

VOLUME SIXTY-THREE

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL





Delicate, Fragile Treasures

Have you seen them?
Those fragile,
minutely designed,
exquisitely colored
flowers
God created?

Some are so tiny,
so thin of fabric,
so easy to be broken,
If I had made such fragility
I would have built around them
thick....glass....cases,
Protecting them day and night
From nature's harsh
and careless touch.

But God had different thoughts:
He planted treasures
— delicate, fragile treasures —
In the desert's heat
and barrenness,
In the tundra's cold
and wasted wilds,
In the jungle's wet
and monstrous growth.

And everywhere
God's jewels
survive
and thrive,
and seem doubly,
triple
precious
because they live
where fragile gems should never grow.

And in those wild and barren soils
They speak of God.

-- Betty Burton Choate

What is a “family”?

- ◆ A family consists of parents and children.
 - ◆ It wears the family name.
 - ◆ With love, parents teach and care for the children.
 - ◆ The children are obedient to the parents.
 - ◆ The parents have authority to reward or punish children, based on their behavior.
-

What is God’s “family”?

- ◆ I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God ... (1 Timothy 3:15).
 - ◆ Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are ... (Hebrews 3:6).
-

The family of God is the Church

- ◆ These are people who have been born into the family through the new birth (John 3:5).
- ◆ The church wears the name of Christ (Romans 16:16; Ephesians 3:14,15).
- ◆ Faithful children are obedient to the New Testament pattern and law (Revelation 2:10).
- ◆ Christians will be rewarded or punished, according to their life in Christ (Rev. 22:14).

A denominational preacher once presented a list of New Testament Scriptures dealing with “faith”, and he challenged, “Now **what are you going to do** about these?” He listed such passages as:

...purifying their hearts by faith... (Acts 15:9).

...those who are sanctified by faith in Me (Acts 26:18).

The just shall live by faith... (Romans 1:17).

...a man is justified by faith... (Romans 3:28).

*...For by grace you have been saved through faith...
(Ephesians 2:8).*

The answer? “I accept all of them. They are the Word of God. Without faith, nothing that any of us can do toward God actually counts; so every passage regarding the necessity of faith in our hearts is 100% true. There is no argument.

“But, now, **what are you going to do** with the many verses that teach that our faith is the threshold for our continued obedience to God, resulting in the *initial* — and *continued* — forgiveness of sins?”

*... make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them...
(Matthew 28:19).*

*He who believes and is baptized will be saved...
(Mark 16:16).*

*... Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins...”
(Acts 22:16).*

We are not dealing honestly with God when we array one Scripture against another.

ALL must be believed and obeyed:

“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 2:24,26).

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



“Come, Let Us Reason Together” (Isaiah 1:1-20)

Byron Nichols

The words of Isaiah and the other prophets were obviously for the benefit of the people of their day, but they were much more than that. Their words contained principles that have also been applicable and pertinent for all generations since.

The first verse of the text says, *“The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz ...”* Through divine guidance and revelation, Isaiah was made able to perceive the message that God wanted transmitted to His people, and he delivered that message as if the Lord Himself were speaking.

Jehovah testifies in verse two that He has cared for Judah as a loving and devoted father. In spite of the fact that He loved them and provided for them as His children, their response was ingratitude, and even disobedience and outright rebellion.

We see in verses five and six that these people were so depraved and impenitent that they are pictured as being sick and afflicted from head to foot. They stubbornly refused to forsake their unrighteous ways. They were indeed a hopeless lot.

The Lord Reacts to Their Worship

Verses 11-15 constitute some of God’s harshest statements regarding false worship in the entire Old Testament. Judah’s worship was no more than an abomination to the Lord!

Perhaps the Lord’s animosity reached its zenith when He stated that His soul hated their disgusting excuse for worship (verse 14). We need to remember that this is the same God that John, in 1 John. 4:8,16, described as being the very personification of love! But we see here that the God of love can become totally nauseated by the conduct of His own chosen people!

The Remedy: Repent

Fortunately for Judah, the Lord didn't leave them, as it were, dangling over the fires of Hell. In spite of all of His grave reprimands, His love for them is still there. This is seen in His plea in verses 16,17 to turn away from their evil and from their pretense and hypocrisy.

God specifies nine things in verses 16,17 that must be done in order to make their lives acceptable in His sight. Even a rather casual reading of these commands shows that acceptable worship requires much more than just doing the right acts at the right time and in the right manner when assembled for worship. We see here that people only fool themselves when they think that they can live carelessly and dishonorably through the week and then be able to offer up acceptable worship in the worship assembly.



A Reasonable Solution Is Offered by Jehovah

After this severe reprimand to Judah, the Lord again displays His mercy and willingness to forgive penitent sinners. God entreats His wayward children to accept His reasonable terms of pardon. Thus, in verse 18, the loving Lord said, *“Come now, and let us reason together ...”*

The Lord proposes that they be reasonable and acknowledge their sins and listen to His gracious offer to forgive them and accept them back into His good graces.

What an impressive gesture He is making! He stresses to them the awful contrast between purity and their sinfulness. Though the contrast is tremendous, Jehovah is more than willing to make them as pure as the snow.

The Choice Is Theirs

The Lord wills that all men be saved (2 Peter 3:9), but He leaves it up to man to decide for himself, as He says in verses 19,20 of our text, *“If you are willing and obedient ...”*

Thus we come to the end of the Lord's effort here to call His wayward people to reason. Isaiah concludes our text with the impressive affirmation, *"For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."* The Lord had spoken from the depths of His heart. In spite of all their sins, He still longed for the salvation of His people.

Lessons for Today

Though originally for Judah, the words of this text are so very pertinent for the church even today! Judah did not understand that acceptable worship of a holy God can only come from holy people. Now, what about us today? We have to realize that to offer up worship that is acceptable to God we must approach Him with *"clean hands and a pure heart ..."* (Psalm 24:4).

We each must be fully persuaded of these three things regarding worship: (1) that worship is to be offered by people whose everyday lives depict a deep and sincere commitment to Christ; (2) that worship is submitted to God for His acceptance and pleasure; and (3) that we must not only possess this understanding ourselves — it is imperative that we continually do our very best to help other Christians to also understand this.

May we never neglect to treat God in the manner which He deserves. May we faithfully heed Him, honor Him, love Him, obey Him, serve Him, thank Him, and worship Him. †

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:8-12)



The Bride of Christ

Jerry Bates

Several images are used in the Bible to describe the church so that we can better understand it. Some of those images are a kingdom, a body, a temple, a flock, a family, and a priesthood. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul compares the church to a bride. He writes, “*For I am*

jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” This imagery suggests several aspects such as a unique identity, an extremely close relationship, unlimited provisions, and unblemished beauty. However, I want to focus on another aspect, which is unquestioned loyalty.

The idea of a bride conveys faithfulness. Marriage is a commitment, a covenant that requires love and loyalty. In marriage, each partner should look out for the good of the other person. We know Christ has done that for the church. Christ gave Himself for the church just as a good husband would for his bride (Ephesians 5:23). The idea of a marriage suggests a devotion that matters more than life itself. We have heard stories of husbands and wives who chose to face death together rather than be separated. The devotion of their hearts to each other mattered more than life.

Our allegiance to Christ should be more precious than anything else. When Joseph discovered that his espoused wife, Mary, was going to have a child, he was going to put her away. Undoubtedly, he still loved her, but her supposed infidelity was more than he could stand. He was not going to marry a woman who was unfaithful. It is unthinkable for a bride to betray her husband, so Paul used it to illustrate the fidelity of a Christian towards Christ.

James uses the same idea, when he referred to Christians as “adulterers” and “adulteresses” (James 4:4). He stresses that friendship of the world is enmity or hate with God. If the things of this world become more important to us than Christ, then it is just as serious as committing physical adultery. Christ spoke these demanding words in Luke 14:33, *“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”*

Our commitment to Christ should matter more than any other relationship. In marriage, the relationship between a husband and wife should be closer than any other relationship. Anything short of that is bound to cause problems. The same is true spiritually. Our relationship to Christ should be closer than even the relationship of our family. Christ said in Luke 14:26, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also; he cannot be my disciple.”* They seem to be harsh words, but they only emphasize that no relationship should be more important to us than that of Christ.

As we compare the above thoughts to the church of today, we find many shortcomings. The church is no more important than the local social club for many people. They view the church as a good organization, but certainly not something that demands sacrifice or should come before one’s family. Many move from one congregation or group to another, searching for whatever association satisfies their needs and desires for the present time. In the minds of many, the beliefs of family members are more important than what the Bible teaches. Even when confronted with the truth, they refuse to go against their family traditions. Many others spend far more time working and accumulating riches of this world than working for God. They excuse their lack of spiritual activity by saying they don’t have time. In actuality, it only reveals what is most important to them.

How important is God in your life? Many would proclaim that God is very important to them, yet they do some of the things as described previously. If a bride were to exhibit such attitudes, she would not be acceptable to her husband, and those attitudes are not going to be acceptable to our spiritual Husband either. God is indeed a loving God, but He is also a God that will tolerate no rivals. As it has often been said, God will either be number one in your life, or He is not in your life at all. Let us always keep in our minds the imagery of a bride adorned for her husband. As someone once said, **“Let us not just act like the bride of Christ, but let us be the bride of Christ.”** †

“For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 4:24).



Can't See the Forest for the Trees

By Louis Rushmore

There is a popular expression that goes something like this: “You can’t see the forest for the trees.” This expression presupposes that someone is **standing in the woods**, and therefore, he cannot adequately see the forest composed by the mass of trees. Yet, from another vantage point, such as **standing outside the woods**, maybe on the crest of a hill, one can see the forest and may not be able to see the individual trees that compose the forest.

Consider for a moment applying these figures to spiritual matters, and particularly to congregations of the Lord’s church. For instance, as a visiting preacher only speaking for one, two or three class or assembly times, really, I can only see the “forest”; for the most part, I cannot observe the “trees” — the individual members who comprise that congregation. On the other hand, someone who preaches frequently for the same congregation may more easily be able to see the “trees” and less able to see adequately the “forest” — how the congregation may be perceived by visitors or the community.

Think with me a couple of minutes about the different kinds of trees that one might find in the same forest: pines, oaks, maples, dogwoods, mimosas and many more. Furthermore, a forest will likely have in it old trees, saplings and trees of every age in between. Irrespective of the kind of trees or the age of trees, together the various trees constitute a forest. Although we humans may value or dismiss as worthless certain kinds of trees, together, the various trees nevertheless make up a forest.

There is a congregation with which I am familiar, owing to my several

occasional visits over the years, that makes me think: “I can’t see the forest for the trees.” In this case, that’s a good thing. These “trees” — local Christians — cause in me awe and admiration.



Human tendency, even among Christians (1 Corinthians 1:10-13), is to be fussy if not divisive. Often, adults don’t play well together any more than small children who

sometimes fuss with each other. Small children, however, get over it shortly and play well with each other again. This little church, though, functions well, despite being a “forest” comprised of various “trees.”

This church is comprised of at least four races, representing directly or indirectly several nationalities and cultures. Members represent all ages and socio-economic distinctions. From a purely secular viewpoint, these people **have nothing in common**, but because they **have Jesus Christ in common** as their Savior, they are an awe-inspiring **family of God** meeting in their community. The point is that they (and all Christians should) have and remember Jesus Christ in common as Savior. Jesus Christ our Savior is the great equalizer; nothing matters beyond the salvation of souls from past sins and subsequent preparation to meet God in eternity (Amos 4:12).

Further observation respecting the reason behind this remarkable cohesiveness is their “out of body experience.” By that I mean that this church is comprised of Christians whose interaction with each other **is not** limited to assemblies for Bible class and worship; they have “out of *corporate* body experience.” They not only worship and study God’s Word together, but they eat together in one another’s homes, they play together, and they work together to further the cause of Christ. Doesn’t some of that, the frequency of interaction in one another’s lives in addition to assemblies, remind you a little bit of the church of the Bible (Acts 2:46)?

These “trees,” though they differ from one another in a number of ways, make up a healthy “forest” of Christians in their community. What kind of “trees” are we, and do we contribute to a healthy “forest” of God’s people in our respective communities? †

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We Are Converted by the Holy Spirit

Albert Gardner

“And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sins, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8 ASV).

It is certain the Holy Spirit converts sinners, but the real question is **how** He converts. Some hold the view that the Spirit comes directly to the sinner to convert him, which is sometimes called the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. If that is true, why does He not come to every one, and why is every one not converted? If He comes directly to one but not to all, that would make Him a respecter of persons, something that does not happen with God (Acts 10:34).

Notice what happened on Pentecost. Before that crowd would ever consider salvation they must be convinced they were lost. Peter let them know that God approved of Christ by miracles, wonders, and signs, which they saw. In spite of it, they crucified Him, but God raised Him up (Acts 2:22-24). The death, burial, and resurrection proved He was the Christ. He drew them to that conclusion in Acts 2:36. *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*

“When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Peter told them, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38). Three thousand actually did that and were added to the church.

Were they converted by the Holy Spirit? They certainly were. Peter was an apostle who was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:5), and was, therefore, speaking the message of the Holy Spirit. At that time the message was in inspired men. Now, the message is in an inspired book, but it is the same message. When the people heard, believed, and obeyed the message of the Holy Spirit preached by Peter, they were converted by the Holy Spirit.

The people of Samaria heard the preaching of Philip. The eunuch heard Christ preached by Philip. Ananias preached to Saul. Cornelius heard Peter. Lydia heard Paul. The jailer heard Paul and Silas. The people at Corinth,

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including Crispus, heard, believed, and were baptized. Over and over we have examples of those being converted, but the Spirit converted them when His word was obeyed after being preached by men.

“For we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). It is the plan of God that people tell other people how to be saved. Please do not wait for the Holy Spirit to speak to you directly, for He converts people through His Word, spoken by people. †

Albert Gardner is a Gospel preacher living in Kennett, Missouri, USA.

LOOK TO GOD AND ASK FOR STRENGTH

Tim Childs

No rocket scientist is needed here to explain that we are living in challenging times. Many of us are not accustomed to adversity, at least not openly. Human nature, for the most part, is to prefer that things run smoothly, no hitches, no glitches. Roll with the flow, but some things are beyond our control. No, no one enjoys difficult times. Yet, ultimately, they can have some positive effect. By choice, that positive effect should be maximized for the greater good of the heavenly kingdom. God can help us through difficult times to become stronger and more effective in our service for him.

In times like these, may we remember to look to God for strength. While we at times may be weak, our heavenly Father is an awesome God of power. One of the wonderful things about our Creator is that He not only knows how to majestically utilize His power, but He has the capacity and willingness to share power with us His creatures. Paul closes his prayer in Ephesians Chapter 3 with an expression that glory might be *“... unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us ...”* (vs. 20). Since we have been recreated and redeemed by the blood of Christ, we know something personally about the power of God. God’s power transcends all other power in the universe.

The familiar lyrics, “... the arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own”, penned by George Duffield in the mid-nineteenth century, admonish us against relying on our own personal strength as we often seek to do. Let’s make a stronger connection to the source of the greatest power. †

Tim Childs is a Gospel preacher serving the Hillcrest church of Christ in Baldwin, Mississippi, USA.

A LONGING FOR HOME

Michael L. King

There is a cultural innateness within each of us to have a longing for home. We have a confidence that when at home everything is just right and security can be found, regardless of how threatening the circumstance might be. It is an empty feeling to be in college, away in the military, or on some lonely mission field half way around the world, to think of the comfort and warmth being enjoyed back home without us. It would be an insult to any set of parents, our siblings, the community in which we were raised, or to the local home congregation if we were not able to think favorably about them and be missed while separated from them.

The Jews in Babylonian captivity lived under a false illusion and grieved the entire time they were there when thinking of home. They wept when they *“remembered Zion”* (Psalm 137:1). When the Babylonians requested them to play and sing one of the songs of Zion, they hung their harps upon the willows and asked, *“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?”* (verse 4). They desired their tongues to cleave to the roof of their mouths if they ever reached a point where they did not prefer Jerusalem *“above their chief joy”* (verse 6). Their lives were filled with despair, and hopelessness reigned instead of comfort and purpose.

Remember the old sayings we used to hear as children extolling the virtues of home and framing our attitude about home? We grew up with warm feelings about “home sweet home”, “home is where the heart is”, “homeward bound”, “I wish I was homeward bound”, and “there’s no place like home”. It is so easy to lose sight of those dreams, aspirations, and confidences because of the conflicting environment in which we live today and changes that have been wrought in our lives. We longed for home because we felt as if everything would be alright when there. There was promise of acceptance and understanding regardless of our failures. Man today has become somewhat self-confident and a refugee from God and His Son Jesus. The observation has been made that we need to see home, not so much as depicted in a Norman Rockwell painting, but as Leonardo Da Vinci’s painting of the Last Supper. At the long table, everyone sits with expressions of grief, confusion, and betrayal.

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The Lord had just explained that He would soon be leaving them. He sat in the center to bear their burdens, ease their pain, and calm their cares. Home is found in the midst of pain and discomfort. When we find ourselves at home in God, we can manage to hold all things together. We often try all kinds of substitutions to curb our longings, but appeasement can only result from our being at home with God in the midst of grief, loss and confusion. Many come from dysfunctional family backgrounds to become disillusioned, disappointed, and discouraged, similar to the condition of the Hebrew captives.

Isaiah prophesied that there would be a voice crying in the wilderness to *“Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God”* (Isaiah 40:3). John the baptizer was that voice crying in the wilderness, introducing Jesus, who would mark a path that would lead to a relationship with God (Mark 1:1-3). Jeremiah reiterated the sentiments of God by telling them to *“Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace”* (Jeremiah 29:7). God was telling His people being disciplined to find home where His presence resides. He was telling them to make their home where they were, because God is not left behind at another place or another time. Yes, you may find Him in the midst of confusion and fear. Home in the true sense can be found here, with Christ in the midst of us. Prepare a way for the Lord, and cease concentrating on our life’s dilemmas or the place where we are stuck.

An interesting feature about spiritual living is that when we seek the good of others, it always results in deep good for ourselves; seeking good simply for ourselves always causes shallow results to follow. Great instructions were given in Paul’s sermon on Mar’s Hill. He told them that *“they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us”* (Acts 17:27). Booker T. Washington used the following illustration in 1895 in his Atlanta Compromise Speech which exemplifies our point:

“A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, ‘Water, water; we die of thirst!’ The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, ‘Cast down your bucket where you are.’ A second time the signal, ‘Water, water; send us water!’ ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, ‘Cast down your bucket where you are.’ And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, ‘Cast down

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your bucket where you are.’ The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River.”

We must not live under a false security today while looking for idealism from the past. God is not far from us at any time, so we must sink our faith in Him to find the sustenance presently needed. †

Michael L. King preaches for the Lakeside Church of Christ in Orange Park, Florida, USA.

INTEGRITY IN DAILY LIVING

Ernest S. Underwood

There are many in today’s society who would like to have a close and personal relationship with God. Such a relationship begins with living a life of integrity. In Psalm 15, God presents a summary of what He expects of His people. He gives a list of do’s and don’ts that, if followed by man, will be pleasing to Him. Let’s look at that list that God gives. The person worthy to meet with God is one who:

- Walks uprightly.
- Works righteousness.
- Speaks the truth.
- Does not backbite.
- Does no evil to his neighbor.
- Does not take up a reproach against a friend.
- Honors those who fear the Lord, but does not honor the ungodly.
- Keeps his word, even when it is costly.
- Does not practice usury.
- Does not take bribes.

By God’s standard, are you worthy to meet Him?

Ernest S. Underwood preaches for the College Avenue church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, USA. He presently travels to India annually.

Calls from the Low Dungeon

Neal Pollard

All he said was what was true. For prophesying that Judah would be devastated by Babylon, Jeremiah was cast into the dungeon of the King's son (Jeremiah 38:1-6). He was left there to starve to death. Were it not for the compassionate heart of Ebedmelech, Jeremiah likely would have died.

The book of Lamentations, written by Jeremiah, is entirely filled with his sorrowful cries because of God's punished people. According to the old *Whedon's Commentary*, the book can be seen as five distinct mournful poems. Each poem reflects a different facet of the common sorrow (chapter one, the physical suffering of Judah; chapter two, God's scolding of Judah; chapter three, Jeremiah's spiritual suffering because of Judah's sins; chapter four, the spiritual suffering of Judah because of their sins; chapter five, Jeremiah's supplications for contrite Judah).

