-29; I Cor. 15:5 |

In Galilee

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 7. Appearance to the Seven By the Sea | John 21:1-23. |
| 8. Appearance to the Five Hundred
Brethren | Matt. 28:16-20; I Cor. 15:6. |

In and Near Jerusalem After His Return From Galilee

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 9. Appearance to the Apostles | Mk. 16:15-18. |
| 10. Appearance to James | I Cor. 15:7 |
| 11. Appearance at Bethany | Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8. |

Later Appearances

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| 12. Appearance to Paul | I Cor. 15:8. |
| 13. Appearance to John | Rev. 1:13. |

These were the appearances that Jesus made before many witnesses. In Acts 1:3 we have the only reference, in scripture, to the length of Jesus' post-resurrection ministry.

They were told not to leave Jerusalem. He told them that ten days hence they would receive the Baptism of The Holy Spirit. In verse 6, the apostles asked Jesus if it was time to establish the kingdom on the earth. Notice His reply. He did not say that there would never be an earthly reign. Rather He emphasized the fact that the Father in Heaven is the only one who knows when it will take place. He informed them that this was not the time to ask about this. They had more important matters to take care of.

In verse 8, he again told them of the promise of the Baptism of The Holy Spirit. He made known unto them that they would evangelize the whole world starting from Jerusalem. Why Jerusalem? Because that is where they were. God wants all of us to start spreading the Good News from wherever we are.

In the next verse, we have the ascension of Jesus Christ. The location was the Mount of Olives. It was located east of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley near the village of Bethany (Luke 24:50). As He was speaking to them, He arose out of their sight in a cloud. I am sure that they were astonished, I know that I would be. It isn't everyday that you see someone rise up away from you in a cloud, even though He is the Son of God. We are told that while they were staring up in the sky, two men in white clothing appeared to them. The two called them "men of Galilee."

The remaining eleven were from Galilee, Judas Iscariot being the only non-Galilean. It is here that the promise that Jesus will one day return to the earth is mentioned. Yes, one day, He is returning for His Church (I Thess. 4:13-18), but He is also going to fulfill this passage, and also the passage in Zech. 14: 4. Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth with His Church to set up the millennial kingdom. Let us live our lives in expectation of the return of Jesus for His Church, then we will be with Him when He comes again to this earth, not as a suffering Lamb but as a conquering Lion.

THE CHOOSING OF MATTHIAS: ACTS 1:12-26

We are told that the distance between the Mount of Olives and the city of Jerusalem was 3000 feet. According to Josephus, 3000 feet was the length of a Sabbath Day's journey. In verse 13 we find the apostles back in the upper room. In all probability this was the same room where they had the Last Supper (Mk. 14:15; Lk. 22:2), therefore it might have been in the home of Mary the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12). Here is a list of the eleven apostles who gathered in the upper room.

1. Peter
2. John
3. James
4. Andrew
5. Phillip
6. Thomas
7. Bartholomew
8. Matthew
9. James the Son of Alphaeus
10. Simon the Zealot
11. Judas the son of James

We find, early in the book, that the disciples were a praying group. In verse 14, we find the last New Testament mention of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Also, Jesus' half brothers had now come to accept His Messiahship. We remember that not too many days before that Peter denied His Lord. Here we see him taking a position of leadership.

In the next few verses they had to choose a successor to Judas Iscariot. How could one who had been chosen by Jesus become a traitor? By relating the act of Judas to prophecy, Peter showed that it was no embarrassment to God. He quotes Psalm 41 for his reasoning. Verse 20 tells us that they realized that there must be a replacement. There must be the twelve again.

In verse 21-22, we have the qualifications set down for the office of Apostle. Peter says that one must have been with them from the baptism of John until the ascension of Jesus Christ. That way one was both a witness of His resurrection as well as His ascension. This clearly shows that the practice of apostolic succession is anti-scriptural. After the Apostle John died, the office ceased to exist there on the earth.

