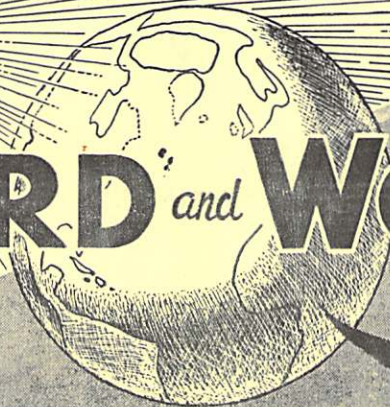


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AUGUST, 1983

WHERE IS THE "PERFECT CHURCH?"

Page 226

Eagles Have Legal Protection, But the Unborn . . .

Page 229

GRACE ABOUNDING

Page 230

Why Do These Heartaches Happen to Us?

Page 232

LET GOD TAKE HOLD OF YOU

Page 235

MISSION REPORT FROM HONG KONG

Page 241

God Deserves All of the Applause

Page 246

SPURGEON'S COMMENT ON PRAYER

Page 254

A CALL FOR YOUNG PREACHERS

Page 256

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THE WORD AND WORK

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THE WORD AND WORK

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

Wm. Robert Heid, Editor

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Vol. LXXVII

AUGUST, 1983

No. 8

In This Issue

God's Family — Looking For A Perfect Church — W.R.H. - -	226
Viewing the News — Jack Blaes - - - - -	228
Thoughts From Romans — "Grace Reigning as King"	
— E. E. Lyon - - - - -	230
Questions Asked of Us — Carl Kitzmiller - - - - -	232
Reprint: Holding Hands — Hall C. Crowder - - - - -	235
By Prayer and Fasting — J. Oswald Sanders - - - - -	236
Asleep At The Switch — Gordon R. Linscott - - - - -	240
MISSIONARY MESSENGER - - - - -	241
Testimony of a Statesman - - - - -	242
A Time For Faithfulness—A Time For Action	
— J. Dwight Thomas - - - - -	243
Gleanings — Larry Miles - - - - -	245
Countering The Applause Syndrome — H. Robert Cowles - - -	246
A Message For Today — J. M. Chambers - - - - -	248
The Gospel of John: The Mystery of Unbelief	
— S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. - - - - -	248
Sunday And The Sabbath — R. H. Boll - - - - -	253
Praying In The Holy Spirit— Charles Haddon Spurgeon - - -	254
Seek the Lord Continually - - - - -	255
NEWS AND NOTES - - - - -	256



God's Family

W. R. H.

LOOKING FOR A PERFECT CHURCH

Ralph and I had gotten all-day passes from the orderly room at Camp Shenango, Pa., a staging area for GI's who were being outfitted for an all-expense-paid cruise. It was a Sunday morning, and as we rode a bus to Chester, Pa., we sounded each other out. With similar motives, we were both looking for a place we could worship God, and have fellowship with other believers. Ralph was a church organist, and I, with a young wife and baby, had been "circuit-riding" to help at three small churches in the bluegrass of Kentucky.

Descending the last hill as we came into town, on the right side was a massive and beautiful church building (not identifiable from that view) and Ralph commented: "Look at that large church. There surely will be a massive pipe-organ there. I am going to get off and attend." A few moments later, the bus made another stop and I alighted in the heart of town, right near a fire-house. "Is there a church of Christ round about? I inquired of one of the firemen. "Yes, there is. Go thus and thus, and it is right there." Sure enough, I found it, and just about on time. It was about the equal of the three various groups that we had been privileged to attend in Kentucky. I don't recall anything about the message, except that I felt very much at home and really entered into the Spirit of the meeting.

That evening, back in the barracks, we compared notes. I had found those with whom I could commune in the Lord's supper. He had really been thrilled with the music program he had heard, as it seemed to meet the longing of his music-oriented soul. Thirty-nine years later, I must concede that "though always changing, man is ever the same." We still have a broad spectrum of traditions and preferences that dictate where we are going to "get off of the bus."

THINGS WORTHWHILE

In choosing where to worship, many folks seek out a group that is attracting the young people. After all, our own young ones need to be in a sizeable group, where there will be more opportunities to get acquainted with Mr. Right. It works like this: I take my family of four out of a group where there were only ten, and attend where there are twenty. Now the kids are with a total of 24. Where I formerly attended, there are now six. If these six are not able to bring in a few outsiders and build things back up a bit, they may also move along.

"I like to be a part of a "going concern," says another. "Where I am going now, they have two morning services, with Sunday school in

between. Besides, I can now go to early service, have Bible class, and still get on my way to my favorite..." "And this preacher really preaches it straight—just the way *we have always* heard it."

"There is something for everybody. Even the senior citizens have a lunch club, bus trips, etc. etc. I am not sure I want to put my "membership" (whatever that is!) there yet, because I am not fully in agreement with their budget and emphasis on giving."

"I think there needs to be some system whereby the preacher makes the hospital calls more promptly. It really is nice to have someone come when you are ill. They have a committee and a system that really works."

Some people have an allegiance to a particular minister. "Wherever he goes, we go!" seems to be their philosophy. "I don't really care to sit through the sermons of anyone else. And, he never fails to mention baptism when he extends the invitation."

A VALID REASON

I join with many who want the church to be alive, Spiritually. By this, I mean, the Holy Spirit is an indwelling Person, and His power and sweetness should be evident. Though some may not have yielded to His sway as much as others, still there should be *none* who would want to either grieve or quench Him. I know that the Holy Spirit can select songs better than I, can discern the burdens of others better than I, can apply the scriptures better than I. Yet He will always use some saint to pick a song, lift a burden, or come up with an appropriate scripture. For this reason, I dislike rigid formality. To have the songs (especially the invitation and worship songs) picked a week ahead of time rules Him out of helping us in these choices. I believe that the preacher should be willing to change his message, abbreviate it, or even dispense with it altogether, if the Spirit of the meeting indicates that we should, as a body, continue in praises, go into a season of earnest prayer, or give the floor to some visitor whom the Lord has evidently sent with a message.

LOOK AT THESE!

If you have recently "Changed churches" or are thinking to do so, consider these questions:

This urgency that I have to share, or seek to find: Have I tried to develop it in the group where I have been till now? Instead of seeking out those who have these "gifts", why not let my life show them forth to those where I am at present?

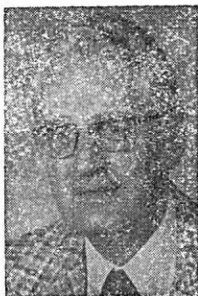
Have you prayed to the Lord specifically (aloud, in your closet) about making this change, earnestly seeking His will in the matter?

Will this change increase your Bible study and prayer time on a consistent basis?

Have you attended all of your present group's business meetings in the last year?

That class that you have been offered to teach, are they really wanting to learn, or to hear a new voice?

Do you plan to put your shoulder to the wheel, or are you really looking for a joy ride?



Viewing the News

Jack Blaes

Secretary of the Interior James Watt sees America as a "hurting nation" regarding the threats to our political and religious freedoms. The secretary recognizes that the desire for political liberty runs parallel to the "yearning that flows and cries for spiritual freedom." The one main force which Mr. Watt sees "snuffing out" our spiritual liberty is what he calls "excessive government." "We have abandoned the political role to the religious left, who teach doctrines and thoughts that would destroy our fundamental political and religious freedoms," Watt told the 1983 graduating class of Liberty Baptist College.

EDWARD SATCHFELD DECIDED HE QUALIFIED so he applied. The ad was looking for someone seeking "high adventure and appropriate pay." He found that he would be paid \$8,000 plus expenses to blow a hole in the wall of the county jail in Golden, Colo. Though he could use the money, he was not looking for that kind of adventure so he decided to notify the F.B.I. They found that the offer was made in order to help a friend escape who was being held on charges of felony theft, burglary, and forgery. As a result both the advertiser and prisoner are being held on \$100,000 bond for the attempted escape. "High adventure?" You bet!

BIRTH CONTROL IN COMMUNIST CHINA. The murder of female babies by ancient Chinese methods of family planning—drowning, exposure, and mutilation—has been revived as a direct result of a birth control law passed in 1979, which permits each family to have only one child. Under this birth control law, couples must ask the party's permission to conceive. Party cadres maintain tight surveillance so that unauthorized pregnancies can be detected.

Women must display their sanitary napkins on demand, for example, to show they aren't pregnant. Thousands of women have been forced to have abortions. Christians have to be opposed to such Satanic destruction of human life, even in distant lands; but we must face up to the fact that this is in the minds of those who are pushing for uncontrolled abortion and euthanasia in our own country.

