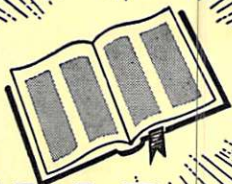
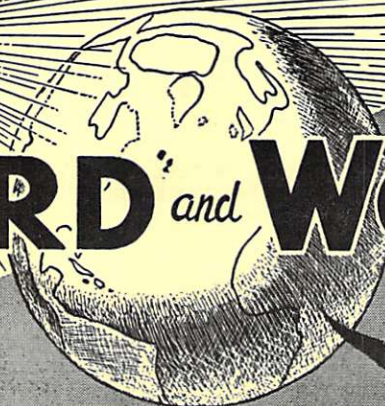


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AUGUST, 1984

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# God's Family

W. R. H.

## ON PLACING MEMBERSHIP

With today's mobile society that shifts families of believers far and wide, there has become a fluid situation in church attendance that presents new challenges to the oversight of the church of God. Some elders and deacons (not to mention pulpit ministers,) feel a bit put upon to know who is a member of a local congregation and who is not. Having come up under the old school of membership records and "transfer letters," there remains the feeling that the church "roll" ought to be in black and white. In defense of "placing membership" one leader was heard to say, "I think folks ought to be a bit bound to the local work, rather than seem to drift about." There is a bit of practicality here, to be sure. When a group decides to enhance their building, or launch out in schoolwork, support a missionary, or engage in some other worthy work, there needs to be a show of solidarity of purpose and sharing, so that the work can be done honorably. And, if a public statement of intent to work together with the local church improves fellowship and brotherly love, it has already begun to bear good fruit. When Jesus sent forth the twelve, and later, the seventy, He demonstrated a spirit of "belonging to the team" which has never been gainsaid. We might notice, however, that the twelve were mentioned by name, while the larger group had no such distinction. Dare we conclude that their team work was more important to be recorded than their names? The Holy Spirit Himself sanctioned teamwork and organization when He, at Antioch, led in the appointment of the deacons, and sending forth missionaries.

### *BUT WHO IS A MEMBER?*

Every obedient believer in Jesus Christ, is a member of the one body. I think that obedience involves public confession and water baptism, after hearing the gospel has led to repentance. The promised filling with the Holy Spirit is that "breath of God" that sustains and empowers the new life. Being in the body of Christ pertains to our new birth, not our subsequent Christian growth. Growth and length of days surely affect the good works that we are able to do, and the eternal rewards which are to accrue unto us, but sonship with God is based entirely upon the new birth and our eternal life that flows into us as we abide in Jesus. It is this sonship that declares us members of the church, the called-out ones in the family of God. In our past, we

have all shared with Nicodemus that "must" of needing to be born again.

### **WHAT ABOUT RECORDS?**

There is one record that the Bible tells about, and that is the Lamb's book of life. In it are all of the names of those who have life from the Lamb of God, our Savior. "Is my name written there?" we sing. And that is the question. When the seventy returned from their missionary journey, Jesus told them to rejoice, not that demons were subject to them, but that their names were written in heaven. In Philippians 4, Paul mentions some of his co-workers, stating that their names are in the book of life. In Revelation 13, we are told that those who will worship the beast are the ones whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb. To the church at Sardis (Rev. 3:1) which had a name that it was living, but actually was dead, Jesus said: "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments, and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." We can only conclude that there were names of Sardis' members, which now were subject to removal from the roll unless they separated themselves from defilement and became overcomers.

No doubt, Paul had some records (in mind, at least) of converts at Corinth, Philippi, Colossae, and the prison at Rome. To be sure, there is some advantage to records that are current. But true membership is not proven by letters in a file somewhere, but bodies in the assembly, that gather often around the Lord's table, that raise songs of praise, that make a joyful noise unto the Lord, that lift holy hands in prayer or stand before Him or kneel in His holy house.

### **WHAT PRICE ORGANIZATION?**

What about small assemblies that have no effective secretarial staff? I preached for thirty-five years where the record keeping consisted of entries in the fly-leaves of my Bible. Everyone knew just about everyone else. When a "new name was written down in glory," we all knew of it. Or if an erring sinner repented, we knew. That is the point of the public confession of faith or of sin. And, if a family of saints moved into the area, their coming and willingness to help were ample recommendations. Yes, we could have used more organization, but four elders, a faithful treasurer, and timely business meetings, was the limit of our resources.

Elders in a congregation might wish that all present would make a public statement of intent, but, scripturally, I doubt that we should press for such. Some very good folks are reticent to make public statements, but great at letting their works speak for them. Let's give them their choice.





## Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

*Does God answer an unbeliever's (non-Christian's) prayer?*

The healed blind man of John 9 observed that "we know that God heareth not sinners" (John 9:31). It is a statement that has been misunderstood and misused. In the first place, it was the observation of a man who was uninspired. We have an inspired record of what he said but no reason to believe his words are inspired. So far as we know there are none who credit him with being a prophet of God or any such like. He had a good bit of spiritual comprehension but had not as yet confessed Jesus to be the Christ. He was apparently repeating what was a commonly accepted belief among the Jews, a sort of commonly understood maxim. This fact does not guarantee its truth, for the Jews had a way of adding to and taking from the truths of scripture. There is some foundation for such a belief (Ps. 66:18; Isa. 59:2; etc.) which we will examine, but there is nothing in scripture to cancel totally any response of God to the unbeliever. It is not even certain that the Jews and the blind man understood the statement to mean a refusal of God to hear every prayer of the sinner. They are dealing with a matter of God-given power to perform a certain work, and the point is that God would not give such healing power to the sinner.

We should keep in mind that God is sovereign. The only limitations on Him are those imposed by His character or His promise. We must be very careful about stating what God will or will not do. He will honor the limitations He puts on Himself but is not bound by man's concept of what He ought to do. We know nothing in scripture which absolutely states His unwillingness to hear all prayer from the unbeliever. As we noted above, the declaration of John 9:31 does not bind Him; it is not His declaration about Himself.

Some of our best light in this matter is what God has done. We have a specific clear case in Acts 10 where God has heard an unbeliever. Cornelius was a devout man, but he was not a Christian (Acts 11:14). It might be argued that he was a believer in God. In fact, almost every prayer would indicate some measure of belief in God, else why pray it? But the point is that he was not a Christian. It is this which is in view in our question. "Unbeliever" in the N. T. does not necessarily signify an atheist; rather, it speaks of one who had not believed or committed himself to some portion of God's word and especially signifies the non-Christian. The definite word to Cornel-

ius before he became a Christian was: "Thy prayer . . . are gone up for a memorial before God." This does not say that God granted Cornelius everything he may have asked, but it does show that God was aware of the prayers. Insofar as Cornelius was praying for light—i.e., knowledge as to how to worship and serve the Lord—his prayer was heard. God sent him light in the person of Peter.

So far as we can tell God generally answers those prayers of non-Christians which are an honest search for understanding the seeking of light toward becoming a Christian. This does not mean He accepts every condition the unbeliever might lay down or that He provides understanding apart from His word. However, in a measure He has bound Himself to give help to these (e.g., Matt. 5:6; John 7:17). If God absolutely refused to hear the sinner's prayer, then we have the contradictory situation that the sinner could not even pray a prayer of repentance until he became a Christian. So, it is evident that God hears (and answers, in some measure) some prayers of the non-Christian.

Perhaps the situation could be explained that, except for the prayer for light or forgiveness, God is *not under any obligation* to hear the prayers of one not a Christian. There is no evidence to suggest that He answers the prayers of the non-Christian in the same way He answers for the Christian. The former is not a child of God. He is not in covenant relationship with God through Christ. Just as the earthly parent is not ordinarily under any special obligation to hear the plea of children not his own, so it is with God. Prayer is the privilege of those who are God's children. He showers good things on both the just and the unjust, sometimes allowing the dogs to have the crumbs which fall from the children's table (cf. Matt. 15:21-28). Even so, prayer is specially the privilege of those who can plead the name of Jesus Christ.

It is evident that sin can hinder the prayers of even the Christian (cf. 1 Pet. 3:7). Those people in a covenant relationship with Him have found their sins standing between them and His answers to prayer. Israel of old often experienced this. Obedience is generally one of the conditions of answered prayer. If this is true of the children, is it reasonable to believe that God answers any and every prayer of the unbelieving? The sin of unbelief stands in the way of any real answer to much of the praying an unbeliever might do.

Why then do some unbelievers seem to think that they have answers to prayer? One suspects that sometimes "answers" may be given by Satan, in an effort to deceive or to keep such ones lulled into complacency.

