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EDITORIAL

The Profane Fire

The case of the profane fire is found written in the Old Testament book of Leviticus chapter ten in the first two verses. It says, "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, WHICH HE HAD NOT COMMANDED THEM. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."

The word profane means to treat sacred things with irreverence or disregard; violate, pollute, what is entitled to respect. David, the prophet, in the long ago, said, "My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness." (Psalm 119:176). Whatever God has commanded man to do is righteousness and sacred. We may not understand all the time everything that God has commanded, and we don't have to, "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men." (1 Corinthians 1:25).

Under the Old Testament there was a special priesthood, and the priests were required of the Lord to take a censer and put fire in it FROM THE ALTAR (Numbers 16:46) and put incense on it to offer it to God in His worship. But Nadab and Abihu, the two priests, offered fire before the Lord, WHICH GOD HAD NOT COMMANDED THEM, that is, that fire was not from the altar, and therefore it was a profane fire. What did the Lord do then: it says, that the Lord punished them instantly. At Romans 15:4, in the New Testament we read: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning. . . ."

What should we learn from the story of Nadab and Abihu? We need to learn that God means that He says, and that He says what He means. From the story of Nadab and Abihu we should learn that we should not make any changes in God's specific commandments. For example, 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11 & 12 says, "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak...." And, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence." From these Scriptures we learn that women should not teach, preach, or lead in worship where men are present. Yet in many churches this is being done in direct violation of God's command. That is, women are teaching and preaching and are leading in public worship. The Bible does not give women the authority to do the work of an evangelist, or preacher or pastor. We must learn to respect God's word. Again, Ephesians 5:19 teaches, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and MAKING MELODY IN YOUR HEART to the Lord." The word melody means music. God never intended that under His New Law, the New Testament, His people should worship Him with mechanical instruments of music. He wants us, His people, whom He has created, to worship Him and honor Him with our singing from our hearts. We are to make melody in our hearts, when we sing, and not through some instruments that we have made. (Hebrews 13:15; Colossians 3:16). Never, in the beginning, Christians in their worship services ever used any mechanical instrument of music. They always sang praises unto God. And those today who are trying to please God in every way in His worship do not use any type of mechanical instrument of music while they sing. Yet, there are many who do use all kinds of mechanical instruments with their singing in worship of God, against God's specific command to sing. Even in the Old Testament, through prophet Amos, God had said, "Woe to you. . . . who chant to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David." (Amos 6:3,5). We need to learn today that God wants US to worship Him. Musical instruments are man's creation, not God's. Likewise, Christ, the Saviour, taught, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. . . ." (Mark 16:16). But in direct violation of the Lord's command it is being taught and proclaimed by preachers all around the world that all one has to do to be saved is just believe in Christ and accept Him as the personal saviour; and that baptism is not essential for salvation. Notice, too, Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized. . . ." But what about those who are baptizing babies, those who cannot believe? Aren't they offering a profane fire

before the Lord? And, what about those who are sprinkling for baptism, whereas the word baptism means immersion or burial, as we read in Romans. (6:3-5)? Also, when it comes to the Lord's Supper or communion which Christ Himself had instituted to be the memorial of His sacrificed body and shed blood of the cross, we read in the Bible, that he took the UNLEAVENED BREAD and gave to His disciples, saying that they should remember His body by eating from the bread. And, that He took the fruit of the vine (grape juice), and gave to them saying that they should drink from it to remember His blood. (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 20:7-20; 1Corinthians 11:23-29). Thus the Lord authorised the use of the unleavened bread (such as, chapati or roti) and fruit of the vine or grape juice to be used in the Lord's Supper. Yet, it is not uncommon to hear people using biscuit, cake and loaf of bread, which are leavened, for the bread of the Lord's Supper; and Campa Cola or any other drinks in place of the specified fruit of the vine or the grape juice, which could easily be obtained from grapes or raisins. From Acts 20:7 we learn that the followers of Christ came together to break bread or partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, that is, on Sunday. This is an example for us as to how often we are to partake of the Lord's Supper today. Every week starts with a first day or Sunday, and therefore we also should come together, as Christians on every Sunday to partake of the Lord's Supper as the New Testament of Christ teaches. God never authorized the use of any other elements, besides the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, in the Lord's Supper; and He has not given the authority to man to choose a particular Sunday of a month or a year in which to partake of the Lord's Supper.

It is true that God is not dealing with man today as He did in the beginning when He had created Adam and Eve, and as He did during the time when the Bible was being written for man. But in Acts 17:30-31, apostle Paul warned by saying, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by raising Him from the dead." Friends, it is never too late to repent and change and do what the Lord has authorised, as long as we live on this earth. God's book also teaches: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27). If you have not been living right before God; if you have been offering before God strange and profane things, things which He has not authorised and commanded, then it is time now for you to repent.