The record tells that there were two men who fit these qualifications. They were Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. The apostles believed that God had already made His choice. So there had to be a way for Him to relate His choice to them. Charles Caldwell Ryrie gives us this account from the footnotes of the Ryrie Study Bible.

“two names were written on stones and placed in an urn. The one that fell out first was taken to be the Lord's choice (cf. Prov. 16:33; Jonah 1:7). The occasion was unique, for the Lord was not there in person to appoint and the Spirit had not been given in the special way on Pentecost.”

Did the apostles act in accordance with God's will in the selecting of Matthias? Of course. There had to be twelve apostles to sit upon the twelve thrones (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:28-38). Some have tried to say that the eleven were acting in haste when they selected Matthias to fill their number. The critics say that God wanted Paul to be the twelfth apostle. This can be shown false by at least three reasons,

1. Nowhere in the New Testament does it say that the choosing of Matthias was in contrast with the will of God. The fact that Matthias was filled with the Spirit on Pentecost proved that he, in fact, was God's man for the job.

2. If the choosing of Matthias was wrong, then Peter erred when he gave Old Testament passages to back his actions. He was guilty of misusing prophecy.

3. Paul had a special apostleship. Also, Paul could not fulfill the qualifications that had been laid down in verses 21-22. In I Cor. 15:5-8, he says that he was not one of the twelve.

So according to the purpose and plan of Almighty God, Matthias became the twelfth apostle. The office was complete again.

In the next lesson we are going to deal with the events in the second chapter of Acts. The lesson will be titled “The Birthday of The

Church Of The Living God.” We encourage all to prepare by reading the chapter through. Remember, no truth is truly yours until you find it for yourself in the Word of God. Until next time,
MARANATHA!



STUDIES ON PRAYER

Jesse Z. Wood

“Lord, teach us to pray”

Such was the request the early disciples made of our Lord (Luke 11:1). In Matthew 6:5-9 the Lord Jesus tells them how NOT to pray. Then He proceeds to give them instruction, saying, “After this manner, therefore pray—”

Note that the Lord did not say, “Use these very words when you pray,” but, in spite of this, in many circles this prayer is memorized and becomes the “sum total” of their daily devotions.

How well I remember the prayer my Mother taught me as she was about to tuck me into bed at night:

“Now I lay me down to sleep;
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take”

But as I “graduated” from baby-hood, I was taught to pray, using my own words in first “thanking and praising my Lord for loving me and keeping me, guiding and promising me great and wonderful things, not only in this life, but in the life to come.”

What the Lord is seeking to “get across” to us in this early lesson on “Prayer” is what He called the “manner” of prayer. Let’s look at what He said a bit closely: We’ll divide what He outlined for them into two sections:

1st section:

1. Our Father who art in heaven—
2. Hallowed be *Thy* Name;
3. *Thy* Kingdom come;
4. *Thy* will be done, etc.

2nd section:

1. Give “*US*” this day—
2. Forgive *US* our debts—
3. Bring *US* not into temptation—

Notice that in the first section the emphasis is on the Father—His NAME—His Kingdom—His will. God is on “Center-Stage.” He

is in the "Spotlight." He comes First—in our thinking—In our praise—in our Thanksgiving. This comes first in our "Manner of Prayer."

In the second section—there is plenty of "room for us." But, shamefully, too much of our public praying, at least, centers more around "ourselves" rather than around Him who deserves all that our voices could ever utter in praise, thanksgiving, adoration, worship!

Certainly this is not to say that we are not to ask for ourselves that the deep desires of our hearts be granted us. Indeed, both Old and New Testaments are crammed full" of challenges from the Lord that we pray and ask God's Mercy and Grace for both spiritual and physical blessings! He stands ready to give, and give, and give again.

The Psalmist David was so full of praise of His Lord, that he almost seemed to forget to ask on his own behalf. Look at the last six or seven chapters of the Psalms, noticing the abundant Praise David utters for our Great God! This "thread of Praise" permeated the whole book of Psalms.

