

“Holding fast the Faithful Word . . .”



The *Word and Work*



“Holding forth the Word of Life.”

July - August, 2008

This is the *final* Word and Work *magazine*
(but check inside about the *website*, now & later).

**The LORD is the Beginning and
the End.**

**HE is the Speaker of the WORD,
HE is the Doer of the WORK.**

**But, wonder of wonders,
He lets us be His co-workers!**

WORD And WORK on the WEB

[Please read this, everyone]

We have mentioned previously that when the printed/mailed-out version of W&W stops (with this issue), we hope to **replace it with another version.**

Well, not all details are finalized yet, but we do plan to activate our online edition on the web-site www.wordandwork.com . If the Lord wills, we hope to add more articles on a regular basis. So, **you who are writers -- keep on writing articles and email them to the editor** at awilson4@bellsouth.net . We also will run missionary letters, and include news from churches, schools, and other ministries that have been in our "News and Notes" through the years. So **keep sending Bennie Hill your reports**; don't let him get lazy.

Like its editor, most of *W&W* 's readers are senior citizens. Maybe you don't have a computer, or even if you do you don't know much about using the web. So how will you be able to get on our website? Well, if you lack a computer we can't help you. But if there is one in your home, and your family or friends can assist you, they can find us at the address given at the top of this page.

Converting *W&W* into a website magazine depends on help from volunteers who understand such things a whole lot more than I do. Praise God that Larry Miles and George Fulda have agreed to handle the technical aspects of the new W&W! So stay in touch if you can. Please **pray for this to reach more readers than ever before!** And plan to be among them.

For more details read the editorial.

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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We have Finished the Race

Alex V. Wilson

Excuse us if the following sentences sound a bit melodramatic. They just seem to fit our present situation. At this time we can say about this magazine what Paul said about himself in 2 Timothy 4. The mail-out *Word and Work* has "finished the race. The time has come for [its] departure." Ecclesiastes 3 also is very appropriate: "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven. A time to give birth and a time to die...."

This is the last *Word and Work* to be printed and mailed out. Our Heavenly Father kept it in action for 100 years and six months. We praise Him for any and all good that has resulted from it. We thank Him for all who have prayed, written, done office/mailing work, donated, subscribed, read it, and gave it away to other folks. We thank our patient readers for putting up with blemishes. We especially regret our getting it out so late much of the time in recent years. (Too much to do; too little time to do it in.)

A New Race Begins!

Inside our front cover this month is an update re: hopes and plans for the new online W&W. Here is more information about it. All of this is tentative, not set in stone. Man proposes, God disposes. But if all goes according to plans, it will be something like this.

Larry Miles has begun the process of setting up the website. It will be a different one from the initial, exploratory site we've had for about a year with only a few articles. The **new address** will be www.wordandwork.com.

Notice carefully that the only difference between it and our earlier site is the ending—".com" instead of ".org". But be sure to get it right, for a miss is as good as a mile.

Our desire is to have it set up and ready for you to read sometime in **November**, if possible. And our current plan is to put out a new edition every two months, though that could change.

Similarities and Differences

How will W&W's online version be similar to the old one? In many ways, we hope. Articles by people you know who've written before (and by some new writers too, we pray). News and notes regarding happenings among the local churches – and in God's worldwide family. Letters from missionaries. Bob Yarbrough's earlier series of meditations, "Lessons from the Farm," will re-commence. There will also be reprints from the past – some old articles which are still timely and relevant.

How will it be different? 1st, it won't arrive in your mailbox. You must seek it on your computer. 2nd, it will be free to the reader. No subscription price. 3rd, some months it may be longer, and other months shorter. 4th, maybe we won't have a unifying theme very often. 5th, we probably won't have as many articles that have already appeared in other magazines. That was a plus for our monthly themes, adding valuable insights. But it also required lots of time getting permissions, etc.

What do we need? Writers and readers. And recruiters who will recommend W&W to other folks. Also advisors, and one or more co-editors would be nice. And prayer-warriors, for our battle is not just against flesh and blood.

Finally, a fond farewell to all readers who for one reason or another will not be reading *W&W* any more. We will miss you very much. The past three issues have told of its origins and history, and May-June forewarned of its probable conclusion as a print-on-paper magazine this year. We will not present a lengthy goodbye here. But from the depths of our heart we thank you for your support through the years. We love you, and pray that grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ will be yours always. Great is God's faithfulness.

Of course we hope that the great majority of our present readers will be able to continue as such. If so, we look forward to meeting you again in November, Lord willing.

EZEKIEL Preaches at Portland

[A man dressed in a robe such as might have been worn in Bible times appears suddenly behind the pulpit.]

Peace be with you all. Let me introduce myself: I am a prophet of the Lord God Almighty, and my name is Ezekiel. Have you heard my name before? It appears in your holy book; but sad to say not many people are familiar with what I wrote.

I am from the far-away land of Judah. And I lived a long, long time ago. At least that's what people tell me. Your prophet--uh, what do you call him?... priest? ... teacher? -- anyway, that fellow Alex Wilson said that about 26 hundred years have passed since I lived and prophesied! Imagine that, if you can! Whew, 26 centuries. No wonder I'm tired. But really now, I don't look nearly *that* old, do I?

Well, some of you seem shocked to see me here today. And some of you look puzzled because I do not dress the way you do. Actually it seems to me it's *you*, not me, who dress funny. But maybe you wonder how I dare to come here today looking different from the rest of you, and no doubt different from the way your teacher looks when he speaks to you. Maybe you think I'm trying to be sensational or something. Well, let me tell you that the Lord God on a number of occasions told me to do actions which were highly unusual. You might have considered *them* sensational.

Once He told me to build a miniature model of the city of Jerusalem and then pretend to lay siege to it--sort of like playing with toy soldiers, as I was told some boys do today. Another time the Lord told me to cut off my hair with a dagger, and then take part of the hair and stab it over and over with the dagger--but to burn another portion of the cut hair (it stank!), and to throw the rest up in the air for the wind to blow away. The Lord had me perform these actions, and others like them, to arouse the attention of the people, and to provoke their curiosity so they would ask questions, and to teach them lessons. I was told you call such things "visual aids" or "object lessons." So you see, it's not so strange that today I am dressed in a different way from you.

Well, I was asked to tell you about my life and service for the Lord. I was born about the year which you now call 623 B.C., though of course we didn't call it that. You cannot possibly understand my life unless you

realize that my father, grandfather, great-grandfather on back for many generations were all PRIESTS. They all served in the Temple of the Most High God, in Jerusalem.

Unspeakable Privileges

What a thrilling privilege, yet what a challenging responsibility it was to be a priest of the one true God, the Lord of Israel. To lead people in the worship of the Almighty! And of course I, Ezekiel, son of Buzi, was destined to be a priest also. One day, when I reached the age of 30, I would be permitted to offer sacrifices which the people would bring to the Lord. I would present the thank-offerings, the sin-offerings, the burnt-offerings and all the rest. I might sometimes take the special bread or the sweet-smelling incense into the Holy Place of the Temple. I would also teach the people about the Law, and the meaning of the sacrifices and also the festivals like the Passover, the Day of Atonement, and the weeklong campout which we called the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles.

Oh, even as a boy I was eager for the time to come when I would begin my duties as a priest. Of course I would have to undergo special, detailed training for years before my term could begin, but I didn't mind that. I was willing to pay any price just so I could be a priest at 30. I loved the Lord very much, and wanted to follow in the steps of my forefathers.

Unthinkable Tragedies

But--when I was about 14, there occurred **the first of four drastic events that happened during my lifetime.** (I'll mention only three of them today.) Good King Josiah, who had led our people in a great revival, was killed in battle. Horrible day! I can still remember where I was when the shocking news came. Even worse, his successor did not continue the work of reformation. He was not devoted to the Lord as King Josiah had been. In fact he allowed the pagan religions to come back--the worship of false gods! Some priests like my father tried to resist him, but they could not stem the flood.