How wonderful it is, and thank God, that He is not dealing with us today as He once did during the time of Nadab and Abihu. But, imagine

that if He was to deal with us today in the same way as He did with Nadab and Abihu and others in their time, then where will you stand before Him? The apostle Peter wrote these comforting words in his epistle, "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." (2 Peter 3:9). Now is the time. Tomorrow it may be too late. May God bless us as we do His will.

Things To Consider Concerning The Eldership Of The Church

J.C. CHOATE

Christ established the church (Matthew 16:18) and while he would be the spiritual head of it (Ephesians 1:22,23), he gave instructions in the pages of the New Testament that each congregation should have elders and deacons. (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1).

There are many things about the eldership that we should keep in mind:

1. Each congregation is to have its own elders. They should come from among the members of the congregation over which they are to serve.

2. There must be at least two men qualified to be elders over the local congregation. If there is only one man qualified, that congregation cannot have elders. In that case, the local men must take care of the business of the church. This may not be the most ideal method, but it can be done until two or more men are qualified. The New Testament does not teach the idea that unqualified men can be appointed and then grow into the eldership. To appoint men who are not qualified is to ask for trouble because their leadership would be in error; and then it is difficult to get unqualified men out of the position of authority.

3. The very fact that qualifications are laid down means that it is important to God that there be those in the local congregation who meet His standard before they are appointed to the eldership.

4. In the scriptures elders are also called bishops, presbyters, shepherds, pastors, and overseers. All of these names or titles are simply a means of describing and explaining the work of this office. Notice in the scriptures, however, that you do not read of *the bishop of*

Ephesus, the pastor of Corinth, etc. The Lord's word always talks about the elders or bishops at Corinth, at this place or that place. Always there was a plurality.

5. The members Choose their elders based on their ability to comply with the qualifications laid down in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

6. Two of the qualifications are that the men have one wife and believing children. In other words, through being heads of families they have gained experience of leadership. They have proved their ability to teach and bring their children up in such a way that they themselves obey the Lord on reaching the age of accountability. Paul reasoned, if they are unable to rule their own house or family, how can they take care of the Lord's church? (1 Timothy 3:5).

7. Paul says that they should have believing children, which suggests two or more. (1 Timothy 3:4). Some argue that one child is enough, but an experienced parent knows that being a competent parent of one child, and of several, is not the 'same.' Children are different, and they must be dealt with according to their own needs and personalities. Thus, we can see the wisdom of requiring elders to have more than one child. With that experience of parenthood a man would be in better position to deal with a multiplicity of members of the church, knowing about each one is different and must be dealt with individually. If a man has only one child he might conclude that all members of the church can be managed in the same way as one would deal with only one child.

8. An elder is required to have the ability to teach others, and that even *publicly*. There will be occasions when an elder will find it necessary to speak to the whole congregation, to teach various classes, etc. He cannot properly lead the church without this ability.

9. An elder cannot be a novice or beginner, a new member of the church. If one is appointed to the eldership too soon after becoming a Christian, he will be more prone to make serious mistakes in spiritual decisions, to feel important and to express pride in a fact that he could become an elder in such a short time when it might have taken years for others to have been appointed to the eldership. One needs time to grow in faith, to become knowledgeable in God's word, to have experience in doing the Lord's work, and in dealing with people. Without the necessary time to grow in these areas, one cannot set a good example, or make wise decisions in areas that he is not familiar with.

10. The other qualifications deal with one's own personal life, a relationship with his fellow Christians, and those of the world. He must

be in full control of his life as a faithful follower of Christ, practicing what he preaches. He must be concerned about his brothers and sisters in Christ and have a desire to reach the lost with the gospel of Christ.

11. Elders are to be men only. The elders' wives have an important role, too, in that they are to have a godly home and bring their children up to obey the Lord. This is as God has requested and his wishes must be respected. He knows what is best for his people.

12. The elders are not to "lord it over the flock," or force or drive the members to do anything. Rather, they are to be leaders, showing love for the members, and setting a good example before all. (1 Peter 5:3).

13. The Lord did not want the preacher or some other man in the church to be a dictator. Neither did he want one of the elders to dominate and control the others. Elders are to have equal power or authority. They are to learn to agree among themselves and to work together, not to work against one another.

14. Elders should not have to cast votes in making their decisions regarding the church. Rather they should discuss each matter, be sure that they are abiding by the teaching of God's word, and learn to "give and take" where there are judgmental questions. They should then make a joint decision, rather than to divide or for one to be determined to have his way regardless of what the others may desire. Even though one may feel that it is better to do a certain thing, if the others want to go on in another direction--as long as it does not go contrary to God's will--then that elder, for the sake of unity, should give in and go along with his fellow elders. If there are differences on doctrinal matters, each one should study the question until all can be agreed on what the Bible teaches regarding that particular point.