In Lamentations 3:55, the weeping prophet tells the Lord, "*I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon.*" This image is identical to the words of the psalmist, who says in Psalm 88:6, "*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.*" David seems to complain that he has been placed there because of injus-

tice and not because of his iniquity. Our minds are called back to Dothan, where jealous brothers cast Joseph into an empty pit. The sins of Joseph's brothers caused him to look up from his pit. However, no doubt or question arises about why Judah is in this figurative pit from which Jeremiah cries. Though Jeremiah had lived godly and had not merited suffering, he realized he stood among a nation of people who failed to obey Jehovah. Thus, from the low dungeon of despair, Jeremiah said several things.

"You heard me when I cried" (Lamentations 3:56). From this statement we are made to see that the Lord recognizes His people! David knew this (Psalm 6:8, Psalm 18:3-6, Psalm 66:19), as he often exclaimed that "*God hath heard me.*" Paul's inspired conviction of hope was "*the Lord knoweth them that are His*" (2 Timothy 2:19). To the Corinthian brethren, Paul said, "*But if any man love God, the same is known of God*" (1 Corinthians 8:3). In verse 56, Jeremiah finds comfort in calamitous times. He also makes an impassioned plea that God not turn away from His crying. Because Jeremiah was a child of God, he was assured that God would, in some way, answer him.

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“You drew near when I called” (Lamentations 3:57). Too, the Lord **responds** to His people! Jeremiah recognizes the “shepherd aspect” of the Lord. One can clearly envision the cradling arms of the Almighty, scooping up His lambs injured by their own choices, and giving them comfort in their repentance (see Psalm 23). James teaches us that God draws near to us if we draw near unto Him (James 4:8).

“You have pled the causes of my soul” (Lamentations 3:58). Truly, the Lord **represents** His people! David prayed that God would plead his cause and deliver him (Psalm 119:154). The prophet Micah patiently waited for the representation of the Lord on his behalf. He said, *“I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me”* (Micah 7:9). The ultimate representation of the Lord was the incarnation of Christ. He who in the flesh experienced humanity represents man before God as Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

“You have redeemed my life” (Lamentations 3:58). The Lord **redeems** His people! A suffering Job rejoiced, *“I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand upon the earth at the latter day”* (Job 19:25). Jeremiah, knowing the mercy of the Lord, confidently spoke of how God had preserved his life in times past. In a greater sense, Christ is the means of mankind’s redemption from eternal damnation. That great passage, Titus 2:11-14, proclaims that God’s saving grace has appeared to all men in the person of Christ, *“that he might redeem us from all iniquity.”* Christ’s incorruptible blood redeems the faithful obedient (see 1 Peter 1:18). Part of the enchanting song sung by the adorers of Christ includes the words *“...thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”* (Revelation 5:9).

“You have seen my wrong” (Lamentations 3:59). Additionally, we learn that the Lord **reprimands** His people! God sees all that we do, though many think that God only sees the good we do, others think that God only sees other people’s wrongs, and still others think that God only sees non-Christians’ sins. God sees *everything everyone does every instant everywhere and every time*. How wonderful and reassuring this is to those who walk in the light. How fearful this is for all who walk in darkness. God, in His justice, will punish all whose wrongs are not covered by Christ’s precious blood.

Obviously, God’s people had sown iniquity. Jeremiah rebukes his brethren throughout the book of Jeremiah because of their idolatry, hypocrisy, failings in the home, materialism, and stubborn wills. Through the Babylonians, Judah reaped the captivity. But, as Jeremiah prophesied, Judah would not be captive

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forever (Jeremiah 30-35). God heard the cries of Jeremiah from the low dungeon of despair. Christians have the confidence that God will deliver them from the pits of persecution, the dungeons of despair, and the cells of sin. What hope! †

Neal Pollard preaches for the Bear Valley congregation in Denver, Colorado, USA.

Does God Have Your Attention?

Bert Brown

God is sovereign over the universe by virtue of His having spoken it into existence and maintains it (Exodus 20:11; Psalm 33:8-12). Jesus often admonished, *“He that hath ears to hear let him hear”* (Matthew 11:15; 13:9,43; Luke 8:8). God from heaven in thunderous tones said of Jesus, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him”* (Matthew 17:5). God promised Moses that He would raise up a prophet like him from among the Jews and would put His (God’s) Word in that prophet’s mouth and hold the people accountable for hearing what that prophet, Jesus, had to say (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Acts 3:22). Hebrews 1:2 informs us that God speaks to people today through his Son, Jesus, the Christ. While on earth, Jesus said that His Word was what God the Father told Him to say (John 8:26).

When acknowledged as the Son of God by the apostle Peter (Matthew 16:18), Jesus responded by promising to build His (Christ’s) church upon the bedrock truth (v. 18). This was accomplished on the first Pentecost feast in Jerusalem after Jesus rose from the dead (Acts 2). As God’s message of salvation was preached, three thousand responded to the Holy Spirit inspired call to *‘repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins’* (Acts 2:36-39) and were by the Lord Himself added to the church that Jesus said He would build (Acts 2:47).

This church is God’s family. All of God’s children are in His family. They all wear the family name, Christian (Isaiah 62:2; Acts 11:26; Ephesians 3:15). This is a God-given name. God has but one family. It is spoken of often as Christ’s body (Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14). He had but one body while on earth. He has but one spiritual body, or church, on earth today. It is referred to as *“the Lamb’s bride”* (Revelation 21:9; Romans 7:4). He is still adding those being saved by His grace through obedience to the Gospel message to His church (Romans 1:16; 6:3-5, 16-18).

“Let the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him... he maketh the devices of the people of none effect” (Psalm 33:8, 10b). Hear the Word of Jesus, my friend. Live *for* Him and someday *with* Him!

Does God have your attention?

†

Our Amazing Blood and Its Pump

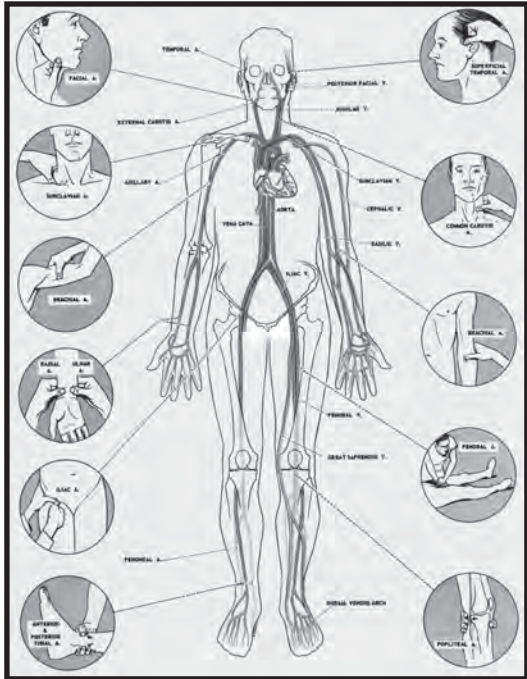
Dr. Glover Shipp

Blood is a marvelous substance. Its color is produced by an immense number of red blood cells — 30 million in each drop, and floating in a pure liquid,

plasma. Blood runs throughout the entire body, passing through a network of minitubes — 60,000 thousand miles of them — but the cycle through the entire body, leaving the heart and returning to it, is completed in only 18 seconds! There are millions of valves that control pressure and circulation. However, the entire system can be influenced by a single thought, emotion, or exercise.

The average adult human body contains about 10 pints of blood. All of the blood passes through the heart, a marvel of engineering that beats more than 100,000 times a day, resting between each beat. Blood is a perishable fluid, but the heart acts as a perfect pump, with valves that open and close so gently that they don't harm the blood globules.

Blood carries to each cell of the body all of the chemicals and enzymes that control the various bodily processes and, along with these, a vast number of antibodies (guards) that protect the body against infection, hemorrhage, and other dangers. It also maintains a reserve of fuel to the cells, for use during the night, between meals, and during moments of stress or exercise.



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But the most marvelous fact about all of this is the chemical process that occurs continually. The body needs at least 16 quarts of oxygen per hour during periods of rest and up to 300 quarts per hour during intense activity, such as running or playing basketball. However, all of this oxygen cannot be carried in the blood stream in the form of a gas. It must be combined chemically with hemoglobin to form an extremely complex molecule:

C3032 H4812 N580 Fe4 O880 S12 — 3032 atoms of carbon, 4812 atoms of hydrogen, 580 atoms of nitrogen, four atoms of iron, 880 atoms of oxygen and 12 atoms of sulfur.

There are 9520 atoms in just one blood cell and these must be maintained at this level constantly. Without iron or oxygen, what would happen to the blood? I tend toward being anemic, which means that my body doesn't absorb, without some help, the level of iron content that it needs. If not treated, the result is extreme tiredness. I take iron supplements to help maintain the necessary level of iron in my system.

The blood obtains a steady supply of oxygen from the lungs, carrying it to all parts of the body and bringing back to the lungs the end product of this oxygen combustion — a poison, carbon dioxide. Although separating the carbon dioxide from other substances is difficult, this is done in the lungs in a third of a second, freeing the poison to be exhaled and picking up a new supply of oxygen. To do this, the body produces 2 million red blood cells per second, each identical and perfect!

Until something goes wrong with it, our heart — the “engine” that keeps the blood flowing — is pretty much ignored. We're vaguely aware of it, but give it little thought, assuming that it will continue pumping forever. “The heart weighs between 7 and 12 ounces (200 to 425 grams) and is a little larger than the size of your fist. By the end of a long life, a person's heart may have beat (expanded and contracted) more than 3.5 billion times. In fact, each day, the average heart beats 100,000 times, pumping about 2,000 gallons (7,571 liters) of blood” (Texas Heart Institute).

Isn't this an amazing machine, one which provides the entire body with life, through a vast system of arteries and capillaries and veins? Is there design to all of this, or has it come about just by chance? †

Dr. Glover Shipp, formerly a missionary in Brazil, serves as an elder in the church of Christ in Edmond, Oklahoma, USA. Dr. Shipp has written more than 30 books, dealing with a variety of biblical topics. “Our Amazing Blood and Its Pump” comes from his most recent book, *God's Hand or No Hand?*

MANY PROOFS

Danny Boggs

Did Jesus rise from the dead? Everything in Christianity turns on a sure and positive answer to that question. *“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins”* (1 Corinthians 15:17). If Christ is not risen, what makes us think that we will ever rise from the dead? *“If we have hope in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied”* (1 Corinthians 15:19). To His apostles, Jesus *“presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God”* (Acts 1:3).

We have proof — many “infallible” proofs. Jesus appeared repeatedly to the apostles over a space of forty days. He appeared to women who had followed Him (Matthew 28:1-19). He appeared to members of His physical family (1 Corinthians 15:7). He even appeared to more than five hundred people at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).

When He appeared, He conversed with people. He showed them the very

hands and feet that had been wounded on the cross, and He invited their touch (Luke 24:39,40; John 20:20,27). They grabbed hold of Him (Matthew 28:9). He stayed in their homes and broke bread with them and ate fish (Luke 24:30, 42,43). He cooked breakfast for them (John 21:9-14).

In all of this, Jesus made witnesses — eyewitnesses (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). What did they do with what they knew? They couldn’t help but tell what they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20)! Jesus was risen from the dead, a Prince and a Savior offering forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:29-32).

Our faith is no leap in the dark. It is not a belief against reality. It is neither superstition nor wishful thinking. True faith in Jesus stands on what eyewitnesses saw and heard. The Holy Spirit provided them just the right words to share the facts (Hebrews 2:1-4). Saving and sustaining faith keeps moving in the direction that those facts lead. †

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

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The Testimony of Two Tombs

Mike Hinton

No historical event is more relevant to our faith than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Paul emphasized the critical relationship that the resurrection has to faith in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. He asserts that if the resurrection never took place, our faith is empty and impotent to save, and thus all Christians are pitiable fools.

It should come as no surprise to Christians that we must endure constant assaults on this cornerstone of our faith. These attacks on the veracity of the resurrection began within hours of the event (see Matthew 28:11-15), and continue still to this day. The persistency of these assaults on our faith require that we bolster our defenses regularly, lest seeds of doubt take root in our minds. To that end, let us return to a day in which the truth of the resurrection first came to public “trial” before men, recorded in Acts chapter 2.

The day was Pentecost, less than two months after the resurrection of Jesus. Peter and the rest of the apostles went about preaching to crowds of people in Jerusalem, telling them of the risen Savior. When some in the crowd tried to discredit the apostles by accusing them of being drunk, Peter took the stand. He proclaimed in no uncertain terms that the same Jesus whom many in this crowd had witnessed being executed was now resurrected from the dead and sitting at the right hand of God.

Then, in a demonstration of faith and courage, Peter went out on a limb. To a crowd of people who had first-hand knowledge of all the events relating to the resurrection, he introduced the witness of two tombs. He reminded them of the tomb of the beloved King David that was right where it had been for most of a thousand years, still occupied by David’s bones. He then by implication introduced the crucial testimony of an empty and abandoned tomb. He applied the prophetic words of David to Jesus, maintaining that it was He who had not remained in the realm of the dead, nor had His body decayed. Peter’s challenge to his hearers was clear; if Jesus was dead, what about the empty tomb?

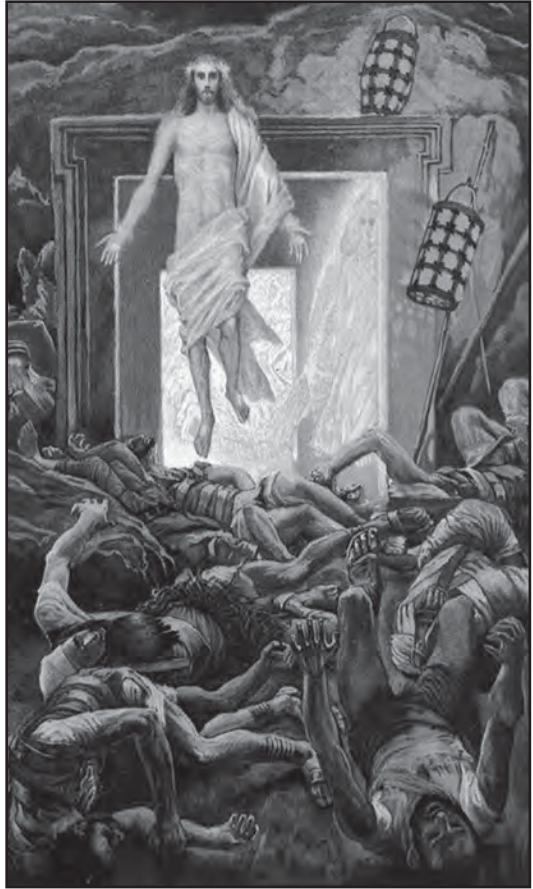
Now, we’ve already noted the preemptive strike that the Jewish rulers had made concerning the tomb, how they paid the soldiers money to repeat a

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made-up version of resurrection morning. Those in the crowd that day had probably heard this report since it was widely known in Jerusalem. But they also knew what happened to soldiers who let prisoners escape (see Acts 12:19, 16:27).

And yet here were some Roman soldiers who, by their own testimony, couldn't keep track of a dead body, much less a living one. And they were walking around and telling how Jesus' body was stolen while they slept at their post (with the assurance of the Jewish rulers that if word of their dereliction of duty got back to Pilate they would intervene).

Though to our knowledge, he never spoke the words, Peter's message to the audience that day was clear. Who are you going to believe? Will you believe the Roman soldiers and the Jewish rulers who clearly had an axe to grind? Or do you believe the prophets, the miracles of Jesus' ministry, and the empty tomb? A jury of about 3,000 people, who to some degree had themselves been witnesses of these events, believed the testimony of that empty tomb. Even with all the first-hand knowledge present that day, Peter won his first case in defense of the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ! †



Mike Hinton is a Gospel preacher living in Blanchard, Oklahoma, USA.

How Much Is a Sermon Worth?

Bobby Dockery

At his death, Jonathan Edwards, the celebrated colonial preacher, left an estate valued at 900 pounds. Included was a collection of 30 manuscripts and 1,074 sermons which were assigned a total value of just six pounds by the appraiser. In modern terms, that works out to less than 14 cents each for the sermons of one of the greatest religious thinkers in the history of America!

Tragically, many in our world would agree with that low assessment of the value of a sermon. It has been widely concluded that preaching is useless, powerless, and irrelevant. In U.T. Holmes' book, *The Future Shape of Ministry*, the charge is made that preaching is "futile" when "relied upon as a major communication tool" (p. 142).

But is it so? Is preaching really so meaningless and ineffective? How much IS a sermon really worth?

- 1. A Sermon Can Change the Course of History.** The preaching of Micah postponed the destruction of Judah for more than a century (Jeremiah 26:18,19)! Jonah preached a sermon in Nineveh which produced such deep penitence that God spared that doomed city (Jonah 3:4-10)! The sermons of Luther, Hus, and Zwingli stirred the conscience of a continent and turned the history of Europe into new channels.
- 2. A Sermon Can Change the Hearts and Lives of Men.** So powerful was Peter's Pentecost sermon that 3,000 people were pricked in their hearts and submitted to the Lordship of Christ in baptism (Acts 2:37,38,41). Girolomo Savanarola was walking in the country one Sunday when he came upon a small rural church. He wandered in without any awareness that he had embarked upon a course which would eventually lead him to the stake for his outspoken opposition to the Papacy. His biographer describes what happened: "The sermon, or rather, one single sentence of it, changed Girolomo's life. The preacher's words went ringing into his head

THE WORD OF GOD

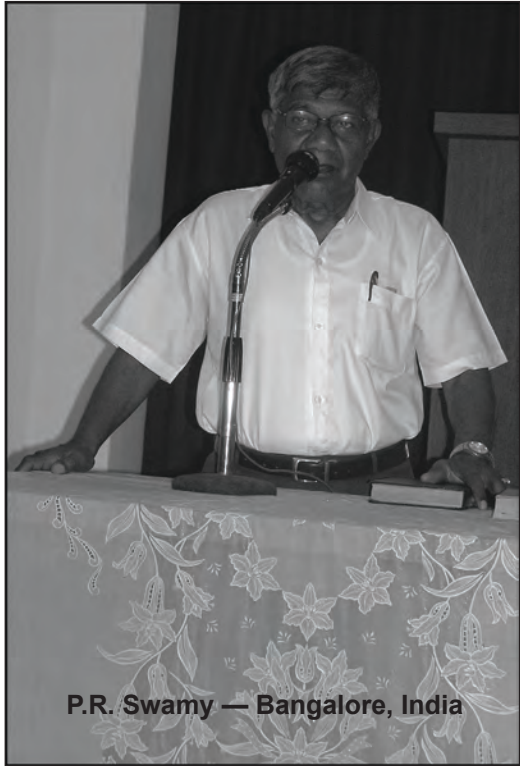
and into his heart and overpowered him. He was a prisoner of the word of God from that moment until the end of his life” (Pierre Van Passen, *A Crown of Fire*, p. 43).

3. **A Sermon Can Change the Destiny of Souls.** Paul knew that the Gospel was “*the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth*” (Romans 1:16). There is no salvation without the proclamation of God’s Word. Preaching occupies a central place in God’s plan for the redemption of lost souls. Only when we recognize what the soul is worth will we begin to understand what a sermon can be worth!

Many people (and churches, too!) are no longer interested in preaching. Pulpits are being filled with psychologists, performers, and publicists, while real sermons have become few and far between. Many have lost faith in the power of God’s Word, and so they tell us that preaching is outmoded and ineffectual. But it is not true! It never has been true, and it never will be true, because “*it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*” (1 Corinthians 1:21). †

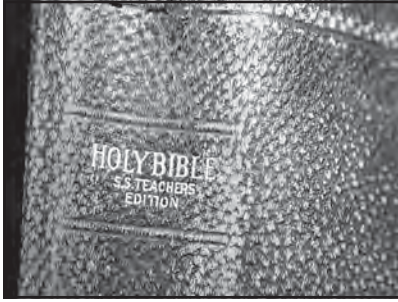
Pulpits are being filled with psychologists, performers, and publicists, while real sermons have become few and far between.

