

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

God:

*Understanding the
Concept of Deity*

Page 10

The Theory of Evolution

Page 17

Where in the World did It Come From?

Page 21

EVIL FROM HELL

Page 37

Time of Treason

Page 58

Divorce- Broken Homes, Broken People

Page 67

Eli Could Speak to Parents

Page 78

The Philippines

Page 102



Forget and Remember

Forget each kindness that you do
As soon as you have done it,
Forget the praise that falls to you
As soon as you have won it;
Forget the slander that you hear
Before you can repeat it;
Forget each slight, each spite, each sneer,
Wherever you may meet it.

Remember every kindness done
To you whate'er its measure;
Remember praise by others won
And pass it on with pleasure;

Remember every promise made
And keep it to the letter;
Remember those who lend you aid
And be a grateful debtor.

Remember all the happiness
That comes your way in living;
Forget each worry and distress,
Be hopeful and forgiving;
Remember good, remember truth,
Remember heaven's above you;
And you will find through age and youth
True joys and hearts to love you.

— Priscilla Leonard



THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU (ROMANS 16:16).



WHO IS TOLERANT?

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

The world tells us that tolerance is a virtue and that intolerance is the result of bigotry and hatred. It says that whatever people want to do must be accepted without criticism or censure, because it is only fair to allow every individual to have his or her own rights and preferences. If any such thing as "sin" exists today it is only in the heart and behavior of

those who would feel intolerance for the excesses of the world.

Particularly does the world require tolerance regarding homosexuals and lesbians. They want us to recognize that they simply have an alternate life style, that men should be able to marry men, and women marry women, and that the government should extended to them all the rights and privileges enjoyed by any man and woman in marriage. They want to be fully accepted in the military, in the work place, in the entertainment world, in being able to adopt children, etc. The news media and entertainment forces have gone all-out to defend them and to force everyone to *accept* them. This, by their definition, is *tolerance*. They will be content with nothing less.

We as Christians are to love all people. We sympathize with those who have emotional and psychological problems, and we want to help them to leave that kind of self-destructive living. Yes, it is self-destructive, because it is costing millions of lives through AIDS. *And the very tolerance that is insisted upon is the basis on which homosexuality spreads, taking with it the deadly scourge of HIV and AIDS.*

Tolerance of a sinful, destructive life style is no more helpful to homosexuals than it is to thieves, murderers, drug addicts, habitual liars, fornicators, or adulterers. As Christians we are sorry for the pain in these lives; we have love for them; we want to be patient with them and help them to give up

their practices so that they can live a better life, a normal life. But we cannot approve their way of living because God Himself says that it is wrong.

God set the example for us. He loves sinners but He does not love their sin. He gave his Son to die, that men and women might be saved from their sins, and He has asked all sinners — including homosexuals and lesbians — to believe in Him, to turn away from their sins, to confess His Son, and to be baptized to wash away the wrong in their lives. Then He expects them to live pure and godly lives, abstaining from the very appearance of evil.

Which life style does God approve? When He created the world, He created man and woman and the institution of marriage, forming the first home. He gave Adam and Eve the ability and the responsibility to have children who would grow to maturity and marry and have children of their own, thus perpetuating the human race. This God-ordained system has continued on up to our day and is the reason we now have over 6 billion men and women in the world.

Let's imagine two scenarios: If every man and woman since the beginning had married, formed a happy home, parented children, and abstained from divorce, what would have been the result? Happiness? Security? The continuation of life? But suppose every man and woman since the beginning had followed the homosexual/lesbian life style, what would have been the result? The immediate end of the human race! When death (whether through AIDS or extinction) is the inevitable result of behavior, isn't there something terribly wrong with that way of life?

In Genesis 18 and 19 we have the story of the angels of God visiting Abraham to tell him of their mission to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their great wickedness. Abraham, knowing that his nephew, Lot, lived in Sodom, pleaded with God to spare the cities if as few as 50 righteous could be found there. God agreed, but Abraham continued to plead for mercy, bringing the number down to 10 righteous, and God promised to spare the cities for even that small number.

Entering Sodom, the angels met Lot. He insisted that they come to his home because of the danger they would face in the streets. When the men of the city learned that Lot had visitors, they came to his door and demanded that the men be brought out that they might have carnal relations with them. In an extreme effort to protect his guests, Lot even offered his two daughters — perhaps secure in the knowledge that, with the perversion of the Sodomites, they would have no interest in women. In answer, the men began to push against Lot, intending to break down the door. The angels then pulled Lot inside and closed the door, and they smote the men with blindness. Realizing that they were suddenly blind, did the men run from

the place in the fear and terror that should have been a normal response? No, their perversion was as great as we see today — the text says that they merely “*wearied themselves to find the door*”! And today, with HIV and AIDS killing homosexuals on every side, what is the response? Some are so perverted that they go out looking for a person who is already infected, to add the thrill of danger to the thrill of sexual perversion.

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire from heaven because of their debauchery. Was the Lord merciful in dealing with those cities? He was merciful to the extent that even if 10 righteous people could have been found, He would have spared the entire population, though their sin was so great that they deserved to be destroyed. But the 10 could not be found and so they were destroyed.

When we think of those cities and of their consuming sexual perversion, we realize that they were as wicked as people can get. How could anyone justify them, or those of our day who engage in such wicked acts? But you might say that homosexuals and lesbians of our day don't do such things. Oh, yes they do! They not only behave with as much debauchery, but they glory in it. In homosexual and lesbians get-togethers, it is no secret they are often naked and engage publicly in the most licentious sexual acts. The news media films some of these things but they do not air them because they are too gross, and because they are trying to protect them from bad publicity.

In the New Testament, Paul wrote, “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; . . . Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*” (Romans 1:18,21). Now who was Paul, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, talking about here?

We learn the answer as he continued, “*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder,*

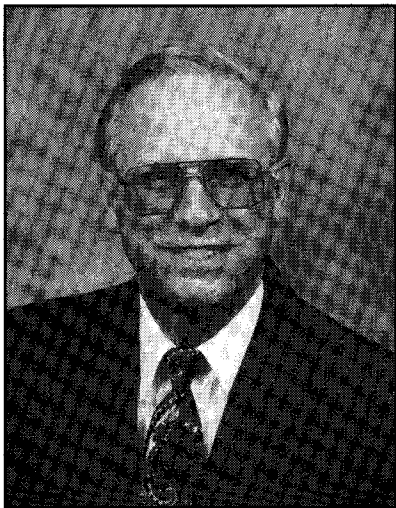
debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them” (Romans 1:24-32).

Who was Paul describing? And how did God respond to the homosexuals and lesbians of that day? It says that “*God gave them up to vile affections.*” He did not say that God accepted them as they were and that He approved of their behavior as just another life style. No, He gave them up, which means that He rejected them. There was no toleration for a sinful, destructive manner of living.

Listen to Paul’s words to the Corinthian Christians, “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). Among all the wicked named in this passage, two groups were the “*effeminate and the abusers of themselves with mankind.*” These would be people with perverted sex lives: lesbians, homosexuals, and tranvestites. Paul said that such people cannot inherit the kingdom of God or the church. That is, they cannot be saved *unless they repent*, which means that they must give up such sinful acts. Notice that Paul did not condone them, explaining that they were born with genes that compelled them to live that type of life. Rather, he classified their actions as unrighteous and said that they could not be saved if they continued to live that way. Neither did he excuse them by saying that they had a sickness or a habit that they could not change. The very fact that God condemns a practice means that it is a sin, and that one can **choose** to continue in it or to quit.

Now, let’s deal with the question of tolerance. When do homosexuals and lesbians show tolerance? They find great fault with all who do not accept their immoral acts. They try to force themselves and their way of life on everyone else. They make demands and ask for special privileges because of what they are. They reject being condemned for their practices but they quickly condemn any and all who disagree with them. Is this *tolerance*?

Again, we love humans — sinners — and we want all sinners to be saved but, at the same time, we cannot condone anyone’s immoral practices. God condemns sinful behavior, and so must we or else we will be found fighting God too. Homosexuals and lesbians **can** repent. Others have done it and so can the rest, **if they choose life.** †



WE ARE INDEED DEBTORS

Byron Nichols

We have been impressed with the strong sense of duty which Paul felt regarding sharing the message of salvation with others just as the Lord Himself had so lovingly done for him. The apostle wrote, "*I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise*" Romans 1:14).

I most definitely do not want to minimize the importance of that indebtedness of which Paul wrote, but I would like to briefly extract his words "*I am a debtor*" from that context and use them to try to help us think with great gratitude about others to whom we are indebted in a different way.

As Christians, we owe so much to so many. Surely we think immediately of **God**. Certainly we are forever indebted to that one who "*so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). Perhaps we remember with tears that "*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). And we are awed as we "*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*" (1 John 3:1). How can we ever repay such love and mercy?!

Obviously, we owe an awesome debt to **Jesus**, the only one who could complete the plan of redemption as outlined by the Father. Paul said that Jesus gave up equality with God in order that He might become a lowly servant — all because of His desire to save mankind from the just reward for sin (Philippians 2:5-8). This fact is driven home with force in Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 8:9, "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through*

His poverty might become rich.” The debt we owe to Jesus is increased by His having left us an example so that we may follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21).

The third personality of the Deity, the **Holy Spirit**, has also brought about a great indebtedness on our part. It was the Spirit who “*moved*” the biblical penmen to write those inspired words that can guide us from earth to heaven (2 Peter 1:21). In addition, it is “*the Spirit who also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*” (Romans 8:26). Most assuredly, we are deeply indebted to the Holy Spirit for His great help to us.

We also owe a great debt to a host of others besides the godhead. Just think of those **ancient stalwarts of the faith** who left us such an example of courage and conviction, saints who were ready to literally give up their lives rather than compromise their commitment to Christ. Consider, too, those **Christians of earlier generations** in our own country who sacrificed greatly in many ways to establish and promote the church in our land. The church of the present is indeed debtor to the church of past generations.

How can we ever repay the debt we owe to **those who taught us** the way of the Lord? Surely our gratitude should be shown by our living in obedience to His will and by our caring for others as these have cared for us.

In thinking about those to whom we are indebted, we must think of those **elders** who have given of themselves to “*watch for [our] souls*” (Hebrews 13:17). It is truly an awesome responsibility that they have accepted, especially in view of the fact that they must one day “*give account*” for each of us. It behooves us all to live in such a manner that they may be able to give their accounts “*with joy and not with grief.*”

It should be obvious that we are also indebted to those **preachers and teachers** who have given of themselves in our behalf, who have loved us enough to try to spur us on and not give up, who have faithfully admonished us to “*be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,*” knowing that our “*labor is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

It is only right that we add to our list the folks who are **faithful examples** of Christian living for us; those **encouragers** whose words and pats on the shoulder help us more than they realize; and on and on we could go.

Like Paul, we surely are debtors to those who still need to hear the Gospel. However, may we always also remember the many others to whom we are indebted, those who have contributed to our hope for eternity. †

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOD

God: Understanding the . . .	10
Contempt for God	13
Standing on Solid Ground	14
The Love of God	16

EVIDENCES

Is There Conflict . . . ?	17
The Blessed Truth	19
Where in the World . . . ?	21

THE WORD OF GOD

Can We Live Without Hope?	24
Buy the Truth and Sell It Not	25
Our Winnowing Fan	27

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Basis and Source of Authority	30
Maintaining our Focus	33
Who Is a "Pastor" . . . ?	35

SALVATION

Salvation from Hell	37
Be Warned: Your Feelings . . .	40

THE CHURCH

The Lost Vision	43
The Holy Priesthood	44
Understanding the Times . . .	46
The Paradox of the Church	47

WORSHIP

A Very Special Day	48
Faddish Worship	49
In Spirit and in Truth	50

CHURCH GROWTH

Bringing Together . . .	52
-------------------------	----

CHURCH HISTORY

Time of Treason	58
Has It Always Existed?	61

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Evangelism — A Way of Life	64
----------------------------	----

Emphasis on Evangelism	65
Who Will Be Saved?	66

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Divorce — Broken Homes . . .	67
Hindered Prayers	70
Do Not Try to Run Ahead . . .	72

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

What Have They Seen . . . ?	75
Preparing Children for Marriage	77
If Eli Could Speak to Parents	78

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

Smoldering	82
The Lord Will Deliver Me	83
Comfort at His Coming	84

PROVERBS 17:22

Humor	87
-------	----

TEXTUAL STUDIES

New Life in Christ	89
God and the Kingdom First	91

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

Regaining Your First Love	93
Our Example in a . . .	95

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Be a Barnabas	97
Gehazi, A Servant	99
Ruth: A Light Shining . . .	100

POEMS AND WRITINGS

When I Thank Him for What . . .	15
Hope	34
God Wants You to Succeed	39
If	41
Ten Thoughts to Start the Day	45
They Were Shocked	51
Promise Yourself	57
Influence	73
A Tragic Choice	76

What Is Ecstasy?	80
My Lord Will Come for Me.....	86
A Consistent Christian	90
Can You Spare . . . ?	92
Today I Spent Some Quiet Time..	96
The Gift that I've Got.....	98

FEATURES

Quick Commentary	23
How Do You Measure Up?	29
Verse Search	42
Who Am I?	74
Puzzle Answers	Back Page

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

Philippines.....	102
A Field Ripe for Harvest	102
Mindanao — History of	103
Evangelism in the	106

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

How exciting it is to see the growing interest from many parts of the world in **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**, and to be getting reports of the good it is doing. It is our determination to continue publishing a quarterly that is true to God's book, "user friendly", and one that carries a range of articles which will speak to the needs of all readers.

Those Christians who desire to introduce the Gospel to people who have no familiarity with the church should realize the perfection of **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL** for just such a task. May I ask that each one of us look for opportunities to share it and to follow-up on teaching those contacts. God bless you. — **JCC**

HOW OFTEN IN THE DAY?

Danger slipped away.
 Death itself brushed by so close
 The coldness could be felt,
 And yet it did no harm.

Life,
 Unscathed,
 Remains intact
 And blood with quickened
 beat
 Races through my veins
 To warm the hands and feet
 Grown cold with fear.

I knew the threat this time
 And thankful words pour out
 to God;

But I wonder
 How often in the day
 Death brushes by
 Without a sound
 While angel wings
 In matching silence
 Fold us gently in God's care
 Away from harm?

— Betty Burton Choate

God:

Understanding the Concept of Deity

Samuel A. Matthews

This study is dedicated to the many believers in God (Muslims, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, etc.) who do not understand that Jesus is not *only* the Son of God, but **is also God the Son**. Since no greater truth is affirmed in the Sacred Text, one cannot read the Bible (especially the New Testament) without recognizing the One Who is God the Son (Hebrews 1:8). This doctrine in fact permeates the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation; only a materialist would fail to see it.

Many people misunderstand the term “God”. So, let’s talk about Deity! Deity is a name of the Supreme Being (from the Latin, “Deus”, God). The term signifies in a concrete sense Him whom we call God. Concerning our Lord Jesus, the term means to assert that He was the very and ETERNAL God.

The word “GOD” is not the name of a *personality*, it is the name of a *nature, a quality of being* (as opposed, for example, to the angelic

or human natures). It is simply a name for the Divine nature. Therefore, when the Bible affirms there is but one God (Mark 12:29), the meaning is that there is but *one Divine nature, one Deity, or one Godhead*. And because there is but one divine nature, it follows there is but one God.

There is a unified set of traits or characteristics that distinguish a personality as being “God”. And those persons possessing these attributes are referred to as “God” in the Bible. So there is no contradiction whatsoever in the biblical teaching that there is but ONE divine nature or one God. The Bible reveals that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (three persons) each possess the divine nature — the infinite characteristics of deity. There is but one divine nature, but there are three possessing this unified set of qualities. Thus, each is called God (John 6:27; 2 Peter 1:17; Hebrews 1:8; Acts 5:3,4).

GOD

Indispensable to a clear understanding of Deity is an awareness of the difference between “nature” and “person”. Deity is eternal! Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are ETERNAL in nature. Jesus said, “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30; John 17:20-23). Some falsely teach that this means they must be one *in person*. But everyone knows that persons and things can be *one* in one sense and *more than one* in another sense.

as” the Father and He were one. We who believe and follow Jesus certainly are not one big fat person! Neither are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit one person.

Some conceive of God as a mathematical unit; and as a thing cannot be both mathematically singular and plural — one and three, at the same time and in the same sense — they deny the true and proper divinity of the Son of God and the

The word “one” must here be recognized as neuter gender which has to mean one in “nature”. Jesus and the Father (and the Holy Spirit) are “one” in doctrine, unity, aim, essence and purpose — but not one in person!

For example, God has declared that husband and wife are one (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5,6) but this certainly does not mean they are ONE person. They are still two separate persons, yet in another sense they are one. The word “one” must here be recognized as neuter gender which has to mean one in “nature”. Jesus and the Father (and the Holy Spirit) are “one” in doctrine, unity, aim, essence and purpose — but not one in person!

As further proof that John 10:30 does NOT teach (as the “Jesus Only” Pentecostals falsely contend) that Jesus and the Father are one person, Jesus prayed in John 17:20-23 that His followers might be ONE “even

Spirit of God. But it would seem that they reason NOT in harmony with the sacred style of inspiration. Why should we imagine that there cannot be a plurality of personal manifestations in the divine nature, any more than in the angelic or human, especially as man was created in the image of God (Read 1 Timothy 3:16).

Deity means God. God is Deity. The Son is Deity. Therefore, the Son is God. Deity, when complete, requires three Beings. Thus, the Spirit and the Son merge with the Father to form the Godhead (Genesis 1:1; Acts 17:29). When Deity is referred to, and the word “God” is used, it is necessary to

GOD

determine from the context whether it is God — the Father (John 17:1, 3, 5), God — the Son (John 1:1), or God — the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4).

There is not a single individual upon the face of God's earth who is able to prove from the Bible the false teaching that the Godhead con-

The Bible does teach, however, that there is one perfect, eternal, divine *essence* Who alone is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. And, that this ONE divine essence or nature belongs equally to THREE separate and distinct persons, designated in the Bible as *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*.

Jesus is also called **Holy child Jesus** (Acts 4:30). The adjective word, "Holy", is applied to all three persons of the Godhead at different times in the Bible. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit thus being Holy and not evil. God — Jehovah — is a Holy Spirit, but NOT the same Spirit or Person, as God — the Holy Spirit. Jesus is called God, but that doesn't mean that Jesus is God — the Father! He couldn't be the Father because He is the Son.

In John 3:16 it is revealed: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" Is it possible to read even this one familiar passage of scripture without understanding that there are two distinct persons referred to in the passage: God — the *giver*, and the Son — the *given*?

sists of only one Divine Being. It is an unprovable proposition because the Bible nowhere teaches such. It is simply not a part of God's truth. The Bible does teach, however, that there is one perfect, eternal, divine *essence* Who alone is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. And, that this ONE divine essence or nature belongs equally to THREE separate and distinct persons, designated in the Bible as *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*.

Please SEARCH THE ABOVE SCRIPTURES and see whether these things are so (Acts 17:11). The churches of Christ are neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jew. We are CHRISTIANS (1 Peter 4:16)! We teach only the Bible; and the Bible ONLY makes Christians ONLY and the ONLY Christians. †

Samuel A. Matthews works with the church of Christ in Moab, Utah, USA.



Not many of us will admit to any kind of contempt for God. Most of us feel that we are respectful enough, even if we are not always mindful of Him.

But that's part of it. It is usually when we are not really mindful of Him that we show the most contempt.

It is becoming more and more common to hear the word "God" used by Christians as an exclamation. No real thought is given to this use of His name; it is just a spur-of-the-moment outcry. But, whatever else it may be, it is, first of all, contempt. God's name is holy and should not be used as some kind of profane malediction — or even as a meaningless exclamation. I have often wondered how those who justify using the Lord's name in this way would feel if we shouted out their mother's name as an expletive.

Improper conduct is also a form of contempt for God, contempt for the fact of His omnipresence. We

watch our behavior very closely when someone is present that we do not wish to offend. God is ever present — why do we feel that it is not contempt for Him when we act directly contrary to what He has asked of us and what His presence should demand?

Indifference while worshipping is perhaps one of the greater offenses. This is a time set apart specifically to honor God. We allocate so little time for Him alone, how can we dare demonstrate nonchalance during what should be such precious moments?

There must be a thousand ways for us to show contempt for our God while He is not even on our minds. But the best way to *correct* this problem is to make certain that He is *always* on our minds and *honored* in our hearts. †

Jack W. Carter preaches for the Lord's church in Castle Rock, Colorado, USA.