*Distinguish between prophets and teachers in the N.T., especially concerning 1 Corinthians 12:28.*

The chief distinction between a prophet and a teacher is the source of the message. The prophet is a spokesman for God, having received his message directly from God in vision, in dream, by inspiration, or by some other supernatural method. God spoke His message

to prophets in many ways (Heb. 1:1). In most cases it would appear that the prophet was also a preacher or teacher, announcing God's message to the people and exhorting them to hear and obey. When interpretation was necessary, the prophet did this as well. The Bible is made up of recorded prophecies, i.e., messages received directly from God. Once the message had come through the prophet, it could be proclaimed by others also who were not prophets. It was still God's message, even when taught by uninspired men.

There is no indication of direct messages to the teacher. He must rely on the inspired message of the prophet (this could be oral or written, as long as its use was accurate). The teacher proclaims, explains, and applies the truths which were revealed by the prophets. Both prophet and teacher, then, once the prophet has received the message, are engaged in very similar work, the difference being the source of the message.

It is not our purpose here to try to settle the question as to whether prophecy has ceased (although a completed New Testament and the consequent lack of need for the prophet point very strongly in such a direction). Prophets certainly existed in N.T. times and were a part of the N.T. revelation. The prophets mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:28 present no special problem. On all sides it is agreed there were prophets in the early church until the revelation of the N.T. was complete. Many of the early teachers and preachers were prophets, receiving their message directly from God (cf. Gal. 1:12). Without the work of these men we would not have the recorded revelation of the N. T.

Most modern proclaimers of God's word (preachers) and expounders (teachers) make no claim to inspiration or to any direct word from God. These rely on the already given message found in the N.T. As they remain true to the N.T. their message is no less authoritative, no less truth, no less the word of God than if they were prophets. For this reason their work may be likened to that of the prophets (in the strictest sense, they are not prophets, however). The consequences of rejection of the message are no less serious. The results of obedience are fully as rewarding. The difference is in the source of the message.

The teachers mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:28 are in a list which includes certain miraculous gifts. Perhaps the question arises as to whether these teachers had some supernatural ability conferred on them. We do not know. If so, we do not know of what it consisted. In any case, there is nothing to indicate that the distinction we have made was not also true then. Surmises can easily be made, but these will likely be colored by the person's views on the whole question of gifts. Teachers are surely a continuing need in the church, and we have no doubt God still confers the ability on some to occupy this place in the Body. It is evident that some people are much better communicators than others, have clearer perceptions of scripture, and in general excel at teaching. There can be little doubt as to the fact or the need of the enabling of the Holy Spirit in doing this work. We believe it to be a serious mistake, however, to assume that the Holy Spirit gives knowledge without study or eliminates the need for preparation. Some



very foolish claims have been made in these matters. The teacher is dependent on the already revealed message of God. It is his work to declare, explain, and apply the word of God as effectively as possible.

Hearers of prophets always need to discern whether they are true or false prophets. Those who are taught by teachers need to discern whether or not the teacher is competent in his understanding and faithful in his explaining and applying God's word. There are false prophets and there are false teachers. There are also ineffective and uninforming teachers who are not discharging the responsibility that is theirs (Jas. 3:1). It is good to know "of whom thou hast learned" (2 Tim. 3:14).

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



## THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—(for deliverance) through Jesus Christ our Lord!* (Rom. 7:24, 25a, with note in parenthesis added to the NKJV by the author).

Before going in any detail into a study of Romans 7:7-25, I feel that it is imperative that we look at the purpose of this part of the book. First, let me remind you that the matter of forgiveness of sin and of sins has already been settled from Romans 3:21 on. But when one comes to Christ he not only receives cleansing from his sin; he is also delivered from the dominion of sin, from its power over him. That had been clearly stated in 6:14, but there are many who, not knowing the meaning of that, try very hard to overcome what Christ has already overcome for them. This portion of Scripture deals with what happens when one "tries it on his own" and the only way to get out of the difficulty.

Also, you may have noticed that this is a very difficult passage to follow. Every statement is founded on an understanding of the one before. It is so closely entwined that, even more than most parts of Scripture, one can become so interested in "looking at the trees that he fails to see the forest." It is not enough, in other words, to understand each verse by itself; it is also necessary to relate them to each other and get an understanding of the deliverance that Paul speaks of in the portion quoted at the head of the article.

It has been my firm conviction for many years that Paul is actually speaking of an experience that he went through early in his life as a

Christian. He had been an ardent student of the Law since his youth, but now he realized that he was "alive apart from the law" or "without the law" (v. 9). That could be only after Christ delivered him from the law and gave him new life. But soon "the commandment came" (v. 9), meaning that in his new life he had acquired an understanding of the real meaning of the Law that he had never had before. Instead of realizing that he had been given deliverance from the power of that Law, Paul records here how he went through a period of striving to live up to his new understanding in his own strength. He found out that there is no way that one can do such a thing. That is why he cries out "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (ASV, v. 24). He had come to a very important realization—he must have a deliverer; he could not deliver himself.

But it is not enough to be in despair, realizing that you can not save yourself. That could lead to hopelessness and despair. But Paul did not go that way. He realized that there is a deliverer, One Who had taken all our sin on Himself and had died not only to give us forgiveness but also to take us out from the power of sin. So very quickly Paul starts the last verse of the chapter by giving thanks for that deliverance to the One Who gave Jesus Christ to deliver us—God the Father.

As our last thought for this article, let us turn back to the first verse of the section under discussion, Romans 7:7. Paul had pointed out that sinful passions were "through the law" (7:5) and those sinful passions had "wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." He realized that some reader might misinterpret what he had said and conclude that the trouble lay with the Law. So he brings up the question, "Is the law sin?" And he immediately gives the strongest expression he can to show the impossibility of such a thing. If you would like an illustration from nature that will help clear up this problem, think of an empty lot. In a long dry spell with hot sun beaming down, the weeds in the lot will probably wither away; at least they won't grow. But let lots of rain and sunshine come on the lot, and the weeds will flourish. So, ask yourself, "Aren't sun and rain evil? They make weeds to grow." The answer is very simple, of course—the fault lies in the ground, not in the rain and sunshine. Let someone plow up the ground, plant good grass seed and then let the sun and the rain come and you have a nice covering of healthy grass (presuming the ground contains the proper nutrients, of course!). So the sin that the Law makes to flourish is not due to the Law but to the "ground", the flesh of the one who has been reading the Law. As always, anything wrong in our lives is our own fault, not God's fault. And any good that will come is entirely due to Him, not to our own efforts.

Are you letting God have His way in your life? He wanted so much to forgive your sins, give you eternal life, and empower you to live for Him, that He gave His only begotten Son to die for you. Praise His Name, thank Him, and repay Him by taking the salvation that He wants to give you.



## Viewing the News

Jack Blaes

THE UNITED METHODIST GENERAL CONFERENCE MET in Baltimore last May. A delegate from Wilmore, Kentucky, David Seamands, called the two-week meeting "the most conservative conference in two decades." Seamands is the author of a resolution which bans the ordination of practicing homosexuals. Speaking on the floor in behalf of his resolution Seamands said, "the demand for specific language banning homosexual ordination is not just a call from the grass-roots. It is a shout from the forest of the church." Seamands said that he was confident that if the conference had failed to have passed this resolution the result would have been a "mass exodus from the Methodist Church."

. . . . .

ROBIN POLIN, OF TULSA, OKLAHOMA, PERSERVERES. She is a Jewess, eighteen years of age, and is deaf and mute. She was converted to Christianity, only to be told by her father that she was not welcome in his home unless she conformed to his religious views. So she left. In less than a week, her parents, seeking custody of their daughter, petitioned to have her declared incompetent. After a five-day trial, Special District Judge Robert Frank ruled that the girl was "judgmentally immature" and therefore regarded as incompetent by the laws of Oklahoma. At that time she was placed in the custody of an older sister. The Oklahoma Supreme Court, in an 8-to-1 decision, overturned Judge Frank's ruling. The Supreme Court labeled the issue of her judgmental immaturity "camouflage" and described Polin's beliefs as "consistent and specific ideals which have motivated her to desire a career as a Christian minister to the deaf."

. . . . .

CAMPBELLSVILLE, KY PUBLIC SCHOOLS DISPLAY quotations of

American Presidents about the Bible. In 1980 the Supreme Court struck down a Kentucky law requiring the posting of the Ten Commandments. The Campbellsville School Board decided to let their boys and girls know how many of our American Presidents felt about the grand old Book.