Are we not falling too awfully short on this score? Should not our prayers, both public and private first be to praise, adore, worship, thank, honor, magnify—our Father in Heaven? Some of our Great Songs of The Church give great Praise and Thanksgiving to our God and His wonderful Son. We sing those songs—but, perhaps, if you're like me, you catch yourself more involved with following the notes correctly, than in thinking of what we're saying as we sing!

In "Great Songs of the Church" song 663, the words are worthy of singing over and over again: "To God be the glory, Great things He has done: So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, Who yielded His life, An atonement for Sin, and opened the life-gate that all may go in." (And the chorus of that song is abundant in praise!)

The prayer-pattern our Lord Jesus taught his little "flock" in Matthew 6, was sufficient for its time, but as the Lord Jesus was about to Complete the purpose for which He came down here, and go back to where He came from (John 6:62) He surprised His Apostles by saying, "Heretofore ye have asked nothing in My Name," having just said, "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My Name." (John 16:23-27)

Shamefully, we hear some public prayers, in which the Precious Name of the Lord Jesus is not even mentioned. Remember, we have no identity, acceptable to the Father, within ourselves alone, but God looks for His Son in us ("... Christ in you, the Hope of Glory..." Col. 1:27). So, in honoring the Son, we honor and please the Father!

Rt. 4, Box 96B
Winchester, Ky. 40391

Your Personality, Does It Glorify God?

Vernon Lawyer

God's Word has much to say about our behavior . . . i.e. "how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God." (I Tim. 3:15)

As personal psychology seeks to examine why people act, think, and feel as they do; there is a place for spiritual consideration of this science in the gospel ministry. Most surely, we need to see ourselves and understand others as God looks upon our hearts . . . for "out of the heart proceed the issues of life." I like the personal observation of the Vermont farmer, who said, "People is mostly alike, but what difference they is, can be powerful important." People are different in interests, abilities, and attitudes, which are expressed in their personality. Are we willing to let God lead and help us develop our personal traits for His highest calling and our greatest joy?

By God's grace, we can improve our personality. A noisy, blustering, mean, or strong-willed temperament cannot be excused simply because "we've always been like that." This may indeed be our fleshly nature but we can have victory over these weaknesses and failings. We need a "new nature", and by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit we "become part-takers of the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust." (II Peter 1:4)

Thus in our study of Personality Development, the Bible student learns best of the nature and personality of man, by looking to the Perfect Man, The Son of Man, Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . "for He Himself knew what was in man." (John 2:25) As He understood Peter, Nathaniel, . . . Phillip, and John, all so different in personality; He knows us and wants to make us fruitful and effective, in spite of our natural weaknesses. It is not His purpose to destroy our natural traits, but rather that Christ be glorified in every area of our life within the capacities of our own personality. Yea, the Holy Spirit says it best as Peter writes, "If any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth; that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (I Peter 4:11)

GLEANINGS

Larry Miles

HARK, THE VOICE OF JESUS CALLING

Hark, the voice of Jesus call: "Who will go and work today?
Fields are white, the harvest waiting—Who will bear the sheaves away?"
While the souls of men are dying, And the Master calls for you,
Let none hear you idly saying, "There is nothing I can do."
If you can not speak like angels, If you can not preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus, You can say, "He died for all."
Gladly take the task He gives you; Let His work your pleasure be:
Answer quickly when He calleth, "Here am I: O Lord, send me."

—Daniel March

THANKSGIVING ALWAYS

In approaching God we should never forget to return thanks for blessings already granted. If anyone of us would stop and think how

many of the prayers which we have offered to God have been answered, and how seldom we have gone back to God to return thanks for the answers thus given, I am sure we should be overwhelmed with confusion.

—R. A. Torrey

INTO WHAT BAPTIZED?

