

VOLUME FIFTY-SIX

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



America 2008



WORLD MISSION SCHOOL

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**You have an invitation
to visit with the
CHURCH OF CHRIST
in your area.**

- ☆ **When and where was the first congregation of churches of Christ begun?** (Isalah 2:2,3; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 16:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-4; Mark 9:1.)
- ☆ **What or who is its founder and foundation?** *Christ.* (Isalah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 16:18.)
- ☆ **By what name is the church called?** (Romans 16:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:15.)
- ☆ **What are its members called?** (Acts 9:13,14; 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16.)
- ☆ **How is one forgiven, to become a part of Christ's church (family)?** *Faith, repentance, baptism into Christ.* (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3,4; Hebrews 5:8,9; Acts 8:27-40)
- ☆ **How is it organized?** (Ephesians 1:22,23; Phillipians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-12.)
- ☆ **How does it worship?** *In spirit and in truth.* (John 4:24; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2.)

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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

I Walked the Path

I walked the path of suffering — I thought I was alone,
But soon I learned that others had heartaches
like my own.

A legion came to join me — an understanding throng —
To share and bear our burdens, heal suffering with song.

I found courage in their handclasp — I found patience
in their calm;

I found hope in faith's assurance — I found healing
in their balm.

I'm not alone in suffering — I'm not alone in tears,
For those who weep with those who weep
can wipe away my tears.

And too, when sore affliction comes — a dreary, rainy day —
I look inside my heart and find rich blessings stored away.
I take them from a treasure chest, and count them
o'er and o'er

And think how good God's been to men —
Why don't we trust Him more?

If all were sun and sunshine — if clouds would never weep —
Would little flowers lift their heads, would sowers ever reap?
The valleys down below us but emphasize the heights;
Low-hanging clouds about us are pierced with shafts
of light.

If sickness never hindered, and pain ne'er wracked
our frame,
Would days of health be cherished, if suffering never came?
In deeps of life's great ocean, may irritants be pearled,
And in the days of reck'ning be gems of heaven's world.

— A.C. Williams



WHAT CAN YOU Do?

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

We often hear that brethren are bored with worship, or they feel neglected by the other members of the church: no one calls them; no one visits them; no one is aware of their needs.

There are others who wonder why no one ever calls on them to do something in worship or in the activities of the church. They feel

unwanted or unneeded or, perhaps, judged to be unworthy or incapable.

What is the problem with this kind of thinking? First, the focus is wrong. Many Christians today feel that if the “worship service” is not entertaining and emotionally charged, it is a waste of time. But read the Scriptures concerning “worship”. Being entertaining or enthralling as an experience for the worshipper is not there. When we truly worship, our focus must be on God, giving praise, thanksgiving and honor to Him. True, a part of the regimen is a study of the Scriptures, to build us up, but this, too, is to enable us to focus on learning more about God and becoming more closely patterned after His image through our knowledge.

Why does God stress knowledge and study, as vital to Christian worship and development, rather than emotions? Because He knows that emotions are fickle. How often do we feel elated, for no good reason? or depressed for no good reason? How often, when “worship” seems “empty” to us is it because of our own emotional low, not because the service itself was lacking in any way, scripturally? God knows that the sure method for us to be right before Him is to worship, focussing on Him, not on ourselves; and to worship in spirit (with our whole heart) and according to Truth — not according to fleeting emotions.

Do you know another “reason” some people find worship to be boring? Consider this parallel: If a student spends his whole life attending college classes but never reaches the point of applying his knowledge in order to make a living, what has he accomplished? Studying the same materials year after year, but never using them, would grow to be very boring, wouldn't it?

Now, think of all the members of the church who spend their entire lives going to the building each week to attend Bible classes and to hear sermons, but never use that knowledge to teach others the Gospel. Though they've been Christians since their early teens, and have grown old attending the services more or less faithfully, they can't point to a single soul they have converted. When the lessons were only for themselves, and were never passed on to anyone else, is it any wonder that such hearers become bored?

Is “faithfulness” in the Lord's church gauged by how many weekly services one attends? True, a dedicated Christian will *want* to be present for every assembly, but this is not our *work*, our purpose in being in this world. It is our *privilege* to be allowed to come into the presence of God and to praise and honor Him in worship. But our *work* is to bear fruit to Him.

If you are teaching someone, and you are successful in getting that person to sit next to you in the assembly of the church, do you know what you will automatically do? You will hear that age-old lesson through his ears, and it will be vital and new to you! That is why God gave humans — not angels — the work of evangelizing the world, so that in the process of teaching others we ourselves will be educated, strengthened, and grounded in the truth. As long as we are sharing the Gospel, there will be nothing boring about our Christian life or our worship.

So what can you do? Don't wait for someone to call you or pander to your feelings or to ask you to do something. Take the initiative! Look into the various programs of **work** — not the **socializing** and **entertaining aspects** — but look into the programs of work in which the congregation is involved. Decide what your talents equip you to do, and volunteer. Don't wait for someone to come to you and beg you to help. You can live an exciting life of growth in the Lord by finding things to do and then doing them.

Do you have friends? Of course you do; but have you really tried to share the Gospel with them? Have you encouraged them to go to worship with you? Have you tried to arrange a weekly Bible study with them in your home or theirs? Have you offered to enroll them in a correspondence course or shared other literature with them?

Have you considered volunteering with others in your home congregation to go to some place where the church is weak and help the local brethren with a door-knocking campaign to sign up people for home studies? Or such a campaign could be done in your own community. Even if no one else in the church is involved, you could go out, perhaps each Saturday, with a religious census form and visit homes up and down selected streets, finding out the religious preferences of those who come to the door, and enrolling all who are willing to take a Bible course. Leave a card with them, telling them of programs they can watch on TV or hear on the radio, and giving them the times of the church services as well as other community services offered by the local congregation.

Then *do* the home studies with the ones who signed up. Or at least accompany the preacher or elder or whoever does the teaching, and be training yourself to the point where you can provide the leadership in the future. *Christians must, again, be the people who know the Scriptures and are equipped to teach!*

In making those house calls, you may well be mistaken for a Mormon or a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses, because they are the ones who have been out actively teaching for the past many years. Where have members of churches of Christ been? In the auditorium, waiting for visitors to come! Evangelism doesn't happen that way.

Order a box of *The Voice of Truth International* and place copies in doctors' offices, waiting rooms, and other places of business. In those waiting rooms you may find materials left by the Jehovah's Witnesses. They have long been convinced of the value of spreading their message through literature, while we have been oblivious to the value of the printed page. We need to learn that we cannot reap unless we sow.

Sign up as a World Bible School teacher. You will learn more about the Scriptures and being a Christian in one year of sharing with others than you would have learned in ten years of studying only for yourself. Try it! You will be amazed not only at the tremendous increase you will see in your own interest in the Gospel, but you will go to bed, thankful, each night for the souls who have learned the truth through your desire to share. ✚

Brother J.C. Choate passed from this earthly existence on February 1, 2008. The next issue of *The Voice of Truth International* will serve as a memorial to his life and work.



HUMILITY – NOT JUST NICE, BUT NECESSARY

Byron Nichols

We tend to enjoy humble people, and we usually are uncomfortable around those who are self-centered and proud. It appears from the Scriptures that God has pretty much these same feelings. It may well be that we have often thought of the goodness and attractiveness of

humility without having come to a realization that humility is essential to our salvation. That's right — it is not *optional* — it is absolutely *essential*. This may come as a major shock to some, but not only does God approve of humility and disapprove of arrogance and pride, He makes it clear in His Word that those who continue in their self-centered pride will be lost eternally. In addition, those who truly desire to go to heaven absolutely must practice humility in their quest for that everlasting happiness.

The attitude of humility expresses itself in obedience. To disobey is to display arrogance and self-will, but to become obedient, whether to parents, employers, governments, or the Lord Himself, one has to view himself as being of less importance than the person or position of another.

However, humility involves much more than mere obedience. We may not have given it much thought, but there are different types of obedience. For example, a child may obey his parents, but his obedience may only be the result of a dreadful fear of stern discipline for disobedience. A citizen may obey the laws of the land, but may also be constantly critical of the rulers and even have an intense hatred for them. A person might obey many laws of God but be bitter toward Him, believing God to be unloving and requiring far too much from man. None of these examples illustrate obedience that results from humility.

The obedience that is evoked by humility is not accompanied by such feelings as irritation, antagonism, or resentment, but humble obedience is

ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL

associated with such as contentment, gratitude, love, and agreement. Those who render biblical obedience acknowledge and subscribe to the truthfulness of the prophet Micah's words in Micah 6:8, "... *And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*" (emphasis added).

Humility toward God eliminates willfulness on our part as it promotes our understanding of our dependence upon the Lord for all that we have and all that we are. To see God in His awesome greatness helps us to see ourselves for what we are — woefully weak creatures who could not even exist were it not for Him and His power, grace, mercy, and love. If only we could duplicate the experience and response of Isaiah in relation to his vision of the Lord as recorded for us in Isaiah Chapter Six! The prophet was enabled to see, as it were, the Lord God Himself arrayed in His royal splendor as He was seated upon His great throne. Then he saw and heard two seraphim, and he heard one of them cry out, "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!*" (verse 3). Verse 5 then reveals to us the immediate reaction of Isaiah to all that he had witnessed in that marvelous vision — "*Then I said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'*"

The book of Proverbs tries repeatedly to teach us that the pathway to honor will take us through humility. This is especially clear in Proverbs 15:33 and 18:12 with these words, "... *before honor is humility.*"

One of the most beautiful and meaningful passages in all of Scripture is found in the second chapter of Philippians, where Paul paints a written masterpiece depicting humility personified. He shows us in verses 5 through 8 the unparalleled humility and submission of Jesus. It is absolutely mandatory that we then read verses 9-11, for it is here that we see the fruit resulting from that submissive humility: "*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

Dear friends, we obviously will never attain the position and honor that belong only to Jesus, but He left directions for all who desire to achieve honor that is truly honor. "*But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted*" (Matthew 23:11,12).

Humility that results in submissive obedience is our map for getting from earth to heaven. There is no acceptable, alternate route. †

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The Preexistence and the Deity of Jesus Christ

Reuben S. Emperado

Did Jesus have a conscious, preexistent state before He came to the earth? This question may sound technical and complicated to some, but it is a very important question that must be considered and answered. Why? Because many people today do not believe in the deity of Jesus.

In this article we want to show from the Scripture that Jesus had a preexistent state prior to His incarnation and that He was conscious of that existence.

In our country (Philippines), there is a fast growing cult that aggressively teaches that Jesus was just a man and that He did not have any conscious, preexistent state before He became a man. These people are known in our country as Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church of Christ – not to be confused with the true church founded by Christ). Felix Manalo, a Filipino evangelist who was baptized into the church in 1911, but later fell away from the



truth, founded this group in 1914 in Manila. He and his ministers have been advancing their pernicious errors aggressively, not only in the Philippines but also in other parts of the world. In fact, they are now found in Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Hawaii (mostly among Filipino communities), and in the mainland continent of America. These people teach that Jesus is not God and that He existed only as an idea in the mind of God before He came to earth.

In this lesson we will show that:

1. Jesus existed eternally and face-to-face with God.
2. Jesus was conscious of this existence.

GOD

3. Jesus existed as a God.
4. Jesus was equal with God.
5. Jesus was the Creator of all things.
6. Jesus became a man.

Jesus was with God in eternity before He came to earth.

A. Prophet Micah said that the Messiah came from eternity, from the days of old. *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting"* (Micah 5:2, ASV)

Jesus, as the ruler of Israel, had to come from Bethlehem Ephrathah, as the fulfillment of Micah's words. However, this prophecy also tells us that His existence is from eternity, or from everlasting. How do we know that these words have reference to Christ? The best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself. In the Gospel of Matthew, when Herod inquired where the Messiah was to be born, the elders of Israel quoted Malachi 5:2. (See Matthew 2:3-6.)

Isaiah 9:6, ASV, further explains: *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

Notice that the text says that

Jesus is "Mighty God", "everlasting Father" or Father of eternity. Again, how do we know that this prophecy has reference to Jesus Christ? We know because this chapter from Isaiah is quoted in Matthew 4:12-16, describing the work of Christ. Also, in Matthew 1:23, an angel of the Lord refers to Jesus as "Immanuel, God with us".

Now we come to the New Testament records. Both apostles John and Paul said in their writing that Jesus the Christ existed with the Father before He came to earth. Let us notice what they said:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made ... 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" (John 1:1-3,14, NKJV).

John, in this passage, tells us four vital things about Jesus Christ:

1. That Jesus, as the Word, existed in the beginning.
2. That Jesus was face-to-face with God. Greek scholars tell us that the Greek phrase "pros ton theon" literally means "face-to-face with God".
3. That Jesus existed in the nature and form of God. John said,

"and the Word was God." (Verse 2).

4. That Jesus is the Creator of all things in the universe.
5. That Jesus became a man.

John's statement concerning Jesus is dynamite. In three short declarations he tells who Jesus is and what He did in eternity.

Now let us see what Paul had to say about the origin and nature of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped." – (Philippians 2: 5-8, ASV).

In Weymouth's New Testament, this verse is translated in this manner:

"Although from the beginning He had the nature of God He did not reckon His equality with God a treasure to be tightly grasped" (Philippians 2:60).

This passage tells the following three things.

1. Jesus existed in the form of God before He was born in the flesh.
2. Jesus was equal with God.
3. Jesus did not hold on to this equality but humbled Himself and became a man (See verses 7,8)

Concerning this passage, Vines' Expository Dictionary of

the New Testament has these very important comments.

"This is important in Philippians 2:6, concerning the deity of Christ. The phrase *"being (existing) in the form (morphé, the essential and specific form and character) of God,"* carries with it the two facts of the antecedent Godhood of Christ, previous to His incarnation, and the continuance of His Godhood at and after the event of His Birth (see Gifford, on the Incarnation, pp. 11, sqq.)." It is translated 'exist' in 1 Corinthians 11:18, RV, for KJV, 'there be', Cf. Luke 16:14; 23:50; Acts 2:30; 3:2; 17:24; 22:3."

Again, Vine said, "The present participle of *huparcho*, 'to exist', always involves a preexistent state, prior to the fact referred to, and a continuance of the state after the fact. Thus in Philippians 2:6, the phrase *'who being (huparchon) in the form of God'*, implies His pre-existent deity, previous to His birth, and His continued deity afterwards."

The epistle of Paul to the Christians in Colossae was written to correct an error that was slowly creeping into the church, which attacked the supremacy of Jesus. So, in this epistle, Paul clearly declared that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, that He antedates everything and He is the Creator of all things.

GOD

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell" (Colossians 1:13-19).

From this passage we learn many things about Jesus, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

1. God has delivered us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves.
2. In Jesus we have redemption through His blood.
3. Jesus is the image of the invisible God.
4. Jesus is the Firstborn of all creation, that is, He became God's firstborn Son when He was born in the flesh, so that, through our brotherhood with Him, He could bring many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10; 1:5,6; Galatians 4:4-6).
5. He is the creator of all things.
6. Jesus existed before all things.
7. Jesus is the head of the church.
8. Jesus is preeminent over all things.

Many more passages could be cited to prove our thesis in this article, but I believe that the references we have quoted in this article are sufficient to prove that Jesus is God, that He existed before time and before all things, and that He has the supremacy over all things. Jesus as God, Creator, and Redeemer deserves all our worship and honor. †

Reuben S. Emperado is an evangelist of the church of Christ in the Philippines.

Jesus identified Himself with the God of the Exodus!

And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you' "(Exodus 3:14)

Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Then they took up stones to throw at Him ... (John 8:58,59).



Jesus Christ, the Eternal Sacrifice

Betty Burton Choate

The Eternal Sacrifice

THE ETERNAL SON

Our study of the Scriptures has shown that in Jesus' resurrection He retained His relationship with humanity, that is, His Sonship with God and His brotherhood with man.

We have also seen that because of His obedience in all things, He was exalted to the position of King of kings and Lord of lords. Today He rules in heaven and on earth, and God alone is not subjected to Christ.

So the sacrifice, which began with emptying Himself to take the form of man, has continued through His ruling by derived authority during these almost two thousand years.

What happens in the next phase? When this earthly age ends and the righteous take up their abode in the new heaven and earth, what will be the relationship? Will the sacrifice end and will the Word return to the position of equality in the Godhead, which was His from eternity? Revelation 19:11-16 describes the Word as He reigns and judges the earth:

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name was called

GOD

The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The end will be heralded,

... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8).

I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books (Revelation 20:12).

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son ... (John 5:22).

And these [the disobedient, Matthew 25:41-45] will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:46).

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

For He [God] has put all things under His [Christ's] feet. But when He says, "All things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.

Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24,28).

These passages reveal what will happen from this present point in time until the judgment of the world. But with the destruction of the last enemy — death — and the blessing of the righteous with eternal life, *the Word does not at last shed His immortalized human body which has bound Him to a brotherhood with man.* Instead, He lays aside His derived authority as King of kings and places Himself under a deeper subjection to God, "... *that God*

GOD

may be all in all." These words set the scene for the future and define the relationship in the Godhead for eternity.

But if the righteous are born into God's Family while they live in the world, and if at death their inheritance of eternal life with God has already been granted, why does the change in the relationship of Deity continue? Galatians 4:4-7 explains the basis for man's sonship to God:

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The last word in this text is **Christ**. This is not the name of the pre-existent Person of the Godhead but the name of the Person He became: **the Son of God, the Son of man**. It was this Person who came into being when the Word emptied Himself and took the form of humanity. It was this Person who died for man, who was resurrected, and who reigns today at God's right hand as the Intercessor for His brethren.

What statement does the text make concerning this new Person, this Christ? That something is done *through* Him; that an inheritance is channeled from God through Him. Now, imagine: God is there, holding in His hands a magnificent inheritance; man is also there, longing to receive the inheritance. However, the bridge between the two must be in place if the gift is to be given and received. Christ, as God's Son, as man's Brother, provides that bridge, making the eternal inheritance a reality for obedient man.

Take Christ out of the picture. Return Him to His original position in the Godhead. As the Word, there is no Sonship; there is no Firstborn. So what happens to the family relationship, to those who were born in His wake? If there is no Firstborn, can there be other sons and daughters?

The text says that it is His Spirit in our hearts acknowledging the Father-Son relationship that makes us the children of God. It is through the continuation of that relationship that our own relationship continues to be possible. It is through the rights of our elder Brother that we are heirs.

Another passage speaks of the duration of the Sonship of Christ: "...*but the word of the oath [God's promise concerning the redemption that would come through Abraham's seed] appoints the Son who has been perfected forever*" (Hebrews 7:28).

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Hebrews 5:8,9 explains that the Son was perfected through His sufferings, a sacrifice that was made for sin once and for all. So the taking of man's sins, the resulting suffering in death, and the perfection [the completion of the prerequisite requirements to qualify Him as man's Saviour] were the actions of the Son — and the Son has thus been perfected forever, which is also saying that the Sonship is a relationship that will be forever.