Standing On Solid Ground

Hollis Miller

Sometimes I think I would like to know all the answers. But I don't, and I never will. I don't know where today is going; I only know where it is at this very moment. I don't know when angels were created; I can only believe they were. I don't know the fullest meaning of eternity; I can only believe it must be.

Life is filled with unknowns of every description. Some things that are not known today might be known tomorrow. There was a time when men believed the earth was the center of the solar system, but Copernicus changed that belief. Until Louis Pasteur, men did not understand germs. Astronomers are currently reevaluating what they believed they knew about the planet Jupiter. Placing oneself at the mercy of the latest "in thing" is not

always a wise thing to do.

Believers in Jesus Christ are just that — believers in Jesus Christ. Their lives are guided by Him because they believe certain things about Him. They believe Jesus was the Word that became flesh and dwelled among men (John 1:14). They believe He was involved in creation. *"All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made"* (John 1:3). They believe Jesus is truth. *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life..."* (John 14:6). Standing before Pilate, Jesus said: *"For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth"* (John 18:37).

Even though Jesus brought truth to the world, there are many things He did not discuss. He did not talk about mathematics, all the

events of history, or everything about the future. The concern of Jesus was *our way of life* and our *eternal destiny*. He taught us that in the end He will be there when all else will have vanished.

In 2 Corinthians 5:11 Paul used an interesting word about his preaching.

"Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." The **mind** is persuaded, not the feet or the elbows. One who would follow the truth of Jesus must be persuaded *in the mind* to do so. His reasoning powers must be brought into harmony with the truth Jesus brought to the world.

When you lay this article aside, please do so persuaded that Jesus has

been in the world. His faith is here; His church is here; the memorial of His body and blood is here; the New Testament is here. Jesus is truth! Standing on Him is to stand on solid ground. †

Hollis Miller is a gospel preacher living in Cadiz, Kentucky, USA.

When I Thank Him for What He Has Done

Someday I shall stand in God's city
To receive the bright treasures I've won
But how can I ever accept them,
Till I thank Him for what He has done?

What joy as I stand and listen
To the songs in that city beyond,
But a tear in my eyes must glisten
When I thank Him for what He has done.

They say there will be no sighing,
In that city when life's race is run,
But how can I keep from crying
When I thank Him for what He has done?

When I thank Him for what He has done, I must
look back to the crucified One,
On that beautiful shore, I must kneel once more,
Just to thank Him for what He has done.

Before I can shout hallelujah,
Before I can sing the sweet song,
I must kneel at the feet of Jesus
And thank Him for what He has done!

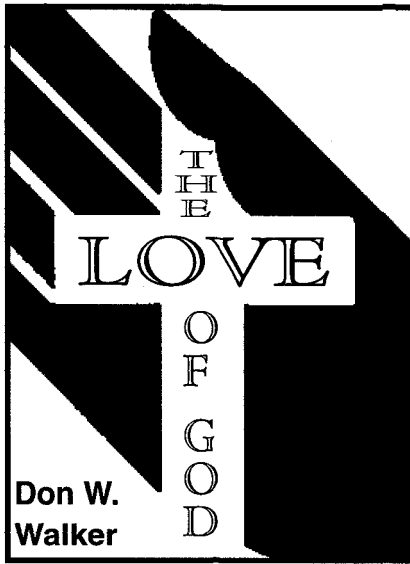
— Unknown

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:4).

Truly the love of God exceeds our broadest imaginations. In Jeremiah 31:3 we read, *"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love;*

therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Again concerning God's love, we read in Ephesians 2:4,5, *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."* These statements come as no surprise when we really understand the fact that *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8). Thus, when we look at God's love, **we see love in its purest and fullest sense.**

1 Thessalonians 1:3 speaks of the *"labor of love,"* while 1 John 3:18 also mentions the *active nature* of genuine love. We see this attribute of love powerfully demonstrated in Jehovah. Romans 5:8 declares, *"God commended His love*



toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." *"God so loved the world, He gave his only Son"* (John 3:16). Thus **the active nature of genuine love.**

In Revelation 3:19 we learn another principle concerning love.

Jesus said, *"as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."* When we read Hebrews 12:11 we can see and realize **the love that prompts discipline.** *"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."* So it is, *"charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins"* (1 Peter 4:8) when one shall convert the sinner from the error of his way and save a soul from death (James 5:20).

These are the ways God has displayed His love for mankind. Let us do the same. †

Don W. Walker preaches for the Shenandoah congregation in San Antonio, Texas, USA.

Is There Conflict Between the Bible and the Theory of Evolution?

Maxie B. Boren

Millions of people have been misled into believing there is no conflict between the theory of evolution and the Bible. Even many religious people have been so duped. These have tried to harmonize “atheistic evolution” and the Bible by embracing so-called “theistic evolution”, accepting the idea that God brought life to be as we know it by the mechanism of evolution. But the fact is that the theory of evolution is incompatible with the Scriptures, regardless of whether one tries to include God to some degree or not. (And just for the record: the vast majority of adamant evolutionists DO NOT BELIEVE IN GOD, and despise the Genesis account.) Why, I ask, would a Christian be inclined to seek “harmony” with a system of thinking that denies God?



Many, if not most, evolutionists say that life came into existence through “spontaneous generation”, thus bypassing God as the source of life. In the book, **Biological Science – An Inquiry Into Life**, published in 1963, and produced by the American Institute of Biological Sciences, it is stated: “We know that the world was once without life — that life appeared later. How? We think it was by spontaneous generation!” (page 41). Furthermore, the authors affirmed: “Now if one believes in the occurrence of spontaneous generation, he cannot also strictly believe in an orderly origin of living things.”

Let it register in your mind the position taken by the evolutionists: (1) By “spontaneous generation”

EVIDENCES

life came to be; (2) One cannot believe in “**spontaneous generation**” and at the same time believe in an “**orderly origin of living things.**” Therefore, by the evolutionists’ own declaration, *one cannot believe the evolutionary theory and at the same time believe the Biblical account of creation in Genesis 1.* Yes, there is indeed conflict between the theory of evolution and the Bible! Make no mistake about it! The evolutionists recognize it. And so should believers in God!

I for one abhor, denounce, and repudiate the theory of evolution:

(1) Because it attempts to offer an explanation for the existence of the universe and life apart from the Creator, and in so doing robs God of the rightful glory and praise He should receive (read Psalm 33:6-8; 146:1-6; 148:1-5,13; Acts 17:22-28; Romans 11:33,36; Ephesians 3:20,21; Revelation 4:11, etc.). How can a Christian subscribe to anything that does that? Christians should be continually offering God praise for His creative genius, not compromising with the enemies of God by giving credence to their godless theories!

(2) Because by the teaching of the theory of evolution, faith is subverted in the hearts of the susceptible and ill-informed,

separating them from God, and planting in their hearts a “philosophical approach” to life that leaves God out (read Hebrews 11:1-3,6; Romans 1:18-23).

(3) Because the theory of evolution, which teaches that life spontaneously arose from non-life, eliminates the basis for proper human conduct. If man is just the “highest rung” on the evolutionary ladder of blind chance development, and there is no Creator to whom man is accountable, then why act differently from the beasts? Such thinking not only lends full support to the philosophies of hedonism and humanism, but also to “master race” Nazism and such like!

My friends, “the theory of evolution” is a diabolical lie of Satan, and is a very real contributing factor to the social and moral decline of our world. †

Maxie B. Boren preaches for the Brown Trail congregation of the church of Christ in Bedford, Texas, USA.

One faith system raises man to emulate God; the other reduces him to the level of an animal without a conscience.

Which offers the better life, even in this world?

The Blessed Truth of the Resurrection of Jesus

James W. Farris

The child of God today can boldly declare that Jesus Christ did arise from the grave, conquering death and offering hope for every individual in the world. As students of the Bible one of the things in which we *must* believe is the resurrection. It is obvious that Christianity and the resurrection go together and cannot be separated.

There are three major areas which prove the resurrection did take place:

1. The prophecies and their fulfillment present unshakable evidence to the world.

In Psalm 16:10 David said concerning the coming Messiah, "*For thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.*" Jesus Christ foretold His own resurrection even when His disciples did not know what was meant by His statement in Matthew 12:40: "*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" And again, "*From that time forth Jesus began to show unto His disciples how that He must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day*" (Matthew 16:21). Finally, He promised in Matthew 26:32, "*After I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.*"

2. The training of the Roman Guards gives great evidence to the resurrection.

Some of the best trained men were placed at the door of the tomb for the very reason of keeping watch. The enemies of Christ actually tried to prevent the power of God. In Matthew 27:62-66 the officials said, "*Lest his disciples come by night and steal him away and say to the people, 'He is risen from the dead'.*" Nevertheless, no matter what feeble men tried to do, they could not stop the power of God Almighty and, yes, the tomb was found empty.

3. The actions of the enemies of Christ substantiate the resurrection.

It was the enemies of Jesus who made up a lie, stating that the disciples came and stole away the body of the Lord (Matthew 28:11-15). Yet, each of the inspired writers of the gospel accounts declared that, "*He is not here, He is risen*" (Matthew 28:6).

The resurrection was a major truth which the Apostles used to give credence to the Messiahship of Jesus. Peter declared with boldness, "*Him...ye have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain, whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that He should be holden of it*" (Acts 2:23,24). The greatest difference exists between the apostles before and after the resurrection. Previously, they had cowered and fled from the trial of Jesus, but at Pentecost they claimed to have seen the resurrected Lord, freed from the confines of the tomb.

Paul discussed the significance of the resurrection for Christians today. "*For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*" (1 Corinthians 15:21,22). The life we shall obtain is based in the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without the resurrection we would have no hope. As Paul said, "*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable*" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Since we know that Christ did come back from the dead, we have the greatest hope and the greatest reason to live for Him. †

James W. Farris is a preacher of the Gospel, working with the church in San Augustine, Texas, USA.



Where In The World Did It Come From?

Ancil Jenkins

Has it been twenty-five years since man first walked on the moon? More than the first moon walk, the entire space program has become a vital part of our lives.

Yet, for what purpose did America spend that 24 billion dollars? Why did twelve men walk on the moon and bring home hundreds of pounds of rocks? The primary goal of this exploration was to attempt to discover *the origin of the moon*. By discovering the moon's origin, scientists thought that we

would be able to better understand the origin of the earth and the rest of the solar system.

In his new book, **Liftoff, America's Adventure in Space**, astronaut Michael Collins recounts this search. Before the moon exploration began, he points out, there were three possible explanations for the moon's beginning. Scientists thought it might have condensed from gaseous matter. Others proposed that the moon was a piece of matter that wandered into our sys-

EVIDENCES

tem and was captured by the earth's gravity and pulled into orbit. The third explanation was that the moon used to be part of the earth that broke off.

The moon rocks brought back by the Apollo program disproved the first and third explanations. The moon rocks are of a different chemical composition than those of earth. The second explanation is greatly weakened by mathematical analysis. In effect, Collins concludes, after all the time, money, effort, and lives have been spent, men still do not know the origin of the moon.

This failure brings to mind Paul's words: "*Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? ...the world through its wisdom did not know him...*" (1 Corinthians 1:10-21).

We wonder why men are unwilling to have simple faith in what God has said. In reality, there are only two explanations for the origin of the moon and the rest of creation. **One explanation is that God made them.** This should settle it if we are willing to believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6) This faith should embolden and enrich our lives. Because He lives, we can face not only tomorrow, but also anything else that comes.

The other explanation is that God did not create the world. If this is true, what difference does it

make where the world came from? We are all doomed to a brief life and then a ceaseless existence. In reality, to study, experiment, and explore to find the origin of life becomes a meaningless exercise.

Which of the two explanations is correct? Science has admitted it does not have the answer. What is lost if one has faith in God as the Creator? If we are wrong, and God does not exist, our end will be no different. Yet, if we are right, what a joy to waken in the presence of the King! We can easily imagine the horror of those who have chosen the *wrong* explanation for the world's origin.

Simple faith settles many questions. I once heard of an evangelist who took some time before the preaching services to answer questions from the audience. Once he was asked, "**How do you explain the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea on dry land?**" His answer, "**God. Next question.**"

Sometimes, only one word is needed to explain what man's monstrous efforts cannot explain. If God did what He said He did, we should do what He said for us to do. If we do not do what He said for us to do, our fate is certain and our eternity sure. **He is still the "I AM"!** †

Ancil Jenkins is a writer and preacher in Jamestown, Tennessee, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Romans 8:9-11

Like all humans, the Christian exists in a fleshly body that is dying; but because of the New Birth, he has been made alive to God through the Spirit.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The key to our eternal existence lies in (1) our birth through water (baptism) and the Spirit into the Family of God, and (2) the righteousness with which we live and die, as He dwells in us.

Contrary to the doctrine of some, these verses clearly state that the Christian is indwelt by:

the Spirit,

the Spirit of Christ,

the Spirit of God.

This indwelling is the promised "gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38), and without His presence the New Birth cannot take place (John 3:3-5)

As sinful humans, we were dead in sin, but now it is the Spirit in us that "is life" (John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6)

As sinful humans, are our bodies doomed to perish? These verses say that there is a parallel between the body of Christ and the bodies of the Christians: Christ's body was raised from the dead in a glorified, immortal state by the Spirit of God. If His Spirit dwells in us, that same Spirit will raise our mortal bodies in the same way to the same immortal existence for eternity.

Can We Live without Hope?

Peter Mostert

The Bible, which speaks of good news, is a collection of books or writings that were penned during a period of 1,500 years. Moses wrote the first five books, starting with Genesis, and John wrote the last, Revelation, in A.D. 96.

Throughout the Bible a unique thread of hope is interwoven — Jesus was the promised hope of the Old Testament, He came to earth and died for all, and is coming again on the last day to retrieve the faithful, as recorded in the New Testament.

The Bible is important to us as our source of hope, that Jesus will be returning for “me” and “my” loved ones. The hope that we have in Christ as our Savior, however, is not wishful thinking or an unrealistic expectation or a fantasy. Our hope is an anchor of the soul — secure and steadfast, in His promises (Hebrews 6:19,20).

Our hope is a feeling of confident expectation that will be realized when Jesus returns. It is an intangible that many people cannot understand, but for those who have the hope it is the major source of comfort, and those who hope place their trust in God.

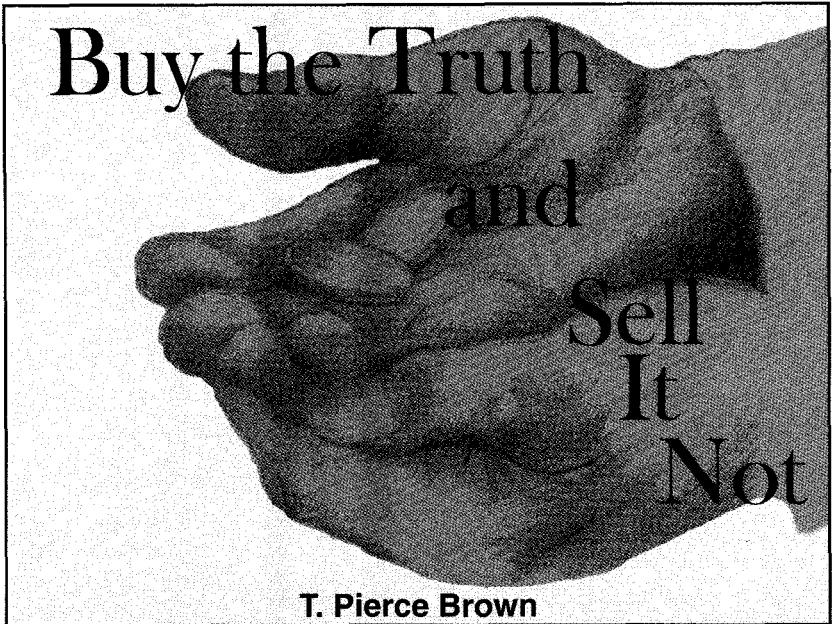
There are two major reasons for having such a hope:

The first is in Jesus. He is our hope. He defeated Satan and death by His resurrection from the grave and is now preparing a place for us in heaven. He is also our advocate, able to overcome any charge raised against us by Satan, the accuser.

The second is the Bible. The Bible, God’s Word or Divine Communication, is the story of man’s fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, and his redemption through Jesus. The Bible is not “just a book” to be compared to Shakespeare, Homer, Plato, or others. There is **no other book like it**, not in continuity, circulation, translation, survival, teaching, or influence. It is the *only* book that is truly a universal manual for all people everywhere, any time, and in any culture.

The Bible can be believed today — “not in part, but the whole.” From Genesis to Malachi, Matthew to Revelation, God’s Word is in-spired, not someone’s clever imagination or interpretation! “We stand secure on the Word of God, the B-1-B-L-E,” as the children’s song suggests. †

Peter Mostert works with the church of Christ in Yucaipa, California, USA.



T. Pierce Brown

Solomon said in Proverbs 23:23, “*Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.*” To the superficial mind, the question might be raised, “How could a person buy something if no one sold?” But the thing of which Solomon spoke in Proverbs 23:23 is not a commercial venture. Our Christian heritage was bought with the blood of the martyrs, but no person sold it to us.

When Jesus said, “*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32), He expressed a principle of the widest application. Knowledge of *historic* truth can make us free from having to repeat the same mistakes over

and over. Knowledge of *scientific* truth can make us free from superstition in those areas and free to explore in all sorts of areas heretofore inaccessible. *Economic* truths can make us free from poverty. *Medical* truth can make us free from various kinds of diseases. *Moral* and *ethical* truths can make us free from many of the social ills that plague our nations. *Religious* truth can make us free from the love, practice, guilt, burden, stain, and punishment of sin. But when Jesus used the word “shall” He did not mean that it was an automatic or predetermined reality. “*You shall know the truth*” in no way means you are **forced** to know it. And

THE WORD OF GOD

“*the truth shall make you free*” only if it is applied or acted upon.

If we think in man’s normal relationships with man, we can immediately see the value of Paul’s admonition, “*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor*” (Ephesians 4:25). **An orderly society cannot exist in the absence of truth.** The disorder in all societies is largely the result of the failure to recognize the value of truth.

In the philosophical or scientific area, the same kind of thing is true. For example, the acceptance of the false doctrine of evolution and its related corollaries has brought untold damage to humanity. It includes such things as the murder of millions of unborn babies, Hitler’s atrocities (many of which were based on the idea of “the survival of the fittest,” which is an evolutionary concept), including selective breeding, and the murder of the “unfit,” and many other examples of man’s inhumanity to man. There is nothing at all philosophically or scientifically sound about the theory of evolution, for it cannot be proven to be logical or scientific.

There is also moral, religious, and spiritual truth. Probably Solomon primarily had this kind in mind. If God is not a sovereign God, the source of all moral and spiritual truth, and man is not a

mortal, moral, accountable being, made in His image, bound by nature and law to live in accord with that truth or suffer the consequences, then any talk of ethics and morality is utter foolishness.

To buy the truth, then, is to assert its reality, persevere in its acquisition, and devote oneself to its practice. Prejudice and pride must be put aside. Sin and self-will must be sacrificed.

To “sell it not” means never to lose the disposition of mind that causes you to value it above all else. It means never to betray it through selfish or sordid motive. A preacher who preaches some false doctrine through the desire for money, prestige, or power has sold the truth. But the preacher who does not preach false doctrine, but fails to preach the truth for the same reasons, or any other, has also sold it.

Inasmuch as no society can *function* with disregard for truth, no noble or worthwhile activity that is based on error or lies can be carried to successful *fruition*, our freedom in any area is *based* on truth, and our sanctification and eternal salvation are as *a result of truth*, let us **buy the truth and sell it not**. Let us sacrifice all, even life, if need be, on the altar of truth. †

**T. Pierce Brown preaches and lives in
Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.**



“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12).

Harvest was an important event to the farmers of Christ’s day. The grain with the stalks would be carried to a place prepared where it would be spread out and, either by animals treading over the harvest or by pulling a kind of sled over it, the grain would be separated from the stalks. This would be followed by using a two- or three-pronged fork called a winnowing fan with which the kernel and the chaff would be separated by tossing them into the breeze. John’s listeners probably had little trouble understanding the parallel. But what of us today? What spiritual significance does this statement have for us?

