

FIRST THINGS FIRST

By

W. DOUGLASS HARRIS

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INTRODUCTION

Brother W. Douglass Harris has been a preacher of the gospel for many years in Decatur, Alabama, U.S.A., and other places in that area. A prolific writer, his printed work has added to the good he has been able to do many times over.

As a writer, Brother Harris has served as Associated Editor of the Caribbean Evangelist, and more recently has been the Editor of the Caribbean Messenger. I might add that I am honored to be one of the staff writers for this monthly paper. Bro. Harris has also edited numerous bulletins, and has written dozens of tracts, some of which we have printed in India and neighboring countries.

We thank Brother Harris for sharing these materials with us and the people in this part of the world.

J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
New Delhi 110049
Nov. 6, 1992

A STATEMENT FROM THE AUTHOR



W. DOUGLASS HARRIS

Being limited in space as most of these articles originally appeared, we were forced to be brief and concise, which limited expansion on many points. No effort was made to be eloquent or profound, but to be simple enough that the most uneducated could understand.

Material, thoughts, and ideas were gleaned from so many sources that memory is too dim now to recall. In a few instances, full credit has been given because we recorded the source. We purposely avoided the violation of any copyrights, and express deep appreciation to those who refused to copyright their materials so they could be used for time to come in an ethical manner to save souls, to edify the church, and glorify God.

We express deep appreciation to Brother J.C. Choate and the brethren in India for all their labor and expense to make this book a reality. It is an honor we never expected to receive.

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WHAT TIME IS IT?

Time is the most precious commodity in the world. Wasting time is the most extravagant and costly of all expenses. "Time is the most important thing in the world." (*Edison*). "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for time is the stuff of which life is made" (*Franklin*). "Time is the best of all possessions" (*Socrates*). Jesus' appraisal of time: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (Jno. 9:4). Our eternal destiny depends on the way we use our time. Since it does, we need to determine WHAT TIME IT IS?

I. TIME FOR MANY TO AWAKE FROM SIN (Rom. 13:11-14). Paul employs in this passage three acts naturally followed in awakening from sleep. First, *the act of awakening* (V. 11). The time to awaken from sin is NOW! The enemy of the soul does not sleep (1 Peter 5:8). Second, *the act of dressing* (V. 12). This specifies what we are to put off and put on. We are dressing for eternity! Third, *the act of walking* (V. 13). We are to walk honestly, as children of light, not in rioting, drunkenness, and lasciviousness. If we squander our time in sin, the harvest will be costly.

II. TIME TO GO TO WORK IN GOD'S VINEYARD (Matt. 21:28). By the sin of Adam man was cast out of God's vineyard. In Christ we are brought back into that vineyard (Isa. 61:3; Gal. 3:27). We must work in the Lord's vineyard to receive his reward (Matt. 20:1-11). Time to work? NOW! "Go work TODAY in my vineyard." Procrastination is the thief of time! No one can practice procrastination all his life and claim to be an "eleventh-hour" laborer. He agreed to go into the vineyard and

work at the first opportunity he had, not after refusing multiplied opportunities. We need to be buying up the opportunities (Eph. 5:15 ASV Footnote).

III. IT IS HARVEST TIME (Luke 10:2). If the harvest was plenteous in the time of our Lord, is it any less now? The Macedonian call is coming from nearly every nation in the world today. As the laborers were few then, they are few now! We need to pray more fervently than ever that the Lord will send laborers into his harvest. *"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest"* (Jno. 4:35).

There will be a time when it will be too late to seek the Lord. (Lk. 13:25-28). And everyone who is unprepared for the Lord's second coming will be like the five foolish virgins left on the outside (Matt. 25:1-11). There are manifold warnings in the scriptures about the brevity of time (Cf. Job 7:6; 14:1,2). ***WHERE WILL YOU BE WHEN TIME IS NO MORE??***

***"So teach us to number our days,
That we may get us a heart of wisdom."***

(Psalm 90:12)

"I DON'T HAVE TIME"

Excuses for not serving God have been made from time immemorial. One of the most frequently-heard excuses of professing Christians for not obeying God and serving Him faithfully is: *"I don't have time."* If God had no more time for them than they have for Him, their state would be pathetic. What are some of those things for which they do not have time?

I. "I DON'T HAVE TIME TO STUDY GOD'S WORD."

They have time to scan the newspaper and get the news on TV, but not enough time to study God's word. It is plainly taught in the Scriptures that Christians must READ God's word (1 Tim. 4:13); that they must STUDY God's word regularly (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 1:5, Jno. 12:48); and that Christians must MEDITATE on God's word regularly (Deut. 6:6-8; Psalm 1:1,2; 2 Tim.4:15). Reading, studying, and meditating on God's word are as essential to spiritual life as food to the physical body. Can we afford not to take the time to study God's word?