DOES ANYONE IN THE FREE WORLD KNOW WHAT RUSSIANS OUR GRAINS FEEDS! "This a happy day for American agriculture and for the citizens of this country," says Secretary of Agriculture John Block. The Administration had just announced a new grain agreement with the Soviet Union under which the Reds are required to buy at least nine million metric tons of wheat and corn in each of the next five years, and may buy up to 12 million tons without receiving permission in advance. Senator Daniel Moynihan (D. - N.Y.) criticizes the accord, asking, "If we're going to feed the Russian Army, what right have we to complain about the way in which the Russian Army conducts itself?" In a speech to members of the Future Farmers of America, President Reagan implied that the Communists want the grain to feed the citizenry. I wonder if the high schoolers really bought that line from the President.

HAS ANY READER SEEN ANY REPORT OF MONEY BEING TRANSFERRED TO AMERICA for any purchase which the communists have made from America? If so, I would like to know about it, as I'm sure, all of America would.

ANYONE FOR PEACE? At least 10 million people have met death as a re-

sult of war since World War II. Right now, people are killing each other in at least 15 "small wars" and something like 20 "lesser conflicts." The Associated Press remarks about the "peace and war" situation: "Although great powers have not clashed with each other on the battlefield for 38 years, almost half the current wars could be classified as proxy battles, conflicts waged between local forces armed and encouraged by the superpowers."

THE PRESIDENT RECEIVES OVER 100 LETTERS A DAY on the subject of nuclear war. No other subject gets that much attention. These letters are from a special class of citizens—frightened, ill-informed schoolchildren who are filling teacher's assignments in writing the President. It is apparent from the statements of the children that they have been indoctrinated with a particular political viewpoint, and have been drenched with fear. They see the President as a war-crazed person who can't wait to push the "button." It could very well be the major scandal of our age that the largest teacher organization in America is promoting such political indoctrination in the classroom. The National Education Association has developed a project which is promoting this activity in America's schools. The Association has published a program of Study (?) entitled **Choices: A Unit On Conflict And Nuclear War**. Even the liberal *Washington Post* calls it what it is, "political indoctrination."

"**ENTITLEMENT TO TAX-EXEMPTION**," said Chief Justice Warren Burger, "depends on meeting certain common law concepts of charity—namely, that an institution seeking tax-exempt status must serve a public purpose and not be contrary to established public

policy." That was from **Bob Jones University vs. U.S.** On June 16, 1983, the Supreme Court made it perfectly clear that abortion was established as public policy. "The Justices," said *Time* magazine, "roundly reaffirmed the landmark 1973 decision as the law of the land." All tax-exempt institutions (including churches, hospitals, universities) opposing abortion as murder of the innocent are in danger of losing tax-exemption, and you can be very sure that the ACLU will not by-pass this golden opportunity to press the matter.

THE SAME DAY THE SUPREME COURT ANNOUNCED ITS abortion decision some 50 people were being sought in nine states for slaying eagles! Eagles have more legal protection in the U.S. than unborn human beings! Congressman Hyde contends that a blade of grass has more protection than an unborn human being, William D. Mote is correct: "Why worry about the butchery of the Third Reich? Since the U.S. Supreme Court gave the nod, we have surgically slaughtered enough babies to make Hitler's regime look like inept amateurs."

GAY LEADERS DELIBERATELY SUPPRESS VITAL information concerning San Francisco's Castro area and AIDS. They did not want to admit publicly that gay leader's bath houses were hot houses for AIDS. Instead, since the bath houses were the symbol of gay liberation itself, the gay leaders sought to suppress studies tying bath house promiscuity to AIDS. The gays worry that if they admit the plague is spread sexually, "everything that had been said about their lifestyle would seem true." So in order for it not to appear to be true, they simply lie about it.



THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

“Grace Reigning as King”

And the law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly; that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Romans 5:20, 21 ASV.

As we come to the end of this difficult but wonderful chapter 5 of Romans, we find Paul bringing to a glorious end his contrast of the result of Adam's sin and of Christ's act of righteousness in dying for us. Read those two verses several times, and if possible, read them in several translations. You should then be able, if you are a Christian, to praise God and thank Him anew for the wonderful work He did for us in Christ.

“And the law came in besides” is the ASV translation of the beginning of verse 20. The KJ and NKJV translation of “entered” instead of “came in besides” is much less a true picture of what Paul is saying. Strong's translation as “came in alongside” is probably better. The idea is that to show the terribleness of sin, the law was brought in for us to see what sin really is. It is like a mirror being held up to see, or much more to the point, a magnifying glass being used to show in greater detail. Put a magnifying glass over a place with dirty spots and more spots seem to appear. The glass does not create the dirty spots; it simply lets you see them better. That is the way the law “came in alongside” to work for us to have a clearer view.

But Paul adds then this statement: “that the trespass might abound.” The Law, as I mentioned in type, does not create sin; it simply shows it to be what it is—a terrible refusal of God's will, a doing of things hateful to God, a departure from the way that God wants us to walk. To drive down Broadway in Louisville at 50 miles an hour at 5:00 in the afternoon would be dangerous to yourself and to others, but not until the city passed a law and posted it did it become lawlessness to do that. Any wise person would know it was wrong because of the danger to others, but when the law is passed it is clearly seen to be lawless. That is a weak but correct analogy of what the law did for us.

“But where sin abounded, grace did more exceedingly” is the way Paul ends this verse. When Adam sinned God now had the opportunity to show His grace. Instead of banishing the sinner from His

presence eternally, He provided the means not only of forgiveness of the sin but also of receiving a blessing far beyond what Adam had lost. I emphasized this matter in my last article. Reread it if you have forgotten.

In this comforting end to verse 20 Paul first notes that indeed sin did abound; it increased in our sight because we now could see that it was against God's will. He then adds that "grace did abound more exceedingly." "Abound more exceedingly" is just one word in the original Greek, but it is one word made up of two other Greek words. One of those means "to be over and above a certain number or measure," thus "to superabound." And then to this Paul adds a word more "above." Indeed grace did abound more abundantly!

Verse 21 then shows why grace abounded more exceedingly. In this verse Paul again uses the word for "reign-as-king." Using that expanded form we have for verse 21 this: "that, as sin reigned-as-king in death, even so might grace reign-as-king through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." That sin did reign-as-king in death is obvious. Every single person since Adam has died except for two that God took away without death—Enoch and Elijah. But the knowledge that sin reigned-as-king is made here into a matter of rejoicing because that provides the opportunity to show that God's favor (grace) now reigns-as-king through righteousness and the result is not returning to Adam's place in the Garden of Eden but of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. I do not envy Adam and Eve in their idyllic existence in the Garden of Eden. If they repented of their sin and believed on the Lord, as I believe they did, then they will get to share with me something far better than what they lost. I hope that you too will be there through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ helping you to lay hold of the salvation that He has provided for us. And I also hope that you allow that grace to give you victory over sin daily as pictured here and elsewhere in this chapter and in things to come in Romans.

This is a good place in our study for you to go back over what Paul has pictured for us so far. Note again how mankind foolishly gave up faith in God and descended very low (chapter 1). Then note how thoroughly Paul showed through chapter 2 and 20 verses of chapter 3 that there is no hope for man in his own strength. Read again that dismal summary in 3:19, 20. After that, pass immediately into what God has done for us in Christ Jesus and rejoice in His Word through chapter 5 as Paul shows what God in Christ has done for every true believer in His Son. Again I say that I hope you have entered into that glorious position as a Son of God in Christ, but if not, don't delay any longer. Put your trust in Jesus Christ, be buried with Him (ch. 6) into His death and be raised into His life.



Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

We try to live as Christians. We have been faithful about being in church. So why do these things (certain specific heartaches and problems) happen to us? Some non-Christian friends don't have these things happen to them.

The problem of evil has been with us since man's fall and, no doubt, people of all ages have had the same mental and spiritual battles as to "why" things happened to them. There have been those who, like Cain, tried to deny any wrongdoing and who have cried out that their punishment for evil deeds is "greater than I can bear" (Gen. 4:13). There have been those who, like Job, have been models of human righteousness who have cried out against the injustice of it all. The form of the problems may change a little, but the basic conflict is ever with us. The reasons for human suffering are not always evident to us, and suffering tends to provoke the question, "Why me?" We do not often ask "Why me?" when good things come to us, but we tend to think that we have experienced something we did not deserve when the evil comes.

THERE IS NO ONE ANSWER to the question why evil happens to us. Sometimes we are reaping the just rewards of our deeds. But sometimes we have done no particular wrong to cause the evil. Sometimes the answer lies between those extremes. Moreover, one outside ourselves cannot always know with certainty what the reason has been. Job's friends thought his problems had been brought on by some hidden sin, when that was not the case at all. On the other hand, sometimes people have a tantrum about the injustice of it all when they know deep down that they have merely reaped a bad sowing and got what they deserved. People may not always be as honest about their evil as the repenting thief who confessed that crucifixion was "the due reward for our deeds" (Luke 23:41). Sometimes even the individual in the suffering stands too close to the problem to be able to judge fairly. He may either assume a guilt that he does not deserve or he may fail to see what is reasonably evident to his friends and disinterested persons.