The scriptures say of the Word, that all things were created by Him, through Him, and for Him (Colossians 1:16). Therefore, the Word was the possessor of all things, in position to bestow an inheritance but not to receive one. As Christ, the Brother of man, He becomes the heir: "*God ... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, Whom He has appointed heir of all things ...*" (Hebrews 1:2).

Romans 8 is a chapter that deals largely with the family relationship we enjoy. Verses 15-17 say, "*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*"

This passage goes a step further than the one in Galatians 4. It not only says that we are heirs of God, but it also says that we are joint heirs with Christ. If Christ is the heir of God, and if His brothers are joint heirs with Him, what will the inheritance be?

(1) The new heaven and the new earth. (Revelation 21,22). "*He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son*" (Revelation 21:7).

(2) The glorification indicated in Romans 8:17: "... *and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*"

(3) To sit with Christ on His throne. "*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne*" (Revelation 3:21).

Who can really know what glories and position of responsibility await the brothers of Christ? On this side of eternity, we cannot fathom what that world will be like, but we can understand the promise enfolded in these words: whatever He *is* and *has* will be shared by those who overcome through Him.

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CONCLUSION

Think back over all that has transpired in the Godhead and in the history of His working with man in order to bring about reconciliation. Such giving, such love cannot be doubted by anyone who understands these Scriptures.

Far back in our studies we asked the question: Could physical death alone atone for man's physical and spiritual alienation from God? We have learned that the immeasurably great sacrifice that was made by Christ was both physical and spiritual, and that the commitment to man is as lasting as the duration of his salvation. For eternity we will enjoy the blessings of being heirs of God because for eternity our Brother's blood flows between the Father and ourselves, making us the children of God.

This is why, even now, as faithful members in God's family, we approach God boldly (Hebrews 4:16), confident of His love, sure of our acceptance with Him, because our Brother's love speaks for us from the right hand of the Father. Our salvation is secured; His watchful care over us, day by day, is also secured.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded 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 (Romans 8:31-39).

And in response to such love, will not our own love grow to a full maturity of giving ourselves, without reserve, to Him? Will we not also want to share this sweetest love story with those of the world who do not know it yet? †

Betty Burton Choate, wife of JC. Choate, is the author of JESUS CHRIST THE ETERNAL SACRIFICE from which this and the previous lessons were taken.



We preach the love of God when we preach God's commandments. God does not forbid us anything that would be good for us. He gave us His Son. What would He withhold that we should want? He commands us to do nothing except what is best for us to do. He forbids nothing except what would harm us. His law is a law of love. His revelation of the law or the Gospel to us is a manifestation of His love.

We preach the love of God when we preach the cross. God so loved that He gave the only gift that could really cost Him anything. In the outstretched arms of Jesus, we see the breadth of God's love. In the Son's nail-pierced hands and feet, we see the pain the Father willingly suffered for us. The cross

proclaims the horror of sin, the depth of God's wrath against iniquity, and the depravity to which man can sink. But above all else, it trumpets the love of God. *"God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

We preach the love of God when we preach His mercy and forbearance. His gift of love was given so we could be saved from our sins. *"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities"* (Psalm 103:10). He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. Unrepentant sinners need to hear about the wrath of God, lest they suppose that God can be mocked and they can reap some

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crop other than the corruption they have sown. But terrified sinners, despairing sinners, men and women who have reached the end of their rope, need to hear of the mercy of God, lest they continue in sin because they have no hope of redemption or of the possibility of change. God does not want anyone to perish. That is the good news that makes the Gospel what it is.

We preach the love of God when we preach God's nature and attributes. "God made the world and everything." "God is great, God is good." The smallest child learns these things, and also early learns, "God is love". If we do not believe in God's love, it is not God in whom we believe. If our understanding of God does not cause us to love, it is not God we understand. If we say we know God, whom we have not seen, yet have no love for people, whom we have seen, we lie (1 John 4:20). It is not God we know.

We preach the love of God when we do good to those in need. God chose our hands to be His hands to minister His love to others, just as He chose our mouths to be His mouth to tell His love to others. **We are the light**

of the world. When our holiness is sullied by open sin, the name of God is blasphemed among the pagans because of us. **We are to be merciful as God is merciful.** If the world does not see His mercy in us, in whom may they see it? **We are to love as God loves.** When we do, people see our good works and glorify God. When they cry to God for help, and we help them because of God, they learn that God is love.

Let us not neglect any means of preaching the love of God. †

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A Bit of Heaven

**Everyone was meant to share
God's all-abiding love and care;
He saw that we would need
to know**

**A way to let these feelings show,
So God made hugs a special sign
And symbol of His love divine,
A circle of our open arms
To hold in love and keep out harm.
One simple hug can do its part
To warm and cheer another's
heart.**

**A hug's a bit of heaven above
That signifies God's perfect love.**

— Jill Wolf

Truth

Jack W. Carter

Without appealing to Scripture to make my point, I want to say that, with all of my heart, I believe that our entire relationship with God, including our hope of heaven, depends primarily upon our attitude toward the truth of God's Word.

I feel compelled to mention this as often as possible because it is becoming more and more evident that more and more of us are trifling with truth.

I have come to believe that one of the reasons why this is true is that many of us have not made up our minds about the Bible.

Is it really a reliable book? Is it really the inspired Word of God? Does it mean exactly what it says, or can we disregard some of it? Is it outdated?

Inasmuch as this is the book that tells us about heaven and our eternal destiny, it would seem that we should give our Bibles serious thought and seek to answer all of these questions. But often we do not!

Why?



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In all honesty, does this description fit you? If so, only you can provide the answer to the searching question, "Why?" And only you can turn to the Scriptures, giving them the time and consideration to prove to you that they are what they claim to be.

If you live without the guidance of the Bible, your life will be immeasurably less than it should have been — and not only will you be the loser but you will fail all who come under your influence.

If you die without the guidance of God's Word, you will die without hope, for a life void of true spirituality is a life without promise or expectation of anything good.

What price are you choosing to pay— perhaps merely through neglect or apathy — for your lack of knowledge?

"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

Modern Man vs. God's Word

Rick Cunningham

Every generation breeds a crop of "modern men". Modern men are those who think they know more than every generation before them. They hold the past in contempt. They believe themselves to be wise. If only *they* could be in control, everything would be perfect.

Modern men are intrigued by the novel. New ideas, new methods, new approaches are all so appealing. Modern thinkers seem to take into consideration up-to-the-minute wisdom. To them, old ways failed because information was unavailable, undeveloped, outmoded, outdated, or obsolete.

Modernists have given us modern art (contrasted with the works of Michelangelo), modern music (compared with the music of Beethoven), and modern literature (in contrast to the writings of Shakespeare). But worst of all,

modernists have sought to replace the Word of God with man's own pale philosophical ideas.

God's Word is old; it does not change with the times. It does not consider the modern trends. It stands as a rock against man's fickle ways. And thank God it does! God's Word is our only true source of wisdom in a world infatuated with its ever-changing "modern ways".

Remember Proverbs 30:5,6:
"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."

God and His Word never change. There we will find stability in an ever-changing world. †

Rick Cunningham is the preacher for the Main Street congregation in Big Spring, Texas, USA.

Every day let God say something to you through His Word.
Every day say something to God through prayer.
Every day say something to someone for God.
Every day do something for someone for God.

— Clarence DeLoach



Romans 3:21-31

Jerry Bates

1. What served as a witness to the righteousness of God? (v. 21)
2. Through whom can a person be made just or righteous? (v. 22)
3. Is there a difference between the Jew and Gentile? Why? (vs. 22,23)
4. What does it mean to be justified and what is the means of this justification? (v. 24)
5. Who became a propitiation for us, and what does it mean to be a propitiation? (v. 25)
6. According to verse 26 what was the purpose of God in sending Jesus Christ?
7. Can any man boast about how good he is? (v. 27)
8. How can we be justified? (v. 28)
9. What did Paul mean when he said that God was the God of both the Jews and Gentiles? (v. 29)
10. What is the means by which both Jews and Gentiles might be justified? (v. 30)
11. What does faith do to the law? (v. 31)
12. What is the point of this whole section in regards to man's salvation?

(See inside of back cover for answers.)

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, **22** even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, **26** to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. **28** Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. **29** Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, **30** since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Romans 3:21-31 — *New King James Version*

NOTE:

This passage shows that neither Jew nor Gentile is justified by his own goodness, and that apart from the shedding of the blood of Christ, there is no justification. When we are washed in Christ's blood, there is no place for boasting of having merited our salvation, or of being saved through the value of our own works. All are saved through faithful obedience to the Law of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Noah's Flood

Owen D. Olbricht



The flood that is mentioned in the Bible is sometimes called "Noah's flood" because it took place in the days of Noah (Genesis 6-8). Jesus spoke concerning it (Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26, 27) and others wrote about Noah (Isaiah 54:9; Ezekiel 14:14, 20; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5). According to the Bible, Noah was a real person who built an ark to save himself and

his family from the flood which God brought upon the earth because of the rampant sins of humanity.

Recent Discovery

An article by Randolph E Schmid of the associated press appeared in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, "Evidence of great flood found in sea off Turkey." September 13, 2000, p. 3A. The article begins, "Artifacts found at the bottom of the

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Black Sea provide new evidence that humans faced a great flood, perhaps that of the biblical Noah, thousands years ago."

Most of the news media overlooked this discovery, a discovery that adds evidence to the records of many Middle Eastern cultures and the Bible that the flood was an historic event.

Undersea explorer Robert Ballard reported concerning this recent discovery, "Remnants of human habitation were found in more than 300 feet of water about 12 miles off the coast of Turkey.

"Fredrik Hiebert of the University of Pennsylvania, chief archaeologist from the Black Sea project, said from the ship, 'This find represents the first concrete evidence for the occupation of the Black Sea coast prior to the flood.'"

Ballard had studied freshwater shells along the Black Sea coast that dated 7,000 years and older, and saltwater shells that dated 6,500 years ago. He concluded that there was a "sudden and dramatic change from a freshwater lake to a salt water sea about 7,000 years ago," which would have been brought about because of a great flood.

"And we know that as a result of that flood a vast amount of land went under water." Collapsed human structures were found in a valley under the sea that were of the

type built 7,000 years ago, evidence of a culture in that area before the flood.

Ancient Reports

Many of the cultures around the world have records of a great flood. "Traditions regarding a disastrous flood that occurred long ago are handed down by many people. Isolated tribes in all parts of the world have been found to have such traditions.

"...The Hebrews, Assyrians, and Babylonians who lived within the area of the Tigris-Euphrates basin, all had traditions of a great flood. These narratives stated the purpose of the Flood to be punishment because the world was full of violence, but the Hebrew account remained simple and credible, whereas the other accounts became complex and fanciful." Donald Chapin Boardman, *The International Dictionary of the Bible*, Merrill C. Tenney editor, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), p. 356.

Conclusion

The recent discovery in the Black Sea by the Pennsylvania archaeological team adds to the mountain of evidence that a great flood at one time occurred. New discoveries continue to support the accuracy of Biblical accounts. †

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Iraq in the Bible



Israel is the nation most often mentioned in the Bible, but, do you know which nation is second? It is Iraq! However, that is not the name that is used in the Bible. The names used there are Babylon, Land of Shinar and Mesopotamia.

The word Mesopotamia means “between the two rivers”, or more exactly between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The name Iraq means “country with deep roots”. Indeed Iraq is a country with deep roots and is a very significant country in the Bible. Here’s why.

1. Eden was in Iraq (Genesis 2:10-14).
2. Adam and Eve were created in Iraq (Genesis 2:7,8).
3. Satan made his first recorded appearance in Iraq (Genesis 3:1-6).
4. Nimrod established Babylon, and the Tower of Babel was built in Iraq (Genesis 10:8-9; 11:1-4).
5. The confusion of the languages took place in Iraq (Genesis 11:5-11).
6. Abraham came from a city in Iraq (Genesis 11:31; Acts 7:2-4).
7. Isaac’s bride came from Iraq (Genesis 24:3-12).
8. Jacob spent 20 years in Iraq (Genesis 27:42-45; 31:38).
9. The first world empire was in Iraq (Daniel 1:1,2; 2:36-38).
10. The greatest revival in history was in a city in Iraq (Jonah 3).
11. The events of the book of Esther took place in Iraq.
12. The book of Nahum was a prophecy against a city in Iraq.

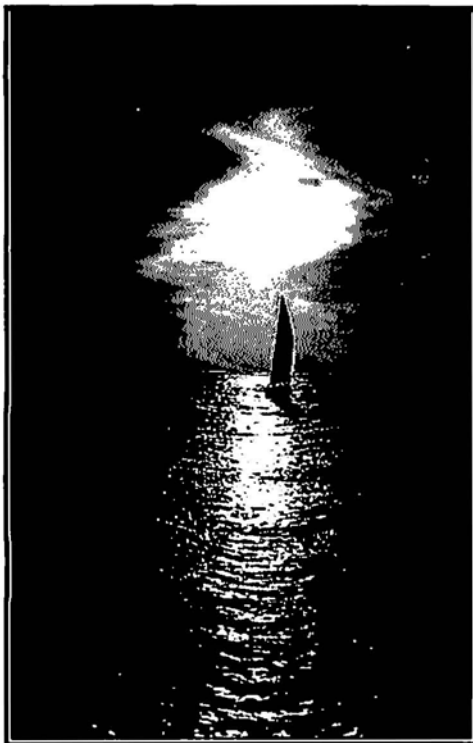
No other nation, except Israel, has more history and prophecy associated with it than Iraq. Who would have guessed! †

— Selected

It's the Set of the Sail that Determines the Course

Mike Sinapiades

**"With Prayer at the Prow,
the Bible at the Rudder,
and Christ at the Helm,
our daily Devotional life
will help us weather
every storm."**



I was brought up in the biblical city of Thessalonica, Greece, the city was built amphitheatrically by the slopes of Mount Chortiates, cradled by the waters of the large gulf in front of her.

I was always amazed to see sailing ships moving forward, even though the winds were actually blowing against them. It took me a number of years to understand the principle that *it is the set of the sails that determines the course!*

Is this not the same principle for the Christian life? Not every day do we have smooth sailing, and neither do all things come upon us in the way we want them to come. Many people often complain, "Life is not fair," while others contend that life has more sorrow than happiness. Especially is the latter true, since the Word of God points out, "*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of troubles*" (Job 14:1). Amidst the sin and turmoil all around us, how is a Christian to guide his life against the negative "winds?"

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Please read again carefully the quotation at the beginning of this article. What is the basic message? It is simply this: "... *the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23). For those who believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, these words confirm man's inability to successfully sail through this life alone. Any person who will start by himself, making the tragic mistake of a self-sustained pilgrimage through the toils and storms of life, will assuredly make a shipwreck.

It is a fact of life that storms and toils will come upon us, just as opposing winds often come against the sailing ship. However, this does not hinder the captain of that vessel in its onward progress, because he knows how to set the sails to turn the wind to his own purpose. In the same way, we Christians must learn to set our priorities, our desires, our dreams and aspirations in such a way that the Captain of our "ship", being greater than ourselves and greater than the contrary and unfavorable conditions of life, will bring us Home safely!

The sailing ship, with its sails properly adjusted, goes in the direction the captain desires. Man is a free moral agent, and has the right to select the direction of his life — right or left. But it must be remem-

bered that he is ultimately responsible for his choices, as well as the present and the eternal consequences of those choices. Man should be wise to follow the pointing finger of God; for if he chooses to chart his course alone in this life, he will fail eternally. †

Mike Sinapiades works with the church of Christ in Jacksonville, Arkansas, USA.

Saved by the Bible

Ten days ago, Pfc. Brendon Schweigart, 22, was on a mission to recover a tank that had broken down in Baghdad, Iraq. Upon reaching the tank, he was struck in the chest by a sniper's bullet. Fortunately for Schweigart, the bullet became embedded in a Bible he carried in his shirt pocket. The Word of God had quite literally saved his life!

Mr. Schweigart's experience reminds me of a passage in the Bible, "*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*" (James 1:21).

Pfc. Brendon Schweigart learned that keeping a Bible near your heart can literally save your life. But more important than that, by keeping a Bible near your heart you will also be able to stop the attacks of the devil and will save your soul.

— Steve Higginbotham

The Wonder of Conversion

A. R. Holton

Man is the only being of God's creation that has remorse for sin.

He is the only being of God's creation that is aware of the mystery and wonder of his own spirit.

He is the one being to which the Holy Spirit can bear witness.

Man is the one being in creation who can be "converted".

What is conversion?

To turn from doubt to faith is to be converted.

To turn from death in sin to life in Christ is to be converted.

To be converted, then, is one of the great mysteries of man's existence and, at the same time, it is the deepest reality that man knows.

To turn from an existence of selfish living — even sinful living — to a life elevated by goodness, self-denial, and righteousness, patterned after God, is a distinctly human privilege. Such conversion is undeniable testimony of the spirit within man that is made in the image of God, as the Scriptures declare: "*So God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him, male and female. He created them*" (Genesis 1:27).

The converted soul is covered by the blood of Christ, according to

Acts 22:16: "*Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" And "*if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7).

Cleansed by that blood, we are able to go into the presence of God the Father. Yes, we stand amazed at the possibilities of an hour of worship. We are humbled that God will grant to sinners the privilege of calling Him "Father", and of praying to Him through His Son's name.

We stand amazed at the human spirit in making decisions for God and for things high and noble.

May we never lose the sense of wonder and of the mystery of human life on this earth. And may we never lose the sense of awe that the Eternal Spirit — that Power Who is able to sustain the entire universe — deigns to reach down to the speck that is called "Earth", to the infinitesimally smaller speck that is "me" and to allow me to be His child.

May we never lose the awareness that this is God's world and that we belong to Him and that we shall go at last into His presence. †

A Divorce of Faith and Works

Stephen Seibert

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ... Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? ... You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:14-26).

There has been a great deal of effort, over the years, to drive a wedge between faith and works. Preachers on TV and radio, in books and newspaper articles, affirm authoritatively that man is saved at the point of faith and that no acts of obedience ("works") are required in order to have our sins forgiven.

Now, masses of people consider themselves children of faith, living in a "single-parent" home, spiritually. It can be seen in the surveys as large numbers of people admit high levels of confidence that they will be going to Heaven, despite lives that exhibit an extreme level of disregard for what God has said clearly in Scripture.

But, in the Bible, Faith and Obedience are partners — married!

The marriage is such a perfect union that faith and acts of obedience are used interchangeably. In a sense, "the two have become one", just as the Scriptures describe the union between a man and his wife.

For instance, Romans 5:1 tells us that we are "*justified by faith*". But James 2:24 says that we are "*justified by works and not faith only*". Similarly, Acts 10:43 says, "*Whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins,*" while Acts 2:38 instructs people to "*repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins....*"

Baptism, one of the acts of obedience, shared such a close relationship to faith that Paul used them pretty much interchangeably. When

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he found something lacking in the faith of some Ephesians, he immediately questioned their baptism. "... *He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'* So they said to him, '*We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.*' And he said to them, '*Into what then were you baptized?'*" (Acts 19:2,3)

Peter also saw such a close marriage of faith and baptism that he wrote, "... *baptism doeth also now save us*" (1 Peter 3:21).