ANOTHER KY SCHOOL EXPRESSES ITSELF. Visitors to the Webster County schools will see the Ten Commandments displayed, not on the walls of the building, but on the shirts of the students. Wayne Cole, a local physician, purchased \$1,700 worth of shirts with the Commandments printed on them and gave them to any students willing to wear them.

. . . . .

EVANGELIST BILLY GRAHAM HAS BEEN INVITED to return to the Soviet Union to speak in churches in several major cities. Mr. Graham said that the invitation was from the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of the U.S.S.R. The Russian Orthodox Church also joined in the invitation, and, Mr. Graham indicated that the invitation had the endorsement of the Soviet authorities. The evangelist said that his purpose in returning to the Soviet Union will be the same as he has had before in every other country of the world which he has visited: to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"IN WASHINGTON PRESS CIRCLES, IT IS far more deviant to be a fundamentalist Christian than a homosexual drug user." Newt Gingrich (R-GA).

TWENTY-FIVE HEADS OF FAMILIES IN AN ISLAMIC village north of Niger, Africa have presented a written request to be taught the Christian way. A five-man delegation brought the petition signed by all 25 family heads and representing 96 people to the Sudan

Interior Mission. It read: "We the undersigned, and our families have decided to follow Jesus Christ. We want you to help us." A team of evangelists was sent. When they arrived, more than a hundred men from the district had assembled in a large new grass shelter waiting to be taught. Years before, student evangelists had visited the village regularly, but no one was interested in the Gospel then.

A PROFESSOR OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION at Harvard was recently quoted: "Every child in America entering school at the age of five is mentally ill, because he comes to school with certain allegiances toward our founding fathers, toward our elected officials, toward his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural Being, and toward the sovereignty of this nation as a special entity. It's up to you teachers to make all these sick children well by creating the international children of the future."

"THESE PROGRAMS CAN ONLY SCARE THE WITS OUT of young people, challenge them with unsolvable problems and ultimately lead to a sense of hopelessness about the future," concluded Dr. H.M. Voth, chief of staff at the Veteran's Medical Center in Topeka, Kansas from his study of the curricula on nuclear war that is being used in many schools. He further said that "when there are no solutions to life's problems, despair eventually follows, and then comes a sense of defeat and depression. Such exercises will seriously aggravate the sense of despair

many young people already feel about life."

SUICIDE IS THE THIRD LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG teens. Every day 18 American adolescents kill themselves. For every recorded suicide, according to some experts, there are two or three not recorded. The most often cited reasons of suicide among the young is a belief that one is not meeting the expectations of parents or friends, frequent family moves causing a sense of rootlessness, a divorce in the family, an unwillingness for parents to listen to their children, ever-changing codes of morality and extreme freedom, low self-esteem, and a sense of hopelessness.

THE AUSTRALIAN STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES has made a valiant effort to solve its driving-while-intoxicated problem. Last Christmas random breath testing of motorists was introduced on an experimental basis. It was credited with cutting the death toll over the holiday period by 57.7 per cent—from 52 the previous year to 22. Until then the toll had been steadily rising each year. So random testing has become permanent. Police said that even the domestic murder rate was down. Not as many people were arriving home drunk and in a violent mood. A blood alcohol reading of .05 for a driver brings automatic disqualification from driving for six months and a fine of up to \$500. Perhaps such a law with enforcement would help our streets and homes to be safe and enjoyable again.

If you asked 20 good men today what they thought the highest of the virtues, 19 of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you had asked almost any of the great Christians of old he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive. The negative idea of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point. I do not think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ. . . . —C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

# Two Kinds of Wisdom

C. Dennis Kaufman

The young preacher walked out to his mailbox. It was a sunny day and he was feeling great. He trotted back to his office and began to browse through the stack of mail. He came to a church bulletin from one of the sister churches in his area. As he glanced through it, he saw the attendance in bold print—1465. He noticed the long list of response—8 baptisms and 5 transfers. He noticed how much the church was involved in and all the great things they were doing for the Lord.

He laid the newsletter down and he noticed he didn't feel light-hearted anymore. His sunshine-filled day now seemed overclouded by strange feeling of frustration. As we are allowed to hear the thoughts of this young preacher, we sense an emotional schizophrenia. The preacher knows he should be thankful for the success of his brethren, but when he thinks of how much he struggles just to get 60 people in church on Sunday, and the fact that no one has come down the aisle in months, he can't help but be a bit intimidated. He begins to wonder if the preacher of the large church is using unscrupulous means to draw a crowd. He becomes defensive and begins to make excuses for his own church's lack of growth. Half of the day is gone before the young preacher can again focus on the work he has before him.

Sound familiar? Chances are you have experienced these feelings of rivalry or have seen more outward expressions of the competition that seems to develop in the church and particularly among its leaders.

I sincerely believe that this is one of the greatest obstacles that a young minister faces, and I am also quite convinced that this problem must be confronted and dealt with before one can be wholly effective as a servant of God.

The purpose of this message is to determine the dynamics of this problem and lay the groundwork for a Biblical solution.

*Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace. (James 3:13-18)*

## WORLDLY WISDOM

James has been accused by many commentators of being very disjunctive. They see the book as one that simply sandwiches many unconnected teachings together. This is not true however of chapter 3.

The problem of unqualified teachers had forced James to warn them before taking this great responsibility. He admonishes the teacher to give greatest care to his most important tool—the tongue. James then feels it necessary to ask the question, “Who is wise and understanding among you?” His answer seems to be that only the individual endowed with wisdom from above is truly wise, and thus qualified to teach the “Holy Word of God.”

Knowing these things, the passage under consideration becomes no less than a “flashing red warning light.” For the very feelings that we explored in our introduction are vividly described under the heading of “worldly wisdom”. Notice that envy, rivalry and strife are all there. As I was faced with this reality, I realized that these verses were very important for me to understand. As I studied the passage in depth I found one Greek word that seemed to unlock the meaning of this entire section of Scripture and I would like to share that with you.

The Greek word is “eritheia” and is translated “strife” in the KJV and “selfish ambition” in the more modern translations such as the NIV. That difference in translation itself should cause us concern about the word. “Eritheia” is a word that underwent a great deal of development in its early years from the time of Homer to that of Aristotle. Early, we find it simply meaning a hired laborer. A few centuries later, it is used to describe a public official who gained his office by questionable methods. You may say, “Well, how can that be?” Kittel puts forth this theory. “The aristocratic scorn of the men of property and culture for the daily wage earner is responsible for this change. It regards the laborer as suspect from the very first in view of his concern for gain and his readiness to do things only for profit.”

As a simple summation, the word changed because the focus changed. The idea of laborer focuses on the work. The concept of selfish ambition focuses on the pay or reward.

This principle is still very valid today. For example, we call our elected officials “public servants”. That focuses on the labor. But how often, when we think of politics do our minds dwell on power struggle, rivalry, glory-seeking, mud-slinging and bribery. That part focuses on selfish ambition.

Now, let’s move this knowledge into a spiritual arena. Just as the focus determined the meaning of the Greek word, it also separates our two kinds of wisdom.

James is saying when a preacher or teacher begins to have too much concern for the “benefits” of his work, he is in danger of becoming like the world. In James’ day, the benefits of oratory were indeed sizeable. Especially in the Greek culture, great teachers were honored, respected, praised, and perhaps well-paid. Many of those dividends still exist today and can be quite alluring. However, you can be sure that if these become your focus that rivalry, envy, harmful comparing and ultimately division will occur.

There is plenty of service to go around without ever bumping into one another, but the moment reward becomes the issue, people are willing to gain at all cost—even at the cost of unity. James 4:1 elaborates on that phenomenon. How many times have we heard of two preachers



in the same congregation striving for pre-eminence? Surely at this point I don't have to tell you the results of that situation.

### WISDOM FROM ABOVE

That's the problem, let us now move on to the solution. As James answers his question about who the wise one is, he states that he should show wisdom by his good life and by deeds done in the humility of wisdom.

Is that not exactly the conclusion we drew as we discussed the problem? If worldly wisdom consists of selfish ambition, then wisdom from above must issue forth from a humble desire to serve. The dramatic transformation that humble service can have is most vividly depicted in the Gospels as we see Christ teaching His disciples.

The setting is a borrowed room where Jesus and the 12 were preparing their last Passover meal together. Jesus had been speaking of impending death and yet the disciples were dull of understanding concerning this event. In Luke 22:24ff, we find the disciples in a feud with one another. It is quite interesting to see what caused their division. Luke tells us the disciples were divided over who would be the greatest in the kingdom. This is a perfect example of "worldly wisdom."

