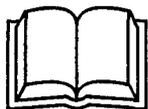


"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

April, 2005

< **GODLY WISDOM** >

Questions and Answers

Important Announcements:

S.C.C. Reunion, May 30: page 126

Sunday School Quarterly: Inside Front Cover

Famine in Zimbabwe: BackCover

A Reluctant Announcement – Please Note!

We are sorry to say that at the end of 2005 we shall not publish our Sunday School Quarterly any more. Our last quarterly will be for the months of September through November, with lessons on the book of Acts written by Bob Yarbrough.

The quarterly goes back almost 90 years. R. H. Boll began writing regular lessons for Lord's Day classes when he became editor in 1916. So far as I know, he was the one and only writer of those lessons till his death in 1956. Forty consecutive years--wow! And of course he edited the monthly W&W too, all those years. Again, wow!

Since then a number of other capable men have written the S.S. lessons, but Carl Kitzmiller had by far the longest tenure: two separate periods adding up to 29 years. During those decades the W&W editors hardly had to worry about a thing so far as the quarterly was concerned.

In recent years nobody has combined the three great traits of ability, continuing *availability* and willingness to carry on with such a thorough commitment. We are very thankful for all who have helped. But none was able to write for an entire year, due to other commitments. Several took an entire quarter at a time. But as time passed, we had to divide most quarters between two writers, or even three (and one time, four!). The burdens also have become too great for the publisher and our office manager to continue.

There are various other good quarterlies available. Perhaps you who read Word and Work can suggest to our subscribers which quarterlies you have found (or heard from others) to be truly profitable—true to God's word and written both capably and practically. Let us know your recommendations and we will pass them on to all our readers.

We hope our present subscribers will continue through the fall quarter. The June through August quarter covers the synoptic gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke. Our writers are Darren Johnson, Cecil Garrett and Bob Yarbrough. Then the fall quarter will cover Acts, as mentioned above.

We appreciate you, our readers. I wonder which living subscriber has taken the SS quarterly for the greatest length of time?

[to Inside Back Cover]

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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Godly Wisdom

Alex V. Wilson

This month we are reprinting by permission a number of GracEmails by Edward Fudge. His "column" has often appeared in W&W, but not to this extent. Our good brother's writings impress me as Biblical, profitable and interesting. Most of the time I agree with him, but even when I don't he stimulates me to reflect, study and sometimes change my mind. Obviously a lot of other folks feel the same way, for there are over 4,200 subscribers in dozens of countries circling the globe.

He usually sends out 2-3 GracEmails weekly. Anyone may get a free regular subscription by going to www.EdwardFudge.com/gracemail/subscribe.html. Then if you wish to quit getting them you may unsubscribe at the same address. Also, anyone who wishes to reprint any GracEmail (or any number of them) may do so *IF* they (1) print it in its entirety and without change; (2) add a line stating: "Reprinted from gracEmail by permission. To subscribe free to gracEmail, go to www.EdwardFudge.com"; and (3) add him to your mailing list so he can see your paper.

Some GracEmails are doctrinal, others devotional, others practical. In this issue you may read about unanswered prayers, 70 A.D. and Christ's return, church changes and controversies, the battle of the sexes, "Fundamentalists," cuss words, and more. Enjoy—with discernment.

PAID MINISTERS

Edward Fudge

A correspondent inquires: "I am curious as to your opinion of the 'paid minister.' As you are aware, many argue against church buildings and paid ministers. As a paid minister this idea naturally is a bit disturbing to me. However, I wish to do what pleases God."

* * *

The New Testament scriptures do not portray institutionalized, corporate-style churches with budgets, buildings and paid staff. One certainly cannot find there an exact equivalent to the modern "paid minister" who works as an employee for a local church. That is not the end of this subject, however, for the New Testament teaches by principle as well as by direct example.

The New Testament does describe evangelists (missioners) who go into new territory with the gospel and who are supported financially by those who already believe (3 John 5-8; Rom. 15:23-24; Phil. 4:15-19). It portrays pastors/elders who are financially supported for their spiritual work (1 Tim. 5:17-18). Jesus is pleased when his followers supply the monetary needs of those men and women who diligently and faithfully give their lives in service to others for his sake (Matt. 10:40-42; 1 Cor. 9:14). "The laborer is worthy of his hire" is a biblical principle (Deut. 24:15; Lk. 10:7). The principle remains true regardless of job titles and other formal, external details.

Scripture also makes clear that God disapproves of those who merchandise the gospel for personal advantage, selfishly "fleece" God's sheep or who do "spiritual" work with the primary motivation of financial gain (Ezek. 34:1-10; 1 Pet. 5:2). There were career "hirelings" in biblical times and that species remains alive today (John 10:12-13). It is important now, as in ancient days, to observe the lifestyles of religious leaders and to measure them by the attitudes and conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ himself (Matt. 7:15-23).

SALVATION: PROCESS OR EVENT?

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber in the San Francisco Bay area asks whether salvation is a process rather than an event.

* * *

"Salvation" is another word for "deliverance" and there are many ways of talking about God's mighty deliverance of sinners. For example, the Bible speaks of justification, sanctification and glorification. These involve past, present and future so that the believer may say, "I have been justified; I am being sanctified; I will be glorified." Justification is God's work for us; sanctification is God's work in us; glorification is God's work on us. Justification delivers us from the sin's penalty (Rom. 3-4). Sanctification delivers us from sin's power (Rom. 7). Glorification will deliver us from sin's presence (Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 15).

There is a sense in which we have been saved (Eph. 2:8). But the Bible also speaks of those who are "being" saved (1 Cor. 1:18). And it says that we "shall be saved" in the Last Day (Rom. 5:9-10). We have been redeemed, liberated, by Jesus' blood -- but we also look forward to the day of redemption (Eph. 1:7, 14). We have the Spirit of God already, but we anticipate the fullness of the Spirit in

New Heavens and New Earth. We have been washed and cleansed, but the Christian life involves ongoing cleansing (1 Cor. 6:11; 1 John 1:7). The Messiah came and he is yet to come (Heb. 9:26, 28). The Kingdom is here but it is also coming, and Jesus taught us to pray that it will come on earth as it is in heaven (Col. 1:13; 2 Pet. 1:11; Matt. 6:10).

These days we are so accustomed to hearing people talk about "getting saved" that we might find it surprising to realize that the New Testament scarcely uses that language. "Salvation" -- the outpouring and outworking of God's grace -- is not only a single-point event but a lifelong process. Some of us come to God in crisis-experiences; others are nurtured in the faith from infancy and have no "Damascus-Road" testimony at all. Is salvation an event? Indeed it is. Is it a process? Indeed it is. Is it past, present or future? Again the answers are "Yes!" We may describe salvation in the simplest of terms and speak truthfully. But as much as we ever learn, we will never be able to describe it exhaustively. Thanks be to God for his incomparable gift!

INTENT AND DEED

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber offers the following analogy to prove that someone who dies without baptism will be lost, even if he dies as he drives to the river for that purpose. "Hypothetically speaking, if a lady falls in love and agrees to marry a young man, receives a ring, buys her wedding dress and goes to the church, but her husband-to-be dies on his way to the wedding, would she be considered married in the eyes of the law so as to inherit his estate?"

* * *

Speaking as an attorney, I can tell you that she would not inherit as his wife. But taking off that hat and putting on my Christian teacher hat, I will add that this analogy illustrates very well the great difference between law and grace. It also highlights the difference between abstract theory and personal relationships. What do you think the deceased groom-to-be in your hypothetical story would do if he could decide the matter? Jesus, our benefactor, does live to administer his estate.

Now here's a question for you.