II. "I DON'T HAVE TIME TO ASSEMBLE WITH THE SAINTS."

But some have time for all kinds of secular pursuits and community activities. So it's really a question of what we consider to be of greatest value in life--the material or the spiritual. Assembling with the saints is a command (Heb. 10:24,25). It is essential to edification (Heb. 10:23-25). Failure to meet with the saints brings disastrous consequences (Heb. 10:26-31; Rom. 6:23; James 4:17). God is not unreasonable in requiring us to assemble three or four times per week. There are 168 hours in each week. Are four hours to assemble with the saints unreasonable? This is a little more than 2 1/2% of our time.

III. "I DON'T HAVE TIME TO HELP THE NEEDY."

In both Testaments we are taught to care for the needy (Prov. 29:7; Psa. 82:3,4; Matt. 25:31-36; Gal. 6:10). Jesus illustrated the need to care for the poor in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37). James defined caring for the poor and needy as "pure religion" (James 1:27). Jesus observed that helping the poor will be a perpetual need (Matt. 26:11). Do we not have the time to practice the "Golden Rule" (Matt. 7:12)?

IV. "I DON'T HAVE TIME TO SHARE CHRIST WITH THE LOST." If others had not shared Christ with us, where now would we be? Jesus came into the world to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10). He has commanded us to follow in His steps (1 Pets. 2:21; Jno. 14:15). We are to make disciples of ALL the nations (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15, 16). "He that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30).

It's high time some of us stopped salving our consciences with such excuses.

No time for God?

Some day you'll lay aside

*This mortal self and make your way to worlds
unknown,*

And when you meet Him face to face

Will He—should He have time for you?

---TROTT

"HOW READEST THOU?"

This question was Jesus' reply to a lawyer, who asked Jesus the greatest question ever asked by mortal man, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Lk. 10:26). It introduces the subject of reflective reading. In I Tim. 4:13, Paul told Timothy to give attendance to reading. One of the most disturbing traits of the average professing Christian today is the little reading he does to increase his perception of God's word. Paul, also, told Timothy to study ("give diligence" ASV) to show himself approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15).

"Reading makes a full man," Francis Bacon once

said. One of our greatest needs is to learn HOW to read. It is one thing to read and another to read reflectively, or with meditation. Meditation is to understanding what germination is to the planted seed. See Psalm 1:1,2; 119:97; Josh. 1:8. (We wonder how many will bother to find these in their Bibles and read them.) "To read without reflecting, is like eating without digesting," said Edmund Burke. It is one thing to read words not perceiving the thought and another to read the thought of words. Many professing Christians have such a shallow perception of God's word because they spend so little time in reflective reading. They are content to wade in the shallows around the edges rather than to launch out into the depths of the treasures of God's word. We need to ponder what Jesus said about the shallow soil in Luke 8:13.

It is by reading that the mind is developed and expanded, "Reading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body. As by one, health is preserved, strengthened, and invigorated; by the other, virtue (which is the health of the mind), is kept alive, cherished, and confirmed." (Joseph Addison). If some professing Christians would use half as much time in reflective reading of God's word as they do so-called true-story magazines, or Hollywood gossip papers, or watching TV, we would have a much better-informed church.

***"It is one thing to read the Bible through,
And another thing to read to learn to do.
Some read it with a desire to learn to read,
But to the subject pay but little heed.
Some read it as their duty once a week.
But no instruction from the Bible seek;***

***While others read it with but little care;
With no regard to HOW they read or WHERE.***

--Anonymous

IDOLS IN THE HEART

"Israel . . . setteth up his idols in his heart" (Ezek. 14:4).

An idol is anything that man allows to come between himself and his service to God. It does not have to be a lifeless image to which he bows down, but it can be an "idol set up in the heart." Anything which is given precedence in the heart over God and service to Him becomes an idol in the heart. This means that one can be guilty of idolatry without bowing down to a material image. In fact, we are in greater danger in our society of doing the latter rather than the former. What are some of the idols that can be set up in the heart?

1. One's Family Can Become an Idol in the Heart. Any time we show greater reverence for family than we do the worship of God we have set up an idol in the heart. Jesus said, *"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"* (Matt. 10:37). Could language be plainer than this? God must have first place in our lives or no place at all. He will not tolerate any rivals in our affections. He also said, *"If any man come to me, and hate not (love less) his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"* (Lk. 14:26). When there is a conflict of duty to family and to

God, which comes first with you?