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



P.R. Swamy — Bangalore, India

THE WORD OF GOD



The Bible

Hollis Miller

How important is the Bible? Look at it this way: were it not for the Bible, all the books written about it would never have been published. There would be no Bible encyclopedias or dictionaries, no Hebrew/Greek lexicons or grammars, no theological works which discuss biblical subjects, and no atlases of the biblical world. Without the Bible, the millions of sermons preached throughout post-apostolic history would amount to no more than opinion.

The Bible is important for reasons which far transcend all the above. From the Bible we learn the teaching of Jesus Christ. We also learn about God's dealings with mankind, from creation to the closing of earth's history. Most importantly, we learn what we need to do to be saved from our sins, and how to live in a manner that is pleasing to

our heavenly Father.

The Bible teaches us about the church, its origin, purpose, and destiny. It also enlightens us concerning do's and don'ts regarding morals and general personal conduct. Such themes as love, marriage, family, and hope are given unparalleled treatment in the Bible. The blessings obtained from the Bible are far too numerous to be catalogued.

Should we read the Bible? Surely such a question is self-answering. For all who are concerned about their souls, it is not unlike asking if we should eat, drink water, or sleep. What a blessing the Bible is to us, and how fortunate we are that we have it to read. The next time you are tempted to ignore reading the Bible, give more than a casual thought to what you are being tempted to do.

... we learn what we need to do to be saved from our sins, and how to live in a manner that is pleasing to our heavenly Father.

Its light is like the body
of heaven in its clearness;
Its vastness like the bosom
of the sea;
Its variety like scenes
of nature.

— **John Henry Newman** †

Hollis Miller is an evangelist living in Murray, Kentucky, USA.

SPEAKING BOLDLY

Loy Mitchell

“Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (Acts 14:3)

Paul and Barnabas came to the city of Iconium, where they spoke in the synagogue of the Jews. Scripture tells us that *“a great multitude both of Jews and of the Greeks believed”* (Acts 14:1b). Trouble, however, came from the unbelieving Jews who stirred up the Gentiles and *“poisoned their minds against the brethren”* (Acts 14:2b).

This did not stop the preachers from their work. They were speaking boldly

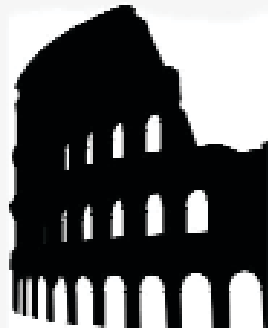
There is no room for apologizing for what the Bible teaches.

in the Lord! How we need boldness today! In this day the politically correct thing is to keep quiet, or agree to disagree. Have we fallen into that mode of thinking? Yes, we must speak the truth in love, but let us be bold in our proclamation.

There is no room for apologizing for what the Bible teaches. Does the Bible teach that Jesus built a church? Yes, it does (Matthew 16:18). Does the Bible teach that baptism is necessary to be saved? Yes, it does (Mark 16:16). Does the Bible teach that repentance is necessary? Yes, it does (Luke 13:3). Does the Bible teach that there will be a judgment? Yes, it does (Matthew 25:31-46). Does the Bible teach that marriage is between a man and a woman? Yes, it does (Matthew 19:1-9).

The purpose of the church of the Lord is to speak the Word of God and to speak it boldly to all who will listen. We all want to go to heaven. We want to be saved. That cannot take place without the message of God. The Lord willing, let us all determine to do our best every day to speak the *“word of His grace”* with boldness. Let us invite others to hear. Let us pray for the proclamation of the truth. Let us pray that we will be strengthened and that the lost will be saved. †

Loy Mitchell, former missionary to Zimbabwe, now lives and works for the Lord in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.



Romans 6:12-23

Jerry Bates

1. What does Paul say that we are not to let reign in our mortal bodies? (v. 12)
2. What are the “members” that Paul mentions in verse 13?
3. How are we to present our “members” to God? (v. 13)
4. What system are we living under today? What does this mean to the relationship between us and sin? (v. 14)
5. Why were some people apparently saying that sin did not matter to a Christian? Was this a true conclusion? (v. 15)
6. Paul says that we are either slaves of _____ leading to _____ or slaves of _____ leading to _____? (v. 16)
7. How were we delivered from being slaves to sin? (v. 17).
8. Since we have been delivered from sin, what did we become? (v. 18).
9. How dedicated should we be to being slaves of righteousness?
10. What was the attitude of Paul’s readers toward their former lives? (v. 21).
11. What is the end of being slaves of sin? (v. 20-21)
12. What is the end of being slaves of God? (v. 22)
13. What are the wages of sin? (v. 23)
14. What is the gift of God to us? (v. 23)
15. Where is eternal life to be found? (v. 23)

(See inside back cover for answers)

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness, 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:12-23, New King James Version)

Note: This section is an exhortation to live lives that are consistent with our changed relationship to God. Slavery was common in the first century, Paul uses that image to illustrate the effect of sin or God on our lives. All of us are slaves to something. Most of us don't like the idea of being a slave to anyone or anything, and most would deny that they are. However, Paul emphasizes that we are slaves to whatever lifestyle we choose to live, either sin or godliness, and the result of the two different lifestyles are quite different. We are set free from the bondage and guilt of sin through obeying from the heart the commandments of God, and after being set free, we should live lives consistent with that newfound freedom in Christ.

The Truth on Truth

Rod Kyle

Jesus stood before Pilate, and Pilate asked, “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38). How would you answer him? How essential is truth? How does it affect you?

Without truth, none of us would exist. The physical universe operates on fixed truths. However, this article concerns itself with spiritual truth. It is vital for you to know that the God who is there, is a God of Truth (Isaiah 65:16). His truthfulness is fixed (Titus 1:2). Everything, therefore, rests upon Him. Only the fool would deny this (Psalm 14:1; Proverbs 12:15).

All spiritual truth is perceived through the Bible (John 1:17; 17:17). God’s Word is indestructible (Matthew 24:35), multi-dimensional (Psalm 119:89), pure (Proverbs 30:5), and powerful (Hebrews 4:12). Through it the Creator speaks to His creation (John 5:19-24). It sets us free from religious error (John 8:32), remakes our hearts (1 Peter 1:22), and cleanses us from sin (John 17:17), IF we will

believe and obey it (John 14: 23,24)!

To realize the truth about truth, you only have to imagine a world without truth. Can you? Simply put, such a world could not exist. Even error needs to be surrounded by truth for error to exist. Yet, there is a world where only truth exists. Jesus describes it in Matthew 6:19,20. You cannot earn a position in this realm, but you can inherit it as a gift (Romans 6:23). But you must obey the truth (1 Peter 1:22,23) through baptism for the remission of your sins (1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38). Then you must let the Lord add you to His church (Acts 2:47), which is His means of teaching truth to a world immersed in error (1 Timothy 3:15). Then, through a lifetime of study and application of the truth (2 Timothy 2:15), you will enter into the world of eternal truth (2 Peter 1:11).

Remember Pilate’s question, “*What is truth?*” Jesus had already answered his question for him. Read verse 38 of John 18. Pilate was not willing to accept Jesus’ answer. Are you? Are you of the truth? †

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“Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, ‘I find no fault in Him at all.’” John 18:38

Are Infants “By Nature” Children of Wrath?

Wayne Jackson

During a speech some time back before the American Humanist Association, television mogul Ted Turner leveled a blast at Christianity for its alleged doctrine that infants are born in sin. The fact is, though this teaching is popular with certain denominational groups, it is unknown to the Bible. However, a few biblical passages are perverted in a futile attempt to support the doctrine. In Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul wrote: “*And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*”

Here, the apostle describes unregenerate people as being “*by nature children of wrath*”. Calvinists appeal to this verse for support of the doctrine of hereditary total depravity. They feel the passage is affirming that humans are “*by birth children of wrath*”.

Baptist writer B.H. Carroll contended that Ephesians 2:3 “knocks the bottom out of the thought that sin consists in the willful transgression of a known commandment. He argued that the allusion is to “original sin” (pp. 105,106). This is the theory that all people are born tainted with the guilt of Adam’s sin.

The assertion is absolutely false. There are several interesting observations that can be made in connection with Ephesians 2:1ff.

First, note that in verse one the apostle plainly declares that spiritual death is the consequence of “*your trespasses and sins*” (ASV). Note the word *your*. This emphasizes personal sin. We are not spiritually dead as a result of Adam’s transgression. Though the term “your” is not found in the King James Version (following the Textus Receptus), it is amply supported by evidence from ancient Greek manuscripts, early versions, and the writings of the “church fathers” in the post-apostolic period (Salmond, p. 283).

Second, in verse three Paul affirms that all of us “*were ... children of wrath*”. The verb *emetha* (“were”) is an imperfect tense form. The imperfect tense describes continuity of action as viewed in the past. Thus, here it

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depicts the habitual style of life which had characterized these saints prior to their conversion. Had the apostle intended to convey the notion of inherited sinfulness at the time of their birth, he easily could have expressed that idea by saying, “you became by birth children of wrath”.

Third, it is also significant that the verb is in the middle voice in the Greek Testament. The middle voice is employed to suggest the subject’s personal involvement in the action of the verb. The language therefore stresses that the sinful condition of the Ephesians had been their individual responsibility. Hence, combining the imperfect tense and middle voice aspects of the verb, we might paraphrase the passage like this: “*you kept on making yourselves children of wrath*”.

Fourth, it is probable that the King James Version and most subsequent translations reflect a Calvinistic bias in the rendition, “*by nature children of wrath*.” The Greek word *phusei*, rendered “nature” in our common versions, can denote “a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature” (Thayer, p 660). Edward Robinson observed that the term can be understood of a “native mode of thinking, feeling, acting” on the part of those who are “unenlightened by the influence of divine truth” (p. 771). Clearly, these people, by habitual practice, had become worthy of divine wrath.

Huge McCord’s translation has an excellent rendition of this passage. It suggests that the Ephesians had “by custom” become children of wrath. Winter contended that their trespasses and sins had made them “natural children of wrath” (p. 270). Moule suggested that the phrase rendered “*by nature children of wrath*” might be equivalent to saying, “*left to ourselves we are destined to suffer the consequences of sin*” (p. 174). Thus, the Ephesians, in their unregenerate state, had become, by long practice of sin, deserving of the wrath of God. These thoughts are consistent with the immediate context and with the tenor of the Bible as a whole.

Fifth, it is worthy of note that if this passage teaches that babies are born totally depraved, one would have to infer necessarily that infants who die in that condition are lost since they are clearly designated as “*children of wrath*” (cf. the expression “son of perdition” — John 17:12). Yet, this is a conclusion that even denominationalists are loath to accept.

The Bible does not teach the doctrine of inherited depravity. The dogma is strictly of human origin. It is a serious tragedy that those who profess to be friends of the Scriptures will teach this error, thereby subjecting the Christian system to unjustified criticism. Ephesians 2:3 does not teach inherited depravity. †

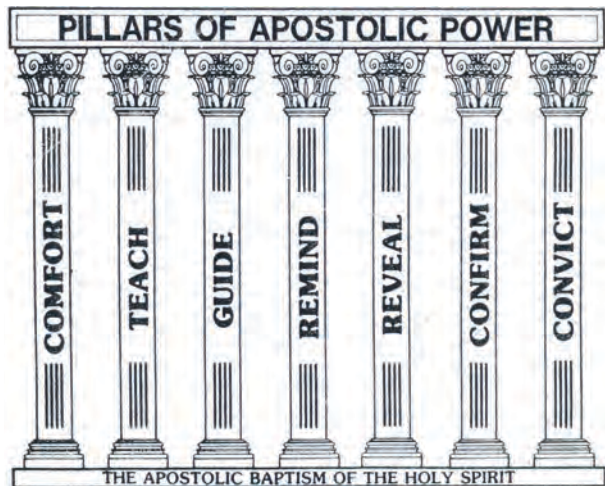
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Pillars of Apostolic Power

Perry N. Hall

“But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). These words were spoken to the apostles by the Lord shortly before He ascended back to heaven. This promise was very vital to the establishment and perpetuation of Christianity. When Jesus called

them, they were ordinary, uninspired men. They had accompanied the Lord during His ministry, beginning from the baptism of John until the day He ascended. They were chosen by the Lord to be apostles that they might be sent out as eyewitnesses of His resurrection, as they took the Gospel to the whole world



(Acts 1:21,22; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). Since there cannot be a successor to an eyewitness by one who was not a witness, there can be no modern day apostles. It is unbelievable that some today claim to be such and some accept them as such. Men certainly do not and cannot qualify as apostles. Others presently claim the baptism of the Holy Spirit which enabled the apostles to work miracles and be inspired. All such modern day claims make men liars and frauds, as the public is defrauded of millions and millions of dollars.

Jesus had prepared His personal apostles for the baptism of the Spirit when He told them that He was going away and that the Comforter (Paraclete), the Holy Spirit, would be given them (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7), that the Spirit

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would be their miraculous Helper. They were not to be deserted, so as to make them spiritual orphans (14:18). The signs of an apostle would be mighty works and wonders through the power of the Spirit of God (Romans 15:19; 2 Corinthians 12:11,12). They were enabled to teach and preach an inspired message because they were, by the divine power of the Spirit, taught all things that pertain to life and godliness (John 14:26; 2 Peter 1:3,16,19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Spirit did guide them into all truth (John 16:13). There is, therefore, no place for so-called latter-day revelations. All who profess such are simply deluded and, sadly, to be damned (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). We must hear only the voice of the Good Shepherd as He speaks to us through the words He gave His inspired men (John 10:1-9,24-29; 17:5-23). These words are not the words of man, but of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The apostles were miraculously reminded by the Spirit of all Jesus had taught them and had revealed to them things to come (John 16:13). This message was confirmed through the inspired signs, wonders, and miracles they were enabled to do (Mark 16:19,20; Hebrews 2:1-4). Through the Spirit and confirmed Word, the world was and is convicted concerning sin, righteousness, and the approaching judgment of all men (John 16:8-11).

When the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles in baptismal measure at Pentecost, they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4). They preached the crucified, resurrected Christ as having fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (verses 22-36). Three thousand considered the miracles and message of the triumphant Savior. They were convicted of their sins by the Spirit's inspired words of apostolic power and preaching (verse 37), and were told how they could receive forgiveness (verse 38). Having gladly received the message, they were baptized in water for the remissions of their sins and were added to the church of Christ, thus embracing the Savior and His salvation (verses 41,47; Mark 16:15,16). They then continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).

When we receive the words of the inspired apostles, we receive Christ, and when we receive Christ, we receive the Father and everlasting life (Matthew 10:14,40).

Dear friend, receive with meekness the Word that is able to save your soul (James 1:21). The Gospel of Christ, preached by the apostles of Christ, is God's power to save (Romans 1:15-17). †

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What Is the Gospel?

The word “gospel” is defined as “good news” and “glad tidings”. The apostle Paul said, *“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things”* (Romans 10:15).

The good news of Christ is that He loved us so much that He died in our place, for our sins, that He was buried, and that He triumphed over death in His resurrection from the grave. It is because of these facts that we can be saved from our sins and have the hope of eternal life.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, If ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

The Bible not only teaches that we must believe the facts of the Gospel but that there are also commands of the Gospel which must be obeyed if one expects to be saved. Just before Jesus returned to His Father in heaven (Acts 1:9-11), He instructed the apostles, *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every*

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creature” (Mark 16:15). Of course they were to preach that Christ had died on the cross, had been buried, and had been resurrected from the grave on the third day as had been prophesied. But they were also told to preach, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16).

Paul was inspired to write to the church at Thessalonica, “*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Peter wrote, “*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*” (1 Peter 4:17).

To help us better understand how we can obey the Gospel, keep in mind that the Gospel — the good news — itself is the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. Then, as we obey the commands of the Gospel, first believing in God and in Christ as the Son of God, turning away from a life of sin, confessing our faith in Jesus, finally we come to the point of being buried by baptism in water as He was buried in the grave, and being raised to walk in newness of life. Through picturing in our actions a form of what Jesus did for us, through obeying what He has asked us to do, the Lord saves us from our sins and adds us to His church (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:47).

Concerning this obedience, Paul said, “*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*” (Romans 6:17,18). That is, just as Christ died for our sins, we die to sin; as Christ was buried in the grave, we are buried in the waters of baptism; as He was resurrected from the tomb, we are resurrected from the watery grave of baptism to live a new life. That is the significance of the Gospel and of obeying a “form” of it.

God saves all those who obey the Gospel from the heart, as is explained in detail in the second chapter of Acts, where the Gospel was preached for the first time and people were able to obey it.

Have you obeyed the Gospel? You must do this if you want to be forgiven of your sins, so that you may enter Christ and His church, which is His Family, composed of the saved people. †

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The Urgency of Baptism

Bonnie Rushmore

Recently I listened to a discussion between two older Gospel preachers about what one called “instant baptism” and baptism after a lengthy period (a year or more) of Bible study. One preacher felt that a candidate for baptism needed to have a thorough understanding of the Bible before committing to be immersed for the remission of sins. This individual studied for nearly five years before he acknowledged his need to be baptized. This preacher feels that “instant baptism” (being baptized after one or two Bible lessons) contributes to an individual falling away and leaving the church. The other preacher asked, “Can we refuse to baptize someone when he requests it?” His thoughts were to baptize an individual when that individual requested baptism, and then continue to study to ensure that he grows in the knowledge of God.

As with any biblical subject, the answer is in the Bible. Please consider the following examples of baptism.

Acts Chapter Two

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached the first recorded Gospel sermon. Jews and those who had accepted the Jewish faith (verse 10) gathered from the nations of the known world (verse 5) in Jerusalem for Pentecost. This feast was “the second of the three great annual festivals on which all the males were required to appear before the Lord in the national sanctuary” (*McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia*. CD-ROM. Seattle: BibleSoft, 2000). At the conclusion of Peter’s sermon the audience asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (verse 37). Peter replied, “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*” (verse 38). About three thousand people gladly accepted his word, were baptized, and were added to the church (verses 41,47). The baptized “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (verse 42).

Being Jews, the baptized individuals had an understanding of God’s law (the Old Testament) and the prophecies concerning Christ and His church. Peter’s sermon built on this foundation and concluded with the need for immersion in water to wash away sin. The baptisms happened as soon as those individuals understood their lost condition and need for salvation. However,

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the new Christians were not left to struggle on their own as they continued to learn more of God's will from the apostles.

Acts 8:26-39

A man from Ethiopia traveled to Jerusalem to worship God. As he journeyed home, he read the book of Isaiah. God sent Philip to meet the Ethiopian. Beginning where the Ethiopian was reading, Philip preached to him about Christ. As they travelled, the Ethiopian asked, "*See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*" (verse 36). Philip answered, "*If you believe with all your heart, you may*" (verse 37). The Ethiopian replied, "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*" (verse 38). Philip commanded the chariot to stop, and he immersed the Ethiopian in water for the remission of his sins (verse 38).

This man was a Jew or at least a proselyte to Judaism with knowledge of the Old Testament and was intelligent enough to read the book of Isaiah. However, he needed someone to help him fully understand what he was reading. When Philip explained the biblical text the Ethiopian was immediately baptized.

Acts Chapter 10

Cornelius was a devout man who feared God (verse 2). This man was not a Jew, but a Gentile (verse 45) with knowledge of the great God of the universe to whom he daily prayed. God sent Peter to preach to Cornelius the way of salvation (verse 22). At the conclusion of Peter's lesson, Cornelius and his household were baptized (verse 48). Peter and those who accompanied him to Cornelius' home remained several days to further teach Cornelius God's Word (verse 48).

This individual was not a Jew, but he knew enough about God to daily pray to Him and to do good deeds for those around him. As soon as Cornelius understood his need for baptism, he was baptized. Peter remained to further teach him God's Word.

Acts 16:23-34

While Paul and Silas were in Philippi, a young woman was possessed with a spirit. This woman continually followed them around, causing much distress for Paul. After several days, Paul cast the spirit from her. For their actions Paul and Silas were cast into the inner prison. At midnight they were praying and singing praises to God (verse 25). God caused an earthquake to open the doors and to loosen the stocks on the prisoners' hands and feet (verse

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26). When the jailor awoke and discovered the prisoners were free from their bonds, he drew his sword to kill himself. Paul stopped him, informing him that no one had escaped (verse 28). The jailor then asked, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” (verse 30). Paul told him to believe on Jesus and continued his conversation to include what was involved in that belief (verses 31,32). The jailor was immediately baptized upon understanding the words Paul spoke to him (verse 33).