Jesus pointed that out. He told them that the Gentiles measured greatness by authority and power and "lording it over the flock". But He went on to say that in His kingdom, that would not be the case. I would guess that it was just about this time that Jesus got a bowl and filled it with water, girded Himself, and proceeded to wash the disciples' feet. What a lesson! I would imagine the conviction level must have been pretty high as they saw the Master of all lowering Himself to the task of a servant. After He had done this He uttered the words of John 13:12-16 telling them He was setting an example for their philosophy of greatness. Indeed he who would be greatest of all must be servant of all!

When we are serving one another it is not likely we will be rivals. This innovative idea by the Lord Jesus became His plan for unity in His kingdom. From grasping to giving--indeed this is the key to "Godly wisdom".

### CONCLUSION

Certainly, knowing the cause of the problem does not automatically solve it. When it comes to motives and selfish human nature, none have conquered the problem. Perhaps we will always have to deal with the feelings of selfish ambition, but it is my hope and prayer that our Christ-like nature will overrule and we will always be servants of Jesus Christ.

The future of the church and its unity depend upon men like us. We have seen our forefathers divided over pet theories and minor issues. The time has come that we ask for wisdom from God that we might be qualified teachers of the Word--part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

## PRICE TALKS:

# LOVE

William A. Price

*And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (I Cor. 13:13).*

Without any doubt the central and consistent message of the New Testament is LOVE. Love is listed as the highest characteristic of character. Love is central in God and love must be central in man. Lack of love and you lack being a complete person.

When a scribe asked Jesus, "What commandment is the first of all," he replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. He is saying that we are to love God totally—with the heart—affectionately; with our soul—volitionally; with our mind—intellectually; with our strength—physically.

Jesus did not stop there, and in the 2nd commandment, we are told that besides loving God we must have a like love for our neighbor. The Apostle John said, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." (1 John 4:20).

Let us take a moment to deal with the word love. When Japan was opened up to the outside world and Christian missionaries were allowed to enter, they found that the Japanese language had only one word for love and that was for the physical or erotic love. The missionaries had to coin a word to express the love of the New Testament.

In dealing with the word "love", we can do best by using the Greek words EROS and AGAPE. In English these are both translated "love" but with decidedly different meanings. *Eros* was the Greek god of love, and the Greeks also used the word to express physical love. The Christians adopted the word *Agape* which was the love of God for mankind, and the spiritual or brotherly love of one Christian for another.

*Eros* is the type of love that expects something in return. If no return, the love ceases. We sometimes try to make this principle work in the case of God too. If we are not loving properly we make God a means to our end. He saves us from trouble, heals our sickness, gives us success in life and provides a home in heaven hereafter; therefore we serve Him—we go to church, we pray, we tithe our wages, we are faithful in duty; therefore God is under obligation to us. *This is wrong. This is Eros.*

God doesn't love us for what we can give Him. God doesn't need anything. He loves for what He can give, not for what He can get.

Some believe that God loves the righteous, and loves them because they are righteous. This is much like the attitude of the mother who says to her child, "Mother won't love you if you are bad." So the child tries to earn the mother's love by being good.

This is not the kind of love that the Bible talks about. We have an excellent example in the parable of the Prodigal Son. This father showed the kind of love the Bible teaches. He met the son where he was—at the place of sin and degradation. By his own love, he created in the son a love and self-respect, by his forgiveness and reconciliation.

This is precisely and exactly the kind of love the Father showed to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. God loved us when we were sinners.

Some believe that God can only deal with the pure and the good. They feel that if God has any relation with the impure, this would render God impure.

We have the story of the time the Pharisees invited Jesus to a dinner. A woman came up behind Him and stood weeping. The tears fell on His feet and she wiped the tears away with her own hair. The pharisees objected, saying, "If this man were of God, and a prophet, he would have known who this woman was who was touching Him, for she is a sinner. She was a sinner, but Jesus changed that. He extended real love and for the first time in her life she was considered a person and not as a thing to enjoy for a moment and then cast aside. She had become a redeemed person, made new, accepted by God and now acceptable to herself.

We don't just love our children when they are good, and hate them when they are bad. Real love will bring about change.

The Bible says, "We love Him, because He first loved us."

"Why did He love us? We had nothing to give in return. We were dead in trespasses and sin. He loved us into loving Him.

When we say that God loves the sinner, it cannot be because of his sin, but in spite of his sin. If this were not true He could not love any of us.

Do you only love the people that love you?

Do you only love when people do as you would want them to do?

Do you love when you are not getting any love in return?

If you love properly, changes will be made, for real love never fails.

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## HEROES OF THE FAITH

### CALVIN

James C. Hefley

The young Frenchman put the finishing touches on the manuscript before him and looked it over carefully. It was an important document, especially so for an enterprising lawyer just two years out of school, and also for his friend, the new rector of the University of Paris.

"Do a good job, John," Nicholas Cop had asked him. "I've been in Paris only a month, and this inaugural address is important."

On All Saints Day, November 1, 1533, Nicholas Cop delivered the address. "The musty theologians of Rome teach nothing of faith,

the love of God, grace, justification," he cried. "Even if they do so, they pervert it by their laws and sophistries. I beg of you who are present not to tolerate any longer these heresies and abuses."

The speech stirred an uproar in the city. Some priests, wishing to extend Luther's reform to France, were enthusiastic, but Catholic theologians charged: "Heresy at the university! The new rector is a heretic and cannot be tolerated. We must get that lawyer friend of his, too."

Nicholas Cop fled his university post and took refuge in Basel, Switzerland. Calvin hastily went into hiding at a friend's house. Hardly had he arrived when friends warned that police were coming. Calvin changed to farmers' clothing, and his host fashioned a rope to let him out a window.

Carrying a hoe upon his shoulder, the disguised lawyer evaded the police and escaped. He lived to become an international leader for law and order in society and the most influential theologian since Augustine wrote in the fifth century.

Sixty miles northeast of Paris lies ancient Noyon. There, on July 10, 1509, John Calvin was born. Noyon was called Noyon-la-Sainte because of its many churches, convents, and priests. John Calvin's father, Gerard Calvin, served as apostolic secretary to the bishop of Noyon. His mother, Jeanne Le France, was the daughter of a prominent townsman.

After finishing school at Noyon, John went to Paris in 1523 to enter college, where he lived with his uncle near the Church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois. Fifty years later the bells of this church were to announce the deaths of an estimated 70,000 Protestants throughout France in a barbarous slaughter beginning on St. Bartholomew's Night! As the thin-faced Calvin walked daily under the tower's shadow, no one dreamed that he would rally the forces of church reformation in a movement that would sweep through Scotland, England, the Netherlands, and eventually reach the New World of North America.

Calvin had been marked from childhood for the priesthood. But while John was studying in Paris, his father requested that instead he become a lawyer. He received his Doctor of Laws in 1531. The following year he published a book which was later called "the work of a humanist, not an evangelical reformer." Then came the turning point of Calvin's career—"my sudden conversion"—as he calls it.

He does not mention the exact time or circumstances. He wrote "God Himself produced the change. He instantly subdued my heart to obedience. The full knowledge of the truth, like a bright light, disclosed to me the abyss of errors in which I was weltering; the sin and shame with which I was defiled. Only one haven of salvation is there for our souls, and that is the compassion of God, which is offered to us in Christ."

Friends who had been troubled by contradictions they saw in the Roman church thronged his Paris home to hear him challenge repeatedly in words of Scripture: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

After fleeing Paris, Calvin spent the next three years wandering as a homeless teacher in southern France, Switzerland, Italy, and finally in Geneva. Once when he returned to his home town, Noyon, he was imprisoned, but was freed after a few weeks. Here he publicly renounced Roman Catholicism and declared himself in the train of Wycliff, Huss, Luther, and the other reformers.

Under the protection of Queen Margaret of Navarre, Calvin lived with a friend, Louis du Tillet, canon of the cathedral. Here in seclusion he began to write his position on Christian doctrines in the *Institutes*, and also helped his kinsman Olivetan revise and translate the Bible into French.

"You're no longer safe in France," friends told Calvin in 1534. "If they catch you, you might burn for your doctrines." Calvin heeded their advice and fled to Basel, Switzerland.

"I am driven from the land of my birth," Calvin moaned. "Every step from its boundaries costs me tears." Basel, however, was already a Protestant city through the leadership of Ulrich Zwingli and William Farel. Here in 1536 he published his *Institutes*, setting forth in brilliant clarity the truths of Christianity as he found them in the Scriptures: the authority of the Bible, the depravity of man, God's election to salvation, and justification by faith, among others.