2. Pleasure is an Idol in the Hearts of Many. Many who would not be guilty of external idolatry are worshipping at the shrine of the goddess of pleasure. This seems to be the prevailing philosophy of our times. They have been converted to the teaching that pleasure is man's highest good in life. Humanism teaches that since this life is all there is, get all the pleasure you can as long as it does not injure others. Our interest in creature comforts grows out of this philosophy.

Jesus warned that "*the pleasures of this life*" choke out the word of God (Lk. 8:14). Such pleasures are temporary. Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin *for a season* (Heb. 11:24). John warned his readers what the consequences of loving pleasure would be (1 Jno. 2:15-17). Solomon, as the voice of experience in the pursuit of pleasure, warned that the ultimate consequence is "*vanity and vexation of spirit.*" (Eccl. 2).

3. Covetousness Can Be an Idol in the Heart. "*Put to death . . . covetousness, which is idolatry*" (Col. 3:5). Covetousness is greediness for material things. Jesus said, "*Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" (deceitful riches, money, possessions, or what is trusted in.) (Matt. 6:24). "*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.*" (1 Tim. 6:9,10, RSV). Countless thousands who would not bow before an idol of wood or stone are worshipping money in their hearts. "*Take heed and beware of*

covetousness," said Jesus (Lk. 12:15).

Conclusion: God must always be first in our affections (Matt. 22:37). Any time He is replaced in our hearts we have set up an idol in our hearts.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Rather than offer our own comments on the subject above, we decided to let the Book speak for itself. After all is said and done, if our readers will not accept what God (to whom they must give their final account) says, how important would they consider my comments? Remember what Jesus said in John 12:48—*"He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."* (Luke 11:28). *Will YOU listen to the Lord speak?*

Follow Christ before any other: "And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me *first* to go and bury my father. But he said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God. And another said, I will follow thee, Lord; but *first* suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looketh back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59-62)

God's kingdom and his righteousness before material things: "Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly father knoweth that ye have

need of all these things. But seek ye *first* his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:31-33).

Reconciliation before worship: "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, *first* be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. 5:23,24).

Self-correction before the correction of a brother: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out *first* the beam out of thine own eye; then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matt. 7:3-5).

The commandment of love before any other commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the *great and first* commandment. And a *second* like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets." (Matt. 22:37-40).

Inner cleanliness before outward cleanliness: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse *first* the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside thereof may become clean also." (Matt. 23:25,26). (*Italics mine. W.D.H.*)

Will you make the same vow as the poet did in the following?

***In all that I say, in all that I do,
Thro'-out the world of toil and strife,
By day and by night, thro'trust in His might,
I'll put Jesus first in my life.***

--James D. Murch

"WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?"

Scripture: James 4:14.

Life is very difficult to define. It has been defined as that period of existence between birth and death, but human life is more than mere existence. Human life should be defined in terms of preparation and service rather than in years of existence. Methuselah existed 969 years, but HOW he lived is not revealed. So we must make a distinction between existing and living. Let us take note of some things that make life rich and meaningful when properly considered.

1. Life Is A Gift From God. God created man and gave him life (Gen. 2:7) In his famous sermon on Mars Hill, Paul said, "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" . . . "In Him we live, move, and have our being". (Acts 17:24,28). In recognition of this, Solomon said, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccl. 12:1). Remembering that life is a gift from God should move us to honor and glorify Him daily in our lives. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

***"We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do and loads to lift.
Shun not the struggle; face it; 'tis God's gift.***

--Maltbie B. Babcock

II. Life Is A Stewardship: Life is not a possession to do with as we like. We only receive life in trust from God and we are held responsible for the use that we make of it. Our time and talent are not our own. We are not at liberty to lounge about in dreamy idleness. God intends for us to be industrious in the use of our lives. In due time He will call us to account (2 Cor. 5:10). "To be blameless as a steward of God," a man must be faithful, honest, and industrious. "Life is not lost by dying! Life is lost minute by minute, day by dragging day, in all the thousand, small, uncaring ways" (Stephen Vincent Benet). It should be remembered that Christ is a Judge as well as Lord. Our lives will be tested by "his scrutinizing and searching eye, his just and faithful judgment. Fidelity will be rewarded, unfaithfulness will be condemned."

III. Life Is A Preparation: It is the period of time God has given man when he should prepare for eternity. It has been compared to a dressing room. As one prepares in his dressing room to go out into the activities of the day, so in this life one dresses and prepares himself to move into eternity. Life is only a short interval between two eternities. If we could only realize the importance of this interval, how careful we would be! Day by day we shape our costumes for the world to come. There are only two destinies that await us--one is heaven, the other is hell. Dear reader, how are you dressing? **WHERE WILL YOU LIVE IN ETERNITY?**

Conclusion: What are YOU making of the life God has given You? "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

"ONCERS"

One of our older brethren coined the term "oncners" to describe those who only attend the Sunday morning services. When pondered seriously, it becomes an apt description to those who think. Brethren engage in so much false reasoning and rationalizing to justify their not attending Sunday night and Wednesday night services. According to Jesus, those who do such put themselves in a bad class. (Cf. L. k. 16:15. Be sure to read this). What is wrong with being a "oncner"?

