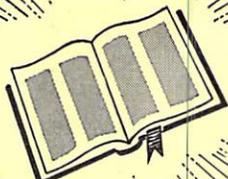
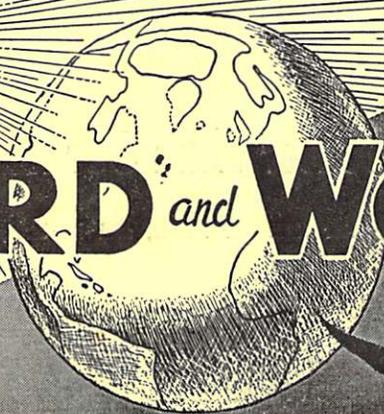


"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."



The **WORD** and **WORK**



"Holding forth the Word of life."

FEBRUARY, 1990

Dealing with DEPRESSION AND DESPAIR

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added affliction He addeth His mercy;
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

His love has no limit; His grace has no measure;
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

—Annie Johnson Flint

"We may well afford to leave it with Him to choose for us whether He will lighten the burden to suit the back, or strengthen the back to bear the burden; whether He will bring us out of the fire to Him, or come and walk in the fire with us."

Greater Than Our Hearts

“God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”
1 John 3:20

My heart is heavy, my heart is sad,
And clouds have shadowed the joy I had,
Perplexed and doubting, my way I take;
Hast Thou forgotten? Canst Thou forsake?
Thou—greater than ever my heart can be,
For my fainting heart give Thy strength to me!

My heart is troubled and tossed within,
Tired of thinking what might have been,
Tired of facing the future years,
Tired of fighting with coward fears;
Thou—greater than ever my heart can be,
For my weary heart give Thy rest to me!

My heart is fretted and anxious, too,
Eager to venture and quick to do,
Chafed by inaction, impatient still
At waiting in silence Thy quiet will;
Thou—greater than ever my heart can be,
For my restless heart give Thy peace to me!

My heart is empty, my heart is lone,
In the silence of night it maketh moan:
Two walked together, but one is gone,
No footstep echoes beside my own;
Thou—greater than ever my heart can be,
For my lonely heart give Thy love to me!

My heart is burdened, my heart is sore,
As manifold sins it counteth o'er;
I long to be holy, Thou Holy One,
But swift to do evil my feet will run;
Thou—greater than ever my heart can be,
For my sinful heart give Thyself to me!

—Annie Johnson Flint

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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THEME:

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION & DESPAIR

Alex V. Wilson

I've been there, more than once or twice. Doubtless you have too. In a deep valley of discouragement, and even a pit of despair. My worst time was back in 1976; several months of blackness, when at times I really wished that I didn't have to go on living. I wasn't tempted to take my life, but I wanted God to! Then again just last year there were some weeks of heavy gloom and depression.

Such moods are as old as Adam, I guess. And the affliction is very widespread too. Let me give you a quiz related to this. *Who Made These Statements?* (1) "For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation." (2) "I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to." (3) "During a very serious illness, I had an unaccountable fit of anxiety about money matters." (4) "My nerves were ragged, frazzled, exhausted. And such gloom and depression fell upon me as I have never known, although depression is an old acquaintance of mine."

(5) "God seemed nonexistent. The grave seemed my endless goal. Life lost all of its glory, charm and meaning. Prayer brought me no relief; indeed, I seemed to have lost the spirit of prayer and the power to pray." (6) "I found that I could usually struggle on pretty well during the day. But at night it was as if I were the picked target of the Enemy. Irrational fears gripped my spirit, unreal guilt swept over me. Even my sense of God disappeared, though it never reached nihilism nor utter despair. Still, when I turned to God for help, He seemed remote and unapproachable."

OK, are you ready to check your answers? (1) Martin Luther, mighty reformer. (2) Charles Spurgeon, one of church history's greatest preachers. (3) Spurgeon again. (4) Samuel Logan Brengle, bold evangelist of a former day, and a writer of books about holiness which formerly were widely sold and translated. (5) Brengle again. (6) J. B. Phillips, noted author and Bible translator in the 1950's - 70's.

Are you surprised? After all, these men were spiritual giants. And more could be mentioned, such as David Brainerd, dedicated missionary to the American Indians. His father-in-law, Jonathan Edwards, called him "the most melancholic person I have ever known." Then there was William Cowper, the English poet who wrote such hymns as "There is a Fountain" and "Oh for a Closer Walk with God." He experienced acute mental sickness off and on from the age of twenty till his death at sixty-nine. He wrote his greatest hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," after an attack of insanity during which he tried to drown himself. Another example is F. B. Meyer, the outstanding preacher, leader and writer whose books still sell well seventy-five years after his death. After serving God fruitfully for

many years, he experienced a period of nine years in which he lived in deep darkness and depression, wondering if he even belonged to the Lord at all.

"But this is preposterous!" someone may object. "Spiritual giants don't get shaken by desperation, have fits of anxiety, give way to nervous spells of gloom and fear, have attacks of insanity, wish they would die, and doubt their salvation. People who live like that can't be called great Christians. In fact, were they really Christians *at all*, or just counterfeits? Surely, at best they were living in sin and carnality when they had such experiences!"

Oh? Are you sure? Well, let's take another quix. (Don't you love them?)

Quiz Number Two

Who Made the Following Statements? (1) "Cursed be the day I was born!" (2) "O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." (3) He "prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'" (4) "I am not able to carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now."

(5) He "cursed the day of his birth. 'May the day of my birth perish. . . . Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come?'" (6) "I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning." (7) "Grief and anguish came over him. He said, 'The sorrow in my heart is so great it almost crushes me.'" (8) "I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears." (9) "We groan and are burdened." (10) "My heart is troubled." (11) "He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled."

Here are the answers: (1) Jeremiah; see 20:14-18. (2) Jonah 4:3, 8. (3) Elijah, in 1 Kings 19:4. (4) Moses, in Num. 11:14f. (5) Job 3: many verses. (6) David, in Psa. 31:9f. (7) Christ, Matt. 26:37f., Good News Bible. (8) Paul, 2 Cor. 2:4. (9) Paul, 2 Cor. 5:4. (10) Christ, Jn. 12:27. (11) Christ, Jn. 11:33.

Did you realize how often such deep depression was experienced by God's people—yes, by spiritual giants, including our Lord Himself? And many more examples could be given.

There is no joy in recording such facts. But that is what they are—facts, which stubbornly refuse to go away. So it is better to face them than to live in a never-never dreamland where God's people never feel devastated and everyone lives happily ever after, even in this life.

Common Causes

Let's think briefly about various sources of depression. Other articles in this issue delve into this subject too.

1. *Temperament* inclines some people—like Brainerd and Cowper, no doubt—to become more depressed than the average person. Unlike

your *character*, which develops according to the moral choices you make throughout your life, you are born with *temperament*. You inherit it from the genetic pool of your parents and grandparents. So “melancholic” David would be more liable to moods of discouragement than “choleric” Nehemiah. And “melancholic” Jeremiah would have to wrestle against depression more than “choleric/phlegmatic” Daniel, who lived during the same black period of Judah’s downfall and captivity. Don’t get me wrong. *One’s temperament does not excuse his faults; but it does explain his temptations*. Some are more tempted to anger, others to laziness; some to pride, and others to depression; etc. (If you are at a loss regarding terms like melancholic, phlegmatic, and choleric, used here not just in their traditional sense but to describe various basic temperments— then I recommend to you *Spirit-Controlled Temperament*, a book by Tim LaHaye. You will find it fascinating and illuminating even if you don’t agree with all of it.)

2. *Sickness*, some types of *injuries*, and sometimes even *normal exhaustion* account for much depression. Brainerd had TB; Luther and Spurgeon both had gout, a disease which commonly has the side-effect of depression. While Brengle was preaching in the open air, a drunk hit him in the head with a brick. The injury intensified the problems with despondency which he already had by temperament. Elijah was exhausted, and Job suffered from excruciating boils, when they sank into the pit of despair.

3. *Intense emotional strain due to difficult circumstances, especially opposition or danger*, is another source of depression. It certainly was a factor in the cases of David, Jonah, Jeremiah, Elijah, our Lord Jesus, and Paul.

4. Sometimes melancholy is due to *aging and diseases that may attend it*, such as hardening of the arteries or Alzheimer’s disease. This probably explains F. B. Meyer’s sad decline when he became old.

5. *Our failures and sins*. The two are not identical, but we lump them together here. Sometimes our mistakes and defeats get us down—the “if-onlies” of life. At other times we are depressed—and rightly so—because of our sin and guilt. David surely was, after his Bathsheba affair. He bore stirring testimony to that fact in Psalms 32:3-4 and 38:3-4. He would not have been a holy man nor even a normal human being had he not felt shame, remorse and contrition. And since every last one of us experiences failure, commits *sins* and has to battle *sin* from time to time (to say the very least), is it any wonder that depression is so common? In fact, ought it not be more common? But blessed are those who know how to use “the Christian’s bar of soap” described in 1 Jn. 1:7-9 and Prov. 28:13. To be cleansed is one great antidote to sadness and despair.

Interestingly, just today the newspaper reported a study showing that 23% of patients hospitalized for psychiatric problems blamed their mental illness on “sinful thoughts or actions.” No doubt some of the 23% need not have felt guilty, for there is a false sense of guilt brought on by an overwrought conscience which blames itself for matters which are not sins at all. But it is equally certain that some (many?) of the other 77% should have felt guilty but did not, due to

consciences which they allowed to become calloused and seared. The Bible mentions both of these dangers: 1 Cor. 8:7, 10; 1 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:15; Eph. 4:18f.