15. The elders are to feed the flock or teach the members the word of God. (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).

16. The highest position that one can have in the church is to be one of the elders in a *local congregation*. This is a great honor, if one is qualified and doing the work God has given him to do. However, the office carries with it no political power and neither does it put one in position to make financial gains from it. Elders are to be there to serve with others to accomplish the Lord's will.

Are you an elder in the Lord's church? If you are a faithful member and can meet the qualifications, along with fellow-men, and the members will appoint you and the other qualified members, then you

can be one of the elders over the congregation where you worship. No, you and the other elders are not perfect, and neither will you ever be perfect, but by meeting the qualifications the Lord has laid down in his word, and by continuing to be faithful to the Lord in this capacity, you will continue to grow in the faith, becoming more like the Lord, and you will be able to render the kind of service to God and to your brethren that is needed to help the church to grow. May God bless you and the other elders as you perfect yourselves in the Lord and his service. If you are not an elder, and if you desire to become one, study God's will and prepare yourself that one day you can be selected and appointed to do this work.

Especially for Women

In Her Power Over Her Children

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Rachel had said to Jacob, **"Give me children, or else I die!"** (Genesis 30:1) How Rachel had longed for a child of her own as she saw her sister, Leah, with her little boys. Fervently she prayed, asking God for a son. **"Then God remembered Rachel and God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son, and said, 'God has taken away my reproach,' So she called his name Joseph, and said, The Lord shall add to me another son."** (Genesis 30:22-24)

We don't know how old Joseph was when Benjamin was born, and Rachel died after giving him the name, Benoni, 'Son of my Sorrow'. Nothing is said in the scriptures about the training of Joseph during his early formative years.

Was Jacob the one who kept this favoured son at his side, teaching him about God? Surely he must have told not only, Joseph but all of his sons of the wondrous times when God had shown special favor in talking directly to him. How vividly Jacob must have described his dream at Bethel when, as a young man running from the anger of his brother, Esau, he had wearily pillowed his head on a rock in a lonely place. While he slept he saw a ladder stretched between earth and heaven with glorious angels ascending and descending upon it. And there, standing above it, was the presence of God Himself, saying to Jacob. **"I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of**

Isaac. . . " (Genesis 28:13).

Jacob must have told them, too, of the cause of his limp when he had wrestled all night with a Man and had prevailed. Then the Man, as God, had promised that Jacob would also prevail with men. He had changed Jacob's name to 'Israel'—Prince with God. This encounter had given him the courage to move forward and meet his brother Esau, trusting that God would be with him and protect him.

But when we see the difference between Joseph's character and that of his brothers—sons of Leah and the handmaids—we must realize that part of that tremendous difference was surely the influence of Rachel, who had prayed nearly seven years for a son. She had long agonized over her barrenness, her empty arms. Having thought and dreamed and planned all of those years of having a son, we cannot suppose she would have taken lightly the spiritual responsibilities of motherhood. When, out of twelve sons and one daughter fathered by Jacob, we see only one with the living faith—the pure understanding of God's role in his life—and that one was the only one who would have had Rachel to teach him, then we can safely conclude that Joseph gained the fullness of his faith in large part from his mother.

In our understanding of human nature, we surely can imagine that Jacob poured out his heart to Rachel, the wife he loved. Every word God had spoken to him, every growth of faith, must have been shared fully with her. Then we can almost hear little Joseph, asking for a story before going to sleep, or as he and Rachel walked or rode together the long miles of a nomad's life: "Mommy, tell me about the beautiful ladder from heaven. What did God mean when He told my father, 'I will be with you and will keep you . . . ?'" or, "Mommy, I want to hear again the words God spoke to my father when he was alone and afraid." or, "Did you really pray for me for many years? Did God really hear your words and give me to you?"

Within Joseph's young heart the words, the lessons of faith, took root and grew. They were there to sustain him during the long years of exile in pagan Egypt. The victim of false accusations, of slavery, and of years of imprisonment, never did Joseph forget that God was with him, bearing him up and enabling him to overcome all that was plotted against him. (Genesis 45:7,8).

As mothers in today's world, quietly teaching faith from day to day by words and by our lives of faithfulness to God, we can equip our children to face life and to overcome.

What Is The Church of Christ

BASIL OVERTON

Anyone who reads the Bible will easily learn that on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, which was the first day of the week (same as our Sunday), the church of Christ was established, in the city of Jerusalem. (Acts 2.) Jesus had said he would build his church. (Matthew 16:18.)