I. **"Oncners" Forsake the Assembly.** *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."* (Heb. 10:25). Correct exposition will not allow "the first day of the week" to be read into this passage. "But what was the day approaching?" You may ask. Some say the judgment day (Clark), and others the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation (Milligan and others). To read "the first day of the week" into this passage is rank eisegesis (reading into a passage what is not there). Thus the saints are to assemble **WHENEVER** it is appointed for them to assemble. Some elders will schedule Sunday evening services and Wednesday night services, but will not attend themselves. How much more inconsistent can you get

than that?

II. "Oncers" Fail To Obey Jesus' Teaching. *"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."* (Matt. 5:41). Roman citizens were required by law to assist a courier for one mile in carrying out the demands of the government. Do you think Jesus was only teaching His disciples a lesson in Roman law? Would you bet your life that He was? You would lose it if you did. Jesus was teaching His disciples that rather than retaliate against the government to go beyond the required one mile and GO TWO. No one, then, can be a true disciple of the Lord and be satisfied with a minimum of service, but must strive for the maximum—he goes beyond the call of duty. He implies that those who do only what is required will not be accepted as His when He comes. If not, why not?

III. "Oncers" Are Unprofitable Servants. *"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."* (Luke 17:10). What happens to unprofitable servants? Jesus says they will be cast into outer darkness (Matt. 25:30). All the rationalizing one can muster will not explain this passage away. Coleman Overby says, "The servant was not hired to do so much, but the Master had a right to all of his time . . . The servant can never say that what is required is done." To be a faithful servant, one must put the kingdom first" (Matt. 6:33). (Roy). *Jesus said, "Even so ye also,"* and means the case is similar to the matters of our service to God." (John T. Hinds). We have done the Lord no favors having done "that which was our duty to do"—WE ARE STILL UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS.

IV. "Oncers" Fail to put the Kingdom First. *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matt. 6:33). How can any professing Christian claim that attending one service a week is giving the church top priority in his life. And the echo comes ringing back, HOW?

CONCLUSION: There is also the matter of love involved here. If one loves the Lord and His people more than anything or anybody else, why would he not want to be with the Lord and His people on Sunday and Wednesday nights? (Matt. 18:20).

MEDITATIONS FROM A HOSPITAL BED

"My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." (Psa. 63:5,6).

While lying flat on my back in a hospital bed with a ruptured disc in my back, I had an abundance of time to look up and to meditate. I read once somewhere that when one is flat on his back with illness he has to look up, and we may add, hopefully to God. Since I had this experience recently for ten days and nights, I thought I would verbalize some of my meditations.

1. *Although God did not cause it, I believed He would overrule it for good.* The Psalmist said, *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."* (Psalm 119:71). These things may be allowed to happen to keep us humble and contrite. They may be reminders that in this world the righteous have to suffer with the wicked because of

Adam's sin. They may be evidences of God's chastening, because He chastens those He loves. (Heb. 12:6). *"All chastening seemeth for the present not to be joyous but grievous; Yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby."* (Heb. 12:11). We MUST trust Him through all afflictions as Job did (Job 13:15), and he came out victorious and wiser.

2. *My immobility reminded me of the frailties common to all men.* We all need to pray the prayer of David: *"Make me to know how frail I am."* (Psalm 39:4). David in Psalm 90 and Job through all of his trials pondered the frailty of man. Jesus alluded to man's frailty when He said to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane: *"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Matt. 26:41).

3. *I was made to realize how rich I am in having such a devoted family, friends, and wife.* *"A friend loveth at all times; not only in prosperity, but also in adversity."* (Prov. 17:17). *"There is no treasure that may be compared unto a faithful friend."* (John Payne Collier).