6. *The sins and follies of others* often cause intense pain and anguish of heart. Those who are dearest to us can hurt us so sharply: "a foolish son brings grief to his mother" (Prov. 10:1). No doubt Paul was saddened when John Mark left the evangelistic team and ran home to momma. Paul was no doubt more deeply grieved when Demas abandoned him at a time he was most needed. And our Savior loudly lamented His own people's stubborn rejection: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often I have longed to gather your children together . . . but you were not willing" (Matt. 23:37). They hated Him without a cause; no experience can be more bitter.

7. *Our great adversary the Devil* is surely a major cause of depression. Discouragement is one of the weapons he uses the most. He uses any or all of the six factors just mentioned; he schemes and maneuvers to lure us into the quicksand of sadness, the "slough of despond" mentioned in *Pilgrim's Progress*. So beyond the other causes, and back of them, Satan orchestrates his forces and still "seeks to work us woe. On earth is not his equal." Woe to any Christian who forgets that we are in a spiritual war.

Conclusions

The "dark night of the soul" experienced and described by saints and mystics through the ages is not unusual, nor necessarily sinful. Depression may result *from* sin, or may result *in* sin, or may have nothing to do with sin. That is, *sin may cause depression*, as it troubles our conscience. In such a case, the needed cures are repentance and confession. Or *depression may cause sin*, if we let it lead us to bitterness or rebellion. But *not all depression is sinful*: I may need God's *help in fighting it* without necessarily needing His *forgiveness for wallowing in it*. This presumes that I have not wallowed in it. Instead I have *accepted* by faith those causes and conditions which cannot be changed, and *resisted* by faith those causes and conditions which should be changed.

Samuel Logan Brengle gives us an example of one way to resist depression. We now complete the quote we began before:

Prayer brought me no relief. Indeed, I seemed to have lost the spirit of prayer and the power to pray. Then I remembered to give thanks and to praise God, though I felt no spirit of praise and thanksgiving. Feeling, except that of utter depression and gloom, was gone. But as I thanked God for the trial, it began to turn to blessing, light glimmered, grew very slowly, and then broke through the gloom. The depression passed away, and life was beautiful and desirable again, and full of gracious incomings once more. (Quoted from *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, by David Seamands, ch. 10; a most valuable book).

Note well Brengle's third sentence there. It is a key that often turns the lock. It is not our only weapon, but one of the more important. Practical steps are not to be despised nor neglected. But along with all of them, praise the Lord despite your bad feelings or lack of feelings. "Praise the Lord *anyway!*" There is Light at the end of the tunnel.

Escaping the Pit of Depression

Don Sparkes

"Depression is hell."

This is the way Bernard described the harrowing experience from which he had just emerged. A few months before he had been a radiant Christian, witnessing to his fellow steelworkers. He had come to our church to speak on *My Faith and My Job*, and had thrilled the congregation with his radiant sincerity. Within a matter of days all this had gone. Instead of joy there was now worry, darkness, and boredom. He could not read or concentrate on anything worthwhile. The darkness became so intense that he began to feel the only way out was to take his life. *Hell* was the only term he could use.

One reason for this was the fact that God was, so it seemed, no longer a part of Bernard's experience. Had God withdrawn Himself? Men do put themselves sometimes beyond the love of God by outwardly rejecting and spurning their Creator, but we only know of one person from whom God has ever deliberately withdrawn Himself, and that person was His Son, Jesus Christ. This withdrawal was only for a moment, and was due to Christ bearing the sin of the world. His cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Mark 15:34) gives us a glimpse of the depression of soul through which our Lord was going. C. H. Spurgeon, the great preacher of the last century, when preaching on these words of Christ, said something rather like Bernard:

A man may bear depression of spirit about worldly matters if he feels he has God to go to. He is cast down but not in despair. Like David he dialogues with himself and he inquires, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him. . . ." But if the Lord be once withdrawn, if the comfortable light of his presence be shadowed, even for an hour, there is torment within the heart, which I can only liken to the prelude of hell.

Bernard found that his depression was not just a personal thing. It affected others. His home became an unhappy place not just for him but for his wife and children. It was like a disease, it spread to and affected those with whom he came into contact. Depression was just as infectious as his former joy. Those who have got out on the wrong side of the bed will know a little of the way a mood can affect the others in the house and at work. How miserable it is to work with those who always have the Monday-morning feeling! The person who, as H. E. Fosdick once put it: "Not only do they have cellars in their emotional houses, as everybody does, but they live in them."

Very often depression is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. We see this in the large percentage of people attending doctors' offices, people who have reacted to unforeseen changes in circumstances by becoming anxiety-prone or neurotic. When we look into the reasons for Bernard's illness we find it was his reaction to something new to his experience. In his case depression had physical, mental, and spiritual reasons all springing from the basic change in his

life when he found himself out of work and idle for the first time in his life.

My main aim in this article is to try and deal with spiritual depression. Before I do this a brief note on depression springing from physical or mental causes is included. Anyone who believes himself to be suffering from severe depression of any kind should, of course, consult his doctor.

Part of the Trouble may be Physical

Bergsten, in his book *Pastoral Psychology* writes:

Many physical diseases, and many conditions of bodily disorder, especially in the endocrine system, are accompanied by characteristic mental and emotional changes. Very often these take the form of depression which may rise to the intensity of anguish or despair. A person who is assailed by thoughts and feeling of this kind seldom realises that they are of physical origin.

Bernard had developed an acute ear trouble. Because of this he became susceptible to dizziness, which made it dangerous for him to be near machinery. He was also in his middle years when hormonal changes in the body, relating in some way to the change of life in women, were taking place. For him the cure of his depression was related in a very real way with the cure of his ear complaint. Not till this was well on the way to being dealt with did the depressive state abate. Some physical reasons for depression can be dealt with easily enough, and with little enough effort, and the earlier we go and talk with our doctor the sooner we shall receive the advice we need.

Some other physical causes are not so easy to deal with. Often the first need is that the cause of depression should be seen for what it is, and made the best of. An adolescent, or a woman in the change of life, or a man in his late forties, all experience hormonal changes in the body; the pregnant woman whose baby is lying low down in the womb, or the mother of a few days recovering from the shock of birth and readjustments in her hormones—such folk cannot do much but accept the situation. The changes in the body will soon pass and the depression will go, and the realization of this fact frequently is all that is needed.

Yet other physical upsets, affecting the soul with gloom, may be serious warning of serious disorder in the body and if this is the case no delay should be allowed before we see our doctor. In some cases, the earlier he can diagnose and treat us the better will be the possibility of cure.

The fact that body and soul react on each other is a truth we all recognize. This is one very good reason for taking care of our bodies—taking enough exercise, adequate sleep, eating the right kind of food, not misusing the body in any way. We should strive to make our bodies fit, clean, and beautiful.

Part of the Trouble may be Mental

Bernard had always been a very active person. He loved his work. His spare time since his conversion was taken up with service to the community. His life was so organized that there was no time to be idle, to sit and think.

Now he was off work. Weeks, maybe months, would have to be spent idle. His dizziness made it impossible to read or do anything. The reaction to this abnormal situation was normal—he became depressed, miserable, and irritable. No one seemed to be able to help him. Each day took him further into the mire until he felt the only way out was to end it all.

Boredom is only one of the many mental causes for depression. The most common one occurs in hypersensitive persons—the people who drive themselves hard, who have ideals which they must live up to, who are over-conscientious, and who feel guilty if they relax. Failing to live up to their ideals they fall into deep depression over their failures. Such folk would begin to find a cure if they could be helped to take life not so seriously. We must be what we are and advance a step at a time instead of trying to be now what it will take a lifetime to become.

Overwork and overstrain saps our very lifeblood, and it is not surprising to find Christians having bouts of depression if they take too much on, or ignore the need for a holiday and change. In such cases when one is mentally exhausted it is worthwhile sitting down and considering seriously dropping this or that commitment, and working out how one can get away from it all, if only for a weekend.

Some are depressed because they are never appreciated. They try to do their best, yet those working or living with them just never see what they do. All is accepted with never a word of praise or thanks. How many yearn to be appreciated and are downcast and depressed because the words of thanks and praise never come. Praise is better than any tonic. To quote again from H. E. Fosdick: "A word to the living is worth six wreaths to the dead." If we Christians could get into the habit of looking round for things to praise instead of complain and grouse about we would banish depression for many people. Try it with your own minister at church when something has been said which has helped you, try it in the store when you have been helped to find what you want by the sales clerk, try it when you sit down to the next meal at home!

I remember reading about an interesting experiment with babies. A film record was made of changes of expression on a baby's face during periods of absence from its mother. It was found that if the mother was absent too long when the baby was needing her it went through phases of what the author called "profound depression"—that is, it appeared to experience something not unlike what an adult would know. If this is so, it seems most unwise continually to leave a child to cry itself to sleep, for some depressions may well be related to the childhood experience of being left alone. This may throw light on the fact that some live in dread of losing someone they love, and an actual loss brings this profound depression surging back into consciousness.

So often we point to things outside ourselves that have brought about worry and depression yet the trouble is within us. *It is how we face situations which matters.* Whether we have our lives based on the solid foundation of Christ, or everything just resting on the sands of changing feelings—as in the story of the two houses which Jesus used

so pointedly in His Sermon on the Mount. If all is well within, then we can cope with any situation outside ourselves, even if it is a serious physical disability which could overwhelm the soul with darkness. I have seen Christians overcome depressing illnesses such as diabetes and sclerosis because of the inner joy they had from contact with Christ.

Christianity, remember, is "good news"—that is, good news for every situation which a man or woman may find themselves in. That Christ can deal with the situation is a basic Christian truth, but He may choose to use a Christian psychiatrist to help us to find wholeness of mind just as He may use the doctor in bringing about wholeness of body.

Part of the Trouble may be Spiritual

It would be nothing more than a quick look at the physical and mental cause if Bernard's trouble cleared up when his ear got better or when his boredom ended with his return to activity. But his depression was something deeper—it reached down to the very spiritual depths of his being. For him as a Christian it was the spiritual havoc that had been wrought that concerned him most. God seemed to be no longer present. Vital prayer was now a thing of the past, and no longer a present joyful experience. He could pray, but somehow did not seem to be in contact with the Lord. The reading of God's Word was no longer a joy to him. He had lost his hunger for the things of God—somehow the Bible did not seem relevant.