Jesus purchased the church with his blood; which means he paid the price for it on the cross. (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23-25.) The church we read about in the Bible is God's family or house. (1 Timothy 3:15.)

HOW TO GET INTO IT?

In the days when inspired men lived people became members of the church of Christ by hearing the gospel about Jesus Christ being the Son of God and how he died for their sins; by believing the gospel; by repenting of their sins; and by being baptized upon a confession of their faith in Christ. (They were thus baptized into Christ for the remission of sins.) (Romans 6:3; Acts 2:38.) In Christ there is remission of sins through his blood. (Ephesians 1:7; Acts 2:36-47; Romans 6:3, 4.)

In the days of the apostles, the obedience that saved one from sin at the same time made him a member of the church of Christ, the family of God. The church of Christ that we read about in the Bible, and the church of God that we read about in the Bible are the same.

SEVERAL TERMS

There are several terms used in the Bible that refer to the church. The expression "the church" is used in the Bible more than any other term to refer to the church of our Lord. It would be wrong to use any one of the terms used in the Bible referring to the church to the exclusion of the other terms used.

It should be the desire of all who want to go to heaven to please God, and to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-6.)

The church that we read about in the Bible is God's family, or house; it is the spiritual realm over which Christ is head.

WHERE IS HEADQUARTERS?

Headquarters of the church we read about in the New Testament is in heaven where Christ serves as head of his church. The church we read about in the Bible has no other head.

Christ, the head of his body which is his church, rules or regulates his church through what he teaches it in the New Testament.

It is wonderful, indeed, to be in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ which he purchased with his blood. (Acts 20:28.)

You Can Be A Christian Without Ever Joining Any Denomination

CHARLES CHUMLEY

Do you know that you can be a Christian, a member of the church of the Lord, forgiven of your sins, and assured of eternal life—all without ever joining any denomination or being bound by any human creed, or submitting to any final human authority in religion? Not only can you be, the Lord wants you to be!

Throughout the world, many people are studying their New Testaments with the thrilling awareness that the way to Christ and the salvation he offer is clearly revealed. These people are learning that the Word of God is the "seed" (Luke 8:11), and that just as the seed produced Christians when preached and received into "honest and good" hearts in the first century, so it will produce Christians in the twentieth century. They are seeing too, that far from authorizing a great number of different competing groups, the Lord established one church and that he guides that church, even today, by his own Word.

When people hear the gospel, believe it, repent of their sins, confess Christ, and are baptized the Lord forgives their sins (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10; Romans 6:3, 4; Acts 22:16) and adds them to his church. (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22, 23.) These "new creatures" are called Christians. (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16.) In all of their work and worship they are guided by the word of the Lord as revealed in the New Testament. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17.)

Each congregation of the church of Christ is a group of just such people described above. They have obeyed from the heart the simple commands of the Lord as they are given in the gospel record, and they have the Lord's promise that he added them to his church. They have

joined no denomination, subscribed to no human creed, recognized no final human authority in religion. They along with millions of others are pleading for the restoration of New Testament Christianity. They urge you to obey the gospel of Christ revealed in New Testament.'

Words, Words, Words

TIM PAHMAN

Very few recognize the strength and influence of words. However, the fact still remains. Words are extremely powerful. Words can be tremendously constructive and awesomely destructive. Words have the ability to aid in the healing of the soul, or inflict the mind and heart like a rapid moving cancer. Jesus understood that words have the power of life and death, spiritually. In John 6:63 he claimed "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." The major part of the discussion of John 8 was concerned with man's willingness to hear the words of God, thereby abiding in light, or to yield to the words of the Wicked One and walk in darkness. The Lord assured us that "he that is of God heareth God's words." (John 8:47a.)

ESSENTIAL TO HAPPINESS

It is essential to the happiness of the individual Christian, and to the peace and harmony of each New Testament congregation, that this power of words is recognized and respected.

1. The message of the gospel expressed in words has the power to save. (James 1:21.) Think of it! The saving power possessed by the blood of Christ is likewise found in the words of the gospel message.

2. Words can create faith if they are of God's divine revelation. (Romans 10:17.)

3. Also, words serve to strengthen and mature the child of God in the faith. (1 Peter 2:2.) Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that the "word of God's grace was able to build them up." (Acts 20:32.)

4. The words of God's standard, the Bible, equip everyone to discern between good and evil. (Hebrews 4:12.) God's Word is not a dead letter. On the contrary! It is living and powerful. It can guide every soul through every trying circumstances, in every country and in every generation.

THE WORDS OF MAN

But what about the words of man? What about the words of man's own wisdom and device? Let us be most careful with our words. Let us be very cautious in the use of words to persuade others. May they be constructive for the building up of the faith in Christ and not malicious or deceptive.