There is a near-blasphemous teaching which is widely proclaimed today by print and on radio and television (and, I suppose, in some pulpits) which declares that only good things need happen to the Christian. These "good" things are conceived as being health, wealth, ease, and happiness in life. There is, of course, true good from the overruling hand of the Lord, per Rom. 8:28, that belongs to the Chris-

tian and that makes the long-term good assured in his life. This, however, is not what is in view in the current teaching. These declare that any believing Christian need only ask for health, wealth, ease, or happiness, and that God is honor-bound to give it. It is based on a partial truth concerning prayer. Hence, it must be concluded, if any Christian is having problems or is suffering it is because he has not lived up to his privilege in some way. This is, simply and bluntly, a falsehood. The idea is created that the Christian life is one big "high" and that the Christian has no problems.

Do not be surprised if the Christian seems to have more problems than the non-Christian. Being a Christian solves some great spiritual problems but it may mean an increase in the problems of this life. One who becomes a Christian to get rid of present earthy problems has become a Christian for the wrong reason. One who becomes a Christian with the expectation that only "good" things will come here and now is headed for great disappointment if not disaster. There are sufferings experienced by the Christian which the non-Christian usually has no reason to experience. Persecution for the Lord's sake is a Christian suffering. Chastening from the Lord is the experience of sons, not those outside the family. The devil has some folks so securely in his pocket that all he needs do is keep them thinking everything is fine. Like pigs headed for the slaughter, they happily gobble up the present pleasures and grow fatter. The transgressions which bother the faithful Christian hardly disturb them— not because the transgressions do not occur, but they have accepted the standards of society, not the standards of Christianity. They save face, if need be, by lying, murder (abortion), brazenness, and such like.

The Christian must remember that his life is lived in the face of eternity. The psalmist of old (Ps. 73) faced the problem of evil. He saw the wicked as not having trouble like others—no pangs in death, plenty of wealth and material fatness, no grief from their scoffing, disregard for God without apparent judgment. Such prosperity caused him to say: "Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocency." In effect, he was made to feel that he was wasting his time trying to live righteously. He had troubles (v. 14). This kind of thinking almost captured him, causing his feet to be "almost gone" and his steps "well nigh slipped" (v.2). But then he went to the sanctuary of God and considered their latter end (v. 17ff). Ah, there's the difference. The evil-doer lives on the brink of destruction. He doesn't "get away" with anything. Man's life is measured in terms of eternity, not in mere earthly years.

Two neighboring farmers were discussing their corn crops. One man was a faithful Christian; the other was an atheist. "What has God done for you?" challenged the atheist. "We both have good corn crops. When it rained on yours, it rained on mine. I have just as good a crop as you!" he declared. The Christian man answered very wisely, "All of God's accounts are not settled in October." Indeed, don't judge the blessings of God (or the seeming lack of them) on a short-term basis. Keep eternity in view.

Why do Christians suffer? Sometimes they along with the unregenerate suffer in natural disasters, in warfare, in pestilences, etc.,

because this is the common lot of fallen man. God sometimes overrules in these matters so that some are spared, but this is not always the case. We do not know His greater purposes. If Christians were delivered from all such by the Lord there would be multitudes of people whose only motivation for serving the Lord would be escape. There is a sense in which God does have a hedge about every Christian, but it does not mean that nothing can ever touch him. Instead, that hedge is a promise to work everything for good to those who love Him (Rom. 8:28). Keep in mind, however, that the good is not determined by man's limited viewpoint but by God's eternal purposes.

Sometimes Christians suffer because they have sown to the flesh and God allows a harvest. The sowing may have been before turning to the Lord. Some sins have consequences which go on even though the guilt of sin has been forgiven. The thief on the cross did not escape crucifixion even though he turned to the Lord and was forgiven. Again, the sowing may have been after turning to the Lord. He still allows us to make wrong choices. Christians can sow to the flesh (cf. Gal. 6:7-8). God can overrule to set aside a harvest, but it is often not in the best interests of all concerned that He should do so. As a rule, He allows the harvest. This is not a denial of His grace but a confirmation of it.

Sometimes Christians suffer for a reason similar to that which brought the prodigal son to hunger (Luke 15:11ff). God may use a natural tragedy or a harvest of our own foolish sowing to bring us to our knees and to our senses. Whom the Lord loves He chastens. Some troubles are meant to make us realize our need of Him. However painful the process at the moment, it is for our future blessing—either maturing us for our present life or making us set our values in eternity. We may squawk, child-like, that the chastening is unfair, more than we deserved, etc., but this is one of God's acts of love.

Sometimes Christians suffer simply to the glory of God. They have not done wrong as such, but they need strengthening. They are being prepared or used as vessels of the Master. Some suffering prepares us as helpers of others, enables us to walk in their shoes. Jesus suffered not for His own sins but, among other reasons, in order that He might be a sympathetic High Priest, knowing the feeling of our infirmity. Jesus healed a blind man (John 9) and in the process taught that the man's blindness was to the glory of God. It gave him an insight into the identity of Jesus that sighted people missed. Trouble may be God's way of making us aware of our need of Him, of developing Christian character in us (Rom. 5:3), or of using us for a testimony to others. Job's troubles came on him, not because of evil-doing but to make him a better man and at the same time to use him as an example of righteousness.

Sometimes Christians suffer persecution for the Lord's sake. In fact, this is a promise to every godly person (2 Tim. 3:12). This is suffering, not for sin but because one is a Christian and lives like it. Persecution is not always life-threatening; it may be very subtle and involve attitudes taken toward us. This kind of suffering is to be regarded as a blessing and a privilege (Matt. 5:11-12).

It is important that as Christians we try to determine why we are

suffering. Am I whining, finding fault with God because I don't like the process by which He develops me into a more suitable vessel for His use? Am I suffering because I love Him and follow Him? Or, am I just getting what I deserved for human foolishness, bad choices, sowing to the flesh? Is He chastening? If He is trying to speak to me through these things, then I had better listen. His is not a weak, fearful, indulgent love. Of one thing I may be sure—He is never going to do me an injustice or allow evil to come without the possibility of blessing. Let me never be envious of the unregenerate man who seems to be “getting away” with something. That's like the child of loving parents who envies another because his parents let him do as he pleases, make no demands on him, set no standards, etc. It seems to be wonderful for a while, but that unrestrained child is to be pitied.

REPRINTS:

Holding Hands

Hall. C. Crowder

A man and his son went for a walk in the country one cold, snowy day. The boy, trudging along with both hands rammed down in his pockets, soon slipped and fell. Getting to his feet he decided to guard against another fall. This time he grasped the sleeve of his father's coat for security. It wasn't long until his foot slipped again and the weight of his body broke his grip on the sleeve. Down he went!

Getting to his feet once more, he had a new idea. “Father,” he said, “you hold my hand!” This time with father carefully choosing the path and holding him up when he slipped, he was able to finish the walk without further falls.

This little story illustrates three different attitudes we may have toward God as we go through life. Check and see which one is most like yours.

1. The boy with his hands in his pockets is like one of us saying to God, “I don't need you; I can get along O.K. by myself.” The boy didn't want to fall, and neither do we, but, “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” Can't we all tell by the bruises from past “falls” that we can't make it through life alone?

2. The boy, holding on to his father, was not really much better off than before. He realized he needed help, but the way he went about getting it was wrong. He was still depending on his own strength! Many people admit that they need God's help in living but still believe that salvation depends on their own strength, faithfulness, and good works. My grip on God's hand offers no security at all!

3. The only security comes from saying with the psalmist, “I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand.” (Psa. 73:23). This involves real surrender! With this attitude of faith and trust, though we may sometimes “slip” we shall not “fall.” Jude says, “Now unto Him that is able to *keep you from falling* and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory . . .”

Have you really asked God to take hold of you?

BY PRAYER AND FASTING

J. Oswald Sanders

(formerly the General Director of the China Inland Mission)

*If I wished to humble anyone, I should question him
about his prayer. I know nothing
to compare with this topic for its sorrowful self-confessions.*

C. J. Vaughan

The disciples, flushed with recent success, were sweeping everything before them. Suddenly they met humiliating defeat. They found themselves impotent to alleviate the distress of a demon-possessed lad. "Why could not we cast him out?" they asked Jesus in their perplexity. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" was His diagnosis and prescription (Mt. 17:19-21). Their impotence was a reflection of failure in their own praying and stemmed from a lack of self-discipline. Who would say that the same diagnosis and prescription are not equally relevant to many present-day disciples of Christ?