When we submit ourselves to the threshing floor of God’s kingdom, the winnowing fan of the inspired Word will separate us from:

THE WORD OF GOD

The chaff of ignorance: *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:5).*

The chaff of indolence: *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15)*

The chaff of selfishness: *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:1,2).*

The chaff of hatred: *“If someone says, “I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen: And this commandment we have from him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20,21).*

The chaff of moral laxity: *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).*

The chaff of hopelessness: *“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13).*

The chaff of fear and uncertainty: *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7,8).*

Let us use the winnowing fan of God’s Word to separate the chaff while in this life, lest the Lord come and, with the winnowing fan of judgment, separate us from life in God’s eternal heaven. †

Joe C. Magee preaches the Gospel of Christ in Carthage, Missouri, USA.

God loves each one of us
as if there was *only* one of us.
— Augustine



How do you measure up?

**A good man
out of the good treasure of his heart
brings forth good things,
and an evil man
out of the evil treasure
brings forth evil things.**

**But I say to you that
for every idle word men may speak,
they will give account of it
in the day of judgment.**

**For by your words
you will be justified,
and by your words
you will be condemned.**

Matthew 12:35-37



Basis and Source of Authority

Earl D. Edwards

“Authority” means “power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior.” For the humans who believe in a benevolent Creator it should be obvious that the very highest authority or power belongs to that Creator because He is the one who owns every being and every thing on the earth, by right of creation. “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1). “*Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures...’*” (Genesis 1:24). “*And God created man*” (Genesis 1:27).

God’s Authority

When Christ was on the earth He taught “*as one having authority*” (Matthew 7:29). And later, after His resurrection, He did indeed affirm that “*all authority* (Greek = *exousia*) *has been given to me in heaven and on earth*” (Matthew 28:18). Jesus spoke elsewhere of the authority He had “over all mankind” and said, as He spoke to

God, the Father: “*Thou gavest*” Me “*authority over all mankind*” (John 17:2). Later Paul wrote that “*God is the head* (Greek = *kephale*) *of Christ*” and “*Christ is the head* (Greek = *kephale*) *of every man*” (1 Corinthians 11:3). The term “head” as used here means “one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being.”

From the above passages it is clear, even if one accepts them only as valid historical documents, that Christ and Paul believed in a hierarchy of authority, with God the Father being at the top where “the buck stops.”

Christ’s Authority

But likewise it is clear from the above passages that the Father gave “*all authority*” in “*heaven and on earth*” to Jesus (Matthew 28:18). So at the point in time at which He uttered the words under consideration here, He already had absolute authority, the absolute right to speak and command.

The Apostles' Authority

Immediately, after the above-quoted affirmation of Jesus that He possessed all authority, He began using that authority to tell His disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." (Matthew 28:19). He likewise told them that He would send upon them "the Spirit of Truth" (the Holy Spirit) who would "guide" them "into all truth" (John 16:13). A short time later the Spirit came upon them and they "were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4). They therefore went and preached and wrote epistles, as one of them said, with "authority the Lord gave" to them (2 Corinthians 10:8).

Authority of the Writings of Inspired Apostles

When Jesus was on the earth, He had confirmed that all of the writings of the thirty-nine books we call the Old Testament carried the approval of God, and were therefore

authoritative. In fact, on one occasion, He said, "*the Scripture cannot be broken*" (John 10:35), thus confirming that all books recognized as Scripture by the Jews were actually from God. A bit later He made it

clear which books He regarded as being included in "Scripture": "*all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled*" (Luke 24:44). It is a recognized fact that these three categories in-

cluded all thirty-nine books which are today described as the Old Testament.

But in addition to the above thirty-nine books, Jesus, as noted earlier, had promised that the promised Holy Spirit would "guide" the apostles into "*all truth*."

One of those apostles later wrote that God "*has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us...*" (2 Peter 1:3). In other words, that "*all*

Biblical Authority:

- ✓ God
- ✓ Christ
- ✓ The Apostles
- ✓ The Written Word

Unacceptable Authority:

- ✗ Creeds and Doctrines developed by men.

truth” has been received. In fact, just a few verses later he said, “*the truth*” is “*present with you*” (2 Peter 1:12). Likewise, another apostle declared, “*the things which I write unto you are the Lord’s commandment*” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Delegated Authority

“Delegated authority” refers to authority by which one person is “acting for another.” From the above reasoning it is clear that God delegated authority to Christ, who, in His turn, delegated authority to His apostles to reveal His will for us. No wonder, then, these apostles clearly affirmed that to disobey their writings would be equal to disobeying “*the Lord’s commandment*” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

God doesn’t speak to us directly today, but He does speak through His Son, Who in turn speaks through the written Word of God. That is why the apostle Paul told Timothy that the way he [and all who would come after him] must deal with false doctrine in the future of the Christian age would be to “*preach the word*” (2 Timothy 4:2). That “*Word*” which Paul had in mind clearly included the **Old Testament** that he had mentioned just a few verses earlier (2 Timothy 3:15), as well as the **New Testament** which was being written at that time through the inspiration of

the Holy Spirit: “*all Scripture is inspired by God*” (2 Timothy 3:16). This “*all Scripture*” certainly included the apostles’ writings, which as earlier noted, that same apostle had affirmed were “*the Lord’s*” (1 Corinthians 14:37), and therefore carried His authority. Thus, since neither God nor Christ any longer speak directly to us, **the written Word is our authority base.**

False Authority Standards

In Jesus’ day there were some who held to teachings (or “traditions”) which did not originate with God. Concerning these, Jesus plainly said, “*In vain do they worship me teaching as doctrines the precepts of men*” (Matthew 15:9). Just so, today, we have those who dedicate a certain kind of worship to Mary, or baptize infants, or add instrumental music to the singing commanded in the New Testament. In order to justify their practices, such people must go beyond the bounds of Scripture authorized by God, thus violating the clear commands in Revelation 22:18,19. They, therefore, worship “*in vain... teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.*” †

Earl D. Edwards is Director of Graduate Studies in Bible at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

Maintaining Our Focus



Wayne Barrier

Today's world has few constants. One constant is change. It's hard to comprehend the social, economic, technical, and medical change of the past 100 years, or even the past 50 years. Every day something else affecting hundreds of millions of people changes — a new way to communicate, a new drug to cure disease, a new discovery of some kind.

Changes are both good and bad. All create the need for continual learning and education. In every facet of life change requires constant evaluation and refocusing. Things that once were important are no longer important or even relevant to our lives.

What about change and the Christian?

Christians must deal with

change effectively. We must learn to change some things, but always to maintain our focus on the unchanging priorities and goals of God and of the church.

Consider Paul's statement in Philippians 3:12-21. He says, "*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*"

"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

"Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind, and if in

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame — who set their minds on earthly things.

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

These inspired words remind us of our purpose, eternal citizenship, mission, attitude, standards of performance, goals, and some major distractions. Our world is home to over 6 billion people — most never having heard the Gospel of Christ. Our task

is great and we must maintain our focus and press forward if all are to hear the message of hope. †

Wayne Barrier works with the World Evangelism program and lives in Florence, Alabama, USA.

Hope

Harold D. Duncan

Hope is a window to heaven,
Giving us glimpses above,
Urging us on to that haven,
Completely surrounded by love.

Hope is a fuel that propels us,
Giving us power to go,
Furnishing light for our pathway,
Accenting heaven's bright glow.

Hope is a lifeline that saves us,
As we go struggling along,
Guiding our steps and direction,
Marching to Heaven's sweet song.

Hope is a balm for the Christian,
Soothing the tired weary soul,
Furnishing gentle persuasion
As we press on to our goal.

Hope is the strength that sustains us,
Raising our eyes to the Light,
Filling our hearts with His glory
Transcending this earthly night.

Who Is a “Pastor” According to the Scriptures?

Francis David

In the New Testament, Paul, Peter, Timothy and Titus were evangelists and ministers of the Gospel of Christ. Their work was to preach and teach the message of Jesus. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that any one of them were introduced at any time to any one as “Pastor Paul” or “Pastor Titus”.

There is much misunderstanding today about the word “pastor”. The majority are misinformed about this biblical use of this word. People call any church leader a “pastor”, intending to show proper respect to spiritual leaders.

However, if we sincerely examine the New Testament, we will find that the word pastor is used to mean “shepherd”. Biblical pastors were also called “elders”, and “bishops” (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Ephesians 4:12). All of these names were applied to one office in the leadership of the church.

There is a great difference between the work of a preacher and the work of a pastor. Pastors are spiritual shepherds whose work is to oversee, or care for, the flock of God (Hebrews 13:17). All elders or

pastors are to be *preachers* and teachers of God’s word, but not all *preachers* are *pastors*!

There are many who feel honored to be called pastors or chief pastor, chief elder or chief bishop. In the scriptures nowhere do we read these terms. Only Jesus our Lord is worthy to be called Chief Elder or Pastor.

Please open your Bible and read 1 Timothy, chapter three. Here we clearly see the qualifications of and elder or pastor: “*A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife (must be a married man), vigilant, sober, of good behavior (not rude), given to hospitality, apt to teach (good student of the Bible), not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous, one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?). Not a novice (not a new convert) lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have*

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

a good report of them which are without, lest he fall into reproach and snare of the devil."

Titus 1 repeats the list of character traits a man must have if he is to be considered for the office of presbyter or pastor. If a person does not have these qualities he is unfit for the job and cannot be scripturally appointed as an elder in the Lord's church.

The requirements concerning marriage, believing children, and not being a novice or a young convert also establish the fact that an elder is to be an older Christian — older in age as well as in experience. A young man, therefore, cannot be appointed as elder or pastor.

In contrast, an evangelist or preacher can be a young man or an old man. Timothy was a young preacher. An elder or pastor must know how to run his own house (take care of his wife and children, 1 Timothy 3:15). Age and experience are essential for this job. All preachers should prepare themselves for this work. They must study well the word of God and make themselves good teachers of the Bible. They must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and one day, with age and experience, perhaps they will also be qualified to be appointed as elders.

Another point about pastors or elders is that the words are always

used in the plural form in the New Testament, when speaking of "*the elders*" [or bishops or pastors] of a particular congregation, as in Acts 15:2; Acts 16:4; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1.

Though qualifying for the work is vital, it must not be forgotten that elders carry a tremendous responsibility. They are instructed to "*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage but being ensamples to the flock*" (1 Peter 5:2,3).

Christians are commanded to "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as **they that must give account**, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief...*" (Hebrews 13:17).

Are you a pastor? Do you possess these qualifications which we have just seen in the scriptures? Do you call yourself a pastor, elder or chief bishop, even though you do not meet these qualifications? Please do not misuse this word. It is not a "title", as such; it is an office of work.

Where do we stand in these matters? †

Francis David is a preacher of the Gospel, living and working in New Delhi, India.

“God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

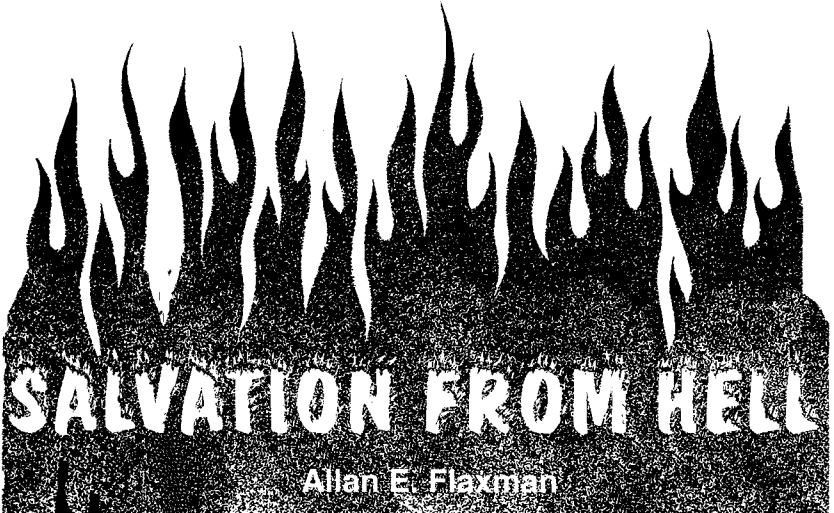
How horrible is the Bible picture of Hell! Many years ago I listened to a sermon delivered by one of our outstanding preachers, based on the biblical description of Hell. It was not funny. It was designed to make his audience “sit up and take notice.” It certainly got that response from me and I feel confident that it had the same effect on everyone in that large audience.

Hell is a place of darkness! Hell is a place of fire! Hell is a place of suffering and weeping and gnashing of teeth! In Hell the condemned will remember all the events on earth they wish they could forget — for example, the times

they ignored those who were trying to teach and encourage them to become Christians.

Hell is eternal — it will never end! You can stay out of Hell by obeying the Gospel, but if you once get into Hell you will *never* get out! Not a pretty picture! And remember, God painted that horrible picture and doubtless used such graphic language so that it would be a warning to everyone through the ages (Matthew 13:42-50; 18:8,9; 8:12; Jude 13; Luke 16:27-31; Matthew 25:32; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.)

The Scriptures say clearly that Hell is the ultimate destiny of all



unforgiven sinners (Romans 6:23.) That raises the question, "What is sin?" Also, "How does God regard sin that He would prepare a place as horrible and as horrifying as Hell, to be the eternal lake of fiery punishment for unforgiven sinners?"

Perhaps we should answer these questions by noting first that God's present attitude toward sin is not new! In the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, God promised Adam and Eve that to eat the one forbidden fruit would bring about their death. Thousands of years later we are all too well aware that every word God said was true. In the days of Noah the whole world population — except for eight people — was drowned in the Flood. Why? Because of sin. And, as the story continues on through the Old Testament until the coming of Christ, God's attitude toward sin has never changed (Genesis 2:17; 6-8:14). Seeing the story of mankind unfold, history surely has taught us that God never fails to keep any promise He ever makes.

The New Testament takes up the story of God's relationship with man, continuing to emphasize His severe attitude toward sin. "*Sin*" it says, "*is the transgression of God's law*" (1 John 3:4; Romans 4:15.) Again it says, "*He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin*" (James 4:17). Gets one to

thinking, doesn't it? **How sinful is sin?** The New Testament actually speaks of the "*sinfulness of sin*" (Romans 7:13). It also points out that the sacrificial blood of animals has no power to "take away" sin, that is, to cause the sinner to experience God's forgiveness (Hebrews 10:4). God continues to view sin as the one factor that separates man from Himself!

But, in this Christian Age, a new event has been introduced into the equation. "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,*" says Paul (1 Timothy 1:15). "*For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). Is this a "back-flip" on God's part? Is He having "second thoughts" about Hell? Not at all. The advent of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world was a God-planned event! Planned, in fact, "*before the foundation of the world*" (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 13:8). **How marvelous and how wonderful His Love, that He should go to these extreme measures — giving His "Only begotten Son" as the only qualifying and suitable sacrifice to keep sinful man out of Hell!**

And that brings forward yet another thought, raised in the

Hebrews Letter. The writer, by Heavenly inspiration says, "*He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*" (Hebrews 10:28,29). No wonder we are reminded immediately, "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.*"

For vengeance, indeed, belongs rightfully to Him (verses 30,31)!

Yet, think of it. "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). Hell remains more horrible than we can imagine! And, God so loved us all, that "*While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8).

The question is, "By our manner of life, which do we choose for ourselves: God's righteous judgment or His great love?" †

Allan E. Flaxman is a gospel preacher in New South Wales, Australia.

God Wants You to Succeed

You make an investment in someone when you trust him/her with your money, time, or energy. You make clear your commitment, and your desire is to see that person succeed because you are willing to risk something of value.

As this parable makes clear, God has invested in you. The master "*called his servants and entrusted his property to them.*" Some people act as though God wants you to fail. But that's nonsense! He doesn't trust you and then hope you'll fail. God *wants* you to succeed. That's why He was willing to make the most significant investment possible: His own Son.

There's a day of reckoning coming. All of Matthew 25 is a warning to be prepared. But we don't prepare as those who are faced with certain or even likely failure. The one who made this incredible investment in us wants us to succeed and will freely give us all that we need. "*...He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Philippians 1:6).

His investment proves His desire to say to you, "*Well done, good and faithful servant. ...Enter into the joy of your lord*" (Matthew 25:21).

Stephen M. Stewart

Be Warned



Your Feelings Can Deceive You!

G.F. Raines

The following passages in the Holy Bible tell us that man's feeling are often deceitful:

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26).

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself — it is not in man that walketh to direct His steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

"The heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9). James A. Harding, one of the greatest gospel preachers since the days of the apostles, has well said:

"When a man trusts his feelings for his knowledge of pardon, without properly weighing the testimony of God's Spirit in God's Word, there is no telling to what he will drift. The

religion of feeling leads to all sorts of fanaticism and folly, to every degree of cruelty and crime.

"Your feelings depend upon your faith, and the stronger the faith the more intense the feeling, and that, too, whether your faith be well founded or not. The belief of a lie will affect your feelings just as much as the belief of the truth, as many of you well know."

By the Book of God we are made **wise** unto salvation (John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:15). The Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13). When we, from the heart, do the will of God revealed in the Bible by the Holy Spirit, we know that we are children of God, and in no other way can we *know* that we *know* God; for "*hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep His com-*

SALVATION

mandments” (1 John 2:3). “*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*” (John 17:3).

Our feelings are competent to testify as to things which take place in us, but they cannot testify as to **what takes place in the mind of God**. All we know about the mind of God is what the Holy Spirit has revealed: “*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:11).

Pardon takes place, not in man, but in the mind of God. The Holy Spirit in the New Testament tells us what God requires us to do to

become His children. When our spirits are conscious (aware) of the fact that we have done what God has revealed in His Word through the Holy Spirit that we must do to become His children, “*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*” (Romans 8:16).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, “*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him*” (Hebrews 5:8,9), unequivocally says: “*Not every one that sayest unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). †

G. F. Raines is a writer and preacher living in Celina, Tennessee, USA.

IF

IF Christ stood before you right now and said, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*”, what would you do??

IF The Lord promises us salvation without baptism, why did Peter say it **saves** (1 Peter 3:21)?

IF Sprinkling and pouring are scriptural baptism, why did Paul say there is **ONE** baptism (Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12)?

IF We can have remission without baptism, why did Peter say baptism is **for** the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)?

IF We get into Christ without baptism, why did Paul say we are **baptized** into Christ (Galatians 3:27)?

IF We get into the body of Christ without baptism, why did Paul say we are baptized **into the body** (1 Corinthians 12:13)? The body and the church are the same (Colossians 1:18).

IF Jesus Christ grasped your hand and said, “*If ye love me, ye will keep My commandments*”, **would you love and obey Him???**

Verse Search

Supply the missing information from the book of Acts, chapter eight, NKJV.

1. After Stephen's death, "...devout men _____, _____" (V. 2).
2. What happened as a result of the persecution that followed? (V. 1).
3. "As for _____, he _____, _____, and _____ and _____" (V. 3).
4. When Christians were scattered by the persecution, what did they do? (V. 4)
5. Where did Philip (one of the seven appointed in chapter 6) go and what did he do? (V. 5,6).
6. "But when they _____ Philip as he preached the things concerning _____ and _____, both men and women were _____" (V. 12).
7. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard about the converts in Samaria, what did they do? (V. 14-17).
8. To whom was Philip called to preach next? (V. 27).
9. When Philip asked the eunuch if he understood what he was reading, what did he answer? (V. 31).
10. What Old Testament passage was he reading? (V. 32,33).
11. What did Philip answer concerning the passage? (V. 35).
12. What response did the eunuch make? (V. 36).
13. How did Philip answer him? (V. 37).
14. "So he _____ to stand still. And both _____ and the _____ went down into _____, and he _____ him" (V. 38).
15. What happened when they came up out of the water? (V. 39,40).

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

The **Lost** Vision

Hershel Dyer

In this world of so many differing faiths and practices, all claiming Christ as their Savior, a restoration to God's way must be diligently preached. Were the prophets and apostles of Scripture living, they would be pressing for massive reforms by those who claim Christ as their Lord. They would be interested in no compromise with those doctrines or practices which are untaught in their own Spirit-inspired writings.

We are witnessing in the church today one of the saddest losses of the prophetic, apostolic vision. Rather than helping preachers and others who are astray, some of our preachers are compromising and sacrificing truth to ingratiate themselves with these misled groups. Their proffered fellowship with those in error hinders others of us who are striving to lead souls into the way of truth and righteousness. It can only bring the wrath of God upon all who thus "*hinder the truth in unrighteousness*" (Romans 1:18).