The Lord has revealed in the Bible the many ways that one can be deceived and led astray by the wrong words. In Romans 16:17-18 we are beseeched by an apostle of Christ to "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

Every generation of the Lord's church has been plagued with deceivers who can speak eloquently and dynamically. They saturate their dialogue with words like "grace, peace, unity, love, patience, mercy." All of which are good words to be used fittingly in the gospel message. However, their use of them is to cover their wolf-like heart with a sheep's cloak. Sad to say there are many who like to hear it that way. Isaiah said they would say to the prophets "prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits." (Isaiah 30:10.) Dear friend, let us compare every "smooth speech" filled with "good words" with the doctrine of Christ. Let us perceive the difference between just a "smooth speech" and sound doctrine.

WORDS CAN DESTROY

Words have been used to destroy good men and good works. The apostle John wrote of a man named Diotrephes who "prated against them with malicious words." (3 John 10.) Many times the way that a good work is terminated, or a good brother is defamed, is by the circulation of false rumors, gossip, and backbiting. Let us be selective in our use of words when making reference to another, remembering the Lord's warning: "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matthew 12:37.)

NOT SPEAKING CAN BE WRONG

Finally, let us be reminded that sometimes silence, refraining from speaking words, can be sinful. When another needs to hear the words of the gospel message it is a sin to be quiet. When a wayward brother or sister needs admonishing it is wrong to keep silent. When a member of

God's family is being led down the wrong path by teachers of error it is ungodly not to seek to warn them. And when a dear one is down trodden and discouraged it is unmerciful not to encourage them with precious words.

Justifiable Killing of an Old Man!

DILLARD THURMAN

Jesus warned the disciples of His impending death: *"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."* (Mt. 16:21). He soon repeated this in Galilee, saying: *"The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again."* (Mt. 17:22-23). They were slow of heart to believe, so two days later He explained: *"Thus it is written, and thus it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."* (Lk. 24:46-47). Later the apostles received revelation that Christ died that all men might live: *"But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us . . . For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* (Rom. 5:8, 10). How great is the love of God and His grace!

EVEN ENEMIES PROCLAIMED THIS TRUTH!

How wondrous that God could use His enemies, who would soon condemn Him to death, to set forth Truth! *"And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them. Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation."* (Jno. 11:49-51). So an enemy of the cross revealed that Jesus should die that ALL men might live! *"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* (1 Cor. 15:21-22). One man was sacrificed that all men might live through him eternally, for by Him we *"have life more abundantly."*

THE FACTS OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Paul explicitly set forth fundamental gospel facts: "*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 Cor. 15:3-4). Very simply, plainly and forcefully it is stated that the facts of the gospel include the **death, burial and resurrection** of Jesus Christ! Thus the divine side embraced those cardinal facts. Paul wrote further, "*If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*" (Rom. 4:24-25). The **death, burial and resurrection** is a continuing theme showing how we profit in Him: "*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins . . . being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*" (1 Pet. 3:18). And again, "*Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*" (1 Pet. 1:21). Remember the death of Jesus Christ, but never forget the importance of His resurrection! He was "*declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*" (Rom. 1:4). Tie together the **death, burial and resurrection** as the vital, cardinal, gospel facts!

HOW GOD'S DIVINE LOVE WAS MANIFEST

Divine love was amply shown for all men! "*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.*" (Jno. 3:16). Paul preached this: "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Rom. 5:8). Such sacrificial love must prompt deeper love from us: "*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" (1 Jno. 3:16). Notice that God and His Son declared their love by their deeds! They loved; and they gave! This is an index to our love: "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*" (1 Jno. 3:14). Paul spoke of dire things befalling them that obey not the truth (Rom. 2:8-9); and says Jesus will take "*vengeance on them that obey not the gospel.*" (2 Thes. 1:8).

OBEYING THAT FORM OF DOCTRINE DELIVERED!

Paul clarifies this in writing: "*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 to you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17-18). They could not obey the **facts** of the doctrine, but rather obeyed that **form**! Notice from the first part of the chapter. *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."* (Rom. 6:3-7). Study those words which we have put in **bold face** to get the emphasis shown in our gospel obedience!

Through faith and repentance they died to sin; and in baptism were buried and raised to walk in newness of life! Paul teaches this also in Col. 2:12: *"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."* With faith in Christ we die to past sins, are buried in baptism into Christ, and raised to walk a new life in Him! It is an example Christ left us: *"For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom. 6:10-11).

THE OLD MAN OF SIN MUST BE CRUCIFIED!