Catholic authorities in France ordered the book burned. But they were no match for the power of the printing press. Within months, scholars throughout Europe were pouring over its pages, and by the year's end the publisher called for a new edition. "I began this book to meet the need of multitudes hungering and thirsting after Christ who have little knowledge of Him," he wrote in the opening pages.

Soon after publishing the first one-volume edition of the *Institutes*, he journeyed to Italy to appeal to the Dutchess of Ferrar, daughter of a former king of France, on behalf of his oppressed countrymen.

The dutchess welcomed him but her husband opposed Calvin, and again he fled for his life. He returned briefly to his hometown and there led several of his kinsmen to faith in Christ, then set out for Basel by way of Geneva.

Farel, the reform preacher who had strongly influenced the Genevan government to outlaw the rule of Rome, urged Calvin to stay and help establish an orderly church government.

Convinced that he was needed, Calvin set to work to help Farel draft the articles of government. Then he began recommending strict rules of discipline and of morals for the residents of the city. At this, some influential citizens balked and other opposing citizens raised a tumult against Calvin and Farel. They were forced to leave the city, and Geneva's thoroughgoing reformation was postponed three years until a strongly Protestant group gained control of the government and invited the reformers back.

This time the citizens approved Calvin's blueprint for church government and discipline. The church was not to be united with the state, but the two organizations were designed to support each other in Geneva. This, while being attractive in theory, raised serious difficulties in practice.

In the code of ecclesiastical ordinances, the duties of pastors, teachers, deacons, and laymen were spelled out. Women could be sent to jail for dancing. Three men who laughed during a sermon were imprisoned for three days. A boy was shipped away for calling his mother a she-devil. In time Geneva discovered that not even church and state laws together could make an ideal community.

Michael Servetus, a Spanish scholar denounced as a heretic by both the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches, paid the ultimate price—death—for his fiery opposition to the official beliefs in this new form of church-state government.

Servetus was convicted of heresy by the church and sentenced to die at the stake by civil authorities. His execution has remained a stain on Calvin's record for the present-day Protestants, though death was the typical penalty for heresy among both Protestants and Catholics in religious and political strife of Reformation days.

Calvin's influence in Geneva increased steadily. He founded a theological academy which became the University of Geneva. Leaders of reform church movements in various European countries came to Geneva and carried back inspiration for their struggles in the homeland. John Knox, the intrepid leader of the Scotch Presbyterian church, called his training under Calvin "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on the earth since the days of the apostles."

Through other leaders and in his writings, Calvin's influence lived on through the centuries after his death in 1564. His grave was unmarked according to his request, but his life remains a towering monument of human ability dedicated to Almighty God.

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## GLEANINGS

Larry Miles

### THE GODLY MAN

The godly man is acutely aware that godliness is not a static condition attained, but is a movement, a manner of life. An "honest man" may stumble at some point, but his conscience stabs him and he makes correction . . . Nor will a godly man condone a way that is contrary to the way of God. He may sin—he will sin—but his very character cries out in protest, and he makes correction. His inner guidance system is "locked on" to the way of God and he wants to keep it that way.

—Robert Turner, in *Plain Talk*



### WALKING IN THE LIGHT

“Walking in the light” implies our sincere effort not to sin; Christ’s blood, under this condition, cleanses us from all sins (there is no exception; His blood cleanses totally), and in this way guiltless children have spiritual association and union with their Father.

—J. W. Roberts, in *Living Word Commentary*

### DO YOU HAVE HEART TROUBLE?

Room and time now give to Jesus  
soon will pass this day of grace.  
Soon thy heart left cold and silent;  
and thy Saviour’s pleading cease.  
—Selected

### ON PREACHING

In discussing the preparation of the preacher, Alan Redpath put it this way: “When our confidence is in gimmicks, programs, schemes, and planning, and we have not learned to seek first the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit, in brokenness at Calvary, we inevitably go on being defeated and losing the battle.”

—quoted, in *Vanguard*

### FOLLOW THE LEADER

Follow after love (Charity) - - - - (1 Cor. 14:1)  
Follow that which is good - - - - (1 Thess. 5:15)  
Follow that which is just - - - - (from Deut. 16:20)  
Follow every good work - - - - (from 1 Tim. 5:10)  
I am the way, the truth, and the life:  
no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.  
(John 14:6)  
—Selected

### THE MARK OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The distinction of the Christian life lies in this, that it is not a life lived unto self, but unto God. “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). “That ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (1 Peter 4:2). “He died for all that they that live should no longer live unto themselves but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again.” (2 Cor. 5:15).

—R. H. Boll, in *Words in Season*

### AFTER THE TOIL OF THE DAY IS DONE

After the toil of the day is done,  
After the hurry, the flurry, the fun,  
Then as you sit in your room alone,  
The Lord will speak to thee.  
Only the one who is quiet, still  
Ready to go, and His word fulfill  
Only to such will He tell His will:  
Does He speak oft to thee?  
—R. E. Neighbour

### FAITH

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is the great faith chapter in the Bible. A Careful study of it will bring the simplest definition of the word "faith" as shown in the following acrostic:

F – Forsaking	or again	F – Forsaking
A – All		A – All
I – I		I – I
T – Take		T – Trust
H – Him (as my Saviour)		H – Him (as my Lord)

–J. L. Addams, *Seed Thoughts*

### TILL HE COMES

"till He comes:" O let the words  
Linger on the trembling chords;  
Let the "little while" between  
In their golden light be seen;  
Hush! Be ev'ry murmur dumb;  
It is only "Till He come."

–Selected

Until next time, Maranatha!

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## Christian Leadership

Harold G. Mackay

These are days of danger and difficulties, demanding great carefulness and spiritual wisdom to walk a path of spiritual fruitfulness for the Glory of God. Not only is this true in the life of the individual Christian, but also in the testimony of the local assembly. This presents a challenging call for wise Christian leadership. Some Christians have the notion that any form of human leadership is an infringement on the Lordship of Christ, and therefore an assembly does not need leaders. Because all believers are fellow-members of the body of Christ, and all are in the Christian priesthood, they conclude that this does away with any sort of leadership among the saints. All should have a voice, and an equal voice—they say—in assembly matters.

Let us examine this carefully, as it is of utmost importance to the well-being and progress of an assembly.

Conditions during the first century in the Church would surely refute the idea that the prominence of human leadership is incompatible with the preeminence of the Lordship of Christ. Most will agree that the Lordship of Christ was most completely acknowledged and practised during the early days of the Church's history on earth—that period we speak of as the apostolic era. Although errors and evils crept in early among the saints, nevertheless in the main the Lordship of Christ prevailed, and

His Name alone was taken by the saints,  
His Gospel was preached,  
His Teachings were followed, and  
His Spirit was in control.

This represented a practical acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ. When we seek to pattern New Testament assemblies we turn to the first century. BUT, it must be noted, at this very time human leadership was most prominent among the churches. In the Acts of the Apostles we find twenty-three specific references to the apostles, while Peter and Paul are mentioned by name about 200 times. We find the apostles exercising a very definite leadership among the saints; then, after a certain point (11:30) associating the elder with them in that leadership, so that we find the expression "the apostles and elders" five times in one chapter (15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23).

While we do not have apostles in the church today, we certainly should have elders. Leadership among the Lord's people is clearly taught in the New Testament as being in the elders of the local assembly. Not only did Paul associate younger men—Timothy and Titus—with himself in his labors for the Lord, but in his last inspired letters—when he knew his time of service was drawing to a close—he wrote much about the elders. The inspired description of such leaders is found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. May we not conclude, then, that the New Testament suggests no conflict between a recognized human leadership and the Lordship of Christ? But, such leadership should conform to the New Testament pattern for such. Let me suggest three characteristics for leadership in the assemblies,

1. Leadership without lordship.
2. Direction without dictation.
3. Guidance without government.

#### *LEADERSHIP WITHOUT LORDSHIP*

The leadership among the saints is to be that of a shepherd, not of an overlord. Peter expressly charges the elders, "The elders which are among you I exhort . . . : feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (1 Peter 5:1-4).

The elders are *under*-shepherds, serving under Christ the Chief Shepherd from whom they shall receive their reward. The word "FEED the flock of God" is literally "shepherd". And so there is to be leading and feeding.

#### *DIRECTION WITHOUT DICTATION*

Dictation is "to command with authority", and this is not the function of the elders, but rather to give direction to the saints. There are many occasions on which the assembly needs direction as to the wisest, most scriptural, and most God-honoring course to pursue. Here is where wise and spiritual leadership is invaluable. Much time and effort can be conserved and channeled into profitable activities if there are leaders with a good sense of direction. Speaking of the true shepherd of the sheep our Lord said, "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" (John 10:4).