We wish that those who compromise for worldly advantage could have the attitude of C.H. Spurgeon, the renowned London preacher, who declared in a sermon long ago:

"Everywhere, in all sects, I see inventions of men arrogating the place of the commandments of God. Let us sweep our temples, and return unto the Word of the Lord. Say not that ye believe the Book when you act as though it were not true — Will they believe it? Will they practice it? Will they abide by the standard?"

— **From the sermon:** *Nominal Christians — Real Infidels.*

The **standard** has never changed. It continues to be the Bible, God's inspired word. **It must be our guide and our law.** †

Hershel Dyer preaches for the 10th & Rockford congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD

John Thiesen

Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been separated from God by sin. It is this separation which has created the need for a priesthood to represent us to God.

PRIESTS ARE MEDIATORS

A priest is a mediator who stands between God and sinners. His job, from the earliest times, has been to offer up sacrifices to God in order to make propitiation for sinners and to pray on their behalf to God. For example, Moses' brother Aaron was a priest. Every year, when offering up the sacrificial atonement animals both for himself and for all Israel, he laid his hands on the scapegoat and confessed all the sins of Israel before releasing it to carry the iniquity of the nation into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21). No one could



take this priestly authority to himself, but only those called by God for the purpose.

"And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4). Among the Jews, only Aaron and his sons were set

aside for this holy work. It was important that the priest be a merciful person in order properly to approach God on behalf of others.

Even before God set up the Israelite nation, he had priests operating in the world. Melchizedec, for example, who came out to bless Abraham following his victory over the kings, was called *"the priest of the most high God"* (Genesis 14:18). During that same pre-law period, Moses' father-in-law was known as *"the priest of Midian"* and offered sacrifices to God with

Moses, suggesting he may have been a priest authorized by God (Exodus 3:11; 18:12).

GOD'S PRIESTHOOD TODAY

Our High Priest today is Jesus Christ the Son of God, "*set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*" (Hebrews 8:1). At God's right hand, "*he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*" (Hebrews 7:25). The sacrifice He offered for our sins was His own blood on the cross. This supreme sacrifice of Himself supersedes all previous sacrifices offered in the world, which were only a shadow of His. "*For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*" (Hebrews 10:14).

Under Christ their High Priest, all Christians function as sub-priests, "*an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 2:5). These spiritual sacrifices consist of: (1) praise and thanks of our lips; (2) doing good to others; (3) sharing with those in need (Hebrews 13:15,16); and making intercession by prayer for all people and authorities (1 Timothy 2:1,2). †

John Thiesen was formerly a missionary to Malawi, and he now preaches for the Lord's church in Buffalo, Missouri, USA.

TEN THOUGHTS TO START THE DAY

(From Psalms 116 and 118)

1. This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

2. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

3. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear; what can man do unto me?

4. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

5. I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.

6. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

7. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

8. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.

9. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

10. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee.

— Jim Moffett

THE CHURCH

In the Church, the Lord intended there to be leaders and followers. Followers are many.

Leaders are few. Effective leaders are even fewer.

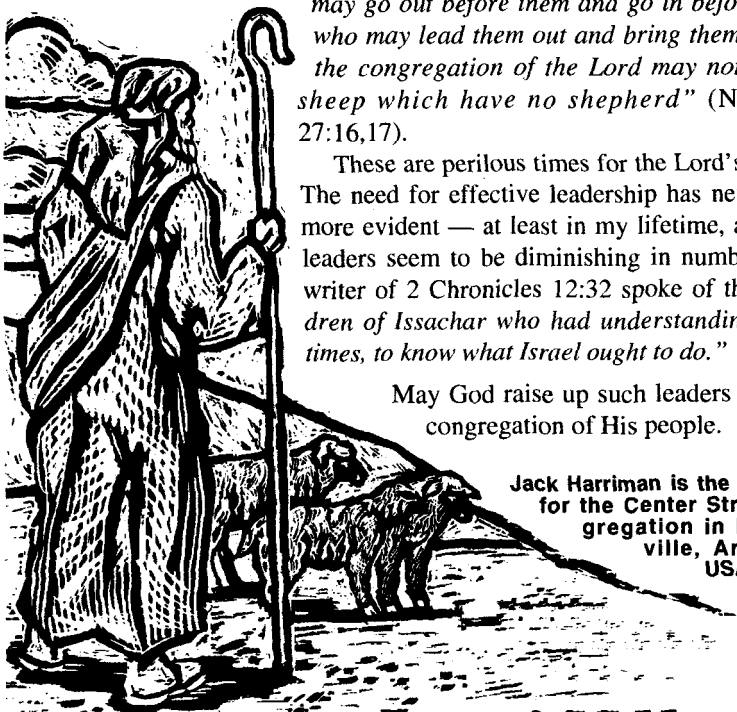
Poor leadership has always been a hindrance to God's people. King Saul commanded his army to fast, and as a result, they became too weak to fight (2 Samuel 14:26,27). Jesus said the Jewish leaders were "*blind guides*" (Matthew 23:16,17). Diotrephes was a leader not to be followed (3 John 9-11).

Effective leaders have always been in demand. Moses asked Jethro to be his eyes in the desert (Numbers 10:31). He later prayed for a man to replace him as leader. "*Let the Lord...set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep which have no shepherd*" (Numbers 27:16,17).

These are perilous times for the Lord's people. The need for effective leadership has never been more evident — at least in my lifetime, and such leaders seem to be diminishing in number. The writer of 2 Chronicles 12:32 spoke of the "*children of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.*"

May God raise up such leaders in every congregation of His people.

Jack Harriman is the preacher for the Center Street congregation in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.



*Understanding the Times and Knowing
What to Do* — Jack Harriman

The Paradox of the Church

Hardeman Nichols

When a congregation is established according to the divine pattern of the New Testament, it is composed of **elements of perfection and of imperfection**. Since it is a divine institution, it deserves respect and appreciation. Everything that such a church is and does, as authorized of God, is divine.

God's part is perfect. He has designed a perfect plan of salvation and a perfect system of worship (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible is its only guide, is "*the perfect law of liberty*" (James 1:25). The church has a perfect Savior who holds before us His perfect life for our goal, saying, "*Follow Me*" (Matthew 16:24).

But here is the paradox. Man is not perfect, nor does he perfectly follow the Lord. **The human element in the church is as imperfect as its members.** The church would have been an imperfect institution if it had been designed only for perfect people! It would have no members at all, "*For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*" (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

The church's perfection is retained by *the way it deals with our imperfections*. It does not overlook

sin, but believes the grace of God is perfect in dealing with it. And it must distinguish between *the penitent* and *the rebellious*, between *the humble, weak* and *willful reprobate*. God now "*commandeth all men everywhere to repent*" (Acts 17:30).

The church believes that Christ promises pardon for all imperfect beings who, in godly sorrow for their sins, penitently seek mercy and forgiveness. His invitation is to imperfect men. When one repents and is baptized, Jesus forgives his sins and adds him to His church (Acts 2:38, 47). Covered by the blood of Christ, the penitent and faithful Christian is perfect before His God, as he walks in the light (1 John 1:7).

The church offers strength to help us in our weaknesses, courage when we are fainthearted, comfort when we are sad, and "*joy unspeakable and full of glory*" (1 Peter 1:3), along the way. Its call is to all men to come and be saved. Its God-ordained teachings and services restore lost humanity back to God. Thanks be unto God for His perfect church and its wondrous benefits to imperfect men. †

Hardeman Nichols is an evangelist and lives in Dallas, Texas, USA.

A Very Special Day



Just whose day is it, anyway? Don't you believe **the Lord's Day** ought to be given back to *the Lord*?

Sunday should be more than another busy, pleasure-filled, weekend play day. It ought to be more than another excuse for sleeping late and lounging about the house. It must be seen as more than another opportunity to water the grass or wash the family car.

Sunday, the first day of the week, is special. It is the Lord's Day — a day for worship.

The apostle Paul tarried seven days in Troas, until "*the first day of the week*," when he met with the saints of that city in worship (Acts 20:6,7). John, "*the disciple whom Jesus loved*," wrote, "*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*" (Revelation 1:10). And is it any wonder why? Our Lord arose from the dead on **the first day of the week**. The church was established on Pentecost Day, **the first day of the week**. This day, the Lord's Day, is more than ordinary. *It is special.*

Justin Martyr, one of the recognized historians of the early church, wrote near the beginning of the second century, "On Sunday a meeting

is held of all who live in the cities and villages...they rise together and send up prayers."

Early disciples faced terrible persecution in gathering together for worship on the Lord's Day, yet they assembled and worshipped in spite of their adversities. According to John Fox, in his *Book of Martyrs*, many early Christians: were burnt alive, others were dragged by their feet through the streets naked until they expired; some were scalded to death, many were stoned, and a great number had their brains beaten out with clubs. Nero is said to have dressed Christians in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed them to axletrees, and then set them on fire to light up his gardens at night.

And what of us? We have great difficulty convincing more modern saints, with no fear of physical oppression, to drive the new car down a four-lane, paved highway to a comfortable, climate-controlled building.

By the way, what will you be doing this Sunday? †

Dalton Key is the editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the church in Amarillo, Texas, USA.

Fads come and fads go. In my life hairstyles have gone from crew cuts to flattops, to ducktails, to bangs worn across the forehead, to shoulder length, to spiked, to white-sidewalls. Fads came and fads went. That's okay. I now just wish I had some hair to style!

I am alarmed, however, at the faddism in worship these days. Like teenagers searching for a new means of expression, worshippers are in some cases "expressing themselves" in childish ways.

In extreme cases a worship service may look like a staged production, complete with lights, cameras,



Faddish Worship

Rick Cunningham

and action. If the "preacher" is especially entertaining or the male and female choral leaders are especially enthusiastic, the audience may encourage them with applause. It's a show. True worship, however, is never for show (Matthew 6:1-18).

As fads come and fads go, true worshippers will continue to honor God through biblical expressions of worship; in song, prayer, communion, sermon, and giving. Worship will be orderly, God-centered, and will not resemble television talk

shows or rock concerts. Worship should reflect Bible guidelines, not Madison Avenue hype.

Christianity is not a fad. It is the two thousand year-old covenant between God and man. Let's not desecrate what is holy by patterning our worship after the fads of the day. Instead, let's continue to worship God as Jesus and His apostles taught, in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). ✠

Rick Cunningham is the preacher for the 14th & Main St. Church of Christ in Big Spring, Texas, USA.



It is no secret that worship styles are the big issue in churches of Christ. It seems that agendas abound. On the one hand, there is selfish desire on the part of some to do what is right in their own eyes; on the other, there is the fear that any adjustment is a challenge to the "way we have always done it."

Worship should lift our spirits to the heavens. Often, however, it either bores us to tears, or brings about upset and heartbreak.

There is another way. We can still approach God in a manner that pleases Him, and uplifts us all. The Bible lays down two principles that must affect the worship of those whose top priority is to please Him.

1. Worship is Conducted on God's Terms

"Let us be thankful and so worship God accordingly with reverence and awe, for 'Our God is a consuming

fire'" (Hebrews 12:28,29).

If God takes the trouble to instruct us in an aspect of worship, *that ends the debate there and then!* This affects our worship in song (Colossians 3:16), who it is that leads worship in the assembly (1 Timothy 2:11,12), when we are to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), and other subjects. The God who formed our hearts knows what those hearts need; the child of God will humbly and willingly oblige. If this criterion is not met, no other will suffice!

2. Worship Must Build

"When you come together...all of these must be done for the strengthening (edification) of the church" (Corinthians 14:26).

Once (and only then) we have established that a worship practice is Biblical, we can ask how it affects humans. The Bible draws from the language of construction to

WORSHIP

express this thought. As a preacher, it fascinates me that people expect a sermon to be well prepared and thoughtful (and so they should), but that other aspects of worship can be hap-hazard and “off the top of the head.” *When it comes to serving God and His people, there is no such thing as being over prepared!* I think the Lord deserves better than a song leader tossing the hymn book to his family on the way to church and saying, “Choose a couple of songs, will you? I forgot I was supposed to lead singing.” What we

often think of as spontaneous is often nothing more than unprepared, and results in a worship service that is about as deep as a birdbath.

The question is not what will produce the most credits, but what will please the Creator. Worship is not *production*, it is *petition*. It is not measured by the world’s standards; it brings us, heart and mind, up to the Lord’s standards.

There should be only one agenda in worship. **God’s.** †

Stan Mitchell works with the Lord’s church in Borger, Texas, USA.

They Were Shocked

The treasurer of a local congregation was disgusted and resigned. The church asked another person to take the position. He managed a local grain elevator. He agreed to take the position on two conditions. One, that no report from the treasurer be given for a whole year, and two, that no one ask him any questions concerning the finances of the church during that time. The church members gulped, but finally agreed, since he was a very trustworthy man in the community, and well known because most of them did business with him at the elevator.

At the end of the year he gave a report as follows: “The indebtedness of \$250,000 on the building had been paid, the minister’s salary had been sharply increased, the mission work of that congregation raised by 200% and all outstanding bills retired. Besides a rather large cash balance on hand of some \$1200, a building fund had been established and money set aside for renovating the auditorium.”

The congregation was shocked. They could not account for it and immediately asked for an explanation. Quietly the treasurer answered, “Most of you bring your grain to my elevator. As you did business with me, I simply withheld ten percent on your behalf and gave it to the church in your name. You never missed it.”

— Selected

Bringing Together the Great Commandment:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34,35).

and the Great Commission:

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16).

Clayton Pepper

A great deal of research has been done relative to church growth and love. The following are some of the things that were learned:

- ✓ Most people rated the love they received from church members to be only slightly above what they received from a casual associate or neighbor.
- ✓ Visitors received significantly less love than even the members.
- ✓ Only about 70% felt loved by the preacher.
- ✓ In one study, 26 religious groups were surveyed as to how loving the church was. Those that rated highest in saying to fellow members "I love you" and demonstrating love for each other had an approximate 50% increase in attendance in the 10 years previous to this study.
- ✓ A study of 168 congregations that had a 5%-10% growth rate in five years showed that 90% felt loved by the preacher.
- ✓ In the same study, the churches with the highest growth rates showed a higher percentage of love felt by fellow church members, as well as higher in love given to other church members, visitors and community. The faster growing churches also highly rated the love they received

CHURCH GROWTH

from Sunday school classes and/or “care groups”, and they highly rated hugging and/or touching as a way of expressing love.

Love — a motivational and compassionate love — is to be the supreme characteristic of a Christian. Paul said, *“Though I speak with the tongues of angels, but have not love, I become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing”* (1 Corinthians 13:1-4).

Jesus explained, in answer to the questioning of the scribes concerning the greatest commandment of the law: *“The first of all the commandments is ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these”* (Mark 12:29,30).

The first and greatest commandment involves love for God with all of one’s heart, mind, soul and strength. This refers to the *whole man*. The love of God produces **obedience to His commandments**, and when combined with love of one’s neighbor, it will result in **obedience to the great commission**, thus going and teaching the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20).

In this study we want to see that the many situations in the church which require personal visitation and soul winning are, in reality, **acts of love**. They cannot be reduced simply to “duty”.

Compassionate Deeds Are Love in Action.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). This verse has been called the golden text of the Bible. It glows with the flame of divine love for a world of lost souls.

After demonstrating His concern for Zacchaeus, a man in need of a savior, Jesus said, *“For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10).

Jesus illustrated the value of one soul in the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son (cf. Luke 15). The concern that was felt because of

CHURCH GROWTH

the loss and the joy felt when that which had been lost was found shows the love God has for lost men.

Jesus selected His apostles, and they traveled among the Jews, preaching and teaching, seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Compassion was behind every act. Love and compassion are the motivating forces that cause men to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, doing the work He did.

Love and Compassion Are the Motivational Forces that Cause Men to Do the Work Jesus Did.

Jesus showed compassion for the:

- **Lost.** *“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd”* (Matthew 9:36). He grieved over the city of Jerusalem. In Matthew 23:37 He said, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, The one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”*
- **Sick.** *“And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them and healed their sick”* (Matthew 14:14).
- **Hungry.** *“Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, ‘I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry lest they faint on the way’”* (Matthew 15:32).
- **Blind.** *“So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him”* (Matthew 20:34).
- **Bereaved.** When He saw the only son of a widow being taken for burial, He raised him from the dead, *“...He had compassion on her and said unto her, Do not weep...so he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother”* (Luke 7:13,15).
- **All who had physical and spiritual needs.** *“The blind see and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are*

CHURCH GROWTH

raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matthew 11:5).

Love manifested itself in the form of compassion for others. Someone has described love as “intentionally doing something caring or helpful for another person, in Jesus’ name, regardless of the consequences to oneself.”

The love of God for the human family was being revealed through His Son. Jesus would demonstrate this to those whom He trained. They would then be a model to all those they would teach.

The New Commandment Had Evangelistic Implications.

The way the disciples loved each other would be a factor in others believing in Christ. Jesus prayed that they might be one, as He and God were one, so that the world would believe (John 17:21). The apostles’ love for each other would set them apart from the world. Jesus said, *“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35).

The disciples were to love each other as Christ had loved them. He had given them an example, and their success was based upon how well they followed Him. They were to be living demonstrations of what the children of God were to be like. They would be known and read of all men, as Paul later wrote of Christians: *“You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart”* (2 Corinthians 3:2,3).

While the Jews disputed about which was the greatest commandment, Jesus made the order of importance clear. He said, *“...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matthew 22:37-39).

After Jesus’ resurrection, He asked Peter about his love for Him. Peter had been a fisherman. Would he go back to his former life and quit fishing for men when Christ had ascended to the Father? After eating breakfast with Peter and other disciples, Jesus said to him, *“...‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ He said to him again a*

CHURCH GROWTH

second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep'" (John 21:15-17).

The proof of Peter's love for Christ would be his doing the will of Christ. James admonished Christians, "...Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18).

The Great Commission.

Jesus was born, grew, wept, toiled, suffered, died, arose, ascended, intercedes, and is coming again that he might save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Everything He did, and does, is evidence of His great love for humanity.

Ten days after His resurrection and just before ascending to the father Jesus issued His most far-reaching command. He said, "...All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

We cannot separate *love for God* from *love for lost souls*, as seen in the example of the apostles and the early church.

We Cannot Separate Love for God from Love for Lost Souls, as Seen in the Example of the Apostles and the Early Church.

Forty days after Jesus' ascension to heaven, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles to bring to their remembrance what Jesus had taught them and to guide them into all truth. On that very day some 3,000 souls obeyed the Gospel and were added to the believers. This was the beginning of the church.

Those who became Christians now knew that Jesus was the long await-

CHURCH GROWTH

ed Messiah. Their happiness and love for God and for man are seen in Luke's description of the early Christians in Acts 2:46,47; 5:42. *"So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved...And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."*

In Acts 4:4 the number of men who had obeyed the Gospel had reached 5,000. It has been estimated that there were probably 10,000-15,000 Christians by this time. The number was growing daily because the early disciples were practicing the love that Christ had taught them by His life and His death.

We cannot separate love for God from love for man. We cannot separate love for God from love for lost souls, as seen in the example of the early church. Their love for each other included physical assistance for those Christians in need (Acts 6), and a spiritual outreach for the lost souls around them. Paul said, *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith"* (Galatians 6:10). †

Clayton Pepper, long-time promoter of church growth, works with Restoration Network International in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

Promise Yourself

*To look at the sunny side of everything
and make your optimism come true.*

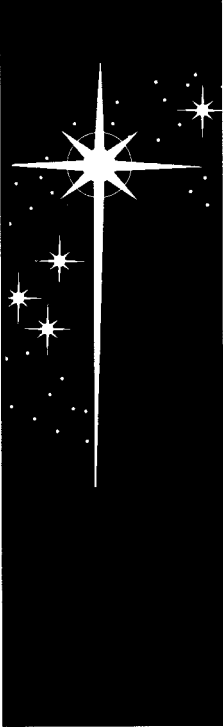
*To think only of the best, to work only for the best,
and to expect only the best.*

*To be just as optimistic about the success of others
as you are about your own.*

*To forget the mistakes of the past
and press on to the greater achievements of the future.*

— Author Unknown

"...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13,14).



English Christians were among those who glimmered like gold during fiery persecutions of the sixteenth century. Law abiding men and women were brutally executed for no other crime than being faithful members of the Lord's church.

Devoted confidant and courtier of Elizabeth 1, Sir Francis Walsingham, joined the leagues of enemies of the Lord's church. His hatred of faithful Christians stemmed from immoral behaviour of continental cults sharing the title of Anabaptists.