Finally, my pain intensified my anticipation of receiving a body in the next life that will never know pain. The apostle John was given a vision of that painless existence of those who love God and keep on doing his commandments. (Rev. 21:4; 22:14). What a tragedy it will be to miss that glorious, painless, eternal existence of those placed on the right hand by the judge at the last day! My resolve has been greatly strengthened to be in that throng around the eternal throne of God singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. (Rev. 15:3)

Never a trial that He is not there;

Never a burden that He doth not bear;

***Never a sorrow that He doth not share.
Moment by moment I'm under his care.***

***Never a heart-ache, and never a groan,
Never a tear-drop, and never a moan,
Never a danger but there, on the throne,
Moment by moment, He thinks of his own.***

***Never a weakness that He doth not feel;
Never a sickness that He cannot heal.
Moment by moment, in woe or in weal,
Jesus, my Saviour, abides with me still.***

—Daniel W. Whittle

MOTHERS

May is the month in the U.S.A. when our nation honors mothers. It is great to live in a nation which so honors motherhood. That word "mother-hood" incorporates all of the qualities that are the finest in women, which are being demeaned and denigrated in many circles of our society today. No calling of a woman is greater in God's sight than that of being a good mother. The following acrostic is our tribute to all mothers.

M—is for the MILLION things she gave me. It would be impossible to name all of them—her loving pre-natal care; her willingness to bear the pain to bring me into this world; her loving care in infancy; her teaching me my first words and how to walk; pre-school lessons learned at her knees; discipline that was done in love; for her

warnings against the temptations of the teenage years; for her always being there when I needed her; for her prayers; and for all the memories that will never fade.

O—is for her concern for OTHERS. She was always concerned about her husband's and her children's welfare, rather than hers. There was no lack of concern for a neighbor's or a friend's sick child. Her life seemed to say, "For others, Lord, yes, for others let this my motto be."

T—is for the TEARS she shed for us, too. Tears when it was necessary to administer corrective discipline; or tears when we were badly hurt as a result of our childish carelessness; or tears when we seldom wrote to let her know of our welfare; or tears when we forgot her on Mother's Day or any other day when we should have remembered her; or tears because we might have become unfaithful to the Lord's church.

H—is for the HOPE and joy she knew. Hope and joy that a child was born to her with all of his future before him; hope of his coming into Christ when reaching the age of accountability and of his dying in the Lord; hope based on the God-given power to become—power to become a zealous worker in the kingdom of God, a soul-winner for Christ, and a spiritual giant in God's hall of fame.

E—is for her ETERNAL FAITH in God. A faith that never wavered even in adversity; a faith which believed that all things worked to the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose; a faith that there is life beyond this vale of tears that defies description, and trust in this belief that never wavered.

R—is for the ROAD that the Master trod and her example and direction to walk therein—that such a life

would bring no regrets when we have gone the last mile of the way.

CONCLUSION: All of this helps us to appreciate the tribute to mothers by Kate Douglas Wiggin when she said, "Most all of other beautiful things in life come by twos, and threes, dozens and hundreds. Plenty of roses, stars, sunsets, rainbows, brothers and sisters, aunts and cousins, *but only one mother in the whole world.*" (Emphasis mine. WDH).

"UNSTABLE AS WATER"

(Gen. 49:4)

On his death bed Jacob made the above prophetic statement about Reuben, his first-born son, as the reason he would not excel. History shows that his prediction was fulfilled. Reuben never enjoyed the privileges of the first born. Because of his unstable character, the birthright went to Joseph, the priesthood to Levi, and the rulership to Judah. Jacob compared Reuben's instability to that of water, and Reuben was not the last to possess such a character.

I. WATER IS A VERY UNSTABLE ELEMENT. It would be difficult to find anything more unstable. It is unstable in respect both to *form* and *state*. It has no fixed shape of its own. Normally, it is a liquid, but if subjected to subnormal temperatures, it becomes a solid—ice. When heated to above-normal temperatures, it becomes a gas—steam. In its normal state it assumes the shape of its container. Water is one of the easiest elements to pollute. It was descriptive of Reuben's character—his

virtue and honor were unstable. If he were alive today, he would find much to remind him of himself and his father's predictions. So many members of the church are unstable, unreliable, and fickle that they remind us of Reuben.

II. WHAT CAUSES INSTABILITY? (1) *Double-mindedness*. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:8). What is double-mindedness? "A man of divided heart, who seems almost to have two souls (minds)—one disposed to lean on himself and seek wisdom, strength, and satisfaction in the world; the other disposed to look to God for help and happiness." (*Robert Johnstone*). This makes him unstable, a word used to describe a drunk man who is unable to walk straight, swaying first one way and then the other. Note James' description of such a character in verse 6. This is not a very complimentary description. At the root of this instability is a lack of faith according to James.

(2) *Shallow-mindedness* is another cause of instability. Jesus in explaining the parable of the sower and the seed which fell in the rocky ground said it represented those who have heard the word and received it with joy, but because "these HAVE NO ROOT," they fall away (Lk. 8:13). Mark says, "*Because it had no deepness of earth, it withered away*" (Mk. 4:6). In other words the soil was shallow, and it represents the superficial, shallow-minded hearer. Because of their lack of spiritual depth, they are unstable. These two causes hit at the taproot of most of the instability in the church.