Here is the leadership of a true shepherd, either in the natural or

spiritual realm—not driving but directing. There is no room for a dictator among the saints, be he named Diotrophes (3 John 9-11) or anything else.

### GUIDANCE WITHOUT GOVERNMENT

While the Authorized Version translates "hegeomai" as "them which have the rule over you" three times in Hebrews 13 (vs. 7, 17, 24) the marginal rendering of "your guides" seems preferable. Strong and Vine give the meaning as "to lead", and this is followed by Darby, Young, Williams, Phillips, New English Bible, New American Standard, and other translations. There is a gift of government in the church (1 Cor. 12:28), but the thought is "to steer, pilotage" with the suggestion of a helmsman or pilot. Thus, while a pilot or a guide must be accorded a measure of authority and be obeyed, yet the emphasis is on guidance and not rule.

One closing thought. It is too much to expect that any *one* man will possess the knowledge and wisdom necessary for the leadership, the direction, the guidance of an assembly of believers. Thus God has vested leadership in a plurality of elders. They are so spoken of in Acts 20:17, 28; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5, etc. In 1 Timothy 4:14 we have the presbytery (eldership) acting collectively.

"In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14).

Surely a regular meeting together of the spiritual guides of an assembly for prayer, counsel and deliberation will produce wiser decisions for the guidance of an assembly than either the personal decisions of one brother, or those of a general gathering of all brethren, novices and experienced, carnal and spiritual, young and mature.

—from *INTEREST* magazine



Timothy Nakahara

Shizuoka City, Japan

July 25th

First of all, I want to apologize for not having written to you for some time, not because I was sick, nor I was neglecting to do so, but because I'd been tied down with so many things that had demanded my immediate attention. Before going any further, I would like to thank you for your unceasing prayers on our behalf and for having helped us sustain with the regular monthly contributions towards the work here. As you know, we're wholly dependent upon the Lord's supply through your prayers and cooperations of faith and love, and we're indeed grateful to you who have joined us in the work of evangelism amongst the Japanese with prayers and financial support. And we're very happy to share with you now some of our recent news of our work in Shizuoka, Japan.

A woman of 45 years of age, who had long been fighting against accepting Christ as her Savior and Lord, confessed the Name of Christ

and obeyed in baptism to walk in newness of life on July 8 along with two other young boys and a girl of the same age. We went out to a mountain stream in the rain but about the time for baptism it did stop raining miraculously and we all gave glory to the Lord for His watch-care over us. We had 3 new souls won to Christ last year and two the year before last. Thus, the Lord has blest us with our efforts of bringing the lost to Christ, which has made us all the more zealous for witnessing. We still have several more who are seriously thinking about becoming Christians, and your prayer is so much appreciated and strengthening in our working for the Lord.

We're going to run our annual summer Bible camp at the foot of Mt. Fuji this time, independently of two other churches with whom we used to have joint-camps until last year. 25 or more are expected to be present at the camp. There are several of the campers who aren't Christians and so our main program is directed toward meeting their spiritual needs, and I am to preach 3 times in all. We hope to see some turn out to accept Him, then.

I now have a license to handle a 16mm movie projector! Here in Japan we're required to have a license to run a projector with any rented films. So I had to spend about 4 hours taking lessons on "How-To-Run a movie projector" and then a test. I've made it all right. At our camp as well as at the church in Aug., we're going to do film-evangelism which has necessitated me to get it by the request of the church. So we're ready now for it.

We as a church have made our final decision to purchase the lot on which the main church building and the preacher's house are standing, and it costs us 15,000,000.00 YEN (\$65,220.00) and its full and final payment is due at the end of September this year. We have only two more months left and are still short of \$20,000.00. So the building committee has asked the members for the loan of money as well as free contributions and so far we have had \$19,000.00 in case plus \$26,086.00 which we've saved up over the last ten years. We won't want to go into debt if we possibly can help. We would like all of you to remember this very urgent crying need before the Throne of God. Teruko, my wife, for instance, has decided to donate every penny she earns from working for the Gideons International Head Office here in town during the fiscal year 1984. We praise God for that! Everyone is trying to do the best she or he can. This is a call from Macedonia!

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## GOD'S ANSWER TO AMERICA

Maurice Clymore

Americal Americal  
Why do you call on me  
For blessings great from heaven's store,  
While sin unchecked I see?  
You call on me to bless the land  
Of the red and white and blue,  
But know you not that barriers stand  
Between my hand and you?

America! America!  
You've wandered far from me;  
Your gods are pleasure, wealth and wine;  
From church an absentee.  
The marriage vow you disregard;  
Divorce now breaks the tie;  
Your homes have lost their sacredness;  
To fashion's shrine you hie.

America! America!  
My answer give I thee:  
Bow down your heart in penitence;  
Lift up your eyes to me.  
Let righteousness and justice run  
Like waters to the sea;  
Let sinful lusts be put away;  
From greed for gain be free.

America, the home sweet home,  
Of those who now are free;  
If still this blessing you would keep,  
Return in heart to me.  
Tranquility I cannot give  
The land from blue to blue,  
Until from sin you turn away,  
And to my word be true.

—from *Word & Work*, June, 1941

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## Studies in the Book of Acts

Larry Miles

Acts 11:19-30

### The Establishment of the Church at Antioch

#### INTRODUCTION:

Luke, the historian, is picking up the narrative after the events described in Acts 8:1-4. This was the scattering of the church following the death of Stephen. It was said that everywhere they went they preached the Word.

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE WORK IN ANTIOCH: ACTS 11:19-81

In verse 19 it reads,

So those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch speaking the Word to no one except to Jews alone.

Gareth Reese writes the following,

... In some of the earlier chapters he (Luke) has shown us Phillip going down to Samaria, Saul to Damascus, Peter to Joppa and Caesarea, and now we shall see the disciples going to Antioch."

Concerning Antioch, Irving L. Jensen writes in *Acts: An Independent Study*, the following,

Antioch of Syria is located on the Orontes River, fifteen miles inland from



the sea. When Syria was brought into the Roman empire in 64 B.C., the city became a free city. During the days of Acts it was the third largest city of the Empire, surpassed by only Rome and Alexandria. Although Antioch was a cosmopolitan city of various races and religions, it was predominantly a Gentile city. The city was branded with a wide reputation of loose morals. It is very possible that Luke was a native of Antioch.

We also have the phrase, "that they spoke the gospel to the Jews alone." It is apparent that those who were scattered had not come to the conclusion that the good news was for Gentiles. The events described took place before the conversion of Cornelius. In verse 20 we're told that men of Cyprus and of Cyrene began speaking to Greeks also. J. W. McGarvey wrote the following,

It appears that these men came to Antioch at a later period than did those who spoke to Jews alone. It is clearly implied that something else had taken place in the interval to cause the change. What else could that event be, save the conversion of Cornelius, which Luke has just related? So, while Peter's work opened the way, this work in Antioch was the first vigorous invasion of the Gentile world by the advance forces of the Lord's army.

What is the probable date for the coming of these men? It is somewhere after the conversion of Cornelius and the death of Herod which is related in Acts 12. Herod died in A.D. 44. In verse 26 we're told that Paul and Barnabas labored together for an entire year. So it follows that Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch in A.D. 43. Further in verse 20 Luke tells us that the men were preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. The emphasis was on the Lordship of Jesus. Verse 21 informs us that they were quite successful in their actions and that many were added to the Body of Christ. Gareth Reese writes the following,

... Now there is a church in Antioch made up of converts from both Jewish and Greek backgrounds, and this church then becomes the springboard for evangelistic efforts to the Gentile world at large.

#### ***BARNABAS IS SENT BY THE JERUSALEM CHURCH TO ANTIOCH: ACTS 11:22-24***

In verse 22 Luke tells us that the news of Gentiles becoming Christians has spread back to Jerusalem. We're also told that the Jerusalem Church is sending Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas was introduced in Acts 4. In verse 23 we read the following,

Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute to remain true to the Lord.

Gareth Reese writes the following about this verse of Scripture,

What did he see? He saw that God had graciously been at work, drawing souls into the sphere of redemption in Christ. He saw men's lives changed because of the power of the Gospel. "Grace" is a broad term in the Scriptures, and it expresses "all that God does to save a man."

In verse 24 we're told why Barnabas was selected by the church at Jerusalem for this task. It said that he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. His life produced the fruits of the Spirit. Under his influence many were brought to the Lord.