Time of Treason

Keith Sisman

The Anabaptists proclaimed against infant baptism, thus undermining the already stressed Protestant faith, which had Queen Elizabeth as head.

There were deliberate false allegations that all Anabaptists had connections with the Munster rising, in Germany. This group had the reputation of forcing membership on people, practising polygamy, and also the sharing of all possessions (The identity of Anabaptist was in this time period a term of derision, aimed at many different groups).

To an insecure monarch and her advisers Anabaptists were viewed as left wing and anarchistic. At a time of unstable government any moves that undermined the Queen's church or state were hastily destroyed.

The sixteenth century was a time when kings and queens assumed absolute power. The affairs of church and state were intermingled. This was also a terrible time of plotting and conspiracy, with the establishment of the infant Protestant church. Tides of Catholicism swept back and forth, with wars being fought in Europe. The Scots were forming alliances with France to invade England. The Welsh population regarded the new queen with distaste, and Ireland hoped to negotiate with Spain to allow access to England through their ports.

Catholics and Protestant religions shared the false doctrine of Original

CHURCH HISTORY

Sin, enforcing the need of infant membership of the state church for Salvation. This ensured the ruling monarch, head of the church, with absolute control. This when coupled with the new Calvinist doctrine, meaning you could do nothing to lose your Salvation, was very alluring to an autocratic society.

In contrast, the offensive Lord's church taught "free will" and individual responsibility. They also taught that salvation came through Christ Jesus, into whose body obedient souls were baptised. Its conduct proclaimed against clergy within the church, and thus provoked hatred from those who chose to remain in error.

In October 1538 there was a commission sent to Cranmer, Stokesly, and Sampson to inquire after all Anabaptists and to proceed against them.

In 1549 Bishop Burnet warned; "There are many Anabaptists in several parts of England who say that 'infant baptism is no baptism'". In 1587 Dr Some also declared that there were several Anabaptist congregations in London and other places.

In his book, **Believers Baptism from Heaven and of Divine Institution**, published 1691, Hercules Collins who was a minister of Wapping church of Christ said that England did not receive

baptism from the Baptists, originating from Smith, as it was prevalent before that time.

Sir Francis Walsingham confirmed this when he was recorded as saying, "It was in the year 1381 that that damnable heretic, John Wicliffe, reassumed the cursed opinions of Berengarius."

Who was this "Berengarius"? When did he live and what did he do? He was born at Tours between 999 and 1010, and was educated in the Roman Catholic church by Bishop Fulbert of Chartres (died 1028). By 1030 Berengarius was archdeacon and by 1047 was the treasurer of Angers Cathedral. In 1047 however he wrote a treaty against the Eucharist, denying the material change of the elements. As a result he was excommunicated by Pope Leo IX in 1050, without being heard in defence. Then, between 1059 and 1079 he was pressured into subscribing to the doctrines he loathed

Berengarius gradually fell out of favour again however because of his persistent debating with the pope. After 1080 he retired to the hermitage of St Come, on an island three miles west of Tours. Berengarius died a natural death, in 1088, with a questionable relationship with the Roman Catholic church.

Berengarius lived at a time

CHURCH HISTORY

when it was possible to practice New Testament Christianity under the eyes of Catholicism without attracting violent persecution. This situation changed in subsequent years to the extent that faithful members of the Lord's church would be convicted of heresy. Slow and tortured deaths would follow.

Berengarius stood opposed to the organised clergy, teaching what was to become known as the 'uni-

the Roman Catholic churches were most powerful in Protestant England. But, in those settings, suspicion brought accusations of intrigue and treason. It was among those citizens that the authorities looked for heretics, and often those of the true church found themselves prosecuted and executed for practising New Testament Christianity.

In contrast, in many places the newly developing Protestant church

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versal priesthood of believers'. He had rejected infant baptism, advocating baptism by immersion for repentant believers upon confession. Berengarius was the last opponent of Catholicism who argued not only for a return to the New Testament but who actually practised New Testament Christianity inside the Catholic Church. From that time forward, with the increasingly dogmatic view of the Catholic hierarchy, such men would face torture and if they refused to recant, would suffer a slow and torturous death.

The sixteenth century churches of Christ survived best in the country villages, which was also where

continued its old Roman Catholic practices, and became known as "high church" within Anglican circles. Some of these high churches still exist today.

In spite of persecution and terrible opposition, the Lord's church survived this winter in its history and by the seventeenth century greater religious freedom was established in England. †

Keith Sisman worships with the Church of Christ in Ramsey, England. Having been given permission to use the ancient Cambridge Library, he is doing extensive research and writing on the records he is finding concerning the church in Europe, particularly in England.

Has It Always Existed?

Betty Burton Choate

I have done quite a lot of reading, from my limited resources, on traces of true Christianity through the centuries. Today, with our ability to consider, first hand, a church or a group of people, we can judge by the name and the doctrine whether they could be counted as a part of the true church. That doesn't mean that, with God's ability to judge the hearts in addition to outer identification marks, He might not in some cases still count congregations that we might personally have thought to be no longer acceptable to Him. There would also be border-line cases in this time of liberal challenge to the truth when, as in Revelation, a group might still be recognized as part of the body even though God might have already removed their candlestick.

Certainly, we know that none are in the true church unless they have been born into it as the Scriptures so clearly delineate, through a faith which moved them to obedience to the gospel, culminating in a burial in water (baptism) and the resurrection from that grave to the new life in

CHURCH HISTORY

Christ. And no church can be recognized as a part of the body of Christ unless it espouses the basic principles of doctrine, organization and worship. But, after meeting those points, only God could say who He will cover by His grace and who has gone outside of what even His grace can make acceptable.

If we had lived in the early days of the American restoration movement, we might have seen doctrinal error still lurking in some congregations and preachers that we would have felt raised a wall to our acceptance of them. If we today were put back in the days of Milton or Cromwell, or Wycliffe, or when those small congregations of Christians were grouped by the outside world with the Anabaptists, we might draw a line that would shut them out — or we might accept them with some reservation. Or if we were there to actually know all the details, we might see that we were truly of the same belief.

If we today were put back in the first century, in the midst of the problems the Jerusalem church was facing, trying to hold to the truth of the Gospel and at the same time trying to function effectively in the heartland of Judaism, we might feel that they were compromising too much and were not worthy to be called the church of Christ. Or if we were in Corinth, or among the

churches of Galatia, or in most of the churches mentioned in Revelation, we would probably feel compelled to withhold our fellowship from them. Yet, God identified them as His people, and Paul and the other inspired writers fellowshiped them.

By saying these things, I am certainly not advocating compromise of the truth. But I *am* saying that the only scenario we can clearly see and judge is the one in which we live, with our present circumstances and knowledge. Only God can judge what His grace can cover, or did cover, among those of the past who genuinely obeyed the Gospel and were thereby made a part of His church — however close or far away they might have been in various points of other doctrine, or in the living of it.

But, if we believe the Scriptures (and if we don't, what is the point of the discussion anyway?) we must affirm without any doubt that *there have always been Christians and churches of Christ in the world since its beginning on Pentecost*, and that *there will continue to be a representation of Christ until He comes again*. We have God's word on that: "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed...it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44). "...call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the

CHURCH HISTORY

Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32).

The question was asked by Christ, “...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). He answered, Himself, “*But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be...Then two men will be in the field: **one will be taken and the other left...Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him**” (Matthew 24:37, 40,44). And the promise: “*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we **who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord** will by no means precede those who are asleep.**

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the

Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

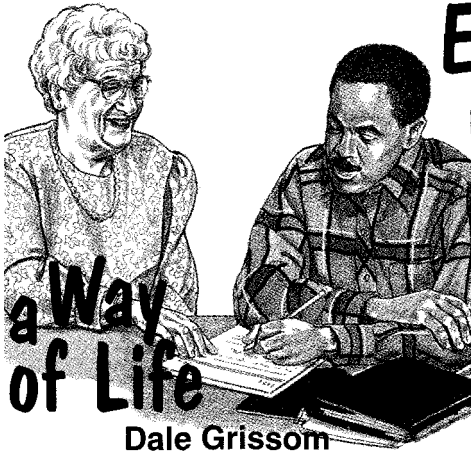
These verses tell us two things: (1) that since the day of its beginning in Jerusalem, the Lord’s church has not ceased to exist in this world — not simply as “the seed in the Word” because the church is *people — souls* — not words; and (2) that there has never been a time when God has had no representation of His people in this world (if so, there would have been a time when the Lord **could not have returned, because there would have been no Christians alive to be caught up to meet Him in the clouds!**), and there will *never* be such a time.

A thousand years from now Christians may question whether any congregations of the Lord’s church existed in the 21st century, because what we are and what we are doing are not making headlines in the annals of “church history”. Few traces may remain of us then. But **we are here! And we will remain!**

So it’s not *necessary* to back-track a lineage through the centuries. But to do so, and to find evidences of people with names, and churches with locations, and histories of events is a most interesting and thrilling thing. †

Betty Burton Choate is a Christian living in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

Evangelism -



God has given us the Gospel plan of salvation. If we obey from the heart and follow this plan, we will be saved. We must **hear** (Romans 10:17), **believe** (Mark 16:15), **repent** (Acts 17:30), **confess** (Romans 10:10), **be baptized** (Acts 2:38), and **live faithfully until death** (Revelation 2:10).

One of the best ways to serve God is to grow and mature in our Christian life. In doing so, we will live the kind of life that is a good example for others to follow (1 Corinthians 11:1). Living the Christian life means that we serve God faithfully in spirit and in truth, and that we let our lights so shine among men that they will see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Part of the Christian life is developing a zeal for leading lost souls to Christ. We will find that our love for God and our desire to serve Him will grow as we diligently study His Word. Understanding that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), we must prepare ourselves to lead others to Him.

So often the first step is the really difficult one. Our love and appreciation for what God has done for us must be so great that we are willing to take that step. As we pray and study and work to teach another, we will find that we, too, are growing spiritually. Soon *soul winning is no longer a job, but a way of life*. We begin to **watch for opportunities**, looking forward to Bible studies and leading others to Christ. We develop our skills and use our talents to the fullest. *This is Christianity in the true sense of the word: leading others to a knowledge of God, as Christ taught when He was in the world.*

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:1,2). †

Dale Grissom is deeply committed to evangelism and works with the church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

Emphasis On Evangelism

Clarence DeLoach

There is much agreement today that we need a greater emphasis in the church upon evangelism. I know of no one who disagrees. Evangelism is the life of the church, the exercise which enables it to thrive and grow.

Here are some observations about **evangelism** in the New Testament:

First, evangelism was never limited to church assemblies. As a matter of fact, it occurred *least* in their church gatherings. The church met as a body primarily for worship and edification, then it scattered as it did its evangelism. The idea of the church gathering for evangelism is *our tradition*, not New Testament practice. “*They went everywhere preaching the Word*” (Acts 8:4). They assembled for worship, instruction, and fellowship, then they spread out — went out to touch and win the lost to Christ. That pattern is evident in the book of Acts.

The huddle in a football game well illustrates the principle. Teams don’t just show up for *the huddle*. The

huddle lasts long enough for the players to hear and understand the plays. Then comes *the execution*. Through *the week* we run the plays, then return *Sunday after Sunday* to the huddle. Evangelism really occurs when we *leave* the pews to go out in the work place, to our communities, to our world to confront, touch, and reach lost souls for Christ. Every person made in the image of God should be considered as a soul for whom Jesus died.

Second, evangelism was always initiated by individual Christians. It wasn’t a matter of unsaved folk tapping a Christian on the shoulder and saying, “Please tell

The *depth* of the church is determined by the quality of its worship and instruction, but the *breadth* of the church is seen in its commitment to fellowship and evangelism.

me about the Savior." Sinners did not initiate evangelism — Christians did! Lost people have never beaten a path to our door! They're often not even aware that they are lost. "*How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard?*" (Romans 10:14). Someone must confront and teach — and that someone is the Christian — one who has already been touched and changed by the Master. **You** must make the contact.

Third, evangelism in the New Testament was never a matter of coercion or manipulation. The soul-winners were never coerced into doing it — *it was a natural outgrowth of their faith and love.* And sinners were never manipulated in an effort to lead them to salvation. They were treated with tact and dignity, respect and intelligence. There was never any *emotional* environment created. The message presented brought *conviction* to the heart (Romans 10:10).

The depth of the church is determined by the quality of its worship and instruction, but the breadth of the church is seen in its commitment to fellowship and evangelism. †

Clarence DeLoach preaches for the Walnut Street Church of Christ in Dickson, Tennessee, USA.

WHO WILL BE SAVED?

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). If each soul must answer for the deeds done in the body, and if **all** people have sinned, *how can anyone be saved eternally?*

The Bible teaches that God Himself provided the perfect sacrifice in Whose blood our sins can be washed away. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.... No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him"* (John 1:1,2,14,18).

This Son, Jesus Christ, gave Himself as a ransom for all. It is the *good news* of **His** gospel that brings us salvation from our sins.

Next: What must I do to be saved? Believe. . . .

Divorce — Broken Homes, Broken People

Albert Gardner

The home is under attack from many sources. Our society is running at white-hot full speed. Materialism and jobs, education with evolution and its anti-Bible view, government recognition and support of homosexuals and abortion instead of supporting and reinforcing the home as God would have it — these factors are weakening the home and tearing it apart.

There are four terrible “D’s” in this world. *Death* is inevitable. *Drink*, *desertion*, and *divorce* are matters of human choice. They bring hurt feelings, broken lives, shattered dreams, financial distress, emotional scars, and spiritual reverses. In this study we will focus on the fourth “D”, divorce, which is one of the most critical problems facing the world today.

According to the New Testament Scriptures there are only three classes of people who have the right to marry:

- 1) One who has never been married, who is physically fit and mentally alert (Hebrews 13:4).
- 2) One whose companion is dead (Romans 7:2,3).
- 3) One whose companion has committed fornication and has, thus, broken their marriage (Matthew 19:9).

According to Jesus' conclusion in Matthew 19:12, people can get themselves into situations where the only way to live right is to live a single life. I have pity and sympathy for those people, but it would not be fair to them to build our discussion on *emotions*. Our thinking and our conclusion must be based solely on that which will judge us in the last day — *the written word of God*.

From the beginning God intended that one man and one woman should live together until they are parted by death. When people marry, they should understand that it is a permanent relationship and that divorce is **not** an option.

Will there be problems? Of course! There are no perfect homes because there are no perfect people, but any problem can be solved if both parties want to find a solution.

Robert Wingfield tells of a survey of 730 marriage counselors who revealed the ten most common marital problems. They are given in the order of frequency.

1. A breakdown in communica-

- tion
2. The loss of shared goals or interests
3. Sexual incompatibility
4. Infidelity
5. The absence of excitement and fun in the marriage
6. Money
7. Conflicts about children
8. Alcohol and drug abuse
9. Women's equality issues
10. In-laws

People of Jesus' day came to Him and asked, "*Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*" Their question had to do with God's law, as given by Moses. In our time, civil divorce is granted for nearly any cause; in fact, even "no fault" divorce is possible!

In Jesus' answer He went back to the beginning of the home to show how God had intended it to be between a man and his wife. "*Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:4-6).

Though Moses allowed divorce because of the hardness of their hearts, "*from the beginning it was not so.*" But, then, Jesus gave the

one cause for divorce which allows remarriage: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:9). It should be noticed that if a person marries someone who has been divorced because of fornication, that person commits adultery. This shows us that the guilty party has forfeited the right in the sight of God to remarry.

People often reason that they were young when they married and divorced, and that they didn't know any better, but does this excuse them? There is no Scripture that says that God has one rule for the young and unknowing and another rule for the mature people. Neither youth nor ignorance nor sincerity ever change *error* into *truth*. If one takes a wrong turn as he travels, what must he do? Continue on the same road because he didn't know any better? Sincerity and common sense require one to return to the *right road* if he wants to reach his intended destination.

God has made His will available for the world through the pages of His written word, the Bible. He has provided the laws and the guidance. It is the responsibility of humans, then, to learn what God requires of us. The salvation of our souls is *per-*

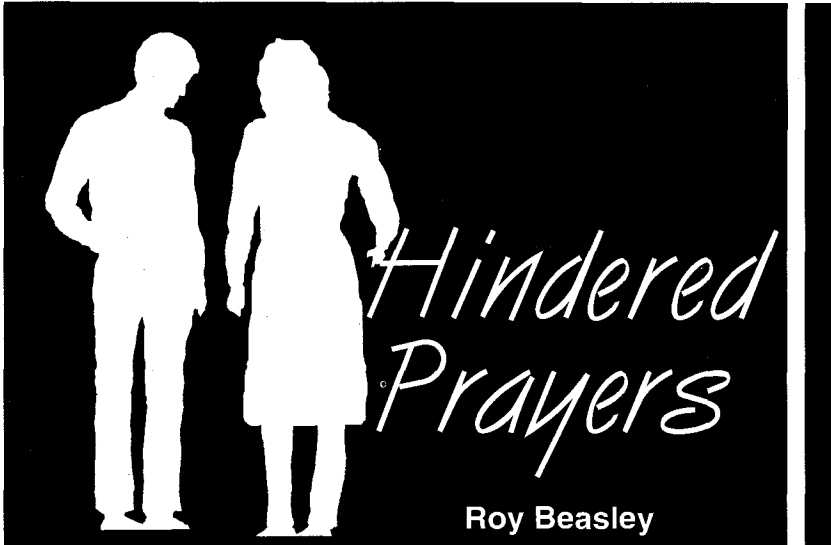
sonal but God's law concerning salvation does not differ from one soul to another. There are *no individual rules*. That fact must be first and uppermost in our minds on every point of our relationship with God.

Literally, we will be judged on that Great Day, based on what we have done in our bodies whether it is good or bad (Revelation 20:12). We will be judged according to the way we have kept God's word — and that includes His laws concerning marriage and divorce. Satan has sold people a bill of goods, by getting them to think they can make their rules as they go, rather than follow the plan of God — and then they expect God to bend *His* will to accept the rules *they* devised!

Summary: *Marry right, and marry only once.* Work out the problems and stay together for the same reasons that brought you together in the first place.

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matthew 5:31,32). †

Albert Gardner works with the Lord's church in Marmaduke, Arkansas, USA.



Let me share an interesting statement found in 1 Peter 3:7. Peter is writing concerning the duties of a husband to his wife and he says, *"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered"*.

Did you realize that your prayers could be hindered? When you walk into the kitchen and flip the light switch, you expect light. If this doesn't happen, you know that something is wrong. When you walk over to the sink and turn on the faucet, you expect water. If there is no water, you know that something is wrong.

Likewise, it is normal and natural for God to hear and answer the

prayers of His children. If we pray and there is no answer, it is time to get concerned, for something is wrong. Something has broken down the line of communication. Something is hindering that normal relationship between the Father and son. In our text the apostle Peter says that it is possible for prayers to be hindered by a problem in the relationship between a husband and his wife.

Marriage is an institution which originated with God, not with man. God has decreed that one man and one woman live together as husband and wife until death separates them. In our context, Peter says that the wife is to be in subjection to her husband, and he gives Sarah, the wife of Abraham, as an example. She is to be in subjection to him,

even in those cases where he is not a Christian; for, he says, it is possible that the husband may be won to Christ through the good life of the wife. I have seen that happen on a number of occasions.

But this is not a one-sided situation. The husband has a number of responsibilities toward his wife. Paul says that he is to love her as he loves himself (Ephesians 5:22). He also has the responsibility of providing for her and of being faithful to her. He must treat her with honor, respect, and understanding, for she is his helpmeet. If he doesn't do these things, his prayers will be hindered. God will not hear him.

Wrong relationships with others can also hinder our prayers. Jesus said, "*For I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*"

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23,24).

God requires that we love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:34-40). With that kind of love we

will not do him any harm but will always look for ways to do him good. Jesus makes it plain that *wrong relationships* with our fellowman result in **no relationship** with God. To sin against our fellowman is to sin against God. Even under the law of Moses, according to the Ten Commandments, God's people were forbidden to steal, kill, bear false witness, commit adultery, etc. Under the law of Christ, we are warned that even to think evil against others in our hearts makes us guilty before God. If we do sin against our brother, we must make it right with him before we can have forgiveness and fellowship with God again.

An unforgiving spirit hinders prayer. In the model prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*" (v. 12). And then He went on to explain to them, "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*" (vs. 14,15).