The trouble was that Bernard was somehow blaming the Lord for this state. He went to bed at night resenting the Lord's dealings with him. He ignored Paul's wisdom: "... never let the sun set upon your exasperation" (Ephesians 4:26, Moffatt's translation); he thus awoke in the morning with his resentment and depression and irritability even more a part of him. How he needed to come to the Lord seeking forgiveness, a new start, new life in the Spirit and power to live victoriously. Yet he did not seem able to do this. Then one afternoon he sat in his home thinking. The house was quiet with the children at school, and he was turning over in his mind some words which a workmate had said only that morning:

"Your faith must make quite a difference to you in the situation you find yourself in!"

"Why is this not true?" he thought. "Why as a Christian am I in such a state as this? He is right. My faith should make a difference."

He opened his Bible and read at random till he came to a verse that he knew by heart. This time its relevance came alive for him—the words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28 RSV).

Why he had not come to Jesus before with his burden and trouble he was not quite sure, but there was no time like the present. So he poured out his heart to the Lord—shared the situation with Him. This, as he said afterwards, "... lifted the fog and brought me into the glorious sunshine of His presence again."

In Bernard's case, this led to a striking change. The depression

which had sprung from, and reacted back on, his whole being, was now cast out. He was free to be recommissioned for service.

While not recommending this dangerous and chancy way of opening the Bible at random for a message from God, this incident well illustrates *the danger of flouting spiritual laws*. We recognize readily enough that if we overwork and allow ourselves to be ridden by worry then there is a possibility of nervous breakdown. The same is true of overworking the body or misusing it. We must take sufficient food and rest to function properly. Bernard will tell you that his spiritual trouble resulted partly from neglect of the means of grace; he especially mentions the missing of his morning time of prayer and Bible-reading. It was dangerous, for it meant that when his faith was needed to combat the depression coming from his physical and mental states it was so weak that for a time it was useless. He knew the answer was in the Lord, yet somehow could not get to Him.

How necessary it is, in fact how *more* necessary it is, to keep our daily times of prayer and Bible-reading, our meditation and our meeting with other Christians for worship and fellowship, when things are difficult and life becomes a struggle. It is not without reason that Thomas doubted the resurrection of the Lord considering he was not found in fellowship with the other disciples when the Lord appeared among them.

* * * * *

Much Depression Springs from a Blurry View of God

GOD IS EASY TO LIVE WITH

A. W. Tozer

Satan's first attack upon the human race was his sly effort to destroy Eve's confidence in the kindness of God. Unfortunately for her and for us he succeeded too well. From that day, men have had a false conception of God, and it is exactly this that has cut out from under them the ground of righteousness and driven them to reckless and destructive living.

Nothing twists and deforms the soul more than a low or unworthy conception of God. Certain sects, such as the Pharisees, while they held that God was stern and austere, yet managed to maintain a fairly high level of external morality; but their righteousness was only outward. Inwardly they were "whited sepulchres," as our Lord Himself told them. Their wrong conception of God resulted in a wrong idea of worship. To a Pharisee, the service of God was a bondage which he did not love but from which he could not escape without a loss too great to bear. The God of the Pharisee was not a God easy to live with, so his religion became grim and hard and love-less. It had to be so, for our notion of God must always determine the quality of our religion.

Much Christianity since the days of Christ's flesh has also been grim and severe. And the cause has been the same—an unworthy or

an inadequate view of God. Instinctively we try to be like our God, and if He is conceived to be stern and exacting, so will we ourselves be.

From a failure properly to understand God comes a world of unhappiness among good Christians even today. The Christian life is thought to be a glum, unrelieved cross-carrying under the eye of a stern Father who expects much and excuses nothing. He is austere, peevish, highly tempermental and extremely hard to please. The kind of life which springs out of such libelous notions must of necessity be but a parody on the true life in Christ.

It is most important to our spiritual welfare that we hold in our minds always a right conception of God. If we think of Him as cold and exacting we shall find it impossible to love Him, and our lives will be ridden with servile fear. If, again, we hold Him to be kind and understanding our whole inner life will mirror that idea.

The truth is that God is the most winsome of all beings and His service one of unspeakable pleasure. He is all love, and those who trust Him need never know anything but that love. He is just, indeed, and He will not condone sin; but through the blood of the everlasting covenant He is able to act toward us exactly as if we had never sinned. Toward the trusting sons of men His mercy will always triumph over justice.

The fellowship of God is delightful beyond all telling. He communes with His redeemed ones in an easy, uninhibited fellowship that is restful and healing to the soul. He is not sensitive nor selfish nor temperamental. What He is today we shall find Him tomorrow and the next day and the next year. *He is not hard to please, though He may be hard to satisfy.* He expects of us only what He has Himself first supplied. He is quick to mark every simple effort to please Him, and just as quick to overlook imperfections when He knows we meant to do His will. *He loves us for ourselves and values our love more than galaxies of new created worlds.*

Unfortunately, many Christians cannot get free from their perverted notions of God, and these notions poison their hearts and destroy their inward freedom. These friends serve God grimly, as the elder brother did, doing what is right without enthusiasm and without joy, and seem altogether unable to understand the buoyant, spirited celebration when the prodigal comes home. Their idea of God rules out the possibility of His being happy in His people, and they attribute the singing and shouting to sheer fanaticism. Unhappy souls, these, doomed to go heavily on their melancholy way, grimly determined to do right if the heavens fall and to be on the winning side in the day of judgment.

How good it would be if we could learn that God is easy to live with. He remembers our frame and knows that we are dust. He may sometimes chasten us, it is true, but even this He does with a smile, the proud, tender smile of a Father who is bursting with pleasure over an imperfect but promising son who is coming every day to look more and more like the One who child he is.

Some of us are religiously jumpy and self-conscious because we know that God sees our every thought and is acquainted with all our

ways. We need not be. God is the sum of all patience and the essence of kindly good will. We please Him most, not by frantically trying to make ourselves good, but by throwing ourselves into His arms with all our imperfections, and believing that He understands everything and loves us still.

* * * * *

Factors in Depression

J. Robert Ross

The "Normality" of Depression

Ruth—not her real name—as a child had suffered severe emotional deprivation and abuse. As an adult she had a long history of emotional instability, and she had been seeing me for several months. Then one day she walked into my office and announced, "I think it's OK to be depressed." Ruth had made a valuable discovery that would help her along the road to emotional and spiritual wholeness.

Many persons have the fantasy that almost everyone around them has learned how to negotiate the treacherous journey of life with scarcely a bump or a detour. The fact is, of course, that life is filled with difficulties. None of us has it "all together." We all make mistakes. We all have flat tires. We all suffer injustice. We all feel insecure, fearful and anxious. And we all get depressed sometimes to some degree. And it is OK.

Clinical Depression

However, what we call clinical depression, the sort that cripples a person to the extent that he cannot function at work or home, is another matter. Depression is something like a fever. When a physician determines that a patient has a temperature of 101 degrees, she knows that something is wrong inside the patient's body, but not much else. A fever of 101 degrees is not normal, but the existence of a fever does not in itself tell the doctor what is wrong with the patient.

In the same way deep depression is not a normal or healthy emotional state, but besides the fact that the degree of depression cannot be as precisely measured as a fever, the existence of the depression does not in itself tell us what has gone wrong. The fact is that a depression may be caused or maintained by one or a combination of several factors.

(1) *The Physiological/Genetic Factor*—In the first place, there may be an organic, physiological basis for depression. Certain types of brain damage produce depression. Or a problem with absorption of a group of chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters apparently plays a role in some kinds of depression. In these cases the administration of one of the modern antidepressant medications may prove helpful.

There may also be a genetic factor in some depressions, since those with a history of major depression in their family are more prone to depression than the general population. Although a medical

treatment of depression sometimes proves helpful, we still have only a vague and imprecise knowledge of the exact physiological mechanisms underlying depression, and we look forward to the results of continuing scientific research in this field.

(2) *The Cognitive Factor*—Second, some depressions seem to be caused or maintained by the way a person has learned to *think*. For example, if an acquaintance is rude or ignores you, you may think or say to yourself, "This person does not like me, and I must, therefore, be a bad person." Obviously if you have such a bad thought about yourself, you will probably have a depressing feeling.

The fact is, however, that the person who was rude or who ignored you may have been acting on the basis of any one of a number of other factors including an emotional upset that had nothing to do with you. In other words, the reality is that his response to you had little or nothing to do with you.

At any rate it is totally unrealistic to expect that everyone around us is going to be always happy or to think that we will always get the attention we want. Unless these and other erroneous thoughts are clarified and changed, they tend to produce depression.

(3) *The Physical Environment Factor (Light)*—In the third place, we have recently discovered that certain people are more prone to depression during the winter. And it appears that their depression is caused by winter's shorter days and lack of sunlight. The good news is that Seasonal Affective Disorder, SAD, can be helped by exposure to artificial light which incorporates the wave lengths found in sunlight.

(4) *The Loss/Grief Factor*—In the fourth place depression may be attributed simply to the experience of loss in a person's life. These are called "reactive" depressions, because they are a *reaction* to a tragedy or loss. Grief experiences such as loss of a job or the death of a friend or relative will naturally bring a sense of loss and sadness. But if we do our grieving well, that is, if we can face our hurt realistically and if we can acknowledge and articulate our sadness and anger, we can after a period of time learn to accept our loss and work through our grief.