#### ***BARNABAS BRINGS PAUL INTO THE WORK AT ANTIOCH: ACTS 11:25-26.***

Verse 25 says that Barnabas left the work at Antioch to go to Tarsus to look for Saul. We last read of Saul of Tarsus in the 9th chapter. What had happened in Saul's life since the Jerusalem breth-

ren had sent him away to Tarsus as recorded in Acts 9:30. Gareth Reese relates this to us,

Paul will next be seen at Antioch where he is brought by Barnabas to help in the evangelistic work there. If our chronology is correct, Paul was converted about 34 A.D. The next time we see him is 37 A.D., as he returns from Arabia to Damascus, only to have to flee for his life, whereupon he goes to Jerusalem, from which he also has to flee. The next time we see him, it is about 40 or 42 A.D., when he turns up in Antioch of Syria.

The phrase "to look for Saul," implies that he found him with some difficulty. In verse 26 Barnabas has found Saul and has persuaded him to come to Antioch and labor for the Lord of Glory. It is revealed that Paul and Barnabas labored with the Body in Antioch for an entire year and that they taught many the way of the Lord. It is in this verse that we have the words, "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

#### **THE ANTIOCH CHURCH AIDS IN THE RELIEF FOR THE JUDAEAN FAMINE: ACTS 11:27-30**

During the time that Barnabas and Paul were laboring in Antioch some prophets came down from Jerusalem. In verse 28 we're told that one of them was named Agabus. This same prophet will reappear in the narrative at Acts 21:10, 11. In the passage in the 11th chapter he prophesies that there will be a great famine all over the world, i.e., the Roman Empire. Luke tells us that this famine took place in the reign of Claudius. This would place these events somewhere between 41-54 A.D.

In verse 29 the disciples in Antioch decided to help financially the less privileged and hungry in Judaea. The text tells us that each of the disciples purposed to give of their means. In verse 30 we have the first mention of elders in the New Testament. The brethren in Antioch entrusted this money with Barnabas and Saul to take to Jerusalem.

We have read in this chapter of the work of Barnabas and Saul in Antioch and how the Gentiles were hearing the Good News and were responding in numbers to the cause. In our next essay we will deal with the 12th chapter of Acts dealing with the persecution of the Church by Civil Authorities. Please study the 12th chapter of Acts in preparation for our lesson.

Until next time, **MARANATHA!**

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Edited by Dr. Horace E. Wood

## **THE GOSPEL OF JOHN:**

### **The Believer in the World**

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.

*John 15:18 - 16:4*

The outflow of fruitbearing comes before the reader now, since the subject of abiding in Christ for the bearing of fruit has just been traversed (cf. John 15:1-17). The new relationship to Christ means a new relationship to the world (cf. 15:1, 18). The fact of the matter

is that union with Christ results in both fruit and hate! That is startling, but true.

As Leon Morris says, "It is not without its significance that the disciples are to be known by their love, the world by its hatred."

Two purposes seem to be in the mind of the Lord in telling His disciples of the world's hostility. In the first place, He wishes to warn them of what will happen in the future, in order that they may remember that He predicted the world's hatred. That would encourage them in the midst of the hostility, giving them a measure of assurance by this manifestation of His divine foreknowledge (cf. 16:1, 4). It is common for disciples, when they are experiencing difficulties in the Christian life, to wonder if they really are in harmony with the will of God in their experience. And the Lord desired to encourage the disciples when they faced the inevitable enmity of the unbelieving world.

Thus, the second purpose is simply to support them by this knowledge of His ability to predict that which is to come. To know that the omniscient divine Son is with them in their difficulties will be of inestimable benefit to them in the warfare of the Christian campaign for the souls of men.

With these things in mind we turn again to the continuation of the Lord's discourse in the upper room.

#### THE ANTAGONISM OF THE FOE

*The reasons* (John 15:18-21). The section begins with the words, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (v. 18). In another context Jesus had already said much the same thing. In sending forth of the twelve on one of their missions He had said, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matt. 10:25).

The reasons for the hatred of the world are given in verses eighteen through twenty-one. And the first of them is their election by Christ (cf. v. 19). They have been chosen by Him and, therefore, are not of the world. Because of their different nature and disposition from the world, the world cannot get along with them.

It is natural to ask the question here, "Is the election that Jesus speaks of an election to eternal salvation, or an election to apostleship?" Now a sound exegesis of the passage must conclude that election to the apostolate is foremost in the mind of our Lord. But is that all that one can find in this text? Probably not. In the first place, the same principle of distinguishing grace would be exhibited, even if it could be shown that apostleship was only referred to here. In the second place, all the results of this electing work belong to all the saints, for they all are subject to the antagonism of the world. Finally, the rest of the New Testament makes it quite plain that there is manifested this same distinguishing grace in the election to salvation of all believers. One cannot evade the doctrine of sovereign election by the subterfuge that our Lord's words have to do here with the apostolate only and can have no bearing on the question, "Is there doctrine of

sovereign, distinguishing grace in the Bible?" One only has to turn to 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 and Romans 8:29-30 to see the folly of attempting to avoid that blessed and comforting doctrine.

One notices in the original text that there is a bit of emphasis placed upon the personal pronoun "I" in the words, "I have chosen you out of the world" (cf. vv. 16, 19). One might raise the question, "Why does our Lord trace the election to Himself, while in the prayer of John seventeen He seems to trace the gift of them to Him to the Father's initiative. Augustine wrote in answer to the question, "The Son says that the men were given Him by the Father out of the world, to whom He says elsewhere, 'have chosen you out of the world.' Those whom God the Son chose along with the Father out of the world, the very same Son as man received out of the world." Those whom God the Son chose along with the Father out of the world, the very same Son as man received out of the world from the Father; for the Father had not given them to the Son had He not chosen them. And in this way, as the Son did not thereby set the Father aside, when He said, 'I have chosen you out of the world,' seeing that they were simultaneously chosen by the Father also: as little did He thereby exclude Himself, when He said, 'Thine they were,' for they were equally also the property of the Son. But now that same Son as man received those who belonged not to Himself, because He also as God received a servant-form which was not originally His own."

Occasionally one will comment in this connection that one reason for the world's hatred of the believer is the weakness and inconsistencies of the Christian. There may be something to that, but Ryle is closer to the mark when he contends, "It is not the weaknesses and inconsistencies of Christians that the world hates, but their grace." And the world's displeasure cannot always be attributed to the faults of those who are the objects of it. As Barclay points out, the world even in unspiritual matters, such as daily work, often persecutes men for working too hard or too long at their duties. It is a convicting thing to practice a higher standard in one's physical work habits than that practiced by the common everyday laboring man.

"The world complains loudly of the *odium theologicum*," Swete says, "but the *odium seculare*, the bitterness with which the church is assailed by the world, far exceeds it." And he is perfectly right in affirming, "The quarrel of the world with the Church, so far as it is not provoked by the faults of Christians, is merely a continuation of its quarrel with Christ."

It is a rather interesting thing, perhaps a testimony to the insight that Plato had into human nature, although not a Christian, that he wrote centuries before John's Gospel that, if a truly righteous man ever appeared on earth, he would be scourged, imprisoned, and hanged!

In the twentieth verse is the second of the reasons for the world's antagonism. It is found in their relationship to Him. Jesus says, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." Sharing

in His life by union with Him means in His fate, too. Perhaps the world's antagonism, then, should be of little concern to us. Perhaps we should just get on with the business of being persecuted, confident that in it we share with our Lord His life and fate.

The third reason given for the world's antagonism is the world's ignorance of the Father (cf. v. 21). In fact, the world's ignorance of the Father is evidence of their lack of love for Him. If they loved Him, they would find out about Him. The world's ignorance of the Father may be contrasted with the believer's knowledge of Him and of the life that He gives. We differ from the world in our views of God, for we believe in a trinitarian God, in our views of man, for we know that we are sinners, in our views of life, and duty, and the future, and death (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11-14; Acts 5:40-41). It is no wonder that the world is hostile to Christ and the Christian.

*The results* (John 15:22-25). The principal result of the antagonism of the world to the Lord Jesus Christ is the fact that now, since He has come into the world and ministered here, the world has sin (cf. vv. 22, 24). The clause, "they had not had sin," which occurs twice here (cf. vv. 22, 24), is not easy to understand. It certainly does not mean that had He not come and spoken to them, the Jews would not have had sin, for all men since Adam have had sin. It could mean that they would not have had the sin of rejecting God as He really is, as He is seen so perfectly, in the life of Christ. As Morris explains it, "But He does mean that the sin of rejecting God as He really is would not have been imputed to them had they not had the revelation of God that was made through Him. But now, as things are, they have no excuse. There is no way of covering up their sin."

Or perhaps He refers to the particular sin of unbelief, the sin that the present age is so guilty of, the sin of not believing in the Son, the climax of the revelation of God (cf. 16:9).