But, now, men are working hard to bring about the complete divorce of faith and obedience.

Brethren, **what Christ** joined together in Mark 16:16, let not man separate! "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned..*"

The point needs to be made that faith is *not* a point. Faith is more of a journey, like life itself. Faith, and salvation by faith, is more of a process than a particular point one reaches in life.

Think about birth. I bring this up because those who would enter Heaven must be "*born again*" (John 3:3). Birth, at first glance, seems like a specific point in life. But we know that birth is actually a process.

Men are constantly debating about *when*, during that birth process, the fetus becomes a person. They are looking for a magic point

so that they can perform abortions up to that point. So, they make their own definitions about when "life" begins. But you and I know that it is a waste of time to try to pick apart that sacred process of birth and insert man-made distinctions. And what is the goal of those man-made distinctions? To bring to an end the work of God before it is completed!

In just this way, many evangelists are trying to make the new birth a point rather than a process. With their man-made definitions about when "faith" begins, they seek to terminate the process before the new birth is complete.

Just as doctors have learned to circumvent the natural birth process and use a Caesarean section in order to avoid labor and the final stages of the birth process, many preachers hope to perform a Caesarean and avoid having their converts go through the final stages of the spiritual birth process (such as baptism).

The divorce of faith and works. A spiritual abortion or Caesarean. Either way you want to look at it, men are leading people away from God's design and purpose for their lives.

"What God has joined together, let not man separate!" (Matthew 19:6). †

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Is Salvation Forever?

Bill Nicks

In one sense, salvation is forever and cannot be cancelled. *"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:14).

However, if a person, though a member of the church, backslides, like the Israelites, he will miss heaven as surely as the Israelites missed the promised land. God was *"angry with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness"*, and swore *"that they would not enter his rest"*, for they did not obey (Hebrews 3-17f). *"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God"* (Hebrews 3:12).

The Israelites' example of backsliding is given in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12 as a warning to us. *"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"* (1 Corinthians 10:11,12).

There are some 2500 warnings in the Bible against God's children falling away from Him. Consider one example from the Old Testament: *"When a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die ... in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered ..."* (Ezekiel 3:20).

Look at this example from the New Testament: *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled"* (Hebrews 12:14,15). Another example: *"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning ... But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'"* (2 Peter 2:20,22). The remedy for backsliding is found in Peter's final words of encouragement: *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18). †

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD

and the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ

Sunny David

In the last chapter of the book of Acts, and in its last verse, we read that the apostle Paul was "... *preaching the kingdom of God and teaching things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 28:31). Paul was held as a prisoner in Rome, but he was permitted to dwell in a rented house with the soldiers guarding him. He was also allowed to receive and meet people in his house. Paul used this opportunity to preach to visitors about **the kingdom of God** and about **the things which concern Jesus Christ**. Undoubtedly, these two things must have been very important in the life of the apostle. The record says that he stayed in prison for almost two years and, during that time, he preached the same things over and over again to all those who came to him.

Concerning the kingdom of God, Paul must have told his listeners, among other things, what the prophet Daniel had said in Daniel 2:44, that the God of heaven would

set up a kingdom and that it would stand forever. He must have said that later Christ, Himself, confirmed to the apostles that the kingdom would be established in their lifetime on earth (Mark 9:1). Christ also explained that kingdom of heaven was His church which He was going to begin or build (Matthew 16:18,19). And Paul must have told his visitors that to



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this spiritual kingdom the Lord adds those who are saved (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13,14). He must also have helped them to understand that, when the end comes, Christ will deliver the kingdom to God the Father, so that God may be all in all (I Corinthians 15:24-38). To enter the kingdom of God, Paul must have told them that one must be born again, because the King and the Savior had said, "*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5)

Further, in teaching about the **things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ**, the apostle must have told his audience the most wonderful story of the miraculous birth of the Son of God (Matthew 1:18-25 and 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20; John 1:1,14). Surely, he explained about the sinless life of Christ on earth, that although He was tempted in every way just as we are, yet He committed no sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Paul would have told them of the wonderful works our Lord performed and of the powerful lessons He taught. He must also have described in detail His propitiatory death for sinners, and how He was buried, and was resurrected after three days. Paul would have declared that before going back to heaven, Christ had told His disciples to go into all the world and preach His gospel (I Corinthians

15:1-4), to every person, and that those who believe and are baptized will be saved (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). No doubt, the apostle, lastly, must also have warned his visitors that Christ will come back on the last day, on the day of the judgment, when He will judge all people of all nations according to His word (Acts 17:30,31; John 12:48). Paul would have said that on that "day of the Lord" all will be made alive by His glorious power; and those who have followed His will on earth shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus they will always be with Him in His heavenly kingdom (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Of course, ever since becoming a Christian, Paul had dedicated his entire life to the preaching concerning the kingdom of God and the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. Why would this have been the message which he felt debtor to preach to all who would hear him? Because Paul believed that God's kingdom is the beautiful and perfect place of salvation, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way by which one can enter that heavenly place: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6; Philippians 3:7-14). †

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Ingredients of a Great Church

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

What does God want the church to be? What is the church about? A study of 1 Thessalonians reveals God's pattern for the ideal church. Interestingly, nothing is said about numbers, goals, programs, preachers, budgets, staffs, or facilities. Instead, it is the spiritual qualities of the church that are noted.

1. It was a *called church*. In chapter 1:4,5,11 Paul said they were "*chosen, predestinated*" unto the adoption of sons — according to the purpose of His will. The church was no accident, but was the result of God's eternal purpose. Ours is a holy calling according to His purpose and grace, to become conformed to the likeness of His Son and our Brother — Jesus Christ.

The church is God's called, chosen, and elected! How, though, were the Thessalonians called? Paul answers in 2 Thessalonians 2:14, "*You were called by the gospel.*" We have been called out of sin — that's *salvation*; we have been called unto holiness — that's *sanctification* (1 Thessalonians 1:4:6).

2. It was an *exemplary church*. "*Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord*" (1 Thessalonians 1:6). They modeled their lives after the ministry of Jesus Christ. The word "followers" is from a

word that means "to mimic". Theirs wasn't just talk, but action.

The church, the spiritual body of Christ, is to mimic Christ — love as He loved; teach as He taught; serve as He served. It wasn't easy for the Thessalonians, for they were formed in affliction, yet they continued in joy. Their lives were examples to the believers throughout the region. They were serious about both living and spreading the Gospel.

3. It was an *anticipating church*. They turned from idols to serve God and to wait for His Son's appearing (1 Thessalonians 1:10). While serving, they were waiting, and while waiting, they were serving. Anticipation of Jesus' return will accomplish two things: (1) It will keep us from being too "this world" oriented; and (2) it will motivate godly living and diligent service. It will create an urgency in our work.

Let us be like the church in Thessalonica: **chosen and called**, thus assured of our redemption in Christ; **exemplary**, thus imitating Christ in life and mission; and **anticipating** the Lord's return, let's be motivated and urgent about our business. ↴

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Brotherhood

Jimmy Jividen

Every child of God is my brother or sister. If God is his Father, then I am his brother. I do not choose him because he is desirable; I just recognize him because he has been chosen by God.

He, like I, is an important and necessary part of the Family. He is not to be put out or put down. We are not to make him feel that we "dutifully" put up with him. Paul used the analogy of the physical body to show the importance of even the weakest and most unattractive child of God: *"... It is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor ..."* (1 Corinthians 12:22).

I love my brother because he is family. If he is discouraged, I exhort him. If he is in need, I share with him what I have. If he does wrong, I tell him his fault. If he is hurting, I care. That's brotherhood! I know, by

treating him like a brother, I am honoring Christ. Jesus said: *"Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to me"* (Matthew 25:40).

God's children are special people. We hold them in high esteem and give them special treatment because *"they are brethren"* (1 Timothy 6:2). †

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You Did It Unto Me

An agonizing cry from the valley below,
A sinsick heart, a low bent soul,
Who will hear, and who will go
Who will venture to the valley below?
Their cries beat against the Church's walls,
An eerie echo drifts down its halls;
It takes a caring heart to hear the calls
To answer the need of the wailing walls.
To your own self, please be true,
Let your love of God do the talking for you,
And when you're finished, you will know
You helped rescue them from below.
Remember this poem and forgot it not —
Help your brother remove each dark blot.
And in the end, you will see
You did it unto them, You did it unto me!

— Earl W. Nester



Worship

Charles E. Cobb

Men are worshipful creatures. They will worship something. Jesus indicated that there would be "*true worshippers*" (John 4:23,24). It follows, therefore, that there would also be false worshippers. Jesus pointed out the distinction and made it clear how true and false worshippers could be distinguished from

one another. True worshippers worship the Father "*in spirit and in truth*". False worshippers may worship the Father or some created "god", but their worship will not be according to the truth. The truth is the Word of God. One is a false worshiper; therefore, if he does not worship according to the directions

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given in the Word of God. Jesus said, "*In vain they do worship Me...*" (Matthew 15:9). These people worshiped. They even worshiped the Lord. But, their worship, Jesus said, was vain because they were teaching the doctrines of men.

Though true worship has been conducted by faithful Christians for many years, yet there are those today who do not seem to know the "what" or the "how". Worship, as a result, has become a "catch-all" for whatever things men want to add to it. Emotionalism has become so rampant among some religious groups that the people of God are becoming tainted with it. Shouting, clapping, waving hands, (even tongue-speaking with some) are having an impact upon the church. When this emotional outpouring is not taking place, some decide that the worship is lacking in spirit (excitement, which they deem essential). The worship, they say, is dry, dull, boring, and needs a resurrection.

Worship is bowing down before God (literally and figuratively), a recognition of God's awesome power and majesty. Worship is a giving of oneself to God — an offering made by a priest of God, a Christian. Worship is the observance and action of required elements — singing, praying, teaching, communion (the Lord's Supper) and

the offering (sacrificially) of our means. One may do some of these things, or even all of them, without having his spirit involved and he will fail to worship acceptably. Every Christian needs to be aware of this.

Worship is not just making a lot of noise! Those who become so involved in loud, unbecoming revelry are led to think by their leaders that they are really "having a great meeting". Their departures from the truth about worship as set forth in God's revelation show the absurdity of what they do. Wildly "speaking in tongues," mass confusion, hysterics (such as that which seems to accompany rock bands) and the like, distracts, detracts, and destroys the very spirit of worship. It violates the instruction of the Lord, "*Let all things be done decently and in order*" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

From the many Scriptures found in the Bible about worship, it can be clearly seen that worship is to be directed toward God; it is to be devout; it is to be reverent; it is to be according to the truth; it is to be offered from the depths of one's being (spirit), motivated by faith and love, and unmixed with the false ideas or mysticism of men. It is for the praise of God, not for the entertainment of the worshiper. †

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Keep the Worship Simple

Hershel Dyer

Perhaps you have had this experience. You invited a friend to attend one of our worship services. He or she came, and afterwards you asked, "Well, what did you think?" After some hesitation the visitor said, "I don't know exactly how to put this, but your worship services seemed a little strange. I don't mean any offense, but I'm accustomed to a choir doing most of the singing, and I surely do miss the organ — or at least a piano."

With such a reaction (and sometimes it may be much more critical than the foregoing), you feel a little embarrassed and even inclined to apologize for the simplicity of our worship. **Don't Do It!!**

The simple worship of the early church was quite surprising to pagan visitors. Indeed, this very factor occasioned the enmity of unbelievers.

"Another circumstance that irritated the Romans against the Christians was the simplicity of their worship, which resembled in nothing the sacred rites of any other people. They had no sacrifices, temples, images, oracles, or sacerdotal orders: and this was sufficient to bring upon them the reproaches

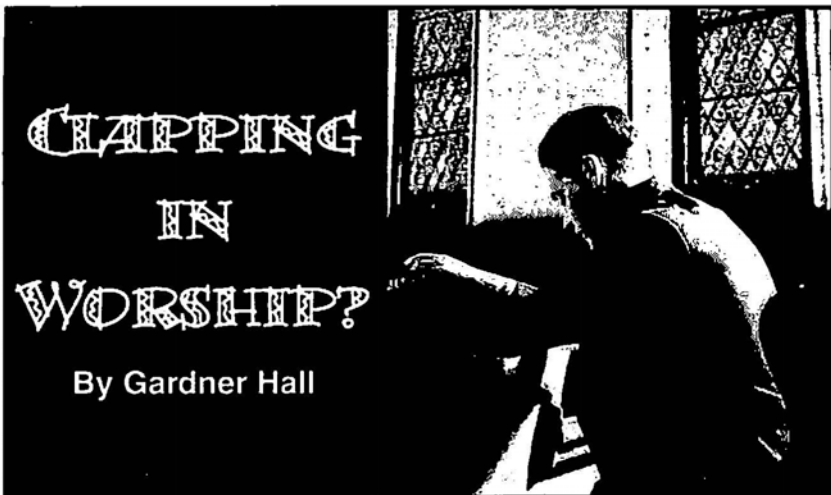
of an ignorant multitude, who imagined that there could be no religion without these" (**Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History**, page 30).

When we confine the acts or items of our religious devotion and exercise to those taught and exemplified in the New Testament, the modern religious world does think we are indeed strange. However, such visitors today rarely accuse and react as some did in the days of old Rome.

"The simplicity of the primitive worship, contrasted with the pomp of paganism, was striking. It was concluded by the heathen that they who had neither altar, victim, priest, or sacrifice, must be atheists, and without God in the world" (**Haweis' Church History**, page 182).

The suggestion of any one — member or visitor — as to how we can make our assemblies more edifying and helpful, is always welcome. However, before we can follow any person's idea we must ask, "Does this agree with the teaching of the New Testament?" It is God Whom we worship; it is He Who must be pleased. †

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CLIPPING IN WORSHIP?

By Gardner Hall

HANDCLAPPING TO SHOW APPRECIATION

Clapping to show appreciation for others has been a part of Western culture for millennia. Since Christians are to honor each other (Romans 12:10; Romans 13:7; 1 Cor. 12:23, 24), certainly applause could be one way we choose to show appreciation in appropriate circumstances. For that reason, applause among Christians is common at birthdays, awards presentations at schools and other social events. The question is, should such applause be a part of assemblies designed to praise God?

To defend applause as a part of worshipping God, it has been pointed out that worship assemblies not only involve vertical communion with God but horizontal communion with brethren. As a part of that horizontal communion, it is reasoned, we can applaud each other.

It is absolutely true that worship assemblies involve horizontal communion, fellowship with brethren. Hebrew Christians were told to "*consider one another in order to stir up love and good works*" in the assembly (Hebrews 10:24,25). Ephesians 5:19 tells us to "*speak to one another*" in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Colossians 3:16 says that when we sing we are "*teaching and admonishing one another*". The latter two texts, however, give us the key to this mutual edification. It is not brought about by *praising* each other (though there should be occasions for that), but rather by focusing together on "*singing ... to the Lord*" (Colossians 3:16), by making melody in our hearts "*to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:19). That expression, "*to*

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the Lord", is found throughout the Old and New Testaments in reference to worship, and it indicates *a point of focus in worship*.

God's people in the Scriptures have always had designated times to meet together to focus upon prayer and praise to the Lord. Though we greatly encourage each other in designated times of worship, it comes from a common effort to unite and sing and pray to the Lord, not to praise each other. In that designated time to give praise to the Lord, applause for each other becomes a distraction.

Some activities, such as eating meals together, are important for the growth of the body (Acts 2:46). However, they are completely out of place in the time that is dedicated for worship to the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:22, 34). The same thing is true of applause for birthday celebrants, preachers, mothers, fathers, grandparents, etc. While appropriate and stimulating in some settings, it is out of place when we have come together for the purpose of focusing on worship to the Lord.

CLAPPING TO SHOW APPROVAL DURING PREACHING

Dave Miller quotes from the Encyclopedia Britannica in his book, *Piloting the Straits*, page 238:

"When Christianity became fashionable the customs of the theater were transferred to the churches. Paul of Samosata encouraged the congregation to applaud his preaching by waving linen cloths. Applause of the rhetoric of popular preachers became an established custom destined to disappear under the influence of a more reverent spirit."

It should be obvious that applause has historically been associated with show business rather than praising God. In our entertainment-obsessed culture, it seems that Christians should want to disassociate themselves from that worldly current rather than move towards it.

Both the Old and New Testaments employ the same word, "Amen" to describe how God's followers express their approval of the message. It originally meant "firm" and came to mean "so it is, so be it" (Thayer, p. 32). While applause tends to focus attention on a performer or a speaker, saying "Amen" focuses on the truth of the message.

Instead of expressing ourselves in a way not found in the New Testament, but associated more often with theater and show business, Christians should express themselves in the ancient, time-proven method that all acknowledge to have God's approval. *"Let all the people say,*

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Amen!" (Psalm 106:48; I Corinthians 14:16). Sermons and prayers need to be filled with enthusiastic yet orderly "Amens", not with applause. This form of expression is found in Scripture, focuses on the message, is associated with the praise of God, and is unquestionably right. The other is not found in the New Testament Scriptures, tends to focus on the speaker, is associated with show business, and is highly questionable and distracting.

APPLAUSE AT BAPTISMS

One brother has stated sincerely to me, "How often have baptisms been announced in churches, and such announcements have been met with silent smiles. Souls have been wrested from Satan's grasp — from the dominion of Satan to the dominion of God — saved for eternity. Yet, a church of 400 sits silent at such an announcement. Then they go home and raise the rafters with cheering and applause every time their football team scores! Unrestrained celebration when their football team is "saved", but quietness when the announcement is made of newborn babes in Christ in their midst. Isn't there something seriously wrong here?"

Though a distinction should be made between the hysteria of a football game and the spiritual joy of Christians, the brother does make a valid point — that brethren are usually too reserved when witnessing a spiritual triumph. And yet, is clapping the best way to express that joy? Should baptisms be accompanied by drum rolls, cheers, or other forms of celebration seen at ball games?

The fact that an occasion of baptism may not necessarily be considered worship gives me pause in my objections to accompanying clapping. Perhaps such a response at a victorious spiritual event might be considered a matter of judgment. However, because baptisms often take place within a designated period of worship, the danger that such applause could easily move into the worship services for the Lord make me prefer that announcements of baptisms be met with enthusiastic songs of praise, either directed or spontaneous, and with other expressions of thanksgiving, the type of praise God has specifically requested (Hebrews 13:15). Anything more than this is unauthorized in the New Testament. †

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name (Psalm 100:4).

I will sing of mercy and justice; To You, O LORD, I will sing praises. I will behave wisely in a perfect way (Psalm 101:1,2).



What a Novel Idea!