Question: Not so hypothetically speaking, if God told a man to go offer his only son as a sacrifice, and the man rose up early in the

morning and went to the place God had shown him, built an altar, tied his son and put him on the altar, raised the knife to slay his son, THEN STOPPED -- did he "offer" his son? (Gen. 22:1-19.)

Answer: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, OFFERED UP Isaac; and he who had received the promises WAS OFFERING UP his only begotten son" (Heb. 11:17).

Moral -- Man looks at the outward appearance, but Jehovah looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). We are justified by grace (not by baptism) through faith (not through baptism). Even if that were not the case, however, the story of Abraham and Isaac shows that the person in this hypothetical question would be safe in God's keeping.

FORGIVING OTHERS

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber in Delaware writes, "Someone in a Bible class recently said that we don't have to forgive everyone because some people are purely evil. I have always thought it our duty to forgive anyone who wrongs us."

* * *

Jesus said that we are to forgive anyone who sins against us and asks for our forgiveness (Lk. 17:3-4). Refusing to forgive is really not an option if we expect to be forgiven ourselves (Matt. 6:14-15). The Christian is called to imitate God. That means, among other things, that we are to forgive others just as God has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32). As a practical matter, only those who know their own need of forgiveness usually find the grace to forgive others who wrong them. In the same way, the ability to forgive others is strong evidence that the person forgiving has experienced the grace of forgiveness by God.

Even though we forgive another person who wrongs us, the wrongdoer cannot experience and enjoy that forgiveness without acknowledging the wrong done and accepting forgiveness. However, our forgiveness does not depend on the wrongdoer's attitude or conduct. We are to have a heart ready and willing to forgive. We are not to hold grudges or keep account of evil done to us. We had certainly dare not turn anyone away who asks forgiveness for a wrong done to us.

Forgiveness is a relational event between persons. For that reason, the only human being who can forgive a wrongdoer is the indi-

vidual who has been wronged. Unless you and I lost loved ones in the September 11 terrorist attacks, for example, we cannot forgive the perpetrators of those horrendous deeds. Nor does human forgiveness eliminate the need for divine forgiveness. Finally, even divine and human forgiveness combined do not remove the legal, personal or social consequences of criminal acts or other evil deeds.

PARADOX AND MYSTERY

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber asks if God is one or three. Another inquires whether salvation involves human accountability or divine sovereignty.

* * *

Whether we consider the nature of God or the workings of our salvation, we hear Scripture speaking in stereo. It is as if we are wearing a set of earphones, listening to different sounds in each ear. We should not think in terms of either/or in such cases but rather of both/and. Theologians sometimes use the terms "paradox" and "mystery" when talking of such matters. These subjects remind us that God's thoughts and ways are higher than our own (Isa. 55:9; Rom. 11:33). We can no more grasp such concepts with our finite minds than we can simultaneously view an entire globe of the earth with our physical eyes.

I was recently impressed with the paradoxical nature of spiritual truth in reading Proverbs 16:9, which says: "The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps." Does the believer steer his or her own life or is God in control? As with the questions at the top of this gracEmail, again the answer is "Yes." Both are true. Can we fully understand any of this? Likely not, if the experience of those who have gone before us teaches us anything at all. Given such choices, Christian people too often choose sides rather than live with mystery. Too often, those on all sides then minimize or overlook entirely the truth that the opposing side proclaims and treasures. We need to hear truth with both ears, even when it transcends our minds' ability to comprehend and explain. The one and only God has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God initiates, empowers and accomplishes our salvation, but we make genuine and responsible decisions along the way. Some wise sage has said: "Pray as if it all depended on God; work as if it all depended on you." When all else has been said, that is quite good advice indeed.

70 A.D. AND CHRIST'S RETURN

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber heard a preacher say that Jesus Christ returned invisibly and for the last time when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70. This reader asks whether we ought still to expect Jesus to return visibly and in person at the end of human history.

* * *

Yes, we should. I believe for many reasons that preacher was mistaken but here will mention only two. The first reason is scriptural; the second is historical. Shortly before Jesus' betrayal, his apostles were admiring the great stones of Herod's Temple. Jesus noted that the time would come when not one stone would be left on another. The apostles asked when this would occur, and what signs would foreshadow it and the end of the world (or "age"; the same Greek expression found in Matt. 13:39-40, 49 and 28:20). Jesus responded with the prophecy recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, in which he predicted in detail the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple -- events fulfilled at the hand of the Romans in A.D. 69-70. Jesus also foretold events related to his personal, visible return at the close of earthly history.

It is true that Scripture sometimes uses prophetic symbolism picturing the end of the world to describe a national judgment such as fell upon Jerusalem. Indeed, God's judgment on Jerusalem provided a preview in many ways of the final judgment yet to come. For that reason, it is sometimes difficult at first glance to know which of those events Jesus is describing -- especially in Matthew 24 and in Mark 13. However, Luke clearly distinguishes between the events of A.D. 70 and the events surrounding Jesus' own visible, personal return at the close of human history. He does this by inserting an intervening era not mentioned by Matthew or by Mark -- an era identified as "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).

During this intervening era, said Jesus, the Jews would be scattered among the nations and Jerusalem would be "trampled under foot by the Gentiles." This era would follow the destruction of Jerusalem and separate it from Jesus' personal return at the close of history. Based on this detail recorded only by Luke, we may also draw a line in the accounts of Matthew and Mark, separating Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70 (Matt. 24:4-22; Mark 13:5-20) from Jesus' personal return in power at the close of earthly history (Matt. 24:23-31; Mark 13:21-27). Indeed, with generations of Christians who preceded us,

we may confidently affirm that Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again (visibly, according to Acts 1:11 and Rev. 1:7).

HISTORICAL NOTE: Those Christians who lived within a century after the destruction of Jerusalem still looked forward to Jesus' personal return in the future. Sometime between A.D. 138-161, Justin Martyr wrote concerning Christ: "For the prophets have proclaimed two advents of his: the one, that which is already past, when he came as a dishonored and suffering man; but the second, when, according to prophecy, he shall come from heaven with glory, accompanied by his angelic host, when also he shall raise the bodies of all men who have lived . . ." (First Apology, Chapter 52).

UNANSWERED PRAYERS

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber writes: "Over 20 years ago, I prayed for God to heal a sister in Christ. She died, leaving a husband and small son. Several years later, a beloved elder and his wife died despite earnest prayer by many. Later my mother and father died of illnesses within three weeks of each other. By then, I'd quit praying altogether, convinced that God didn't answer my prayers and doubting that I was even a Christian. I used to cry myself to sleep, feeling like my knuckles were bleeding from banging on God's door. I still enjoy going to worship, helping others, teaching about Christ and doing whatever good I can. But I feel like a deaf-mute Christian when it comes to praying."

* * *

Truly I empathize with your grief. I also have experienced the agony of seeing a loved one die whom I had begged God to heal and restore. I had to be reminded that death is the common lot of all mortals until Jesus comes and that sickness or disease will probably be the occasion by which it comes to most of us. There is a time to die, in God's purpose, and God answers prayers for healing that fit that divine purpose (Eccles. 3:1-2; Psalm 139:16). One day he will answer our untimely prayers as well, when he "heals" his people perfectly by resurrecting them to deathlessness and eternal glory (1 Cor. 15:51-55).

Is it possible you have missed seeing the forest by focusing on particular trees? The disappointment of your unanswered prayers for loved ones to live might well have distracted you from noticing nu-

merous other prayers which God did answer. Many people find it helpful to keep a prayer journal--in which they daily write down every request they make to God, beside which they also record answers to those regular prayers. When God says "not now" to an enormous prayer request we sometimes overlook his positive responses to our smaller prayers day after day. Your standing as God's child does not depend on your record of positively-answered prayers. The great Apostle Paul received a definite "no" to some of his prayers, and so apparently did our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 12:7-10; Mark 14:35). Our children are not our children because we give them what they ask for, and they are no less our children when we do not. The same is true of us and the Father in heaven. Your relationship with God is evidenced in your continued faithfulness despite your disappointment involving prayer. Those who believe without having seen are especially blessed, said Jesus (John 20:29). Be assured that the Savior has that same loving attitude toward you now. Don't give up, dear sister. Your prayers are not in vain.