(5) *The Personality Development Factor*—Normal grief does not ordinarily lead to a major depressive episode, but there are situations in which other factors seem to aggravate a normal feeling of sadness and lead to a full blown depression. Generally speaking, if you have difficulty affirming, loving and taking care of yourself, the grief experiences which are rather common, such as loss of a job or a friend or relative, will make you more susceptible to a serious depression. We also know that those persons deprived of emotional nurture as small children, or who lost a parent by death or who were abandoned by a parent, are more likely to become depressed as adults.

Indeed, we theorize that some children grow up depressed without the depression being recognized as such. Many of these people report that they have felt all their lives that there is a huge empty spot in the middle of their stomach. They feel terribly insecure, and

they exert most of their energy trying to find the love and acceptance which they missed as children. This kind of depression may not become apparent in the adult until there is a loss which breaks down one's usual coping mechanisms.

(6) *The Interpersonal Factor*—Next, there are certain types of interpersonal interactions that perhaps do not "cause" a depression but can serve to maintain a depression once it has developed, or even propel a garden variety sadness into the development of a severe depression. For example, if you have lost your spouse through death or divorce, you will certainly feel sad. And if important people around you such as family, close friends or pastor tell you to cheer up and act as if they don't want to hear you express your negative emotions, that can thwart the normal, healthy grieving process and can lead to depression. By the same token we can help one another avoid depression by not letting our anxiety put up walls between us and the people around us who are experiencing a significant loss.

(7) *The Sex Factor*—Major depression is twice as common in women as in men. Some studies indicate that as many as twenty-five per cent of all women will experience a major depression at some time in their life. Perhaps one reason that women are more susceptible to depression than men is their tendency to bottle up negative feelings and to turn them inward upon themselves. And they may do that either because of an innate tendency within females to respond to stress and anxiety in that fashion, or they may do so because our culture does not permit or condone women blaming anyone but themselves. Women are supposed to keep everyone happy, and if something goes wrong, it is their fault—or at least that is part of the way we are conditioned to look at women.

(8) *The Spiritual Factor*—Depression can also be thought of as a tendency toward self hatred and self destruction. And, if we are honest, we must acknowledge the role we ourselves play in the development of that tendency. For example, alcoholism leads to a destruction of everything that we hold important and meaningful to the enjoyment of life: family, health, finances, job, etc. Alcoholics are some of the most depressed people we know, at great risk for suicide, although their denial of alcoholism may also mean a denial of the state of depression that accompanies it. This is not to say that other factors beyond the alcoholic's control are not a part of the syndrome. But to the extent that the alcoholic lies to himself as well as others, we are clearly dealing with a moral and spiritual problem.

But that is only one of the more blatant and deadly examples of our nasty tendency to self destruct and how it contributes to depression. Our impulse toward death is reflected in compulsive, addictive habits like smoking tobacco, overeating, sexual promiscuity and in repetitive patterns of angry conflict with persons close to us to make ourselves miserable. But we don't know how to stop. "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:24, 25).

Religion in the Psychiatrist's Office

J. Robert Ross.

[This article originally appeared in the author's column in a secular newspaper.]

A psychiatrist once said, "There is a place for religion in the church as well as in the psychiatrist's office." He obviously felt that a lot of what he did in his consulting room had religious implications and that perhaps the church itself should be dealing more effectively with many of the problems which bring people to mental health professionals.

There are a great many reasons why people seek the help of a counselor. Only a small percentage can be appropriately classified as "mental illness" in the true medical sense of that term. But whatever the problem—whether it be marital conflict, concern about a misbehaving child, stress connected with employment, alcohol abuse or the death of a close friend or relative—there are usually underlying questions which have deep religious significance. These basic questions of human existence are the "religious" background to many of the problems brought into the counselor's office.

One of these questions grows out of the fact that *we are finite creatures*, and we know we are finite. I reflect upon the fact that both of my parents are dead, and I cannot live forever. The fact of death and how that affects my life activates a normal anxiety which can become a pathological fear from which I may attempt a futile escape. Anxiety about death is a normal human experience, but the attempt to completely evade the anxiety can cause some very abnormal problems.

Moral failure, the fact that I do not live up to my own ideals, activates a sense of failure and self condemnation, old fashioned guilt. Part of the mental health profession has tended to see guilt as "neurotic," something which needs to be cured. And no one doubts that many problems result from unrealistic demands which we place on ourselves. Nevertheless, the person without realistic guilt feelings is really sick. We call him a sociopath. Pray that you never run into one, because he will lie to you, cheat you and perhaps even murder you without his conscience bothering him one iota. Our capacity for feeling guilt makes life in society possible. But it also raises the question of how we find relief or "redemption" from our wrongdoing.

A third existential question which surfaces in the counselor's office is about *the meaning and purpose of life*. Why am I here? Is life worth living? These are essentially religious questions, but people often seek the answers in self-defeating ways. In drugs or alcohol or in an extramarital affair, for example.

Finally, although we cherish our freedom to choose, we are bothered by recurring thoughts of *whether we have made the "right" or the "best" choices*, or the choice that is in "God's will." Today's psychotherapist finds herself in the position of the ancient priest or wise man. Her clients come with questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life. So she finds herself engaged in a religious

role. But as the psychiatrist quoted above says, there is also a place for religion in the church.

* * * *

You May Be Under False Condemnation

T. A. Hegre

Many sincere Christians labor under false condemnation because they lack a clearcut distinction between temptation and sin. Academically, almost everyone agrees that temptation is not sin, but in experience many are confused.

After one meeting, an elderly woman came forward with tears in her eyes saying, "You will never know what a relief it is to know that temptation is not sin." For years she had felt condemned. Now this release made a tremendous change in her life.

Others are falsely accused either by themselves through faulty understanding, or by the devil, who is the "accuser of the brethren."

It is not sin to be tempted. The angels were tempted; some responded and fell, but others remained in the will of God and are called "the holy angels."

Adam and Eve were tempted before the Fall, but they did not actually sin until they responded to the temptation and reacted contrary to the will of God. From that moment on they were verily guilty and worthy of condemnation.

Even Jesus Christ was tempted, but we know He did not sin.

We need to get a firm grasp of this truth that temptation is not sin. In fact, it isn't the sinful that are generally tempted by the devil—they are already on his side and doing his will. The devil and his host of evil spirits tempt the saints, those who are committed to the will of God and are seeking to serve Him.

Sometimes we are drawn away by our own desires and tempted. But here too, until we yield to the temptation, we have not sinned. When the will embraces a desire that is not pleasing to God, conception takes place and a child is born. This child is sin (Jas. 1:14-16). But there is not sin if the will does not yield. Few have strong enough will to renounce a strong desire or appetite. But praise be to God, we have the Spirit of God who is available to help in every time of need.

Temptation begins in the mind with just a simple, evil thought. The next stage is fantasy or strong imagination. Then comes delight and finally consent. We hasten to add that unless an evil thought is rejected at once, it will always lead to the other stages, and sin will be committed.

The enemy of our souls seems to be able to project thoughts into our minds even if he has to use other people or pictures or writing to do so. *We are not responsible for the wrong thoughts that enter, but we are responsible for the thoughts we entertain.* We have the opportunity of rejecting them; and if we do, there will be no sin.

We have often heard the saying that you cannot keep a bird from flying over your head, but you can keep him from building

a nest in your hair. Of course that is right. So also regarding evil thoughts that come to us. We cannot always keep them from occurring, but we can reject them at once. We do not need to entertain them; instead we can set our minds on things that are above.

In the New Testament we are given many words concerning the responsibility for our thought life. Let us consider a few of these. Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth." This should be the habit of our minds.

We are also told to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). In other words, we must not let our minds flit from place to place and thing to thing, but rather assume the responsibility for our thought life. We have this ability and we must exercise ourselves in obedience to this importance fact.

The Apostle Peter says, "Gird up the loins of your mind" (I Pet. 1:13). Here too the same thought is in view. We must not let our minds go out to every possible thing but rather keep a tight rein on them. We must discipline ourselves to think right thoughts.

The Apostle Paul gives a wonderful word concerning the responsibility of right thinking: "Whatsoever things are true... honorable... just... pure... of good report... think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

A practical definition of sin is helpful. Many words are translated "sin" in the Bible, but in a definition we should not be satisfied with merely academic descriptions but rather a practical explanation of what sin really is. John Wesley and Charles G. Finney had a simple definition: "Sin is a wilful transgression against a known law." This definition may not cover everything, but for practical purposes it may be the best description of sin. It shows us our responsibility concerning the law of God (I John 3:4). It takes sin out of the abstract and makes it something we can understand.

Finney and Wesley were both criticized for their definition of sin. But study their life and their ministries and you will see that they were more careful in pointing out sin, in getting people under conviction, delivered, and genuinely saved, than almost any others in the history of the Christian church.

One of the three items that Martin Luther considered essential for the development of a saint was temptation. We ought to view temptation positively. God has purposely made us temptable—not to cause our fall but rather to enable us to grow strong spiritually. *Every temptation is an opportunity to say no to whatever is not pleasing to God and to prove to God that we love Him supremely—more than even the thing which seems attractive for the moment.*

At the moment of temptation we should say, "Yes, I feel the attraction of this thing and am drawn to it and know it is possible to yield. But by God's grace I refuse to embrace this thing, for it would be sinning against the God I love. *I accept this opportunity to prove to God that I love Him more than anyone or anything.*" *Such an attitude will take temptation out of the negative sphere into the positive.* Then the fact of temptation can become a challenge, and Christian living will become exciting instead of monotonous.

The lack of distinction between temptation and sin causes many to think that they have to sin in thought, word, and deed every day. They believe that a feeling of temptation implies they have already sinned. They think that because they can respond, they have already entered into sinful striving. This is not true; temptation only proves that they are able to respond and react, either embracing the temptation or rejecting it. If we couldn't feel the temptations, then they wouldn't be true temptations, nor would we have a clear-cut choice of reacting one way or the other.