Stephen D. Rook

"There are church musicians who use the entire congregation as their choir on Sunday." These words are taken from a report filed by Kristin E. Holmes, reporter for *Knight Ridder Newspapers*, March 28, 2002. The headline reads: "Churches try different worship styles."

Of course, my use of the word "novel" above is with tongue in cheek. This "novel" use of congregations has been characteristic of faithful churches of Christ for 2000 years. Our "choir" has always been all the people present for worship, as enjoined by apostolic authority (e.g., Ephesians 5:19; Colossians

3:16). Choirs (special singers for church worship) were not employed by "Christian churches" until centuries after the last apostle died, according to the **Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church**.

But back to Holmes' report. She identified John Witvliet as the director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He heads the college's program, "Vibrant Worship, Healthy Congregations: A National, Ecumenical Worship Renewal Initiative." According to Holmes, "Witvliet cited examples of practical strategies that have been employed by

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churches to energize and deepen their worship services. That typically means that members don't just observe. They participate." He was further quoted as saying, "There are church musicians who use the entire congregation as their choir on Sunday, churches that are bringing back more reading of Scripture, and efforts to incorporate both young and old as leaders in the service."

Interesting, wouldn't you say? Perhaps those who urge upon us the adaptation of dramatic plays, solos, choirs, etc. (performance/spectator worship) would do well to attend the institute.

Holmes' report also quoted Robert Webber, professor at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary and director of its Institute for Worship Studies: "There is no bag of tricks that will instantly result in vibrant worship. It requires an individual's commitment to worship, pray, and hear the scripture and sermon. It's an inner thing that comes from education and formation."

Well said! The "worship wars" we hear so much about these days are a lot about satisfying self and not about the honor and reverence of God. Remember Nadab and Abihu? *"They offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them and they died before*

the Lord" (Leviticus 10:1,2, NIV). Then the Lord said, *"Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored"* (verse 3). To offer as worship what is not authorized is to dishonor God and reflect upon His holiness.

Jesus said, *"But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:9), and *"...the Father seeketh such (true worshippers) to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23,24). Jesus also said that God's Word is truth (John 17:17). True worship is not novel. It is as old as the New Testament. The need of the hour is a return to Scripture for the pattern of worship that is acceptable to God. †

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***"And at midnight
Paul and Silas
prayed and sang
praises unto God:
and the prisoners
heard them"
(Acts 16:35).***

Givers of the Bible

12

◆ **The willing giver, ABRAHAM**, who offered his son (Genesis 22:1-19).

◆ **The big little giver, THE WIDOW**, who in giving two mites, gave all that she had (Mark 12: 42-44).

◆ **The stingy giver, SAUL**, who wanted to offer the spoils of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:17-23).

◆ **The sacrificial giver, DAVID**, who refused to give that which cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24).

◆ **The covetous givers, ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA**, who held back part, pretending to give all (Acts 5:1-11).

◆ **The consecrated givers, THE MACEDONIANS**, who first gave of themselves to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 11:8,9).

◆ **The life givers, PETER AND JOHN**, who had neither silver nor gold, but gave their lives (Acts 3:1-10).

◆ **The voluntary giver, ZACCHAEUS**, who gave half his goods to feed the poor without being asked (Luke 19:1-19).

◆ **The reward givers, those who gave TO BE SEEN OF MEN**. They had their only reward (Matthew 6:2).

◆ **The unpretentious giver, THE SAMARITAN**, who made no show (Luke 10:25-37).

◆ **The perfumed givers, THE PHILIPPIANS**, whose gifts were "*an odor of sweet smell*" (Philippians 4:17-18).

◆ **The greatest giver, GOD**, who "*gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

Every child of God is asked to give himself first to the Lord: "... *the churches of Macedonia ... first gave themselves to the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Then we will willingly give all that we are and have. How do you give?

—Selected

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

BONES! The valley was full of bones! As far as the eye could see — disconnected, dry human bones! Gloom and helplessness hovered over this ghastly sight. “Death Valley” would have been an appropriate name for this gruesome place.

and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord” (verse 4-6). Ezekiel prophesied (preached) over these bones with phenomenal results.

THE VISION OF DRY BONES

Jerry L. Davidson

The hand of the Lord led Ezekiel to survey the morbid and depressing scene. The young preacher must have been both startled and speechless at what he saw, but the silence was broken when the Lord said to him, *“Son of man, can these bones live?”* (Ezekiel 37:3). The question was surely as shocking as the scene itself. How could Ezekiel answer such a question? Nothing but helplessness was in the air, but the prophet did finally manage to utter the words: *“O Lord God, you know.”*

The Lord then gave this young preacher what must have seemed to be an insurmountable task. He told him, *“Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!’ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you,*

The picture is really this: here was a vision of God’s sinful, rebellious, unfaithful people who were now spiritually dead. Could Israel ever live again as a nation?

God’s people were crushed and carried away into Babylon where they remained for seventy years. The Jewish nation essentially died, but the stench of death would be replaced with new life and optimism. The remnant was released from captivity and was able to eventually return home and to new life under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, and Ezra. What do we see in this lesson for us today?

Sin Is Lethal

Sin is the deadly enemy of the soul. The prophet Ezekiel said, *“The soul who sins shall die”* (Ezekiel 18:20a). Paul wrote, *“The wages of*

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sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). "...*He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sin*" (Ephesians 2:1). Paul further describes man's condition in sin by saying, "... *you were without Christ being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world*" (Ephesians 2:1,2). In that condition, souls are "without Christ", "no hope", and "without God".

The Lord says, according to Proverbs 8:36, "... *he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.*"

Sin Is Devastating

Even For God's People

Unless Christians are faithful and vigilant, sin can have its devastating effects. Sinning against God, as did Israel, can leave us as dry bones spiritually. Proverbs 14:30 tell us, "*A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.*" This being true of envy, it would also be the result of any sin (i.e. pride, anger, lying, sexual immorality). Proverbs 17:22 says, "*A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.*"

It's a sad state when God's people are walking as skeletons, devoid of spiritual life. Paul speaks of those who have "a form of godli-

ness, but deny its power" (2 Timothy 3:5). Spiritual void and lifelessness may be caused by several things: lack of prayer, failing to study God's Word, unresolved sin, lack of gratitude, indifference concerning evangelism, etc.

Restoration Needed

Restoration of life comes only through Jesus Christ and the Gospel. The Lord told Ezekiel and Israel that where His Word is proclaimed, "*Behold, O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O, my people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live...*" (Ezekiel 37: 12-14).

Jesus said, according to John 10:10, "*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*" Paul wrote: "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new*" (1 Corinthians 5:17).

Choose life in Christ and enjoy the fullness of His salvation! †

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"The wages of sin is death ..." (Romans 6:23).

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY



Jesus warned about “wolves” that endangered His sheep. Paul repeated this warning. The problem in heeding such words is in recognizing these “wolves”. Let us consider the facts in the case (Acts 20:29-31).

Recognizing and Resisting Wolves

Ardron Hinton

First, we need to realize that not all who teach and practice false doctrines are “wolves” — in the Lord’s estimation. Some are *mised* themselves. Like Apollos, these need correction (Acts 18:24-26). Their sincerity and good intentions will not transform their mistaken ideas into biblical truth.

Next we must face the fact that real “wolves” will appear to be sheep. They will not label themselves as what they actually are. Their intentions will be deceptively disguised or carefully hidden. In general, what can we do in confronting and resisting these predators?

First, we can test them by the Scriptures, especially what they teach and advocate. A “wolf” will twist truth to serve his purposes (2 Peter 3:16), so caution is advised.

Then, we can be alert to indications of desire for power and the control of others. Diotrophes (3 John 9) was not the last of his kind.

Finally, we can notice the “fruit” the person’s life produces. Evil ways will produce evil “fruit” sooner or later (Matthew 7:15-20).

Specific Steps

1. Listen to what is said and check it carefully.
2. Watch what is done. “Actions speak louder than words.”
3. Notice the results and effects (“fruit”), and don’t be misled.
4. Apply common sense to issues. Truth is reasonable.
5. Strengthen your own faith. It is your “shield”.
6. Master the use of Scripture. It is your “sword”.
7. Develop your serving skills. You will need them.



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An Objection to Baptism

A.L. Franks

Argument: Jesus, according to Mark's account of the "Great Commission", commanded His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16). Some argue, "Since Jesus said, 'He that believeth not shall be damned', and didn't add, 'he that is not baptized', shows that baptism is not really essential. Faith is all that really matters."

Response: What does the lost sinner want? Salvation or damnation? To whom did Jesus promise salvation? Jesus clearly stated, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Who shall be saved? "He that believeth and is baptized." Jesus joined the two together: faith and baptism. What right do I have to separate that which is joined by Jesus?

Now, it is true that "to be damned", one need only to "believe not". Jesus clearly stated, "He that believeth not shall be damned." To say that baptism is not required for salvation demonstrates unbelief. Remember, also, that it is *unbelief*

that condemns. The believer accepts the words of Jesus who said that salvation comes to those who believe and are baptized; the unbeliever says, "Salvation is for those who believe only".

As a young boy, I recall hearing an illustration given by Thomas B. Warren, a Gospel preacher. Explaining the Lord's promise of salvation and damnation recorded in Mark 16:16, he cited a parallel statement. Brother Warren said, "He that eateth and digesteth shall live; he that digested not shall die." He observed, "If one desires to live he must eat and digest." He added, "If one eats not, he shall die." He then said, "It is not necessary to say, 'He that eats not and digests not'...You cannot digest if you do not eat."

The obvious conclusion is that one cannot be properly or scripturally baptized who does not believe. Do you believe? Have you been baptized? You should be. You must. Faith requires it! †

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PREDESTINATION

Owen Cosgrove

A friend recently told me about an old man who believed adamantly that God predestines everything that happens in the lives of men. One day he tripped and rolled down a flight of stairs — whappety, whappety, whappety — bam!

The old fellow got up and dusted himself off. “Man, that hurt,” he said. “But since it just had to happen, I’m glad it’s over with!”

The Bible speaks of predestination in the sense that Christianity was planned and purposed, rather than being merely an accident, a coincidence, or a kind of afterthought of God. God *predetermined* that man would have a way to be saved, but He leaves it up to us to decide whether we will obey or not. “Whosoever will” is the clear invitation of the Scriptures.

Predestination is not simply the belief that “whatever will be will be”. Only a fool would argue that whatever will be won’t be, or whatever won’t be will be. The question is whether God **causes** everything that happens. If God causes it, then He is at fault for all of the world’s sin and rebellion, and man is only a helpless and mindless pawn.

People say such things as, “When it’s your time to go, you will go!” That may be so in some ways, but we can do a great deal to postpone it. Man can make a great difference in his life, either for good or for evil.

The key word in the Bible for refuting Calvinistic predestination is “if”. If everything is predestined, there is no “if” to our part of it. Men talk about fatalism and determinism, but nothing is more clearly taught in the Bible than man’s free moral agency.

“I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.”

God set up the plan for man’s redemption — deliberately, consciously, and intentionally, but it is up to man whether he wants to fit into that plan. God has come as far as He can without overriding our will and forcing salvation upon us. The next move is ours — it’s up to us to hear, believe, and obey. †

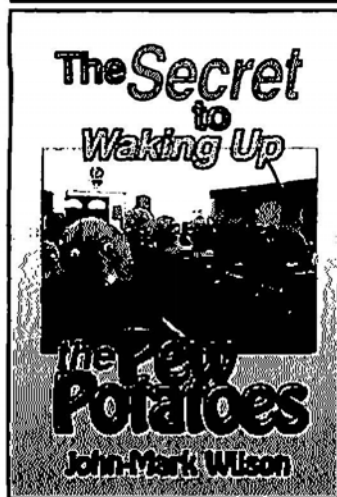
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BIBLE FIND



... Draw a line to match ...

1. Go into all the world
 2. In the beginning God created
 3. For God so loved the world
 4. He who believes and is
 5. There is no other name under heaven given among men
 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life.
 7. If you love Me,
 8. Let not your heart be troubled;
 9. In the beginning was the Word,
 10. There is one body and one Spirit,
 11. Be faithful until death,
 12. And now why are you waiting? Arise and
 13. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is
 14. Seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be
 15. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will
- A. and I will give you the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).
 - B. keep My commandments (John 14:15).
 - C. by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).
 - D. and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).
 - E. No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6).
 - F. be baptized, and wash away your sins (Acts 22:16).
 - G. the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).
 - H. and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1).
 - I. that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16).
 - J. just as you were called in one hope of your calling (Eph 4:4).
 - K. baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16).
 - L. you believe in God, believe also in Me.(John 14:1).
 - M. opened to you (Matthew 7:7).
 - N. give you rest (Matt. 11:28).
 - O. Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11).



Misunderstandings about Salvation

MISUNDERSTANDING 1: Can I be saved like the thief on the Cross?

No. The thief died under the Old Law of Moses, not under the New Law of Christ. Christ frequently forgave sins during His personal ministry, which He had the authority to do as one of the Godhead. However, He has specified in His new will — the New Testament — how people can be saved after His death. We must remember that a will is in effect after the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:15-17). God tells us when the Old Law ended (Colossians 2:14).

According to Ephesians 2:14-16, the Law was like a wall, separating Jews and Gentiles, and it was abolished in the Lord's death. Second Corinthians 3:14 tells us that the Old Testament was done away in Christ. We read in Galatians 3: 23-29 that we are no longer under the Old Law. Therefore, we must obey the directions in the New Testament if we desire to be saved today.

MISUNDERSTANDING 2: What about the people who are very sincere but have not been baptized? Would a sincere atheist or Jew or Muslim or pagan be saved?

Not by sincerity alone. Hebrews 5:9 says clearly that we must obey Christ. We read in Matthew 7:21 that we must do the will of God. In John 3:5, Jesus explained that one must be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven. We read further in 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8 that God will take vengeance on those who do not obey the Gospel.

Romans 6:3,4 and Acts 22:16 show that it is through our baptism into the death of Christ that we are cleansed by His blood. Second Timothy 2:10 explains that salvation is found only in Christ Jesus. Without Him we cannot stand before God, but according to Romans 8:1, there is no condemnation *in* Christ. Galatians 3:27 tells how we get into Him — through baptism. However, if there is no water and no baptism, then the person is *not in* Christ. *Can one be saved without Christ? Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6).*

CHURCH GROWTH

A question for the reader: What if you are bitten by a rattlesnake and there is no antidote? You die. The poison that kills the soul is sin. We are bitten by the serpent of sin. The only antidote is the blood of Christ. Without the saving power of that blood, the soul is dead.

MISUNDERSTANDING 3: What if the person is out in the desert?

The biblical case of a person being in the desert and wanting to be baptized is found in Acts 8. Shockingly, they came to some water, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into that water, and the eunuch was able to obey his Lord in baptism! If a person genuinely wants to be baptized, he will be able to do so. However, if he is simply looking for an excuse not to obey the commands specifically laid down in the New Testament, one excuse is as good as another.

MISUNDERSTANDING 4: Baptism is a work; we are not saved by works.

Verses often used: Romans 4:1-5; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 4:1-5. The works mentioned in these verses are works of merit — we can't *earn* our salvation. However, those who teach that we are saved by "faith only" are contradicting James 2:14-26. This passage shows that we are not saved by faith apart from works, but also by spiritual works, as commanded in the New Testament.

Baptism is not a work of *merit*, but an act of God's mercy allowing us this avenue of salvation, according to Titus 3:5. In Luke 7:30, the Pharisees refused baptism and rejected the counsel of God. John 6:29 teaches that even the act of believing is called a work — the work of God. Acts 10:35 says that he that *works righteousness* is acceptable to God.

MISUNDERSTANDING 5: We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8).

Acts 17:30. This passage shows that we must repent, but confession and faith are not mentioned. So we don't have to believe or confess in order to be saved? Right?

Matthew 10:32,33. Confession is mentioned, but neither believing nor repenting is mentioned, therefore we don't have to have faith or repent? Right?

1 Peter 3:21. Baptism is mentioned, but neither faith, repentance, nor confession is mentioned. So all we have to do is be baptized? Right?

Why are these conclusions not right? Because we cannot isolate one passage about salvation from other verses dealing with that subject.

CHURCH GROWTH

Grace — everything God has done to redeem mankind.

1. Promise of the redeemer.
2. Death of Jesus on the cross.
3. Giving of the plan of salvation.
4. Preservation of the Bible.
5. Sending of the apostles out into the world.
6. Includes God's providence.

Faith — everything man must do for his salvation.

1. Believe in God.
2. Turn away from sin.
3. Believe in Jesus as the divine son of God.
4. Confess faith in Him.
5. Be baptized as an act of faith.
6. Be faithful unto death.

Noah is a good example of being saved by grace through faith.

Genesis 6:8 — Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. So God in His mercy told Noah what to do — build an ark. It was a huge job, but he did it exactly as God asked.

Hebrews 11:7 — Noah prepared the ark with godly fear, and it was called faithfulness.

MISUNDERSTANDING 6: Baptism is only a figure of our salvation, signifying we have been saved (1 Peter 3:21).

1 Peter 3:21 Does not say baptism is a figure, but a “like” figure. Just like the flood waters saved Noah, “Baptism saves us”.

MISUNDERSTANDING 7: In Mark 16:16 Jesus does NOT say, “He that believeth not and is baptized not shall be condemned.” Only the unbelievers are condemned.

Parallels: Digestion example:

1. He that eateth and digesteth shall be filled, but he that eateth not shall be hungry. (If one does not eat, he certainly won't digest.)

Car Dealer Example

2. He that believeth and is baptized shall receive a new automobile, but he that believeth not shall be rejected. If you refuse to be baptized, is the dealer obligated to give the automobile? NO. You didn't meet both the conditions. †

From John Mark Wilson's book, The Secret to Waking Up the Pew Potatoes,

Questions about the Soul

Felix O. Aniamalu

To ask what a soul is, is as good as asking what a man is for we cannot talk of the soul without talking of the man; neither can we talk of man without talking of the soul.

On that beautiful day when God stepped down on the ground and became a Potter, fashioning what we know today as man, we learn that God did congratulate Himself for the job well done in the things created. He then sought a crown, a leader, an overseer over all the perfect things He had created. This desire resulted in the making of man.

However, as with all works of pottery made from clay, man remained like a log of wood — lifeless, immobile, and, of course, useless. At this point in time, God came to the motionless figure, breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul!

Quite unlike ordinary animal creations, this new being was described as “made in the likeness of God”, sharing His divine nature. He was a composite of the physical body and the immortal soul. As God is Spirit, man’s resemblance of Him is in his soul, which is also spirit.

Without the soul — the immortal element — the body is dead and is destined to return to the dust from which it was made.

Socrates, a great Athenian philosopher, was reputed to have said, “All men’s souls are immortal but the righteous souls are both immortal and divine.” Hence, Albert Magnus advised, “... let thy chief care be to remain inwardly united to God in the intellectual part of the soul.”