III. RESULTS OF INSTABILITY: "*Thou shall not excel,*" said Jacob to Reuben. And how pre-eminently true of the unstable now! They never excel in school, in their jobs, and in the work of the church. About the only

thing in which they ever excel is in being unstable. They contribute nothing to the strength of the church and its future existence. Instability is one of the major hindrances to the growth of the church. Members of the church at Sardis were unstable. *"I have found no works of thine perfected,"* said the Lord to them (Rev. 3:2). They were in and out, off and on, ad infinitum, ad nauseam. *Is your instability showing?*

"Be instant in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). "Wherefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

ANEMIC CHRISTIANS

PART I

We often hear it said of people that they are anemic physically. But one can be anemic spiritually. In fact, this may be the major weakness of the church.

What is anemia? It literally means "no blood." According to the dictionary, it is "a condition in which the red corpuscles of the blood are reduced in number or deficient in hemoglobin." Some of the symptoms are pallor, shortness of breath, and palpitation of the heart. It is a synonym of weakness.

I. The Possibility of Spiritual Anemia. The churches at Rome, Corinth, and Thessalonica had their weak members (Rom. 14:1; 15:1; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Thess. 5:14). There are several other terms used in the New Testament to describe an anemic Christian. They are described as having a divided allegiance or no

conviction (Matt. 6:24; Jas. 1:8); as those with a slow pace or having no purpose (Gal. 5:7; Matt. 13:21); and as those with a lukewarm devotion or no fervor (Rev. 3:16).

Spiritual anemia is spiritual immaturity. Some of the Corinthian Christians were carnal and immature—babies spiritually (1 Cor. 3:1). The Hebrew Christians were making no spiritual progress and were rebuked by the Hebrew writer (Heb. 5:12-14).

II. Symptoms of Spiritual Anemia. They are weak in resistance to temptation (Cf. Eph. 6:10, 16—usually justifying themselves by saying that all are weak. They are weak in their resistance to error (Cf. Eph. 4:14)—ashamed of the truth and afraid to defend it. They are weak to offenses—easily offended because they have “thin blood and thin skin, and must be handled with gloves on.”

Anemic Christians are also weak in appetite for spiritual food. A good spiritual appetite is necessary to reach spiritual maturity (Matt. 5:6; Heb. 5:14). Anemic Christians have a good appetite for TV, movies, ball games, card games, magazines, etc. They literally devour these things, but they have no appreciation for strong spiritual meat. They must have a diet of “first principles” and not Christian living. They have no appetite for distinctive preaching; it must be positive and not negative. When error is contrasted with truth, it is then that they have “shortness of breath and palpitation of the heart.” They also have no appreciation for admonitions to regular Bible reading and study. To them one sermon a week is enough.

Weak in exercise is another symptom of anemic Christians. They exercise much in home affairs, at

school, on the job, or in the club. But they cannot exercise much for the Lord and His church. They do not attend regularly because they feel bad, have company, etc. They cannot visit the sick because they do not have the time. They do not teach their neighbors because that is the preacher's job. Exercise is essential to spiritual strength (1 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 5:14). But anemic Christians neglect it.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Many of the thoughts and outline of this article and the one to follow are taken from Eugene Clevenger's book of sermon outlines entitled SERMONS FOR SAINTS AND SINNERS.)

ANEMIC CHRISTIANS

PART 2

At the end of the preceding installment, we were discussing the symptoms of spiritual anemia and had noted three: weakness in resistance, in appetite, and in exercise.

Another symptom is **weakness in estimating their ability**. When they are asked to do something in the work of the church, they say they can't, when the strong say, "I'll try." They have been in the church for many years and cannot lead a prayer, teach a class, instruct a sinner, or lead a song. **They are anemic!** In most instances it is not that they can't, but they **won't**; not a matter of humility, but a lack of application.

III. Proper Attitude Toward the Spiritually Anemic.
1. We must not despise them. We must not even hate those who have been withdrawn from, but we are to

admonish them as brethren. (2 Thess. 3:15). We must receive the weak and bear with them. (Rom. 14:1; 15:1). We are taught not to offend them, or put a stumbling block in their way. (Matt. 18:6; 1 Cor. 9:22). Our attitude should be the same as the Lord's toward them, which we will discuss later.

2. *Although we are to bear with the weak, it is also our duty to admonish them.* Paul admonished the weak to become strong (Eph. 6:10; Heb. 5:12). If they have apostatised we must try to restore them to their first love. (Gal. 6:1; Rev. 2:4). Mutual edification has always been necessary to spiritual strength.