Many evil practices began to flourish like weeds after rain: bloodshed, adultery, injustice in the courts. (You do not have such things as those here and now, do you?) And would you believe it-- idols of false gods, that are no gods at all, were set up on many street corners even in Jerusalem! It was awful. The veteran prophet Jeremiah denounced these

practices with sound and fury and many tears, but he was outnumbered by the false prophets. They supported the younger kings who led Judah far away from God and righteousness.

It was the year you call 609 B.C. when Josiah was killed. I hoped there would arise a 2nd Josiah who would bring another revival before my career as a priest would start. But conditions did not get better, they got worse. Oh, people still came to the Temple, but not as many as before. And many of those who came worshipped the false gods too, and practiced the vices I mentioned earlier!

Then, three years after Josiah's death, **the second terrible blow fell**. It was the year 606 and I was still a teenager, when Nebuchadnezzar, the young king of Babylon, came with his army and besieged our holy city! Cruel soldiers surrounded us, and no one inside could go out for any reason, nor could anyone in the villages or countryside enter Jerusalem at all. Many days passed, and food supplies grew low and our hopes were even lower.

My nation, Judah, had to surrender to Babylon's king. He took some of our Temple utensils and vessels, used in the worship of the Lord, back to his land. He put them in the temple, of his gods. To most people that would seem to prove that his gods were stronger than our God. Blasphemy! What humiliation! Nebuchadnezzar also took some of our most talented and educated young people, from the noblest families, to Babylon. Think of it: uprooted from their homeland and families and forced to live in the court of that pagan king. Yet some of the ungodly among us in Judah envied them! "They'll get to live in the most splendid city in the world," they said. Bah! Most of the youths who were carried away soon compromised their faith and even worshipped Babylon's false deities, but a few remained true to the Lord. They were led by a man you have heard of, named Daniel.

Meanwhile life went on in Judah, where I was. Sadly, most of the people grew more disobedient to the Lord. Though He had chastened us to bring us to repentance, the majority paid no heed. Nevertheless I became excited as my preliminary training for the priesthood began. God had raised up kings before who led great reformations... Wouldn't He do it again? That was my longing--to serve in the temple in days like those of Josiah or Hezekiah or Jehoshaphat, when the multitudes joyfully worshipped the Sovereign Lord and shaped their lives by His Law.

Blow Upon Blow, Woe After Woe

But because of Judah's apostasy, **the third and hardest blow of all fell.** About 8 years after the armies of Babylon besieged Jerusalem the first time, our king broke his oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon, the world's superpower, was not about to overlook a rebellion like that. Their armies returned, and once more we were besieged. This time when we finally surrendered, we were not treated so leniently. Our king himself was carried away as a captive to Babylon--along with his mother, his wives, and all our top government officials! And that's not all: 7,000 of our best soldiers were also dragged off into captivity, plus 3,000 of our highly skilled craftsmen, educated scribes, and priests. There were 10,000 of us in all.

Yes, you heard me correctly--I said "us," for I was one of those 10,000 captives! Thus in 598 B.C., at the age of 25, I became a refugee, a displaced person living in a foreign land.

Can you possibly imagine what it was like, to be suddenly yanked up by the roots from your country, your city and your home...knowing probably you would never see them again? To say goodbye to your friends who were not deportees? To look for the last time, through tear-filled eyes, at the Temple you had longed to serve in?

Can you imagine what it was like to leave behind us all our earthly possessions except what we could carry in a backpack plus whatever bags we could carry in our arms? To walk mile after mile in the hot sun, escorted by soldiers--*and they were not kind!* We were prodded along day after day after day, for hundreds of miles, with babies crying and women wailing, men sighing and older folks groaning. Our guards jeered at us all, and made free with the younger women. They repeatedly hurried us on, laughed as we stumbled, and taunted us when we threw away prized possessions because we could carry them no longer. We were just despised *refugees*, with no rights and no hopes.

I read that in your time--yes 2008--there are many refugees in the world. There are perhaps 20 million people displaced from their homes though still living in their own countries, and over 18 million people who are refugees outside their homelands. Some of this springs from long-lasting droughts and encroaching deserts, but most of it is due to terrorism or warfare. Do you ever think and pray for such desperate people, in Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Israel and elsewhere?

Can you picture the horrors of refugee camps with their crowdedness and squalor? Can you hear the cries of the malnourished and hopeless?

Friends, do you ever pray, donate or go to help those who minister to such suffering people? Some Christians seek to provide them food, medicine, education, but especially the message of God's love.

Oh my friends, you have many comforts and conveniences here, but you live in a world of towering misery and heartbreak. Hear the cries of the suffering world, and share God's love with them. God judges those who hoard His blessings. I repeat: God Judges Those Who Hoard His Blessings! Consider the refugees in their hardships. I know: *I was one myself.*

After that horrible journey to the land of Babylonia, we were somewhat pleasantly surprised that the places we lived in were not too bad. We lived together in communities, and toiled hard on the plantations of our masters, or else worked as craftsmen for them. But at least we could have our own houses and gardens. Yet we were far from our own land and people, and we were dreadfully homesick. Psalm 137 lays bare our feelings during our journey and our stay in exile. I hope you will read it -- thoughtfully. Put yourselves in our place; how would you have felt?

I was 25 yrs old when we were deported, and of course I was disheartened like all the rest. As the years c-r-a-w-l-e-d by, we became somewhat more accustomed to living far away from the land God gave our forefathers--but it still was very hard. The most depressing times were when the days of the holy festivals came but we could not go to the Temple. Then, after five years in exile *my 30th birthday drew near.* My heart sank lower than ever, for that would have been *the time of my appointment as a priest of the Lord.* If only I were still in Jerusalem I could begin my ministry. But *now... here...* I was nothing but a refugee far away from my land and the Dwelling of my God.

What good were all those years that I trained for the priesthood? Of what use were the regulations I had learned, the ceremonies I studied, the Psalms I memorized? --Some of you Americans may know something of the frustrations and bitterness I felt: I hear that some of you, after working faithfully for years in some job or craft, find yourself out of work because you have been replaced by a "muh-sheen," whatever that is. Well, *I was out of a job before I ever began, because the Temple was there and I was here!*

And Yet: Grace, and Glory!

And yet after I reached 30, to my utter amazement the Lord did something incredible. It was almost indescribable, though later I did manage to put it down in words. You can learn about it in detail if you study the opening chapters of my book. For now I can only say that the Lord appeared! The Lord Himself appeared to me, in overpowering magnificence and majesty.

And He did it where I was -- in Babylon! I could not go to Him, but He came to me. As I later wrote, "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God."

More than that, He still had work for me to do for Him. He ended my unemployment, He called me into His service! Not as a priest, it is true, but as a *prophet*. "Son of man," He told me, "*I send you. I send you to the people of Israel...and they will know that there has been a prophet among them.*" Oh what mercy and kindness, that He chose me to be His Messenger. I don't mean the job He gave me was easy; in fact He warned me at the start that it would be hard and that most of my hearers would reject the message I brought. Indeed, He gave me some difficult assignments through the years. And yet how glad I am that the Most High gave me the privilege of serving Him.

As a prophet I was a *seer*, for He showed me His glory. I beheld it. And I was a *sayer*, for He put His Word in my heart. I spoke His Word. I shared His Truth. I delivered both His warnings and promises. My messages became part of the Holy Scriptures, for you and others to study. The Sovereign Lord fulfilled many predictions written in my book; other predictions He shall fulfill in the years to come. For He shall carry out all His purposes, and neither the shortcomings of His own people nor the opposition of His enemies shall stop Him. Indeed, as I wrote 70 times in my book: "**They shall know that He is the Lord.**"

Friends, is He *your* Lord? Because of your conduct, do *others* know that He is the Lord?