In the words of Isaac Bashevis Singes (a Nobel Laureate), “The soul never dies and the body is never really alive.” “The soul comes from without into the human body as into a temporary abode, and goes out of it anew ... for the soul is immortal,” stated Ralph Waldo Emerson. The belief of the Godians, Hindus, Buddhists, Krishnas, Eckankar, etcetra, in reincarnation, though wrong, attest to their belief that the soul never dies.

While the quotes given are not inspired, the Scriptures make it clear that the soul does not die physically, though it may die spiritually. Because of the imprint of divine

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

nature in man, the soul is always longing for fellowship with its Creator. The Psalmist said it all when he sang, *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"* (Psalm 42:1,2).

Other passages of Scripture clearly attest to this fact. Man has been told of the futility of directing his steps, which only God can successfully do. We long for liberation from the consequences of sin and the inevitable judgment that faces us. God, being merciful and not willing that any person should perish (suffer eternal damnation; John 3:16,17), made provision to buy man back from the slave market of sin where he had been sold by Satan.

How Valuable Is a Soul?

The value of a soul is inestimable. No mathematician, statistician, or accountant can put a price tag on its value. Christ made us to understand that the value of a single soul is far greater than the riches of the world. He said: *"For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26) In fact; the soul is so valuable that it cost the Son of God His

life to salvage it from the enslaving power of sin.

Why Does the Soul Need to Be Won?

To ensure that man once more has fellowship with the Father of spirits, the soul needs to be won back from its lost and condemned condition. It needs to be won to show its gratitude for the goodness and wonderful works of the Creator. Finally, the soul needs to be won so that it can enjoy the spiritual blessings that are only in Christ Jesus.

Hear Him: *"There is no man that hath left houses or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time ... and in the world to come eternal life"* (Mark 10:29,30). What an astounding promise for an obedient soul!

How Is a Soul Won?

Now we address the question, "How is a soul won?" What is the short answer? Through the preaching of the Gospel.

Up to the time Christ was arrested, He walked the roads of Israel, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. At the appointment of the twelve apostles, He gave them a

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

limited commission, "*Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matthew 10:6).

When Jesus was dying on the cross, before His last breath, His last words were "It is finished." Included in those three words would have been, "Walking the streets of Jerusalem is finished; My limited commission to preach only to the lost sheep of Israel is finished; My work physically on earth is finished; My work of saving man, atoning for his sin, is finished."

"You, now, will be my legs to walk the streets of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth. You are to be my mouth, preaching '*repentance and remission of sins in my name among all nations*' (Luke 24:47). From the beginning, I have used **angels** in giving My message to My servants, but **the Gospel is yours to preach to the world**. If you develop cold feet towards this mission, the Gospel will be hindered, but be assured that My word must endure, though heaven and earth pass away. I count on you as My ambassadors and would use you in reaching the lost. I look to you to obey My words. I have no other plans for bringing the message and hope of salvation to the lost. **Go.**"

Jesus is counting on you and me. There is no boundary to our

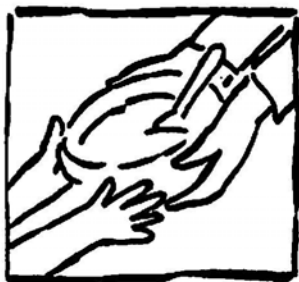
catchment area, even though our initial target would be those within our vicinity. From there, we are to spread our outreach to embrace anyone, anywhere in the world. Little wonder the apostle Paul talked of the Gospel in earthen vessels and of the beauty of the feet of those that preach the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:15; Romans 10:15).

Jesus, Himself, laid down the requirements for the salvation of the soul: "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:16). The Gospel that we obey is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Have you obeyed Him, for the salvation of your soul? †

I came into you
through God's breath;
Without me you're a mere dust.
I'll live in you
and keep your body alive;
Your action will determine
my destiny in eternity.
While your body without me is dead,
I am different,
I could live without the body;
Like the one who gave me to you,
I never die.
I'll live in eternity
for good or for bad.
My name is Soul
and I cannot be seen.

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One Mission

John Gipson

"The church has many ministries but only one mission." It's a line I ran across in my reading and can't seem to forget it.

I think of Christ. He performed many good works. He showed compassion, fed the hungry, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, cast out demons, cured lepers, and raised the dead. His ministries were many. **But His mission was one!** "*The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10), and Jesus passed that mission on to His disciples. In prayer, He said to the Father, "*As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world*" (John 17:18).

We all remember the charge Christ gave: "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age*" (Matthew 28:19,20).

If you knew that you had only one week to live, what would you do with it? Would you tell as many people as possible about Jesus and the good things of the Gospel?

One man expressed his desire in memorable words:

*Happy if with my latest breath
I might but gasp His name.
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,
Preach Behold, behold the Lamb.* †

John Gipson works with the Windsong Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA.

Can't Be Moved?

Danny Boggs

A large rock (an ugly dull orange rock, about a foot in diameter) greeted newlywed Janet Fithian when she moved to the family farm with her husband. The rock stuck up a couple of inches through the lawn at the corner of the house.

"Can't we dig it out?" she asked after she hit it with the lawn mower, breaking the blade. Her husband and her father-in-law explained that the rock had been there at least since the Civil War, and no one had ever been able to get it out.

Later in life, Janet decided to make the lawn more attractive. She made many improvements, but until that sore spot at the southwest corner of the house was healed, the yard would never look nice. So she decided to dig out the rock.

She writes, "I braced myself for what was to be a long day, perhaps experienced by generations who had tried to dislodge the rock ... but if it took the whole day, that rock was going to come out." Five minutes later the rock was out. What had seemed immovable was only a foot deep and six inches wider than it looked from the top. She pried it loose with a crowbar and hoisted it into the wheelbarrow.

"I was stunned. That rock had persisted beyond living memory. Each family had taken it on faith that the previous generation had tried and failed to remove it" ("Rock of Ages," *Reader's Digest*, March 1994, pp. 89-90).

What if Jesus had assumed that all Pharisees and Sadducees were set in their ways and could never be moved? What if Jesus felt like others did about tax collectors? What if Jesus had let people's assumptions, such as "*no good thing can come out of Nazareth*" (John 1:46),



prevent His ministry? What if He had ignored those who were not of His own race? What if He had shied away from "unclean" people? What if He had condemned adulterers without offering them the possibility of forgiveness?

Yet, how often are Christians today like the Pharisees of Jesus' day and don't want to associate with — or to teach — such sinners?

Had Jesus presented His Good News only to people who had much in common with Him, there really would be no Gospel message. We should honestly yearn for the day when we can say that many more Christians in our midst were sexually immoral, idolaters, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers, but have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

We don't know how our friends, neighbors, and loved ones will respond to the Gospel the first time or the next time that they hear it. *"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). People may not be as immovable as we think. †

Danny Boggs preaches for the Hillcrest congregation in Neosho, Missouri, USA.

Definition of a Christian

He has a mind
and knows it.

He has a will
and shows it.

He sees the way
and goes it.

He draws the line
and toes it.

He has a chance
and takes it.

A friendly hand,
he shakes it.

A rule —

He never breaks it.

If there's not time,
he makes it.

He loves the truth.

Stands by it.

Never, ever would deny it.

He hears a lie
and slays it.

He owes a debt
and pays it.

He sees the path Christ trod,
and grips the hand of God,
and follows it.

— Bulletin Digest

The Thief in the Church

Charles Cash

Someone has said, "The greatest challenge to faith is not intellectual at all, but rather shallow indifference." As I see it, the greatest threat from within the church is not false doctrine, vile sins, or even the loss of faith, but rather simple indifference.

Indifference is "the thief in the church". It robs the church of our time, our talents, and our support. Indifference kidnaps the members out of Sunday School and worship, saps the enthusiasm of members, sabotages all kinds of good programs, and takes the pleasure out of serving Jesus.

Of all problems in the church, indifference is the most difficult to deal with because it is not identified as an evil behavior or attitude. Many Christians are not *against* what we are trying to do, nor are they really *for* it. They're just indifferent!

There is a saying, "Trust a person little who praises everyone; trust a person less who criticizes everyone; trust a person least who is indifferent."

People can change their minds. A man's right to hold a certain view does not mean that view is right. One can be led to a fuller knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. Christians can be "equipped" for greater service and guided in fruitful ministries for the Lord. We can grow and mature as we correct our mistakes and become more like Jesus, but not if we are indifferent. Why? Because those who are indifferent do not see that there is error or sin in their attitude. After all, they're not committing a crime or even a moral sin! So, where is the wrong?

Another word for indifferent could be "lukewarm". One of Jesus' harshest condemnations was for those who come into this category. He warned: "*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth*" (Revelation 3:15,16). †

Today, too many churches are spiritual hospitals
filled with spiritually sick saints,
rather than barracks
filled with dedicated and trained
soldiers of the cross.
— Selected



How do you measure up?

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; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.

1 Peter 1:13-23

Study to Receive God's Approval

Wayne Barrier

God's approval of us as individual humans is dependent upon many things. Certainly it would not be possible for one to receive divine approval without the person's acceptance of Jesus as God's Son. Jesus said, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).

Further, we are made acceptable and approved for addition to the family of Christ, the church, through belief, repentance and baptism. Acts 2:38 tells us, "*Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*" Verse 47 explains what God did in His approval of their obedience: "*... the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*"

We can readily think of numerous other conditions for approval by God. Some of these are: participation in scriptural worship (John 4:24); having godly character and lifestyle (2 Timothy 3:1-10); being obedient to God's will (2 Thessalonians 1:8); and bearing fruit (John 15:8).

Paul told Timothy to **study** to be approved of God. We read in 2 Timothy 2:15, "*Be diligent [study] to present yourself approved to God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" This condition of approval makes it possible to satisfy other conditions. Many people are religious and consider themselves approved of God even though they are not obedient to Him and are not doing His will, as revealed in the New Testament (Matthew 7:21-23). In order to please God, one must **know** His will. However, we can know God's *will* only when we know His *Word* and how to "*rightly divide the word*".

Further instructions to Timothy can yield more understanding of this important condition of approval. Consider the following verses:

- 1 Timothy 6:20 "*Shun profane and idle babblings; for they will increase to more ungodliness and their message will spread like cancer.*"
- 2 Timothy 3:23 "*... Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.*"

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

● 2 Timothy 3:24-26 "... *A servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*"

● 2 Timothy 3:16,17 "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*"

Those who desire to be approved of God must study, learn, and apply the Word. However, in 2 Timothy, the person approved of God is called a **worker**. We are to do God's work. The Gospel is to be taught to all men everywhere (Matthew 28:18-20). This can be done only by those willing to work and know God's Word.

To reach heaven we must be approved of God, which means we must study. Study brings knowledge, understanding, faith, and the ability to obey. †

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Did You Know...?

"Accdrnig to rseearch at Amabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttair in what oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a ttoal mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porblem. Tihis is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe."

Many people mistakenly think the same holds true of reading God's Word, that the order and details are not important, that a verse here and there gives one sufficient knowledge to please God. However, Jesus said, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY WORD that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4). We cannot rearrange any of the requirements or commands to suit ourselves, or to conform to some religious doctrine created by man, and still correctly "spell" the salvation of our souls before God.



Now That I Am a Christian

Tim Childs

Now that I have "*tasted that the Lord is gracious,*" I will intensely crave "*the sincere milk of the word*" so I may continue to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:2,3; Matthew 5:6). I must remember that when I am young and weak in the faith, I am in a vulnerable stage of my

development. Satan wants to steal the Word out of my heart, or otherwise render me unable to produce fruit for God (cf. Matthew 13:18-23). Jesus said, "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples*" (John 15:8). I must remember it is the Word of God that brought me to this point, and it is the Word of God that will move me along in my spiritual development and fortify my faith (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Now that I have learned of God's love for me, I want to love Him back and prove my love for Him (John 3:16; 1 John 4:19). I am able to demonstrate my love for God by drawing nearer to Him, as James instructs his readers to do in his epistle (James 4:8). Further, I will seek God's counsel, walk in it, and obey His Son (John 14:15), whom He has made Lord (Acts 2:36), and the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22,23). I will not be

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deceived by satisfaction in *hearing* only. I will be a *doer* of the Word (James 1:22).

Now that I am washed, sanctified, and justified through Jesus' blood in His offering of Himself, I will no longer engage in any works of the flesh such as fornication, adultery, or homosexuality (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Since I have been bought with a price, I do not own myself. I now belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). I must refuse any temptation to abuse God's grace by continuing in a lifestyle of sin. I am now dead to sin, but alive to God's power of righteousness (Romans 6:1,2). Any sin or work of the flesh that keeps me from being solely under the power and influence of Jesus Christ is something I must put away from self. This also includes beverage alcohol and illegal substances. Through the Gospel, God will empower me to overcome all forms of evil and vice so that sin no more has dominion over me (Romans 6:14).

Now that I have learned that my sins put Jesus on the cross, I will not crucify him over and over again, and put him to shame (Hebrews 6:6; Isaiah 53:6).

Now that I know God has revealed Himself not only through nature, but through the Holy Scriptures and that He alone is worthy of praise and honor, I will assemble together with God's children upon the first day of the week to worship him "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:25). I will worship him in view of the fact that He seeks true worshippers and with a knowledge that we tend to become like that which we worship.

Now that I know that Heaven awaits those who love God, who befriend His Son and obey Him in truth and righteousness, I will follow Him in fighting the good fight of faith every day of my life. I will pursue Heaven's gate with vigor (Hebrews 11:10). †

Tim Childs, a preacher of the Gospel, lives in Baldwin, Mississippi, USA.

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.
(1 Corinthians 6:19,20)



Trust

Mike Benson

Lead

Confession time (James 5:16). There have been periods during my forty-three-year sojourn that I have experienced a certain *apprehension* about the future (Mark 9:24). As much as I hate to admit it, I've not always taken the "Christian perspective" in regard to my days (Psalms 90:12). "Fearful" — Yes; "faithful" — No.

I have occasionally fantasized about how much easier and nicer life would be if (dare I say it?) if I wielded control over the future. If I, in some God-like fashion, could keep tomorrow and all its attendant circumstances under *my* tight supervision. I would manage my surroundings — controlling **where** I live, **how** I live (i.e., my standard of living), what I **buy**, where I **go**, what **happens** to me, etc. (Did you notice all of those personal pronouns)? My life-text would read, "And Mike said...", and it would be so (cf. Genesis 1). Life would be according to my script — with no anxiety, no uncertainty, no trepidation.

Well, experience has been something of a "tutor". Newspaper headlines and untimely events continue to

remind me that physical security is fleeting at best and subject to fluctuation (Job 1:13-2:7; 2 Corinthians 11:23-27). I'm not in control of tomorrow, nor will I ever be. Mike is Mike; God is God — and each of us has different roles and functions — mine is to learn faith and trust (Matthew 14:31; Hebrews 11:6a); God's is to oversee and determine my days (Daniel 4:35). Doug Sherman, in **Keeping Your Head Up When Your Job's Got You Down**, p. 108 explains it like this:

"Imagine two fight-type aircraft three feet apart in tight formation through a wide range of maneuvers. Perhaps you have seen the Thunderbirds do this at five hundred miles an hour. Now picture the return to base for landing. These aircraft can fly in tight formation all the way to touchdown. When the weather is poor, landing becomes a little 'hairy'." Let me explain.

"These two aircraft in the clouds have about twenty feet of visibility. They fly very close, and the lead pilot just looks at his instruments. The number two pilot just looks at lead. When they approach

the field, the two pilots will, on signal from the lead, lower the landing gear, and together the aircraft change pitch like a porpoise in the water. Because the number two pilot is looking out the side of the aircraft instead of straight ahead, his sensory perception gives him funny signals as he decelerates and the nose pitches up and down. Sometimes he feels as if he is in ninety degrees of bank when he is wings-level with the horizon. Now if he shifts his focus from lead to the cockpit, he could easily either slide into lead or away from lead in the clouds close to the ground. Either could be disastrous.

"What we as instructors had to burn into the memory of students learning to fly in bad weather is to trust lead no matter how scary it feels. 'Your job,' we would say, 'is to follow lead and stay in position; his job is to make a safe approach.' But this is tough when you feel as if the plane is in a steep bank and about to crash. It involves focus and trust."

1. Trusting God with my future is like formation flying in a fighter jet. It involves following His lead no matter how scary it feels at times. "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd

in the stalls — Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength ..." (Habakkuk 3:17-19a).

2. My job is to focus on the here and now — today. "See then that you walk circumspectly (carefully), not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15,16; cf. Matthew 6:11).

3. God is responsible for my future. "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that'" (James 4:13-15). **He wants me to relax about the days ahead and trust Him.** "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ... For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:31-33,11; cf. Psalm 31:1,9; Proverbs 3:5,6). †

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Power — My Rights: The Right to Become

Jeril (Polly) Cline

Where there is more than one human being, there will be a power struggle. Man's will exerts itself and clashes with other wills, seeking his own desires. No one has ever been exempt ... not even the Son of Man.

In truth, where there is one human being, there is a power struggle ... **within**. Whose will is going to be done — mine or my Maker's? God reveals our Savior's humanity as He struggles with this great dilemma just hours before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion: "*My soul is deeply grieved (see Hebrews 5:7)... My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt*" (Matthew 26:38,39).

Our Lord continues to pray a second and third time: "*My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done*" (Matthew 26:42,44). Control is being relinquished. The Father's will is becoming the will of the Son.

Hebrews 9:14 tells us that Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit to God. This, then, is the key to our own victory over

self/sin. As Jesus said, "*I can do nothing on My own initiative*" (John 5:30) and tied it directly to His will, "*because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me,*" so we can do nothing apart from Him (John 15:5). Through Him we offer ourselves up to God, resulting in righteousness, holiness, fruit for God, and eternal life for us (Romans 7:4-6).

Hear Ephesians 5:2: "*Walk in love just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*" "Just as" (in the same manner as) Christ loved me and gave Himself up for me, I offer my "self" on the altar as a fragrant aroma to God. There is no greater sacrifice than to give my will up to the will of the One who made and loves me. By this voluntary emptying of myself, those around me come to see a living demonstration of Christ (1 Peter 3:1-5; Ephesians 5:22-29); I become the fragrance of Christ to God; an aroma of life to those who long for life; and God is glorified (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

Over and over in the Gospel of

John, Jesus uses the phrase "My own initiative." "... the words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works" (14:10). "... I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me" (8:28). "... I have not even come on My own initiative, but He (God) sent Me" (8:42). "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak" (12:49). Even the Spirit of truth will not "speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak" (16:13).

Nothing was done on His own initiative. Nothing. Except... "For this reason the Father loves Me. Because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority [permission, lawful power to act] to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father" (John 10:17,18).

Only He could offer Himself. Only I can offer myself. No one can make me give myself up — except me. Only I can initiate it. I have the right to empty myself of myself and to be filled with God and the light of His life and love, or to go on struggling with myself in a living death

full of darkness and separation. It is my God-given right.

John begins his Gospel with these words: "All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God" (John 1:3,4,11-13).