The Philippian jailor was a Gentile. There is no indication in the Scriptures that this man prayed to or had any previous knowledge of the God of the Bible before Paul and company arrived in Philippi. It is possible that he had heard some of Paul’s preaching. It is probable that he heard some of the prayers and songs Paul and Silas were singing before this man fell asleep and God caused the earthquake. While he had enough knowledge of God to ask what he needed to do to be saved, he did not have the degree of knowledge of the Jews in Acts 2 or the Ethiopian. Yet, he knew enough to ask, “*What must I do to be saved?*” and responded accordingly when presented with the appropriate information. As with the other cases of baptism previously discussed, this man was immediately immersed for the forgiveness of sins when he understood the need.

Each of the four cases of baptism discussed above show that the individuals were baptized as soon as they understood the need for immersion. They were not asked to wait until the assembly of the saints or for some other convenient occasion. Nor, did they choose to wait until their favorite preacher could perform the task. They were not told, “You need to learn more of God’s Word before you can be baptized.” An individual who understands he is lost in a sinful condition and that baptism is the only way to remove those sins, if he understands that he is added to the Lord’s church and that he must conform his life to the will of God, he is a viable candidate for baptism (Acts 2:47; Romans 6:1-12). When we delay baptism until a convenient time for us, are we not telling them that baptism is not the point at which sins are forgiven? I would not want to face God on the Judgment Day having caused the delay of the baptism of a penitent sinner who died before the individual was immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. Let us follow the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19,20 – teach, baptize and continue to teach those who are baptized. †

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Welcome Return

Graham Walker

I am sure you may have a similar tale to tell, as it appears the following is not uncommon with children; it has something to do with growing up. I particularly remember the time I decided to leave home because of what I perceived to be an unreasonable mother. She had chastised me for what appeared to me to be an insignificant cause, but in reality was probably for my own good. So I set off to my friend's place, as I knew he would be of comfort in my hour of distress and determination. Of course, his mother must not know of my abdication; suffice it to say, I was merely on an outdoor adventure. This would seem plausible considering it was at the height of summer. This adventure would take the form of a night out in the "underground fortress" that had been constructed on the vacant section next door.

By adult standards, this accommodation was tantamount to refugee camp status, for it was no more than a hole in the clay with a plywood roof. You can imagine, it would not stand up to the rigours of a mid-summer's downpour, for it leaked from all quarters, and only the temperate climate would make it bearable to sleep in, should it rain. Yet, to a young determined mind it was a haven from the severe measures one faced at home.

Well, it was not long, maybe an hour into darkness and a Central Waikato thunderstorm, that this once determined mind pined for the shelter of a solid iron roof and the comfort of a spring mattress. The rain was incessant to the point of flooding, and the burlap mattress had become waterlogged. So I headed home with the awful expectation of condemnation that welled up from the pits of my belly. Instead of the perceived inevitable, I was greeted with outstretched arms from all quarters and engulfed in a sea of hugs. I was welcomed home with gladness.

Needless to say, I slept soundly to the sound of rain upon the iron roof, snuggled up in the warm environment of the spring mattress. I soon forgot the reason for my estrangement and accepted the chastisement designed for my well being.

In Luke 15:11-32 there is a parable that relates a similar thought, the most heartening aspect of which is the compassion, the rush to greet, and the warm embrace that the prodigal's father displayed in verse 20. It is the case that this

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will be God the Father's reaction when a soul returns to His fold. It is the case that it should be our reaction when a wanderer returns to the fold. It gives us confidence that the warm embrace is due to all those that come back from the wayward direction.

May we always be people set in this mold that will cause us to exhibit the same grace that God extends to the prodigals of His congregations. †

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God's Plan of Salvation

The following items illustrate that there are several things by which souls are saved and that both Deity and man participate in the salvation of souls.

- Being Born Again (John 3:3,5)
- Laying Aside Evil (Jam. 1:21)
- Preaching (1 Cor. 1:18, 21)
- Calling on the Name of the Lord (Rom. 10:14)
- Knowledge of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15)

GOD'S PART

- Love (John 3:16)
- Grace (Eph. 2:8)
- Mercy (Titus 3:5)
- Gospel (Rom. 1:16)

CHRIST'S PART

- The Blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5)
- Our Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5)

MAN'S PART

- Bible Faith (John 8:24)
- Repentance (Acts 17:30)
- Baptism (1 Pet. 3:21)
- Obedience (Heb. 5:8, 9)
- Purity (Rev. 22:14)
- Faithfulness (Rev. 2:10)
- Love (1 John 2:10)
- Hope (Rom. 8:24)
- Works (Jam. 2:24)
- Endurance (Matt. 10:22)
- Confessing Christ (Rom. 10:9,10)

These represent the formula and cost of discipleship and constitute the recipe to acquire and maintain true discipleship. There are no shortcuts by which one can attain or maintain discipleship. Each aspect of the plan of salvation must be taught, learned, believed, and lived continually. Salvation is not attributed to any formula or equation apart from the complete adoption of God's will for us. Men are to direct their entire lives by His divine will. God's plan for saving man is not a magical incantation that when spoken mystically turns one into a Christian. Instead, His plan demands of men a different way of life that is only characteristic of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

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The Few or the Many?

David Deffenbaugh

I like being in the majority. One of the reasons is purely selfish; it usually means that your ideas or thoughts or values or whatever will be the ones carried out. The other reason is that being in the majority can give a pretty strong sense of validation. Hey, if this is the way most of the people think or feel, there must be some validity to it.

There is a danger, though, that lurks with the majority. That is the idea that majority opinion constitutes truth and right. The majority may very well be right, but its rightness is not based on its majority. As a matter of fact, very often truth and right are in the minority. Many times in the teaching and experience of Jesus, the few stood above the many.

Jesus' Parable of the Sower showed that, among other things, there are many conditions of men's hearts that may render the Word of God ineffective, but there is only one kind of heart into which the seed of the Word may fall and much good be produced (Matthew 13:18-23). One out of four, that's a minority.

Ten lepers called out to Jesus for mercy one day. He commanded them to show themselves to the priests. As they went, their leprosy was cleansed. Only one of those men immediately returned to Jesus to praise Him and give thanks for the mercy that was shown. Jesus, seeing this solitary figure, asked the compelling question, "*Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine — where are they?*" (Luke 17:17). One out of nine cured lepers was thankful, a significant minority.

As Jesus was tried and found innocent of any wrong-doing, the multitude insistently cried, "*Let Him be crucified!*" (Matthew 27:22). As He hung on the cross at the multitude's demand, people were "*passing by ... hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads*" (Matthew 27:39). On that darkened Golgotha hill, Jesus, the sinless sacrifice for humanity's sin, was an undeniable minority.

Anyone wanting to follow Christ with a great affinity for the majority needs to take stock. Jesus laid it out in the clearest fashion when He explained, "*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it*" (Matthew 7:13,14). †

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Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses Job 26:7-14

He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing.

He binds up the water in His thick clouds, Yet the clouds are not broken under it. . . .

He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, At the boundary of light and darkness. . . .

Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways, And how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?"

1. According to scientists, the universe seems to be like a balloon that is continually "stretching"; this word is used several times in Scripture to describe the formation of the heavens.

2. There seems to be an area in the north that is devoid of stars.

3. The clouds are part of God's cycle for watering the earth.

4. The earth is a sphere, answering to the description of the "circular horizon".

5. Evidently there is a boundary that limits the area of light and darkness. Is this saying that space has fixed parameters?

Considering the millions of light years of distance in the universe, what does this tell us about the power of our God?

These verses, spoken by the patriarch Job, but recorded by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, speak volumes of scientific facts that were unknown, generally, during the time of the early patriarchs.

Since God dealt directly with the heads of households during this period of time, we have no record of the many truths and revelations they might have had.

Without doubt, either these words themselves were inspired by the Spirit, or the knowledge had been imparted to Job as special information shared by God, for we recognize that these pieces of scientific facts were not generally known for many centuries after this message was recorded.

Yet,
the astounding thing is that after saying these amazing things about God's power in creating and sustaining the Universe, Job says that these great things that we can see are only the "mere edges" of His ways — of His power — and are nothing more than a "whisper" of what He is actually able to do. Our minds are not capable of comprehending His "thunder"!

PROVERBS 17:22



The graveside service had barely finished when there was a massive clap of thunder, followed by a tremendous bolt of lightning, accompanied by even more thunder rumbling in the distance.

The little old man looked at the preacher and calmly said, "Well, she's there."



Money will buy a fine dog, but only kindness will make him wag his tail.



Taxiing down the tarmac, the jetliner abruptly stopped, turned around, and returned to the gate. After an hour-long wait, it finally took off.

A concerned passenger asked the flight attendant, "What was the

problem?"

"The pilot was bothered by a noise he heard in the engine," explained the flight attendant, "and it took us a while to find a new pilot."



Two men were chatting about the energy crisis. "Which of our natural resources do you think will become exhausted first?" one man asked his friend.

"The taxpayer," replied the other man.



A New York boy was being led through the swamps of Louisiana by his cousin. He asked, "Is it true that an alligator won't attack you if you carry a flashlight?"

His cousin smirked and replied, "Depends on how fast ya carry the flashlight."



Hank Billings asks some thought-provoking questions. For instance, "Why can't airports find a more cheerful name for its passenger facility than 'terminal'?"

Here's another: "Which is the

PROVERBS 17:22

worse offense: tearing a tag off a mattress or not having your credit card ready when ordering by phone?”



“Well, son,” asked the father as he settled down with his evening paper. “Are you going to need any help with your homework tonight?” “No, thanks Dad,” replied the boy. “I might as well get it wrong all by myself.” (Bulletin Digest)



A man was wheeling himself frantically down the hall of the hospital in his wheelchair just before his operation.

A nurse stopped him and asked, “What’s the matter?”

He said, “I heard the nurse say, ‘It’s a very simple operation, so don’t worry. I’m sure it will be all right.’”

“She was just trying to comfort you. What’s so frightening about that?”

“She wasn’t talking to me. She was talking to the doctor!”



Believe it or not, it’s true. A man robbed a bank in Kansas City. For whatever reason, he laid his wallet on the bank counter and ordered the

teller to put all of the \$100 bills in a bag he handed to her. He left the bank with the money, but he failed to take his wallet with his driver’s license with him. You can figure out the rest of the story.



An old woman called a furnace repairman, who put oil in the motor and charged her \$80 for labor. “But it only took you five minutes!” she exclaimed.

The repairman explained that his company had a minimum one-hour charge on every house call.

“Well, I want my remaining 55 minutes of labor,” the lady replied, handing him a rake.



Every night a doting father would sing his two young sons to sleep, until one day he overheard the 4-year-old tell the 2-year-old, “If you pretend you’re asleep, he’ll stop.”



The judge said to the defendant, “I thought I told you I never wanted to see you in here again.”

“Your honor,” the defendant said, “that’s what I tried to tell the police, but they just wouldn’t listen.”

Isn't It Easy to Conform?

Demar Elam

Conforming to the world is one of the easiest things we do in life. Isn't it easy to conform? However, Paul instructed those at Rome with these words, “. . . *and be not conformed to this world*” (Romans 12:2). Divine inspiration demands nonconformity with the world. So, did Paul mean that we aren't to do anything the people around us are doing? Certainly not! There are many acts of acceptable conduct in which people in the world engage. However, Paul has in mind our being conformed to those acts of conduct that are evil and wrong.

The great apostle of love wrote, “*The whole world lieth in wickedness*” (1 John 5:19). Our world is surrounded by and permeated with wickedness. Being conformed to the world carries the idea of going along with its wickedness.

Webster defines the word *conform* thusly: “(1) to be similar or identical 2) to be obedient or compliant; especially to adapt oneself to prevailing standards or customs.”

A synonym of “conform” is “agree”. Conformity is the order of the day, but isn't that because conforming to the standards and customs around us is the easiest thing for all of us to do?

Satan is the prince of this world (John 14:30; 16:11), and we read in Galatians 1:4 that Christ died to deliver us from this present, evil world. If we drift with the tide, we'll find ourselves conforming to such sins as immoral sexual acts, filthy language, lying, stealing, murder, greed, hatred, idolatry, drunkenness, and pride.

We are living in perilous times! “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty*” (2 Corinthians 6:17,18). We must not conform to the pattern or mold of today's society. Though there are many good and wonderful things happening in our times, we are forced to admit that sin is rampant in our present world.

Paul told the Corinthians, “*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (2 Corinthians 7:1). Let us break away from conformity with the world. Faith, courage, conviction, and holiness should be very much a part of our lives today.

If you live righteously, you will definitely be considered a nonconformist

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and will attract, like a lightning rod, the scorn of a world that demands conformity. Yet, just as the lightning rod protects those around it, so you will guard fellow Christians by your example of attracting the fiery darts of the wicked without submitting to them. **Our determination to resist the demands of the world to conform should be unconquerable!** †

Demar Elam is involved in foreign missions and lives in Athens, Alabama, USA.

A GOOD EXAMPLE

Roger Rush

The apostle Paul wrote to two young preachers. Both were encouraged to set good examples. Timothy was admonished: *“Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1 Timothy 4:12). Titus was challenged: *“In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say to you”* (Titus 2:7,8).

The challenge of the Gospel is to live life imitating the example of Jesus Christ. He left us an example that we should follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21). We are to walk as he walked (1 John 2:6). A mature disciple is one who can say with Paul: *“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Galatians 2:19,20).

The effects of a good sermon are destroyed by bad living. The best parental advice is overruled by a bad example. Children imitate what they see and hear. Imagine the frustration of a child who is punished for smoking the cigarette butt his father threw away, or has his mouth washed out for saying a word he learned from his mother. Jesus warned regarding the Pharisees: *“Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do”* (Matthew 23:3). Sadly, the Pharisees are not the only ones to have their influence destroyed by a bad example.

It’s impossible to place too much emphasis on the importance of a good example. What we do says more about us than what we say. Edgar Guest wrote: *“I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day. I’d rather one would walk with me than merely show the way. The eye’s a better pupil and more willing than the ear. Fine counsel is confusing, but example’s always clear. And best of all the preachers are the men who live their creed. For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.”* †

Roger Rush is a Gospel preacher in Marietta, Ohio, USA.

How Do You Look?

Carroll Sites

It has been said, “If we could see ourselves as others see us, we would deny it.” It is easy for us to point the finger at the other fellow — to cry, “Foul!” It is so easy to see the other person’s faults and fail to see our own. How foolish! Jesus taught concerning this: “*And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?*” (Matthew 7:3). He went on to ask how we could remove a speck from our brother’s eye with a plank in our own eye (Matthew 7:4). What to do? He said, “*Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye*” (Matthew 7:5).

It all begins on the inside. Someone wrote, “*White-washing the pump will not purify the water.*” The meaning? No matter how pretty the pump looks, the water is still bad.

People are the same. Just looking good on the outside doesn’t purify the heart. Jesus addressed this condition very strongly in Matthew 23:25-28. The scribes and Pharisees had cleaned the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess. Jesus told them to cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Then He compared His hypocritical audience to whitewashed tombs that seemed beautiful outwardly, but inside were full of dead men’s bones. He said they appeared righteous to men, but were full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

How can we avoid this same mistake? We can purify our souls by obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22). Whatever Christ teaches us to do — do it! This will clean us up — inside and out! †

Carroll Sites works with the Lord’s church in Higden, Arkansas, USA.

Light travels at more than 186,000 miles per second. Spiritual “light” is equally fast — until it hits a closed mind.

The Deceitfulness of Sin

Danny Cline

Desires are a wonderful part of life, but strong desires, intensified desires, must be carefully watched. Being neither good nor bad in their nature, they want to attach themselves to the *objects* of our desire (see John 17:24; 1 John 2:16).

Because we seek satisfaction and fulfillment in them, we may learn too late that our desires have characterized our lives. Wanting what is good is advantageous, but evil desires destroy us. They are deceptive, tricky, promising what they do not deliver. They pass away with the world; but people who have good desires (who seek God's will or desire) live forever (1 John 2:17).

The Devil is a great deceiver, deceiving the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He began by deceiving Eve in Eden in the beginning, and he has had success with all the rest of us of responsible age (1 Timothy 2:14; James 1:14), including the inspired apostles of Christ who wrote honestly of their own deception (1 Peter 4:3; Titus 3:3; Ephesians 2:3). Lusts of deceit corrupt and ruin us (Ephesians 4:22; 2 Peter 1:4). Bad people proceed from bad to

worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13).

Hearts of men become darkened and foolish when they refuse to honor and thank the God they know. The truth of God is exchanged by them for falsehood, and the lusts of their hearts lead to immorality (Romans 1:21, 25,26). They become full of deceit (verse 29). Their sin compels them to obey its lusts, producing even more sin (Romans 6:12). Don't be deceived (James 1:14-16).

Satan's plot is to outwit and to deceive us to sin (2 Corinthians 2:11). *"Let no one deceive you...the one who practices sin is of the Devil who has been practicing sin from the beginning. Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil"* (1 John 3:7,8).

The *"old man of sin"*, corrupted by deceptive desire, must be removed. The new man, taught in truth, must be put on (Ephesians 4:20-24). As Christ taught only truth, those who are unable to hear His teaching do not understand it, and end up doing the desires of the Devil (John 8:43-45).

The truth of God teaches us to be obedient children, not allowing our

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lives to be shaped by the desires of our former ignorance (1 Peter 1:14). Our souls that once were at war with their fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11; James 4:1) are purified by obeying the truth (verse 22). Recounting the waste of the war, we are not to live the remainder of our time on earth *“to the lusts of men, but to the will of God”* (1 Peter 4:2).

“The saving grace of God has been revealed to all men, instructing us that we should deny irreverence and worldly lusts, and live sensibly, uprightly, and reverently in the present world” (Titus 2:11,12). Deny and say “No” to evil desire.

The flesh with its passions and desires must be “crucified” (Galatians 5:24). *“We know this, that our old self has been crucified together with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer serve sin”* (Romans 6:6). Attend the funeral of your old self as you are baptized into Christ Jesus, being buried together with Him through baptism into death (Romans 6:4a). We put on Christ by this immersion (Galatians 3:27).

All this is *“in order that we also might walk in newness of life, in the same manner that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father”* (Romans 6:4b). Having put on Christ, and having put off the old self, we have clothed ourselves with the Lord Jesus so as to *“not make provision for fleshly lusts”* (Romans 13:14).

Then, walking by the direction of the Holy Spirit, we will no longer fulfill the desire of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). We will want to encourage one another every day so that we do not again become hardened in heart by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13). †

Danny Cline is a preacher of the Gospel, living in Blue Ridge, Georgia, USA.

The Causes of Things

Life must be lived under the unyielding law of cause and effect. Every effect has its cause. Comply with the rule and we shall be happy; violate it and we shall suffer.

It is about time we were learning the futility of trying to cure effects without remedying the causes.

The successful people in this world of sowing and reaping are smart enough to see the causes of things and strong enough to alter them. If we are successful, efficient and happy, it is no accident; it is the harvest of our sowing.

“... for whatever a man sows, that will he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

— Excerpt from *Today Is Mine*
Leroy Brownlow

Courage

Bill Dillon

In the year 404, a monk by the name Telemachus traveled to Rome and was shocked beyond measure at the cruelty of the gladiatorial contests. Telemachus leaped over the railing of the Coliseum and tried to stop the gladiators from hacking themselves to pieces by repeated cries of “In the name of Christ, stop!” The little monk stood his ground and refused to move. Shortly he was slain by the gladiators, who continued their fight, standing over his dead body. But the little monk’s sacrifice was not in vain, as the consciences of the Roman populace were stirred, and Emperor Honorius soon decreed the bloody combat games be forever abolished.

The spirit of courage, exemplified by Telemachus, needs to be alive today as modern Christians struggle against deeply entrenched evils such as injustice, indifference, and immorality.