Well, I thank you for listening to my story. And now I conclude. Perhaps today you are discouraged, very depressed, even deeply fearful. I know what that is like: When good King Josiah was killed, it was as though the world fell apart. When Jerusalem was besieged the first time, we thought nothing more dreadful could ever occur. Yet the increasing wickedness of my people as they deliberately broke the Lord's Law and

also His heart -- I later came to realize that this was a worse calamity than when foreign troops surrounded our holy city. And then the 2nd siege: have you ever faced problems equal to that? Can your difficult circumstances match the horrors of my being wrenched from my homeland and marched far away at sword-point? Never again to live in Jerusalem; never to serve in God's Temple; all my training seemingly wasted. Oh yes, I knew discouragement and fear firsthand.

And yet despite it all, the Lord was so good to me. He did spare and use me after all. I did get to serve Him--but in ways different from what I expected. The will of God often contains surprises. I repeat: *The will of God often contains surprises*. Thus from my own experience I urge you: Trust the Lord. Trust Him whatever your circumstances! Like me, you can experience that *Whatever The Difficulties Life May Bring Your Way, God Is Greater Still*. You will know from experience that indeed "HE is the LORD."

Questions Asked of Us--

Is It God's Will for a Church [or Magazine] to Shut Down?

Carl Kitzmiller, 1991

Is it ever God's will for a church (or any work for Him) to close its doors? Is not this a confession of failure? Why should any of His works ever fail?

It is difficult to see how we can lay down hard and fast rules in these matters. There are certainly those works which, so far as we can judge, have moved aside from the truth of the Bible and faithfulness to the Lord. He has removed their candlestick, and they have shriveled and died. Any of His works can fail--and we might add, ought to fail--when they move off the foundation. The failure in such cases is not in the Lord but in men.

As we look at the religious world about us today, however, we must also realize that there are works disowned by the Lord which have

prospered so far as growth, finances, and the continuation of their programs are concerned. He is no longer in them, but they have a flesh-empowered life. We must be careful not to equate growth, prosperity, and humanly impressive things with being in the will of the Lord, for it simply is not always so. The church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14ff.) was probably the most outwardly impressive of the seven churches of Asia, but she had shut the Lord out of her life and was in grave danger of being spewed out of the Lord's mouth.

Some of the Lord's faithful and useful works may have struggled along for years without much apparent success, but if the people involved had become discouraged and quit, the work of the Lord would have suffered injury. Many a mission work has had a difficult time until the seed finally begins to bear fruit. On the other hand, there is no requirement that, the Lord having begun a work, it must never stop, or, if it does, one of His works has failed. He may have needed it only for a given time and place. Some rural churches have closed simply because people moved away, have better transportation, etc. Sometimes efforts are consolidated with great profit.

I have seen churches closed when, in my estimation, there was little else to do. Changing communities, loss of members, too many problems, etc.--all of which seemed to indicate that whatever good had been done in the past, their usefulness was over. The few people involved could count more for the Lord in other efforts. I have also seen churches close when, in my judgment, they should have held on--when people had just grown tired, perhaps affected by the lack of prestige or power or programs. In closing they surrendered convictions and compromised truth for what was often some secular or worldly gain.

The closing of the doors of a work of the Lord does not necessarily mean that work was a failure nor that the funds, efforts, and time put into it are "all down a rat hole," as I heard one recently express it. Many people are serving the Lord today who were converted and learned the word of God in a church no longer in existence. The closing of the old church doors did not wipe out the spiritual realities in the lives of these people or others like them. Their efforts are now felt in other places and in other works. In nature we see a plant flourish, then fail and die, but in the process it produces seed that will carry on its life. God may sometimes (even often?) use this principle with His spiritual works. John the Baptist, having come on the scene, is not a failure because he did not live a long life, build up progressively larger work, etc. He was destined

in the will of God to decrease after a certain time. Paul the apostle, having been directed by the Spirit to a given locality to evangelize, did not conclude that he must never leave that community, as though to do so would be failure. When God is through with a man in a given place he had better move on, and when God is through with a work it is much better for it to die than for us to try to pump artificial life into it, trying to keep it going at any cost. *If* He is through with it, it has been a failure only if He wished to use it or the people who made it up in a different way, if He was somehow limited by a lack of surrender. Even in such cases, He knows how to achieve a great deal with poor instruments.

All of which does not mean that we give up at the first bump of discouragement from the devil and decide lightly the Lord is through with this or that work. The real need is for discerning the will of the Lord--not always an easy thing to do. I am persuaded that it is His will in many cases for us to stand up in the power of God to formidable problems and hindrances and opposition. In spite of a lot of false propaganda implying that God's work will always be crowned with success in the eyes of men, we know that His work is sometimes slow, discouraging, and requires a lot of faith. And whenever God is doing a work, the devil will be there trying to defeat it. If he succeeds in persuading people who ought to stand to run away, or if he succeeds in persuading people to give up in favor of some bauble he offers, then God's work has indeed failed. And God may allow it within limits, because He will not force us to serve Him against our will.

A word of caution is in order. We don't want to be armchair quarterbacks who boast how we could have succeeded when we have not been in the fray. We don't want to sit off at a distance, unaware of many factors making up a decision and criticize those who have had that responsibility unless it is evident that they deserve such. Sometimes the folks who are a big part of the problem are the ones with the loudest protest when a work is closed.

Thank God for *Everything*?

Carl Kitzmiller

The Bible instructs us to give thanks to God for everything. Does that mean even for something bad happening to us in early childhood, years before we obeyed the Gospel, and harming us physically for all our lives; or does it mean to give thanks just for things that happen to us after we are in Christ?

With our limited vision it is sometimes hard for us to see how it is suitable to give thanks to God in everything. On the day these lines were penned I had a funeral service for a man who had made no profession of faith of any sort. He was a "good" man, I understand, but he died out of Christ. Should I thank God for the death of that unregenerate man? Or more to the point, should Christian loved ones give thanks that time ran out for him, and he died without hope? Perhaps the things that happened to us before we obeyed the gospel really present no greater problem than some of the things which have happened since.

Certainly the Lord's overruling of all things for good is especially for the Christian. The Christian is the one to whom the promise is specifically made. But let's not decide that all which happens to us before we became Christians is mere chance. Surely that One who knows the fall of a sparrow also knows and cares about what is occurring in the life of His highest, though disobedient, creation. He who sees the end from the beginning is often working in lives, preparing vessels for His use, long before there is a turning to the Lord. In my opinion, our thanksgiving is not just to be limited to the present but is to be retroactive to include all of our life. Likely some explanation concerning our thanksgiving is in order, however.

A significant passage is found in Heb. 12:2. "Jesus ... for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus did not joy in the suffering and shame of the cross. He endured the suffering and He despised the shame. His eyes were on something else, the joy set before Him, the great things to be accomplished for man by His death. Does Jesus require of us what He did not practice Himself? Should I give thanks that Jesus suffered? In and of itself, no! But I can give thanks that

through His suffering came certain invaluable results. It should grieve me that He had to suffer as He did and that my sins were a part of it, but I can give thanks for the love that was demonstrated toward me there. I see no reason to believe that Jesus was thankful for His sufferings, but He was thankful for what was wrought thereby.

It seems to me there is a difference between giving thanks *in* everything and giving thanks *for* everything. Let's use another example. Bro. X was sixty years old when he became a Christian. Should he give thanks for that? He certainly should be thankful that he came to know the Lord and the joys of being a Christian. He should be thankful that he can yet, as the Lord tarries, be used in some way. He can be thankful that God's mercy continued so long with him. Etc. But should he be thankful for sixty wasted years, years spent for the devil? Should he be thankful for the bad example he set for others in those years? I think not. In the matter of his becoming a Christian, then, there is abundant reason for giving thanks, and it is fitting and expected that he should do so, but he will not necessarily give thanks for all features of the matter.