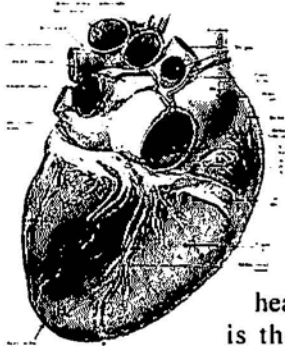
In the way of God, empty becomes full ... not filled with yourself, but filled with Jesus Christ. His living, loving nature and personality, lifestyle and manner become yours (2 Peter 1:4). As He changes you, your husband, child, church, and community are affected. Now that is real power — the power to become, by the working of God (Hebrews 13:21; Philippians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29).

From this point on, how are you planning to obtain all that belongs to you? By maneuvering, protesting, recounting, litigating — the world's way — or by relinquishing — God's way? †

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HEART DISEASE

Bonnie Rushmore



Coronary heart disease is the number one cause of death in American women today. *Webster's Talking Dictionary* defines "coronary" as "of or pertaining to the heart. 2. pertaining to the coronary arteries." This dictionary further defines "heart" as "a muscular organ in vertebrates ... that receives blood from the veins and pumps it through the arteries to oxygenate the blood during its circuit."

Thus, "coronary heart disease" would be any physical ailment that affects the heart or the surrounding arteries. Currently, much research, money and effort are expended to educate people about this national killer. Women are encouraged to alter their eating habits and lifestyles to lower their risk of developing the disease which claims the lives of almost 250,000 women annually in the United States.

As tragic as this may seem, there is another form of heart disease that is not covered in these statistics and has far reaching conse-

quences. Spiritual "heart disease" will cause one to lose his or her soul in eternity.

The spiritual heart is not the pulsating pump that pushes blood through our arteries, giving life to our bodies. The spiritual heart is the mind, which, when educated through knowledge and experiences, decides how we will deal with the various challenges we face. Just as we must take care of the physical heart to sustain life on earth, we must also take proper care of the spiritual heart to sustain life in the hereafter.

Our physical heart becomes diseased when we fail to maintain a nutritional diet for a healthy body. Our spiritual heart will also become diseased when we fail to feast upon the Word of God. The apostles Paul and Peter used the terms milk and meat (physical food) to explain the spiritual diet one must eat (1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Peter 2:2). One of the duties of elders is to feed the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). When we willingly miss worship services, Bible

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classes, Gospel meetings and the many other opportunities to feed on the Word of God, we are setting ourselves up for "spiritual heart disease."

Unfavorable environmental factors can affect our physical hearts. Our spiritual hearts are affected when we allow ourselves to become involved in activities and around individuals that encourage us to forget God. Continued association with individuals who fail to acknowledge and who curse the one true God, view pornography, use vulgar language, and practice immoralities will eat away the armor that is to protect our spiritual heart (Ephesians 6:11-18).

Likewise, abnormal conditions will affect both the physical and the spiritual hearts. The continual bombardment of the eyes and ears with pornography, vulgar language, sexual activities, and other immoralities through movies, television, radio, internet, magazines, etc. will desensitize our spiritual hearts, pulling us away from God's way of life.

Just as an infection in the physical body can affect the heart, the infection of sin can affect the spiritual heart. Sin, for which we do not repent, can weigh on our spiritual heart, separating us from God (Isaiah 59:1-3).

There are many symptoms and indications of physical heart dis-

ease. Likewise, there are symptoms of spiritual heart disease. The most noticeable is choosing to spend more time with people of the world who pull us away from God than with Christians who will uplift and encourage us to serve God. Jesus stated in Matthew 6:21, "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" Jesus went on to explain that we cannot be faithful and loyal to God and the devil at the same time (Matthew 6:24). God wants our whole heart, not a part of it (Psalm 119:2). Our words and our actions are the outward expression of what is in our spiritual hearts (Matthew 12:33-36). What is the condition of your heart?

Many times, the physical heart is permanently damaged through disease or heart attack. This is not true with the spiritual heart. God can heal and restore the spiritual heart no matter how damaged it may become through neglect and abuse on our part. If we will obey the Gospel through baptism, ask God to forgive us of any sin committed after baptism, and make a renewed effort to study the Bible, applying it to our lives, God will make our Bible hearts free from spiritual disease and defect. †

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WHAT MAKES GOD CRY?

Jerry Bates

We are all familiar with death. We also know the sadness and grief associated with the loss of a dear loved one in this life. We must never forget that God is concerned with our sorrow. In John 11:35 we find the shortest verse in the Bible which simply says, "*Jesus wept*". In only two words, tremendous meaning is conveyed.

This one verse shows the humanity of our Lord in a very tender way. Sometimes we wonder why He was weeping when He knew that Lazarus would live again very shortly. Most likely Jesus, as God in the flesh, wept out of a sympathetic heart for the sadness in the hearts of those He loved. This is in contrast to the pagan conception of gods who are not touched with the feelings and infirmities of man. These gods may weep for themselves, but in the legends they never weep for man, nor do they sympathize with man. This verse should clearly remind us that our God still cares for us even in the greatest of tragedies.

I believe that a more important point needs to be made along this line. We normally think that the

greatest loss and the greatest grief that can be experienced by man is the loss of a loved one due to death. I agree that indeed it is a deep loss, and it is right and proper that we mourn and weep over the death of a loved one, just as Jesus and Mary and Martha wept over Lazarus.

While we see Jesus weeping over the death of Lazarus, the word in Greek is not the one used to describe the strongest kind of weeping. In the Greek, the word translated "wept" in John 11:35 means to shed tears or to weep silently. Thus we see that Jesus' crying was not the loud wailing that we often associate with death.

There is another word that means to sob aloud. This is the strongest word for weeping in the Greek language and is used only one time in regard to our Lord. It is found in Luke 19:41: "*Now as he drew near, He saw the city and wept over it.*" On this occasion Jesus was descending from the Mount of Olives from which there is a magnificent view of the whole city of Jerusalem. He knew what was going to happen to the city, but He also knew that the tragic destruction

was unnecessary. The Jews could have been saved if they had only turned to Him and to God, but they refused. Even while Jesus was speaking these words, the religious leaders were looking for a way to kill Him without arousing the anger of the people.

over a polluted world. Tears were streaming down his face as he viewed the mess mankind had made. I imagine a similar scene in this passage in Matthew. We can see the tears in Jesus' eyes and hear the pain in His voice as He utters those words and views the sinful

The loss which undoubtedly grieves God most is the loss of our souls in eternity. It does not have to happen, if we will simply turn to Jesus and His Word, and obey Him.

As the commentator William Barclay aptly wrote, "The tears of Jesus are the tears of God when He sees the needless pain and suffering in which men involve themselves through their foolish rebellion against His will." The significant point of this is that while God is concerned with any grief of His people, it seems that He is most deeply grieved for their spiritual loss and their needless suffering.

I especially appreciate the picturesque language used in Matthew's account of this occasion. He wrote in 23:37, "*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!*"

There used to be a TV commercial depicting a Native American Indian sitting on a horse, looking

and spiritually polluted city of Jerusalem.

The greatest loss of man is not physical death or destruction, but the loss of our souls. God sent His Son to prevent that, but far too often men today are like the people of Jerusalem in the long ago. They *can* be saved, but they are not *willing*.

We grieve deeply over the loss of a family member or material possessions but seem to care little about the possible condemnation of our souls. That is a loss which undoubtedly grieves God beyond our comprehension, and what makes the loss even more tragic is the fact that it is unnecessary. It does not have to happen if man will simply turn to Jesus and His Word. Will you not decide to obey Him today? †

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“What Goes Around Comes Around”

Roy Beasley

You have heard the old saying, “What goes around comes around.” Also, there is the familiar warning: “Chickens come home to roost.” Sadly, most of us can attest to the truthfulness of these statements by our own human experience. Life does have a way of paying us back for the wrongs we commit.

This was certainly true in the life of Jacob. The name Jacob means “supplanter” or “trickster” or “schemer”. By all evidence he lived up to that name. Esau, his twin brother, complained to his father Isaac: *“Is not he rightly named Jacob? For he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing”* (Genesis 27:36).

Jacob cheated his brother Esau. However, Esau was not blameless. He is described as a “profane” person who did not appreciate his birthright. But, Jacob was sly and cunning. He took advantage of Esau. Later on, in the land of Padan Aram, Laban took advantage of Jacob. Jacob worked seven years

for the hand of Rachel in marriage, but Laban put one over on him. He gave him Leah instead, and Jacob had to work another seven years for Rachel. Jacob complained to Rachel that her father *“hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times...”* (Genesis 31:7). “What goes around comes around.”

Jacob conspired with his mother to deceive Isaac when his father was old and nearly blind. In later years, when Jacob was old, his sons deceived him about the death of his favorite son, Joseph. They did not have to say anything. All they had to do was to take Joseph’s coat of many colors and dip it in blood and show it to their father and let his imagination go from there. “What goes around comes around.”

Jacob and his mother used the skin of a goat to deceive his father Isaac. Jacob’s sons used the blood of a goat when they deceived him into believing that his son Joseph was dead. “What goes around comes around.”

This principle is taught in God’s Word, the Bible. Galatians



6:7 says: *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."*

The context shows that Paul was speaking of the use of our material wealth, but the principle applies to all of life. We shall surely reap as we have sown, not only in eternity, but in this life as well. "What goes around comes around."

In the great Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, *"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again"* (Matthew 7:1,2).

Here Jesus refers to harsh,

unkind judgments of others. This would include jumping to conclusions without enough evidence. It would involve placing the worst kind of interpretation upon facts at hand. It is the failure to give anyone the benefit of the doubt. It is to be hasty in pronouncing the guilty sentence. Jesus says that if we manifest such an unloving attitude toward others, we shall receive the same kind of judgments. He is not speaking of the final judgment here, but he is saying that this is the kind of judgment we will receive from our fellow man. "What goes around comes around." †

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What Lack I Yet?

Ron Boatwright

A young man came running to Jesus and said, "*Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*" (Matthew 19:16). Jesus said to him, "*But if you want to enter life, keep the commandments*" (Matthew 19:17). The young man said, "*All these things I have kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?*" We need to ask ourselves the same question, "What lack I yet?" so we can be sure of going to Heaven.

We are told to "*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves*" (2 Corinthians 13:5). We need to look at our lives and try to see where we are lacking and need improvement. What can we do to be more pleasing to the Lord? We are told, "*Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure*" (2 Peter 1:10). Any sin of which we will not repent will cause us to be eternally lost. Jesus says, "*Unless you repent you will all likewise perish*" (Luke 13:3).

We need to beware of the false teaching of "once saved, always saved". This is a lie of Satan who wants us to be lost. He doesn't want us to ask ourselves, "What lack I yet?" We are warned, "*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed*

lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). In addition, we are warned to "*beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness*" (2 Peter 3:17). Let's not let Satan lure us into complacency. Jesus has promised, "*Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life*" (Revelation 2:10).

To be strong, we must regularly feed ourselves on God's spiritual Word, the Bible. We are to "*receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls*" (James 1:22,23). And "*desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2). Studying His Word will help us to have a strong faith to protect ourselves because we know that, "*faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17).

We must concentrate on what we must do to inherit eternal life. And in doing this, "*Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience*" (Hebrews 4:11).

We need to look seriously at our own lives, to recognize any mistakes we are making that could keep us out of Heaven. We need to ask ourselves, "**What lack I yet?**" †



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

WHO SAID "LORD"?

Paula Bates

John 14:5 "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?"

John 14:8 "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

John 13:37 "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake."

John 11:27 "Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world."

John 6:68 "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

John 14:22 "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

John 20:28 "My Lord & my God."

John 21:25 "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."



John 14:5	Thomas
John 14:8	Phillip
John 13:37	Peter
John 11:27	Martha
John 6:68	Peter
John 14:22	Judas not Iscariot
John 20:28	Thomas
John 21:15	Peter

HEY! YOU KIDS!



Let me ask you a simple question. Who is Number One in your life? Now I know that a Christian should say "God is" without hesitation, but let me ask it another way: **Who really has your heart?** Jesus said that if He and His Father aren't on top of your list, even above your Mom n' Dad, boyfriend/girlfriend, so on and so forth, then you're wrong. That's a hard pill to swallow. I know that most people understand this on an intellectual level but they may not really get it.

So I will give you an illustration from my own experience.

Top Priority

PFC Alex Gibson

Now I happen to be in love with a beautiful woman. I'd gladly do almost anything for her. I'm not overstating the facts when I say that just talking to her makes me feel joy and happiness. I can be depressed but just thinking about her makes me feel better. When I work out I push myself a bit harder for her. I have few goals in life that don't involve her in one way or another. I'm head over heels for her. Though I have yet to pop the question I'm rather sure she'll take the job. Have I made it clear that she means the world to me? She is, without a doubt, the most important person who walks this earth to me.

Ok, so with that point made, allow me to throw a recent experience at you. A little while ago I ran into a problem. There have been some tough times between the two of us since I have been in Iraq. So, I'm half a world away and having a few hard days in a row and she's having some bad days of her own. I called her and wanted to talk because it always lifts my spirits.

The first sentence out of her mouth was, "Good. I'm glad you called.

HEY! YOU KIDS!

We need to talk.” Those words are deadly, my friends. So we talked and, in a nut-shell, She was having some worries about a vacation we were planning together, to the point that she didn’t think she could go.

Now, I hadn’t slept that night and hadn’t eaten all day, so I was not in a great mood to begin with, but I’m telling you it’s not a good thing to yank something that important from me. I mean, I was looking forward to that trip, and to be told there was a strong possibility that it wouldn’t happen smarted a bit. It sucked that I had already sunk over a thousand bucks into it and was getting ready to spend another thousand, too.

Now I can’t get mad at her for anything, but it depressed the living daylights outta me that my whole dream was evaporating. Well, the real kicker was that the conversation ended before anything was settled, so it wasn’t a very good night for me.

So the next few days without much rest and not much food didn’t help the depression. Top that off with personal family problems and having to put up with tension on the field all day, and that comes to a total of a Depressed Gibson. I mean I didn’t have any energy to work out, and hardly enough to do my job. I felt sick and was not loving life.

Most people at this point will start blaming God or just asking Him to fix things like they want

them to be. At first I did that, and later I decided to be content with just a nudge in the right direction. I also sat up at night and thought about things long and hard. There were times that I was tempted to be mad at God for all of my problems. But in my heart I knew that’s not right.

But then I tried something different, something that was really hard for me to do. I asked God to take control and do what *He* wanted. I said, “God, I commit my life and what’s in it into Your hands.” In other words, I handed Him the reins.

Through all of this agony, God helped me to learn something: This trip meant a lot to me, and I was connecting my feelings for my Lady to it. So when there was a possibility that it would be taken away, I reacted in much the same way, on a lesser scale, as if *she* was being taken from me. It was painful to relinquish control to God in this case because I love this Girl with nigh onto everything I’ve got.

But not *everything*. God has everything and that’s the *only* reason I was able to turn control over to Him.

So guess what I did after I figured this out? I went and spent that other thousand on our trip and finished making all the arrangements for it. Then I called her up and talked with her. Told her that all the

HEY! YOU KIDS!

arrangements were made and that I won't try to force her to go, though I want her to come with me. So we left it at that and then talked about other things. The conversation was good and I came away with a feeling that everything will work out for the best. Whether we make the trip or not, it will be all right.

Lo and behold, that day my work load lightened, I got some good food, some rest, and my family problem stabilized. And I learned a valuable lesson: through a painful situation I got to see just how much my lady matters to me, but I know now that God is more important.

I recommend such trials. They let you know how you stand. God already knows your heart. He needs no test to reveal anything to Him, but he allows you to be tested that you may better know yourself — and Him — through the process. It is good for you to learn when you say, "God comes first in my life", if it's really true or not.

As a side note: the important part of any struggle is not the end but the means. I could have had the same second conversation and made all the preparations and been mad at God all the time because of my struggle and fears. Instead, I turned things over to Him even though my emotional inclination was to pull my hair out.

God smiles when you turn to

Him during those times because you're putting your faith and trust in Him. Though it may be the hardest thing in the world to do at the moment, the harder it is the more rewarding it will be when you've learned the lesson and say, "Ok. I'm done. You take it."

Just trust me on this one, too: it takes years of practice to learn to bend your will to God and to trust Him. Kinda like how, as children, we try to fix something on our own and fail time and again. Only when we have admitted that we can't do it, and ask for help, does the adult's knowledge hold real value to us. After all, if you didn't try and fail but just went to someone else first, you would know that *they* knew what to do but would never really understand how little *you* knew.

But that's ok. God, more often than not, will wait and provide you with ample opportunity to try and learn. My advice is to keep at it because the reward of having a deeper relationship with God and trusting Him is worth the pain. ☩

For any comments/challenges to head-butting competitions, or other complaints, email me at zex1@hotmail.com. Can't say I'll be able to write back but if I can I will. God bless.

Now go away and let me sleep. ☩

Alex Gibson is currently in the US Army, stationed in Iraq.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THIS SERVICE?"

Raymond Elliott

"And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service' ...?" (Exodus 12:26).

Because of the hardness of the heart of Pharaoh, the children of Israel were still held captive in the land of Egypt. Now the Lord God was to bring yet one more plague upon the Egyptians: the death of the firstborn of both man and beast.

God was to spare His children from the awful fate that awaited Egypt. The Israelites were instructed to sacrifice a lamb for every household, and to mark their dwellings with its blood. In response, God promised that when the Death Angel

swept through Egypt, he would see the blood and would pass over their children and livestock.

Moses and Israel were instructed concerning the further details of their preparation for this last plague: they were to have the first observance of what would become a great feast that was to be celebrated annually throughout their generations. They were to remember the Lord's Passover and the night when Death passed through the land.

In the new home which God would give to the Israelites, they were to teach their children the real meaning of the Passover when



THE CHRISTIAN HOME

asked the question, *"What do you mean by this service?"*

Later when God gave the law to Israel through His servant Moses on Mount Sinai, the people were to learn His commandments and then to teach them to their children. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 we read,

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

The parents were to be able to answer properly the question raised by their sons *"What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God has commanded you?"* (Deuteronomy 6:20).

The responsibility of teaching children the ways of the Lord belongs to the parents. The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:4, *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*

The church and Christian schools can assist in this matter, and

parents should utilize such organizations as are available in fulfilling their responsibilities. However, they must always remember that the final responsibility for the training of their children lies with themselves, as parents.

Fathers, mothers, are you able to answer intelligently and scripturally the questions raised by your sons and daughters regarding the existence of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the creation of the world, acceptable worship, the Lord's Supper, baptism, instrumental music, and the need to keep oneself unspotted from the world when they ask, *"What do you mean by this service?"*

Are you carrying your children to the periods of Bible study on Sunday morning and Wednesday night? Are your children in attendance for all the periods of worship? Are you studying daily with your children, and teaching them as *"you walk by the way"*? Do you encourage them to read the Bible, religious periodicals and books written by our brethren that would strengthen their faith in God? If you cannot answer their questions today you should not expect them to be able to answer your grandchildren tomorrow. †

Raymond Elliott works with the church in Prattville, Alabama, USA.