The fact of prayer is universal. There is no religion without prayer of some kind. It is instinctive. Even where men profess to have eradicated this instinct, it almost inevitably re-asserts itself in hours of acute personal need or when facing the deeper realities of life. Prayer is as much a demand of man's own nature as a command of Deity. It is the most ancient, most universal, most intense expression of the religious instinct. It is to religion what thought is to philosophy.

THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

Prayer touches extremes. It is at once the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try and the sublimest strains that reach the Majesty on high. It is the Christian's vital breath and native air. And yet—strange paradox—we are all plagued by a subtle aversion to praying. We do not naturally delight in drawing near to God. We pay lip-service to its value and potency. We admit its indispensability to a mature spiritual life. We acknowledge that it is constantly enjoined and exemplified in Scripture, but in spite of that too often we fail to pray. "When I go to pray," confessed one eminent Christian, "I find my heart so loth to go to God, and when it is with Him so loth to stay." It is here that self-discipline comes in. "When thou feelest most indisposed to pray," counselled an old divine, "yield not to it. But strive and endeavor to pray even when thou thinkest thou canst not pray."

Mastering the art of prayer will take time, a commodity of which there is a universal and chronic shortage. Lack of time is a much overworked excuse for neglect of duty. And yet, strangely enough, we always contrive to find time for what we really want to do. In reality the fundamental problem lies not in the time factor but in the realm of will and desire. We have all the time there is, and it is we who choose our own priorities. Our Lord moved through life with majestic and

measured tread, never in a hurry though always thronged by demanding crowds, always fulfilling the work entrusted to Him. Time held no power over Him because He knew there were sufficient hours in the day to do all His Father's will. If daylight hours left insufficient time for prayer, there were always the hours of night, and He could always rise a great while before day. To us, crowding duties are a reason for neglecting prayer. To Martin Luther extra work was a strong argument for spending more time in prayer. Once when asked his plans for the following day he answered, "Work, work from early to late. In fact I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." It all depends on our choice of priorities. If we share our Lord's view of the indispensability of prayer, we will somehow make time for it.

That prayer presents intellectual problems is of course true. But the skeptics regarding its efficacy are usually those who do not fulfil the revealed conditions. Samuel Chadwick maintained that there was no way to learn to pray but by praying. No reasoned philosophy of prayer ever taught a soul to pray. But to the man who fulfils the conditions, the problems are met in the fact of answered prayer and the joy of fellowship with God.

One problem which commonly troubles the Christian on the threshold of the prayer life is this: If all things are controlled by law, how can God in answer to my prayer interfere with the fixed and changeless laws that govern the universe? Within the limits of this brief article it is possible only to hint at a solution. "Law" is defined as a statement or formula expressing the constant order of certain phenomena, a rule by which the same effect always follows the same cause. But who or what is responsible for this regularity? If, as we believe, it is God, then what are these various modes of action so regular and immutable but expressions of His will? They are the way God decides that force shall act upon matter. Law is simply our name for God's method of working. If this is so, why should it be foolish to ask God to control natural or spiritual forces in the interests of His praying disciple? "Who will dare to say that God cannot, if He choose, without disaster modify, suspend or even change what we call a law?" asks W.E. Biederwolf. By the exercise of my free will I can overcome temporarily the force of gravity simply by lifting my hand. Must God have less liberty in the exercise of His free will? Is He the prisoner of His own laws?

It is surely not impossible to believe that in creating the universe, God provided for prayer being a real and effective force in it, and that He intended men to make use of this force. How else can one account for the consistent and remarkable answers to prayer in the life of a man like George Muller of Bristol? Might prayer itself not be one of God's laws? Just as sin, and not righteousness, is the disruptive thing in the universe, might it not be that it is prayerlessness and not prayer which breaks in on the moral order of the universe?

OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE

We do not, however, base our belief in the necessity and rationality of prayer merely on logic, but pre-eminently on the example and

precepts of Christ. If prayer could have been dispensed with in any life, surely it would be in that of the Son of man. If it were unnecessary or unreasonable, we would rightly expect it to be omitted from both His life and His teaching. On the contrary, prayer was the dominant feature of His life and a recurrent element in His teaching. An examination of its incidence reveals that prayer kept the vision of His moral duty clear. It was prayer that nerved Him to do the costly will of God. It was prayer that transfigured His life. "As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered."

To Him it was not a reluctant addendum, but a fundamental necessity. He spent nights in prayer (Lk. 6:12). He rose to pray a great while before day (Mk. 1:35). The great crises in His life were preceded by prayer. "He withdrew himself into the deserts and prayed" (Lk. 5:16), a statement indicating not an isolated instance but a habit. Both by word and example He impressed upon His disciples the importance of solitude in prayer (Mk. 6:46; Lk. 9:28).

Both our Lord and St. Paul made it clear that prayer is no mere pleasant, dreamy reverie. "All vital praying makes a drain upon a man's vitality," wrote J.H. Jowett. "True intercession is a sacrifice, a bleeding sacrifice." Jesus performed many mighty works without outward sign of strain, but of His praying it is recorded that "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7). "Epaphras is always wrestling for you in his prayer," wrote St. Paul to the Colossian Christians (4:12). How pale a reflection of Epaphras' intercessions are our languid prayers! The word "wrestling" is that from which our "agonize" derives. It is used of a man toiling at his work until utterly weary (Col. 1:29), or competing in the arena for the coveted prize (I Cor. 9:25). It describes the soldier battling for his life (I Tim. 6:12), or a man struggling to deliver his friend from danger (Jn. 18:36). Prayer is evidently a strenuous spiritual exercise which demands the utmost mental discipline and concentration. Was it because of this fact that our Lord linked prayer with fasting?

THE VALUE OF FASTING

Fasting, in the sense in which He used the word, has gone out of fashion. "Fasting of the mind" or "in spirit" has taken the place of abstinence from food. But to be consistent we might as well talk of giving alms in spirit as of fasting in spirit. There is no doubt that Jesus had in mind partial or complete abstinence from food for a season. Did He not commence His own ministry after a prolonged period of fasting? "And afterwards he was an hungered." He instructed His disciples in the correct manner of fasting. St Paul exhorted the Corinthians to give themselves to prayer and fasting. It has been the practice of great men of God down the years—Luther and Baxter, Whitefield and Edwards, Brainerd and Martyn.

One value of fasting is that its discipline enables us to "keep under" the body and "bring it into subjection." It is a practical acknowledgment of the supremacy of the spiritual. Over-indulgence in food has never been favorable to deep spirituality. But fasting has direct benefits in relation to prayer as well. Those who practise it

from right motives and in order to give themselves to prayer state that the mind becomes unusually clear and vigorous. There is a noticeable spiritual quickening and increased power of concentration on spiritual things. Pastor Hsi, a great Chinese saint, demonstrated the value of fasting and prayer. "Constantly and in everything he dealt with God," recorded one who travelled with him. "In a very real way he dealt with Satan too. His conflict with the Evil One at times was such that he would give himself for days to fasting and prayer. Even when travelling I have known him fast a whole day over some difficult matter that needed clearing up. That was always his resource—fast and pray. . . . I have never seen such influence over others."

John Hyde of India was known as "The Apostle of Prayer." From student days this was the distinguishing feature of his life. "Hyde of India was our 'man of prayer' as Foster was our 'man of suffering,'" wrote a contemporary in McCormick Seminary. His decision to go to the foreign field marked a great increase in his influence. "From that day he grew rapidly in power. . . . He prayed for men individually and then sought them out, His soul seemed aflame."

On the mission field his power in prayer grew in proportion as he gave himself to it. Days and nights were spent by him and like-minded companions in prayer and fasting. Revival scenes accompanied their preaching. Not long after reaching India he wrote: "I never knew before what it was to work all day and pray all night before God for another—4 in the morning and late at night until 12 or 1 o'clock. In College or in parties at home I used to keep such hours for myself or pleasure. And cannot I do as much for God and souls?"

But to him prayer was no substitute for personal evangelism. In 1908 he entered into a very definite covenant with God for one soul a day—ready to confess Christ and be baptized in His Name. It meant prayer and fasting and conflict, but by the year's end more than four hundred had been gathered in. We may not all be John Hydes, but we could well emulate his godly example of prayer and self-discipline which issues in soul-winning endeavour.

Lord, what change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower;
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower,
We rise and all the distant and the near
Stands forth in sunny outline brave and clear.
We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power!
Why therefore do we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak and heartless be
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee!