We may take an example from the life of Paul. He had persecuted the church, putting saints to death. For this fact itself he could never give thanks. In truth, after becoming a Christian he was ashamed of it and marveled that the Lord could forgive him. But in this evil matter Paul did find occasion for thanksgiving (1 Tim. 1:12-16). He was grateful for the Lord's mercy in calling him in spite of his error, and he was thankful for such evidence of the Lord's willingness to forgive any sinner. *In* the matter he found great reason for thanksgiving though he could not be thankful *for* every fact and detail.

Let's return to the case of the man who died out of Christ. Am I thankful for that in and of itself? No. But I'm thankful for a God who will not be trifled with and whose word can be depended on, for good or for evil. I'm thankful for the fact He may speak to others in the event, and for a gospel which could have brought salvation if allowed to do so, etc.

This question is concerned with something which may have happened in childhood--an accident, a birth defect, sickness--I have no way of knowing what might be in mind. We may not be thankful for the evil thing itself, but has not God worked good from it? Many a so-called tragedy has been the turning point in the road that brought us to the Lord or to our work for Him. Some of the "evil" things have kept us relying on Him. The Christian is to develop the habit of looking for the hand of the

Lord in all that comes his way and is to develop the habit of thanksgiving. He need not be thankful for every evil thing in and of itself, but he should be thankful for the abundant good to be found in the whole matter.

Re-Thinking Repentance

Gordon R. Linscott, 1967

A writer in a certain church publication uttered a blanket anathema upon all suggestions that we "re-study our doctrinal position." He asked, in effect, "How could anyone dare to question the doctrines we hold?" This is a far cry from the time (about a century ago) when Barton W. Stone and the Christians associated with him were derisively called New Lights, because they were accustomed to inquiring, "Have you had any new light from the Word of God lately?"

We would like to encourage the continuation of such a spirit...not with a view to making major changes in doctrine (which the writer mentioned above seemed to fear), but rather to the end of catching new glimpses of the glory of the Lord Jesus. It is so easy to hold doctrines abstractly--as related to nothing in real life--or to relate them only to men when they should speak pre-eminently of our Lord. So, I would like to focus our attention on a familiar doctrine.

Repentance—A *Privilege*

Most people take repentance for granted, as though it were in our power to exercise at our pleasure. Yet we read (Acts 11:18) "To the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life."

Hebrews 6:6 speaks of some to whom repentance is impossible, and Hebrews 12:17 (referring to Esau) implies the same. Human responsibility there is, otherwise we would not have men commanded to repent (Acts 17:30) and judged for refusing to do so (Rev. 9:20, etc.). Yet repentance is a privilege granted by God, and not inherent in being a human. After Pharaoh had for a third time hardened his heart against

God, the possibility of repentance was withdrawn from him, and it is written, "Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (Ex. 8:32; 9:12, etc.)

What Is Repentance?

Repentance is usually defined something like this: "A change of mind (or heart) that leads to a change of life." This is all right as far as it goes, but it says nothing about God and what He has to do with repentance. I learned long ago that preaching cannot be based on the dictionary. Nothing explains Bible words like examples of their usage.

Until I began to "re-study" repentance, I had thought of it as relating primarily to a person and his sins. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance" seems to imply as much. The sinner is sorry for his sins and turns away from them. However, the word "godly" brings God into the picture (actually the Greek is 'God's sorrow' or 'sorrow of God'). Evidently God has something to do with the sorrow from which repentance springs. In Rom. 2:4. Paul says, "...the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." That God is active in producing repentance is also indicated by Jer. 31: 18: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art Jehovah my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented..." Many are the means the Lord uses to turn a man. The beginning point of repentance is often adversity--witness the history of Israel. The Prodigal Son is a classical example; he first became sick of his miserable circumstances. But this is not all of repentance.

Many an addict to narcotics has in desperation turned away from narcotics to alcohol--to become an alcoholic; this is not repentance.

Many an alcoholic has turned away from alcohol to a normal way of life; this is not repentance either. Many a guilt-ridden sinner has entered a monastic order to atone for his sins--but neither is this repentance. Repentance is not merely turning away from sin.

"Repentance Toward God"

In Acts 20:21, Paul speaks of "repentance toward God." This is the emphasis that I long failed to appreciate. The misery of the pig pen is only the beginning of repentance for the Prodigal. As he casts about for an alternative, he suddenly considers his father's house. But he does more than reflect on his father's goodness. He sees his father in a different light. He sees himself in a new light. There is a change of direction in his

life--he is (within his heart) facing home for the first time since he left. Likewise, the repentant sinner takes a new direction; he's facing toward God. He sees the grace of God as being greater than all his sins.

Paul's "repentance toward God" is coupled with "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance and faith almost overlap. Certainly they are inseparable (in spite of the hair-splitting arguments that would put one before the other as separate "steps"). Faith is dependence upon God--but there can be no dependence upon Him when one is turned away from Him. There may be an initial "act" of repentance, just as there is a moment when one first believes, but repentance--like faith--is a way of life. It means maintaining the soul's orientation toward God.

Have You Repented *Lately*?

Sometimes when people say, "I need more faith," what they really should say is, "I need to repent." The lack of spiritual vitality that they feel is due to the fact that their lives have become engrossed in "the cares of this life." How much this is reflected even in public prayers we sometimes hear! Everything is in view--troubles, needs, responsibilities, opportunities--except God. The common response to "besetting sins" is a sincere attempt to overcome them--to turn away. The need is repentance, making the full turn--to Him who has already overcome for us. Repentance is not only a turning from Sin, but from ourselves and our own resources. It is acting upon the whole-hearted conviction that Jesus Christ is our "wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption"--that there is nothing good apart from Him.

When we discover that we are trying to keep one eye upon the Lord and one on circumstances around us, there is need to repent. When we find ourselves to be cold toward prayer, uninterested in Bible reading, unconcerned about the souls of our neighbors--it is time to repent, to turn to the Lover of our souls with the confession that our coldness and indifference have really been toward Him, that we have shared with someone or something else affections that belong to Him alone. When such realization comes to you, repent. And don't forget to be thankful that in His marvelous grace, He has found the way to turn your heart back to Himself.

What I AM

Gordon R. Linscott, 1973

"Free me from what I am." That part of a line of a song, heard over the din of afternoon rush hour traffic, caught my attention and set me to reflecting. It is not unusual today to hear expressions of concern over "what I am." Except among Christians. There the common concern is "what I've done," or "what I keep on doing when I know I shouldn't." And they keep on treating the symptom rather than the disease.

Paul deals with this situation in Romans 7; "I fail to do the things I should and keep on doing the things I hate." In earlier chapters he has assured us of justification through faith in the blood of Jesus. The sins we have committed have been marked off the books forever. But then an awful fact comes to the surface—the newly-justified believer keeps on sinning. What about that? The Christian wakes up to the realization that he is a "sin factory." The real need is to shut down the production line, and this is the point frequently neglected. A great deal of attention is directed toward individual sins and what to do about them. Meanwhile, the assembly line keeps rolling and nobody stops to ask where these sins are coming from. "What I am"—there's where the trouble is.

Sin and Sins

The scriptures make a distinction in some cases between sin and sins. "Sin" speaks of the sin factory, "what I am" by nature. "Sins" are those misdeeds that offend a holy God. You may note this distinction in 1 John 1:7-9 by reading carefully. Also Romans 8:2-4. So we need salvation from sin and salvation from sins. Are there then two salvations (saved, then sanctified)? No, but deliverance from sin is sometimes experienced separately from salvation, and it may come as a dramatic spiritual crisis. Some churches teach that every Christian must seek and receive this "second blessing" (or "sanctification," or "baptism of the Holy Spirit"). The normal experience, it seems to me, would be for the new-born Christian to enter into this blessing immediately; perhaps lack of teaching is a deterring factor.