‘WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION’

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber from Texas writes, "Philippians 2:12 says to 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' Does this mean that we must 'do our part' in addition to what Jesus has done?"

* * *

The word here translated "work out" occurs often in the New Testament and always involves bringing to fruition something already inherent in a situation. For example, "law works wrath" (Rom. 4:15). "Sin works death" (Rom. 7:13). "Godly sorrow works repentance" (2 Cor. 7:10-11). In each case the thing "worked" is present all the time, though originally invisible. Given full process it finally comes into view. In the same way, our relationship with Christ contains our certain salvation. By the process of our obedient lives, that salvation blossoms from bud to bright flower.

Paul emphasizes the source of our salvation by explaining, "for it is God who is at work in you." Literally the apostle says that God "energizes" you. God empowers our obedience, both internally ("to will") and externally ("to do"). We can only "work out" what God "works in." All that God does through us is aimed toward the accomplishment of his great saving purpose. The Greek word here

translated by the phrase "his good pleasure" refers in the New Testament to God's program for saving sinners (Lk. 2:14; 10:21; Eph. 1:5, 9; 2 Thes. 1:11-12).

Because we realize that God is at work in us, we live our lives obediently before God "with fear and trembling" (as the King James Version put it). Throughout the Bible, this expression always signifies reverential respect in view of God's presence and activity, or in the face of some relationship ordained by God (Gen. 9:2; Ex. 15:16; 2 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 6:5). Knowing that God is the one energizing our every good thought and deed causes us to live seriously and reverently. What an awesome thought that our daily lives are the very arena of God's saving purpose!

CHURCHES, CHANGES AND CONTROVERSIES

Edward Fudge

(Part 1 of 3)

When my generation was growing up in the 1940's, 50's and 60's, we knew exactly what to expect when we went to church. My town had perhaps a dozen expressions of the Church universal, each carrying forward its own traditions of thinking, speaking and doing. And if people from our town visited a church of their own variety somewhere else, they could anticipate in advance what they would find when they arrived. My group thought it was the only one that did things "right," but most other Christian groups probably thought at some level that their ways were also best.

* * *

Today, to put it mildly, things are different. It is not uncommon now to see as many independent or nondenominational churches as churches with the old brand names. Also common are what I jokingly call "stealth churches" -- congregations affiliated with traditional denominations or fellowships which omit that association from their name. Within five miles of my house are "stealth churches" that are really Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist and Lutheran. Other churches use a location or community name, disclosing an affiliation in smaller print on a second line. It is not uncommon to hear people say, in all varieties of churches, "I think of myself as a Christian who happens to attend such-and-such church."

Things really get exciting when one moves about. Within my own tradition (non-instrumental Churches of Christ), one finds most churches singing without accompaniment but some using instruments now and then. Most of our congregations still limit public functions to the males but a growing number of churches make no distinction between men and women. Some use a song leader; others feature a praise team. Some celebrate Christmas and Easter while many others do not. Most have fellowship halls, family centers or multipurpose facilities but a minority avoids them all. The issues vary with other denominations but the diversity is clearly present in most Christian groups.

One finds many different attitudes toward change. Any church usually contains an element of people who not only prefer the familiar old ways but believe that anything else is wrong. Another group seems to think that anything is better than what has always been. A larger group -- who perhaps did not grow up within the particular Christian tradition -- doesn't care either way and cannot quite understand what the fuss is all about. Meanwhile those charged with responsibility for leading the church try to balance old and new, to do the most good and the least harm, and to maintain unity while promoting progress. In this short series of gracEmails, we will look at two of the earliest Christian churches -- Jerusalem and Antioch -- and ask how they dealt with diversity, how they evaluated changes and how they led when controversial issues arose.

(Part 2)

The Jerusalem church had a uniform look (Acts 21:20). Everyone there was Jewish. All males were circumcised. Everyone kept the Sabbath. All households were kosher. These first believers in Jesus had heard about Gentiles and their pagan ways, but there were no Gentiles in their church. Then the gospel spread northward to Antioch in Syria. These people were largely Gentiles. They had never kept the Sabbath, observed Passover, circumcised their baby boys, eaten kosher foods or kept the Law of Moses. Yet the first Christian church of Antioch was growing, gifted, grace-based, evangelistic and generous (Acts 11:19-30). Its leaders were prayerful, Spirit-led and obedient to God (Acts 13:1-3). But trouble was on the horizon.

* * *

One day some men came to Antioch from the mother church in Jerusalem, insisting that circumcision was necessary for salvation, as was keeping the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1-2, 5). After some controversy, Paul and Barnabas led a delegation to Jerusalem to discuss this matter with the apostles and elders. The assembled leaders did three things which are worthy of our imitation today. First, they re-

fused to compromise the gospel. Salvation comes through trusting in Jesus Christ, they said, and on no other basis. God had demonstrated that at Cornelius' house in Caesarea when he gave the Holy Spirit to Gentiles who believed (Acts 10-11; 15:7-9). No one can obtain God's approval by his or her own performance -- not in the past, not now, not in the future (Acts 15:10). All who are saved are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus (Acts 15:11).

Second, these early Christian leaders sought out common areas of practical fellowship (Acts 15:22-29). The Jews had long associated with honorable Gentiles who maintained basic standards of morality and decency -- standards which the Jews believed God had revealed to Noah long before there were Jews or Gentiles. This Noachic covenant, they believed, prohibited idolatry, sexual impurity and eating blood. These restrictions were acceptable to the Gentile Christians (who were not required to become Jews) and they enabled even the strictest Jewish believers to join with Gentile Christians in table fellowship.

Third, these leaders acknowledged that diversity was acceptable, useful and good. There was no reason for the Jerusalem church to cease its "Jewishness" or to change its distinctive practices and observances. But there was no reason for the Antioch church to adopt Jewish customs or to imitate the ways things were done in Jerusalem. So long as one put no trust in the ordinance itself, circumcision and uncircumcision occupied equal ground (Gal. 5:6). So long as one trusted in Jesus as Savior and sought to please him, one could eat kosher food or eat anything else. The same was true for observing traditional Jewish religious holy days (Rom. 14:1-13). There is enormous room for diversity among churches today, consistent with the gospel and the broad teaching of Scripture. Within those parameters, we should do whatever best advances God's kingdom, leads others to faith in Christ and builds Christian character and maturity (1 Cor. 8:19-23).

(Part 3)

When some men came to Antioch from Jerusalem saying that circumcision was necessary for salvation, those involved gathered at Jerusalem for a general conference. Led by the Holy Spirit, they reached a decision based on the gospel itself. By observing the process these early church leaders followed, we may observe several principles that will help us work through controversial issues that arise today.

* * *

First, we need to discern what God is doing now. At the conference, Peter related how God had received Cornelius' Gentile household on the basis of faith and had given them his Spirit (Acts 15:7-11). Barnabas and Saul followed with their testimony about God's powerful signs performed among non-Jews (15:12). We also need to reflect on God's life-changing work that we have observed. Wherever we see God at work, we may join in that work without fear.

Second, we ought to compare what we see God doing now with his plans and agenda as revealed in Scripture. James recalled Amos' ancient prophecy -- which matched what Peter, Paul and Barnabas had reported seeing (15:13-18). If the Word of God promises the very things we are experiencing, we may believe that God is at work in what we are experiencing. We cannot afford to turn away from God's program -- even though it is new to us -- merely to preserve and cling to what is old and familiar. The life of the Spirit will stretch our imaginations and compel us to change our minds and our ways.