Of course we can feel temptations; of course we can react in a wrong manner. But praise be to God, we do not have to react wrongly; we can rather reject temptation and give it no room in the mind or heart. We are not machines; we are persons, and we have been given intelligence to *know* right from wrong. We are also given sensibilities to *feel* both right and wrong. Furthermore, we are given a will which can *choose* right or wrong.

Let us consider Joseph. When both the temptation and opportunity to sin were present, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" His love for God made him strong in temptation. Joseph did not feel sorry for himself, but through this experience, he grew in grace and power. So it is for us all. We need to exercise resistance against temptation. This is the way of developing strong spiritual muscles.

After I shared the positive element of temptation to an audience in the West Indies, several embraced this idea and later testified that life had become an adventure and taken on new meaning. Now they were rejoicing in opportunities to prove to the Lord that they loved Him supremely. So it would be for us if we understood our temptations and entered into the adventures of an overcoming life.

* * * * *

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Randy Becton

Dear Friend:

I'd been a Christian eleven years when I experienced the shock of hearing my doctor say, "You have cancer." I felt like you probably felt when you first heard your bad news: somewhat shocked and stunned, frightened.

My cancer was lymphoma (cancer of the lymph system) at an advanced stage. Immediately after I was diagnosed, biopsy surgery was done and I was rushed to a major cancer hospital. Since I was first hospitalized, I have had three other surgeries, two years of chemotherapy, and dozens of clinic and laboratory visits. There is no medical cure for this disease, and statistics generally say that 80% do not survive five years. But at the time of this writing I thank God that I am in *remission* (the disease is inactive). It can, of course, become active but I'm praying for continued remission.

I don't know all that you have gone through, nor do I understand it. But I do feel that we, being Christians, would become close

friends if we had even a short time together, not only because we share our faith but also because we have to face a *common enemy*. Since a personal visit is not possible, I wanted to share, by this means, something with you.

Think about what cancer has done to you and me. It has attacked our sense of security and well-being, our time to live, our work, our homes, and our families and their future. Maybe it's even troubled our faith.

During those weeks in the hospital, I received the beginning treatments of chemotherapy with their painfully severe reactions and side effects. It was so hard for me to fight the almost unbearable depression that set in during these days. I was afraid; and as one Christian who visited me later told me, "You seemed depressed about being afraid." I guess I was because I was disappointed about not having a stronger faith when this crisis hit me.

I had been a faithful Christian, I believe, honestly seeking to do God's will in my life. I had often told people of God's love for us and how "all things work together for good for those who love him." But somehow it was so easy to say then, but so hard to really believe and rely on when cancer struck. Cancer threatened everything precious to me. Every time I thought about my three small children (one of them only six months old), I would cry and cry, because I feared they would soon lose me as their father. Daily I would have my wife by my side; but at night when she went away for a few hours' rest, I would wonder if when she awoke the next morning she would be a widow. That thought almost overwhelmed me and kept me almost always in a state of depression. As you read this maybe your own thoughts go to similar things you've thought about, cried about, worried endlessly over, and prayed fervently about.

My prayers during this time pleaded with God. First, I needed to know with certainty that he loved *me*. I felt so helpless, so alone. In fact the *aloneness* I felt in suffering, the uncertainty of facing a large unknown were strong emotions I experienced. I confess that I doubted that God really loved me. If he did, I reasoned, then why did he let this happen to me? I had tried to serve him, but in the strength of my life I felt he allowed me to be cut down. Death as a prospect at this time didn't come as a friend but as a horrible enemy. I longed for God to be close to me. I needed him so badly in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. I felt maybe a little like Jesus felt in Gethsemane when he said, "My soul is sorrowful."

You may think, "Well, how weak Randy's faith was." If so, you're exactly right. I doubted; I was anxious; I was depressed. Somehow, though, I feel that God accepted me in those feelings. He knew and, much more important, he helped me know that "It's alright for you to feel this way."

I talked to him about it all. Everything. Even my anger and bitterness. During this time I needed someone who understood me and accepted me. And I tell you without any doubt and with full exultation *God heard me*; and like the loving Father he is, he surrounded me with his understanding, and I felt secure in his arms of love.

I was convinced that it is right to cry out to God. It is an appropriate response of our humanity to bare ourselves before him in the midst of our suffering, or pain, our disappointments, as well as our hopes, expectations and joy. It is always proper for a child to be honest with his father. It is always right for a child to ask from his father. When I became a Christian, I received a "spirit of sonship."

If you've doubted that God really loves you, I want you to know that I know exactly what you felt. It's normal to experience that valley. Maybe you are in it now and are finding it very hard to come out. I wish you'd write me and tell me about it. I'll write back and share some other things that also helped me come back out. And by the way, that battle is a *continuous* one in my life. I *still* experience valleys, doubts, and serious struggles with depression. I struggle one day at a time.

I have found some truths from God that help me live each day. I'd like to share them in the hope that you will share some with me.

First, God gave me and you life—every day is a gift from him. Cancer just sharpens our focus on the fact that life is "as a vapor." Length of days at best is short; therefore, we need to concentrate on living each day as a celebration of life. If we pause for a moment, we'll remember that everyone is terminal!

This is a time when we have some regrets and possibly make some resolutions. We may promise that if our health is stabilized, there are some areas of life that we plan to live differently. I have found that I have to be careful not to dwell constantly in personal regrets, nor go too far in making great resolutions, although some of each seem to be normal and probably helpful.

Secondly, it helps me to remember that I have something secure that cancer cannot threaten—Jesus Christ. My true identity is in being God's son with all the rights and privileges that go with it. God said that as his child I can trust him. He said that nothing can separate me from the love he has for me. He said that when my "earthly tent" folds up, even if by cancer, he will give me a dwelling that is eternal, one that will never fold up. *I believe him.* He is trustworthy. Oh, sure, sometimes I waver but in those times I pray, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." Sometimes "faith is the bird that feels the light... and sings... when the dawn is still dark." Maybe it's hard for you, like it is for me, to walk by faith, not by sight. But *every day* I remind myself that I'm a son of God, a child of the King, and my security and hope are in him. And remember you must *decide to trust.* It is a matter of your *will*—not how you *feel.* Decide every day, even every hour to trust. During my periods of uneasiness, apprehension, or fear, I say, "Lord, I'm going to trust you. Help me." He does. He will help you!

Third, remember that earlier I told you about praying. When you pray, I suggest you tell God *exactly how you feel* and *exactly what you want.* That's what he wants—whatever is really on your heart. It will probably help you to remember your Lord did that in Gethsemane when he said: "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will but what thou wilt." Remember I said it is good for a child to be honest with his father.

That applies to you too. Express your heart fully. But notice that it must follow in my life and yours that *our spirit seeks to be in the center of God's will*. We want most for his will to be done. I pray to live; I tell the Father why, then I seek to tell him that I know he knows what's best for me, his child. Isn't the whole point of my life in Christ to "do my Father's will"?

Fourth, keep in mind at all times: *you are not alone!* When it hurts, during tests and medication, in uncertainty, when no one really understands—he is within you. Accept his promise that whenever you are "in the valley" he is there.

Fifth, other brothers and sisters are experiencing similar *trials*. We are trying to endure and . . . by God's power . . . we will. Pray for me. I'll pray for you. We're in this together.

Remember to "trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight." Remember also, that no matter how many dark days you may have, no matter how many losing days . . . the last day you are a winner! God, by Jesus' resurrection, will keep his promise:

If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.

If you've asked *why?* and all you've heard is silence in your suffering, I'd like to send you a little study I had a part in preparing entitled "Does He Cry With Me?" Maybe it will help, even though now "we see through a glass darkly." There's a lot I don't know, and being no gaint of faith, I waver often; but I do know this: I know my Father; I love my Father; I trust my Father. He is my *anchor point*. He sustains me. When I think that my loving Father controls the last hour, then trusting him with the next moment becomes easier.

I've been *personal* with you. I hope you haven't been offended. I just wanted to share my *struggle* with you. I would appreciate it if you would share yours with me. Maybe you can help strengthen my faith. I need that help. Maybe you want to talk with the one who gave you this material. Talking with someone close to you holds great promise of being helpful to you. Or maybe you want to share some of your feelings, whether fear or trust, joy or pain, with me. I promise to respond because I care.

My prayer for you is this:

O God, you gave my friend and me life and hope in Jesus Christ. This health crisis has shaken us. We ask you for strength spiritually. Understand our emotions of anger, bitterness, fear, anxiety. Help us trust you and commit our way to you. Thank you for understanding. Be very close, we pray in Jesus' name.

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Supporting Those Who Hurt and Grieve

The preceding article is available in pamphlet form to give to people with serious illness. It is just one of dozens of materials published by a ministry called CARING. Randy Becton is its founder

and director, and the author of most of its materials. As you have seen, he writes from personal experience. This gives authenticity to what he says.

Here are some titles available, to give you an idea: "We're Fellow Strugglers" (5 pages; 40¢); "Helping Children Cope with Cancer" (13 pages; 60¢); "Does He Cry with Me?" (20 pages; 50¢); "Dealing with Depression in Illness" (60¢); "Help Me, Alcohol Controls My Family" (50¢); "How Families Cope with Cancer" (60¢). These pamphlets are all printed in attractive, high quality printing and paper.

There are also books like *Everyday Strength—A Cancer Patient's Guide to Spiritual Survival* (157 pages; published by Baker Book House); *Caring: Compassionate Concern for the Sick* (\$4.75); and *Coming to Grips with God* (\$5.75). Tapes and videos are available too. For a full catalog, write CARING, Box 1315, Abilene, TX 79604. We thank God for raising up this important ministry to the sick, fearful and despairing.

HOSEA

"Amazing Grace—Hope out of Trouble"

(2:2 - 3:5; read the passage first)

Ernest E. Lyon

In these two chapters there are many contradicting things, you might say. Central in these is the statement found in 2:15—"I will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope." That is, to our minds, contradictory because "Achor" means "troubling." We wonder how a valley of troubling could become a door of hope. But we will see if we meditate on the two chapters.