Yes, wrong relationships with our spouse or with our fellowman can hinder our relationship with God. By our own behavior we can close God's ears so that He will not hear our prayers. †

Roy Beasley works with Restoration Radio Network in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

Do Not Try to Run Ahead of God

Gordon Hogan



I was talking with a young lady some time ago. We talked about family and she told me how she longed to be married and have children. She wants to marry a faithful Christian man so that the two of them can honor God in living right and rearing children according to the

principles of Christ. However, she confessed a feeling of desperation. Past relationships had ended painfully and the prospects for the future, at least as she saw it, looked bleak.

My heart goes out to her and others who have had, and are having similar experiences.

I counselled my young friend that she must continue to trust that God will provide the husband and family she desires. She, however, must do her part by being faithful to the Lord and His way. She must keep herself pure and in the company of faithful Christians if she is to find that Christian husband.

She must not allow discouragement and despair to overwhelm her, for if she does this will lead to compromise and the wrong company. It is a truism that we usually find our husbands or wives from those with whom we spend the most time.

We must not run ahead of God. Remember the poignant story of Sarah, in Genesis, chapters 15 through 21? With the passing of years Abraham and Sarah felt keenly the lack of a son and heir. They had doubts, and sought to gain an heir by their own unsanctioned efforts. The childless Sarah urged Abraham to have a son by her servant, Hagar. Ishmael was born, Hagar despised Sarah and only trouble and pain followed, all because Sarah allowed discouragement and despair to cause her to try to run ahead of God.

On the other hand, remember Hannah? Her barrenness filled her with despair and discouragement. She was tormented by others because she had no children. However, her trust in God carried her

through. She vowed that if God blessed her with a son, she would give him back. God honored her, she bore a son and she kept her promise. Samuel became one of the great men of the Old Testament.

Both these analogies from the Scriptures relate to a desire for children, but the principle involved has not changed. It applies to my young friend who longs for a husband and family: *God will provide if we faithfully do our part and do not try to run ahead of Him.* †

Gordon Hogan, former missionary to Singapore, works with Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, USA.

Influence

Your influence is like your shadow: it may not always fall where you want it. Therefore, you need to be especially careful to see that wherever it falls, it will have a "good" effect on all.

You may not be able to control *the shadow*, but you can control *the one who casts the shadow*. Make your influence count for God. Be not deceived! Others are watching your example and being influenced this very hour.

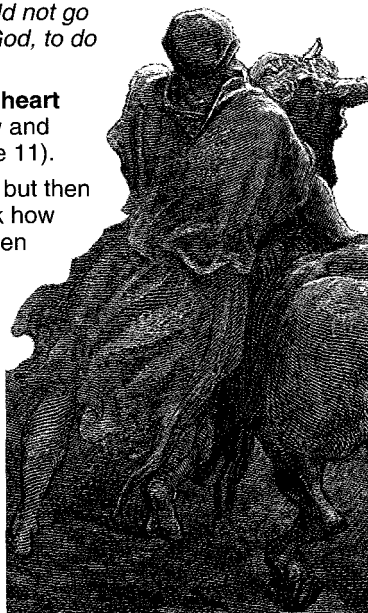
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Who Am I?

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc.

When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's word.

1. **100** My home was in Pethor on the Euphrates (Numbers 22:5).
2. **90** Elders from the people of Moab (descendants of Lot's grandson, Moab) and Midian (descendants of Abraham through Keturah) came to seek my help (Verse 7).
3. **80** Though my ancestry is not given in the Scriptures, it is evident that I knew of the true God (V. 8).
4. **70** The Moabite king, Balak, offered me money if I would do as he asked (V. 6,7).
5. **60** I replied, "*Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more*" (V. 18).
6. **50** Though my **words** were right, my **heart** was desirous of having the money and pleasing Balak (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11).
7. **40** I blessed Israel with God's words, but then I "taught" the Midianites and Balak how to create disastrous trouble between God and Israel (Numbers 31:16).
8. **30** Because of my rebellious heart, I was almost killed by the Angel of the Lord, but He allowed me to live so that I might speak the blessing on Israel (Numbers 22:22;24:25).
9. **20** I was killed by the Israelites (V. 31:8).
10. **10** Though I had been a spokesman for God, I forsook Him (Revelation 2:14).



My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.

King Hezekiah was a good man who made a bad mistake. The king of Babylon sent messengers to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery from a near fatal illness; Hezekiah welcomed them into his house and showed them all the treasures which had been accumulated over the centuries.

The prophet Isaiah came with a searching question: "*What have they seen in your house...?*" (2 Kings 20:15). Hezekiah was warned that the day would come when the Babylonians' lust for the treasures they had seen would draw them back. The nation would be overthrown, and all the king's treasures would be carried to Babylon. Hezekiah's children and grandchildren would be captives in chains. In pridefully showing off his possessions, Hezekiah sowed the seeds which would bring down his house.

The question, "What have they seen in your house...?" is one which many fathers might well ponder today. Consider...

Fathers, what have **other people** seen in your house? Our friends and neighbors take note of what goes on in our homes. It is vital that they see evidence of Christ's influence there! The Bible says, "*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God...*" (1 Peter 2:12). Christian principles must be given priority in the home. How tragic that in so many homes today the influence of Christ is not easily seen.

Fathers, what have **your children** seen in your house? Even the smallest children have big eyes. They see much and forget little. The things they wit-

What Have They Seen in Your House?



Bobby Dockery

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

ness at home may mark them for all eternity. What do they see???

They may see sexual immorality. Many children see a steady parade of live-in boyfriends or girl friends which their mothers or fathers bring home. They may see abuse and violence. The #1 killer of children under 5 is child abuse. As many as fifteen million women are battered in the home each year.

Some children may see pornography. Dirty books, lewd magazines, and sexually explicit videos are common in many homes. Innocent minds are brutalized and corrupted by the vile things parents bring into the home.

Children may see alcohol and drugs. Millions of homes are torn apart by drinking and drug abuse. Soon, children leave home to make their own way in the world. They will go out equipped for life or victimized and vulnerable to temptations. It largely depends on what they saw at home!

Fathers, what does **God** see in your house? We may hide what goes on in our houses from the eyes of our neighbors and, to some extent, even from our children. But we cannot hide anything from God! "*For God will bring every act to judgment...*" (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

"*What have they seen in your house...?*" The answer will matter for all eternity. †

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

A Tragic Choice

On the table side by side,
The Holy Bible and the T.V. Guide.
One is well worn but cherished with pride,
Not the Bible but the T.V. Guide.
One is used daily to help folks decide,
No! It isn't the Bible but the T.V. Guide,
As pages are turned, what shall they see?
Oh! What does it matter, turn on the T.V.
So they open the book in which they confide,
No, not the Bible, it's the T.V. Guide.
The word of God is seldom read,
Maybe a verse e're they fall into bed,
Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be,
Not from reading the Bible, but watching T.V.
So then back to the table, side by side,
Are the Holy Bible and the T.V. Guide,
No time for prayer, no time for the word,
The plan of salvation is seldom heard.
Forgiveness of sin so full and free
Is found in the Bible, not on T.V.

—Author Unknown



Preparing Children for Marriage

Ken Tyler

One of the most difficult tasks we have as parents is to properly prepare our children for marriage. Young people are immature and can easily make devastating mistakes in this area. Parents must work overtime to provide the proper guidance. At best, there are many concerns because of the evil influences in our sinful society.

What can parents do? **Example** is the most powerful teacher. It is a fact that strong marriages produce strong marriages. That is, children who grow up seeing their father and mother lovingly committed to one another are more apt to have the same kind of marriage. Children who grow up in a bad marriage tend to be just like Mama and Daddy.

Another key area is for parents

to teach their children that marriage is for life (Romans 7:2). This will do away with most of the half-hearted commitment far too many are making to marriage.

Parents fail when they do not teach their children what God says about marriage and divorce. We must prevent divorce by listening to God's plan for the home and instilling it in our children. "Til death us do part" are powerful words that we must never forget.

Our job is not easy. However, we must turn this thing around. Our children need our help. Don't neglect them. The results are too tragic. The home is a glorious institution. Let's keep it that way. †

Ken Tyler preaches for the Lord's church in Arab, Alabama, USA.

If Eli Could Speak To Parents

Ferman Carpenter



First Samuel, chapters 2-4, tells us of the life of Eli. He was the high priest of Israel. He loved God and was very sensitive to His word. During the time of Eli, spiritual conditions were not good. People mocked God and lived immoral lives. Tragically, ungodliness also found its way into the lives of Eli's sons. They were not only disrespectful to God in their worship, but they were also immoral in their conduct (Samuel 2:12-25).

While we appreciate Eli's dedication to God, it is disturbing to see how he neglected his children. For whatever reason, he failed to restrain and discipline them (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 29). Because of Eli's lack of restraint, his children became careless and immoral even in the Lord's service, and they died as ungodly men.

Today we also live in a very busy world. For over two generations many parents have been so busy that they have failed to restrain and discipline their children. Thus, many children have grown up to disrespect God in their worship and in the way they live.

Let's look at what Eli might tell parents if he were here today:

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

✓ **“Dedicate yourself to God.”** Our dedication must come from within and not just from a few “noticeable” acts. Whether we are at home, work, or play, we should live like children of God. Joshua knew that his family could tell if his life was a fake. Therefore his faith was seen in his worship and in his daily living: *“As for me and my house we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15).

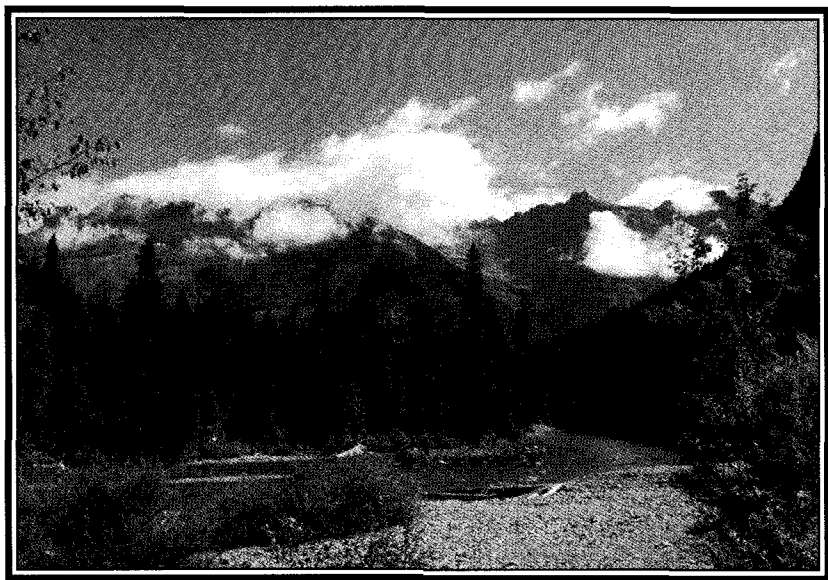
✓ **“Give your family the attention it deserves and needs.”** Helping our family see the joys of Christian living should be our supreme objective. Many good people fail to give their children the spiritual nourishment they need. God instructed parents to “bring” their children up, NOT “send” them up (Ephesians 6:4).

✓ **“Restraint is necessary to please God.”** Eli knew his sons were wrong but he did not restrain them. Many homes today are facing the same problem. More parents are listening to “noted psychiatrists” than to God. God’s Word is truth and it has never changed (John 17:17; Malachi 3:6). Other ways may seem better, but what if “they” are wrong? *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Therefore, parents, take heed when God says, *“He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him”* — *“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying”* — *“The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame”* — *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Nevertheless afterward, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who were trained thereby”* (Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 15:17; Hebrews 12:11).

✓ **“You will pay the price if you fail!”** God tells us, *“The way of the transgressor is hard”* — *“The wages of sin is death”* (Proverbs 13:15; Romans 6:23). Eli’s sons lived and died in rebellion to God. Their lives brought them misery and heartache to Eli. The same destiny is true for everyone who fails to heed God’s way. The price we pay will be in this world as well as in eternity.

Eli cannot speak to us today, but through the Bible God tells us his story, and gives us warning (Psalm 119:160; 1 Timothy 4:16). We have only one opportunity to raise our children right. Let’s do it God’s way. †

Ferman Carpenter preaches for the Lord’s church in Corsicana, Texas, USA.



What Is Ecstasy?

What is ecstasy?

It is being at peace and secure with God, not egotistical, or proud, or confident in oneself, but simply secure in God.

It is having lived with Him long enough that you know His nature, not only from experience but also because His ways have become yours and are now natural to you.

It is having studied His thoughts in His book to saturation point, so that you know the bedrock of your faith and that no words or actions of any person can touch it.

It is having endured sufficient trouble and hurt that you know how you will respond, even though the particular challenge may be new. You know from past behavior that you will draw closer to God, perhaps in understanding, perhaps in bewilderment, but you will draw closer and you will hold on and wait, knowing that He will sustain you and work it out to make all things right.

It is having passed that era of spiritual childhood when obedience was a duty, or a deed to be rewarded; when sometimes the relationship seemed precarious under challenge and other times it seemed hollow in your soul. It is having at last become His child, not in name and reaching to achieve, but in every atom of your being, so that existence without the continued awareness of His presence can no longer even be imagined.

It is knowing, not from reading the words in the Scripture but from the consciousness within your own soul that "neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
(Romans 8:38,39)

— Betty Burton Choate

Smoldering...

Allan Hicks

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. (Isaiah 42:3a; NIV)



Have you been hurt lately? Physically? Emotionally? Spiritually? Mentally? Those who lived in Isaiah's times would see much sorrow and pain. Isaiah prophesied that they would be sent into the hands of foreigners who would rule over them. It would seem as though God had abandoned them, but in chapter 42, Isaiah speaks of the

Servant who would come to deliver them. This servant would handle a bruised reed with gentleness and would not snuff out a smoldering wick.

Anyone who has been near a river's edge where reeds grow has seen how tall and strong these plants can be. They are very similar to the bamboo plant. They are hollow in the center and very strong. However, the plant is easily broken in the bruised place.

A smoldering wick on a candle needs just the right amount of air to nourish it into a strong flame, too much and it becomes extinguished, too little and it dies.

Our lives can be very much like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick. We may have had major setbacks, physically, or even spiritually. Jesus came to help us with the crises and problems in our lives. He didn't come to demand that we be blameless before He would help. In fact, He is gentle in caring for those who have been hurt or for those who are carrying heavy burdens in their lives.

Jesus asked all who are weary and burdened to come to Him, promising that He will give the needed rest (Matthew 11:28). Are you carrying a burden that is too heavy? Do you need rest? Turn to Jesus and He will help you.



The Lord Will Deliver Me!

Loy Mitchell

"The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37).

David was confident that he would defeat Goliath, who was defying the God of Israel. Yes, this enemy stood almost three meters tall. He was a giant and a seasoned soldier. However, David did not fear this Philistine as one who could destroy the children of God.

There were people that day who did their best to discourage this young man, David. His oldest brother tried to dishearten him by saying, *"Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle"* (verse 28).

Saul, the king, made this remark: *"You are not able to go against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth"* (verses 43,44).

David's answer to Goliath shows us the great confidence he had in God. *"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied. This*

day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head" (verses 45,46).

David did defeat that great giant. How? He knew the Lord would grant him victory. He knew he was in the right.

What about today? Is our God still able to deliver us? Yes, the enemies we face are powerful and numerous. Yes, there are people who will do their best to discourage us in our fight against Satan and his army. Yes, Satan is powerful and a seasoned warrior, but OUR GOD CAN GIVE US THE VICTORY!

So we say with confidence, *"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"* (Hebrews 13:6).

"I can do all things through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

"But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). †

Loy Mitchell, former missionary to Zimbabwe, now preaches for the Northside Church of Christ in Topeka, Kansas, USA.

Comfort at His Coming

David R. Pharr

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 we have a powerful text regarding the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the

clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Dying is real. And there is no fear that has a greater grip on humanity than the fear of death. No day is more dreaded. And no loss is more crushing than the loss of a loved one. The Thessalonian Christians were immature in their spiritual knowledge. They needed to be reassured that God would solve the problems they saw in death.

Through the direction of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote the Thessalonians — and all of us — words of comfort concerning the resurrection which is promised to Christians. He did not intend in these few verses to explain everything about the Lord's coming, but he did, however, make certain things quite clear.

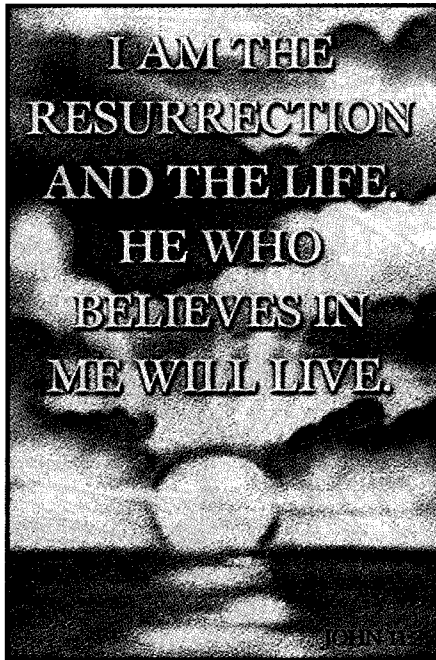
COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

There is clearly a difference between those whose hope is in Christ and those who have no hope. Notice again in verse 13 how Paul contrasted those *“who have no hope.”* No comfort is given for people who die out of Christ. Revelation 14:13 declares a blessing for *“the dead who die in the Lord.”* Psalm 116:15 says, *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”* But tragically, those who are out of Christ have *“no hope”* (Ephesians 2:12).

Our hope stands on our faith that God raised up Jesus. Our Savior did come out of the grave. He was raised and even now He lives (Hebrews 7:25). Thus Paul reasons, *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him”* (verse 14).

The *“dead in Christ”* (verse 16) are only *“asleep”* (verses

13,14,15). Ancient pagans spoke of death as sleep, but to them it was eternal sleep from which one would never awaken. Christians call death sleep because we expect to be awakened from it into eternal life!



“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord...” (verse 15). All that Paul explained was according to God’s promise. It was neither superstition nor science. Only He who has the *“keys of hades and death”* (Revelation 1:18) can unlock its secrets. Science and philosophy know nothing

of these things, but we have the word of the Lord.

Those who are dead in Christ will miss nothing of ultimate importance. Apparently some in Thessalonica feared that those who had died would not get to enjoy the glory of the coming of Christ, but Paul assures them the living would not *“prevent”* (precede) those who

were asleep in Christ. Rather, before the righteous living would go to meet the Lord, the dead in Christ “*shall rise first*” so that all together could meet the Lord in the air (verses 15-17).

Incidentally, it is a complete misunderstanding to think that “*rise first*” indicates that there will be more than one resurrection day. The word “*first*” has the sense of before and means that the dead in Christ would be raised before the living ascend. As regards whether there will be a separate day for the resurrection of the wicked, Jesus settled the matter by putting the resurrection of all the dead in the same hour (John 5: 28,29).

We are given a glimpse of the majesty and power of Christ’s second coming (verse 26). The Lord Himself will descend, literally and personally. “*This same Jesus*” (Acts 1:11) will come with a shout. The dead will hear His voice (John 5:28). There will be also the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God.

When Jesus comes,

all saints, living and dead, will go to meet Christ and be with Him forever (verse 17). John wrote that “*when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*” (1 John 3:2). This promise is directly tied to the famous words of Jesus, “*I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:3). †

David R. Pharr preaches the Gospel in Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA.

My Lord Will Come for Me

Although the grave is waiting near
And long its guest I'll be,
I will not be abandoned here:
My Lord will come for me.

When all the living rise that day
In joyous jubilee,
If death has taken me away,
He'll also come for me.

Though chains of death my soul secure,
My Lord will set me free.
His word is truth and I am sure
That He will come for me.

He's gone, a mansion to prepare
Of matchless ecstasy,
And when it's ready over there
My Lord will come for me.

— Henry Presley



A group of women were talking, and one of them said, "Our congregation is sometimes down to 40 or 50 on Sunday night."

Another said, "That's nothing. Sometimes our attendance is down to 15 or 20 on Sunday night."

An old maid then commented, "It's so bad at our church on Sunday night that when the preacher says 'Dearly beloved,' I think he's talking to me."