Third, when we discern God's course of action and confirm it by the Scriptures, we must state that clearly and openly, then move forward under God's direction. When the apostles, elders and whole church at Jerusalem perceived that God was receiving uncircumcised Gentiles in fulfillment of prophecy, they not only concluded that Gentiles did not have to become Jews to be saved -- they then wrote a letter to Gentile believers clearly stating their conclusion (15:22-29). As a result of this Spirit-led resolution, God's people were strengthened and encouraged (15:31-33). As God reveals to us the implications of the gospel, it remains important for church leaders to clearly express what they have learned and to lead their people boldly by the light that God reveals. When God illuminates our hearts with his truth on any subject, we must be careful always to speak that truth in love, but we dare not ever again speak or act as if we were still in the dark (Gal. 2:11-17).

HOPE IS SECURE

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber writes: "My Sunday School class has been studying the Epistle to the Hebrews. The word 'hope' in chapter six has been a speed bump for us because it suggests that our salvation is something we can hope for only and cannot be assured of. Any light you can shine on this will be appreciated."

* * *

When New Testament writers speak of "hope," we should think "confident expectation." For the Christian believer, this is not mere wishful thinking, as the author of Hebrews makes plain. "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb. 11:1). Our hope of salvation is as well-founded as the fact that Jesus has entered through death to exalted heavenly life. He has gone there ahead of us as our very representative -- our glorification is as sure as his own (Heb. 6:19-20).

This hope anchors us through the storms of this life. It is both "firm and secure" (Heb. 6:19). Furthermore, God promised this salvation and underscored his promise with his oath -- officially certifying it with these two unbreakable seals (v. 17-18). We may therefore be "greatly encouraged" because God cannot lie and he will not violate his oath (v. 18).

"Hope" could not possibly be more certain for God's people. The only question remaining in Hebrews is whether we are among God's people or are only pretending and professing to be. The answer is revealed day by day as we live out our lives in faith, keeping our eyes of trust on Jesus the Savior. Those who belong to God will certainly do just that. Those who are not really his people will not (Heb. 3:6; 6:11). Those who look at Jesus in trust may know that they will never be disappointed.

Prayer -- "O God, grant us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may become partakers of your heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen." (Book of Common Prayer.)

DENOMINATIONS AND 'ERRING CHRISTIANS'

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail reader writes, "In several recent articles you've put Churches of Christ in the same category with 'other denominations.' How do you respond to those who believe that they are part of the church Jesus established and are not a member of any denomination? If one has been added to the Lord's body but embraces non-scriptural teachings, does that person not become an 'erring Christian' to say the least?"

* * *

Whoever follows, learns from and imitates Jesus Christ is a "disciple" of Christ, and disciples of Christ are also called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). Since every Christian continually comes short of God's glory, we all may be called "erring Christians" (Rom. 3:23). We all must confess that we now know only in part (1 Cor. 13:12). The Apostle Paul reminds us that "if any one supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know" (1 Cor. 8:2).

Certainly one may be a Christian and not belong to any denomination. There is at least one nondenominational congregation in most towns of America. I once helped lead such a nondenominational group which we called "Elm Street Church." When we posted our service times in the religion page of the local paper, we requested a heading that said "Undenominational." A dear Church of Christ friend asked me if we were accusing him of being a denomination. I suggested that he join us under the "Undenominational" listing, but he preferred to be listed under the heading "Churches of Christ."

Any time a group of Christians select a name which includes more than one congregation but not every Christian everywhere, they have "denominated" themselves and have become a "denomination." (Churches of Christ "denominate" themselves as an identifiable group of congregations although they have no formal denominational organization.) It is good to remember that we are not saved by the sign over the church-house door. We are saved by trusting God, who showed his undeserved kindness to sinners in the life, death and resurrection of the Savior Jesus Christ. "If anyone loves God, he is known by him" (1 Cor. 8:3).

DOES GOD HEAR A SINNER'S PRAYER?

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber in Alaska asks whether God hears the prayers of those who do not yet know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Someone in his congregation is saying that God does not listen to the prayers of anyone until he or she believes in Christ and is baptized.

* * *

If the person saying that was reared in a Christian home, he probably grew up praying to God from earliest childhood, long before he came to faith or was baptized. This man is probably misunderstanding a statement recorded in John 9:31. There Jesus' enemies attack a man whose sight Jesus has just restored, trying to convince him that Jesus is a sinner. The healed man counters with the argument, "We know that God does not hear sinners," yet Jesus has opened eyes born blind -- something unknown in world history.

Cornelius is a clear example of a man who had neither believed in Jesus nor been baptized, whose prayers God nevertheless heard and answered in a powerful way. That is not just my opinion, but the express word of an angel sent by God from heaven (Acts 10:1-4). The simple fact is that God made all human beings, and he provides every earthly blessing any of them enjoys. As Creator, he expects all his human creatures to seek after him, to reverence him as God and to give him thanks (Acts 14:15-17; 7:24-28; Rom. 1:20-21). The universal human sin is deliberately ignoring God, consciously rejecting him, intentionally putting him out of mind and choosing to go the opposite direction (Rom. 1:18-25; see Hos. 4:6; 2 Thes. 2:10-12).

If the former blind man's statement that "God does not hear sinners" were taken as an absolute and general rule, we could not think that God would hear anyone's prayer except Jesus Christ's, for all the rest of us fall under the category of sinner. The fact is that God sees the hearts of all people and he strongly delights in every one who loves the "light," seeks the "light" and is moving toward the "light" (John 3:19-21). Such a person is already under God's gracious influence and we are privileged to encourage him or her to "continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:42-43).

AFRAID OF GOD?

Edward Fudge

A brother writes that "the God of the Old Testament does fierce and horrible things to people, and this makes me pretty nervous. I know that perfect love casts out fear. But I understand that I show my love by my obedience and that leaves me scared again."

* * *

The New Testament also exhorts us to contemplate "the goodness and the severity of God" (Rom. 11:22), and it warns us that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. 10:31). However, from Genesis to Revelation, God reveals himself as indescribably gracious and generous to the person who is repentant in heart, who seeks his face, who lives with a spirit of creaturely reverence, dependence and submission (Psalm 32:1-2; 103:10-14). But the defiant, the haughty and the willfully rebellious had better watch out! There is a great difference between the way God deals with sinners in the first category and the way he treats sinners of the second sort.

Let us always remember that God's love is not a response to our love, or to our obedience. We love God because he first loved us (1 John 4:10, 19). He loved us while we were still sinners, helpless, enemies -- so much that he gave his Son for our sins (Rom. 5:6-9). And if he loved us that much then, how much more does he love us now that he has reconciled us, washed us, made us holy, and adopted us as his children (Rom. 5:10-11)?

Knowing that we come short, that we sometimes intentionally sin, that we never measure up to God's perfect standard, we come again and again to the Cross, as it were, and say to God, "Thank you that Jesus died for sinners. I am one of them. Thank you for reconciling me to yourself in the person of my Savior, my Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ! Help me respond better to your great saving work. I cast myself on your mercy and love for sinners which I see demonstrated on that Cross, and I claim your forgiveness and acceptance which I see demonstrated by that Empty Tomb."

And, saying that -- and meaning it -- we stand acquitted in God's sight. By his holy pronouncement, we are "justified by faith." Through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are at peace with God. And God is at peace with us (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:16-18; Col. 1:19-20).

FAITH ONLY

[This and the following GracEmail form a duet]

by Edward Fudge, on GracEmail

A Christian Church preacher writes, chiding, "I see you saying that you believe in salvation by faith alone, which is an improvement over the doctrine of salvation by works, but is not satisfactory to careful Bible students. (I teach that we are saved by faith and not by works, but not by faith only.)"