Verse two opens up our passage with what at first glance seems to be Hosea complaining about and condemning the actions of his wife Gomer. For three verses we could think that Hosea was speaking only of her, for the words did fit her actions. But that God was here using her actions as representative of Israel becomes more and more obvious as we read on through the chapter. Gomer, for example, knew where her food and water came from, but Israel did not recognize that the Lord was providing for her. And just as Gomer had gone into adultery, so Israel had sought after the gods of the people around them. It seems natural to us then to read from verse 9 through verse 13 what God was going to do about that situation.

But when we come to verse 14 we see a complete turn around and great tenderness shown. God is speaking of bringing Israel back to Himself. Out of that then comes our apparent contradiction in verse 15. There are three times that Achor is mentioned in the Old Testament. The first is in Joshua 7:23-26. Achan, whose name means "trouble," had caused such trouble in Israel that 36 men were killed and the people of Ai had defeated Israel. His trial and his being sentenced to death along with his family gave the name "Valley of Achor" to the place. Real trouble, obviously. The second passage is

in Isaiah 65:10—"Sharon will become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds, for my people who seek me." A valley of troubling to become a resting place when people turn to the Lord. That is similar to our passage here in Hosea 2:15.

It is very obvious that the things that the Lord declares in verse sixteen and the following verses about what will happen "in that day" are not things that have been fulfilled yet. Very often that phrase is referring to the events connected with the second coming of Christ. We should all look forward to the day when Israel will turn to the Lord as they have never really done before and He can bless them and give them the land He promised to Abraham and the others of the patriarchs.

But that does not tell us why the Valley of Achor is to become a door of hope. Let us think a minute about that. Hope relates to trouble because we hope to escape from that trouble. Why should we hope for a change if all you have is satisfactory? The idea of hoping for the better and risking all for it when what you have is good—such a note is rare, indeed. Hope came out of the original Valley of Achor—not for Achan but for Israel because they were getting rid of something that was holding back the Lord's blessing and keeping them from taking the land He had promised. Hosea has learned about the suffering of God. He has learned that necessity and the inevitableness of the severity of God, but now he will learn about restoration and some strange things that go with or before it. G. Campbell Morgan has well said, "It is this connection between troubling and hope which reveals God. It is the relation between Law and Grace. Law creates troubling as the result of sin. Grace creates hope through troubling."

Let us remind ourselves, then, that troubling as the result of sin is inevitable. By putting our three passages on Achor together, we come to this conclusion, "Troubling swings open a door of hope; troubling leads presently to the place of peace and the place of rest."

Fundamental behind all this is the severity of God with sin. Troubling, you see, as the result of sin, is truly inevitable; inevitable because of the law of God. Let us illustrate from the physical world. Put your hand in a fire and you do not break the physical law; instead you have pain and other results. I have never forgotten the time I backed into a wood stove with my hands behind me—I have never done it again! And, so, troubling must come from sin. Sin looks like a nice broad path, but our Lord says it leads to destruction, to a narrowness that crushes and curses life. On the other hand, the way of life seems very narrow—but Jesus says it broadens out into the great spaciousness of eternal life.

Here, then, we can understand grace. If sin brought no troubling, we would be destroyed. But troubling opens up the door of hope. So here Gomer says, "I will return to my husband"—just as the prodigal son decided to return to his father. The door was open, but each had to go through it—and Israel to this day has not entered.

We have learned, I hope, a bit about the nature of sin in the way it wounds the heart of God. And we have learned the necessity of severity with sin. But we have also learned that the valley of troubling is a door of hope. Hosea had not yet learned this, for Gomer was still

away; she was degraded; she was suffering and he was suffering. But God then gave him a strange command—"Go show your love to your wife again." Not just sympathize with her, not just teach her better, but love her. So he bought her back with half the price of a slave plus some grain. All this must have run counter to his natural feelings, but by obeying God he learned another lesson about God.

Now let us notice what Hosea learned so we can learn and remember. First, he learned that God suffers when His people are unfaithful. Just add together all the suffering of all human beings and you get a view of God's suffering. He is love and He loves sinners and suffers because they suffer. Secondly, we note that God cannot tolerate or condone sin—as He proved at Calvary. Sin defeats the purpose of love and entails suffering. If God did not take sin as He does, then you could prove to me that He is no lover of the human soul. Because sin hurts us, God hates it. Thirdly, though He hates sin, God loves the sinner. Do we? I wonder how many little boys have asked, "Does God love naughty boys?" and gotten the wrong answer of "No." That is unintentional blasphemy. And, lastly, God therefore seeks the sinner to restore him. He wants to restore him to his former place—or to a greater one. He has done this from the Garden of Eden through approximately 6,000 years.

In case you want to know if Hosea was living in communion with God, just look at the fact that he obeyed. I am sure that he did not go because he loved Gomer, but also sure that when he went the love returned if he had lost it.

In conclusion, let us make three general observations. First, sin has no door of hope and the sinner can not open such a door. But love can and love does. God is love and we were "without God and without hope." Secondly, the troubling that created the door of hope was not the troubling of Gomer (or Israel) but the troubling of God, the broken heart of God. And, finally, this passage opens for us a wonderful understanding of the love of God. So we sing, "I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me; Oh, it was wonderful" or "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all." You see, all this demands a responsibility on our part—"If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar." We need to know that God is love, but we also need to act in correspondence with that love in our dealings with men—from the best to the lowest derelict. As Hosea loved Gomer and served her, so we need to love the lowest sinner and serve him.

VOICES from the FIELDS

"The Field is the World"

Crystal (& Ted) Hardin

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

December 10, 1989

Ted and I chaperoned a group that travelled to the north coast for the national spelling bee and college bowl. Eleven bilingual schools participated. This competition was unusual in that lists of

the words to be used were sent to all the schools, but none of the Tegucigalpa schools received theirs! I guess the Honduran postal system was to blame. Even with the disadvantage, we won two second places, a third place, and a first place (won by Hope Hardin in seventh grade).

Additional excitement was added to the trip by the failure of the bus light about 1½ hours from Tegucigalpa. There are no gas stations and no telephones outside the big cities, so we completed the trip over winding mountain roads with Ted standing at the front with a flashlight to signal oncoming traffic, and one of the students at the back. We thank the Lord for His care!

The school runs six buses up and down the hill every day over a winding road that rises about 3,000 feet in 5-6 miles. Part of the road is unpaved, and even what is paved has potholes the size of a dishpan. Our buses were all bought in the States, and breakdowns are frequent. We needed another bus this summer, but we couldn't get any dollars. We have to apply for them, and schools had low priority this year. Please pray for safety for these buses.

Our Sunday Bible clubs are going pretty well, although we have so little time with the boys. Some of our friends have been working with boys at one of the centers across from us and several of the boys asked to be baptized. They were not able to get permission from the director, however, even though a neighbor had offered the use of his swimming pool. One of the centers is much more responsive, and we see most of the kids quite a few times, but the other one has a real high turnover, with many new faces every month. Please pray for these boys.

Men from our church have gone out twice to put tin roofs on the shacks of people in the poorest section of Honduras. They have only one room with a dirt floor, and sometimes the rains wash them right down the hill side. Ted and John T. went to work, and John was quite a big help carrying tools and hammering nails. There is a struggling church in the neighborhood, and we hope this work will help the minister to relate to the people. Ted was asked by the minister to supervise the second work crew that went out and it looks now like the position is semi-permanent. Ted is very interested in helping these people and giving John this valuable experience. One elderly lady had a 6 month old baby in her shack that weighed only 5 pounds. It's heart breaking to see the needs.

The campaign is finally over! Elections here were two weeks ago, and a new party that promises to change things and clean up government was voted in. Most people think the only changes will be new faces in government jobs, but we hope Honduras will be able to avoid the pitfalls that Nicaragua and El Salvador have fallen into. Although democracy is only seven years old here (military dictatorships ruled before), elections were fairly peaceful. There were a few bombs, but we didn't know of anyone being hurt. There were armed guards at all the overpasses for a couple of weeks before the election, and vehicles were stopped and frisked for weapons. One of our teachers almost lost his pocketknife. Things are just different here. Many people carry guns, and even the grocery stores have

guards armed with rifles. Once you get used to seeing them you don't even notice any more. It surely does cut down on robberies.

Speaking of robberies, our house was broken into several weeks ago. They got our short wave radio, a bicycle, my jewelry (nothing of any value except to me), a stash of toiletries we had brought from the States. A friend of ours drove up out front and evidently frightened them off before they got our T.V. and tape recorder. Thank the Lord for sparing us. Several teachers have had their houses robbed while they were at church on Sunday mornings. Please pray for our protection.

Winston & Irene Allen

January 1990

12731 Spring Brook Drive, Eagle River, Alaska 99577

The first meeting in the new part of our building was conducted December 3, 1989. The first baptism in the baptistry was last Sunday (January 7, 1990). At the present time we are using folding chairs, and a speaker's stand which I made years ago. The Municipality requires that landscaping and paving the parking area be completed this year.

Irene has been ill for six weeks with a vicious kind of virus which caused high fever and much severe abdominal and back pain. We have made several trips to the doctor in Eagle River and one trip to the Radiology Dept. of Providence Hospital in Anchorage. The symptoms now seem to be decreasing. Yesterday we learned about three others in this area who had the same illness.

Abnormal weather seems to be the norm in many parts of the world now. *The Anchorage Times* yesterday had the headline *Snowfall 50% Above Average*. So far we have had about 60 inches of snow and much sub-zero weather. However at times warm Chinook winds from the south cause melting of snow, and this produces hazardous driving and walking conditions when freezing temperatures return.

During the past six weeks I have learned much from the promises, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" and "My grace is sufficient for thee." My left eye is useless for reading. A lens implant has been recommended.