The Lord’s church is a fellowship of courageous souls who have banded together to grapple with wickedness and all unrighteousness. The church of Christ was not established by cowards, nor has it been preserved by cowards. Let God’s people be lionhearted and

bold, neither fearing the frowns nor courting the favors of the world. Severe trials and tribulations will only serve to increase our fortitude. God “*hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind*” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Only by being courageous can we swim against the world’s current and move in the direction of God. †

Bill Dillon is the Editor of *Gospel Gleaner* and preaches for the church of Christ in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas, USA.



Faith

Barbara Jones

What is Faith? Hebrews 11:1 says it is "... *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" Faith gives us assurance; it gives us confidence and conviction. The book of James provides great insight into faith, as he deals with a *faith that works* and *not faith and works*. In chapter 2, James describes for us the kind of faith in which God is well pleased. He says it must be a working faith, one that produces fruit. James integrates true faith and everyday practical experience, stressing that true faith must manifest itself in works of righteousness.

Our trust in God helps us to endure trials. Trials come and go, but a strong faith will help us meet them head on and develop endurance. Faith also helps us understand temptation. It will not allow us to consent to our own lusts and slide into sin. It helps us obey the Word of God, and it develops "DOERS", harboring no malice and displaying itself in godly works.

Faith is more than words; it is more than knowledge. It produces knowledge by prompting a study of God's Word, and it is demonstrated by obedience. Faith acts wisely, giving us the ability to choose wisdom that is heavenly and to shun wisdom that is earthly. Faith helps us separate ourselves from the world and submit to God, while resisting the devil. It helps us draw near to God.

Ours must be a working faith. Faith, resulting in obedient works, is made perfect. James says, "*Show me your faith by your works*".

Peter states in 1 Peter 1:7 that the genuineness of your faith is much more precious than gold. God says here the worldly things that we seek are not the most precious. The big house and fine cars, the worldly things for which we often work our whole life, will perish in the end. Second Peter 1:3,4 says that God has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness. The precious promises of God are far better than anything man can offer. These promises lead to eternal life.

Second Peter tells us to grow in faith by adding the Christian virtues, in chapter 1 verses 5-7. He writes that we must add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. If we have

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these things in our heart, we will hunger and thirst after the Word of God. If these things be in us, we will never be lazy and slothful about God's Word. We will always be ready to study with a lost soul. The Scriptures will be in us so strongly we will have to tell someone. Jeremiah said the Word of God was in him like a fire in his belly and he could not be quiet. He had to let it out. That is the way we should be. Second Timothy 2:15 says that we must study to show ourselves approved, of whom? Of God.

Paul told Timothy he had kept the faith, and because of that faith he had a crown of life, laid up, in heaven for him. The beautiful part is that you and I can also have this crown of life that Paul is talking about if we remain faithful to God, obey His Word and seek His favor, work for the Lord and strive to lead others to know Him.

We can grow in favor with God by being faithful in worship, living a righteous life, abounding in good works, letting our light shine, seeking the kingdom of God, and looking to the end of the world. If we are found faithful, we will receive a crown of righteousness (Revelation 2:10). Faith is necessary for eternal life. We can not please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6).

Always keep the FAITH, abounding in the work of the Lord, looking forward to THAT DAY. †

Barbara Jones has been involved in mission work for many years and is currently working in Africa with her husband, James.

Such a Love

One soul, longing
For the safety of another soul,
Much loved,
Cries,
“Oh, God,
If prayers and tears
— if hurt —
Could do it,
He would have been won
So long ago.

With burning tears
Falling in the heart,
The answer comes
Unspoken:
“Yes ...
If even death itself
Could do it,
He would have been won
So long ago —
You see ... I love him even more:
I gave My Son.”

— Betty Burton Choate

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God Himself has ordained the great institutions of (1) the home, (2) the civil government, and (3) the church. Faithful Christians will respect each of these, honor God's principles regarding them, and contribute in any honorable way to the upbuilding of each.



Speak Up, Christian, *Before It's Too Late!*

Charles Pugh III

Those of us who live in America have been blessed with living in a nation that allows us to have a voice. We may think ours is only one voice, but history evidences the fact that a single voice can make a great difference when it comes to the destiny of families, nations, and churches.

Noah was **only one** in the midst of a generation described as corrupt and violent (Genesis 6:11-13). However, his willingness to live and preach righteousness saved his family and himself (2 Peter 2:5). Esther was **only one**, but she spoke out with a courage that said, "*If I perish, I perish*" (Esther 4:16). Her conviction resulted in the saving of her nation.

The society in which you and I live is in deep trouble. Various historians and philosophers have noted that when past civilizations have reached the present moral condition of our nation, they eventually collapsed. For example, civilizations have weakened and disintegrated when they experienced such things as the (1) weakening of the home, (2) rapid increase in divorce, (3) tolerance of abortion and homosexuality, etc.

If there ever has been a time for faithful Christians to live right, and speak up for the right, it is now!

Regardless of the price we must pay, let us make our voices heard. Say nothing, and you give a victory to evil without a contest. †

Charles Pugh III has a writing ministry and resides in Vienna, West Virginia, USA.

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Urgent!!! Warning!!! Warning!!!

Betty Burton Choate

Would you younger folks allow an old woman — OK, an *elderly sister* — to share some important thoughts with you?

If you're still here, I suppose that means YES, so here goes:

I am a typical person; I have typical relatives; I have lived a typical life, in most respects, so I think that many in my age bracket will empathize fully with what I am about to say.

My Mother is eighty-eight and lives with me. My sister and her husband are planning to sell their house in a nearby city and to move into Mother's house. Suddenly, in the midst of very full days of "routine" work, all of us have to find the time to sort through and empty two houses. What do you do with a lifetime of accumulations that are bonded to a lifetime of precious memories? All of the stuff is "good" — not trash, not junk — we thought we needed it and so we bought it, and there it is. How in the world can we ever go through all

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of these miniscule odds and ends and sort out what we need, what other family members might want or use, what someone else could use, and what finally has to be dumped in the garbage because there is just no place to put it?

Mother grew up during the depression. She saves margarine tubs and mayonnaise jars and broken things that need to be mended. Contrast that frugality with the young people today who have never had to “make-do” in any way. I’m warning you — you will one day be in trouble, drowning in “stuff”.

Our great problem, among Christians, is not that we are defiantly breaking all of God’s rules. We are merely living a typical life in the culture with which we are surrounded. And that affluent culture means that we have all the necessities, we accumulate year by year the many things our hearts desire, and we stack up endless numbers of superfluous things that are the trimming on the icing on the cake.

We begin, as young married people, with wedding showers, we furnish our first house, we plan, and buy, and add to, until soon every necessity has been covered. But we’re young and we’ve only just begun. There are countless stuffed animals to buy for our children, DVDs they must have, special birthday gifts, and on ... and on ... and on. And of course we adults continue to add things all along that we have seen and “need”.

Then we come to my time in life when my husband is gone, my children are grown and have their own stuffed places — and our daughter says, “Mother, don’t you die and leave me with all of this to deal with!”

At this end of life, I think, “I wish I hadn’t planted all those flower beds. Who will keep the weeds pulled when I can’t? And what an insurmountable task it would be to dig up those plants and have grass again ...

“And who will have space for these odds and ends collected from here and there, as we’ve worked overseas, or for these gifts that meant much to us but will have no meaning to anyone else? What can I do with these clothes that are too good to throw away but that no one seems to need anymore?”

Yes, I know that we are civilized people, living in houses, and that the houses need beds and we really should eat from a table. But my cry of caution is this: **In the early years, try to learn the habit of practicing constraint about investing money and time in the many, many unnecessary things.** The real necessities are, most often, commodities that are used up or outgrown, so they don’t hang as albatrosses around your neck for numberless years.

The commands in God’s Word are of two types: DOs and DON’Ts. When God asks us to do something, it is ultimately for our own personal good. For in-

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stance, “Love your enemies.” — A paradoxical-sounding command but, when we obey, we find that we have been spared the ravages of carrying in our hearts hatred, anger, desire for revenge, and the accompanying stress. And our health has been protected while we lived at peace.

God’s DON’Ts are equally important and effective. Listen again to the parable Jesus spoke in Luke 12:16-21:

The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

Did you notice the plight of the “rich man”? There is no mention of stealing or murder, or of any other “sin” that he did. No, the problem was with his *focus*. He had too much of the riches of his world, and there was no longer any place to store it all (they must not have had the mini-storage places back then ... mmm ... what does that say about us “typical” folks?) The treasure that consumed his attention was the physical things of this world. That was his sin.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Timothy 2:4).

Through the years of maturing as a Christian, my focus has been increasingly fixed on the spiritual treasure. I want to be a good soldier and I don’t want to feel entangled with *things*. I believe I could leave behind all that I “own” and not look back — but the reality is that a lifetime of accumulations are here in this house, a weight around my neck because *somebody* has to do *something* with them *someday*. And somebody has to do something with Mother’s things, and my sister’s ... And at our age, who has the strength? †

Then Whose Shall These Things Be???

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate of Winona, Mississippi, USA.

The Biggest Man

Bruce Tucker

Who is the biggest man in the Bible? You may think at first of Goliath who was nine to ten feet tall (1 Samuel 17:4), but towering over him was Og, the last of the Rephaim. These were a tribe of men known for their tremendous stature (Deuteronomy 2:10,11). Og's height is not specifically stated in the Bible, but we know something about his bed. His bed was made of iron and was around 13 feet long (Deuteronomy 3:11). Allowing Og to be one foot shorter than his Sealy Posturpedic, this man was around 12 feet tall!

This godless giant lingered a long time in Israel's memory (cf. Psalms 135:11; 136:20), but it does not say much for a man when the most outstanding thing about him is his physical stature. In contrast, Luke wrote about Jesus' growth as a child in these words, "*And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him*" (2:40). This thought is echoed at the close of the chapter by the statement, "*And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*" A. T. Robertson points out that "filled with wisdom" is a present passive participle, meaning that the growth of the inner man was keeping pace with the growth of the outer man. For the first and only time in history, the vigorous growth of the child physically was matched with a perfect, vigorous growth of the spirit within.

Dad, you are the biggest man in your family — even if your son does wear bigger tennis shoes than you! Later in life your children will find other male leadership figures to adore, but none will compare to you. For your children, you are the model of what a man should be, the model that impresses them most. Are you fulfilling your role? When your children grow up seeing you putting Christ first, cherishing His Word, and worshiping at His feet, you are impressing them with life principles that they will never forget.

Being "the man of the house" is not simply a matter of exuding "toughness" or "masculinity" as the world defines it. Og had these qualities, but when his life was over only two things were remembered about him: he did not love God, and he had a big bed. Dad, make sure your spiritual growth towards God keeps pace with all your other strengths. In your children's eyes, you are the biggest man in the world. †

Bruce Tucker lives in Gadsden, Alabama, USA.

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Christianity and the Home

Jim Poland

Being a Christian at home is a very tough assignment sometimes. The difference between what we know and what we perform leaves many doubts and guilt feelings at times.

But we must not let that deter us from trying and doing better, because nations and churches fall apart in their families. Building a Christian family takes a great deal of time. It is quicker to scream and yell at one another.



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It is easier to watch TV. Meeting a problem head-on and talking about it really takes a great amount of time and effort.

God never said it would be easy! But He did say it is possible! It is possible for a Christian couple to teach forgiveness by being forgiving, to teach love by being loving to each other, to teach self-worth by showing and demanding respect, to teach faith by showing trust, and to teach communication by listening and talking.

When Israel entered the land of Canaan, God told them to concentrate on their homes (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). It is in the homes that nations and churches get their strength. God-centered homes are a priority in every part of life. God's eternal purposes and blessings are carried out from homes built upon His revealed will, the Bible.

The home was created by God when man was created (Genesis 2). Jesus taught that the home is to be protected against corruption. To those who questioned God's arrangement by their manmade interpretations, Jesus said, "...Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall

become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 19:4-9).

The home, as God has commanded it, is to be in the image of the church of Christ to Christ (Ephesians 5:21-33). Unless our homes are built upon faithfulness, love, loyalty, and submission to God and His Word, and commitment to each other, we will not learn to be the church of Christ. The future of the church and salvation of souls depends upon marriages built God's way! †

Jim Poland is a Gospel preacher working with the church of Christ in Bona, Missouri, USA.

Being a Christian at home is a very tough assignment sometimes.

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It is with great embarrassment and chagrin that apology must be made for the mistake in indicating in the last issue, Volume 62, that our brother Bill Nicks had died. We are quite relieved to now know that our statement was incorrect, having been based on misinformation, but we very deeply regret that we failed to verify the accuracy of the report that had been received. Our most sincere apology is extended to brother Nicks and to his family and friends.

- the Editor

On the Death of Little Children

Bill Nicks

Our children are precious to us. They enlarge our vision, make us more unselfish, and give our hearts higher aims. It is better to have children than the finest tapestries and furnishings without them. God sends children to us to gladden our hearts. Jesus used them as emblems of purity (Matthew 18:1-6; 19:13-15). We must be humble and teachable like them in order to become Christians and to enter heaven at last.

But the death of a child brings great grief. When Herod killed the male children of Bethlehem at the age



of two years and under, “*a voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel, weeping for her children*” (Matthew 2:16-18).

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Sometimes parents are tempted to lose faith in God when a child dies. J.W. McGarvey tells of a distraught father who, having lost his young son in an accident, went into the office of a Gospel preacher, banged his fist on his desk, crying out, "Where was God when my son was killed?" The preacher answered, "He was in the same place as when His Son was crucified!"

Although it is difficult to lose our children (we always expect them to outlive us), the right attitude is expressed by King David on the loss of his little child, "*While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me*" (2 Samuel 12:22,23). Paul said, "... *to depart and be with Christ, which is far better*" (Philippians 1:23). Little children, who are sinless, are carried by strong, fair winds to a haven where there are no storms. We can be thankful they have reached the harbor safely before we have, since we all are destined to die (Hebrews 9:27).

May this anonymous poem comfort hurting parents:

"Garden of the Lord"

One bud, the Gardener gave me, a fair and only child.
He gave it to my keeping to cherish for awhile.
It lay upon my bosom, it was my open pride;
Perhaps it was an idol which I must be denied;
For just as it was opening to the glory of the day,
Down came the Heavenly Gardener and bore my bud away;
Yet not in wrath He took it, a smile was on His face,
So gently and so sweetly He bore it from its place;
"Fear not" — I think — He whispered,
"Thy bud shall be restored;
I take it but to plant it
In the Garden of the Lord." †

Bill Nicks is a former missionary to Africa and the island of Trinidad in the West Indies, and he now lives in Waycross, Georgia, USA.

Death is not extinguishing the light; it is only putting out the lamp because the Dawn has come.

Turning the World Upside Down

Acts 17:6

Louis Rushmore

Introduction:

1. Exposition of the last phrase of Acts 17:6.
 - a. “turn . . . upside down” = unsettle or upset minds; excite tumults and sedition
 - b. “world” = here the inhabited earth
2. The Gospel was the catalyst for ‘turning the world upside down.’
 - a. Acts 4:19,20.
 - b. Acts 5:25-33.
 - c. Hebrews 4:12.
3. Christians are charged with the responsibility of taking the Gospel to the world.
 - a. Matthew 28:18-20 — disciple the nations.
 - b. Mark 16:15-16 — take the Gospel to every creature.
 - c. 2 Timothy 2:2 — pyramid distribution of the Gospel.
4. How did early Christians turn the world upside down?

Body:

I. Preached Jesus Christ, Acts 8:5.

- A. Acts 5:28-32.
 1. Taught by the authority (name) of Jesus.
 2. Filled Jerusalem with the doctrine (teaching) about Jesus.
 3. Preached the blood of Christ for sin; all sin contributes to the death of Jesus on the cross — ‘this man’s blood on us.’
- B. Acts 5:42.
 1. Early Christians preached Christ daily.
 2. They preached Jesus publicly and privately.
- C. Acts 8:30-39.
 1. Preaching Jesus involves teaching prophecy and fulfillment, vss. 30-35.
 2. Preaching Jesus involves teaching about belief and baptism.
 3. Baptism involves a burial or immersion, Colossians 2:12.
 4. Preaching Jesus results in baptism, which results in rejoicing.

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

- D. Acts 13:38,39.
 - 1. To preach Jesus is to preach forgiveness of sins.
 - 2. Resulting belief (not faith only, James 2:24) justifies.
- E. Acts 17:3.
 - 1. Jesus is preached as the Messiah.
 - 2. This preaching involves the death, burial & resurrection, 1 Corinthians 1:23; 15:1-4.

II. Preached the kingdom.

- A. John the Baptist inaugurated preaching the kingdom, Luke 16:16.
 - 1. The law and the prophets ceased to be preached with the preaching of the kingdom.
 - 2. All people are intended to hear and enjoy the benefits of preaching the kingdom.
- B. Jesus preached the kingdom, Luke 4:43.
- C. Jesus called others to also preach the kingdom.
 - 1. The twelve, Luke 9:1.
 - 2. Luke 9:60.
- D. Philip preached the kingdom to the Samaritans, Acts 8:12.
 - 1. The kingdom preached belongs to God.
 - 2. Preaching the kingdom involves preaching Jesus.
 - 3. Preaching the kingdom results in baptism.
 - 4. Men and women are the hearers and beneficiaries of preaching the kingdom.
- E. The apostle Paul preached the kingdom, Acts 20:25-27; 28:31.
 - 1. Preaching the kingdom makes one free from the blood of others.
 - 2. Preaching the kingdom involves preaching the whole counsel of God.
 - 3. Preaching the kingdom involves preaching Jesus.

Conclusion:

- 1. We will 'upset' the world around us if we practice N.T. militancy.
- 2. Further, we have an obligation to preach the Gospel to the world.
- 3. If we fill the community with the teaching of Jesus, we will turn it upside down.
- 4. Some will obey.
- 5. The disobedient will make a lot of noise; everywhere the apostle Paul preached he had either a great Gospel meeting or a riot.
- 6. Preach the Word of God at all times, 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

Unspotted from the World



*“Pure religion and undefiled
before God and the Father is this,
To visit the fatherless and widows
in their affliction, and to keep himself
unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).*

Moral Living in an Immoral World

spilos = spot or stain;
figuratively = moral blemish
aspilos = unspotted

Elders and Deacons

T. Pierce Brown

If we do not recognize the fact that the terms “elder” and “deacon” are used in the Bible in at least two senses, we will be utterly confused in some cases. It may not always be clear whether the term merely refers to an older person, or whether it refers to a person who has been appointed to a specific work, but we know of no case where it is not clear in which there is something crucial in the knowledge. For example, 1 Timothy 5:1 says, “*Rebuke not an elder; but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as*

brethren.” We are fairly sure it is simply speaking of an older person in this case, but since one who does the work of shepherding the flock is also an older person, the statement applies to him as well. The reason we are reasonably sure it is merely speaking of an older person is because the last part of the verse indicates that the other persons are simply younger men. Also, the next verse says, “*The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.*” If we do not realize that the term

“elder” in this case refers to anyone who is older, then we would perhaps think that women could serve the congregation as elders-presbyters.

We need to recognize the same thing is true with regard to the term “deacon”. For example, in Philippians 1:1, we find, “*Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops*

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:5).

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and deacons.” It seems fairly evident that he refers to “deacons” here as a special set of servants who were appointed to that work and were to have special qualifications as 1 Timothy 3:8ff clearly shows. However, Paul says about himself in Ephesians 3:7, “*I was made a minister (deacon)*”. There is nothing in the New Testament that would lead us to conclude that Paul was appointed in a local congregation to serve in “the office of a deacon”, but he was a minister (servant) in a special way.

The same thing is true with regard to the statement in Romans 16:1, “*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant (diakanon—deacon) of the church which is at Cenchrea.*” She was a “deaconess” if we understand that word to simply refer to a female who served the church in some capacity. She could not be a “deacon” who must be “*the husband of one wife*” (1 Timothy 3:12), but she could be (and was) one who served the church in some way. So Paul and Phebe and many others could be “deacons” in some sense, and “elders” in some sense without being in the special group that we normally think of as “*the elders and deacons*” (Philippians 1:1) of the church. The context will usually make this distinction clear. †

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“Shall” or “Should”?