* * *

Good brother, we can't have it both ways. We are either saved by trusting or we are saved by trying. Either Jesus did it all, or we do some of it. We either bring something to God, in exchange for which we hope to receive his favor, or we come to him with empty hands trusting his promise that he loves us and forgives us in Jesus and for Jesus' sake.

Do I believe in salvation by faith "only"? It all depends on what you mean. If you mean that one who exercises saving faith can possibly sit and do nothing in the face of God's understood commands and will, or that mere profession of faith is the same as faith itself, or that claiming to be a believer makes one such, then, with the epistle-writer James, I emphatically deny that THAT kind of "faith" is saving faith, and that anyone is saved by such so-called "faith" alone.

However, if you mean that all we can do to enjoy salvation is to trust God for it, based on what he did for us in Jesus -- since we cannot do anything to bridge the gap between God and sinful humans ourselves -- I agree with that and insist that it is what Jesus teaches throughout the Gospel of John and what Paul teaches throughout Romans and Galatians. The only way of salvation is by trusting God's kindness, shown most fully in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We cannot contribute to our own salvation, or earn it, or deserve it. If that is what you mean by "faith only," it is the gospel and I affirm it with all my heart.

OBEDIENCE

[Sequel to the Previous]

By Edward Fudge, on GracEmail

Martin Luther once complained that his German Christians resembled a drunken peasant who fell into the ditch, first on one side of the road and then on the other. We may take warning who have seen the futility of trusting in our own performance to set us right with God. Someone is staggering, for example, who says that obedience has "nothing to do with" salvation -- as if the two were in no way related -- or that saving faith does not manifest itself by visible deeds in daily life. Consider the following.

* * *

Jesus recognizes as his family those who do God's will (Mark 3:35). Not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" enters the kingdom, Jesus warns, but the one who does the Father's will (Matt. 7:21). The doer, not the idle hearer, builds a life that withstands the storm (Matt. 7:24; see Ezek. 13:13-14). The Great Commission includes teaching new converts to observe all that Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:18-20). In Jesus' mind, discipleship does not mean pious professions only, but also daily deeds. Paul, the great apostle of grace, in the very Epistle to the Romans, tells us that those who receive eternal life at the End are those who persevere now in doing good (Rom. 2:6-10). The author of Hebrews proclaims Jesus as the source of eternal salvation to those who obey him (Heb. 5:9). Peter writes that God's people have been chosen to obey Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:1-2). James warns that faith without works is dead (James 2:14, 20, 26). The one who does God's will, promises John, will outlast this passing world (1 John 2:17).

How can God save sinners? Only by his grace, which is also his justice through the atoning work of Jesus Christ our representative (Rom. 3:23-26). Since both God's grace and Christ's work are external to our own performance, we cannot contribute anything to either, but we are called to trust unreservedly in both. We sinners receive God's grace by trusting him for it, and in no other way. That is not inconsistent with saying that genuine trust produces obedience. To claim otherwise is to contradict Jesus and his apostles. It is to climb out of one ditch, only to fall into another.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber in Arkansas asks the basis on which I believe God holds people accountable.

* * *

So far as I know, the Bible does not use the term "accountability," nor speak of a specific age at which one becomes accountable. Nevertheless, based on such texts as Leviticus 10:16-20; 2 Chronicles 30:17-20; Matthew 25:29; Romans 2:12-16, 25-29 and 2 Corinthians 8:12, I conclude that God holds humans accountable based on their individual knowledge, understanding, ability and opportunity. In other words, God does not hold people accountable for what they do not know, what they do not understand or what they cannot do, whether due to personal inability or lack of opportunity.

Judged by even that fair standard, no one blessed with reason and understanding measures up. Every competent person since Adam (excluding only Jesus Christ himself) has consciously said "No" to God at some time in response to the divine revelation each person had--whether that revelation came through creation, innate conscience, the Law of Moses, the message of the Gospel or some extraordinary means. Measured by the light we had, we are all sinners, responsible for our sins and accountable to God (Rom. 1-3).

Although no sinner deserves God's favor, God is unspeakably gracious. Because of his heart of love for his creatures, God shows undeserved favor to sinners in whom he sees a heart of faith (Rom. 4) God has publicly demonstrated the justice of his grace by setting forth the perfect doing and dying of Jesus Christ in our stead (Rom. 5).

SPEAKING THE SAME THING

Edward Fudge

An adult Bible class teacher asks what the Apostle Paul means when he commands Christians all to "agree" or to "speak the same thing" (1 Cor. 1:10).

* * *

Paul is prescribing a solution to a specific problem in the Corinthian church, which the next verse identifies: "there are strifes among you." Verse 12 tells the nature of these strifes: "Now I mean

this, that each one of you [contrast "all" in v. 10] is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas' and 'I am of Christ.'" Instead of each one shouting a different party slogan, Paul urges that they all "say the same" -- that is, that they rally in unity around Jesus Christ himself. Someone can even say "I am of Christ" in a sectarian and exclusivist way, which is also divisive and wrong (v. 11).

Paul's phrase translated "to speak the same thing" also appears in Greek military and political literature, where it describes unity of allegiance in contrast to sedition or civil war. It is clear, even in the English Bible, that Paul has the same point in mind in this spiritual context, because of his explanation which we noted above. The Apostle is not requiring that we all have the same level of knowledge, or that we share identical opinions or understandings. That happens gradually and to some degree as we all grow, but it cannot be commanded or forced.

However, as Paul points out in this same passage, all Christians should declare their common allegiance to Jesus Christ for at least three reasons: Jesus was crucified for all of his people. Jesus is not divided. All Christians were baptized in the name of Jesus. More than anything else, Jesus is what we share in common. He deserves our undivided loyalty.

THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber asks the meaning of the second curse pronounced on Eve after she and Adam ate the forbidden fruit, that "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16, NIV).

* * *

Some interpreters have understood this to mean that women, who earlier in the verse were doomed to suffer pain in childbirth, will nevertheless be sexually attracted to their men who, in turn, will have their way with the women. That explanation is unlikely, however, for at least two reasons. First, it suggests that humans lacked sexual attraction before the Fall, although God made them male and female and told them to multiply. Second, the Hebrew word translated "desire" refers to a desire to control or to dominate. It is the same word found in Genesis 4:7 where God tells Cain that "sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

In this fallen world, woman desires to dominate over man and man dominates over woman. This struggle is often referred to as "the battle of the sexes" and it is a sign of human fallenness. God originally made woman as a strong helper [*ezer*] corresponding to man (Gen. 2:18). Sin estranged man and woman from each other and both of them from God. Instead of *completing* each other as God intended, in their fallenness they *compete* for power and control. The New English Translation (NET Bible) expresses this clearly by saying: "You will want to control your husband, but he will dominate you." This struggle does not represent God's creation purpose. It reflects the effect of sin and the curse.

Jesus Christ overcame sin and redeemed humankind from the curse that sin had brought. In the context of this verse, Jesus reconciled man and woman to each other and both of them to God. Because of Jesus, the sexes need no longer compete for mastery. Instead, they both may "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). Paul describes this mutual deference in Ephesians 5:22-33, and he says far more to men about this than he does to women. As the NET Bible so aptly states in a footnote: "Sin produces a conflict or power struggle between the man and the woman, but in Christ man and woman call a truce and live harmoniously."

AGENTS OF GOD'S HEALING

Edward Fudge

A minister in the Midwest writes: "Last night I had a Bible study with a young couple. Right in the middle of the study the young lady broke down in tears, saying she had been sexually molested by her stepfather from age four to 11. 'Why would a loving, all-powerful God allow this to happen?' she asked. How would you answer her question?"