Winston K. Pendleton reports that a directive from the U. S. Dept. of Defense was sent to all Army units in the field. It read: "*It is necessary for technical reasons that these warheads must be stored upside down, that is, with the top at the bottom and the bottom at the top. To prevent anyone making a mistake, and in order that there will*

be no doubt as to which is the bottom and which is the top, for storage purposes, it will be noted that the bottom of each warhead has been labeled with the word "Top."



Preacher Tom Steed inserted the following in the church bulletin:

For the next few weeks, I will be teaching the Ten Commandments in the Wednesday night auditorium class and the Sunday morning high school class. I began each series by asking class members to see how many of the Ten Commandments they could list. The winner listed thirteen!



One fellow said, "It really does bother me to fly. You know, they put you on a plane built by the lowest bidder, fly at 600 mph at an altitude of 35,000 feet, and they start you out at what they call "the terminal!"



My good friend Charlie is always complaining about his wife's cooking. The other day he told me that her oven has two settings...smoking and non-smoking.

PROVERBS 17:22

A mother was making pancakes for her sons Kevin 5, and Ryan 3. The boys argued over who would get the first pancake. Mother saw a chance to teach a lesson, so she said, "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake. I can wait.'"

The 5-year-old turned to his younger brother and said, "OK, Ryan, you be Jesus."



Overheard: "My wife's age is her own business, but I'll tell you this: She's been in business a l-o-o-o-n-g time."



After the fall in the Garden of Eden, Adam was walking with his sons, Cain and Abel. They passed by the ruins of the garden, and one of the boys asked, "What's that?"

Adam answered, "Boys, that's where your mother ate us out of house and home."



A man and a dog were walking along together down a sidewalk. A jogger came by, stopped and asked the man, "Does your dog bite?" The man said, "No." The jogger

then reached down to pet the dog and the rascal just about tore his hand off. The jogger exclaimed, "I thought you said your dog didn't bite!" The man replied, "This ain't my dog."



Question: Who was the greatest financier in the Bible?

Answer: Noah. He was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.



The headline in a church bulletin read as follows: "Missionary from Africa Speaking at Calvary Memorial Church in Racine." The article then told that the lady missionary's name was Bertha Belch. The article concluded with the invitation, "Come hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa."



We all know that the computer technology is changing constantly. There's a new model for sale now that is a combination word processor and food processor. It's especially good for those times when you have to eat your words.

New Life In Christ

Randy Kea

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, the apostle Paul said, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* Please consider the following analysis of this verse:

“Therefore if” — This phrase sets forth the conditional nature of gaining and maintaining a right relationship with God. The word “if” is found throughout the New Testament denoting the fact that salvation is conditional. For instance, in John 8:31, the Lord said, *“If ye continue in my word, then are you my disciples in deed: And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

“any man” — This phrase clearly shows that God’s offer of salvation is universal in scope. Note the following phrases found elsewhere in the New Testament: *“every creature”* (Mark 16:15); *“all nations”* (Matthew 28:18-20); *“every man”* (Hebrews 2:9); *“all”* (1 Timothy 2:6; Matthew 11:28-30).

“in Christ” — This specifies the precise location of all of the wonderful blessings that God offers throughout the Gospel of Christ. For example, Paul says in Ephesians 1:3 that *“all spiritual blessings”* are in Christ. In 2 Timothy 2:10 he affirms that salvation is found in Christ. John the apostle indicates that the promise of eternal life is found in Christ (1 John 2:25; 5:11-13).

“new creature” — When a person obeys the Gospel, thereby becoming a Christian, all things become new. The new Christian has a new life, a new destiny, follows a new standard, enjoys new blessings, and has a new purpose. The process of becoming a Christian includes **faith** to change the heart, **repentance** to change the life, **confession** to change allegiance, and **baptism** to change the state (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:26; Galatians 3:26,27; Acts 15:7-9; Romans 10:9,10).

The parallel verse to our text under consideration is Romans 6:1-4. It reads as follows: *“What shall*

TEXTUAL STUDIES

we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized unto his death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." This is clearly a reference to water baptism.

Please seriously consider these points: Water baptism stands

between every lost person and a new life in Christ. It is when a person is buried (or immersed) in the waters of baptism that they contact the soul-cleansing power of the blood of Christ shed in His death. Compare Acts 22:16 and Revelation 1:5. Also compare Acts 2:38 and Matthew 26:28.

The question is, "Have you been baptized into Christ as a penitent believer" (Galatians 3:27)? †

Randy Kea preaches for the congregation in Forest Park, Georgia, USA.

A CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN

Could I be called a Christian if everybody knew
My secret thoughts and feelings, and everything I do?
Oh, can they see the likeness of Christ in me each day
And do they hear Him speaking in every word I say?
Could I be called a Christian if other folk would know
That I am found in places where Jesus would not go?
Oh, do they hear His echo in every song I sing?
In eating, drinking, playing...is Christ in everything?
Could I be called a Christian if judged by what I read,
By all my recreation, and every thought and deed?
Could I be counted Christlike in daily work and play
Unselfish, kind, forgiving each hour of every day?
I wonder, and I ponder, and often do I pray,
That I may be like Jesus in all I do and say.

—Revised

God and the Kingdom First

Max Patterson

"But see ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

There are four facets or clear propositions in this verse. Let us look briefly at each of these.

First, this verse contains an obligation — "seek." Seek means diligent search, patient inquiry. We need to find out our duty to God so that we may know our obligation to Him and His church. There are many admonitions in Scripture dealing with the activity of Christians. We are told to "*Work out our own salvation*" (Philippians 2:12,13). We are encouraged to be "*steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Jesus gave us a great example in John 9:4 when He said, "*I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.*"

Our obligation to be active is nowhere more clearly set out than in Matthew 7:21-27.

Second, this verse designates

an object. We are to seek *the kingdom of God (or church)*. In our time, particularly, men are seeking something — Transcendental Meditation, other types of meditation, astrology, spiritualism, scientology, various cults, immorality, etc. But because these "answers" are from men and not from God, and therefore cannot provide true direction, people often go from one to another in a ceaseless quest for lasting help with life's challenges. To seek God's kingdom is to seek the benefits, blessings, and privileges of that kingdom, both in this life and in the promised eternal life of the next world. **This can be done only by becoming a member of His kingdom** (John 3:3-5; Mark 16:15,16). **One can seek after righteousness only by doing right** (Psalms 119:172; 1 John 3:7).

Third, the verse contains an order in life's priorities. We are to

seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness *first*. Now, our problem is not in any inability to understand what “first” means. Our problem, for the most part, is that we just do not want to do what God has asked. We do not put Him first in our studying, praying, attending church services, and in many other ways. We need to determine to do better.

Fourth, the verse contains a

promise based on a condition. If we seek the kingdom first then “*all these (material) things shall be added,*” or literally “*thrown in to boot.*” They are offered as an added attraction. What a wonderful promise! How can we turn it down? I admonish you to choose rightly. †

Max Patterson is a gospel preacher and teacher living in Neosho, Missouri, USA.



CAN YOU SPARE TWENTY MINUTES PER DAY?

Recently, I received a letter with this statement, “**Twenty-four years in the first grade:** that is how long it would take to pass if public schools met only as often as Sunday Bible school and if no classes were missed.”

Certainly, this is a challenging statement. Suppose you came to Bible school only half the time. That would be the equivalent of forty-eight years in the first grade! At this rate you can see why we have so much Bible ignorance in the world today.

There was a time when members of the Lord’s church were known as people who really knew the Book, but we feel that day is past for many. We need to re-emphasize the importance of reading.

A few years ago, I read that if a person spent twenty minutes a day on a given subject for a period of twenty years, he would be an authority in that field. If that is true then think what twenty minutes a day over twenty years would mean in Bible knowledge!

We live in an age of education. Even retired people return to college and many of the younger ones are still in school at age 30. With all the emphasis on education, we need to emphasize Bible knowledge. We spend a great portion of our lives preparing for a profession or vocation in this world, which at best will be less than one century, and yet we spend so little time in preparation to live for eternity.

— Author Unknown

Regaining Your First Love

Revelation 2:4,5

Kevin L. Moore

INTRODUCTION:

1. About 40 years after the church had been established at Ephesus, the Lord delivered a message to them through His servant John (Revelation 2:1-7).
 - a. He commended them for their works and patience; they could not tolerate those who were evil; they tested and rejected false teachers; they persevered with patience; and they diligently labored for Christ (vs 2,3).
 - b. *“Nevertheless,”* Jesus said, *“I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”*
2. Sometimes we can be very busy and exhibit all the outward characteristics of faithful Christians, but may have lost that inward drive and motivation of love (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14).
3. Jesus reveals how to regain our first love (Revelation 2:5).

DISCUSSION:

1. **“REMEMBER THEREFORE FROM WHERE YOU HAVE FALLEN”**
 - a. Our tendency to forget is a fundamental reason we love motivation.
 - (1) We forget what it was like before Jesus came into our lives (Titus 3:3).
 - (2) We forget that we have been purged from our old sins (2 Peter 1:9).
 - b. To regain our first love, we must remember!
 - (1) Remember the horror of being lost (Ephesians 2:11,12).
 - (2) Remember the tremendous blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:10).

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

2. “REPENT”

- a. Repentance begins with sorrow for sin (2 Corinthians 7:9,10).
- b. Repentance involves turning from sin to God (Acts 3:19,26; 26:20).
- c. Repentance expresses itself through righteous deeds (Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20).

3. “DO THE FIRST WORKS”

- a. It is important to do the things we did before we left our first love.
 - (1) The key to changing behavior is to change thinking (Proverbs 4:23; 23:7).
 - (2). The key to changing thinking is to fill our minds with wholesome things (Philippians 4:8).
 - (3) The key to filling our minds with wholesome things is to read, study, and meditate on the word of God (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16,17).
- b. With God’s word in our hearts, the right actions will naturally follow (Psalms 37:31; 40:8).
 - (1) We will do works befitting repentance (Acts 26:20).
 - (2) We will work righteousness (Acts 10:35).
 - (3) We will be doers of the word (James 1:22).
- c. Changed thinking leads to changed behavior which leads to changed feelings.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. If you have left your first love, Jesus offers the solution.
 - a. Remember from where you have fallen.
 - b. Repent.
 - c. Do the things you did at first.
- 2. May we all try to remain properly motivated as we follow these basic steps. †

Kevin L. Moore works with the church of Christ in Wanganui, New Zealand.

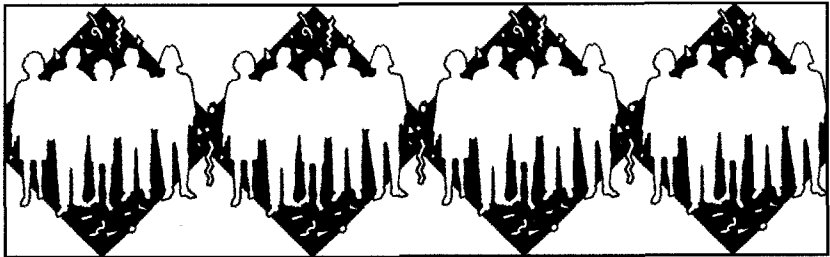
True worship is balanced between spirit and truth. Spirit keeps us from cold formalism, and truth keeps us from frenzied emotionalism.



Our Example in a WORLDLY SOCIETY

1 Peter 2:21-25

Andy Jooste



INTRODUCTION:

- A. Peter writes to “resident aliens” (1 Peter 1:1).
- B. “Where do you live?” This world is not our home (1 Peter 2:11) “sojourners” (Psalms 39:12).
- C. How then shall we live? (2 Peter 3:11).

I. MAN CREATED WITH DIVINE PURPOSE

- A. Man in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).
- B. Children honor the image of parents by reflection: Jesus as the Son of God (Hebrews 1:1-3).
- C. God’s children honor Him by reflecting His glory (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus did (John 17:4).

II. THE HOSTILE WORLD IN WHICH CHRISTIANS LIVE

- A. “They think it strange...” (1 Peter 4:1).
- B. Open hostility of unbelievers (1 Peter 4:12-16). Suffering as a Christian glorifies God.
- C. This conflict portrayed as cross bearing (Matthew 10:32-39).

III. HOW JESUS PROVIDES OUR EXAMPLE

- A. He entered our world to experience what we do (Hebrews 2:14-18; NB. Matthew 12:29).
- B. All who would live godly will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus did (1 Peter 2:21-23).
- C. Left footsteps (1 Peter 2:21). Complete knowledge to partake of divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

CONCLUSION: WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?


- A. He never forgot His purpose in life: To glorify God in obedience (1 Peter 4:16,17).
- B. Committed Himself to God as faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19).
- C. Humble self...resist the devil...be exalted (established) in due time (1 Peter 5:6-10). †

Andy Jooste is a preacher of the Gospel in the Republic of South Africa.

Today I Spent Some Quiet Time

Today I spent some quiet time
Some time at home,
Turned off the TV,
Ignored the phone,
No background music,
No distractions,
My thoughts and I were all alone;
Time for memories,
Prayer and reflection,
Thinking of my life's direction,
Thinking how my time's applied,
Taking time to look inside,
Taking time to pray for others,
For my sisters and my brothers;
May I share their joy and sorrow
If God grants me a tomorrow,
Search your heart and soul and mind,
Take, today, some quiet time.

— Linda Westbrook



In the book of Acts we read a lot about Paul and Peter, but not much about Barnabas. His name was really Joseph, but the apostles called him Barnabas, which means “Son of Encouragement”.

When the new church in Jerusalem was in financial trouble, Barnabas sold his property and gave the money to the apostles.

When the disciples in Jerusalem rejected Paul because of all they had heard about his past, it was Barnabas who told them about Paul’s conversion and how he had risked his life to preach the Gospel in Damascus.

When the Christians in Antioch needed help with the work, the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas. It was Barnabas who was not afraid to ask Paul to help with the work when others didn’t want his involvement because he had formerly persecuted Christians.

It was Barnabas who traveled with Paul to make the first missionary journey. When they talked about going on the second journey, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark along, but Paul was against the idea because John Mark had turned back during the first journey. So

Paul and Silas went in one direction and Barnabas and John Mark went in another, but Paul and Barnabas were still friends.

It was Barnabas who encouraged John Mark in spite of his first failure. Then later, Paul asked Timothy to bring Mark, because “*he is helpful to me in my ministry.*” And later, John Mark wrote the book of Mark.

Be a Barnabas

Jack Gordon

BIBLE CHARACTERS

We don't read about Barnabas again after he and Paul went their separate ways, but Paul might not have become what he became without the encouragement of Barnabas.

Perhaps most of us need to be more like Barnabas. Could we encourage a John Mark after a failure? Could we encourage a Paul who had fought the church and was then rejected by those he had hurt?

There are many ways in today's world that we might emulate Barnabas. Could we be more helpful to those who are hurting because of the death or illness of a loved one? Could we encourage that student who is away at school? Could we show our concern for those who have moved away from home and are missing the ones they left behind? Could we offer more friendship to those in our midst who are new? Could we be a greater encouragement to young Christians, to those

who have talents they have not recognized and, thus, have not developed?

Is there someone who needs our encouragement? Could we be a Barnabas? †

Jack Gordon is a member of the church of Christ in Arnold, Missouri, USA.

The Gift that I've Got

In the church today, this is my task
For the members like me to take time to ask,
In the work of the Lord, what can I do?
And be Christian enough to carry it through
Never complaining that others don't teach
Or try with me, some soul to reach,
But use for the Master the gift that I've got
Even though I may not be given a lot.

Like a picture puzzle, I'm but one small part
If I'll find my place and then just start
To fill that place the best that I can
And show Christianity to my fellowman
The church today will continue to grow
The limits of which we'll never know,
So let us unite our vision and dreams:
Christianity is not as hard as it seems.

In the church today, we each have our call,
There's none of us that can do it all,
So let's each develop the gift we were given
And all work together on our way to heaven.

— Author Unknown

Gehazi, A Servant

Frances Parr

In the few chapters of 2 Kings which speak of him, Gehazi seems to be a fellow on the run. He was a servant of Elisha, God's prophet. As the prophet roamed the country in service to God, Gehazi was his companion and confidant.

A Shunammite woman befriended Elisha and built a room on her house for him to use when he was passing through. Elisha wanted to repay her for her kindness. Gehazi was sent to find her. The woman's husband was well-to-do and there seemed to be nothing she wanted or needed. Gehazi observed that she had no children and that her husband was old. Elisha promised her a child, and the following year she bore a son.

One day, when the child grew older, he went with his father to the fields. He became very ill and died the same day in his mother's arms. The Shunammite woman quickly found Elisha and fell at his feet. Gehazi, the protective servant, tried to push her away from his master. Instead, when the prophet learned that her son was dead, he sent Gehazi to lay his own staff on the child's face. Gehazi did this and returned to his master, saying that the boy did not respond. Elisha then went to the house and revived the woman's son.

There is no indication of how much time had passed from this incident to the next time we hear of Gehazi in the Scriptures, but in the meantime, the servant had changed. When Elisha healed Naaman, the leper, he was offered silver and clothing, which he refused. After Naaman left to return to his home, Gehazi decided the gifts which Elisha turned down shouldn't go to waste. He ran after Naaman, and asked for and got a portion of the goods.

Gehazi returned home, hid his booty in the house, and went about his work. Elisha had missed his servant and asked him where he had been. "*I have not been anywhere,*" Gehazi lied. Elisha's spirit had been with Gehazi and observed everything he did. While Naaman, an enemy soldier, had been cleansed of leprosy, Gehazi, an Israelite, was instantly turned white as snow with the disease. He and his descendants were cursed with leprosy forever.

As with those today who choose to seek worldly gain instead of the way of the Lord, what a huge price to pay for a few bits of perishable rubbish! †

Frances Parr is a Christian writer living in Eldon, Missouri, USA.

Ruth: A Light Shining From the Dark

David Deffenbaugh

Set during the very dark times of the judges, the story of Ruth shines as an exceeding bright light. The period of the judges is remembered as one of hardship, fear, cruelty, and immorality. In bold relief is the story of Ruth, set in those hard times but characterized by faith instead of fear, kindness instead of cruelty and virtue instead of immorality.

Like many before and since, Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, was caused to wonder about God's treatment of her because of the loss of her husband, Elimelech, and their two sons. So great



BIBLE CHARACTERS

were her doubts that she no longer wanted to be called Naomi (meaning pleasant) by her friends and family, instead she chose the name Mara (meaning bitter). Little did she realize the fullness she enjoyed in her devoted daughter-in-law upon her return to Bethlehem from Moab. She could only see her emptiness.

The reputation of Ruth's devotion and love preceded her appearance as a gleaner in the fields of Boaz. It was likely no surprise to this noble and influential man to learn that this lovely woman working among the poor and destitute was the same Ruth of whom he had already heard. One willing to leave her own family and homeland to care for her mother-in-law would also certainly not hesitate to labor in order to help provide food for the table.

Easily recognizing the exceptional character of this Moabite, Boaz saw that she was specially cared for. The provisions of the harvesters were at her disposal, and more than the usual amount of grain was left behind for her to glean. And when Ruth returned to her mother-in-law with the excessive fruit of her day's labor, Naomi knew something special had happened. A sprig of joy must have sprouted in her embittered heart upon learning the identity of the gracious owner of the field. Boaz

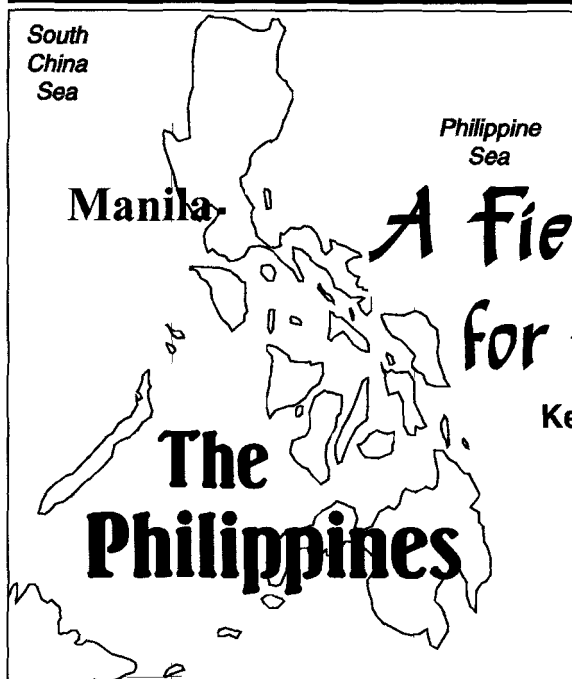
was a near kinsman. Boaz was the man who could, if he would, bring blessing back to the family of Elimelech.