Steve Vice

Genesis begins with God creating the heavens and the earth. In Genesis 1:3, the Bible says, *“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’, and there was light.”* Words are the means by which God chose to create the universe. Words are the means by which the saving power of the Gospel is spread to the lost (1 Corinthians 1:21). God’s Word is alive, powerful, and sharp (Hebrews 4:12).

God’s Word is also accurate. Paul made an argument from the Old Testament concerning Jesus being the Messiah on the fact that the singular form of the word for “seed” was recorded rather than the plural form of “seed” in Galatians 3:16. Jesus demonstrated His trust in the accuracy of God’s Word when He said, *“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled”* (Matthew 5:18).

Many times we fail to put the same emphasis on the accuracy of the Word of God in our lives. For example, John 3:16 is an oft-quoted verse, but many times, it is misquoted after this fashion: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life”* (emphasis added). “Shall” is the wrong word. The correct word is “should”.

“Shall not” implies an impossibility, whereas “should not” leaves open the door of opportunity.

The translators of the King James Version, the New King James Version, the American Standard Version, the English Standard Version, The Revised Standard Version, and others, understood that “shall” would cause a contradiction in the Holy Scriptures. This is because in John 8:31 there were many Jews who believed on Jesus, but in verse 44 Jesus called these same Jews the children of the devil. Their belief cannot be denied, but their souls would not be saved. In John 12:43, the Bible says that many of the rulers believed in Jesus, but would not confess Him for fear of the Pharisees. They also loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Would these people be saved in that condition? They believed, but the greatest treasure would not be given to them, for they would not confess Jesus before men (Matthew 10:33).

On the other hand, “shall” is used correctly in Mark 16:15,16: *“Go into*

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all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned" (emphasis added). This is the new birth that Jesus spoke of in John 3:3,5. When Peter and the apostles preached the Gospel of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ for the first time in Acts 2, people who believed were baptized and then were added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:36,38,41,47). These people were saved, having had their sins remitted.

"Shall not" implies an impossibility, whereas "should not" leaves open the door of opportunity.

The Bible teaches that believers in Christ "*should not perish, but have everlasting life*". Yet, the Bible clearly shows that some believers were not saved. What was the difference? They did not obey from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered to them (Romans 6:17). That is, they were not baptized.

This salvation does not mean that a person cannot fall from the saving grace of God. Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 3:12-14, and 2 Peter 2:20-22 teach that a person can turn from or fall from the saving grace of God.

Here is another "shall" and "should" that we ought to notice:

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:9-12)

Are you trusting your salvation to "should" or "shall"? Make your calling and election sure. †

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Born Again

Royce Frederick

In John 3, Jesus talks to Nicodemus about being “born again,” which is often called “the new birth”. What does it mean to be “born again”?

Being born again does not mean a person who dies will be given another physical birth and live on earth again in a different body. The Bible teaches that each person lives only one time on earth. *“And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27).

Being born again is not the same as “baptism in the Holy Spirit”. The New Testament tells of only two occasions of baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-46). A study of the new birth in the New Testament shows that baptism in the Holy Spirit is not the same as being born again.

Some people teach that the new birth occurs before baptism. Others teach that the new birth can occur long after baptism. However, the Bible shows that neither of these ideas about the new birth is true. The New Testa-



ment teaches that a sinner who obeys the Gospel from his heart is born again

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when he is baptized in water for the remission (forgiveness) of his sins.

Jesus told Nicodemus, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3). Jesus told him more about the new birth when He said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (John 3:5). So, a person who is “born again” is born of water and the Spirit. Other Scriptures in the New Testament explain the new birth more fully.

New life is located in Christ. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23). See also Romans 8:1 and 1 John 5:11,12.

Being born again means beginning a new life. New life is in Christ. Therefore, a sinner is born again when he enters into Christ.

A sinner enters into Christ and a new life at baptism. Paul reminded the Christians in Rome: *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ*

was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3,4). See also Colossians 2:12.

At birth, a newborn infant becomes a son or daughter of its parents. Likewise, by the new birth, sinners become sons of God. Paul reminded the Christians in Galatia, *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:26,27). Being baptized into Christ made all of them *“one in Christ Jesus”* (verse 28) and *“heirs”* (verse 29).

The Spirit causes the new birth. A sinner is *“called”* (invited) to God by the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14; Matthew 11:28-30; Revelation 22:17). When a sinner obeys the Gospel, he is responding to the Spirit. The words of the Gospel, written in the Bible, were given by the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:12,13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; Ephesians 6:17). Further, the Gospel message was confirmed by miracles which the Spirit performed (Mark 16:20; Acts 2:43; 5:12; Hebrews 2:2-4).

Hence, a sinner has been *“born of water and the Spirit”* when he hears the Gospel message, believes it, repents (decides to turn from sin), confesses his faith in Christ, and is baptized in water for the remission of

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his sins (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 8:12,13,35-39; 10:47,48; 16:30-34; 17:30; 22:16; Romans 6:3,4,17,18; 10:9,10,17; Galatians 3:26,27; Ephesians 5:26; Colossians 2:12).

God gives us new life through the words of the Gospel. *“He brought us forth (gave us birth) by the word of truth...”* (James 1:18). The new birth is not an experience that suddenly comes upon us by surprise. When a sinner obeys the Gospel, he is *“... born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which live and abides forever... Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you”* (1 Peter 1:23,25). The words in the Bible, that Jesus has given us through the Spirit, are *“the words of eternal life”* (John 6:68). The Gospel is *“the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...”* (Romans 1:16).

When a sinner has been baptized, God sends the Spirit to live within the new Christian (Galatians 4:6; Acts 2:38). That does not mean Christians can work miracles today. Even in the first century, not all Christians could work miracles. The gifts of miracles were given to the apostles and to some of the other Christians in the first century for some very special purposes. However, the Holy Spirit lived in every Christian then, and lives in each one now (1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Romans 8:9-11).

The words written in the Bible also sustain the Christian in his new life — if he continues studying and obeying them (John 8:31-32; Acts 20:32; Philippians 2:16; Hebrews 3:12-14). A Christian should be *“led by the Spirit”* (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18). That does not mean he is led by a mysterious inner feeling or by an inner voice. It means that he takes the Word of God into his heart by studying the Bible, and then follows what the Word of God says. Jesus said, *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63).

Even without miracles today, the beautiful effect of the Spirit is visible in the life of a true Christian. When we take God’s Word into our hearts and let it lead us daily, we produce *“the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ...”* (Galatians 5:22,23). A life filled with these virtues is the abundant life that Jesus wants to give each one of us: *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10)! †

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5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

We make friends and
then our friends make us

Paula Bates

1. Proverbs 1:10 My son, if _____ entice thee, consent thou not.
2. Proverbs 29:24 Whoso is a partner with a _____ hates his own soul...
3. 1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil _____ corrupt good manners.
4. Proverbs 22:24,25 Make no friendship with an _____ man... Lest thou _____ his ways and get a _____ to thy soul.
5. Proverbs 13:20 He that walketh with _____ men shall be _____: but a companion of _____ shall be destroyed.
6. Philippians 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, In the midst of a _____ and _____ nation, among who ye shine as _____ in the world.

*******One bad apple can spoil the entire barrel*******



ANSWERS:
1. Sinners
2. Thief
3. Communications or Companionships
4. Angry, learn, snare
5. Wise, wise, fools
6. Crooked, perverse, lights

What about Baptism and John 3:16?

A. L. Franks

**“Baptism is not essential to salvation because
John 3:16 says nothing about baptism.”**

Argument: The “Golden Text” of the Bible states, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Since the text mentions only faith (*“believeth in him”*), many argue, “Baptism can’t really be necessary since John 3:16 doesn’t say a word about being baptized”.

Response: True; John 3:16 does not mention baptism. But, the verse also doesn’t say a word about repentance. Are we to conclude that repentance isn’t necessary? Can a person continue to practice sin, yet be pleasing to the Lord? Is it not necessary for a sinner who desires salvation to repent? What about other Scriptures, such as *“repent or perish”*? (See Luke 13:3,5).

A key to understanding John 3:16 is found in the word *“believeth”*. What does it mean to “believe in Jesus”, to truly believe? A careful study of the Sacred Scriptures clearly shows that genuine faith in Jesus is manifested through action or obedience on the part of the believer. *“Faith without works is dead”* (see James 2:26). *“Faith alone”* does not save (James 2:24).

A person who truly believes in Jesus will respond in obedience to the Savior, who clearly promised, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ...”* (Mark 16:16). Baptism is an act of faith, a step taken in faith and because of faith. In truth, being baptized has absolutely no value unless motivated by faith in Jesus.

The text declares that one who believes in the Son of God *“should not perish, but have everlasting life”*. This is the case because the believer will gladly submit to the One in whom he believes and obey His teachings, including being baptized in water. Contrary to what some believe, John 3:16 does not exclude baptism, although it doesn’t specifically mention it. And, *“whosoever believeth”* will not exclude baptism in his response to Jesus. †

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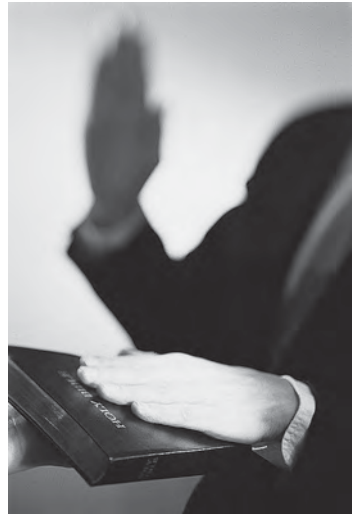
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “SWEAR NOT?”

Cecil May, Jr.

Jesus said, “Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool, nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be ‘yes, yes,’ ‘no, no.’ Anything more than this comes from evil” (Matthew 5:34-37).

The Epistle of James contains more statements similar to Jesus’ recorded sayings than any other epistle. It says, “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your ‘yes’ be yes and you ‘no’ be no, that you may not fall under condemnation” (James 5:12).

Jesus’ word about oaths comes in that section of the Sermon on the Mount in which what “you have heard was said to men of old” is contrasted with what “I say to you”. “Swear not” is contrasted with the “old” saying, “You shall not perjure yourself, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn” (Matthew 5:33).



The Old Testament, in the passage to which the Lord was probably referring, says, “You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:11).

Some of the Jewish religious leaders had built a theology of technicalities around the matter of oaths. An oath by the gold of the temple or by the gift of the altar was a

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binding oath, but an oath on the temple or the altar was not (Matthew 23:16-22). Obviously, a point of all that was to fool the uninitiated into thinking they had been promised something under a binding oath when in fact they had not, sort of like the childish custom of taking back a promise because, "I had my fingers crossed".

Jesus' point is, "Always tell the truth, even in your simple word, not just when you swear or make an oath."

Discussion of this passage frequently centers around whether a Christian may take a legal oath in court or in other official instances. Other things said in the Bible about oaths, and the context of Jesus' statement, indicate it was not Jesus' intention to forbid all kinds of oath taking.

The point of legal oaths is that, by state and federal law, perjury (lying under oath) is punishable by law, and simple lying is not. In legal matters, therefore, one is asked to put oneself in the position of being subject to legal penalties for not telling the truth. That is a legitimate state interest.

The Jewish high priest was administering just such an oath to Jesus at His trial when he said, "*I adjure you by the living God that you tell me the truth, whether you are the Christ, the Son of God*" (Matthew 26:63). Jesus responded with an affirmative answer.

Paul used language by which one binds oneself with an oath on two dif-

ferent occasions (2 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 1:20). God bound Himself with an oath to keep His promises to Abraham (Genesis 22:16,17; Hebrews 6:13-18).

The important thing is not to miss what Jesus is emphasizing.

To say "I swear by... (whatever)" implies, "Since I am swearing, you can rely on my word". But that suggests further that without an oath my word is not necessarily reliable. As disciples of Jesus, who is Himself the Truth (John 14:6), we are to be truthful all of the time. Our "yes" or "no" should be just as binding as someone else's "swearing on a stack of a thousand Bibles".

One who ostentatiously refuses to take an oath in court on religious grounds but plays fast and loose with the truth in business dealings is missing the point of Jesus' teaching from both angles.

According to the Psalmist, one mark of a man acceptable to God was, "*He swears to his own hurt and changes not*" (Psalm 15:4). If we state an intention to another and, then, in changed circumstances, find that to carry it out will be disadvantageous, we should fulfill our word anyway. At least we should be concerned, by explanation, to secure from those to whom we made the commitment a release to which they consent.

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We should care that much about our word, because Jesus does.

When we tell someone we will do something, or be somewhere, we should do it. “Come fire or high water”, even if something else comes up we would rather do.

When we tell someone we will pay a debt by a certain date, we should pay when promised. If unexpected events make it impossible, we should at least be there on time to apologize and to say when we will meet our obligation.

Whether on our income tax return, in representing the condition of something we are selling, in agreeing to help someone, or reporting something that has happened, we should tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

There used to be a saying about honorable men, “Their word is their bond.” When Jesus said, “*Let your ‘yes’ be yes and your ‘no’ be no*”, He was saying, “Let your word be your bond”. †

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Some Important Bible Questions

- “How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4).
- “... What shall we do then?” (Luke 3:10).
- “... What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” (John 6:28).
- “... Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).
- “... Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6).
- “.... what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).
- “... What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:10).
- “... What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? ...” (Matthew 22:42).
- “... What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41).
- “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:9).

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Will Keeping the Ten Commandments Save Us?

John Thiesen

We often hear it said that all that is necessary to please God and be saved is to “keep the commandments”, referring to the Ten Commandments given through Moses on Mt. Sinai. These were delivered to the nation of Israel while they were in the wilderness following their escape from slavery in Egypt. Many people feel that, although many other commandments were also given through Moses on the mountain, the Ten Commandments embody the whole duty of man to God and his neighbor.

THE LAW BROUGHT CONDEMNATION

The Bible teaches that the Ten Commandments cannot save us. If they could, then it would not have been necessary for Jesus Christ to come into the world. The Law, including the Ten Commandments, was given to the Jews some 1,500 years before Christ, but, strangely enough, instead of saving the people, it resulted in their condemnation.



The reason is that the law increased their knowledge of right and wrong, making them even more accountable to God when they sinned against it. *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin”* (Romans 3:20)

The problem was that, although the Law was good and designed for the good of the people, when it was

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sinned against there was no power in the Law to remove the guilt of the sin. Since *“all have sinned”* (Romans 3:23), and *“the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23), a sacrifice for sin was needed in order to remove the guilt of the people. The Lord set up a temporary system of animal sacrifice for them which ceremonially removed their sin, but that system could not in reality accomplish the remission of sins, because *“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:4). It took the death of Jesus Christ, coming into the world centuries later, to remove sin with the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. *“Neither by the blood of bulls and goats, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us”* (Hebrews 9:12).

The Law of Moses, which embraced the Ten Commandments and many others, was given to curb lawlessness and to serve as an instructor, or schoolmaster, until Christ came to take it out of the way. When faith in Christ came centuries later, the schoolmaster was no longer in operation (Galatians 3:19,24,25). Now Christ has given us a new law, called a *“law of faith”* (Romans 3:27). This new law is the Gospel of Christ, which is *“the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”* (Romans 1:16). Therefore, no one is

any longer under the old law given through Moses. To try to go back to it is to reject the forgiveness of sins that comes through Christ and to enter once again into condemnation.

Does this mean that it is now alright to worship idols, kill, commit adultery, steal, and covet, since God has removed the Ten Commandments? By no means, for it has always been wrong to offend against these great moral principles, written on the hearts of men since the beginning of the world, long before the Law of Moses was given to the Jews (Romans 2:14,15). Killing was wrong when Cain slew Abel in the beginning.

No, we are not saved by the Ten Commandments. It takes a Savior to save us from the sins which we have committed. If law without Christ could justify us, then God would not have had to send His Son to die for our sins on the cross. Today we dare not rest our hope in our own goodness and sinlessness, deceiving ourselves into thinking we have kept “the big 10” of Moses perfectly. We must run for refuge instead to our sin bearer, Jesus Christ, to be made right in the sight of God through His blood. Jesus said, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”* (Mark 16:16). †

Before his death in 2006, John Thiesen was involved with the Spanish translation of *The Voice of Truth International*.

The Devil at Work

Owen Cosgrove

A recent religious survey indicates a sizable number of people do not believe that there is a real, actual, literal Devil. The claim is made by some that he is just some religious fabrication developed to explain socially unacceptable behavior in people. Such thoughts must please the terrorist, Satan. He works most effectively when people are not even aware of his presence.

Now, this may sound like some superstitious bumpkin from the dark ages, but I believe that Satan actually exists, that he works in people, and that he is the consummate enemy of mankind. Jesus knew that the Devil lives and that he destroys that which is good and holy. His confrontation with him and victory over him is the hope of humanity. That evil one who had captivated mankind was himself led captive by God's Son.

The Devil is sometimes pictured as a deformed, little creature with horns and a pitchfork-like tail and cloven feet like a cow. Satan could not be more pleased than to see himself so represented, almost in comic proportions. He can work most effectively when people either doubt that he exists or when they believe that he is a clownish little being like one would see in a cartoon.

The Scriptures say that he transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). The apostle Peter says that he goes about as a lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). Peter does not say that he looks like a lion. He says that he acts like one in his deadly viciousness and cunning. He often wears a cloak of righteousness. Some of the most devilish things in history were done in the name of religion.

We sometimes picture Satan as working in bars, crack houses, casinos, and bordellos — and he does. However, our first view of him in the Scriptures is in the Paradise of Eden — posing as a friend to our earliest parents. Satan has always worked that way. His appetite is whetted at the thought of defiling the virtuous person. The adulterer seeks for the precious life (Proverbs 6:26). Vandals look for the prettiest, nicest things to destroy. Satan even sought out an apostle of Christ. Judas opened the door and Satan entered into his heart (Luke 22:3).

The devil works in the scum pits of life, and he goes almost unnoticed in the bedlam and pandemonium of iniquity, but it is in the quiet symphony of God's righteousness that his factious spirit is most discordant and destructive. †

Owen Cosgrove has for many years been involved in printed evangelism in many countries. He lives in Waxahachie, Texas, USA.

THE WISE MAN, SOLOMON, ACTED FOOLISHLY

Maxie B. Boren

Every student of the Bible knows that *“God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much”* (1 Kings 4:29). So wise was he that the Queen of Sheba, upon hearing of Solomon’s wisdom, came to Jerusalem to see for herself, and said to Solomon, *“However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was NOT TOLD ME. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard”* (1 Kings 10:7 NKJV).

However, like all other human beings, Solomon was not perfect, and being tempted, committed sin. God had warned His people not to intermarry with the heathen people that inhabited Canaan land (Exodus 34:11-16), nor to take multiple wives (Deuteronomy 17:17), lest their hearts be turned away from God. Yet, Solomon did both of these things. He allowed himself to be enamored with many heathen women and contracted marriages with them. Just as God had warned, *“his wives turned away his heart”* (1 Kings 11:1-10). In all this,



Solomon acted foolishly!

There is no way I can overstress the importance of a person prayerfully and carefully seeking just the “right one” to be his/her lifelong companion in marriage. Who a person marries is so very important! Every Christian young person must be taught that marriage is a lifelong commitment of one man and one woman (Matthew 19:3-6; Romans 7:2,3).

While we admire Solomon’s wisdom throughout much of his life, a Christian must avoid the foolish mistakes he made in this matter. This was his downfall (1 Kings 11:11). †

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher living in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

BIBLE CHARACTERS

“Where Never Is Heard...”

Dalton Key

One of the more interesting and inspirational characters of the New Testament was a man named Joseph. You probably know him better by his other name, the one he was given by the apostles: *“Joseph... was surnamed by the apostles, Barnabas (which means, son of Encouragement)”* (Acts 4:36).

Joseph did a good job living up to his new name. Not long after Paul’s conversion, when Paul was yet known as Saul, a man much feared and mistrusted by the disciples, it was Barnabas who stood by Saul’s side, encouraging his acceptance as a fellow believer (Acts 9:26,27).

Sometime later, Barnabas did for a young man named John Mark what he had earlier done for Paul. On their first missionary journey, Barnabas and Paul took John Mark with them,

only to see him turn back and return home shortly after the journey began. When the time came for Barnabas and Paul to make plans for a second mission, Barnabas insisted, even against Paul’s strong objections, that John Mark be given another opportunity (Acts 15:39,40).