* * *

This young lady's situation raises a fundamental moral problem for which there is no glib answer. Her story proves that we live in a fallen world, in which God temporarily allows humans to exercise their sinful natures to do evil, often at the expense of other people. Perhaps God could have created human beings incapable of wicked and destructive behavior, but we then would have been unable also to know the joy of intentional fellowship with God or of doing good. In short, we would not be human beings, but something altogether different.

Clearly, God's love is not evident in the evil that people do. God does show his heart of compassion in the care and healing ministered by those who know him, in the redemption he has provided through Jesus Christ the Savior and Healer, and in his promise to confront all unrepentant wrongdoers and victimizers some day with the full consequences of their evil deeds.

In the meantime, we who have experienced God's love are called to share it with others who suffer all kinds of hurts and abuse. The Holy Spirit can use us as channels of blessing and light, to anoint broken spirits with healing balm of divine kindness. The old hymn tells the truth when it says: "Deep in the human heart, crushed by the tempter, feelings lie buried that grace can restore." Let us pray for sensitive eyes, receptive ears and tender hearts, that we may be aides of the Great Physician himself and agents of divine healing to many.

OUR TWO NATURES

Edward Fudge

"Paul speaks in Galatians and in Romans concerning two ways to live," writes a gracEmail subscriber, "by the flesh or by the Spirit. Why, then, can the believer sometimes manifest works of the flesh? And how can one who has not been born again manifest the fruit of the Spirit?"

* * *

Historic Christian theology acknowledges that the person who is not born again can do good things to a point, but it insists that one cannot by those good acts ever bridge the gap between self and God. It also affirms that none of us -- believer or unregenerate -- can do even good things without some element of sin. Neither our motive nor our performance is ever wholly pure.

As you note, the person who is born again still has an "old self" or "former nature" which can be overcome by the Spirit, but which does not go quietly away when left undisturbed. That old nature was crucified with Christ, but it does not like to admit it. We must continually "reckon" ourselves to be dead to sin, therefore, and act accordingly. When we do think and act in this way (which Paul explains in Romans 6), the spiritual truth becomes practical reality and we live out the life of Christ which he works within us by his Spirit (explained in Romans 8).

The more we say "Yes" to God and "No" to the devil, the stronger our "new nature" grows and the easier we find saying "No" the next time temptation comes along. The opposite is also true. The real battle lies not in our effort, nor in our intentions, but in our "yieldedness" to Christ. When a believer sincerely asks God to control his or her will -- moment by moment -- the Spirit of Christ will take charge and will empower right decisions and right conduct (Rom. 8:4).

FUNDAMENTALISTS

Edward Fudge

A Church of Christ sister in New Mexico writes: "The terms 'fundamentalist Christian' and 'evangelical Christian' confuse me. What is generally meant by these terms and what is the difference between them?"

* * *

The terms "fundamentalism" and "fundamentalist" became popular in 1909 with the publication of a 12-volume set of books called "The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth." These books were written by leading theologians and biblical scholars from across Protestantism, most having earned doctorates in their disciplines, who set forth orthodox Christian teaching concerning Christ's deity, virgin birth, miracles, substitutionary atonement, resurrection and future return, and biblical teaching about sin, regeneration, prayer and the believer's obligation to share the faith with others.

All these "fundamentals" of historic Christianity were then under attack by a philosophy known as Liberalism or Modernism, which measured the Bible by human science and knowledge and eliminated everything that its proponents could not rationally explain. In response, two wealthy benefactors funded publication of "The Fundamentals" and distributed the books without charge to more than three million church leaders and students around the world. Over the next four decades, American Christians in most mainline denominations became identified either with fundamentalism, which held to historic Christian teaching, or with liberalism, which denied the supernatural and reduced the Bible to purely human terms.

Many fundamentalists have been Christ-centered, Bible-following, people-loving Christians who manifest the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. Unfortunately, however, theological controversy often hardened attitudes and bred extreme views, so that fundamentalists

gradually came to be known for their radical opinions, dogmatic manners and isolationist spirit. Those noble Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans and other scholars who had written "The Fundamentals" probably rolled over in their graves. And Jesus, watching from his throne of intercession in heaven, likely wept.

‘CUSS’ WORDS

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber writes: "My 12-year-old daughter asked me a question the other day that I could not answer. She wanted to know why some words were okay to say and some weren't, and how 'cuss' words got to be 'cuss' words in the first place. Can you help?"

* * *

"Cuss" is a corruption of "curse," and curse words originally were part of a longer sentence in which someone asked God to condemn another person or thing to eternal punishment. Eventually such words as "hell," "damn" and "damnation" came to be used by themselves as expletives, often with the same cursing intent. Casual use of these words is inappropriate, since we are sinners ourselves and since we lack any power to carry out such a judgment (James 4:11-12).

"Profanity" describes language which lightly esteems what is actually holy. These "bad" words are good words used badly -- exclaiming "O God!" or "Lord!" or "God Almighty!" when we are not really talking to God, or using the name and title "Jesus Christ!" in the same flippant manner. This practice usually stems from thoughtlessness, but it shows irreverence and violates the Second Commandment which prohibits taking God's name in vain (Ex. 20:7). The Bible warns against a "profane" spirit (Heb. 12:16, KJV).

"Vulgar" language is "common" talk not used by respectable people in polite company. These words, which usually spring from Anglo-Saxon rather than from Latin or Greek roots, often refer to private body parts or private bodily functions. People who choose these words, or who use them out of context, show a lack of respect for their hearers, a lack of refinement in their own character, and probably a lack of vocabulary to express themselves in polite language. Christians are to avoid "unwholesome" speech (Eph. 4:29) and to speak "with grace" in language that encourages and enhances what is good (Col. 4:6).

RECLAIMING THE HEART

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber and preacher writes, "I really believe that our pendulum swing away from emotionalism and the heart has cost us. I think we are missing out on powerful avenues of help."

* * *

For several centuries, a sizeable portion of the Christian church has been blindfolded to the powerful presence of God here and now. Today, across the Christian spectrum, many are seeking God's face with fresh intensity, hungry for a deeper personal relationship with him. Thousands of believers in most denominations (and nondenominations) are discovering the emptiness of human-powered "Christianity." These faith-pilgrims have seen the futility of religion based on external forms without internal life (2 Tim. 3:5; Col. 2:20-23). They will no longer sit and listen to doctrines which present God as a retired and absentee deity, reduce the Holy Spirit to words on a page, and exchange the gospel for a do-it-yourself salvation kit.

Thank God there always have been many solid saints across the board -- people who walked with God, trusted in Christ and rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. These noble souls always knew that God is there and that he rewards those who seek him (Heb. 11:6). Like ancient King David, they prioritized a living relationship with the living God. With that man after God's own heart they exclaimed: "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to meditate in his temple" (Psalm 27:4). These people have known that God is very, very near, though unseen by physical eyes. They have heard his invitation "Seek my face," and their hearts have replied "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek" (Psalm 27:8). Many who seek God are still unrelated to the church, often because the church has not seemed to share that same agenda.

The greatest commandment, according to Jesus, is to love God with all the heart, soul and mind (Matt. 22:37). The problem is not that we sometimes love God too much with our mind, but that we love him too little with our heart and soul. The truth is that we are holistic people and God desires relationship with us in every aspect of our humanity. Our minds ought to tell us that the Creator, the Father of Jesus Christ who raised him back from death, calls us to religion of the heart, to worship from the soul. We need to be sure that our minds, hearts and souls remain always open to the Lord. There is no greater tragedy than to miss God when he comes calling be-

cause we are distracted by "religion" (Lk. 19:41-44). None of us has any special claims on God's grace or his truth. However sacred the name on our church door, it is nothing but false advertising if we do not focus on, center in, depend on and seek after the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father who sent him to bring us home to himself.

CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber asks, "What is the difference between creeds and confessions of faith, and why do some Christians oppose both?"