Richard Chenevix Trench



Asleep At The Switch

Gordon R. Linscott

About the middle of last winter, I received a letter from Bill Keith, Senator from Louisiana. Down in the body of the letter, Sen. Keith threw in a statement or two that I didn't give too much weight. He mentioned a lawyer named Constance Cumbey and said that she had some important information on tape. What else he said was more or less "standard;" I had heard it before and I had some books on the subject. I had heard the topic so hashed and re-hashed that I had become immunized to it. Then came the awakening.

MATTHEW 24:24

A few weeks after the Senator's letter, I received a copy of a full-page newspaper ad which had run (I believe in April) in five or six international dailies. The headline shouted "THE CHRIST IS COME!" For the benefit of those who know Christ by another name, five or six other names were given (including some that you would recognize). Christ, we were told, is not a person but an office; his name is Lord Metrea. The advertisement was extremely arrogant. "The New Age Movement" would tolerate no opposition; its government would be monolithic, totally unbending. My study of the newspaper ad left me more or less where I had been—holding the 1930 picture of the international conspiracy. I didn't even keep the newspaper ad.

Another jolt or two and I was brought out of my sleep. First, I heard a series of 15 or 20 minute interviews of Constance Cumbey on the Southwest Radio Church (a daily radio program). I can't give a digest of those interviews in the space available here, but I can hit the high points. The old "international conspiracy" was composed of a number of independent organizations such as the Illuminati, the Club of Rome, the Rosicrucians, the Tri-Level Commission, etc. The New Age holds to the same goals, but these smaller organizations are bound more closely together. For example, the ACLU is an independent organization, but we see it frequently in court supporting or resisting causes that are not directly related at all to the ACLU. Here's another one: You remember the whaling episode near Siberia? When I learned that the project was being promoted by Greenpeace, I knew that it had the blessing of The New Age. The ship was named the Rainbow Warrior and that meant that it went out with the blessing of The New Age (Green and Rainbow are code words—along with many others—that identify The New Age interests). Did you read how the whaling expedition turned out? Did you wonder why the USA ship

was treated like a visiting dignitary? Those who belong to the New Age conduct their affairs above the level of ordinary government. Every man's loyalty belongs first of all to The New Age; there is no higher court or citizenship.

THEY'VE DONE IT AGAIN

In the August 29 issue of *Newsweek* there is a full page ad, inviting the governments of the world to surrender to the World Government of the Age of Enlightenment. I would strongly encourage you to get a copy of this and read it carefully. Notice the double-talk. Even if we're not sure of what is going on, there's no question that *something* is going on. Don't doze off!!

Missionary Messenger

"Greater things for God"

Dennis & Betty Allen

July

On July 14th we boarded a Northwest 747 jet at O'Hare Airport in Chicago for a three week visit in Hong Kong. After being gone for eight years we hardly knew what to expect, but we had prayed and saved a long time for the trip and felt the Lord had prepared the way. Even so, we were hardly prepared for the warm outpouring of love we received. It was a heart-warming experience to see those who were immature teenagers when we left, now married and taking responsible places in the Lord's body and eager to show their gratitude for the spiritual blessings they had received.

We found ourselves on the receiving end the whole three weeks as far as hospitality was concerned. However, we did have a number of good opportunities for ministering and sharing some of the things the Lord has shown us the last few years.

There are many new Christians in the church but they also were very warm in their love and many show a real spiritual hunger. One evening I had opportunity to teach some of the young men 6 or 8 English choruses. It was amazing how eager they were to learn and how quickly they got the tunes so that they could sing them alone.

The church is now meeting in a new location in a satellite city, Tsuen Wan, which has a population of 900,000. It is connected with Kowloon and Hong Kong by the subway. The flat they are buying presents a heavy financial burden for them, but it was their decision to assume it and they all seem to feel their responsibility. The prices of flats in Hong Kong is just fantastic, but rents are just as bad. Just an average sized flat costs \$1,000 US a month to rent.

The three Sundays we were there most of the group went out to a restaurant after the service and ate together. They do this regularly with all sharing in the expense. Their own flats are too small for many to gather in. Many of the young men take an active part in the

meetings and one is planning to enter seminary this fall.

One of the young men who was a teenager when we left is now in charge of an old folks center and a young people's reading room. He has some real good opportunities. Another, a young lady, is studying at a Bible school which specializes in training young people to evangelize factory workers (a challenging and needy area). They have a very demanding and intensive program.

Everyone in Hong Kong is much concerned about the talks now going on between the British and Chinese authorities concerning the fate of Hong Kong after 1997 when the lease runs out. It has had a bad effect on the Hong Kong dollar and business in general, but people are a little more optimistic now. Talks will continue for several more months. It is encouraging to see the attitude of many Christians we talked to about it. Most seem to feel the Lord wants them to stay but feel the need to prepare for the changes that will come.

We were able to go into China for two days. It was a very worthwhile experience and the tour we took was quite inexpensive. Some Americans are now making unescorted tours to several Chinese cities. Things are changing fast especially in the new economic zones that are being established. Communes are being quietly dismantled and farmers are again able to farm private plots. A percentage is given to the government for taxes but the rest they can keep, so they have incentive to work now and are becoming more prosperous. However, a lot are still coming out to Hong Kong. The present premier Tang Siw Ping who has started the new modernization program says, "No matter if the cat is white or black, if it catches the rat it is a good cat." This change of philosophy doesn't however, guarantee things will be better for the Christians. In fact, there are indications that things are more difficult for the house churches in China now. I suppose the government is beginning to realize how many there are.

Testimony of a Statesman

"I speak to you as a Christian. Jesus Christ is my Lord and God and Savior and Song day and night. I can live without food, without, drink, without sleep, without air, but I cannot live without Jesus. Without Him I would have perished long ago. Without Him and His church reconciling man to God the world would have perished long ago. I live in and on the Bible for long hours every day. The Bible is the source of every good thought and impulse I have. In the Bible God Himself, the Creator of everything from nothing, speaks to me and to the world directly, about Himself, about ourselves, and about His will for the course of events and for the consummation of history. And believe me, not a day passes without my crying from the bottom of my heart, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' I know He is coming with Glory to judge the living and the dead, but in my impatience I sometimes cannot wait, and I find myself in my infirmity crying with David, 'How long, Lord?' And I know His Kingdom shall have no end." —from a speech by Charles Malik, former ambassador from Lebanon to the U.S., & also formerly president of the United Nations General Assembly.

J. Dwight Thomas worships at the Highland Church of Christ and lives in Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

A Time For Faithfulness—A Time For Action

Part II

J. Dwight Thomas

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl, instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house (Matt. 5:13-15, NIV).

While proclaiming his disciples to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”, Jesus acknowledged, as it were in the same breath, that certain conditions could hinder them from exhibiting this God-given potential. He describes that state of ineffectiveness as he speaks of the “salt” losing its saltiness and the “light” being put under a basket. It may be the Lord used these two negative conditions to symbolize two ways his disciples can be made ineffective in the world. The saltless-state may, then, refer to alterations that are intrinsic to discipleship while the lightless-state may refer to inhibiting conditions that are extrinsic to discipleship. In the first instance the enemy attacks by altering the substance of discipleship; in the last, his effort to neutralize is externally applied.

In the next few installments, the Lord willing, we shall look at several conditions which may contribute to an ineffective discipleship in the world. We shall be looking at intrinsic-factors such as: the message, the commitment, and the empowerment of discipleship. And we shall focus on two extrinsic-factors: man-made tradition and government suppression.

In this installment we will begin looking at the *message* of discipleship. Although this message is proclaimed by and to men, its origin is centered in God and his great act at Golgotha on behalf of man. It is thus no wonder Paul stated that it is a dynamic message, a powerful proclamation of good news, enunciating *God's way* of rectifying that which is wrong and justifying sinful men and women who put their total trust in Jesus, the only begotten son of God (Rom. 1:16-17). Perversions of this divine proclamation can have injurious repercussions to discipleship; for in this message God reveals his matchless love for the world, and out of this message flows the proper understanding of God's principle of “grace through faith” (Eph. 2:8, 9), the Saviorhood and Lordship of Jesus, and a worldview that is grounded in truth and reality.

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE WORLD

As the love of God lies at the center of the Good News, so also must it be the central, guiding, and motivating dynamic of Christian

discipleship (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Without the love of God being poured-out within our hearts by His Spirit (Rom. 5:5), we have neither the proper motivation nor the proper love-object.

When one considers our congregations' lack in the world, one has to wonder and be concerned about just how much of God's love we have received. For you see the object of God's love, as clearly stated in the Bible, is the *world* and the degree of that love is beyond estimate. John said, "God so loved the *world*, that he gave his only begotten son..." (Jn. 3:16). Jesus said the purpose of his coming was to "save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11, NAS). Our Lord illustrates this truth by telling the story of the shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep to go out and search for and save the *one* that is lost (Matt. 18:12-14). And so, "the love of God" must "constrain us" to manifest his love to the world (2 Cor. 5:14) and not just to one another. This orientation in no way diminishes God's love for his saints or our love for one another. It simply underscores his unfathomable love for a lost world.