Yes, Barnabas was the perfect name for Joseph. He was a perennial encourager, someone who sought out, found, and reinforced the best in those around him. He used his words wisely, as tools for helping, for building up.

And in so doing, this “Son of Encouragement” was busy living what the Scriptures require of all of us: *“Let no corrupt communications proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers”* (Ephesians 4:29). *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin”* (Hebrews 3:13).

Do you wish to be a benefit both to the Lord and to those you know? Be a Barnabas! Be an encourager! †

Dalton Key is the Editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the 10th & Rockford congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

***We increase our ability, stability, and responsibility
when we increase our sense of accountability to God!***

On the Subject of Dating

Alex Gibson



Ok, so you see a girl you are attracted to and you think, “I’m going to ask her out.” She agrees and the date goes well and after some time you decide to seriously consider being a couple. What’s wrong here? Not too much, as this is the way it normally happens — right? I mean everyone does it this way. Well, if you think it’s that simple, you’re wrong as a snowboarding contest in Hawaii.

I know the Bible doesn’t really deal with the dating process, but we can apply a few principles to make it work in a good Christian manner.

Ok, Step One. You see a girl. Stop right there! When you see a girl what are you looking at? Are you really just looking at her body and not much more? Yep, too often that’s what we young men are doing. But I learned something interesting: there’s a little passage where Jesus says if you even *look* in lust, you’ve committed adultery in your heart. It took a bit for me to realize that when I was only checking out a girl’s body, I was as guilty as sin.

So what is a young boy to do here? Well, it’s rather simple: train your eyes to look onto theirs. To put it simply, keep your eyes in a safe place. This will take some time; it took me about 6 months before I did it without thinking but, hey, it’s worth it. Most girls I talk with are normally thrown off by the fact that I’m not staring at their bodies — and let me say here that the clothes they wear often encourage such staring.

OK, there is another thing to be done here. That is paying attention to what they say ... you know, actually *listening*, because when you do you’ll be surprised at how little brain power is left for wandering thoughts that are wrong.

Now that we’ve gotten past noticing the physical girl, what about this “being attracted” to her? Oh, sweet muffins, I can hear it now, “She’s just so beautiful and everything she does just Oh, man, I gotta ask her out.” Beauty is indeed a thing to be attracted to, and admiring a person is fine, well, and good,

HEY, YOU KIDS!

but have you given any thought to talking in depth with the girl before asking her out? I mean getting to know her *as a friend* before you become a dating couple?

“Huh?” you say. “That’s what dating is for!” No, no, no! Dating isn’t even in the scope right now. We’re talking about being attracted to someone. A person is more than an interesting collection of body parts; she has a mind, and a soul, to boot. I’ve known people I think are beautiful, to say the least, but after talking with them for ten seconds I’ve wanted to cut off my ears to make it stop!

Attraction needs to be to the person’s *mind* more than the body, as that is what will remain more constant with the passing of time. Being in the army, I get to see how fast a body can fall apart, but a person’s mind will change very slowly; in fact, it generally stays about the same, and thus is the more enduring part of the real person. Consider that God loves you for your mind and soul more than for your body, as He doesn’t stop loving you when your body grows old and dies. If you look at a person the way God does, you’ll be most concerned about the personality and the soul.

Onward and upward. You noticed a girl and befriended her and decided to ask her out as a friend, but with the intention to start dating. I’m going to let you in on a little secret here. Go and have your date, but be sure to keep it as a friend; that means no kissing or anything else. Brotherly/sisterly hugs are Ok but let’s face it, there is another step you need to take before you go beyond friendship. Keep in mind that you’re testing waters now, not actually committed to dating yet.

Now why do it this way? What’s the point of going out on a date if you’re not dating? That’s simple. People act differently when it’s one with one than if they’re in a group. You want to get to know this person, to be sure you want to date her. “Why?” you ask. That’s simple, because you’re dealing with a very powerful process that can make people love, hate, cry, to degrees that are many times stronger than normal. I’m not about to commit to any such ordeal without being sure of myself and the girl, first. That, and dating, is the *interview process* before getting married, so if you’re looking at dating you should try to be sure that you’re not wasting your time — not even to mention your money.

Anyway, the first friendly outings together have gone well, and you decide to take the next step. So you ask her if she’ll be your girlfriend. She says yes. End of story, right? As you’ve probably guessed, there’s more to it than that. Before counting yourselves a dating couple, you need to realize that she may be her own person, capable of her own choices, but it will make a world of difference if you talk with her parents and/or siblings first. Why? Because families tend to be pro-

HEY, YOU KIDS!

tective of their own! Guys, I'm telling you, there is no better way to make a good first impression on her family as her boyfriend than to ask for their permission. It shows that you have some character and that you care about doing things right. But here's more. Even after getting their approval for dating, you need to keep up the communication. You need to tell her parents when you're going out and where you're going and when you think you'll be back. Also, call if you're going to be late, or if something changes. Oh, yeah, sit down and talk with them, too. Be interested and find some common ground. In a nutshell, befriend her whole family, not just her. You see, a healthy relationship should be a blessing to everyone around it. I mean her parents should feel happier because you help out at her house and are respectful and polite as well as truthful, in other words, being a genuine Christian. You should seek to bring peace to every situation and to be a blessing to all, so doesn't that go double for those who hold a special place in your heart?

As a Christian I'm told to love God with everything I have, so what about being in love with her? Well, be sure you tell her that God is #1 in your life and the best she can be is #2. Be sure that you and she are on the same page, spiritually, or if she is not a Christian already, make the salvation of her soul your number one goal. Try to glorify God in/with your relationship with her, and I think you'll do right by Him.

And, hey, that negative question: what about when we break up? When!?! Ok, if/when you break up, do whatever you can to maintain the friendship with her and her family. Just because you may not want to marry her, it doesn't mean that you need to throw away a friendship. Continue to be a blessing and a good Christian.

So what else do I have for you on this subject? Not much, as all I'm really doing is begging people to control their lust and be sure of what they're asking for when they want to make someone else an important part of their lives. It takes some work, but if you study God's Word and try to apply it in all your relationships, especially here, people will notice something different about you and will generally be disarmed by your efforts to be what Jesus wants us to be. From my own experience, it's a rewarding and worthwhile way to live, and I recommend it to anyone who wants to do things right and avoid the pitfalls. That's what God's Word equips us to do.

You guys know the drill: if you have any questions or feedback for me, then I'm all ears. I'll try to get back to you A.S.A.P., but I make no promises. God Bless. †

Alex Gibson is currently stationed at Fort Campbell, KY, USA.



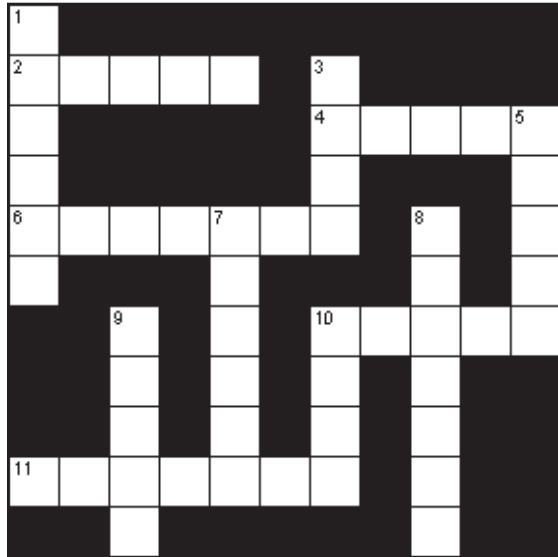
Bonnie Rushmore
**Visions
of God**

Across

- 2. Who saw the God of Israel?
- 4. Who saw the God of Israel?
- 6. Who saw a throne with the likeness as the appearance of a man above the throne?
- 10. Who had a dream with God at the top of a ladder?
- 11. Who saw the glory of God with Jesus standing at his right hand?

Down

- 1. Who saw the Ancient of days whose garment was white as snow?
- 3. Who was caught up in the third heaven?
- 5. Who saw the God of Israel?
- 7. Who saw God sitting on a throne?
- 8. Who saw God sitting on a throne?
- 9. Who saw the back of God?
- 10. Who saw a throne in heaven as one sat on the throne?



The Crisis

Batsell Barrett Baxter

In all of our work for Christ, we are undertaking a major self-examination of every activity, every program, and every expenditure. Every decision must be made in view of our prime objective and task, the saving of souls. Every activity must be reevaluated and every activity must justify itself afresh or be dropped.

We must make personal commitments of dedication and of willingness to sacrifice for the salvation of souls. All of us must be willing to dedicate ourselves, our talents, our time, and our substances totally, to the cause of evangelism. We need to go back and reexamine the dedication of the apostles, especially the apostle Paul. Only when Christians throughout the world are really in earnest about bringing the Gospel of Christ to the millions of people around us and the billions in our world, will our evangelistic efforts become effective.

Ours is a time of crisis in leadership. Elders, deacons, preachers, editors, speakers on radio and television programs, teachers, and all others who occupy places of influence must lead the way in this evangelistic crisis. Leaders must lead if others are to follow. We have often become so busy doing other things — important and good things — that evangelism has been crowded out. Elders and preachers and leaders in other phases of the Lord's work have often been so busy that they did not take the time to get out and talk to people about their souls or do very much to encourage and support those who did. Each one of us needs to examine himself and ask the question, "Who have I brought to Christ in the last 12 months?"

With all of our wonderful church buildings, with all of our fine Bible school programs, and with everything else that we have done, the contours of darkness have still continued to close in upon us. We have been too busy about secondary things, and the first thing has been neglected.

There have been too many chiefs and not enough Indians. There has been too little dedication. Our real crisis is a crisis of ineffectiveness growing out of a failure of will, a failure of dedication. †

Batsell Barrett Baxter (1916 – 1982) was a committed proclaimer of the Gospel to the lost.

Show Them the Way

Hershel Dyer



Jesus began His ministry in the midst of Judaism, which was split into a number of religious divisions. The Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc. offered to the people differing views as to the worship and service of God. When the apostles went out preaching the Gospel in Gentile areas, they had to meet many forms of religion diverse from

either Judaism or Christianity. Yet, all of these proposed their ways of salvation or peace for human souls.

Today there are many religious ways from which people are making their choices. To those who, apart from a study of the Bible, are just “looking around”, this can be very confusing. Do we think it was any less so during the age of the apostles?

Back in that pristine period of Christianity, those apostles and early disciples pointed a perplexed world to “*the way*”. Yes, “*the way*” was a common expression with them (Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:14). Is this any wonder, since Jesus so identified Himself (John 14:6)? Hence, Christ was proclaimed by His followers as the only way for reaching God (Acts 4:12).

But to choose Christ as the way is the same as choosing to obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). Any faith in Christ as the Savior and Lord, to be effectual, must be accompanied by obedience to His commandments (John 14:15,21). One begins this life of obedience by confessing faith in the Gospel and being baptized (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 18:8).

In the midst of such a multitude of ways being offered, let us zealously urge “*the way*” — the only way — for people to please God! †

Hershel Dyer is a Gospel preacher living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

When His Work Was Done, Jesus Summarized OUR Task

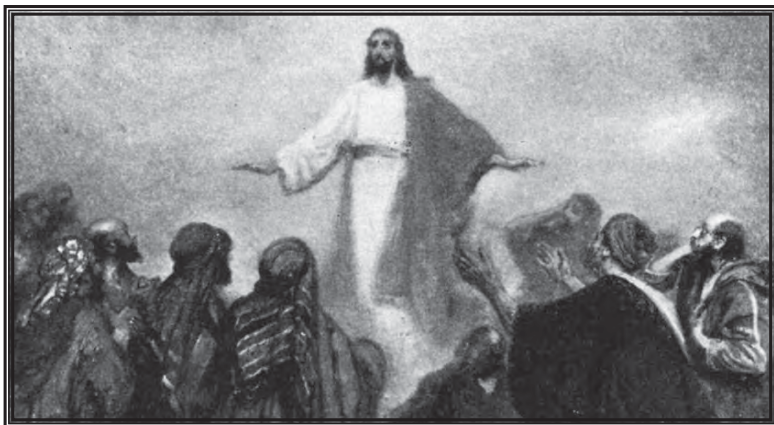
Don Petty

For three years Jesus taught people and carried out His sensitive and sacrificial mission to humanity. When it had come to the close and He was ready to ascend to His Father in heaven to resume His rightful place there, He sent His close followers to a mountain in Galilee where they could no doubt look out on the Sea of Galilee. He had a most important message to give them, as they now would begin their work with Him absent from earth.

There would be serious wonder in the minds of His apostles as they began the trudge to Galilee to see Him. He had prepared them to launch the future in His spiritual kingdom on earth, but they would not have known what He was about to say or do. They were in awe with deep introspective wonder ... “What is next?”

Then when they were all there, He began to talk to them in the most sober terms. This was to be the summary of what His mission had been all about. He was now ready to charge them with what He wanted them to know and to do. It was to be their last command, that to execute the plan, the one laid from the foundation of the world, to evangelize the world.

Jesus made clear that they (and by extension, we) are to preach the Gospel all over the world, and why we are to do that. *“All authority in heaven and on*



CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). He spoke with the authority of God, who had given Him that authority ...

GO... His command of execution was activated. We are authorized and commissioned to go. The command was not given to ignore, or to sit, or to wait, or to be passive, or to rationalize into something less, or to be replaced, or to disobey.

THEREFORE ... He spoke by God’s authority and thus He should be so heard and so obeyed, even at the cost of our physical life, certainly at the cost of our “material” life.

AND ... Both “GO,” and DO something else: (1) locate recipients of God’s word, and (2) achieve God’s objectives.

MAKE ... Put together, build, fashion, shape, form, by teaching and training and patiently showing why, what, and how, permanently impressing and imprinting with the principles of God.

DISCIPLES ... Turning recipients of God’s word into students, learners, doers of God’s principles, incorporators of spiritual thinking and living, believing and serving as His people.

OF ... Springing from.

ALL ... No human being left out.

NATIONS ... The “societies” of the world, every culture, race, tribe, individual, slave or king, wealthy or poor, leader or follower, visionary, worker, strategist, organizer.

BAPTIZING ... God putting them IN CHRIST (Romans 6: 3; Galatians 3: 27) and giving the free gift of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness.

THEM ... The disciples, believers, penitent recipients of the Gospel.

IN ... Defined border, boundary, limit.

THE ... Singular word, eliminating any other, not intended as a plural word.

NAME ... One name of One authority, the ONE GOD.

OF ... Springing from.

THE ... One authority.

FATHER ... Singular, God, the spiritual omnipotent authoritative intellect of Heaven and material humanity.

AND ... Another, connected under the singular name.

OF ... Springing from.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

THE ... Singular.

SON ... Offspring, manifestation of God for humanity.

AND ... Another, connected under the singular name.

OF ... Springing from.

THE ... Singular.

HOLY ... Completely interwoven with God.

SPIRIT ... Manifestation of God:

- to communicate His words to humanity,
- to mediate between God and humanity,
- to reside in humanity,
- to comfort humanity,
- to guide humanity.

TEACHING ... Ensuring the learning of the will of God, for which we are commissioned.

THEM ... All the recipients, those in Christ.

TO ... Active execution.

OBSERVE ... Do, exercise, carry out, continue, match our action with the will of God.

ALL ... Leaving out nothing He (God, Christ, Holy Spirit) taught.

THAT ... Any and all of those things.

I ... Jesus, with all authority from God.

HAVE ... Already done and taught.

COMMANDED ... Said, exemplified, embodied, shown, communicated, meant, told, explained, taught or expected.

YOU ... All those hearing Him and, by extension, all those to whom they communicated the Gospel, till the end of time.

That is our task in life on earth. When we are carrying out His commission word by word, this promise is ours, “*And behold, I am with you always to the end of the Age*” (Matthew 28:20b).

“God promised us a safe landing; He did not promise calm passage.” When we are actually carrying out our task, the sailing will not be smooth. †

Don Petty is a writer, speaker, and evangelist, formerly a missionary to Pakistan and Iran, currently a member of the Lewisville (TX) Church of Christ.

What I Owe My Home Congregation

Frank L. Cox

Unto the church of my Lord in every locality, I am under solemn obligation to the extent of my ability, but unto my home congregation I am under special obligation.

⇒ I want my home congregation to radiate a wholesome influence in the community. Therefore, I owe it the example of a good life. For it I must “*live soberly, righteously and godly*” (Titus 2:12).

⇒ I want the strangers who enter the door of the assembly building to feel at home, to learn to love us, and to return often. They are our guests; I must treat them accordingly. I owe it to them and to the church to show myself friendly. I must not stand back and wait for others to greet them; this I must do (Hebrews 13:2).

⇒ No congregation can make progress without faithful and efficient leaders. To a certain extent, the members of the church make or break their leaders. To

the end that our leaders may be stronger and more efficient, I must give them my support. I must pray for them as long as they are true men. I must not embarrass them in their work (1 Timothy 5:19).

⇒ My home congregation has financial obligations which are due at regular intervals. Whether I give or do not give, these obligations must be paid. If it is right for my congregation to pay its obligations each week, it is right for me to give each week. Though circumstances may force me to be absent at times, my contributions should find their way to the treasury of the church (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

⇒ I know that the very existence of my congregation depends upon the attendance of its members. In fact, the attendance is the life of the church. For this reason, I must attend the services — every service I possibly can. For all that

THE CHURCH



I have, I would not have it said that my congregation perished because I would not attend the assemblies (Hebrews 10:25).

⇒ I want my home congregation to grow, to multiply in numbers. Therefore, I must set myself to the noble work of winning souls for Christ. This I can do by preaching

and persuading; this I can do by persistent effort; this I can do by bringing others to our meeting.

⇒ My home congregation cannot thrive in a frigid atmosphere. I must not by my carelessness allow the church to become a place where hearts are chilled. I must make it a place where hearts are warmed. Therefore, I owe it my heart, the warmth of my life, and I must forgive and forget.

Wishing to be honest, I must meet my obligations to the best of my ability. I must, with the help that God gives, do my part in the incomparable work of building up the body of Christ. †

Frank L. Cox (deceased) was a long-time Gospel preacher, primarily in Texas, USA.

THE CHURCH

The Body

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

Various images are conjured in the mind when the church is mentioned. Bring up the church and some think immediately of a steeple — an ornate edifice — a religious dogma, etc. In the New Testament it is used in ways totally unlike current usage. Jesus made reference to it three times in Matthew (16:18; 18:15-17). He used other terms interchangeably. However, every reference had PEOPLE in mind.

Paul's favorite term was the BODY. A body has life! A body must have a head! A body has members! A body has power and direction!

Since we are the BODY OF CHRIST, let us remember:

1. **That His blood flows through it to keep it clean.** The spiritual life of the body is the blood of Jesus. As we walk in His light, that blood keeps us clean (1 John 1:7). His blood is available — and as “priests” unto God, we are continually cleansed as we serve Him. The blood wasn't just for past sins — but for all sins.
2. **We must take our direction from Christ.** The body does not direct herself. Christ is head, with all executive, legislative, and judicial authority. Paul summed it up this way: *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Colossians 3:17).
3. **Every member has a function to perform.** Every member is involved if the body works well. The body works like a precision machine when each member knows his place and functions well.
4. **Unity must prevail.** It does when each member is submissive to Christ and to each other. A body fighting against itself can't live. We have a common enemy and ought to marshal all of our strength against Satan.
5. **Relationships are very special.** The greatest of all is our relationship with Christ, and it must be ongoing and growing. Then there is the relationship we sustain to each other. That is a relationship of love, growth, sharing, helping, and serving. We are partners: complimenting, cooperating, and continuing together.

What a great concept — You are the Body!



Clarence DeLoach, Jr. is the preacher for the Willow Avenue congregation in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

THE CHURCH

Growing in Number and in Spirit

Dale Grissom

Real church growth is not the same as “swelling,” which occurs when Christians move from one congregation of the Lord’s people to another. Real growth comes when sinners are converted to Christ; it is the result of evangelism.

In order for evangelism to be really effective, more Christians need to be involved. We must equip ourselves for this task through diligent study and prayer, then we must apply what we have learned in the teaching of others. We also need to lend support to one another in this work; those who are actively involved in evangelism need a network of support from their brethren.