* * *

The English word "creed" comes from the Latin verb "credo," meaning "I believe," so the word itself points to a statement of faith. Generally speaking, creeds are statements of those great truths to which Christians universally hold while confessions of faith express the particular beliefs of specific denominations. For example, the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed are used by Catholics and all manner of Protestants alike, whereas the Westminster Confession of Faith (to mention only one) expresses the beliefs of certain Presbyterian and Reformed believers but not those of Christians outside those circles.

Most denominations accept into membership people who do not subscribe to their confession of faith, but do require that those serving as adult teachers and official leaders (pastor, elder, deacon) agree with it. Some churches reject all formal creeds or confessions of faith, intending to follow only the Bible itself. That is a commendable goal on its face, although such people fool themselves if they merely exchange a written statement of faith for an unwritten one which serves the same purposes.

All Bible students form opinions and draw conclusions that go beyond the express language of Scripture -- a reality both good and necessary. The problem comes when one then elevates those opinions and conclusions involving human reasoning to the level of the Word of God itself, using them to measure or determine the authenticity or maturity of other Christians. It is proper to test any creed or confession of faith by Scripture. It is not proper to simply interpret Scripture in the light of some creed or confession of faith.

Australian Christian Mission

Tim & Dawn Yates

Our furlough for 2005 is fast approaching. We have been in contact with many churches since announcing our furlough, but there are still many plans to be made.

July 1st we will be flying out and we'll be returning on October 1st. That doesn't give us much time to visit 9 states and dozens of churches and individuals. Please pray about this with us and contact us if you haven't done so.

Exciting things are beginning to happen in our Youth Group. We began the year with around 25 High School kids, with an actual contact list of around 30.

With a few of them already making decision to become Christians, we have high hopes for what the Lord will do in and through this group of young people.

Our newest and most exciting ministry is what we've called a Young Believers' Group. We meet in the manse (parsonage) on Sunday mornings to have more of a study/discussion group about spiritual things. This has allowed us a more personal setting to share the Gospel message.

Already there are 12-14 from the Youth Group who are attending. This tells us that they are ready to go a little deeper.

Our church has also been instrumental in placing a fulltime Scripture teacher in our local high school next year. This will be a combined effort with all the area churches, but has been initiated and hosted by our church. Though the educational system in Australia provides for this possibility, there has not been anyone in our area who would take the initiative. Please pray for us as we try to work with the school, but also in bringing so many churches together to agree on something! No church doctrine is presented, just the pure message of the Scriptures.

William “Bill” Rinne

1916-2005

Bill Rinne fell asleep in the Lord Jesus on Feb. 28, after several days of sickness. He was 88 years old. It was my privilege to have a part in his funeral in Bloomington, Indiana. I observed, “Jesus Christ was at the core of his life. And in Bill’s case that statement is not exaggeration or just ‘funeral talk.’”

In 1918, when Bill was just 2 years old, his dad died in the widespread flu epidemic. His mother and her sister reared him. When Bill was five his mother helped him form a life-changing habit. She taught him to memorize Bible passages, which became a lifelong practice. The first result of that was, as his wife said, “He seemed to know half the Bible by heart.” The second result was that, yes, he learned it by *heart*, not just by head. For God intended His Word to be a means, not an end in itself. That is, we shouldn’t study Scripture just to know Scripture, but to know *God!* Bill came to know and love God, and therefore to love the Bible more and more. (It works both ways.) He trusted it, studied it year after year, and later taught it in classes decade after decade--till the end of his life. (He also wrote a number of articles in *Word and Work*.)

Why? Because he wanted everyone to trust and obey Jesus the only Savior, and live by the strength of the indwelling Holy Spirit, to the glory and pleasure of our great Father in Heaven.

Bill learned this not only from his mother and aunt, but from Portland Church of Christ where he attended regularly during his boyhood and youth—during the ministry of R. H. Boll. He also attended Portland Christian School from its opening in 1924 till he graduated ten years later. There he grew more and more in experiencing the Lord. [He and his wife asked that memorial contributions in his memory be made to Portland Christian School. Its address is 2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212.]

During World War II Bill was in the Army. For two years he served as a German interpreter, and he was part of the liberation forces of the Dachau concentration camp.

Bill loved education – both getting it and giving it. He earned a Doctorate in psychology from Indiana University, and then worked in its Counseling Dept. for 25 years. He was not only educated but wise. My father, when going through a time of depression shortly after entering the preaching ministry, profited from his counsel.

Women played a vital part in Bill's life. We've mentioned his mother and aunt who reared him and gave him a great start in life. Later he married Ann Carter, who as time passed became extremely crippled by rheumatoid arthritis. He cared for her lovingly and faithfully during over 20 years of pain and difficulties. That speaks volumes about his character. And then the Lord brought Erzsabet Gaal all the way from Hungary to light up Bill's life by her love, companionship and harp. (She is an outstanding harpist.) They were married in 2000. Though Bill was past 80 by then, they enjoyed five years of good health (most of the time), vibrant living and wide-ranging activities. The latter included music, golf, travel, and (of course) Bible teaching.

Bill would want us to praise the Lord, not him. But in honoring him we do indeed glorify his God, for He it was who molded Bill into a man of faith, love and contagious enthusiasm.

Happy Birthday Edith Lale

On March 10th Edith Leora Lale celebrated her 100th birthday. She was born in 1905 on a family farm in Lafayette County, Missouri. Many of you may remember her mother Nelli Bly Doty Lale, who died in 1961, and Edith's sister, Mildred Lale, who died in 1996. Edith has been a faithful member of the Highland congregation for over 50 years, and she still has a vital ministry there sending out congregational updates to those no longer able make it to the the Highland services. She also faithfully served the Word and Work for many years. On March 20th the Highland congregation celebrated her birthday and family legacy by singing a number of E.L Jorgenson hymns. Following the service we had a surprise birthday party. Dr. Dale and Mrs. Mary Lee Jorgenson made the 500 mile trip from Missouri to celebrate with Edith. Dr. Jorgenson led the closing hymn "Immortal Love, Forever Full".

KBC/SCC REUNION

Mark your calendar for Memorial Day, May 30 for the KBC/SCC Reunion at College Park (Old SCC Campus site) in Winchester, Ky. The day will include social time at 10:00 AM, pitch-in lunch at 12 noon, and activities at 1:00 PM. Meat and drinks for the lunch will be provided. You will need to bring only side dishes and deserts desired for those in your group.

A donation box will be available for those who still want to give to the reunion expense and the monument project. The total cost is expected to be about \$4500.

If you are planning to attend the reunion, please contact: J.R. Satterfield, 821: 949-1959 or Julius Hovan, 859: 936-9718.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, BHill40482@aol.com

David Tapp, preacher on "Sowing the Seed" radio program, during the past 18 months endured the death of a brother-in-law, his own wife Retta, his sister, and another brother-in-law. "Sowing the Seed" is now in its 48th year. For a list of the program's times and stations, write to 912 Pounds Lane, Simpsonville, KY 40067. Or phone 502: 722-8003.

Thinking of the Mass Media, here are four thought-provoking quotes re: TV, found in *Christian Standard*: "Television enables you to be entertained in your home by people you wouldn't have in your home." -David Frost, TV journalist

"Television has done much for psychiatry by spreading information about it, as well as contributing to the need for it." -Alfred Hitchcock, movie and TV producer

"Television has proved that people will look at anything rather than each other." -Ann Landers, advice columnist

"It is difficult to produce a television documentary that is both incisive and probing when every 12 minutes one is interrupted by twelve dancing rabbits singing about toilet paper." -Rod Serling, TV producer

Keep An Eye on Jerusalem! A grassroots Jewish organization plans to bring 10,000 Jews next month (April) to the heavily restricted Temple Mount to spark Israeli dialogue about reclaiming the holy site from its Muslim custodians.