“... The Scriptures teach that baptism is sacred because it was authorized by Jesus Christ Himself, and is the expression of ones faith in Him as the Son of God and in the facts of the gospel—His death, burial, and resurrection—and the open manifestation of one’s acceptance of Him as both Lord and Savior, and that one is baptized ‘into Christ (Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:26, 27) and not into a certain church or doctrine or creed, but rather upon being baptized ‘God added to the church daily such as should be saved’ (Acts 2:47, A.V.). Baptism has its significance only in relation to the faith you have toward Christ (see Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 8:37), and is a testimony of your willingness to be identified with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:17, 18). ‘Into what then were you baptized?’”

—Frank M. Mullins

GOD’S UNCHANGING WORD

For feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving,
My warrant is the word of God,
Naught else is worth believing.
Though all my heart should feel condemned
For want of some sweet token.
There is One greater than my heart
Whose word cannot be broken.
I’ll trust in God’s unchanging word
Till soul and body sever.
For, though all things shall pass away,
His word shall stand forever.

—Martin Luther

THE JOY OF THE LORD

The Creator’s joy over His works.	(Ps. 104:31.)
The bridegrooms joy over his bride.	(Isa. 62:5.)
The shepherd’s joy over his sheep.	(Luke 15:5, 7.)
The seeker’s joy over the piece of silver.	(Luke 15:9.)
The father’s joy over the prodigal.	(Luke 15:24.)
The purchaser’s joy over the treasure.	(Matt. 13:44.)
The master’s joy over His disciples.	(John 15:11.)

—CALL TO PRAYER

WHEN JESUS COMES

When Jesus comes to reward His servants,
Whether it be noon or night,
Faithful to Him will He find us watching,
With our lamps all trimmed and bright?

If at the dawn of the early morning,
He shall call us one by one,
When to the Lord we restore our talents,
Will He answer thee, "Well done"?
Have we been true to the trust He left us?
Do we seek to do our best?
If in our hearts there is naught condemns us,
We shall have a glorious rest.
Blessed are those whom the Lord finds watching:
In His glory they shall share;
If He shall come at the dawn or midnight,
Will He find us watching there?
O can we say we are ready, brother?
Ready for the soul's bright home?
Say, will He find you and me still watching,
Waiting when the Lord shall come?

—Fanny J. Crosby

Until next time, **MARANATHA!**

Edited by Dr. Horace E. Wood

MATTHEW:

The Healing of the Centurion's Servant, or the Faith That Astonished Christ

Matthew 8:5 - 13

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.

That a heathen man should come to faith in Jesus Christ in the day that salvation belonged to the Jews was a remarkable thing. That the man was a Roman centurion, a non-commissioned officer in the Roman army of occupation in the pay of Herod Antipas, might appear to make it even more remarkable. That his faith should rise to such heights that it amazed Jesus Christ makes his faith a fascinating thing indeed. What was it, and are we able to have it, too?

There is no question that this centurion is one of the most attractive characters in the New Testament. He belongs to a company of seven centurions referred to in the New Testament, and the interesting thing about the group is that every one of them is pictured as a commendable and honorable man. Among them are the centurion that referred to the crucified Savior as the Son of God and Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to the Christian faith. The reason for this general commendation of them may lie in their training, especially in their discipline. We are not told this specifically, however.

The account in Matthew is not the only account of the incident. The story is also found in Luke 7:2-10, and there is a significant differ-

ence in the accounts, which has led some to feel that the two accounts are contradictory. In the Lukan account it is not the centurion who comes to Jesus personally. There a group of Jewish elders are sent by him to the Lord (cf. 7:3-5). Needless discussion has taken place over this. There is a Latin saying, "What one does through others, one does himself," and it has its application here. The elders come to Jesus as the agents of the centurion, and Matthew simply reports the event from the standpoint of the ultimate origin of their mission. Frequently in my work of teaching I have had graduate students give my exams for me. It could just as well be said that I gave the exam as that the graduate student gave it, one being the ultimate source and the other the mediate source. In Matthew 27:26 it is said that Pilate scourged Jesus, but it is most unlikely that the Roman prefect did this personally rather than through his soldiers.