Re: the Nakaharas

Shizuoka City, Japan

January 1990

The construction work was halted during the Christmas holidays so that the workers could have some time off with their families. Work was to resume on January 11. Before they left they were able to get the roof on the building. Teruko Nakahara wrote us during the holidays sharing this information. She says that the project is now expected to be completed sometime around March 1. Also, final payment is to be made on March 1. \$15,000 is still needed to meet that deadline.

Continue to pray for Teruko. A tremendous amount has happened in her life in a very short time. She has lost her husband, she has had two daughters to marry (both living in the States), she has had a son go off to college, she has witnessed her home and church building torn down, and she has had several painful physical problems

develop recently. Teruko also feels the burden and responsibility for the building and church work. Remember her. Michiya Nakahara continues in his studies at Osaka Bible Seminary and comes home on weekends when he can.

—Bob M. Yarbrough, Treasurer
Nakahara Mission Fund
7110 Bruton Rd.
Dallas, TX 75217

Bob & Joy Garrett

Ruwa, Zimbabwe

January 11, 1990

We began the new year with our annual all day meeting held this time here at Ruwa. There were between 800 and 900 people here January 1st.

Bob spoke in the morning at 10 a.m. on the "Signs of the Times" and the second sermon on "Christian Weddings."

The cooks had labored far into the night cooking the New Year's lunch. At midnight we paused for prayers and Bible reading, Revelation 21:1-8.

We thanked God for his goodness toward us thru 1989 and prayed for His Coming in 1990.

In the afternoon the youth presented a play. Then they had the finals of their interchurch Bible Quiz Competition. They have a trophy which Hatfield youth won.

We were grateful it did not rain as two of our trucks did not have canopies. Our drivers rose early and worked late to get the people of 18 different congregations here.

Nemesio & Myrna Auxtero

Bohol, Philippines

January 15, 1990

We want to thank you all for your support and prayers.

Our people face danger and uncertainty each day. Just two days ago, Trinidad, the town next to ours, had a battle between the military and the rebels. A bus-load and two trucks full of rebels heavily armed opened gunfire. They burned a judge's office and a radio room and also took ammunition. But 5 rebels were killed. Yesterday for vengeance they attacked another nearby town. Trinidad is only 6 miles from our town, which may be attacked soon.

The work at the village of Bangcal, where there are many spiritists, is growing. We have baptized 25 people in less than one year. We still worship under a tree. We sense very strong opposition from demonic forces.

There has been so much sickness lately. And because of economic problems and widespread malnutrition, we foresee more sickness ahead. People's resistance is low, and there seems no end to medical emergencies. We have two members going blind unless they get proper medication, another needs an operation, and others have kidney diseases, goiter, etc. Debts rise and people get discouraged.

It did not rain for over a month, and crops were dying. Then it rained much for two weeks and floods may totally destroy the crops. This will greatly affect our people who already have financial handicaps. Please pray that the Lord will give us all sufficient grace.

The 1990's – What May We Expect?

Robert Shank

Conclusion (Part 3)

Jesus Will Reign from Jerusalem over Israel and the Nations

Jesus is coming, the King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the Land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. . . . [The King, born at Bethlehem to be "ruler over Israel," Mic. 5:2, Lk. 1:31-33] will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace. . . . He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. . . . The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations . . . nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. . . . Then the survivors of all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem [survivors of Armageddon and Messiah's judgment of the nations] will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. . . . The Lord will be King over the whole earth. (Jer. 23:5, 6; Mic. 5:4, 5a; Zech. 9:10; Isa. 2:3,4; Zech 14:16, 9 NIV)

"But," say our amillennial friends, "God never intended the many prophecies of Messiah's reign to be fulfilled literally, but only spiritually, and they are all fulfilled in the triumphant, glorious, righteous reign of Christ from heaven over the nations on earth through his churches, from Pentecost to the end of the age and the Day of Judgment, and the reign of Christ over the nations is going on right now . . . er, ah . . . maybe they will all be fulfilled symbolically and spiritually in heaven. In any case, Jesus will never reign on earth from Mount Zion in Jerusalem over Israel and the nations, for he said, 'My kingdom is not of this world . . . my kingdom is not from hence,' John 18:36. Why don't you pre-mils believe him?"

The question at issue is not a matter of believing Jesus, but rather of understanding what he said. Unfortunately, the almost universal rendering of the Greek text of John 18:36 does not accurately reflect what Jesus said. The Greek word *basileia* may mean either "kingdom" or "kingship." Obviously "kingship" implies "kingdom," and vice versa, but though one Greek word serves for both, the two things are not at all the same. Kingship is the right and power to rule, and kingdom is the realm of the rule. In Jesus' exchange with Pilate, the issue was kingship rather than kingdom. Pilate's question was not "Do you have a kingdom?" but rather "Are you the King of the Jews? . . . Are you a king?" (Jn. 18:33-37). Jesus affirmed that he is indeed a king, and the King of the Jews (v. 37, Lk. 23:3). But he also declared that his kingship is not to be established by any action of his followers or to be conferred on him from any source on earth—"not from hence," not from this world. In contrast with the many inexcusable casual translations which totally ignore the influence of context

on the meaning of *basileia* in John 18:36, RSV is precise and correct: "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world."

Jesus' kingship, not conferred by the world, is by appointment of his Father, who has declared to a world in rebellion which does not wish to have it so, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill" (Ps. 2:6). To his Son the King, God has said, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron sceptre, you will dash them to pieces like pottery" (Ps. 2:8, 9). God has appointed Jesus King, and he has appointed the realm of his kingdom: all nations on earth, from the throne on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, to the ends of the earth.

The vast array of Messianic prophecies concerning the reign on earth of Messiah (much detailed) are to be understood literally rather than allegorically. The church is the kingdom of Christ on earth today, a spiritual kingdom in the hearts and lives of his followers, resented and under attack by the world. But in its ultimate triumphant dimension, the Messianic Kingdom awaits the coming of the King in righteous judgment (Armageddon) to rule the nations with an iron sceptre (Ps. 110; Ps. 2:9; Rev. 12:5; 19:11 - 20:6; 2:25-29; 5:9, 10; 2 Tim. 2:12). In light of the world scene, I believe the triumph of the Messianic Kingdom is near at hand. I believe the end of the decade of the 1990's will see Jesus reigning over Israel and the nations from the throne of David on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

Some Observations

Recent events in eastern Europe have astounded the world, with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain and the emergence of freedom, democracy and independence on a scale undreamed of just weeks ago. We can thank God for the recovery of religious freedom in countries where such freedom has been unknown since World War II and so many have been imprisoned, tortured, and martyred for their faith. The world has been surprised at the strength of faith and devotion which has persisted among many under such severe persecution.

What now? How will the newly liberated nations cope with the problems and opportunities created by their new situation in the areas of the economy, internal politics, and international relations? What developments will be forthcoming? God alone knows, and time will tell. In view of the spectacular developments of recent weeks, should we now modify our expectations concerning fulfillment of the agenda of end-time events as we understand it from the prophetic disclosures of Scripture? By no means. Some, of course, think otherwise.

"All these silly premillennial notions about Russia sweeping down into the Middle East and Israel and making a bold strike for world conquest must now be abandoned," say many of our amillennial friends with glee. "The Soviet Union is tottering on the brink of collapse and will be lucky to survive their horrendous economic and political problems, and Russia will not be a threat to any nation or the world at large in the foreseeable future, if indeed ever. All of this

spells 'ten-four, over and out' for all the preposterous interpretations and ridiculous expectations of poor, misguided premillennialists."

Not at all. Whatever the problems of the Soviets and Warsaw Pact nations, of Germany and western Europe, and indeed of all the nations, and whatever the course of events in the immediate future, the end-time prophetic agenda declared in Scripture will all be fulfilled precisely on schedule in God's time. The agenda is right "on track," and we are now in the "peace and safety" interval prior to the coming of the Day of the Lord "as a thief in the night." That Day will bring "sudden destruction" to an unsuspecting world fast asleep with no perception of the lateness of the hour (1 Thess. 5:1-10) and the peril of their situation in their adamant stance of willful and obstinate rebellion against God and his Anointed One, whom the Father has appointed King of all nations to the ends of the earth (Ps. 2:1-9).

Friend, we shall be foolish indeed if we are caught up in the euphoria so much that we lose our perspective and join the world in "sleeping in" and thus fail to watch for our Lord's coming in righteous judgment for the world, but with joy and deliverance for all his own, who are "not appointed to wrath" that will fall upon a wicked and rebellious world in the soon-coming Day of the Lord. Let us be found faithful, waiting and eagerly watching for the coming of our Lord and Savior (1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Cor. 1:7, 8; Heb. 9:28; 2 Tim 4:8; Mk. 13:32-37; Mt. 25:1-13).

A word now concerning the Rapture, our blessed Lord's sudden catching away of all his own, his faithful followers (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; Phil. 3:20 - 4:1; 1 Jn. 2:28 - 3:3; Rev. 3:10, 11; Mt. 25:6, 10; Jn. 14:3). When will the Rapture occur in the time-frame of end-time events? My belief is that it most likely will occur at the mid-point of the seven-year "night" (as we may think of it) of the 70th Week. This would be immediately prior to the blasphemous act of the Man of Sin in appropriating the temple (to be built in the near future, after negotiation of a treaty recognizing Israel's right to be a nation secure in the Land—the "covenant" of Dan. 9:27) as the temple for his New Age Religion, enthroning himself in the temple as God, and forbidding all worship other than of himself (2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 13:3-18). Coinciding with this act of supreme blasphemy, Satan will be finally and forever cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:7-12) and denied further access to accuse the faithful before God (v. 10). In the seven-year "night" of the 70th Week, "at midnight" the church will hear the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet him." The faithful, "those who are ready," will go out to meet him and will go with him to the wedding feast (Mt. 25:6, 10; Rev. 19:7-9). The general season of our Lord's coming can and should be known to us (1 Thess. 5:4; Mt. 24:32-34), but the day and hour cannot be known, and the watchword is "ready" (even as for the unknown day and hour of our death, should it occur prior to our Lord's coming).