3. *Proper attitude toward the weak is learned from the Lord's attitude.* He understands that we begin the Christian life as babes, having been born of water and the Spirit. (John 3:5; 1 Pet. 2:2). He also understands that it takes time to grow and develop strength. (Heb. 5:12). But when a reasonable amount of time has passed, spiritual weakness becomes SIN. It is **inexcusable!** The Lord says it is wickedness and slothfulness. (Matt. 25:26).

IV. Why Spiritual Anemia Is So Bad. 1. *It is wilful.* Unlike physical anemia, God has made ample provision for our spiritual growth and strength--he has provided the food, prescribed the exercise, and designated the environment. 2. *Spiritual anemia is contagious.* It influences others to be indifferent. As it has been said, "No one can go to heaven (or hell) alone," which means he takes someone else with him through his influence. 3. *Persistent spiritual anemia condemns.* There is no hope for the spiritually weak, because the right life must be lived, the race must be run and the battle must be fought.

Conclusion: To overcome spiritual weakness repentance and confession are necessary. (Rev. 3:19; James 5:19). God can heal our weaknesses if we will let him. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." (Hos. 14:4), and Christ can strengthen. (Phil. 4:13).

***Bring me higher, nothing dreading,
In the race that has no stop,
In Thy footsteps keep me treading,
Give me strength to reach the top.***

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Many of the thoughts and outline for this article and the preceding one was taken from Eugene Clevenger's book, SERMONS FOR SAINTS AND SINNERS.)

SOME RESTORATION PRINCIPLES

PART I

In the early part of the 19th century, a great movement was started in America to restore the New Testament church by following the pattern revealed for it in the New Testament. Those pioneers realized that there is an on-going need to restore the old paths and for men to walk therein. (Jer. 6:16). Their efforts spread throughout the American frontier like a wind-driven sagebrush fire. It was an eminently-scriptural concept and was not a failure as a few disillusioned apostates are claiming today. Splintering in the Movement is the result of abandoning the basic scriptural principles upon which the Movement was founded, and which are just as

fundamental to the restoration of New Testament Christianity NOW as they were then. *What are some of those principles?*

1. *"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."* This eminently-scriptural slogan was coined by Thomas Campbell in his famous DECLARATION AND ADDRESS in 1809 as an exposition of 1 Pet. 4:11, which says, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."* Violating this principle—presuming that silence is authority—has been the major cause of division and departures from the principles upon which the Movement was launched.

We should note carefully what adherence to this principle does. 1) It recognizes the completeness of the word of God as a guide in all matters of religious faith and practice. Its all-sufficiency is affirmed in numerous passages in the New Testament. (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; Jude 3). 2) This restoration principle requires the proclamation of the whole counsel of God without additions, subtractions, or substitutions. (Acts 20:27; Rev. 22:18,19). 3) This principle precludes the concept of being guided by the silence of the scriptures. We are to be guided by what God says, not by what He does NOT say. (Lev. 10:1; Num. 22:18). But this is the position of those who argue that we can do anything in our worship which is not specifically forbidden by the Scriptures. Such a contention opens the floodgates to bring into the worship and practice of the church anything that is dictated by man's wisdom, not God's. 4) This principle is a safeguard against the sin of adding to and taking away from the word of God, which God has never allowed. (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18,19).

In the light of this principle, scriptural authority is

established either by an affirmative statement, such as Mk. 16:16, or by a direct command, such as Acts 2:38, or by a necessary inference, such as Heb. 10:25 (a place to assemble is necessarily inferred), or by an approved apostolic example, such as Acts 20:7. Unless a practice is authorized in one of these ways, there can be no divine authority for it.

There was a time when many churches displayed this slogan on their bulletins and the principle was proudly proclaimed and defended, but it is rare, indeed, these days to hear such. Have some decided this is not scriptural, or not needed any more? Or do they think they have conceived and discovered something better? Or have they let denominational churches drive them away from it? Or do they think that restoring the New Testament church is an impossibility? Or is the desire to be popular with the masses so strong that they have abandoned it? If it is scriptural, and we will affirm to the last proverbial ditch that it is, *how could it ever be out-of-date and obsolete?*

SOME RESTORATION PRINCIPLES

PART II

These principles are as eternal as the word of God itself, because they are enunciated and supported by the word of God. In every age and generation there is a need to call people back to the "old paths" (Jer. 6:16). It is most regrettable that some editors and writers have today abandoned these principles. To restore the New Testament church each succeeding generation of brethren *must* be indoctrinated in these principles. In this

final article we shall briefly discuss two more of these principles.

II. *"In faith unity; in opinion and methods, liberty; in all things, charity."* Matters of faith are matters that are clearly revealed by God's word—matters that are not written in ambiguous language, but for which there is a clear "thus saith the Lord." These are matters that are authorized either by an affirmative statement, direct command, approved apostolic example, or necessary inference (discussed in preceding article).