It is important to remember that the goal of the ministry of the Lord Jesus was to reach the nation Israel. This is reflected in the words He spoke to the Twelve, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not; But go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5-6). He also said to the Syrophenician woman, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24). And Paul sums it up in saying, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a MINISTER OF THE CIRCUMCISION for the truth of God, TO CONFIRM THE PROMISES MADE UNTO THE FATHERS, And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" (Rom. 15:8-9). This mission, of course, will not result in the favorable response of the nation, as the Scriptures prophesied, and it will be necessary for the testimony of the Messiah to go to the Gentiles (cf. 28:18-20). The present age is the breaking off of the natural branches of the olive tree and the grafting in of unnatural branches, or the age of Israel's falling away and Gentile fullness (cf. Rom. 11:11-24). In this incident we have a foreglimpse of this in the response of the Gentile centurion and the prophecy of the casting out of the "children of the kingdom" (v. 12). But, let us turn to the account.

THE REQUEST OF FAITH

The appeal of the centurion (8:5-6). Upon entering into the city of Capernaum there came to the Lord Jesus a group of Jewish elders, sent by a Roman centurion because of a young servant of the soldier who was at the point of death. The young boy was evidently a favorite of the centurion's and, since he had heard of Jesus, he sent to ask if the Great Servant would come and perform one of His mighty works of healing upon the young man. He prevailed upon the elders to be his messengers on the grounds of past favors done for the nation. When the elders came to Jesus they urged Him diligently to come, saying "that he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue" (cf. Luke 7:4-5).

The disease with which the young boy was afflicted was paralysis, and he was bed-ridden and suffering terribly (cf. Matt. 8:6). "Was this a case of progressive paralysis with muscular spasms dangerously af-

fecting his respiratory system, bringing him to the very portals of death, as Luke suggests," Hendriksen asks.

The answer of the Lord (8:7). The answer of the Lord is plain and direct, "I will come and heal him." It was all that the centurion could expect, and there was no evasion at all. "It was not, 'Why did you wait so long?' Nor, 'Since you represent the oppressor I can do nothing for you.' Nor even, 'I will see what I can do.'" It was the thrilling, unequivocal, concise, and positive assurance found in the next verse." How different from the modern "healers."

THE REASONING OF FAITH

The centurion's estimate of himself (8:8). The centurion was a Gentile, as is evident from several things in the account (cf. vv. 10-12; Luke 7:3-5), but in spite of this he was highly regarded by the Jews. They had said of him that "he was worthy" (cf. Luke 7:4). Further, from the affection that he had for his young servant one may conclude that he was a genuinely good man. Servants were little more than animals in value, but this young boy was dear to him. It is possible also, since he had built a synagogue for the Jews, that he had been attracted to Judaism and its God, Jehovah. It is possible that grace was already at work in the heart of this fine man.

In spite of these reasons for holding himself in some admiration the centurion proclaims his unworthiness. They may say he is "worthy," but he can only confess, "I am not worthy." And when the Lord draws near to his place, he again sends friends, saying through them that he should not bother to come to his home. There may be some recognition of the fact that it was polluting for a Jew to enter a Gentile's house in the words of verse eight. At any rate, he urges the Lord to simply "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

The centurion's estimate of the Lord. (8:9). The words which begin verse nine, "For I am a man," have been given varying senses. The NASB renders them by, "I too am a man," taking the Greek *kai* in the sense of *also*. The Arians, who refused to accord our Lord full deity, translated them by, "I too am a man," a rendering similar to the NASB's. The context, however, does not stress the similarity between the two persons. The real emphasis is upon the centurion's intimate understanding of the nature of authority. Therefore, it is much better to render the words by *even I am a man* under authority. It is an argument from the less to the greater. The centurion, even in his subordinate position, knows what it is to speak with authority and have his words obeyed. How much more may one expect the words of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God, subject to no human authority, to be obeyed? Pummer suggests that the use of the term "man" by the centurion in his estimate of himself may hint that he regards Jesus to be superhuman. That certainly is possible in the light of the authority he thinks that Jesus possesses. He thinks that the Lord can heal with a word; that requires superhuman power. And, after all, he has already called Him, "Lord" (v. 8). In his own experience he knew that when the general spoke, the army moved, and when a centurion spoke, his men moved, he now affirms that he believes that, when Jesus speaks, an authoritative, sovereign healing word goes forth. "He spoke and it