One Answer

So I'm a sin factory that I can't shut down! The agonies of this realization are laid out in Romans 7 and summarized in verse 24, "Oh,

wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Quickly the answer comes, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Should we be surprised that God's remedy for our sinful nature is the same as His remedy for our sinful deeds? Just one Savior is all we need! Jesus! Jesus crucified! Jesus resurrected! Jesus exalted to the right hand of the Father, Lord of heaven and earth! What we need is not a "blessing" or an "experience" or even "sanctification"—but Jesus, living in us as Lord.

There is much more in Romans on this wonderful theme; chapter 8 especially discusses it at some length. Assurance is given that our salvation is complete. All of the answers are in our Lord Jesus Christ; in Him provision has already been made for every eventuality that might arise. He has committed Himself to take His saints to glory, and He will accomplish it. And so the Christian's concern moves from "what I am" to "what He is." If He is indeed what the scriptures declare Him to be, then "neither death, nor life ... nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

THE PREACHER SEARCHES HIS SOUL BEFORE HIS LORD

(Gleanings from R. H. Boll's Personal Notebook)

by Alex V. Wilson

After I concluded a series of articles about Brother Boll as a writer, editor and Christian, something else of significance surfaced. The School of Biblical Studies in Louisville has a small collection of historic materials from the Stone-Campbell movement. Among other items it includes a few books, letters, and mementos of Brother Boll--some of his sermon outlines, personal notes, and articles he had clipped from various magazines to use as sermon illustrations. I've browsed through a number of these materials. My favorite so far is a small, black, loose-leaf notebook. There are no dates in it, so we don't know the time of the entries.

Significantly, Brother Boll devoted its first four pages to matters of prayer. He listed some scripture references on that topic, then areas of prayer for himself.... The notebook continues with about ten of his sermon outlines. After that he jotted down a few quotations from writings by other men, followed by a list of "Themes and Topics" for sermons and/or articles.

Then comes the inner sanctum, the holy of holies of this small book. It is a section entitled simply, "*For Myself*." It contains five pages (only 3 by 5 inches in size) of meditations and admonitions which he addressed to himself. He never knew that other eyes would see them.

Yet I do not feel that publishing them now violates his privacy. While there is some confession of his struggles, there is nothing truly confidential. And his soul-searching can help us, preachers most of all, to examine our own hearts. For we wrestle with these temptations too. So we turn to his meditations. The rest of this article is entirely his own composition except for the closing quote and illustration. Brother Boll himself put a dividing line between each section.

Remember, this was not an article for publication but a series of reflections for his own pondering. They show that he was more anxious about the attacks of his own "flesh" and of Satan than about his opposition from human critics. He seemed to fear praise from his followers more than vilification from his opponents.

His Meditations

Do not try to preach up to your reputation; to uphold or advance your reputation; to come up to what is expected of you; to "do yourself justice."

* * *

Make thyself of no reputation--lest you become a man-pleaser or a servant of Self. It is a weary road!

* * *

Remember that pretense shuts the door to all further progress.

* * *

Whose servant am I?

For whom, and for what am I working?

Preach the truth and let God take care of the "impression."

Be content to fill your place. Don't try to seem more than you are. Don't try to make yourself bigger, or to advance yourself. Be faithful and let God promote you as He sees good.

No more than to run *after* reputation should a man run *on* his reputation (coasting) -- i. e., grow careless & indolent. Seek continually to please the Master better--"that thy progress be manifest unto all."

* * *

Do not be "trafficking in unfelt truths."

* * *

Lord help me to be in earnest! I am prone to forget what I am really after--the need and the help of souls--[while] endeavoring to put up "grand" and "wonderful" sermons, "powerful arguments" etc.--which tends more to the glory of self than the help of the people and the magnifying of God and Christ. Lord make me simple, single-minded, pure in heart and motive, sincere and earnest.

* * *

Never preach anything you would not be willing to die for.

* * *

Does God resent our addressing Him for show or formality, or in any way except sincerely, reverently, humbly, and in faith? If so, how often He has been insulted and blasphemed by the contemptuous familiarity and perfunctory prayers of His professed people!--"Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain"--literally--"Thou shalt not lift up the name of Jehovah thy God for falsehood."

* * *

To pray in any unreal way--for pretense, for appearance of religiousness, for custom or form's sake, in any way except in spirit and

in truth, is blasphemy and contempt. It is a worse form of profanity than that of the slums.

* * *

It is better to save your soul than your face.

* * *

Be content to appear no better nor greater than you are. Just be yourself, plain & natural.

* * *

"I left my reputation where I left my sins: at the foot of the Cross."
(Gypsy Smith)

* * *

"That was a fine sermon you preached this morning," said the deacon to the preacher. "Thank you," he replied, "the devil told me that just as I stepped down from the pulpit."

[The End]

When Will He Come?

R. H. Boll, 1955

The time of Christ's return from heaven is veiled in absolute secrecy. No man can know the day or the hour, nor, for that matter predict the month or the year of the coming of the Lord. The folly and futility of time calculations (of which there have been many all along and until yet) has been demonstrated over and over again; though no doubt men will evermore go on making them. "It is not for you to know times and seasons which the Father hath set within his own authority," said the Lord to His disciples (Acts 1:6).

The wisdom of this is evident. The evil results of such knowledge would not be hard to forecast. If the time of the Lord's return had been revealed, the first effect would have been a relaxing from all the waiting

and watching attitude which the Lord enjoined upon His people. This attitude is necessary. The Christian life is to be lived in the light of the ever-imminent coming of Christ.

The Christian needs this motive. Without it he would settle down, lose his pilgrim spirit and grow careless and procrastinating in his service. Christian work would take on a different form if the Lord's return were thought of as in the remote future. Having lost the expectation of the Lord's speedy return, men would likely plan and build for centuries to come--great, permanent religious establishments; and take the more interest in the affairs of the present day and in making this "a better world to live in." They would also soon forget that we are called evermore to go forth with Christ outside the camp, bearing His reproach, and that we have no abiding city here (Hebrews 13:13, 14; note also the teaching in Colossians 3:1-4).

All this would have resulted if men had known how long it would be before Christ would come back. Moreover, as the time approached (assuming that the date were known) there would be much false conversion just before His advent. People would not find it hard to give up their possessions and their goods, and to make great show of devotion and sacrifice of what they knew they would presently have to give up anyhow.

Waiting and Watching Attitude

Far otherwise is the effect when men by faith envision the imminence of the coming of the Lord. Not knowing the time, yet knowing that at whatever time He may come they must be found in Christ, abiding in Him, waiting, watching and doing, they would feel that they must live as though He might come any day.

It is evident that the early Christians expected the Lord's return in their day. Not that the Lord had told them so; He simply left it indeterminate. "I am coming," He said. "My coming will be sudden and at the moment unexpected"--whether sooner or later--"at evening or at midnight or at cock-crowing or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 1:36-37). So they looked constantly for Him. The Thessalonians for example, under Paul's preaching, "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus..." (1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10). So intently

did they look for Him that when some of their number "fell asleep" they were perplexed and troubled, and Paul had to assure them that all was well concerning the departed ones. So far as they knew, and so far as Paul knew, the Lord might have come in their day.