"The Temple Mount is the single holiest place in the world for Jews. It's about time the Israeli government restores it to the Jewish people, where it belongs," said David Ha'ivri, chairman of Revava, the group orchestrating the gathering.

Happy #90 Birthday Cramer & Hanover Church of Christ (Lexington, KY)

The church was "set to order" March 4, 1915 in the home of J.L. Morrison. This assembly was the result of the Shockney & Morrison families in their efforts to establish the Church in this city. The first meeting was begun with determination and records indicate the very first offering was \$1.80. "Let us not despise the day of small things." Today, we continue only by the grace of God with the prayer that much more work can be accomplished for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (Bennie Hill, Minister)

13th Annual Crusade for Christ was held at the Oakgrove Church of Christ March 28th-31st. A study of the "Parables of Jesus" was presented by: Joe Stone, Louis Schuler, Harry Coultas, Julius Hovan, Mike Abbott, Robert Gill, Randy Coultas, Frank Preston, Paul Kitzmiller, & Kenneth Preston.

Marriage Enrichment Seminar ...is being planned at Woodland Bible Camp for Sept.30/Oct.1 weekend by Bennie Hill. Printed workbooks will be available and topics will include: Biblical View of the Christian Marriage; Communication; Love & Loving; Re-

sponsibilities. This retreat is for couples (without children) Space is limited so get your name in early by contacting:

Mike Abbott
520 W. Water St.
Borden, IN 47106
812) 967-2009
bordenc@wrcrc.net

LaGrange Church of Christ (KY) Louis Schuler, Minister.
Spring Revival: April 11-15, 2005 at 7:30 p.m. Ray Naugle, Bud Ridgeway, Ron Flora, Mike Abbott, David Tapp. Everyone Welcome!

Revival Announcements are newsworthy. Let us hear from you early in order to get in the News & Notes. Or, any other meetings that are scheduled. Contact me:

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P.O. Box 54842
Lexington, KY 40555
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Ky-Ind. Christian Fellowship ...is being planned for the 1st full week in August (1-4) Day sessions at the Portland Av. Church of Christ and night sessions at the Sellersburg Church of Christ. More later.

Next 5th Sunday Sing... is May 29, 2005. For Central Ky Churches: Parksville at 6:30 p.m.

For Louisville/Sou. Indiana area: Kentucky Ave at 7:00 p.m. Bryantsville Church of Christ for the churches in that area. Time: 7:00 p.m. (Central time)

WOODLAND BIBLE CAMP...
Clean-Up - April 29-May 1
Work Month - May 1-28

Sr. Wk. - June 5-11
Jr. Wk. - June 12-18
Bible Bowl - June 25
Inter. Wk - July 10-16
Music Wk - July 24-31
Homecoming - Sept. 10
Senior Citizen's Wk - Sept. 11-15
Marriage Retreat - Sept. 30-Oct. 1

Christians, Jews oppose Jerusalem "gay" fest. Warning of divine retribution (much like Sodom & Gomorrah) and possible violent protest, evangelical Christians and rabbis from the United States have joined forces with ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel to fight plans to hold an international gay festival in Jerusalem this summer. "WorldPride Parade" was held last in Rome in 2000 and now wants to hold street parties, workshops and a gay film festival in Jerusalem.

"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man." (Matt. 24:36)

Linton Church of Christ (IND) Ladies Vision Conference presents "Secrets of Inner Beauty" May 14, 2005. "Create in me a clean heart, O God." (Ps. 51:10) Location: Linton Church of Christ, 4th & C Streets NW, Linton Indiana. Registration 9:30 a.m. Ladies Vision 10:00 - 3:00 p.m. Cost \$7.00. Luncheon provided. Main speakers will be Theresa Fagan, Portsmouth, Ohio and Robin Stoner, Worthington, Indiana. 10 registrations from your church means your preacher's wife attends free. Send registrations to Babs Moore, 1785 Oak St., Linton, IN. 47441.

(Anyone care to say?) More important, I wonder who has learned the most, applied the most, grown the most? Only the Lord could tell that. Thanks be to Him for His Word, His illuminating Spirit, and faithful teachers and students who have grown strong in His knowledge, strength, holiness and humility.

Any such ministry continues through the years on the backs of a number of mostly unsung workers. In this case they are also unpaid (but great is their reward in heaven). For many years Helen & Jimmy Condra, Sherry Jansen, and Jane Heid together have addressed, bundled and mailed out the quarterlies. Our painstaking office manager, Louise Wells, not only does the banking but also keeps track of subscriptions, assisted by Dan Leppert. For a long time Louise also kept track of the various subjects and passages of the Sunday School lessons, and informed the writers. The last couple of years I took over that job, via email (and goofed up the works more than once!). For the past 12 years our printer has been George Fulda, Jr., President of the Heid Printing Company. He has been a big help in many ways.

We are exceedingly grateful to all of these, plus those who have prayed and/or donated. And, as in any fruitful ministry, it is the Lord Himself who works in, with and through His servants. **Give thanks to the Lord!**

Please TAKE NOTICE:

Due to our upcoming loss of income from the quarterly, we must increase the subscription price of the *monthly* Word and Work to \$14 yearly, effective May 1. Time may prove that even that increase is insufficient, but we hope not. If we find we are over-charging you (which is unlikely), we will later reduce our price! As before, a bundle of 10 magazines sent to any one address will cost \$1 less per copy per year (i.e. @ \$13 yearly). Note again that the increased subscription rate goes into effect on May 1. We also ask your prayers regarding the future of the monthly **W&W**, that He will provide not only the funds but the personnel, strength, wisdom and love needed for such a ministry.

We are eager to have several upcoming issues focus on the Sermon on the Mount. And a few brothers have sent articles presenting views on some doctrines or practices which differ from the most common interpretations among us. Topics include divorce, the role of women in meetings, etc. The spirit of the writers is loving and their arguments are based on Scripture as they understand it. Shall we bother to publish such, or shall we let sleeping dogs lie? HmMMM.

Concerning Famine in Zimbabwe

[Written by AVW just before leaving Zimbabwe on May 12]

During 2002-3, much of Zimbabwe was hit by serious drought. 2004 was much better, but this year extreme lack of food has returned. Much of this is due to inadequate rainfall. As we traveled around we heard from church people in several different areas that present crops are meager and of poor quality. Brother Garrett went to a number of large grocery stores to buy meat, flour, sugar, milk etc. for various weeks of camp here. But in many places "the cupboard was bare," or at best had such goods only on rare occasions.

Brother Robert received a letter from an elderly church-leader in another part of Zimbabwe, written on Feb. 26. In part it said, "Here we are being threatened by hunger. Granaries are now empty, and the non-government organizations [agencies which minister to the poor in various ways] which supplied people with food they [the government] have withdrawn. The future is also bleak, no rain, the crops in the fields are a complete write-off. Some families are already starving. We therefore appeal for food assistance."

Here are excerpts from another letter he received. This too was from a leader in a remote church, written on March 21. "Thank you very much for the help you gave of cornmeal and cash. Some of our brethren and sisters are suffering, even great distress. No matter what our circumstances are, God does not change. So though there are many afflictions of the righteous, they are for our profit (Heb. 12:10) and the Lord will deliver us out of them all (Psa. 39:19). Our local authority no longer allows people to catch fish by any means due to an accident where someone was killed by crocodiles back in January."

The need will only grow grimmer, for the rainy season usually starts in November, and of course more months must pass before harvest time. Any churches or individuals wishing to help during this current crisis may send funds to Brother Garrett in the following way - c/o Mrs. Joann Wiese, 3508 Evergreen Circle, Jeffersonville, IN 47130. Make the check out to Portland Church of Christ, and note that it is for "drought relief."