was done. He commanded and it stood fast," he had learned. Diseases fled at the word of the Messiah.

THE RESPONSE TO FAITH

Admiration (8:10). "When Jesus heard it, he *MARVELED*." Only twice do we read in the Word of God that Jesus was astonished, once at this manifestation of faith by a pagan Gentile, who had no special privileges, and once at Jewish unbelief, so hopeless and fruitless in spite of all its privileges. The fact that the Lord uses the word "found" suggests as we pointed out in the introduction, that He came *seeking* faith in the nation. In fact, the one thing that He looked for was trust in Him, and that is what He seeks today. Not so much orthodoxy, although that is important, but before all of that He desires trust in Him and His Word.

"Jesus Christ accepts and endorses the centurion's estimate of Him, as He always accepts the highest place offered Him," Maclaren points out. "No one ever proffered to Jesus Christ honours that He put by. No one ever brought to Him a trust which He said was either excessive or misdirected. 'Speak the word and my servant shall be healed,' said the centurion. Contrast Christ's acceptance of this confidence in his power with Elijah's 'Am I a God, to kill and to make alive, that they send this man to me to recover him of his leprosy?' Or contrast it with Peter's 'Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?' Christ takes as His due all the honour, love, and trust, which any man can give Him—either an exorbitant appetite for adulation, or the manifestation of conscious divinity."

The centurion's faith was "great," our Lord said. It was great in the difficulties it overcame, in its clarity of understanding, and in its humility. That it was also a saving faith is suggested by the fact that it caused our Lord to reflect upon the Messianic Kingdom and entrance into it (cf. vv. 11-12).

Reflection (8:11-12). The reflection concerns the inhabitants of the kingdom, and the words point to the presence of believing Gentiles and the elect from the nation Israel. It has been thought strange by some that Matthew, the Jewish gospel, should mention these words concerning the failure of the nation and their eternal judgment, while Luke, the Gentile gospel, should omit them. But, in reality, it is not so surprising, for as one proceeds through this book it becomes clear that Matthew has as one of his aims the presentation of the truth of the rejection of Israel. And further, it is his aim also to link that rejection with failure to respond in faith to the message of their Messiah.

Action (8:13). The final words are the healing words, and the measure of the healing is the measure of the believing, or vice-versa. We may make application of this by affirming that the measure of my faith is the measure of my appropriation and possession of Christ, an important truth upon which I cannot enlarge here.

The word of our Lord produced the healing, and there was not only abatement of the disease, there was an absence of it after He spoke.

The healing, of course, is a mighty miracle, and it formed part of that collection of them in His ministry that pointed Him out to Israel as their Messiah. It identified the Coming One, and it was sheer unbelief to see and refuse the testimony of them.

Professor William Barclay goes to great lengths in his commentary on Matthew to explain away the miracle. He recounts instances of extrasensory perception, and implies that Jesus simply was able to be aware of the spontaneous healing of the boy, although distant from him. He concludes with this amazing comment, "If human minds can get to this length, how much more the mind of Jesus? The strange thing about this miracle is that modern thought, instead of making it harder, has made it easier to believe it." In the fourth chapter, however, it is said that Jesus healed those who were paralytics (cf. 4:24), and that great multitudes followed Him because of it. It is clear that the rationalistic and humanistic explanations of the miracles make nonsense of the New Testament and of the early church's convictions concerning Him.