True, some brief delays had been indicated. Peter must die a martyr's death. Paul must go to Rome. John might tarry till he come. But no delay that would preclude the expectancy of the then-living saints was ever implied. Even the fulfilling of the "Great Commission" might not have to be completed. Paul himself, even when expecting to be executed, still had his heart and hope fixed on the Lord's appearing (2 Timothy 4:6-8). The word is never that the Lord will come "by and by"; but that we are to look for Him daily, "at every season." "For yet a very little while and he that cometh shall come and shall not tarry," we read (Hebrews 10:37). James says, "The coming of the Lord is at hand." This is the only right attitude toward the promised return of the Lord.

FAITH TRIUMPHS OVER TROUBLES

Richard Ramsey

Eighty long years and more the children of Israel prayed for relief from Egyptian bondage. Eighty long years they prayed while nothing happened.

Abraham waited many long years for the fulfillment of God's promise that he would have a son. Long after natural forces had subsided so that it would be impossible for him or Sarah to have a child, Abraham kept praying and waiting.

Joseph was tried by adversity of various sorts; sold by his brethren into slavery, accused falsely by an evil woman, imprisoned, forgotten by friends.

Job had to endure a long period of physical suffering, plus the scorn of his friends. Even his wife urged him to curse God and die. David was a fugitive for years hiding out from King Saul, who was determined to

kill him. After the death of Saul there were long years of civil war before David was fully established as king. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world, the Bible assures us. But *where is that victory?* The men of God through the ages have suffered and died at the hands of their enemies. "Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword." (Heb. 11:36-37)

The height of this disgrace and shame came when the Son of God himself was seized by sinful men, scourged, spit upon, laughed at and then crucified. Even his dead body was savagely pierced by the soldier's spear.

Did not the disciples pray for Jesus? Surely they must have, although the Bible does not tell us about it. Were they not standing nearby, praying God to deliver Jesus from the cross, expecting every moment to see angels descend to set him free? Yet, He went on to die.

You and I want immediate answers to our prayers. We want visible success right now. We pray believing, and we expect results.

Could we have persevered year after year under the trials these men endured? Could we have held on to our dreams in prison, as Joseph did? Could we have still believed in God's promise to take us to the promised land as the Israelites did, when year after year we felt the sting of the taskmaster's lash and saw our children put to death? Could we have held fast to our hope, as Job did when day after day he suffered terribly? Could we have held on to our faith that Jesus was God's Son if we were standing by watching Him die?

Maybe today you are struggling along under a massive load of troubles: sickness, poverty, failure, disgrace. You pray and nothing seems to happen.

Just remember that you stand where mighty warriors of old have stood. Jeremiah endured the bitterness of seeing his city, Jerusalem, burned with fire, his friends slain by the enemy. The faith that triumphs is the faith that holds fast to God come what may.

"No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised by it." (Heb. 12: 11)

A faith that lasts only as long as immediate, visible results are evident is a weak faith. The strong faith is that which holds fast to God when all the visible evidence seems to deny God or His goodness. A faith that endures chastening is stronger than ever.

Moses Chose to Identify with an Ill-Treated People

Stanford Chambers

When Moses was grown up, important decisions began to be made. He had all the while been known as Pharaoh's daughter's son. In his earliest years he had the teaching of a godly mother. When grown up he "looked to the recompense of reward." He compared with it his prospects as son of the princess, in line for the throne of Egypt. On that line were held out both treasures and pleasures in plenty, but his faith gave him the victory. "He looked to the recompense of the reward," and it outweighed all besides, so he made his choice. He decided to identify himself with a despised and oppressed people and did so.

Was Moses appreciated by the people with whom his lot was cast? Far from it, and so his first "recompense of reward" was rejection by his own people and his having to flee and be a refugee for forty years. Had he made a wise choice? Nobody now even asks; but at that time how did it appear? However, Moses' faith in the living God did not fail and never is there a hint that he had a thought of repudiating his affiliation with such a people. Time marched on. His knowledge of God increased. Jehovah had a plan and a time to use this man of faith.

Moses became the leader and deliverer of his oppressed people. A nation is born—in a day. But scarcely had their song of deliverance died away than a murmuring took its place, and a murmuring people they became and continued to be. They murmured against conditions, against Moses, against God. But Moses had no thought of severing connections with the people with whom he had cast his lot. He finally brought them to the borders of the promised land and ready for conquest of the usurping nations, but no, the nation balked. Forty years in the wilderness—the alternative. Why should Moses stay with a people when

he could get them nowhere? Even God's patience was tried, and He would blot out the whole nation and start all over again, but Moses interceded and held fast with his people (to God's delight). Moses still "looked to the recompense of the reward".

He had made a choice and by that choice he stood, and stood steadfast unto the end. "Moses was faithful in all his house." But what had he accomplished? The question was pertinent up to the time of Moses' end, but it is out of order now. Who is the man before Christ who accomplished what Moses accomplished? But the secret of it lies in the fact of his wise choice and his steadfastly staying identified according to that choice.

The stuff of which a faithful servant is made is not found, but lacking, in many would-be leaders today. They could well learn of Moses, and so learning make haste slowly in denying identity with a people slow of heart to move, or in laying "anything to the charge of God's elect" even though they may try the patience of God Himself. Like Moses, it is ours to "look to the recompense of the reward."

God's Great BIG Family

What Some W&W Editors Said and Did

R. H. Boll: "That differences of views and doctrines should exist in the church of the Lord is not strange. Nor is it in itself bad. When free brethren study God's word independently it is to be expected that on one point and another they will arrive at different conclusions. Where brotherly love rules, these different views and the discussions that follow, are mutually helpful. Where motives other than love control, differences result in dissension, strife, bitterness, sectarian parties and partisan hate. The blame in such a case, however, does not rest on the differences themselves, but on the spirit and attitude of those who differ. The wrong comes in when lines are drawn, when brethren are branded, ostracized, disfellowshipped."

Boll also practiced what he preached. His "breadth of fellowship was time and again demonstrated. He often invited our [i.e. CoC] amillennial missionaries to speak at the Portland Church [where he ministered], although such engagements were given no publicity lest unsympathetic brethren use them to destroy the missionaries. Often Christian Church

brethren, visiting the Portland [midweek] prayer meeting, would be invited to speak. Brother Boll consistently participated in the [Christian Churches'] Cedar Lake Bible Conferences, and on one occasion spoke before a large Baptist congregation in Dallas, Texas, at the invitation of their minister, Dr. Luther Peake. He was also featured on Dr. Peake's radio program. Aside from the latter occasion's causing mild concern in one premillennial congregation in Dallas, I never knew of any of these actions being called into question by his premillennial colleagues."

—From a Unity Forum message by LaVern Houtz in 1967

Boll "also dared to teach in Disciples of Christ, Methodist and Presbyterian churches as opportunities arose. As long as he was left free to preach God's Word without restriction, he accepted such invitations. (So did Alexander Campbell and David Lipscomb, by the way.) As Marvin Phillips aptly expressed it, 'Don't judge *what* I preach by *where* I preach it!'" —From "Should Doctrinal Differences Divide Christians?" by Alex Wilson in 3/04 *W&W*.

More on R. H. Boll and Christian Freedom and Fellowship-- In the "News and Notes" section of the 10/45 *W&W* (p. 221) appears this report, probably written by the publisher, E. J. Jorgenson: *Fellowship and Liberty*: "A good brother says, 'I received a copy of the Word and Work and enjoyed it very much. I do not hold to your views concerning the second coming of Christ, but I appreciate very much your attitude concerning fellowship.'"