Paul advocated killing the old man of sin: *"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live."* (Rom. 8:13). The most glorious transformation of heart is shown here: *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."* (Col. 3:1-3). This promise makes it easy to accept: *"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind."* (Eph. 4:22-23). Being in Christ calls for living on a higher plane: *"Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."* (Col. 3:9-10). When one puts on Christ, a new man is shown to the world! *"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"* (Gal. 5:24). Dying is not so bad, when we consider what comes from it! *"It is a*

faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him" (2 Tim. 2:11).

PUT ON THE NEW MAN IN CHRIST JESUS!

Paul stressed that a New Man must arise to replace the Old! *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).* Paul was a New Man, for Christ lived in him! This he urged: *"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:23-24).* Further he said, *"... even when we were dead in trespasses together with Christ by grace ye are saved; And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2: 5-6).* His exhortation is, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).* Surely this means that saints should *"walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:4). This brought up a grave question: *"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, where unto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Gal. 4:9).* We must ask, What is our calling? And the answer is: *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).* But what is the result IF saints do turn back? *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:20, 21).* That is not a pretty picture, is it? Consider that before slipping back into the sloughs of sin!

FINAL WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN!

Think of Paul as he was closing out a life of service to His Lord: *"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12).* But friends, if we have crucified the flesh, renewed the Spirit and served the Lord, eventually we will hear Him say: *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joys of thy Lord." (Mt. 25:21).* That

"What Seek Ye?"

JOHNNY RAMSEY

John announced recognition of Jesus, "*Behold, the Lamb of God!*" Hearing this, two of John's disciples began to follow Jesus. Jesus put their commitment and their lives on trial with the question, "*What seek ye?*" (Jno. 1:36-38). Our life and eternal destiny hinges on a proper response to that query. We read in Lk. 2 of the wise men seeking the Christ. In Prov. 7 we are warned of the evil woman who seeks to seduce men who pass by her house on the way to hell. Isaiah exhorted the people of his day, "*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*" (Isa. 55:6). Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria that God seeks genuine worship from fervent hearts (Jno. 4:23). Jesus tells us to "*Ask, seek, knock*" in order to make our prayers effective (Matt. 7:7). And we are told that God "*is a rewarder of them that seek after him*" (Heb. 11:6).

Certainly we should recognize that Satan is actively seeking our downfall in the midst of a wicked world (1 Jno. 5:16) and we had best be found urgently seeking to follow the Savior! Christians are encouraged to "*seek peace, and pursue it*" (1 Pet 3:11). Ezra, the scribe, is admired by Bible students because of his diligent desire to seek the law of the Lord and do it and then to teach it ardently to Israel.

It is not always the talented people who serve the Lord but rather the dedicated ones. Someone has well said that the greatest "ability" in the world is "dependability"! A powerful hymn has these remarkable words to ponder:

*Fill brightest hours with labor,
Rest comes sure and soon,
Give every flying minute
Something to keep in store,
Work for the night is coming,
When man works no more.*

Evil men sought to catch Jesus in His words (Lk. 20:20) and some even were seeking a convenient time to kill the Prince of Peace (Mk. 14:1-3). Satan, as a roaring lion, seeks to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8). But we are told to seek the kingdom as a pearl of great price (Matt. 13:44-45),

and to be known as a people who seek the Lord with whole heart (Jer. 29:13). Christ left heaven and came to earth *"to seek and to save the lost"* (Lk. 19:10), and that should be the earnest endeavor of our existence, also. When all others forsook the blind man, Jesus was willing to take him in (Jno. 9:35).

Are we seeking the lost, or are we leaving the battle without a fight while millions of precious souls hang in the balance? What are we seeking? We usually find what we seek! In order to be richly blessed by our Maker, we need to follow His admonition: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"* (2 Chron. 7:14). Far too many people head in the opposite direction from heaven, then wonder why their lives are so chaotic. Rom. 3:11 is a pretty fair critique of millions of people in our society today: *"There is none that seeketh after God."*

In many ways, our eternal destiny hinges on the vibrant question, *"What seek ye?"* What are we seeking in the following:

1. *In a congregation?*
2. *In a preacher?*
3. *In a Bible class?*
4. *In a mate for life?*
5. *In our life's emphasis?*
6. *In friends and associates?*
7. *In recreation and entertainment?*
8. *In our use of time and talents?*

The answer to the above questions will eventuate in heaven or hell. Many are seeking soft preaching and easy congregations that put up with mediocrity. Many look for a Bible class with no challenge or assignments. While looking for a husband or wife, we are enamored by the physical and monetary prospects rather than folk who will help us go to heaven. People who emphasize spiritual values often are bypassed for shallow secularism and momentary popularity and "friends" that do not wear very well in the storms of life. Are we seeking immortality or mere hedonistic pleasure? Our honest answer will be reflected in our choice of entertainment, recreation and our use of time.