CONCLUSION

First, the incident reveals Christ as the One who has power over despair, disease, and death. The servant was "dear" to the centurion, Luke says (7:2), and it was the work of the Lord Jesus that, in healing the young man, delivered the centurion from the despair brought on by the possibility of losing him. Further, he was "sick" and was healed by the Great Physician. And, finally, in Luke's account again it is said that the servant was "ready to die." Despair, disease, and death are all under the power and authority of the King.

Second, the means of the healing and that which produced the astonishment of Jesus Christ was the faith of the Roman officer. What were its lineaments? Well, first of all, one must not confound it with a good character. It is not that that saves, as our Lord's words indicate. He, the centurion, had a good character, but it was his faith that brought the healing, Jesus said. He also had religion, it would seem, or he would never have appealed to Jesus Christ for healing, and there is some evidence that he had been attracted to Judaism, but these things did not bring the healing. He certainly was a philanthropist, at least in action, for he built the nation a synagogue, but even building a "church" does not bring healing. And, finally, he was a humble man, that is true (cf. vv. 6-7), but even that did not deliver his boy.

On the positive side, he did know himself to be unworthy of the blessing that Christ could bring. In the words of the famous Augustine, "By calling himself unworthy, he showed himself worthy for Christ to come not into his house, but into his heart."

And, second, he did hear a message about Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 7:3), and it is the constant teaching of Holy Scripture that "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (cf. Rom. 10:17).

And, finally, He believed in a sovereign Messiah, counting Him authoritatively worthy to bless and heal, the great Jehovah-Jireh. These are the lines of a true biblical faith, the faith that astonished Christ, and we are able to have it, too. The invitation has been ex-

tended to all sinners, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (cf. Acts 16:31). Come, believe, while the day of salvation prevails.

NEWS AND NOTES

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



As we are about to go to press, word reaches us that Bro. J. Harding McCaleb has departed to be with the Lord. He was living in a nursing home at Henderson, Tennessee, having moved there from Chicago, where he was a long time member of the Cornell Avenue Church.

For many years, Brother McCaleb contributed articles for publication in these pages, and was appreciated by many. We invite tributes for publication.



Also we report the death of Bro. Howard Marsh in Winchester, Kentucky, where he had been receiving medical care for cancer. His funeral at Belmont Church, Winchester, was on April 9. Brother Marsh was a well-known evangelist, minister, and a key-person in starting Sellersburg Children's Home and Southeastern Christian College. His work lives on in many lives.

Our hearts bear with Sister Marsh as she seeks God's solace at this time.

14 Feb. 1982

"Dear Larry:

Say, brother, that was really neat of you, writing a review of my history. We need all the help we can get in spreading the word about the book, I presume it is all right for me to quote from you in some of my own advertising.

Yes, by all means call me when you are in the area. I will be home during most of the Spring.

We appreciate your helping us along with subs for RR. We will do all we can to make it a blessing to each reader.

Doesn't it speak volumes that Jesus did not come to judge but to save? This is the attitude that we must have toward each other.

As ever,
Leroy"

(Letter from Bro. Leroy Garrett re-

garding his new book **The Stone-Campbell Movement**.)

The School of Biblical Studies Methods of Bible Study Instructor - Dennis Allen

The purpose of the course is to stimulate the student to dig into the Word afresh, that he might see that the Bible is a gold mine of truth waiting to be discovered by the one who is willing to pay the price. The student is introduced to many different methods of Bible study that have proved rewarding to other Bible students.

This semester we have 3 students. They are eager to study and it is a real pleasure to study with them. We are at present digging into the book of Amos.

Dennis Allen

Dear Brethren:

The Bible Club has been going very well so far. Over 1700 Bibles and Testaments have been either purchased or received free. Most have already been placed in Hospitals, Nursing Homes and jails.

I would love to see others begin such a work in their area. If I can be of any assistance to any who are interested they can feel free to write me at the address given.

Odis O. Ford
Rt. 2, Box 123-B
Independence, La. 70443