Now, few of us would disagree with this teaching on theological grounds. But nevertheless we may be deceived by assuming that our intellectual agreement with this teaching means that our discipleship in the world is conforming to the love of God, when in fact it is not. We must assess our discipleship by our activity in the world and not by our theology, alone. We might ask the question: "How many man-hours are we devoting in our community to ministry to the lost as compared with the number of hours we minister to one another in our assemblies?" And another question might be: "How much of our budget is spent on ministry to the lost as compared to money spent on our ministry to one another in our assemblies?" Here, we are tempted to point-out our missionary efforts as proof of our faithful discipleship. But the question is put to us: "Can a missionary in Africa serve as "salt" and "light" in Louisville, Nashville, Dallas, or Los Angeles?" Too often the answers to these types of questions reveal our poverty (Rev. 3:15-18).

But another question we must confront—one which may determine whether or not the "salt" remains saltless in our congregations: "Are we satisfied?" Are we at ease (Amos 6:1-14), with our current efforts to work-out God's love in the world about us?

Granted, we are not talking about a little thing when we talk about being changed and redirected by God's love for the world. It is a wonder of wonders and is one of the most awesome testimonies of God's reality, today. It requires nothing less than a personal death and rebirth from above. When one considers the basic nature of man, it is truly a miracle. But it can be a reality for each of us, if we will in humility drop to our knees, confessing our spiritual bankruptcy and ask God, the Father, to fill us with His Spirit, that we may partake of His unconditional love for the world (Eph. 5:18; Lk. 11:13). Jesus promised:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

... for they shall be filled. (Matt. 5:3, 4, and 6)



GLEANINGS

Larry Miles

THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE

So it is with the Bible. The English Bible is a collection of sixty-six separate books written by some forty different authors. Some of these men lived hundreds of years apart and hundreds of miles from one another. Its words were penned by princes and poets, by physicians and philosophers, by priests and publicans, by shepherds and statesmen, by kings and taxcollectors. But the marvel is that instead of conflict, we find unity of structure from Genesis to Revelation. Such unity demands a single mind as Author.

—George Sweeting, President
Moody Bible Institute

THE GLORY OF THE WORD OF GOD

Today you stand before the Bible as one stands before a beautiful cathedral. You will never know its glory till you enter. Linger, and you will be lost. Submit, and you will be saved.

—George Sweeting

APOSTOLIC PREACHING

Thus the general pattern of the apostolic preaching is clear. It told of the acts and sayings of Jesus; it told how in the purpose of God He had died for sin; above all, it witnessed to the resurrection.

—James S. Stewart

THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

The doctrine of the Incarnation means that God has come into the midst of the tumult and the shouting of this world. In the most literal sense, it was a "down to earth" realism that gave the Gospel birth.

—James S. Stewart

RETURNING TO THE OLD WAY

Let us teach again, as in the New Testament, the coming of Christ as something to be looked for, and as the goal of the Christian's hope. Let us teach it as a glad and joyous event to them that hope for Him and wait for His lovingkindness. So shall even the tribulations deepen our joy, and our hearts shall rest in the unmeasured love of God (Rom. 5:3-10). The Christian life lived under such conviction is far nobler and higher than that which is lived under the "spirit of bondage unto fear."

—R. H. Boll, in *Words in Season*, 1934

CHASTISEMENT

Chastisement is a sign of God's love, it is a sign of our legitimacy; but it is also permitted that we may truly know what it means to live.

—William Culbertson

NOW TO THE LORD, WHO MAKES US KNOW

Now to the Lord, who makes us know
The wonders of His dying love,
By humble honors paid below,
And strains of nobler praise above.
'Twas He who cleansed our foulest sins,
And washed us in His precious blood;
'Tis He who makes us priests and kings,
And brings us rebels near to God.
To Jesus, our atoning Priest,
To Jesus, our eternal King,
Be everlasting power confessed!
Let every tongue His glory sing.
Behold! on flying clouds He comes,
And every eye shall see Him move;
Though with our sins we pierced Him once more,
He now displays His pardoning love.
The unbelieving world shall wail,
While we rejoice to see the day;
Come, Lord! nor let Thy promise fail,
Nor let Thy chariot long delay
—Isaac Watts

Countering The Applause Syndrome

H. Robert Cowles

Maybe it is another by-product of television. Maybe it is a result of the so-called charismatic movement with its experience-oriented values.

Whatever the reason, evangelical Christians are much more demonstrative than they used to be.

Whereas fifteen years ago a handshake was a sign of friendship and cordiality, now it is necessary to embrace the other person and, depending on age and sex, peck him or her on the cheek.

I have no particular argument with this routine. It is no threat to my happy marriage, and a little less stiffness when we gather as a congregation of believers has been long overdue.

Granted, the procedure is not very efficient, especially if you are confronted by a number of after-church friends. But then fellowship was not meant to be something we zip through like hurdles on an obstacle course.

Another evidence of the new demonstrativeness, however, seems totally out of place in the church. I refer to the applause syndrome.

Let the choir sing a selection less funeral than "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," and the standard response is applause. A soloist works

diligently to communicate a spiritual message in song, and the audience reacts with handclapping.

Clearly not all churches have sunk to this level. As a general rule, the proneness to applause seems to be in direct proportion to the congregation's size. Large groups, more; small groups less.

The custom may have started with a few people, perhaps new Christians accustomed to applauding entertainers in a theater. Others picked it up, and soon almost everyone had joined in.

What was an aberration the first time is the thing to do the second. By the third time it is a congregational habit.

Applause is a perfectly proper response for a performance. I applaud as enthusiastically as the next at the end of a moving orchestral concert or a brilliant speech. The musicians, the orator have done their best to impress me by their polished techniques, their interpretation of the composer, their great ability to stir my emotions and to persuade.

But church ought to be different. It should not be a performance. We gather to worship and glorify God, to encourage each other to steadfastness of faith, to announce to lost sinners the saving claims of Jesus Christ.

Music is a part of the ministry. Some would go so far as to reject all "special" music, saying that worship must be participatory and cannot be a spectator thing. Yes and no.

By the same reasoning, they have ruled out preaching also, and preaching is certainly Scriptural and appropriate. But who said a person in the pew cannot participate in spirit as a vocalist sings or as a minister preaches? I have been lifted heavenward in spirit by good preaching. Spirit-filled musicians have directed my attention toward God.

Applause, however, is a totally inappropriate response to such a ministry. It is saying to the singers, the speaker: "You are great. You have performed admirably."

Whom we ought to be responding to is God, not the messengers. We are in His house, met in His name for the purpose of glorifying Him.

The lone Biblical command to applaud, far from justifying the applauding of those who minister to us, reinforces the argument that God, and God alone, is deserving of our worship:

Clap your hands, all you nations;
shout to God with cries of joy.
How awesome is the Lord Most High,
the great King over all the earth! . . .
Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises.

Psalm 47:1-2, 6 NIV

God is the great King deserving of our applause. The minister, the musicians are merely His messengers.

When we applaud them, we are grossly misunderstanding their intended role and crassly disregarding the Spirit of God who has enabled their ministry. —from *The Alliance Witness*

A Message For Today

When the day is torn by trouble
And your heart is lone and sad,
Just remember all the blessings
And the good that you have had.

God's sure hand is ever leading,
Lift the curtain of despair,
For however deep life's shadows,
You will find your Father there.

There's a path His love is planning
Which must mean the best for you.
There are blessings, countless blessings
Which are hidden now from view.

Tune your anxious heart to patience,
Walk by faith where sight is dim,
Loving God, be calm and trustful
And leave everything to Him.

Has not yesterday a lesson
Bearing on your present need?
"Daily bread for daily hunger"
Is the message there we read.

Thus our heart gains full assurance
That His love will be our stay,
Giving strength and help and blessing,
As we need them for today.

J. M. Chambers

Edited by Dr. Horace Wood

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN:

The Mystery of Unbelief

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.

John 12:37-50

The climax of the public ministry of Jesus is now before the reader. One might locate it specifically with John's words in chapter twelve, verse thirty-six, "These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them."

The private ministry of the Twelve, and then the Eleven, will begin with chapter thirteen and verse one.

In the intervening verses, the subject of this study, there is a pause and a summary of the public ministry and its effectiveness by the divine standards. One thinks of a visitor's trip into some tourist's attraction, such as the Carlsbad Caverns of New Mexico, with the guide stopping at the halfway point and describing the descent to that location by indicating the party's position on a map of the caverns.

The verses before us give us John's view of the ministry of Jesus to this point, with its emphasis upon Jewish belief.