Growing congregations have a number of needs. The first that comes to mind is unity; elders, deacons, preachers, and teachers must be committed to the goal of being what God would have us to be. The

second is vision; leadership must be able to visualize and plan for desired long-range accomplishments. And the third is balance — in evangelism, education, and benevolence. Extremes — either to the right or to the left — must

be avoided.

An often-overlooked avenue that affords great opportunity for teaching the Gospel is Christian counseling. There is not a congregation that would not benefit by having someone, ideally someone in the leadership, who is prepared to offer counseling based upon principles found in the Word of God. It is a means by which the world can be reminded that Jesus is the greatest counselor who ever lived, and the Bible is the greatest book on counseling ever written. †

Dale Grissom works with the Church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.



Hindrances to Worship

Jerry Jenkins

The word “worship” in all of its various forms occurs almost 200 times in the authorized version of the Bible. The Scriptures affirm that God desires that men and women worship Him (John 4:23). One wonders, after knowing only a small amount about the true and living God, why one would choose to worship some inanimate object or inferior creature, or how one could downgrade the Holy One. Perhaps some insight can be gained by noting some hindrances to worship.

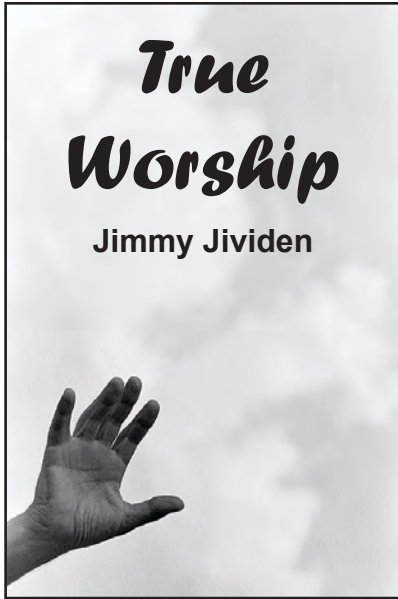
There are hindrances to one’s personal worship. The lack of physical rest makes it almost impossible for a person to pay proper honor and respect to God. One who stays up very late on Saturday night deprives himself of a clear ability to worship the one true and living God on the Lord’s Day. Likewise, a lack of mental preparation will hinder our worship. It is foolish to believe that a person can forget God during the week, watch the Saturday night movie on television, arise late the next morning, rush to church, and then have a contrite heart before the one who really matters.

Personal worship can be hindered by an immature, incomplete, or faulty concept of the Father. The devil always has and always will misrepresent God. He does not have a clear understanding of the nature and character of God. The devil presents God as a cruel tyrant or brutal bully. Jesus presents the heavenly Father as a divine, loving, caring Being who is worthy of our adoration. If one listens to Jesus instead of the devil, one will overcome some of the hindrances that prevent worshiping in spirit and truth.

There are hindrances to worship in those around us. This would include those who whisper, those who wear large hats, or a child who wiggles, making it so distracting that it is difficult, if not impossible, to concentrate on the Father. Certainly the self-righteous Pharisee who complimented himself and congratulated God on how fortunate He was to have such a concerned worshiper would be a distraction to anyone.

Let us lay aside any of these distractions that hinder our worship. *“O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desires not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”* (Psalm 51:15-17). †

Jerry Jenkins preaches for the Roebuck Parkway Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.



Worshipping God is more than saying the right word at the right time and place. Jesus corrected such a misconception with the woman of Samaria.

“... Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father ... God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21,24).

Worshipping God is more than giving a pleasing performance to show your devotion. Jesus corrected such a perverted view of worship in the Sermon on the Mount.

“And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full” (Matthew 6:5).

Worshipping God is more than stirring the emotions. Emotional feelings can be caused by human phenomena and false religions. Such emotions can confuse the mind and overpower the will. Paul described it thus: *“You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols; however, you were led” (1 Corinthians 12:2).*

True worship is my spirit seeking communion with God’s spirit in praise and thanksgiving. Our wills, as well as our words, become living sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God. These are the only things we really own. True worship is giving ourselves to God. †

Jimmy Jividen is a writer and preacher living in Abilene, Texas, USA.

**True worship is
my spirit seeking
communion with
God’s spirit in praise
and thanksgiving.**

Who Am I?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

1. A conquering army captured us from our home (Daniel 1:1-3).
2. The master of the king's eunuchs chose us for service in the palace and changed our names (Daniel 1:3-7).
3. We refused to eat the meals from the king's table (Daniel 1:8-14).
4. We were placed in positions of authority in our new land and later promoted (Daniel 2:49; 3:30).
5. We refused to worship a golden image the king set up (Daniel 3:1-12,18).
6. We had faith that God could deliver us from our punishment, but we did not know if He would (Daniel 3:16-18).
7. The king's mighty men bound us and threw us into a furnace heated seven times hotter than normal (Daniel 3:19-23).
8. God sent an angel to protect us from the fire; the king and his men saw four men walking around in the furnace (Daniel 3:24-27).
9. We walked out of the furnace with no injuries, no damaged clothing, and no smell of the fire on our clothes (Daniel 3:26,27).
10. The king praised God and forbade anyone to say negative things about God (Daniel 3:28,29).



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Where Am I?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

1. I ruled part of the world during Old Testament times.
2. My ancient land area comprised about 9,600 square miles.
3. Civilization in my lands centered around a river valley and delta.
4. Deserts border my land on the east and west.
5. Abram visited me (Genesis 12:10-20).
6. An outsider became a powerful ruler (Genesis 41).
7. I was important to the history of the Hebrew nation (Genesis 39-Exodus 40).
8. Joseph brought baby Jesus to my lands to protect Him from King Herod (Matthew 2:13-15).
9. Today, I am a country in northeast Africa.
10. The Nile River flows north to the Mediterranean Sea through my lands.



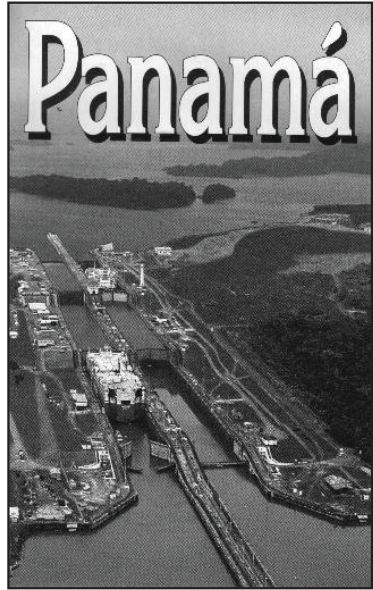
See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Roger Leonard

HOW THE EARLY CHURCH BEGAN AND GREW IN PANAMA

Who the first Christian was to preach the Gospel in Panama, and when, is impossible to know. But we can discuss the “who and when” concerning some of the early pioneers who actively *pursued* the Lord’s work there. Brother Bob Bryson, while preaching at the Meigs Avenue Church of Christ in Jeffersonville, Indiana, had invited an old schoolmate of his, Bill Rogers, to speak on the mission work he was doing. Brother Rogers presented his slides about the work he was doing in Panama, one Wednesday night. These two men had the commitment to “Go into all the world” and Bob decided to go and see for himself. Sister Cordia Hall gave \$100 dollars as the first contribution to the work from the Meigs Avenue congregation. The elders then gave brother Bryson permission to go on an historic ten day trip. He traveled to Panama in the fall of 1958. Traveling with him were his wife Robbie, brother Bill Rogers, and Dr. Floyd Coleman. During this first trip, they slept on the floor at a local member’s home and preached at the old Masonic Lodge by the ocean front. By the end of that trip, brother Bryson was fully committed to the work. As he put it, “I was hooked.” At that time there was not one full time Gospel preacher in the entire country.



MOBILE MEDICAL MISSIONS



Soon after realizing the opportunities to teach people who knew nothing of true Christianity, Bob began putting together teams of Christians from the U.S. to go and

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

teach the Panamanian people. And realizing that so many Panamanians were sick and suffering due to a lack of medical attention, they pioneered what is known as the mobile medical mission team, in the early 1960's. Medical attention and Gospel preaching working together enabled the reaching of multitudes of lost souls! Of course, this manner followed the command and pattern of our Lord:

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

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:35,36).

Medical/Evangelism teams continued to go, in rather small numbers, I might add, to remote villages in the province of Bocas del Toro. Those early trips were rough for the teams, having to fly on small and often dangerous planes, then taking trains, boats, or travelling on foot back into the villages. As time went on and more opportunities were presented, the medical/evangelism teams began going to the other provinces, the San Blas Islands, and the Pearl Islands, spreading the Gospel and establishing more congregations. Other efforts were simply evangelistic in nature, with much work being done in Panama City and the Balboa area of the Canal Zone. Some people were even baptized in the Canal during the early years!

TRAINING NEW CHRISTIANS AND PREPARING PREACHERS

As more work and preaching were done, and more souls were being saved, churches were established and preachers were needed to take care of the new Christians. Again, they followed the Lord, this time by His command from Matthew's Gospel:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in



FROM THE HEART OF . . .

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen” (Matthew 28:19,20).

When people become Christians, the Lord said that they need more teaching. This required trained men under His ministry and the same need was realized in Panama. In 1963,

working under the title of **Panama Calling**, the mission effort, under the leadership of Brother Bryson, began this training process by opening the Pan-American Bible School. They first met in downtown Panama City in an old building called “the chicken coop” because it certainly was not fancy. But it



met the needs for the training of men to preach the saving Gospel of Christ. Faithful teachers were sought to be put to work and thus began the oldest preacher training school of its kind in Latin America. Today it is called The Bible School of the Americas and is located very near to the Tocumen International Airport in the Las Mañanitas neighborhood. Although the main campus is in Panama, there are three additional campuses: the San Blas Islands (of Panama), Columbia, and Peru. More than 400 men have graduated from this school during its forty-six year history.

As the activities continued, more men were coming to the Bible School from all over the country to study in the two-year program. And after graduation, they wanted to begin congregations in their own and other towns and villages. Following this natural progression, the church of Christ spread all over the Republic of Panama. There are more than 200 congregations of the Lord’s church in the country. But even with all of this labor, there are still places where the church needs to be planted. There are still thousands of lost people who need to know the way to the Father through Christ (John 14:6)! We must continue to train men to teach the lost and help the saved remain faithful. It is a sin to baptize people and not find a way to teach them “all things”!

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

HOW WE DO THE WORK FROM THE STATES

The work has always involved other congregations and individuals in the States to make up the teams and support the newly established works. This involvement became integral for the strength of the work. And even though the Meigs Ave. congregation continued involvement with the work, and still does today, brother Bryson moved on as a local preacher to other congregations over the years. However, these moves proved to assist in strengthening the work by involving more members of the Lord's church. This article is not necessarily a detailed historic report, but rather a generic one to help others see the magnitude of the work and what can be done when people have the heart and the vision to spread the Gospel.

In time, the work changed names from *Panama Calling*, to *Panama/Costa Rica Calling*, to *Central American Missions*, and now *Latin American Missions*, due to going into other countries. Over the years, new staff members were added in the States to help gain support and reach more souls. Current staff members are: Jack Farber, director of the Bible School of the Americas; Charles Renfro, master printer; Roger Leonard, missionary to Nicaragua and Panama; Roger Steis, media minister; Lionel Cortez, translator and Editor of a magazine, *El Expositor Espiritual*; James Grace, assistant printer; Dave Huffman, missionary to El Salvador and Honduras; Jonathan Winchester, missionary to the San Blas Islands and Peru. Brenda DeLoach has been the missions secretary and bookkeeper since 1982, when the work settled in Valdosta, GA and came under the eldership of the Forrest Park church of Christ. Rosalina Brathwaite and Marta Cortez serve as translators, and Sarah Dutton works with the children's home, etc. When brother Bryson resigned as the Missions Coordinator in 1994, the Forrest Park elders, brothers Glenn Cochran and Ray Joyner, both being full-time elders on staff, took the reins. And although the work is currently under the entire eldership, today brother Ray Joyner serves as the Mission Elder over the work.

Since we help support several preachers, it is important to maintain communication. Individuals and congregations send support to these men who in turn send their reports to Valdosta. We translate these from Spanish to English and send them to their supporters.

I would be remiss by failing to mention the wonderful servants who labor daily in their countries. Several fellow Christians serve to help us in communication in various ways, many of whom speak English. But the example of

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

love and hard work by so many native Christians cannot be measured. There are so many good works being done we cannot keep up with them. They take care of their own people in a benevolent way, and even though there are many requests for financial help, they do all they can. They conduct their own campaign efforts, youth rallies, building projects, evangelistic training, etc. So many are doing much more than we will ever know.

SPANISH LITERATURE MINISTRY AND SATELLITE SCHOOLS

Preparing local men to reach the lost within their own culture, and who speak their own language and dialects, drink the water and eat the food, etc. is central to keeping the Lord's work going and growing anywhere in the world. In turn, the local preachers have the responsibility to prepare those within their congregations to teach and preach (2 Timothy 2:2). One way the preachers do this is by conducting Bible Fundamentals classes as soon as people are born into the family



of God. It seems clear that the Lord expects the grounding of new Christians in the faith very quickly. (Read Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:42, Colossians 1:3-8.) Brother Joyner had compiled a book, **Bible Fundamentals**, to be used for this very purpose in the Forrest Park congregation. Covering 39 lessons, every new Christian has the opportunity to go through solid instruction of fundamental Bible doctrine. Several years ago, this material was accurately translated by our staff into Spanish. It has been sent out and used all over Latin America. Using this book, along with **Panorama of the Bible** by Jay Smith and **The Church of Christ** by Ed Wharton, the men who are potential candidates for the Bible School of the Americas in Panama City go through two years of study in what we call Satellite Schools. The classes are taught by the local preachers. This is a most effective method of grounding new Christians in "the apostles' doctrine" and preparing men and women of God to teach the lost in their communities.

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Latin American Missions also has printed the materials for the Bible School curriculum, tracts, and the Gospel Advocate Commentary series.

THE CHILDREN'S HOME OF THE AMERICAS

The campus of the Bible School of the Americas sits on 25 acres of land, and on this same property is a home for indigent and orphaned children. The home has been in operation since 1996 and has had from 5 up to 37 children in number at different times. As of the time of this article there are 22 children in the home. The home is operated by a Christian couple and several other Christian helpers.



BENEVOLENCE

Over the years, Panama has suffered more from political problems than from natural disasters. (You may recall the Noriega years.) And up until very recently, Panama was a very poor country, so benevolence needs have always abounded. We have sent containers of clothing, medical supplies, and reached out with benevolence in other ways to help the brethren and others in need.

The economy is much improved, but there still are many areas where help is needed.

BUILDING TEAMS

Under the heading of benevolence, there have been many building teams, well drillings, and construction projects at the Bible school. These efforts allow brethren to go and use their talents for the Lord and to work hand-in-hand with the local Christians.

FAITHFULNESS IN THE LORD'S WORK

Those involved in Latin America Missions are certainly not the only Christians who have worked in Panama. Some have come and gone, others are still working faithfully. However, there have been challenges from false brethren

FROM THE HEART OF . . .



ren who have taught false doctrine on marriage, divorce and remarriage, church leadership, the Lord's Supper, etc., and have divided the precious body of Christ. False teaching causes people to be lost! It weakens the work of the Lord! The Forrest Park elders and missions staff have diligently sought to faithfully "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2) and

earnestly practice "rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). We know that we, and all the people of the world will be judged by the words of Christ (John 12:48) and all of the words of the New Testament (Romans 2:16; Revelation 20:12). Only "the truth" will make us "free" (John 8:32) from sin, religious error and eternity in hell. Only truth faithfully practiced will prepare us for heaven (Matthew 7:21). Any mission effort that fails to take the Bible, the inspired Word of God, in both hand and heart, will not accomplish the commission of the Lord to teach, baptize, and continue teaching. But that same Word, when obeyed, will convert countless numbers of willing souls to Jesus, His church, and to working until the Lord comes again!



†

Roger Leonard is a Gospel preacher and does itinerant mission work in Nicaragua and Panama, working under the elders of the Forrest Park Church of Christ in Valdosta, Georgia, USA. For more information, see: <http://lam.forrestpark.org>.

THERE IS NO TIME FOR APATHY IN THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST!

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Gospel Gazette Online is a 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**)

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What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

- For just a moment, put yourself in a village in Africa, or even in a large city in India, or in the jungles of South America. You are an immortal soul, living in a perishing body. How will you knowledgeably prepare for the judgment and eternity that awaits us all?
- Does the church of Christ exist in your community, so that you can hear the Gospel preached? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- If you have found the Truth and are a Christian, is there a bookstore from which you can order additional study materials? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.

So you are born into an unbelieving home, you live according to the religion of your parents, you grow old, and you die, thrust into eternity to meet the God you never knew. What unspeakable tragedy! The scenario is LIFE for the majority of the people of the world.

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- We want to give \$_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.
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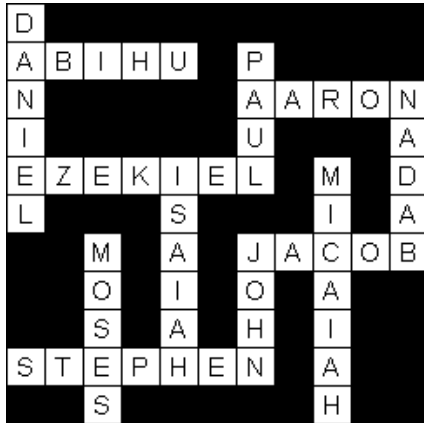
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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (from Page 30)

1. Sin
2. Parts of our physical body
3. Instruments of righteousness to God
4. Grace. Sin no longer has dominion over us.
5. Since God's grace overcomes sin, then sin has no effect on us. That conclusion was not true.
6. Sin, death; obedience, righteousness.
7. Obeying from the heart the doctrine they had been taught.
8. Righteousness.
9. Just as dedicated to being slaves of righteousness as you were dedicated to lawlessness before.
10. Ashamed.
11. Death.
12. Everlasting life.
13. Death.
14. Eternal life.
15. Christ Jesus our Lord.

Bible Find (from Page 88)



Who Am I? (page 100)

Answer: Shadrach,
Meshach, Abednego

Where Am I? (page 101)

Answer: Egypt

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Republic of Panama



Government of Panama: Republic
Head of State: President Ricardo Martinelli

Secular Facts:

Location: Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Colombia and Costa Rica.

Land Mass: 75,420 Km total, slightly smaller than S. Carolina.

Capital: Panama City.

Population: 3,360,474. Growth rate per annum: 1.503%.

Language: Spanish (official), English, 140+ many Panamanians are bilingual, also some indigenous languages among tribes.

Education: Compulsory, ages 6-11; Literacy, 92%.

Religion: Roman Catholic 85%, Protestant 15%.

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo, 70%, Amerindian-West Indian, 14%, white, 10%, Amerindian, 6%.

Economy: Based on a well developed service sector heavily weighted towards banking, commerce, tourism, trading and private industries, because of its key geographic location.

Life Expectancy: 70 male, 74.8 female

Communications: TV sets, 192 per 1000; Internet, 120,000 users

Monetary Units: U.S. Dollar

The Church:

The beginning of the Lord's church in Panama is not actually known, but in 1958 the elders of the Meigs Avenue Church of Christ in Jeffersonville, Indiana allowed Brother Bob Bryson to accompany Bill Rogers and Dr. Floyd Coleman on a survey trip to that country. The result of their visit was the organization of teams of American Christians to go on a sustained basis to preach the gospel and to provide medical care for the needy.

Today there are more than 200 congregations throughout the country, with an effective preacher training school, "The Bible School of the Americas", that has branches also in Colombia and Peru. More than 400 men have graduated in its 46 years of service. An orphanage, caring for 22 children is located on the 25-acre campus.

The Forest Park Church of Christ in Valdosta, Georgia provides leadership and a large staff for the overall work today under the banner of Latin American Missions. Their commitment has expanded to include other countries in the area, as they encourage American medical and teaching teams to work with local Christians to strengthen the church and to enlarge its borders. Much literature in the Spanish language has been printed and distributed. For more information visit their web site at www.forest-park.org.

Front Cover: A sister in Christ who lives in the village of Valle Rico in the Bocas del Toro province of Panama. Photo: Roger Leonard.