Let us go back and read again. *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life"* (Gal. 6:7-

Shouldering Our Disappointments "A Tick At a Time"

EDSEL BURLESON

Have you heard the story of the grandfather clock that decided to stop running when it heard someone say that in 90 years it would tick 2,838,240,000 times? It only started again on the suggestion that it would have to tick only one tick at a time.

To experience disappointment is a part of being a human being. However, there are a multitude of ways of reacting to these disappointments. Some try to cope by fleeing reality. They may occupy their minds with various forms of entertainment, devotion to some cause or pursuit of some goal. They may seek relief through drugs, alcohol, even suicide. Others handle disappointment by rewarding themselves to make up for what they have had to endure.

Life is not a dead-end road. The disappointments, trials and problems we encounter are not meant to be roadblocks, they are meant to strengthen us, not defeat us. Paul said, ". . . all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

God can turn bitter to sweet as he did the waters in the wilderness. Often out of the bitter sorrow of disappointment he makes gladness to arise as he turns defeat into victory if we trust him. This happened to the Israelites as they journeyed in the wilderness. They marched wearily through the hot, dry desert only to reach waters of bitterness, then soon they found themselves amid groves of palms, where they could rest in the shade and drink pure water that flowed from the rocks. They were allowed to rest there and refresh themselves where they were sheltered from the heat. So it is in our world as God does give us moments of refreshing when we come to him and there we rest and find strength to press on life's journey.

Consider the experience of the apostle Paul. Talk about disappointments. Events in his life often turned out differently from what he had planned. He experienced execution attempts, serious accidents, attacks by criminals, betrayal and opposition from those he tried to help. He was very familiar with pain and weariness, loss of sleep, lack of food,

water, shelter and even clothing (II Corinthians 11:23-27).

One would expect that Paul became a depressed, discouraged, defeated individual. Just the opposite. He was a thoroughly positive person who came through those difficult times with a triumphant spirit. He said, ". . . for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound, every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Philippians 4:11,12).

An unknown poet said it this way:

"Never you worry, never you fret,
Flowers shall bloom everywhere yet;
Blue must the sky be under the grey,
Clouds will blow over some sweet day;
These you remember, can God forget?
The best hasn't happened to anyone yet!
When the day faileth and night mounts the skies,
Walk in the starlight until the sunrise.
Those your heart longs for, draw near to you.
Keep yourself ready, keep yourself true.
Never you worry, never you fret,
God isn't done with your world yet."

The Innocence of Beer??

DUB McCLISH

Beer consumption is considered by the average citizen to be an innocent pastime for every "good ole boy" and every "good ole girl" in town. Some parents have heaved sighs of relief when their kids were caught guzzling beer instead of drinking whiskey or smoking "pot." After all, it was **ONLY** beer! It's about time the wraps were taken off this supposed "innocent" beverage! Consider the following facts:

BEER CONTAINS ALCOHOL. The alcohol content of one 12 ounce can of beer contains a little more than 1 ounce of 100 proof whiskey or a small glass of 40 proof wine.

BEER IS A MAJOR CULPRIT IN ALCOHOLISM. Some mistakenly believe that one cannot become an alcoholic from drinking beer. It has been documented that beer-drinkers compose a large percentage of alcoholics undergoing treatment in our hospitals. Alcoholism is a major social problem in Germany and Belgium where beer is the alcoholic

drink almost exclusively. ->

BEER CONTAINS A SECOND POWERFUL NARCOTIC. Besides then narcotic of ethyl alcohol, beer contains the narcotic called lupulin. This drug is the active narcotic agent contained in the hops from which beer is brewed. The chemical formula for lupulin shows it contains the same chemical elements as the narcotic agent in marijuana, only in a heavier molecular structure. Moreover, the hops from which beer is brewed is classified by botanists as belonging to the same plant family as the hemp plant from which marijuana is derived. When one drinks beer he gets a double dose of narcotics (alcohol & lupulin).

THE ALCOHOL IN BEER HAS THE SAME EFFECT AS THE ALCOHOL IN WINE OR WHISKEY. It slows one's reaction time, often just enough to prevent the handling of an emergency on the job or behind the wheel of a vehicle. Many medical schools demonstrate the effect of alcohol by giving two examinations on successive days, with similar questions. The first exam is given as usual. The second one is given after each student has drunk one bottle of beer. The tests are graded by people ignorant of the experiment, thus unbiased. Most of the students judge the second test to be easier and their grades higher, but the grades average about 17% lower. Only **ONE BEER** makes a difference! The fact that alcohol gives one a sensation of being better able to handle a situation when the opposite is true, becomes a major factor in driving a car, practicing medicine, operating a machine, etc.