One of the most wonderful things about this difficult to interpret clause is the reflection that, since by God's effectual grace believers today have responded to the revelation in Christ, it follows that they do not have sin! Marvelous, indeed, is His love and mercy.

Of course, the world is unwilling to recognize its sinfulness and to seek for a resolution of it in the redemption offered through the blood of the divine Savior. In one of the American Broadcasting Company's *Viewpoint* programs, November 20, 1983, the panel discussion, including such well-known and important figures as Henry Kissinger, William Buckley, Elie Wiesel, General Brent Stowcroft, Carl Sagan, Robert McNamara, and Ted Koppel, focused on the peril of nuclear war. The panel followed the showing of the highly publicized film, *The Day After*. After airing a number of stale alternatives, the path to the ultimate solution was spotlighted for a fraction of a second when Carl Sagan, obviously offering up the idea as a "throw away" in the conversation's lull, said perhaps "we should change human nature," or very similar words. Of course, it is "we" who are to do that, not a supernatural being. The evolutionary scientist could not be expected to even allow such an idea to enter the lists. But no one bothered even to reply to such a preposterous notion, a comment-

ary itself on the spiritual and psychological bent of the panel. The discussion ended on a note of false hope, a kind of whistling in the dark hope based upon nothing realistic, substantial, or logical. Such is the plight of modern man, evil, wicked, unbelieving, and blissfully unaware of its unawareness. The solution to the world's problems will be given by God in a great cataclysmic climactic war, in which the Lamb of God shall prevail over the wild Beast of the Wicked One. Believers have the sure hope of that day.

There is an old story of an African chiefess, who many years ago visited a mission station. The missionary had a little mirror hung up on a tree outside his cabin. The chiefess happened to look into the mirror and saw herself reflected there in all her own ugly, painted, grotesque countenance. She started back in horror and said, "Who is that horrible-looking person inside that tree?" "Oh," said they, "it is not in the tree; the glass is reflecting your own face." She could not believe it until she held the mirror in her hand. She said, "I must have the glass. How much will you sell it for?" "Oh," he said, "I don't want to sell it." But she insisted, and begged, till finally he thought it might be best to sell it to her to avoid trouble. So he named the price, and she paid it. Then as she said, "I will never have it making faces at me again," she threw it down and broke it in pieces. Such is the world's common response to the biblical analysis of its spiritual condition.

The section ends with our Lord's statement, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause" (v. 25). The citation is from Psalm 69:4 (cf. 35:19). The word rendered, "without a cause," is a Greek adverb built upon a noun meaning *a gift*. Thus, the word means something like *gift-wise*, *gratuitously*, or *without payment*. This is John's only use of the term, but it is found in Paul in several suggestive places, particularly in Romans 3:24, where the apostle is discussing the doctrine of justification by faith. There he writes that believers are "justified *freely*," the word found in John 15:25, rendered there by "without a cause." Thus, what Paul is saying simply is that believers are justified "without a cause," that is, without a cause in themselves, since the fundamental cause lies in the merits of the redemption of Christ.

#### THE ANTIDOTE TO THE FOE

*The Spirit's witness* (John 15:26). The antidote to the antagonism of the world is found in the witness of the Spirit, that testimony that He will give of Christ through the apostles and disciples. Jesus says, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." As we have noted elsewhere the word that refers to the Holy Spirit, *parakletos* (AV, "Comforter"), is a word with legal associations, suggesting our lawyer, or advocate. In other words, the Spirit has as His task the conduct of the case of Christ before the world. And we might add: We may safely leave the ultimate defense of Christ to His powerful pleading and argument.

*The disciples' witness* (John 15:27). The final words of the chap-

ter have importance. Jesus says, "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." In the original text the word rendered, "shall bear witness" (AV), is a present tense. It may, however, have a futuristic sense, as the Authorized Version has it. A point of significance is found in the use of the emphatic "ye" (the Greek pronoun bears some stress here). While it is the Spirit's witness that is the important testimony, their witness is also necessary. They cannot leave the work to the Spirit entirely. In other words, we have another instance of biblical harmony of the divine sovereignty and human responsibility. We must work, realizing that it is He who works in our work (cf. Phil. 2:12-12). In fact, one might even say that it is one witness, His primarily, but it is a witness done through our necessary instrumentality, our dependent instrumentality (cf. Acts 4:33; 5:32).

We should not leave this brief section without commenting upon the fact that the testimony of the Spirit and of the disciples is, to us Christ's own words, "of me." That underlines again the fundamental message of Christianity. It is of Christ. Any message that fails to set forth truly and triumphantly the sovereign and saving Messiah, Jesus Christ but majors in the minors, can hardly claim to be the witness that pleases Him, or the witness of the Spirit of God.

#### THE ACTS OF THE FOE

*The reasons for the revelation* (John 16:1). That the disciples should not be caused to stumble by opposition, such as excommunication for their faith, is the first of the reasons for the prophetic foreview of their future. The verb *to stumble* is formed from a word that referred to the bait-stick of a trap, and it often, therefore, connotes an element of surprise. Jesus is preparing them for sudden rejection of their persons and message. "As Temple reminds us," Morris says, "it is hard to believe that a cause is truly God's when it seems to meet with no success, and all power is on the other side.' But Jesus prepares them so that they will not be taken by surprise and overcome in the collapse of a starry-eyed optimism."

*The recounting of the acts* (John 16:2). The rejection of their message will take the form of both mental and physical rebuffs. There will be religious excommunication, the loss of the fellowship of their nation's faith, or Judaism as it was practiced in the days of the apostles. Our Lord will experience that pre-eminently at His crucifixion. Of course, in a religious state, such as Israel, that means more than in a secular state such as the United States. There it means the loss of family, friends, and all social intercourse. That has persisted in the Jewish practice of having a "funeral" for one who embraces Christianity, still done in religiously strict areas.

What is also striking about this is the fact that the ones who perpetrate the crime of murder for a religious cause will think that they are thereby doing God a service. The preaching of a sermon at the burning of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer illustrates the matter.

The historical illustrations of the fulfillment of Jesus' words abound, from the earliest days of the church to the persecutions of men such as Athanasius and Chrysostom, through the Middle Ages and



the treatment of Gottschalk and his followers, the Jansenists later, and then in the struggles of Luther and the Reformers with Rome. And the condition has continued to the present day, as missionary history clearly shows (cf. Prov. 29:27).

The scorn and ridicule that present-day believers know in so many ways is simply a modern continuation of the quarrel that the world has with Christ. I have a friend, brought up in a main-line denomination, whose sister is an unbelieving church member. The sister, by calling the believing sister by the mocking designation of "Jesus freak," was able for a lengthy period of time to cause her sister to break into tears. It was my privilege to indicate to her that she was only experiencing what Jesus has said that we all would.

*The reason for the acts* (John 16:3-4). The reason for the response of the world includes the world's failure to know the Father or the Son. The word rendered by "have known" is one that refers to experiential knowledge, suggesting the knowledge of personal faith. While the world may have a lot of knowledge about Christ, this personal experiential knowledge it does not have. Cf. 15:21 (the verb here refers to a more objective knowledge, probably that of the fact of His incarnation and mission).

Jesus concludes with an explanation for giving the warnings at this particular time. Had the trials come while He was with them then He would have been able to give them help at the time. But now His leaving them brings about a definite change in the situation, and He does not want them to be surprised by the hatred of the world. Thus, when the trials come, they will not be a detriment to faith, but an aid, since He has already anticipated them for them.

"There is a dramatic fitness in the use of "their hour" (AV, "the time"), when we recall the way in which Christ's own "hour" is spoken of (see on 2:4). Just as His "hour" would certainly come, so would His enemies' "hour" certainly come. But in how different a sense!"

One might wonder at the fact that the world does not seem so angry with the church today, as one might expect from these words of our Lord. Well, often the church is simply ignored by the world for the simple reason that its message is not the message of our Lord, the message of sin, guilt, and condemnation, the condemnation of hell-fire. The church is ignored often because its message is innocuous. In fact, there is nothing about the visible professing church that suggests that she ought to be crucified! The church's message is the same social gospel of man-centered salvation that the world believes. That is a far-cry from Paul's message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-2). Cf. Gal. 3:1.

If to escape the world's hostility, we drop the flags of divine truth and redemption by blood, hide our badges of the necessity of personal trust in Christ's saving work alone for our eternal safety and welfare, then we, the true church of Christ, become like a tiger without claws. With His message we shall have hostility, but we have the confidence that we shall meet it with the love of Christ and the support of the Holy Spirit, and the end of that conflict is life.



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