[The publisher replied:] "We appreciate this fine expression from our good brother. It might interest this brother and others to know that **an aged brother, whom we love for his work's sake, at one time asked for permission to speak in the Portland Avenue Congregation where Brother Boll is minister, stating that he wished to set forth his views which were contrary to the way Brother Boll saw the prophecies. His request was granted and for three nights he spoke and was heard patiently by the congregation. Not a word of antagonism was spoken from the floor, and the brother was treated with kindness and courtesy before and after the meetings. This is a demonstration of the fact that such men as Brother Boll are willing to differ on the matters of prophecy and still to receive one another. But if any man is factious concerning these matters, pro or con, he will stir up trouble in the church and should not be encouraged. Those who are at agreement concerning fellowship should set an example before other brethren by fraternizing one another in an active way.**" [Emphasis added by avw]

E. L. Jorgenson: "Let the limited proposition which we support be clearly understood: It does not say that there are Christians in *all* denominations, nor that *all* in the denominations are Christians, nor that Christians ought to be in any denomination as such, nor that the simple pattern of work and worship will be found in many of the sects, etc. It affirms simply that 'Christians are to be found in many denominations.' On this proposition we say yes.... Many who profess the unsectarian position have never yet learned the first primary step out of sectarianism. And what is that first step? It is, after a true conversion, to get one's eyes opened to the present scattered state of the members of God's church...."

"Among the many heresies, there is '**the heresy of emphasis, wrong emphasis**'; and of this heresy, too many Christians of our kind have been guilty. If we aspire to be 'New Testament Christians,' a people after the pattern of Paul and Peter, James and John, **we must put the emphasis where they put it. Christ is central**.... Jesus Christ himself, the glorious risen, living Being who is the center of all that concerns Him – *He* is our main concern. It is quite possible, in fact easy, to become taken up with 'movements' and subjects good as they may be, more than with Him, our only Lord and Savior." [*W&W* 8/94, pp. 229-30.]

“What is your view regarding Baptism and Salvation?”

A.V.W.

A Baptist church asked us that question, and we answered as follows:

Matthew 28 shows that our Lord included baptism in His Great Commission: disciples should be baptized. Ideally, there should be *no Non-Baptized Disciples -- nor Baptized Non-Disciples*. Thus I believe in believers' baptism -- and also in carefully counseling people before baptizing them to see if they are committed disciples, not just passive church-attenders of some kind (see Acts 16:31,32,33; Luke 3:7-14).

Acts 2 shows that in the first gospel sermon Peter included baptism along with repentance and faith as *part of the conversion process*. (Faith, though not specifically mentioned, is included by the fact that baptism is

“in the name of Jesus [the] Christ.” Anyone who is not committed to Jesus as the Messiah-King sent by God as Savior is not ready for baptism.) Thus God intends for baptism, the outer action that demonstrates inner faith and repentance, to take place soon after the convert turns and trusts in Christ as Savior and Lord. There should normally be no delay between receiving the Savior and confessing Him by baptism.

Acts 10 shows that at the conversion of Cornelius and his household the Holy Spirit came upon them *before* their baptism in water. Sticklers might say God contradicted Acts 2:38 here. I prefer to say that in His grace and wisdom God works in different ways at different times, and we should not try putting Him in a box. But to those who downplay baptism we point out that Peter didn't say, “Since they have received the Holy Spirit, there's no need for them to be baptized in water.” Instead he ordered them to be baptized.

Romans 6 teaches that baptism is a burial. Nobody buries a corpse by merely sprinkling a few clods of dirt on it. Immersion is implied here, and clearly taught by the Greek word for *baptize* -- which means to *submerge*. But even more important, burial follows death! Anyone who hasn't died to sin shouldn't be buried. The convert professes by his immersion that he desires his former life-lived-for-himself to die and a new life-lived-for-Christ to begin. Baptism is also a resurrection: as someone said, “The 2nd half of baptism is the best!” We rise to walk in the new life given us by God through His Holy Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies us.

The entire Bible teaches that *salvation is by grace through faith, not by works* lest we boast. True baptism is not a meritorious work done *By* us, but a gracious act done *To* us by someone else -- pointing us back to the supreme act of grace done *For* us by Jesus the only Savior. Thus we ought to warn people not to trust in the fact that they were baptized, but to trust **Him** in whose name they were baptized. Salvation is not based on what we do for Christ, but what He did for us at Calvary. It is important to stress that a convert is baptized “*Into Christ*” (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27). At baptism his attention and faith should not be centered on himself, the church, the preacher, nor the act of baptism itself -- but on Jesus the Savior. As Ananias told Saul, “...Be baptized and wash your sins away, *calling on His name*” (Acts 22:16).

For the reasons given above I am convinced that God's Word teaches believers' baptism, by immersion, focused on Jesus Christ and His grace, and intended to be part of the conversion process -- rather than infant baptism, or sprinkling, or done in a legalistic way, or that "it doesn't matter whether or when you are baptized." But since God is sovereign and loving, eager to save rather than destroy, I do not say that a convert who dies before he can be baptized is lost, nor that *all* those who have only been sprinkled as infants are lost. The Lord has *always* required repentance and faith for sinners to be saved, but the outer form demonstrating such commitment to Him has differed from one dispensation to another. Many true believers are confused or misled on these matters, but God knows their hearts.

Yet what if someone knows and understands that God commands sinners to be baptized, and yet he refuses to do so? Will he not perish? Not because he hasn't been *baptized* but because he has not *repented*.

For after all, review those very clear and strong statements in God's Word, which we have already referred to:

Jesus said, "...Make disciples, baptizing them...teaching them to obey all I have commanded you...."

On Pentecost Peter said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

At Cornelius' house Peter said, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 10)

Ananias told the new convert Saul, "...Be baptized and wash your sins away, *calling on his name*" (Acts 22:16).

Paul told the jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved," but he also baptized him that same night after explaining to him who Jesus is and what being His disciple means. (Acts 16)

In his letters Paul wrote, "Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." And again, "You are all sons of God through faith

in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Rom. 6:3-4 & Gal. 3:26-27.)

I agree with a Baptist scholar who wrote:

"In the New Testament, conversion involves five integrally-related components or aspects, all of which took place at the same time, usually on the same day. These five components are repentance, faith, and confession by the individual, regeneration, or the giving of the Holy Spirit by God, and baptism by representatives of the Christian community When one or more of these aspects is missing from a specific passage or conversion account, we should presume that although not mentioned, they are assumed." --Robert H. Stein, "Baptism and Becoming a Christian in the New Testament," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2 (Spring 1988), page 6.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, Bhill40482@aol.com

Westminister Church of Christ (MD) The Children's and Family Ministry is a newly created full-time position designed to strengthen and further develop the faith of children and their families in our community. We seek a minister who can support families in guiding their children to know, love, serve, share, and worship God in a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ. Regionally competitive salary starting at \$50K+based on experience. To apply for the position, please email a cover letter and resume addressed to the search committee at staff@westcoc.org or write

Westminister Church of Christ, P.O. Box 1373, Westminister, MD 21158-5373 (Gary Pearson)

At Woodland Bible Camp (Indiana) the Senior Citizen's Week and the KBC/SCC Reunion were super, thanks to the hard work of Janell/Dick Lewis and Pie/J.R. Satterfield, and others.

Mackville Church of Christ (KY) Charles Knecht has officially accepted the minister's position at Mackville. He will work at selling his property in Indiana before making a permanent move. In the interim, he will commute while performing

his ministerial duties. John Kesel (minister at Ebenezer) will be holding a revival at Mackville August 24-27 7 p.m. nightly. The 5th Sunday Singspiration for several Central Ky. Churches will be August 31st at 6:30 p.m. Also, Bro. Sonny Childs will be at Mackville for a combination revival and a one day youth rally October 3 -5, 2008 7 p.m. nightly. The youth rally will be Saturday, October 4th at 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Leroy Friedley (1914-2008) A final tribute was given to Leroy Friedley on August 4th after he went home to be with the Lord the previous week. Alex Wilson and Dale Offutt officiated with Bro. Leroy's son Charles also participating. Those in attendance were blessed by hearing three or four of his solos on tape. Not only did Bro. Leroy love to sing but he loved people and sharing encouraging words with others. His love for his Lord was also evident in his never hesitating to share his testimony and the gospel with all he came in contact with. He was a staunch supporter of Portland Christian School as well. And last but not least (in his mind) was his love for the UK Wildcats! His life of 94 years was an outpouring of his love and joy in the Lord.