In a real sense the whole era, beginning with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, is "the last days" of the pre-Messianic age (coincident with the church age), to culminate in the coming of Messiah in righteous judgment of the nations and to reign over Israel

and all nations. We are now in the last days of "the last days," and the King is soon to come.

Israel, a nation again in the Land, is no strange unforeseen "accident of history" contrary to the plan and purpose of God, but instead is providential in preparation for the coming of God's appointed King, His Son, to reign on Mount Zion over Israel and all nations to the ends of the earth (Ps. 2:6-9). The agenda of end-time events, involving all nations, will revolve around Israel as its epicenter. What is the agenda?

The next major event on the agenda will be Israel's swift and total devastation of all the surrounding nations that have tormented her and plotted her annihilation for so long now (Zech 12:1-9, God's destruction through little Israel of all the surrounding nations that have come against her, v. 9). This will be followed by a negotiated settlement with a treaty (the "covenant" of Dan. 9:27) guaranteeing Israel's security as a nation in the Land, but requiring the dismantling of Israel's military establishment, making her dependent on "friends" for her defense. In God's time schedule, the treaty will mark the beginning of Israel's 70th Week. The first half of the Week will be "peaceful," but will conclude with the appropriation of Israel's newly built temple by her erstwhile "friend" (the Antichrist) and abolition of Israel's temple worship and prohibition of all religions other than the New Age Religion centering in Antichrist, the self-proclaimed God of the New Age (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 13:3-18). The latter half of the 70th Week will be a time of fearful persecution of the faithful who will refuse to worship the new God.

Near the end of the Week, Russia and allied nations will sweep through the Middle East and into Israel (Dan. 11:40-45; Ezek. 38 & 39, note "in the latter years . . . in the last days," vs. 8, 16 NASB), where their hordes will be destroyed at the coming of Messiah in the world-event of Armageddon (Zech. 14:1-7; Jer. 25:29-33; Zeph. 1:2, 3, 14-18, Isa. 24:1-13; 63:1-6; Rev. 19:11-21, and many, many other passages).

Mention must be made of another of Isaiah's numerous Armageddon passages, Isa. 34:1-10, in which a cardinal aspect of the purposes of God in the great judgment event of the Day of the Lord is declared: "For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause" (v. 8). "Zion's cause" is today cursed by Israel's neighbor nations and the PLO and all Islam, and by most of the world. It is also ridiculed (even cursed) by many who propose to speak for the church and for God and his kingdom. They will all learn to their dismay, and soon, that God's kingdom purposes for Israel are altogether otherwise than those advocated by Israel's critics and opponents.

In the second of Isaiah's five Odes of God's Servant Messiah, the Messiah says:

And now the Lord says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself (for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has been my strength)—he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. . . . I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore

the Land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, to say to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!' They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. . . . He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. . . . See, they will come from afar—some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Sinim." Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. (Isa. 49:5-13)

Messiah, our Savior Jesus, is himself God's living Covenant "to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept," God's living "covenant for the people [Israel] to restore the Land and to reassign its [centuries-long] desolate inheritances" when God will bring his people Israel "from afar," back to the Land of Israel where he will "comfort his people and will have compassion on his [long] afflicted ones." So shall it be, soon.

[I must thank the editor of this periodical for his kind patience with a writer whose paper on "The 1990's—What May We Expect?" was over-long and heavy laden with exposition. I did not want to offer predictions without presenting the biblical basis for my expectations. I hope I may be forgiven for imposing on the patience of my readers. God bless us all.]

NEWS AND NOTES

Sudden Promotion to Heaven

Neal Phillips was killed instantly when a truck veered out of control and hit him head-on. This occurred Jan. 18th. Neal had ministered at the Oak Grove Church of Christ in Independence, La., for 17 years; before that he preached for other congregations. He was one of the original singers in the Good Tidings Quartet that engaged in traveling evangelism and radio ministry, beginning in the 1950's. Just 3 months ago Neal wrote a report for W & W about the deaths of the 3 founders/leaders of the Good Tidings Radio Ministry, and now he is with them—and with his Lord. Pray for his wife and sons in their sudden bereavement.

URGENT PRAYER REQUEST:

We knew that James Ashley, missionary to the Solomon Islands, had gotten malaria a time or two since beginning his work there a few years ago. But word came from his father last week that actually James has had recurrences of the disease 12 or 13 times! "He did not recover so quickly this time. Apparently a doctor advised him to take an eradication course of medicine, which sometimes is harder on the person than the sickness itself. Please pray for his healing & some way of ridding the village of the anopheles mosquito which transmits the malaria parasite."

Central Bible Institute, Manila, Philippines

There are 112 students in C.B.I. this semester. There are twelve teachers now, which means a higher budget for the school. We are glad that Brother Arsenio and Sister Pat Eniego are teaching here now.

I am still enrolled at Asian Theological Seminary, for 9 units, as I work on my Master of Divinity.

—Virgilio Torrefiel (pres., C.B.I.)

Pinch-hitter Available

Ernest Lyon retired from regular preaching at the Highland Church in Louisville last December. He is available through March of this year to preach elsewhere as needed. After that he will be willing to fill in once in a while, but not regularly. His phone is 502-451-5053.

Cramer & Hanover Church of Christ, Lexington, Kentucky

Sunday March 4th commemorates our "75" years of existence as the Cramer & Hanover Church of Christ. Plans are being made now to celebrate with "All-Member" Homecoming—Special Sunday Morning Service—followed with dinner on the grounds! We're planning & praying for a record Sunday in attendance. Your encouragement is important to making this day a special day in the life of the Church.

CALLING ALL LADIES

The annual Ladies Inspiration Day will be held at the Portland Church in Louisville on Saturday, April 21. The theme, "Compelled by His Love, Committed to His Service," reflects the dual aims of the day which are spiritual enrichment and encouragement to be involved in practical service to God. The "L.I.D." is a meeting held yearly which meets in a different part of Kentuckiana each time.

Henryville, Indiana

PRAYER PARTNER/SECRET PAL—Drawing for Prayer Partner/Secret Pal will be next Sunday. I would like to encourage all of our ladies to take part in this activity this year. Praying specifically for someone else's needs enriches our own prayer life. The occasional note or small gift that you send to your prayer pal could be just what she needs to lift her spirits on a particular day.

One of our Ladies Class projects has been to pray for our ladies everyday. Every woman who attends here is on a list and one of the ladies who attend our class is praying for you every day. We could increase our prayer efforts if more of our ladies would take advantage of our class. We meet the first Monday night of each month and we are engaged in a study of prayer. Our sessions are always enjoyable and enriching. Are you too busy to give the Lord an hour of your time once a month? Do other activities come first? What does God expect of you?

Linton Church of Christ, Indiana:

"Adventures! in Christian Living"—This is the name of the men's leadership training course that began recently here at Linton, with men from 4 congregations represented. Those enrolled are men from age 19 to age 80. Bro. David Tapp is the instructor for this course, which lasts for 9 weeks. (We meet each Monday evening).

Jennings, LA

On the second Sunday of December, through the combined efforts of Avenue E church in Crowley and the two churches in Jennings, a 40-voice choir presented a program of carols at the local nursing home.

The ladies of the church prepared and delivered fruit baskets to shut-ins and needy in our church family. On December 16 a progressive supper was enjoyed at 4 homes by over 50

participants. With an Adopt-a-child program, 10 children were given clothing, toys, and food.

Some 244 saints attended the 54th consecutive annual Watch Night service with Bob Yarbrough as keynote speaker, "Joyful Sounds" from Crowley, "Revelators" from Dallas, several guest speakers, and wonderful congregational singing. Afterwards, some 69 diehards spent 5 more hours at the Lock-In at Elsie's Skating Rink!

We began a new attendance check system using a name card board, asking members to turn their name cards over when they arrive on Sundays. Plans include a visitation program worked from this.

During 1989, God blessed us with 14 new births in Christ; paying off the mortgage on our building; a new church library of almost 500 books and a dozen videotapes; classrooms repainted and upgraded; two great gospel meetings with Bro. Val and Bro. Nathan Burks; and 112 registered visitors. What a wonderful year!

"Words of Life" Newsletter RADIO CAROLINE—

Reaching: England and Europe (including Holland, Belgium France, Ireland and Scotland.) Radio Caroline reaches millions of souls with the Gospel, including over 12 million people in London!

Since broadcasting began in England, religious programs have been **Prohibited—No Gospel Programs!** But now, thanks to Radio Caroline, England's unique radio ship, our message is getting through! Praise God!

Gallatin Church of Christ

Evening Bereavement Support Group Being Organized. If you you lost a loved one to death, you may want to become part of this group being organized by Ramsey Memorial Hospice of Sumner Memorial Hospital.

The Support Group will meet each Tuesday for five weeks. There is no fee. Discussions will include issues such as loneliness, practical and emotional adjustments, and helping other family members adjust.

Southeast Church of Christ, Louisville

Hall Crowder from Operation Mobilization will be here on Sunday, January 14, 1990. He will share a missions message with the adult Sunday School classes and will also present the morning message during our regular worship time.

D

Mrs. Hollis Brown
2118 Maryland Ave.

Louisville KY 40205

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"The Church on Target" — Friday evening

SAM WINGER

A specialist in inner city ministry
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Panel Discussion

Friday morning, all speakers

Evening Sessions, 7:00 p.m.
Southeast Church of Christ
12610 Taylorsville Road
Jeffersontown, Kentucky

Friday, 9:15 - Noon
Portland Ave. Church of Christ
2500 Portland Avenue
Louisville, Kentucky

March 15 - 16, 1990