Like all other alcoholic beverages, beer continues to leave death, destruction, heartache, and crime in its wake. **IT IS NEITHER INNOCENT NOR HARMLESS!**

"My Concept of God"

DAN WINKLER

To the atheist, God is nothing. To the agnostic, God is a question mark. To the skeptic, God is an object of doubt. To the polytheist, God is one of many deities. To the henotheist, God is the one deity among many deities we should recognize and worship. To the pantheist, God is everything. But—"Who is God to me, to you?"

"Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Hebrews 11:6).

The above passage provides several observations of

encouragement. First, God can be pleased. Second, for God to be pleased with our lives we must have faith in his existence, we must believe "that he is." Third, for God to be pleased with our lives, we must possess a balanced concept of him, believing "that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him."

Therefore, what is our concept of God? Who is God to us? According to our Old Testament, he is: El Shaddai—God Almighty (Genesis 17:1).

Adonai—Master or Lord (Psalm 110:1).

Jehovah—The One who is because he is, or the One who shall be because he shall be (Exodus 3:13-15).

In the New Testament, God is frequently referred to by the more intimate description of a "Father!"

(1) He is the "**Father of Mercies**," concerned about our problems (II Corinthians 1:3).

(2) He is the "**Father of spirits**," who allows suffering to flow into our lives, enabling us to grow in righteousness (Hebrews 12:7-11).

(3) He is the "**Father of lights**," from whom every good and perfect gift is generated (James 1:17).

Most importantly, God can be our Father! If we step away from the world, becoming and living as Christians, he has promised, "I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters" (II Corinthians 6:17, 18).

Isn't that great?

The Second Coming Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

THOMAS R. DOHLING

It has been reported in a section of the press that a U.S. marine serving in Somalia with the U.N. peace Keeping Force, has apparently 'seen' and even photographed what he thought was the 'image' of 'Jesus Christ' in the desert sands of that country. (It is wondered how he knew the 'image' to be! Jesus' since nobody knows how our Lord looked. Only reference to his appearance is evident in Isaiah 52:14. While God's control over events in the world is beyond doubt, it would be worthwhile to test such report in the light of what is written in the Scriptures regarding the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John says (and these are instructions for every Christian to follow), "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1 read with verses 2 to 4.)

Regarding the day of the Lord's coming, Peter says, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." (2 Peter 3:10), he continues, "That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements (earth, etc.) will melt in the heat." (verse 12ff.) If Christ has appeared in the deserts of Somalia, the earth should have been gone by now, the heavens destroyed, and we should have been caught up in the sky to be with our Lord and a host of departed Christians (1 Thess. 4:17).

If the story of the apparition or mirage is to be believed, it would mean nullifying the Scriptures. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 records these words of Paul, "According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." And, in the same letter, chapter 5 verses 2 and 3 read, "For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'Peace and safety', destruction will come on them suddenly..." Again, in 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff. to 10, we have these words, "This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you." In Chapter 2 verses 9 to 11, Paul continues, "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie."

It would be well to remember here that on the road to Damascus,

Saul (later the apostle Paul) had an encounter with our Lord Jesus at noontime as "a light from heaven" flashing around him and his companions (Acts 9:3, 22:6, 26:13). He became blind until his sight was restored. The marine should have been blind, his camera roll spoiled and beyond use. Yet, we do not read this in the report.

No, our Lord Jesus Christ will not appear to one man alone in some obscure desert in Africa. The Bible does not teach such. If Christ is to appear to someone today, He would do so through the Bible (1 Cor. 13:10) and His present-day disciples, the Christian. The Lord Jesus will not come again in weakness in some obscure fashion, but he will come in all power and glory and his coming will be heralded by the shout of the archangel and the trumpet call of God. He will be revealed in all his Father's splendour and glory and this is a sure saying because it is recorded in Holy Writ. Revelation 1:7, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be. Amen."

Alien and hostile forces seek to subvert the precious truths of revelation. In Jude 3 we read, "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all (delivered, KJV) entrusted to the saints." It is our task as Christians to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints (KJV). We should not be swayed by every wind of teaching. Paul says, in Ephesians 4:14 that we should not be like "infants tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. "but let us"... proclaim him (Jesus), admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom..." (Col. 1:28).

Let us not be like the Corinthians - "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough." (2 Corinthians 11:3, 4). Let us "Have nothing to do with them." (2 Tim. 3:5ff.) Let us accept the Word of God alone in these matters and "keep our head in all situations" (2 Tim. 4:5). Yes, let us not be distracted by such reports for we know whom we have believed and we know that his Word will be borne out at the end of the age. Let us "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen." (2 Peter 3:18).