School of Biblical Studies Fall Schedule: Classes began August

25. Mon. 9-12 Homiletics (Bennie Hill). Mon. 1-4 pm Survey of OT (Jerry Carmichael). Mon. 6:30-9:30 pm (Waterford Church) Prison Epistles (Joe Stone). Tues. 9-11 Methods of Bible Study (Ervin Denkins). Tues. 1-4 pm Life and Teachings of Jesus (Bud Ridgeway). Tues. 6:30-8:30 Sight Reading and Song Leading. Extension Class at Harrodsburg: Romans/Galatians Tues. 6:30 -9:30. Julius Hovan.

The KY/IND Christian Fellowship Week this year was very good. Messages and fellowship were stimulating. It was delightful that Bro. & Sister Nomura were here from Japan, and reported on the work there. Special interest was shown in Edward Fudge's 4 messages related to gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Mountain View Church of Christ (TN) On Dec. 30, 2007, the Mountain View Church of Christ in Johnson City Tennessee held its final worship service. This faithful church served the Lord since the early 1940s. Robert Boyd was the first preacher, serving between Mountain View and Locust Street. Over the years more than a dozen preachers have ministered at Mountain View including Robert Boyd, Paul Clark, Robert Garrett, Glen Baber, Gene McGee, David Brown plus others. The property has been

sold and the money distributed to some very needful ministries and missionaries. (Billy J. Smith) [W&W received this notice not long ago.]

Words to Live By: "Nothing that divides us can be more important than the blood that was shed to make us one." Those stirring words were spoken by Tom Langford, a distinguished longtime university professor, but more than that a zealous worker for unity among all the followers of Christ Jesus. He knocked down walls and built bridges among the born-again. On May 2, he was promoted to glory.

An Interesting Book re: a Remarkable Missionary Alex Wilson says, I highly recommend the biography, *Frontier Girl—True Soldier of the Cross*. It tells the story of Alice Broaddus, as remembered by her daughter Ruth. Alice probably is best known to our readers as the step-mother of Victor Broaddus (longtime missionary in Manila and former president of Southeastern Christian College). Alice served the Lord for many decades, in Hong Kong, various places in China, and elsewhere. She and her children were prisoners of war during World War 2. She was a great example of hard work and sacrificial service, and lived to be 97. It was a privilege to know her.

The book is short. You may order it from Tate Publishing: phone 888-361-9473.

Going Next Year--Susan and I are making plans to move to the Middle East. That will not happen until next summer, but there are tons of details to put in place before then. Please pray with us in this time of transition. We will be telling you more about that in the coming months. --Martin Brooks

Coming Next Year? It was such an answer to prayer to hear my doctor tell me that I will be allowed to make the trip to the United States next summer if I continue to improve. I have begun to prepare for my trip by taking a conversational English class at our local college so that I will be able to communicate with you a "little" better. Kazuma [their son] would like to join me on my trip to the US, so please pray with us that God will make clear His will. --Michiya Nakahara, Japan

Additional note from Bob Yarbrough: We have anticipated Michiya's visit for several years but health problems have prevented it. Now, it seems that it may be possible for him to come. We will try to arrange his coming to coincide with the Kentucky/Indiana Fellowship so that he can see many of you there. We will also try to schedule a few visits to churches where possible.

Portland Christian School, Louisville Concerned friends asked about a report they heard. According to this rumor, PCS is moving from the Portland area to the east side of Louisville. Thus they wondered what the Portland church was going to do with its facilities which PCS used till now. They'd even heard the comment, "A light will be moving out of the Portland area."

The truth of the matter is—During the '07-08 school year, PCS had 3 campuses: the original one at the site of Portland Church for grades 7-12; one a block away (Montgomery St.) for grades K-6; and one near Snyder Freeway (former site of Living Stone Church) for grades K-6.

This school year grades K-6 downtown moved back to the

original site (Portland Ave.) which thus has all 12 grades + kindergarten. It is now called "PCS-North." (The building on Montgomery St. is for sale.) The other campus, now called "PCS-East" has grades K-7, since the plan calls for adding one grade there each year.

We thank God for blessing Portland Christian School for 84 years now. It offers a Bible-based, Christ-centered education at a financial cost lower than many other such schools. Pray for its Board and administrators as they make important decisions; also for its excellent faculty; for the student body to follow the Lord; and for all financial needs to be met—to the glory of the living God.

HIGH AND HOLY, meek and lowly

Ephraem of Syria (300-379 A.D.)

Child of Bethlehem, what contrasts you embrace! No one has ever been so humble; no one has ever wielded such power. We stand in awe of your holiness, and yet we are bathed in your love.

And where shall we look for you? You are in high heaven, in the glory of the Godhead. Yet those who searched for you on earth found you in a tiny baby at Mary's breast. We come in hushed reverence to find you as God, and you welcome us as man. We come unthinkingly to find you as man, and are blinded by the light of your Godhead....

Never was there a king like you! Instead of royal isolation, you made yourself available to everyone who needed you. Instead of high security, you made yourself vulnerable to those who hated you.

It is we who need you, above anything in the world. You give yourself to us with such total generosity, that it might almost seem that you need us. There was never a king like this before!

*Book Review by Daniel Gordon,
Youth Minister at Gallatin Church of Christ*

Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins We Tolerate

By Jerry Bridges; NavPress, 2007

As I browsed at a local Christian bookstore, one particular title grabbed my attention. A thin paperback workbook bore the title *Respectable Sins*. I was engaged and quickly pulled it off the shelf to peruse its contents. I learned enough to buy it for my library, and I just finished reading it.

I remember thinking, “*Respectable sins?* This has to be good.” Jerry Bridges, the author, is mainly concerned with one thing: Experienced, church-going Christians are good at pointing out the sins of the culture, while at the same time being blind to their own “less offensive” and “respectable” sins. The title is captivating—and makes the book’s point for it. No Christian would dare call any sin “respectable,” but certain behaviors and attitudes betray the tolerance Christians have for “lesser” sins.

In short, Bridges’ answer to sin is not to tolerate other, “less respectable” sins. Rather, he advocates a more balanced view of sin—realizing that all people (including Christians) have sinned against God, and that all sin is condemning. Homosexuality may condemn the non-Christian, but no less does judgmentalism condemn the Christian. The answer is not to tolerate sin; the answer is to level the playing field, to call *all* sin for what it is—“sin”—and to confront it to deal with it.

Bridges roots all sins in the foundational sin of ungodliness—that is, human failure to be like God, in whose image they're created. From this sin, he begins his litany of “respectable” sins. Here are just some of the “respectable” sins he addresses: discontentment, unthankfulness, lack of self-control, impatience, resentment, grudges, envy, over-competitiveness, gossip, and slander. To know the others he addresses, you'll have to read the book. His style is gentle: He writes out of genuine concern for his fellow Christians; he also confesses some of his own faults and sins along the way. He is practical, providing suggestions for dealing with each sin. Furthermore, he begins and thus anchors the book in the gospel of Jesus, so that, in dealing with any and all sins, Christians can remember that God has dealt with sin in Jesus Christ and has given his Spirit to help his people in the process of holiness.

Christians need this perspective on sin. We need to level the playing field, to be humbled, to confess our shortcomings and sin, and to move forward in holiness. Then and only then, will we be ready to share the gospel of forgiveness and transformation with a culture drowning in the very thing God has rescued us from.

[The editor also highly recommends another book by Bridges: *The Pursuit of Holiness*. Our Bible class profited greatly from its study.]

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