Noami wisely advised Ruth concerning the way to make known to Boaz how he might greatly help not only this exceptional Moabite, but his own relatives as well. The instructions given by Naomi and followed by Ruth expressed the urgency and the magnitude of this request, but everything was done in such a way as to maintain dignity and honor for the young widow.

Boaz took action. First satisfying all requirements of the law, he married Ruth. Upon the birth of their child, Naomi was reminded that though she had doubted God's love for her, He had blessed her much, and that Ruth proved to be better to her than seven sons. Unknown to Naomi and her contemporaries was the surpassing blessing of this grandson's grandson, who would receive a promise from God ultimately fulfilled in none other than the Savior of the world.

What a beautiful vehicle the story of Ruth is for the messages of dignity and honor, hope in the face of despair, and trust in the providential care of almighty God. †

David Deffenbaugh preaches the Gospel of Christ in Tahlequah, OK, USA.



A Field Ripe for Harvest

Kenneth J. Wilkey

We must look back over seventy years to see the roots of the church in the Philippines. With thankfulness and admiration one can see

a church that lived, and continues to live, through the dedication of many unsung Christians. Heartaches, suffering, martyrdom, victories and failures all are in this history. Only our Lord's Book records it correctly, but here are Filipinos and Americans to remember with gratitude and love for what they gave to us.

Only three persons served as missionaries of the church in the Philippines prior to the Second World War: George Benson, H.G. Cassell, and O.T. Rodman. George Pepperdine was the mover behind the churches of Christ coming to the Philippines. This godly individual had prospered in his business. He made a trip to Asia in 1927, taking both of his daughters, Florence and Esther, with him to Honolulu, Japan, China and the Philippines. In Manila, brother Pepperdine met Leslie Wolfe, a man of very conservative theology who no longer belonged to the liberal Disciples of Christ. Of this visit Wolfe said: "Manila, Aug. 3: Had George Pepperdine of Los Angeles and his two daughters with us during the last week in July. He spoke three times, making most favorable impression. Brother

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

Pepperdine is head of a company that has more than 150 stores selling automobile accessories. He is of the conservative brethren." (Christian Standard, September 17, 1927.

The next year brother Pepperdine took another around-the-world trip with his mother, traveling to India, China, Japan and Hawaii. When they stopped in Hong Kong he met George Benson. Brother Benson had been driven out of Canton, China by the Communists, so brother Pepperdine urged him to go to the Philippines until he could return to China. Later, when there was a need for someone to replace brother Benson in Mindoro Island, H.G. Cassell volunteered to go there. For seventeen years brother Cassell remained in the field, being joined by only one other missionary, O.T. Rodman.

I spent some time with brother Pepperdine in 1960-61, before going to the Philippines myself, and saw his zeal for the Lord first-hand. I recall overhearing him tell the eldership of the old Southwest Church of Christ that they ought to sponsor Margie and me in our Philippine mission work. He continued to dedicate his money and his time to the Philippines, being supportive of the establishment of Philippine Bible College. Objective facts today reveal that he and George Benson, with some kind assistance from Leslie Wolfe, started a movement that is an undeniable success in Asia, recognizing the Philippines as a ripe field for harvest. †

Kenneth J. Wilkey, of College Station, Texas, was a former president of Philippine Bible College and makes regular mission trips to the Philippines.

Mindanao — History of the Lord's Church Dominador Belo

Mindanao ranks the second largest island in the Philippines, next only to Luzon. To Filipinos before the War it was called "The land of Promise", being fertile and sparsely populated.

Ten kilometers from Cotabato City lies the small farming village of Pinarang. It was here that "homeseekers" from Luzon made their stop-over in search of land of their own. One of the first homeseekers to come to Pinarang was Antonio Villanueva, a soft-spoken preacher of the conservative Christian church. When he was not farming, Villanueva went around preaching. Among his first converts were Aurelio Ebita and Espiridion Camaganacan.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

Great blessings came to Villanueva's work when a group of relatives from Nueva Ecija arrived at the invitation of a retired U. S. Navy Remegio dela Torre. The whole clan obeyed the gospel, foremost of whom were Laureano Belo, Cornelio Alegre and Fabian Bruno. Thus the church in Pinarang grew very fast. In 1939 they erected a church building and nailed up the sign "Church of Christ." And so arose the first congregation of the Lord in the island of Mindanao.



Laureano Belo (left, with son, Poly Belo) and his family have had a great part in the spreading of the Gospel in the Philippines.

Villanueva at first held on to denominational practices. It remained for a preacher friend, Pedro Azada, to visit and convince the young church to drop the practices of eating blood, infant dedication, celebration of Christmas, instrumental music in worship and missionary society. Azada had served as an interpreter for missionary H. G. Cassel working in the island of Mindoro.

In late 1940 most of the members left Pinarang and settled in Alip, Datu Paglas in Central Cotabato. The church, composed of eleven families, called their new home "The new Jerusalem..." For two years Alip was the radiating center of the gospel. Through the combined efforts of Villanueva, Belo and Alegre churches were established in Lambayong, Malingon, Central Mangilala and M'lang. Among the foremost converts of those years were Rizal Cariaga, Gabriel Bravo and Melchor Fontanilla.

Meanwhile War broke out in December 1941. The Japanese invaded the country; the Americans were driven out, and terrorism abounded. On one Sunday in 1942 the Alip brethren were invaded by Muslim neighbors, ransacked of all belongings and taken captives for ten days. In Tubod, Lanao, Pedro Azada was massacred with his mother, wife, two daughters and a grandson. When the Alip brethren were released, they did not return to their homes. Instead they separated and were "scattered abroad." Villanueva settled in San Felipe, Alegre in Central Mangilala and Belo in

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

M'lang. But they continued preaching the word.

Liberation from the Japanese occupation came with the landing of General MacArthur in 1944. Frank Trayler, chaplain and also a Christian, baptized several at the San Ramon Penal Colony in Zamboanga City. This work resulted in the coming of Floyd T. Hamilton and Leland O'Neal and the beginning of the Zamboanga Bible College in 1946.

Among the pioneer preachers, Laureano Belo stood out as the most extraordinary. He quoted scriptures from memory, spoke in five dialects, and was blessed with unusual energy and boundless enthusiasm. He never turned down any invitation to preach no matter how far and how difficult the journey. Yet he never owned even a bicycle. He preached while hiking, planting, harvesting, having a haircut, in the bus or in the boat. He established congregations in Cotabato and Zamboanga del Sur, more than anyone else in his lifetime. He was accused as a rebel leader, beaten with a rod and imprisoned. Once he was knocked down unconscious by his opponents in a debate who beat him with the microphone stand. When he died in 1996, the churches of Christ in Mindanao had grown to over 200 congregations.

Dominador (Jack) Belo is now preaching in Tacloban City, in the island of Leyte. Like his father, Laureano Belo, Jack also has a pioneering spirit. The Dominador Belo family, together with the Charles Smith family and Reuben and Evelyn Emperado, began the first congregation in the island of



Students of the Institute of Biblical Studies in Cebu City, operated by brother Reuben Emperado.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

Cebu, in Cebu City. Jack Belo also pioneered the work in Tacloban City, Catbalogan City, Samar and the work in Calbayog Samar.

The Church of our Lord, although it has grown to more than 400 congregations since the coming of the George Bensons in the late 1920's, is still very much a minority religion in the Philippines in comparison to the many religious groups in this country.

Present works in the Philippines include these Bible schools and training schools: Philippine Bible College, Zamboanga Bible School, Manila School of Evangelism, Sunrize School of Preaching, Cebu Bible School, Philippine Institute of Biblical Studies, Mobile School of Evangelism and Shepherding, Bacolod Bible School, Dumaguete Bible School, and Panay Bible School

Goodnews Medical Clinic in Cebu City, begun through the efforts of brother Bob Marshall, is a flourishing and effective outreach, bringing the truth to many while offering medical services to the poor of the area. The medical team frequently takes to the road with evangelists and campaigners to open a new area with the Gospel. †

Dominador Belo, a son in one of the prominent pioneer families of Gospel preachers, now works with the Lord's church in Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines.

Evangelism in the Philippines

Bob Buchanan

It was always the great desire of the apostle Paul to preach the gospel "*where Christ had not been named.*" He had preached from "*Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum*" [probably north of Macedonia] (Romans 15:19-21). Paul's mission to the Gentiles was leading him toward Rome, and then his desire was to go on to Spain (Romans 15:24). His passion was to preach to those "*who were not (yet) told*" (Romans 15:21).

New congregations were begun by Paul and his companions in many places. He remained at Corinth for eighteen months (Acts 18:11). At Ephesus, he evangelized for about three years, teaching in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for two of these years (Acts 19:9,10; 20:31). Throughout his ministry, this great "missionary" to the nations had TWO great objectives: (1) To preach the crucified and resurrected Lord so that disciples could be produced (Matthew 28:18-20), and (2) To assist these baptized saints to MATURE in the Lord so that they would develop their own leadership,

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

“stand on their own” and be “germinal” in “planting” new congregations. The church at Thessalonica is a very beautiful example of this principle (1 Thessalonians 1:3-10).

Paul accomplished the second of these objectives in THREE ways: (1) He taught these new Christians while he was with them. After “many” Corinthians were baptized (Acts 18:8), he taught them, for example, concerning the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23). (2) Paul would either ask his companions to STAY with these new Christians for a time, or else he would ask them to RETURN to encourage and strengthen the brothers (Acts 17:14, 15; 1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:5). (3) Paul would also send inspired letters to strengthen them in the faith. 1 and 2 Thessalonians would be excellent examples, in addition to his other letters to churches and individuals.

In every “mission field”, these Biblical goals and objectives should be primary in the hearts and lives of gospel preachers, both foreign and national. Every effort should focus on these objectives to avoid, as much as possible, another Ephesus that “lost its first love”, a Sardis that is “dead”, and a Laodicea that is “lukewarm” (Revelation 2, 3).

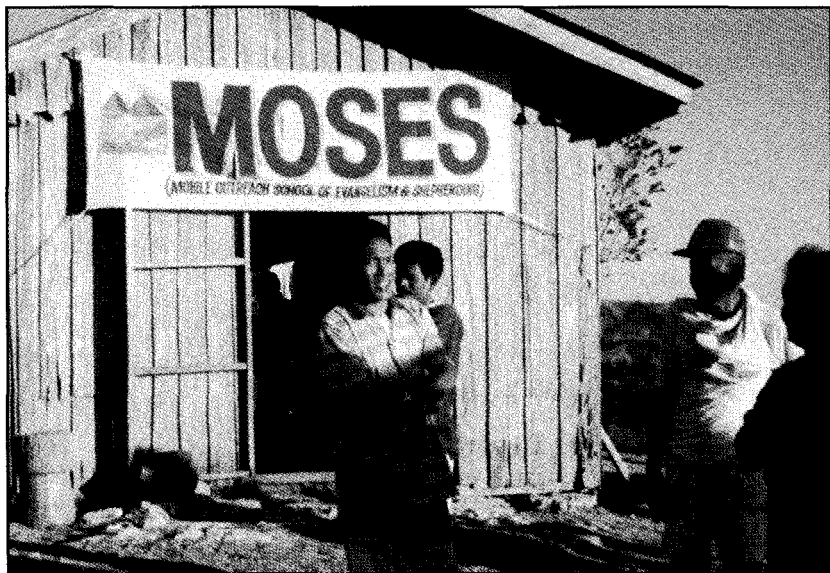
In the Philippines, we quickly affirm that mistakes have been made, and heartaches produced. Sometimes, an emphasis has been placed on baptism, but not discipleship. New Christians have been left alone to “live” spiritually “on their own”, or “die”. Other “babies in Christ” have been so dependent on outside “paternalism” that they could not learn to “stand on their own feet”. False teaching, financed by overseas sources, has divided congregations. The challenges involved in overseas financing had to be confronted. In too many instances, the “preacher” provides the “leadership”, and little effort is expended to develop local leadership. Because of this, congregations have died, or remain static. With sadness, the question is sometimes asked, “Where are these churches now?”

However, in spite of these problems, the Lord’s work has grown in the Philippines in an encouraging way. When an updated directory of Philippine churches appears, it will perhaps contain names and locations of more than 500 congregations. New congregations are beginning continually. More leadership work is being done, and more churches are becoming self-sufficient. Much of the evangelism and leadership training is being organized and accomplished by Filipino brothers, and the American preachers are often considered only as “helpers” or “co-workers”, especially those who try to learn language and culture. Training seminars or forums have been organized and conducted, with vision and planning, by national leader-

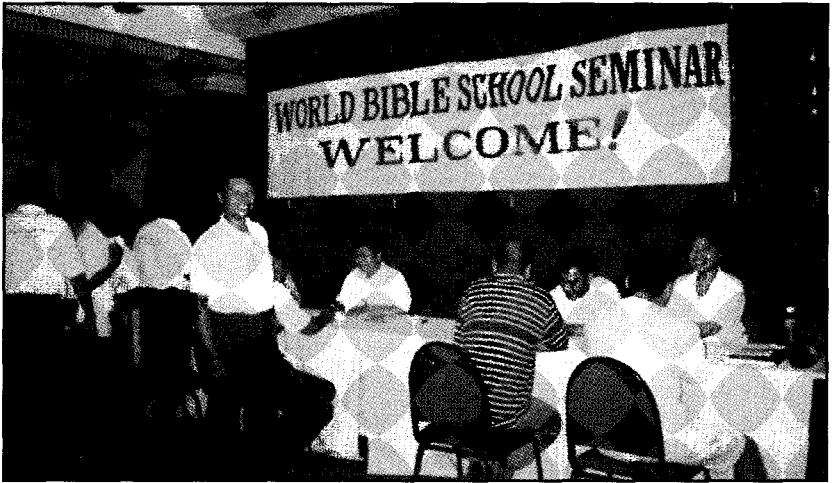
FROM THE HEART OF . . .

ship. Bible schools in different parts of the nation were begun, and continue to operate, with national direction and instruction. This is encouraging.

Another approach to evangelism has begun in the past few years in this rapidly growing nation of about 75 million people. Studies have been made concerning Provincial Capitals where no congregation exists, as well as growing cities in the country which are important centers. "Evangelism teams" have been formed in different places. This means that preachers, church leaders, and other Christians volunteer their time and work together in targeted areas. The first team that began this cooperative approach is called "MOSES" which means "Mobile Outreach School of Evangelism and Shepherding". Christians will leave their secular work to spend a week or more in door knocking and setting up Bible studies in the selected area. Usually, as many as 1,000 homes will be contacted, people will be enrolled in the World Bible School correspondence course, and out of this will come a smaller "core" of good Bible studies. New congregations have begun in a number of places.



"Mobile Outreach School of Evangelism and Shepherding" brings many Christians to a targeted area to door-knock and enroll new people for Bible courses and home Bible studies.



Signing up students who have come to participate in a World Bible School Seminar.



Many people attend the Gospel meetings that are conducted in conjunction with medical outreach clinics which are held in unevangelized areas of the Philippines.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

In the year 2000, a prayerful, “brainstorming” meeting was held in Tacloban City on the island of Leyte. This writer was the only American present with six Filipino brothers. Prayer was important in this meeting. The question was asked, “How can evangelism be done in a population area, where there is no congregation, that will lead eventually to a self-sufficient work?” Careful consideration was given to three areas or “phases” of work: (1) The initial, detailed preparation necessary for an extensive campaign, (2) The evangelistic endeavor itself, with public and private teaching, and the beginning of a new congregation, and (3) The extensive teaching that is necessary to bring the new work to self-sufficient maturity.

It is recognized that this third phase of a new work is a very great challenge. Leadership needs to rise up, and training must be done. The church must realize WHO it is, and WHAT its ministry is. Many times, the first two phases of a new work are far in advance of this third. Consequently, to assist with this need, attention is now being given to “extension centers” in different locations where leadership training can be emphasized as a complement to resident Bible schools. In this environment, the teacher will go to the students, rather than asking leaders to leave their home and work to come to a resident school. The emphasis will be on church “planting” and maturing. Those who attend these classes will be asked to engage in the practical application of the knowledge gained. An extensive curriculum is being prepared, and the location of these centers is being determined.

The challenges are great. The reliance is on the Lord. There must be no distractions permitted to hinder the “building of the walls” of spiritual Zion. There must be unity of purpose so that an increased number of workers will preach the good news “round about” from Aparri to Tawi Tawi (north to south), and then to neighboring lands. This is our task. May God bless us in it. †



Bob Buchanan has done mission work in the Philippines for many years.

Bob Buchanan baptizing a convert, the fruit of prayer and work.

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Please use my special contribution to send more copies of this issue to the mission fields of the world.

Please accept my check to send a bundle to our missionary. **The address is given below.**

As a congregation we want to help print and circulate 100,000 copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search — 30 (from page 42)

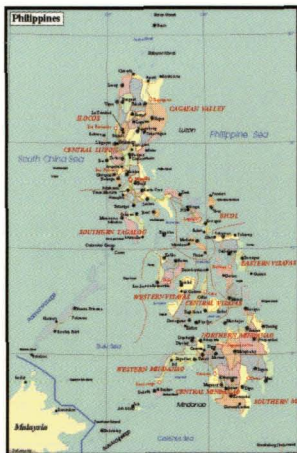
Who Am I? (page 74)

1. *carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.*"
2. The Christians were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
3. *Saul; made havoc of the church, entering every house; dragging off men; women, committing them to prison.*"
4. They went everywhere preaching the word.
5. He went to Samaria and preached Christ to them, confirming the word with miracles, as Christ had promised in Mark 16:20.
6. Believed; the kingdom of God; the name of Jesus Christ; baptized.
7. They sent Peter and John (two of the apostles) to Samaria; when they arrived, they prayed for them and laid their hands on them (as they had done for the seven in chapter 6), that they might receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Philip could not give these gifts; only apostles had that power, as Simon rightly observed.
8. To *"a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of Ethiopia, who had charge of all her treasury."*
9. *"How can I, unless someone guides me?"*
10. From Isaiah 53:7,8, a messianic prophecy concerning Christ.
11. He preached Jesus to him.
12. The eunuch said, upon coming to a body of water, *"See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"*
13. *"If you believe with all your heart, you may."*
14. *"...commanded the chariot; Philip; eunuch; the water; baptized."*
15. *"...the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus."*



Balaam

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:



Republic of the Philippines



Government: Republic
President: Gloria Macapagal Arroyo
Vice President: Teofisto Guingona

Information supplied by Salvador Cariaga and Dominador Belo

Secular Facts:

- Location:** Archipelago off the SE coast of Asia.
- Land Mass:** Approximately 7100 islands stretching 1100 miles North to South; Luzon is the largest.
- Population:** 77,725,862; density per square mile, 671.
- Major Cities:** Manila, Quezon City.
- Language:** Filipino, English. **Dialects:** 80 total; Cebuano, Tagalog, Ilocano.
- Literacy:** 95%; Education is free and compulsory for ages 7-12.
- Religion:** Roman Catholic Church, 83%; Protestant, 9%; Muslim, 5%.
- Ethnic Groups:** Christian Malay, 92%; Muslim Malay, 4%.
- Economy:** *Industries:* Food processing, textiles, chemicals, wood products. *Chief crops:* Sugar, rice, corn, pineapples, coconuts. *Arable land:* 19%. *Livestock:* Chickens, buffalo, pigs, goats, fish. *Labor force:* 43% agriculture, 23% services, 16% industry and commerce. *Exports:* \$20.5 bil.; *Partners:* US: 36%; Japan: 16%.
- Monetary Unit:** Peso.

The Church:

- Congregations:** 400-500 with an approximate membership of 30,000.
- History:** George Benson was driven out of China before World War II by the communists. He went to Manila at the urging of George Pepperdine. He did most of his church-planting work in Mindoro, and from there the church spread to other islands in the country.
- The future of the Philippine church is bright. There are six preacher-training schools, including Sunrise Christian College (recently accredited by the government), and a host of annual medical missions, evangelistic campaigns, lectureships, seminars, and youth gatherings.
- Among the most active regions is Cebu where there is a permanent medical clinic called "Good News," a Bible Study Center, office, Cebu Bible College, and an evangelist team called MOSES. Cebu is also the home base of *Philippine Christian Chronicle*, a nation-wide church newspaper. A major church-planting effort is being planned for Talisay, Cebu, along with a new World Bible School office. A key to future development is training.

Front Cover: The Return of General MacArthur, as he had promised, to Leyte, Philippines, WW II.