In fact, in the section there are two movements, one a movement of explanation (cf. vv. 37-43) and the other a movement of summation (cf. vv. 44-50).

THE EXPLANATION OF JEWISH UNBELIEF

The fact of it (John 12:37; cf. 20:30-31). Jewish unbelief would seem to many to throw a question mark over the apostolic interpretation of the plan of God. How is it possible for Jesus to come as God's authorized Messianic King, offer Himself to the nation as the Scriptures indicate that He should, and then the presentation of Himself end in their disavowal of Him? If He really were the Messiah, would not the people to whom He came in the confirmation of the promises to them respond to His ministry? How could it be that the nation should be so blind as to fail to see that He was the Coming One? The question must have been the subject of much discussion in ancient times, for both John and Paul seek to answer the difficulty the matter raises in their writings, John here and Paul in Romans 9:1 - 11:36.

And both John and Paul proceed to deal with the question in a similar way, although they do not copy the details of each other's position. They both, however, show that the matter is one that was dealt with prophetically in the Scriptures of the nation Israel. It should not have been a surprise, they argue, that Israel should reject the Messiah when He came the first time, because the Old Testament predicted that would be the result of the appearance of the Messiah. John finds the solution to the problem in Isaiah, the chief of the prophets. Paul, in a more extended discussion finds the matter one of the general themes of the Old Testament, suggested in the initial promise program of the Old Testament and confirmed by the later details, as well as abundantly illustrated in the history of the unfolding of the divine revelation.

The fact of Israel's unbelief is stated by John in verse thirty-seven, "But though he had done so many miracles (lit., *signs*) before them, yet they believed not on him."

The reference to "so many miracles" includes the seven that form the principle content of the gospel to this point. They were the miraculous works Jesus had done. They were signs, this is, works of power with spiritual significance. One seeing them was to look behind them to some aspect of the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Pondering them, they were to come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and in that faith find eternal life (cf. 20:30-31). Many had, but the majority had not.

The signs included the following ones:

(1) The turning of the Water into Wine, illustrative of the new age of the completed work of Christ (cf. 2:1-11).

(2) The Healing of the Nobleman's Son, which stress the condition upon which blessing comes, that is, by faith (cf. 4:43-54).

(3) The Healing of the Impotent Man, illustrating the new power that the Messiah brings (cf. 5:1-9).

(4) The Feeding of the Five Thousand, which stresses the sus-

tenance that the Messiah provides, a sustenance of eternal life and certain resurrection (cf. 6:1-14).

(5) The Walking on the Water, emphasizing Jesus as the New Guide (cf. 6:15-21).

(6) The Healing of the Blind Man, indicating the new enlightenment that the Messiah gives (cf. 9:1-7). When we have Him we need no Hobabs (cf. Num. 10:29-36; Psa. 32:8; 34:15).

(7) The Restoration of Lazarus, which most plainly shows Him to be the resurrection and the life, the One who brings both spiritual birth and spiritual and bodily resurrection. This is the climactic sign,—He gives LIFE! Cf. 20:30-31.

The causes of it (John 12:38-43). The causes of Jewish unbelief are now set out by the apostle. The first of them is the fact that it was predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, John says that the unbelief occurred in order that, the clauses that follows "they believed not" is a purpose clause, Isaiah's prophecy might be fulfilled. The words of the prophet come from the first verse of chapter fifty-three, the most famous of the prophet's chapter. They are, "Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The passage, all orthodox commentators agree, has to do with the Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah. Further, many Jewish interpreters believed the same. For example, Jonathan ben Uzziel (1st cent.) took it to refer to the Messiah. And Ibn Ezra, who died in 1170 A.D., wrote a commentary on Isaiah. It still exists, and he pointed to difficulties in the interpretation of the prophecy, but added, "Many believe that Messiah is meant by this expression." The Targum on Isaiah 52:13, the verse with which the prophecy really begins, paraphrases the text in this way, "Behold my servant, the Messiah, shall prosper; He shall be high, and increase, and be exceedingly strong."

The New Testament, of course, is remarkably unanimous in referring the passage to Christ (cf. Luke 22:37). From the voice from heaven at the baptism of Christ, through all the evangelists, on to Philip, Paul, and Peter the Servant is identified with Jesus of Nazareth. That is John's view here. He sees Isaiah's lament of Jewish national unbelief as fulfilled in the rejection of Jesus of Nazareth by the generation of Israel living at the time of the crucifixion. "Our report" John sees as the preaching about Christ, His person and His miraculous works, His signs.

One incidental thing may be noted. John's citation includes Isaiah's word, "revealed," in the clause, "and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" John concurs with the prophet in the belief that it had human acumen, but divine revelation, that makes believers. In other words, no one believes without the divine initiative in spiritual illumination (cf. Rom. 8:7-8; I Cor. 2:14).

The second cause of Jewish unbelief, the apostle says, lies in the divine purpose. In verse thirty-nine he writes, "Therefore they COULD NOT believe, because Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12:40-41). In John's citation of the Old Testament there is a

modification of the imperatives of the Old Testament text. They have become past tenses, as if Isaiah's command has become fact in the nation's unbelief.

One notices the emphasis placed by the apostle's use of Isaiah 6:9-10 here upon the divine agency on the hardening of the unbelieving nation. It is the divine law of retribution in operation, to say the least. The unwilling are also the unable (cf. Rom. 9:17; 11:25). Edward J. Young concludes that the text of Isaiah, as well as John's use of it, supports the doctrine of divine reprobation.

It would seem that the apostle subscribes to the view that the ultimate cause of Jewish unbelief is God (cf. Rom. 9:17-18, 22-23), a view to which many modern students have also come.

One might ask why God should bring about Jewish national unbelief, if that is His purpose. A possible answer to the question lies in the exposition that Paul gives in Romans eleven. There he points out that Jewish unbelief is part of the divine program leading to Gentile salvation and ultimately again to Jewish national belief and restoration (cf. Rom. 11:11-15, 16-24, 25-27, 28-32). Leon Morris has made an interesting comment in his work on John at this point, "Had the Jews accepted the gospel it is difficult to see how it could have gone out to all the nations. But when the Jews rejected it, it became a world religion. We cannot think that this took place apart from the will of God."

The words of John in verse forty-one are interesting, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." It is striking that here John says that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ in His vision of Yahweh, described in Isaiah six. In other words, the Yahweh of Isaiah six is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is another of John's testimonies to the deity of Christ. Cf. Heb. 1:10-12.

The third of the reasons for Israel's unbelief and rejection is suggested in the statements of verses forty-two and forty-three. John says that many of the chief rulers believed but did not confess Him in order that they might not be put out of the synagogue. He traces this lack of confession of Him to the pursuit of self-interest, that is, "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." If this is true of weak believers, it surely is true of the unbelievers (cf. Rom. 10:1-4). One thinks of two of John's important figures, who later lose their fear and boldly own Him as their lord (cf. 19:38-42). The fear of running counter to the world is still one of the great stumblingblocks of believers. We fear being called "fanatics," and we cannot even muster up the courage of our trust in Him to dare a word in His behalf. Such spiritual cowardice! Like Desiderius Erasmus, at one time sympathetic with Luther, could not bring himself to break with the church for truth that he seemed to dimly see. Today he is almost an unknown to the world, while all know of the bold and courageous Luther. Having done so much for us, can He be so little appreciated that we deny that we are His?

"Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine thro' endless days?"

THE SUMMATION OF THE MINISTRY

The Lord the perfect manifestation of God (John 14:44-46). Morris comments at this point, "John finishes off his account of the public ministry of Jesus with one last appeal to men to believe." It is this in a sense. The meditation, or citation, of Jesus' words is not set in any place, at any time, or on any occasion that is known. The words of our Lord here remind one of other statements in the gospel that picture Him as the perfect unfolding of the person of the Father (cf. 1:18; 14:9). And Paul's great statement of 2 Corinthians 4:6 falls into the same category.

The presence of Jesus is the presence of God (cf. I Tim. 3:16; Phil. 2:5-8). The psalmist's longings, expressed in the words, "My soul thirsteth for God" (4:2), find their answer in Him. The philosopher's search ends with Him, too (cf. Acts 17:27).

The love of Jesus is the Love of God (cf. 4:50; 5:8; 11:36). In fact, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, with its beautiful picture of the father racing out with his lengthy robes in his hands to meet his returning son, is Jesus Christ's picture of God, but the parable is given to justify the way in which our Lord receives sinners and eats with them (cf. Luke 15:1-32).

The work of Jesus is the saving work of God. As Paul says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:19).