"Train Up a Child"

Lewis G. Hale

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). This is a very familiar scripture and is often used to prove that some parents failed in their duty when some of their offspring goes astray. Misconduct of a child may mean that a parent has failed in duty, but not always. The general rule is that we do not depart from our training. Any other result must be regarded as exceptional.

Parents must not discount the value of early training. Many parents excuse the lack of such molding by claiming the child is too young for it. Of course, they brag about how smart their children are, and at the same time protest they are too young to be trained in right conduct! A child can be very cute while misbehaving. He may be young, but he picks up on it quickly when the parent or grandparent cannot conceal his amusement at such

capers. He may not yet have learned to talk or walk, but he reads your "body language" quite well.

Our children are not computers that can be programmed, with the output as a foregone conclusion. God allows us to make choices, good or bad. Sadly, we are very wilful and often make bad choices.

Most of us see the words, *"When he is old, he will not depart from it"*, but overlook the stipulation "train". Many parents do a lot of talking and little training. We must *tell* children what they need to know. But, we must do more. We need to provide *experiences* which *put into practice* what we *tell* them. They need to be *trained* to act right and also *trained* to feel right. When our correct knowledge and our emotions run parallel, we will do right.

Let's *train* our children. †

Lewis G. Hale works with the Southwest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA.

The most beautiful sight from the pulpit is a whole family seated together in a pew. The worship service is not a convention to which a family should send a delegate.

Teach Him Gently

**Teach him gently,
Little Teacher,
He has known no
one but you;
And your honest
loving teaching
Will inspire him to
be true.**



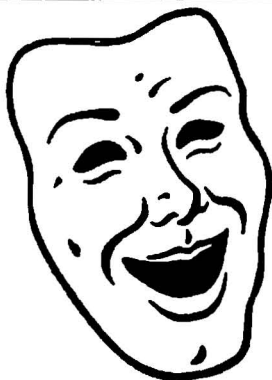
**Teach him tenderly
His teacher
Will impress upon his mind
All the attributes of goodness,
And, in turn, he will be kind.**

**Teach him quietly
A teacher
With soft words can turn away
Childish anger, and your pupil
Will be self-controlled someday.**

**Teach him carefully
No teacher
Can afford mistakes
When the souls of generations
Hang on errors that she makes.**

**Teach him gently, Little Teacher,
Teach him laughter, teach him tears;
For each moment spent in teaching,
You will live a thousand years!**

author unknown



My friend Charlie arrived home from work at his usual hour of 5 p.m. and discovered that it had not been one of his wife's better days. Nothing he said or did seemed to be right.

By 7 p.m. things had not changed, so he suggested to his wife that he go outside, pretend that he had just gotten home, and start all over again. His wife agreed.

He went outside, came back in, and with a big smile, announced, "Honey, I'm home!" "And just where have you been?" she replied sharply. "It's after seven o'clock!"



An old gentleman who had been married for 65 years was asked for his observations regarding marriage. He thought for a moment and said, "Well, I'd have to say that the most

difficult years of marriage are those following the wedding."



A mother was dropping her son off at a friend's house. She said to him, "Will you be good while Mommy's gone?"

The boy replied, "If you give me a dollar!

His mother shook her head and said, "Why can't you be good for nothing like your father?!"



Here are a few Bulletin Bloopers from a variety of churches:

- ◆ "Don't let worry kill you off..... let the church help."
- ◆ "For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs."
- ◆ "The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been canceled due to a conflict."
- ◆ "Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping. She has requested tapes of Preacher Jim's sermons."
- ◆ "Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 and so ends a friendship that began in their school days."

PROVERBS 17:22

◆ “Please place your memorial donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.”



Jack's mother ran into the bedroom when she heard the boy scream. She found Jack's two-year-old sister pulling the boy's hair. She gently relaxed the little girl's grip and said comfortingly to Jack, “There, there. She didn't mean it. She doesn't know that hurts.”

She was barely out of the room when the little girl screamed. Rushing back in, the mother asked, “What happened?”

“She knows now,” Jack replied.



A little girl became restless as the preacher's sermon on giving dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, “Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?”



A theater owner found a wallet with no name and \$700 in it. He announced to the audience, “Will the person who lost \$700 please form a double line at the box office?”

Food for Thought

- Seat belts are not as confining as wheelchairs.
- Middle age is when your memory is shorter, your experience longer, your stamina lower, and your forehead higher.
- He who dies with the most toys is still dead.
- Dear God, I have a problem; it's me.
- Did you ever notice that when you blow in a dog's face, he gets mad at you, but when you take him for a car ride, he sticks his head out the window?
- Why do you have to “put your two cents in”....but it's only a “penny for your thoughts”? Where's that extra penny going?
- It's the start that stops most people.
- Don't be discouraged by failure or satisfied with success.
- Sympathy is two hearts tugging at one load.
- A wise man said, “There are two things I have learned. (1) There is a God. (2) I'm not Him.”
- “In the first forty years in Egypt, Moses learned to be a Somebody. In the second forty years in the wilderness, Moses learned to be a Nobody. In the third forty years, he learned what God can do with a Somebody who is willing to be a Nobody.”

—Dwight L. Moody

“Consecrate Me, Lord”

I Chronicles 29:5

E. Claude Gardner

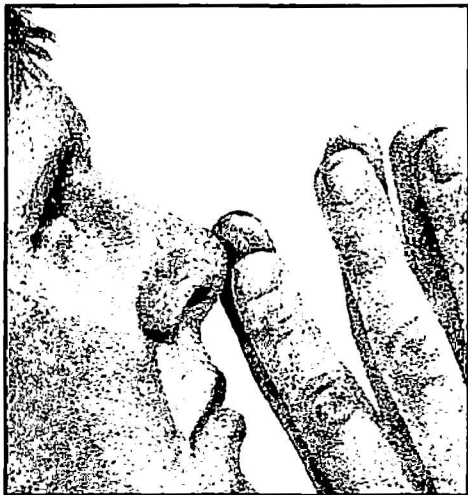
I. Introduction

- A. May we ask: Have I done my best? Am I stronger now than in the past? Do I know more? Have I yielded to sin? Where do I stand before God?
- B. “Consecrate me”
 - 1. Definition is to “set apart”. We think of “dedicate” and “sanctify” (Ephesians 5:26; 2 Timothy 2:21).
 - 2. Re-consecration.

II. Discussion

A. *What spiritual conditions call for renewed consecration?*

- 1. Sin will separate one from God (Isaiah 59:2).
 - a. Laxness in church attendance (Hebrews 10:25).
 - b. Failure to eat Lord’s Supper.
 - c. Misuse of the tongue (1 Peter 2:1).



- (1) Harshness and full of hatred.
- (2) Given to profanity.
- d. Drunkenness (1 Corinthians 6:10).
- e. Unseemly relation with the opposite sex (Ephesians 5:3,5).
- f. Dishonesty (Romans 12:17; 2 Corinthians 8:21).
 - (1) Failure to pay debts.
 - (2) Gambling; deceit
- g. Indifference. “Just don’t care”; not interested; give no thought to how

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

to do more; how to help the church to grow.

h. Disobedience (Luke 9:57ff).

2. Hardness or stubbornness of heart, preventing consecration (Matthew 13:15,16; Acts 28:24-27).

B. *Why be consecrated today?*

1. To take away the blemish on the church, that the world may know and be influenced (Ephesians 5:27).
 - a. An outsider says, "_____ does this." Yes, but after re-consecration, we can say he has repented.
2. With sins forgiven you may be ready at any time for the Lord's return (2 Timothy 4:6-8).
3. Renewed consecration will cause you to have confidence and encouragement to do more work for God in the future (2 Peter 1:8).
4. It will enable you to forget the past, not by ignoring it but by repenting and starting anew (Philippians 3:13,14).

C. *The call for consecration*

1. Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 2:9.
2. Plea to backsliders for penitent hearts (Jeremiah 3:12,14,22; 5:6; 31:22).
3. Invitation to return to God (Isaiah 1:16-18)

D. *"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"*

1. Consecrate your service.
2. To the Lord.
3. This day.
4. Willing (1 Chronicles 29:6,9).

III Conclusion

- A. Who is ready to consecrate himself to God?
- B. You are invited (Matthew 11:28-30).

E. Claude Gardner is President-Emeritus of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

"Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the LORD?" (1 Chronicles 29:5).

What Is the Greatest Commandment?

Do Not Kill? Worship God? Love God?
 Do Good Works? Do Not Commit Adultery?
 Be a Good Neighbor? Keep the Sabbath Day?
 Love Your Neighbor?

Loy Mitchell

- I. **The greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind!** *"One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?' Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment'"* (Matthew 22:35-38).
 - A. I doubt if the Pharisees expected such an answer.
 - B. Perhaps they thought he would say, "Do not kill" or "Keep the Sabbath".
 - C. Maybe they thought He would say, "Do good works" or "Do not commit adultery" or "Worship God".
 - D. Jesus went to the very heart of the matter in His beautiful answer.
 - E. His answer was good for the people in the first century and it is still good for us today.
 - F. The greatest commandment is to **Love God!**
- II. **Man must show *how* he loves God.**
 - A. This is not done by doing things to please men (Matthew 7:1-8).
 - B. It is not done by just talking about how much we love God.
 - C. Man shows his love by obeying God's commandments.
 1. Jesus said in John 14:15: *"If you love me you will obey what I command."*
 2. Those who obey the commands of God remain in His love. *"If you obey my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love"* (John 15:10).

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

- D. Unless you and I are obeying God's commandments we show we either do not *know* His commandments or that we do not *love* God.

III. Look at some of the commands which so many ignore today.

- A. Believe in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ. *"And this is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He loved us"* (1 John 3:23).
- B. To repent of all sin. *"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30).
- C. To be baptized for salvation. *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16).
- D. Remain faithful, doing His will. Please read 1 Corinthians 15:58 and Revelation 2:10.

IV. Jesus also tells us of the second most important commandment.

"And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:39,40).

- A. Yes, you and I must love our neighbors as we love ourselves.
- B. When we fail to do this, we show that we think little of God and His will for all men.
- C. We show our love for our fellow man by supplying his needs when we have an opportunity. *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth"* (1 John 3:16-18).
- V. **Those who fail to love their brothers live in death.** *"This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death"* (1 John 3:11-14).

Conclusion: Do you love God? Then obey His commandments today. This is the first and most important commandment. †

Loy Mitchell, former missionary to Zimbabwe, and now lives in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.

Reliable Witnesses

Lewis V. Mock

"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. There are three that bear witness in earth, *the Spirit, the water, and the blood*; and these three agree in one" (1 John 5:7,8).

These three witnesses bear testimony to the deity of Jesus, and the humanity of Christ, of His power, His work, and His Word. Yes, God has witnesses. Jesus did not leave Himself without witnesses, but said, "*I will send you a Comforter*" (John 14:16-18). He said, "*Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth*" (John 17:17).

1. The purpose of a witness is to bring forward testimony, which **the Spirit** does. Hear the Spirit speak, telling of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2). Do not listen to any man, but listen to God's Spirit. When we choose to listen to some modern revelator instead of the Spirit of God, we impeach one of God's witnesses and disparage His testimony.
2. The second of God's witnesses is **water**. In baptism Christ was owned as the Son of God (Matthew 3:17). The only thing in Christianity that is associated with water is baptism, which is a likeness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3-5). Is there any likeness to sprinkling or pouring for baptism? When such things are practiced, witness number two is impeached.
3. The third witness is **the blood**. Christ shed His blood in His death (John 19:34). Christians assemble on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7) and take of the fruit of the vine (1 Corinthians 11:25). This is the New Testament in His blood, proclaiming to the world the sacrifice of Christ. When people attend services on the Lord's Day, but do not observe the Lord's Supper, they impeach witness number three.

Let God's witnesses testify. In that way, you have to be right and can't be wrong. ¶

Lewis V. Mock is a part of the Lord's church in Biggers, Arkansas, USA.

The Casting Out of Satan

Maxie B. Boren

"...the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8b).

Sometime near the end of the first century, the apostle John wrote that *"the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8b). And what were the works of the devil? By enticing Adam and Eve to transgress God's directive (Genesis 3), Satan succeeded in bringing sin and death into the world (Romans 5:12). Yes, he led humanity into sin and death, with all the accompanying shame, heartache, pain, and suffering! These were his works! Let Satan bear the full responsibility for the misery he has caused!

But at precisely the right moment in God's timetable, the loving Heavenly Father sent Jesus into the world (Galatians 4:4) to redeem man from the curse of sin (Colossians 1:14), and to make it possible for humanity to triumph over death. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary for Christ to give Himself

as the atonement for the sins of mankind (1 John 2:2; 4:9,10). One inspired writer said concerning Jesus, *"... He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"* (Hebrews 9:26b, 10:12, NKJV). *"... that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil..."* (Hebrews 2:14).

Thus, during His personal ministry, upon His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus said, *"Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"* (John 12:31,32). Hallelujah! *"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift"* (2 Corinthians 9:15 NKJV)! †

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher engaged in evangelistic work in Bedford, Texas, USA.



A Man Who Built a Boat

Betty Tucker

In the first book of the Bible, we read of a man who had great faith. His name was Noah. He lived in the 10th generation of mankind. The world had become full of corruption and violence (Genesis 6:5). God was grieved because of the wickedness (6:6). He determined to destroy man and all living things (6:7).

However, God remembered Noah, a just man (6:9). God gave Noah a job — to build an ark. He told him the exact dimensions of the ark. It was to be 300 cubits by 50 cubits by 30 cubits (approximately 450' long x 75' wide x 45' high).

A Big Boat on Dry Land

Until this time, there is no record

that it had ever rained. The earth was watered by a mist coming up from the ground (dew) (Genesis 2:6).

Noah was a man of faith (Hebrews 11:7). Bible students know that faith is the "evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Noah had his job description, and he did not waver in his dedication to do that job.

For 120 years Noah worked on that boat and preached to his neighbors. How they must have taunted him: "Hey, Mr. Noah, what are you going to do with that monster of a boat? You do not have any water to sail it."

At last, the task was finished. Noah took into the ark clean and

BIBLE CHARACTERS

unclean animals, food, and his family, as he had been directed. Then God closed the door (Genesis 7:16).

The Rains Came

We read in Genesis 7:11 that "...the windows of heaven were opened" and it rained for forty days and nights (7:12).

Every person and every living thing upon the earth was destroyed, except those eight souls and the animals that rode in the ark. Noah's faith had turned what seemed unreal into a reality.

Gone were the riotous and wicked throngs. Gone were the cruel neighbors who had made fun of God's righteous servant.

Then God remembered Noah (Genesis 8:1). The waters were dried up, and the ark came to rest upon Mt. Ararat (8:4).

When Noah and his family and all of the animals came out of the ark, the first thing Noah did was to build an altar and offer a sacrifice to God (Genesis 8:20).

Noah rightfully claims a place in the parade of those great men of faith catalogued in Hebrews 11. *"By faith Noah, warned of God ... and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith"* (verse 7). We who live today can be proud of this man who built a boat! †

Betty Tucker is a Christian writer living in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, USA.

With Faith

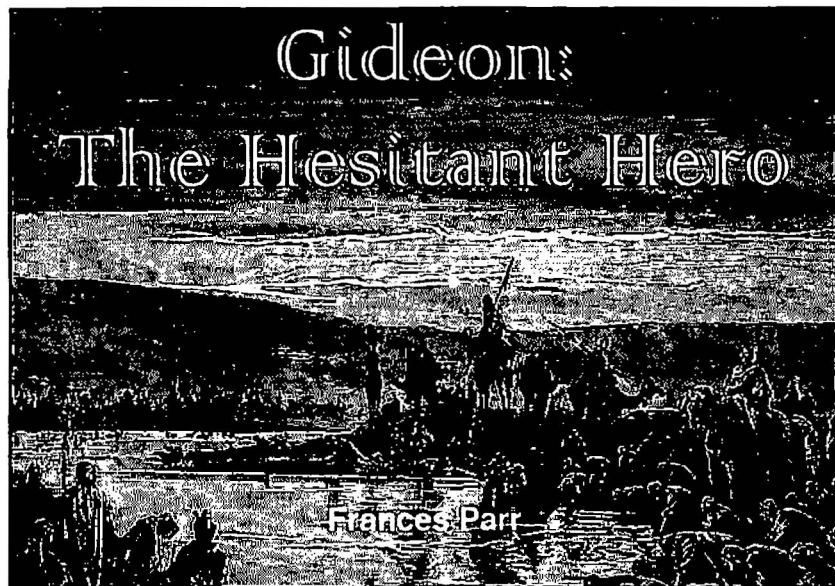
For every disappointment
That ever comes your way,
There also will be happiness
Upon another day.

Sometimes there will be failure
In things you try to do,
But with both faith and fortitude
Success will come to you.

When life appears its darkest
And clouds obscure your view,
You know that you are bound to
find
The sun come shining through.

The faith that you possess in God
Is never placed in vain.
It will sustain and be your guide
Life's finer things to gain.

Harold F. Mohn



The Bible reader first meets Gideon in Judges 6:11. Israel had enjoyed 40 years of peace after Deborah and Barak defeated Jaban, the king of Canaan. Then, the people did evil and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian. The Midianites were extremely cruel to the Israelites, destroying their animals and crops, and the people were starving. The persecution was so great that they dug dens and caves for themselves in which to hide.

Gideon, the son of Joash, was threshing wheat, not on a threshing floor, but in a winepress, so the Midianites would not see him. Suddenly, an angel appeared to Gideon, proclaiming, "*The Lord is*

with you, you mighty man of valor."

This statement puzzled the man. "If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened?"

The angel explained that it was because Israel had disobeyed God, who had done so much for them. The angel further stated that Gideon had been chosen to save the Israelites.

Gideon protested. "*My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house.*" Gideon was doubtful and begged the angel to wait while he prepared a meal for him. The angel waited. Instead of eating the food, the angel instructed Gideon to offer it as a sacrifice. It was consumed by fire.

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Joash, Gideon's father, had sinfully built an altar to Baal and made a wooden image beside it. Gideon was instructed to tear it down and burn it. Taking ten of his servants with him, he did what the angel had told him. Because of his fear of his father and the people, Gideon accomplished this at night.

Those who worshipped Baal and the wooden idol were angry and sought to kill the wrecker of their shrine. Gathering armies from many tribes, they camped on a hillside near Ophrah, Gideon's home.

Again, an angel appeared to Gideon with the directive that he was to save Israel. Again, the Lord promised He would be with Gideon's army and that the battle would be won. Yet again, Gideon wanted proof. Twice he asked for signs, begging that God would not be angry with him for the asking. God was patient and gave Gideon the signs he requested.

As the record continues, Gideon's greatly reduced army scared the enemy soldiers so badly that they killed each other with their own swords. Those who escaped were pursued and defeated.