The Lord the perfect mouthpiece of God (John 12:47-50). Not only does Jesus say, "And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me" (v. 45). He also claims that the words He speaks are words given to Him by the Father's commandment. Listen to what He says, "And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, that I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: **WHATSOEVER I SPEAK THEREFORE, EVEN AS THE FATHER SAID UNTO ME, SO I SPEAK.**"

His words are the words of God; that is the claim of Jesus of Nazareth, and a mighty claim it is. Who else could make such a claim? And at the Great White Throne Judgment His word shall judge the "idle words" of unbelievers (cf. Matt. 12:36).

The excuses that are heard there, no doubt, will be manifold, but the words of our Lord will silence them all. "I am a religious man," some may claim, but their mouths will be shut by His demand, "Ye must be born again" (cf. John 3:3, 7).

"I am a good man, at least as good as most," will be silenced by the demands of Matthew 22:37-39, that men are to love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, and soul.

"I believe in good works" will find its condemning answer in Matthew 7:11 and John 6:29. We can do no good works, for we are in Jesus' words, "evil."

"I cannot accept the deity of Christ" finds abundant answer in His many divine claims, such as, "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58) and "I and the Father are one" (10:30), a statement that can only refer to absolute unity with the Father.

"I cannot accept His substitutionary death" finds refutation in His words in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

"We're all going to the same place, although by different paths," a foolish claim to say the least, finds its rebuttal in His striking and bold affirmation, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 15:6).

"A loving God will not send anyone to an eternal hell" is denied often by the Lord Himself in the New Testament. In fact He is the one person who in the New Testament speaks most often of eternal hell-fire (cf. Mark 9:47-48; Matt. 25:46).

Thus, Jesus' words will judge men, but He links His words with the Father's words. He is no figure of independent greatness, as if He is without relation to the Godhead. He is the Word of God, for He and the Father unite in a perfect communication of the divine will.

The fate of those who reject the message, then, is plain. They, like Israel, shall be judged by Him as the mouthpiece of God the Father (cf. 5:22; 12:48). As Morris points out, "Where the saving word is spoken and where a man despises the Speaker and persistently rejects His sayings, that man does not go scatheless."

It is terrible to realize that such may be close to Him and yet find their way to hell, for He says that they may "hear" Him and be lost (cf. v. 47). One thinks of the thief on the cross, the unbelieving one, who went to hell from the side of Christ!

The favor of those who accept Him, however, is "life everlasting," and that is precious (cf. v. 50).

The act that delivers the sinner from death is the simple act of trust in the divine Savior and His words. As He says, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (cf. v. 46). And, remember, this marvelous act is not an option, but a commandment" of the Father (cf. v. 50). Come to Him! Believe on Him and be saved!

Oh! my reader, I hope you never have to say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jer. 8:20).

Sunday And The Sabbath

The challenge is often thrown out by Seventh-Dayists for anyone to furnish proof that we are to keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath. Such talk would not have been possible except for the illogical and untenable doctrine of some other denominations who teach that Christians are under the Ten Commandments but that the Fourth Commandment has been changed from Sabbath to Sunday; or, even (which is still worse) that the Sabbath has been changed from Saturday to Sunday! Of course such foolish teaching furnishes an easy

mark, and a valiant Seventh-Day warrior can no doubt demolish that as easily as any little child instructed in elementary gospel teaching could. This whole doctrine rests on an assumption and the assumption is a mistaken one. For neither is the Christian under the Decalog, nor does he keep the Sabbath, nor does he keep Sunday or any other day in place of the Sabbath. What then of the first day of the week? It is a memorial day of the Lord's resurrection, in which Christians met to break bread and to worship together. (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2). There is never an example of a *Christian* assembly convened on a Sabbath-day. Nor is there any injunction anywhere to Christians to keep the Sabbath day—only an admonition to be tolerant toward those who are weak in the faith (perhaps Jewish brethren) who would think one day above another, in the sense of a holy day (Rom. 14:5); and the warning to let no man bring us into bondage or judge us as to "meat or drink, or a feast day, a new moon, or a sabbath day" (annual, monthly, or weekly days)—"which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is Christ's" (Col. 2:16, 17). —R. H. Boll

Praying In the Holy Spirit

Jude 20

Mark the grand characteristics of true prayer — "In the Holy Spirit." The seed of acceptable devotion must come from heaven's storehouse. Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God. We must shoot the Lord's arrows back to Him. That desire which He writes upon our heart will move His heart and bring down a blessing, but the desires of the flesh have no power with Him.

Praying in the Holy Spirit is praying in *fergency*. Cold prayers ask the Lord not to hear them. Those who do not plead with fervency, plead not at all. May as well speak of lukewarm fires as lukewarm prayer — it is essential that it be red hot. It is praying *perseveringly*. The true suppliant gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent when God delays the answer. The longer the gate is closed, the more vehemently does he use the knocker, and the longer the angel lingers the more resolved is he that he will never let him go without a blessing. Beautiful in God's sight is tearful, agonizing, unconquerable importunity. It means praying *humbly*, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. It is His office to convince of sin, and so to bow us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We shall never sing *Gloria in excelsis* except we pray to God *De profundis*: out of the depths we must cry, or we shall never behold glory in the highest. It is a *loving* prayer. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love — love to our fellow saints, and love to Christ. Moreover, it must be a prayer full of *faith*. A man prevails only as he believes. The Holy Spirit is the author of faith, and strengthens it, so that we may pray believing God's promise. Oh that this blessed combination of excellent graces, priceless and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts! Most blessed Comforter, exert Your mighty power within us, helping our infirmities in prayer.

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Seek the Lord Continually

It's not enough to say "I believe,"
It's not enough to ask and receive,
It's not enough to repeat the Lord's prayer,
It's not enough to just say "I care,"
It's not enough to be pleasant and kind,
It's not enough to keep God in your mind,
It's not enough just to feed the poor,
It's not enough to forbear and endure,
For while these things are all good to do,
They cannot insure salvation for you,
For not until you are born anew
Can the Spirit of God be alive in you,
And the Spirit of God will soon be dead
Unless it is daily nourished and fed!

—Helen Steiner Rice

"... When my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2).

Most of us know what it is to be overwhelmed in heart; emptied as when a man wipes a dish and turns it upside down; submerged and thrown on our beam ends like a vessel mastered by the storm. Discoveries of inward corruption will do this, if the Lord permits the great deep of our depravity to become troubled and cast up mire and dirt. Disappointments and heart-breaks will do this when billow after billow rolls over us, and we are like a broken shell hurled to and fro by the surf. Blessed by God, at such seasons we are not without an all-sufficient solace, our God is the harbor of weatherbeaten sails, the shelter of the forlorn pilgrims.

Higher than we are is He, His mercy higher than our sins, His love higher than our thoughts. It is pitiful to see men putting their trust in something lower than themselves; but our confidence is fixed upon an exceeding high and glorious Lord. A Rock He is since He changes not, and a high Rock, because the tempests which overwhelm us roll far beneath at His feet; He is not disturbed by them, but rules them at His will. If we get under the shelter of this lofty Rock we may defy the hurricane; all is calm under the lee of that towering cliff. Alas! such is the confusion in which the troubled mind is often cast, that we need piloting to this divine shelter. Hence the prayer of the text. Oh Lord, our God, by your Holy Spirit, teach us the way of faith, lead us into Your rest. The wind blows us out to sea, the helm answers not to our puny hand; You, You alone steer us over the bar between yonder sunken rocks, safe into the fair haven. How dependent we are upon You — we need You to bring us to You. To be wisely directed and steered into safety and peace is Your gift, and Yours alone.

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

NEWS AND NOTES

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

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As you know, there has been some discouragement among the Churches of Christ over the past several years largely due to very few men seeking the position of Minister (or Preacher).

The effort of many during the past two years in the School of Biblical Studies has however, kindled a good degree of enthusiasm both in the leadership of the school and in the students.

At the present time, there are several young men who are studying with the goal of being in the full-time ministry, but of course, there is a need of "on-the-job" training as well as Classroom studies if this training is to be most effective.

The elders of the Southeast Church of Christ in Louisville, feel that we in the churches should offer encouragement to these young men in their training by providing speaking opportunities in the local churches under the guidance of local leaders.

We recognize that such men are at different positions in their maturity, which demonstrates the need for their having personal experience under local leadership.

Such experience is noted in the city of Ephesus when Apollos was called aside by Aquila and Priscilla to teach him more completely on the matter of Baptism (Acts 18:24-28).

In an effort to help meet the need, the Southeast Church is planning to offer speaking opportunities as often as possible to those men who have revealed their desires of entering the preaching ministry.

In order to offer further encouragement, we are willing to be used as a communications link for any other congregations who might also like to use such men in their pulpits. In doing such, we would only be assisting in communication and scheduling.

If your congregation desires to be used in this capacity, or know of other men desiring to prepare for this ministry, please let it be known by communicating to the following:

N.L. Burks
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D