The people of Israel were grateful to Gideon and asked him to be their king, followed by his sons and grandsons; however, he refused. *"The Lord shall rule over you,"* he said. Judges 8:28 tells that there

was peace in the land during Gideon's life, and he died at a *"good old age"*.

There are lessons that we, as Christians today, can learn from this biblical account. We often feel inadequate when called upon to do something for the Lord. No matter what the task, if it is God's will that we do it, He will enable us to succeed. Even though Gideon considered himself small and weak, God equipped him with the strength and help that he needed.

Another point is that God is patient with His children. If we ask sincerely, God will make sure that we have a clear understanding of His will.

God reduced Gideon's army to 300 and gave them no weapons. Don't you imagine it took great faith and courage to rush the enemy camp? Surely nobody could doubt that God's power had won the victory and not human effort. This is why God often chooses the least likely to accomplish His plan.

The next time you are faced with a task that you feel is beyond your capabilities, trust God. Do as Peter did, in Matthew 14:28,29: Jump out of the boat and start walking on the water, keeping your focus on Jesus! †

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

“AMERICA 2008”

WOULDN'T IT BE
THRILLING IF EVERY
NON-CHRISTIAN IN
YOUR COMMUNITY
COULD RECEIVE A
PERSONAL INVITA-
TION TO BECOME A
MEMBER OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT
CHURCH?

Eddie Cloer

We have to go back to 1991, sixteen years ago, to find a time when the churches of Christ joined together in a nationwide attempt to evangelize America, the land we love. Certainly, then, the year 2008 is a good time for us to make a unified effort and reach out to our beloved homeland with the Gospel. **Truth for Today World Mission School (TFTWMS)**, in Searcy, Arkansas, is coordinating such an effort under the oversight of the **Champions church of Christ in Houston, Texas**. As part of a global evangelism plan, “**Into All the World by 2015**”, TFTWMS is spearheading a community outreach campaign in the US, dubbed “**America 2008**”.



Truth for Today World Mission School provides Gospel literature in fifteen languages for national preachers and teachers in more than 130 countries.

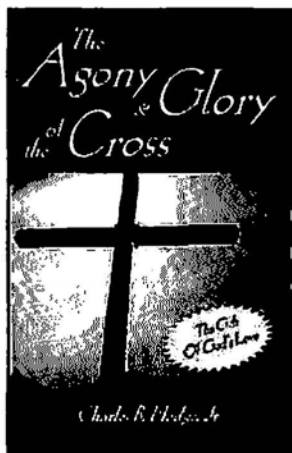
FROM THE HEART OF . . .

They may be individuals who would like to know Christ as Savior and Lord. They are people who do not already appear on our outreach lists.

The "America 2008" campaign is designed to unfold in two phases. The first phase is identifying those who need to be taught, and the second phase is the actual teaching of those seekers who have surfaced.

The First Phase

By using the plan proposed by TFTWMS, Christians can join together throughout America to share the message of the cross with those around them, surfacing numerous receptive hearts. How will the prospects—the seekers, the ones who would like to know the way of salvation—be identified? The book *The Agony & Glory of the Cross*, by Charles B. Hodge, Jr., is a wonderful way to begin a spiritual conversation with friends, neighbors, and fellow Americans. A special gift edition of the



Eddie Cloer, director of Truth for Today World Mission School, explains a revision in the book, *The Agony & Glory of the Cross*. The original text has been carefully edited to be more meaningful to the non-Christian.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

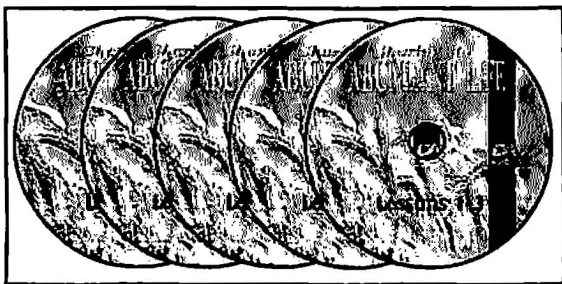
book has been prepared for the non-Christian. When this book is given as a gift, a spiritual conversation may follow, identifying the seeker and opening the door to a Bible study with him or her.

The Second Phase

The second phase is the actual teaching of the good hearts that have surfaced from the first phase. How shall the church do this? How can we be ready to do the teaching that will need to be done?

When someone responds positively to **The Agony & Glory of the Cross**, a Bible study on how to become a Christian can immediately be scheduled. A brief guide on how to become a Christian is included in the back of the book. The Christian might say, "Let's go to the last two pages of this book and talk about the questions." If the church member is not equipped to conduct a personal Bible study, he could arrange for the seeker to meet with another member of the congregation who has been trained for personal evangelism.

In order for the "America 2008" plan to be successful, the local congregation



must have members who are prepared to give one-on-one instruction. Truth for Today World Mission School has put together a 13-week Bible class series entitled "Sharing the Abundant

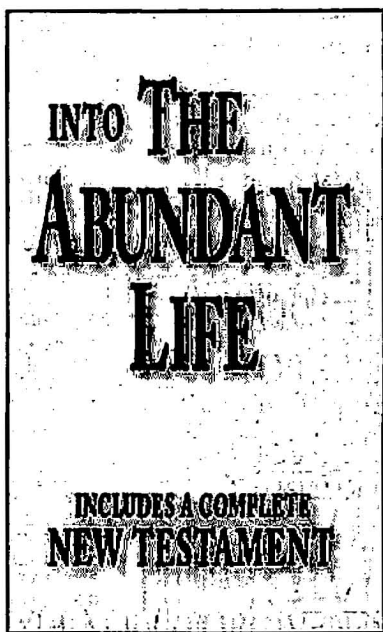
Life." This series by Ian Terry is a personal evangelism workshop on DVD. It teaches a class on how to lead another person to Jesus, discussing the need for evangelism that exists in the church, the qualities that a person must have in order to be a good soul-winner, an approach that can be used to win others, what to say and what not to say in a Bible study, how to find prospects, and much more. Every congregation needs to have one of these classes being taught. It is a crucial part of the plan to share the Gospel in our communities.

The approach to teaching the non-Christian that is recommended in the DVD series is to use the book *Into the Abundant Life*. This book contains 316 pages on how to become a Christian and how to live as a Christian, plus a complete copy of the New Testament. The last four pages of the book provide a home-Bible-study guide to help lead the reader to Christ.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

The church member can give a copy of **Into the Abundant Life** to the person who has become interested in salvation as a result of reading through the book on the cross. The discussion of this book may lead to a continued study of the subject of salvation. This book-approach to teaching someone about salvation has been very effective where it has been used. It's an approach that almost anyone can use. It combines personal study with a relational conversation with a Christian friend -- a powerful combination.

The two phases go hand in hand. One leads to the other: Identifying seekers leads to teaching them. These phases are designed to stretch over the entire year.



What Can We Expect?

What will the book accomplish?

Wonderful opportunities will arise when members of a congregation give **The Agony & Glory of the Cross** to friends, neighbors, and the people of the community.

- * The person who receives a book will be impressed by the fact that a Christian cared enough to give him this gift.
- * He may give local Christians an opportunity to visit with him for a few minutes about spiritual matters.
- * A few pointed questions inserted into the conversation will reveal where the contact is spiritually.
- * Some people will be open to a home Bible study.

Honest-hearted prospects will be found. This is not idealism; they are present in every community. Some have just moved into town. Others have questions, are dissatisfied with what they are currently doing regarding their relationship with God, or may be disenchanted with the way they are worshiping.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

What will happen when a congregation puts into place the DVD Bible-study series on "Sharing the Abundant Life"?

The series will inspire some Christians to prepare themselves to conduct good home Bible studies. They will find this type of work enjoyable and very rewarding, and may be able to lead several from the community to Christ. Conversions will occur only if good teaching is taking place. The prospects will have to be approached lovingly. Perhaps they will need to be invited into the Christian's home for a meal. They may need to be encouraged by the church in some way.

What will be the overall result of "America 2008"?

Every congregation will have an opportunity to grow from conversions of people in the community. The bold and visionary congregation who covers their city or county methodically, going to every person with the message of the cross, will identify many seekers. A team of well-prepared home-Bible-study teachers will be able to bring some of these to Christ. Through this effort, the church will be connecting spiritually in an important way with the people of America. We should not expect too much, but we must not expect too little.

The Strong Points of the Plan

This is the right time for such an outreach.

Now is the time for a united effort of the churches of Christ. In fact, a campaign like this is overdue. This could be one of the biggest searches for prospects that the churches of Christ have ever conducted. Should we not all participate in it?

The message is right.

What is the heart of the gospel? Jesus died for us, and not only for us, but also for the whole world. Paul wrote, "*For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2). This book, **The Agony & Glory of the Cross**, says it well; and when it's given in a caring context, it will be regarded as a beautiful gift. A good impression will be made, and some basic teaching about what Jesus did for each of us will go into the recipient's home.

The methodology is good.

The evangelism is done, as it should be, through the local congregation, with members being called upon to do something about leading the lost around him or her to Jesus. Furthermore, the Bible studies are set up within already existing relationships. The members are asked to go first to

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

prospects whom they already know and love. Research shows that this approach is a key to the retention of those who have become Christians.

The goal is realistic.

Why can't the churches of Christ easily contact and visit with 7,000,000 new prospects in 2008? It has been conservatively estimated that there are 1,250,000 members of the churches of Christ in America. Suppose half of these members made a list of fifteen people whom they know who are not Christians. Then, suppose they gave each one listed a copy of *The Agony & Glory of the Cross* and lovingly asked him or her to stand with them at the foot of the cross. How many would that be? It would be 9,375,000 people, personally contacted and invited to become Christians during the year 2008. Yes, this goal is reachable!

The cost is minimal.

The cost of this effort to the local church will be minimal, for very little funding will come out of the church budget. Funds are being raised to help provide copies of *The Agony & Glory of the Cross* for those who want to participate in the "America 2008" campaign but cannot provide these materials for themselves. Individuals or congregations who have been blessed with the means can obtain copies of the book for the suggested donation of \$1.00 each. The church of Christ nearest to the prospect will provide *Into the Abundant Life*, which is available for \$1.50.

This is a key time in the history of the church.

If we do not evangelize, the church in our community may die. We have everything to gain by engaging in this campaign. It's extremely important for us to pull together, to be of one heart and soul, to go back to grass-roots evangelism, and to do what the church has been commanded by our Lord to do—to teach our families, our neighbors, and the world. About Truth for Today World Mission School

**For more information or to request books and materials,
please contact us at:**

"America 2008"

Truth for Today World Mission School

2209 S Benton

Searcy, AR 72143

501-268-7588

staff@alltheworld2015.org

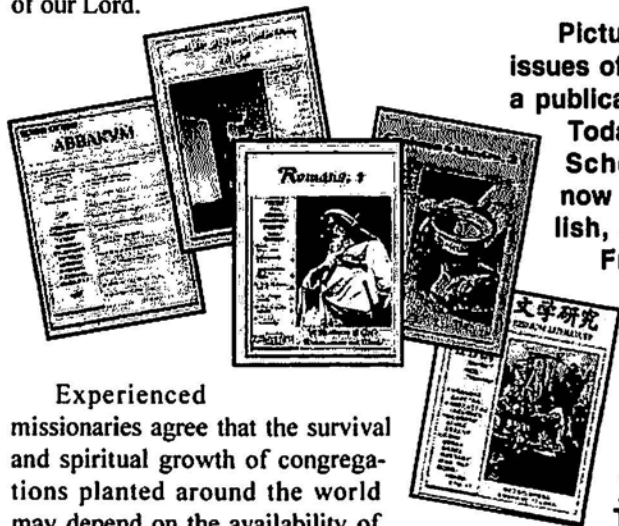
www.alltheworld2015.org/america2008

Truth for Today World Mission School

"And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also"

(2 Timothy 2:2).

Truth for Today World Mission School is a multifaceted non-profit organization providing an education in printed form for national men who are preaching and teaching in their own languages to their own people. Directed by Eddie Cloer, a professor of Bible and preaching courses at Harding University, TFTWMS strives to teach faithfully the Holy Scriptures of our Lord.



Experienced missionaries agree that the survival and spiritual growth of congregations planted around the world may depend on the availability of printed Bible-study materials. The primary focus of TFTWMS, a monthly publication called *Truth for Today*, is designed to address this need. This publication is sent to tens of thousands of preachers and Bible teachers in many nations all over the globe. Each issue is the equivalent of a 150-page book and is filled with expository Bible studies, including sermons, class suggestions, and visual aids. It is ad-free and is sent overseas free of charge. Translating offices have been established in Brazil, Costa Rica, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, and Ukraine. Arabic and Chinese materials are translated in the United States.

Bible studies are available at www.biblecourses.com. All of the materials on the site are provided to help people in their search for truth and understanding of the Bible, and to strengthen their efforts to teach others about Jesus Christ. The lessons are available in many languages and can be downloaded free of charge to use in personal study and teaching.

Pictured are selected issues of *Truth for Today*, a publication of Truth for Today World Mission School. Material is now available in English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Indonesian, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish, plus Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi, Tamil, and Telugu in India.

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at

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or 662-283-9946 if you plan to participate.

Cost: \$10 /per person/per night. This includes your food, drinks, and snacks for the retreat. **Pay when you check in.** Main speakers and wives are free.

Accommodations: *All* Air-conditioned cabins — Men in one, women in another. If you feel you can't handle the camp atmosphere, there is an Econ-o-lodge and a Days Inn about 4 miles from the camp in Hamilton.

What to Bring: Bedding (for twin size- bunk-beds), towels, toiletries, clothes, etc., lawn chairs, umbrellas, missionary attire for Thursday night meal

Location: Maywood Christian Camp
700 Maywood Drive
Hamilton, Alabama 35570

Website for camp: maywoodchristiancamp.com
(See website for map.)

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Gospel Gazette Online is a 20-page, monthly Gospel magazine on the Internet, begun by Louis and Bonnie Rushmore in 1999. Thousands of articles, written by faithful Christians, are archived and selectable through the onsite search engine. GGO is free to users throughout the world, and it is visited regularly even in parts of the world that remain virtually inaccessible to missionaries. (www.gospelgazette.com)





World Evangelism School of Missions

A new school to train workers for mission field assignments is scheduled to begin classes in August, 2008 in Winona, Mississippi. Each month for two years, teachers and students will meet for 2-3 days for intensive classroom instruction. Assignments and follow-up study will be completed between each monthly meeting.

Instructors will all be missionaries with years of successful mission work experience. Courses will be practical, applications-oriented, and Bible-centered. Studies will be designed to equip students with skills to conduct effective evangelism efforts in today's mission fields. Methods taught will be based on the experiences of successful workers.

The founders of this new school are J.C. and Betty Choate, and Wayne and Janet Barrier. The Choates have conducted successful Asian mission efforts during the past 45 years and the Barriers have worked with them for more than 25 years. The methods, processes, approaches, and experiences of these and other missionaries will be discussed, reviewed, and studied in the school.

Students are accepted into the program based on experience, education, and references. The program will not provide basic training to develop preaching and Bible teaching skills. Applicants should already be equipped in these areas.

Typical courses include: **Introduction to Missions, Survey of World Religions, Mission Field Evangelism Methods, Evangelism Plan Development, Fund-Raising and Reporting, Biblical Motivation for Missions, Biblical Pattern for Missions, Mission Field Assessment and Selection, Logistics and Foreign Travel.** Each year students will participate in two field trips (2-6 weeks each), to train with an experienced worker.

For more information contact:

Wayne Barrier, PO Box 93, Cloverdale, AL 35617; Phone: 256-766-2807, wbarrier@hiwaay.net,

World Evangelism, PO Box 72, Winona, MS 38967; Phone: 662-283-1192; email: choate@WorldEvangelism.org,

Jeremy Barrier, 1119 Lorraine Parkway, Florence, AL, 35630; Phone: 256-766-4073; jnrbarrier@yahoo.com

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We Are Calling for Your Help Now! It is Urgent!!!

"I am a Christian, preaching and teaching the word of God to others. I have one of your books here, entitled **BIBLE THEMES**, which I have read for almost 6 times. I have no other book to read apart from the Bible. Please, I kindly request for more books that you may have at the moment — even second-hand books I will appreciate very much. Martin Mazzai (from Zambia)"

Brethren, are you listening? We are getting many calls from our brethren in Africa and Asia, begging for **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL** and other books. Those people are starved for Christian literature. Will we hear them or will we deny them the spiritual food they crave? It is up to you.

With our editions in English, Spanish, (Telugu and Tamil in India), we are printing 60,000 to 70,000 copies of this quarterly magazine, but our goal is to reach 100,000 copies of each issue (we wish it could be a million or more!). We can print and ship one box of 35 copies to a foreign address for approximately \$35.00, providing literature for 35 people. If you send \$35.00 a month, covering the cost of 12 boxes a year or 3 per quarter — 420 magazines — you will be enabling 420 X 10 people to read 112 pages of Gospel message in a year. That's 4200 people you can be instrumental in teaching with this small contribution and small effort on your part! Think of the good that would do! Surely, most individuals and congregations can spare that much for the spreading of the Gospel.

The world cannot get better without the guidance of God's Word. Please help us to have the funds to send **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL** to those who are asking for it.

To help with this particular need, please send your checks to

**THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
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To speed up your announcement that you want to help,
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Dear Brethren:

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We want to give \$35 each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.

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America 2008

*Going into the communities of America
With the Heart of the Gospel*



According to Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr., author of the book, **Why Churches Grow**, America is the fourth largest mission field in the world. Only China, India, and Indonesia have more people who are "unclaimed" by any Christian religious fellowship or denomination. By reaching out to people in our communities, churches of Christ across the country *can* make a difference. If you would like to know more about "America 2008", please visit our website at www.alltheworld2015.org/america2008 and contact us at:

"America 2008"

Truth for Today World Mission School

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Searcy, AR 72143

501-268-7588

staff@alltheworld2015.org

*This global mission work is under the oversight
of the Champions church of Christ in Houston, Texas.*

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (from page 23)

1. The Law and prophets.
2. Jesus Christ.
3. No. We have all sinned.
4. To be justified means to be declared righteous or just by God. The means of the justification is by the grace of God as found in Jesus Christ.
5. Jesus is our propitiation. A propitiation is the turning away of God's wrath by the sacrifice of Christ's own blood.
6. Demonstrates God's righteousness. It also allows God to continue to be just while justifying sinful man.
7. No one can boast about his own goodness.
8. Faith.
9. No group of man has a monopoly on God. God wants to save all men.
10. Faith.
11. It establishes the law.
11. All men can be saved, but only by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. No one can be good enough to deserve salvation; therefore, it is only by faith that we can be saved. However, that does not rule out all works, since our faith must be proven by works of obedience.

Bible Find

(from page 52)

- 1 — D
- 2 — G
- 3 — I
- 4 — K
- 5 — C
- 6 — E
- 7 — B
- 8 — L
- 9 — H
- 10 — J
- 11 — A
- 12 — F
- 13 — O
- 14 — M
- 15 — N

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