This principle makes a distinction between essentials and opinions that must be rigidly observed to accomplish the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17:20,21). Whatever is taught in the Scriptures in one of the above-mentioned ways is a matter of faith and is *essential*. Anything not authorized by the Scriptures in one of the above-mentioned ways is a human opinion and liberty in exercising one's freedom should be allowed. One segment of the church has been guilty of violating this principle by legislating or binding in the realm of judgment or methods where God has not bound. Another segment is violating it by loosing matters that God has bound. Both are departures from scriptural principles.

This principle also requires that love be the controlling principle in both of these matters. **"Let all that ye do be done in love."** (1 Cor. 16:14).

III. *"No book but the Bible; no creed but the Christ; no name but the divine name."* This principle requires the rejection of all books, creeds, confessions and articles of faith but the Bible and requires standing on it alone as our guide for religious faith and practice. It claims to be all-sufficient as such (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; Jude 3).

This principle also requires Christ as the supreme object of faith, rejecting all man-made creeds, disciplines, articles of faith, etc. Any creed that contains more than what the Bible teaches contains too much; any creed that contains less than what the Bible teaches contains too little; and any creed that contains exactly what the Bible teaches is unnecessary, because we already have it in the Bible.

This principle also requires the wearing of the name "Christian," and it alone; or other scriptural designations such as "saint," "disciple," etc. "Christian" is a name divinely given to be worn by God's people (Isa. 62:2; Acts 11:26).

CONCLUSION: The inculcating of these principles brought us to where we are today in restoring New Testament Christianity. Time and testing have proven them to be scripturally valid, and why should we abandon them now, since they are the hope of the world?

AT THE OPENING GATES OF THE NEW YEAR

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, there are new experiences awaiting us and an uncertain future facing us. We should begin the New Year with firm resolutions to do better. Good resolutions are necessary to moral and spiritual growth. Not only should we resolve to do better once a year, but with every new day! Even when we break our resolutions, we should not cease "staying the course." When a water pitcher is broken at our house, we do not quit drinking water. One broken

resolution does not mean the whole war is lost. May I suggest some good resolutions for every year?

1. *Resolve To Make It A Happy Year.* Having Jehovah as our God should take care of this. "Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah" (Psalm 144:15). Happiness is more a state of mind than having ideal circumstances. (Phil. 4:11). Practice living one day at a time and it will cure most of your anxieties.

2. *Resolve To Improve Yourself Spiritually And Become Like Christ.* (1 Pet. 2:2, 21). We should always strive to do better, never being satisfied with whatever plateau we have reached in our spiritual growth. When Thorwaldsen (famous Danish sculptor) was asked, "Which is your greatest statue?" he replied, "The next one." Oliver Cromwell (British Puritan statesman) wrote in his Bible, "If I cease to become better, I shall cease to be good."

3. *Resolve To Read The Bible And Pray Every Day.* "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path" (Psa. 119:105). Studying the scriptures and praying daily are as essential to spiritual growth as food and exercise to physical growth.

4. *Resolve To Resist The Devil.* There is no greater deterrent to temptation than a working knowledge of God's words (Psalm 119:11). When tempted look for the way of escape which God has promised to prepare (1 Cor. 10:13). Keep yourself off the devil's territory and you will not be tempted.

5. *Resolve To Go Forward.* "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looketh back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). "Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the

high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13,14).

6. *Resolve To Live This Year As Though It Would Be Your Last.* It could well be! Many are sleeping the sleep of death now who never expected that last year would be their last. At the end of this year, will you be nearer to heaven than you have ever been?

*"I am resolved to follow the Savior,
Faithful and true each day,
Heed what He sayeth, do what He willeth,
He is the living way."*

LESSONS FROM THE WISE MEN

(Matt. 2:1-12)

Lesson 1

One of the most popular stories during the Christmas season is that of the "Three Wise Men." We have no way of knowing how many there were. Their three kinds of gifts do not indicate the number. Their number is not important, but the basis of their wisdom is. It is usually thought they were wise because they studied the stars. But they were wise because they acted wisely. As some travelled far to study the acts of Solomon, let us study the actions of the wise men to learn how and why they were wise.

1. *They Let Something Above the Earth Lead Them.* When men are guided from above, they cannot go wrong. And man needs guidance from above (Jer. 10:23). Abraham was shown his need of guidance from above when he was told by God to count the stars if he

could (Gen. 15:5). In the Psalm of Degrees of Trust (Psalm 121), the very first degree is that of looking above the earth for help (Vs. 1,2). It was the direction in which the wise men looked that made the difference in their conduct and that of others. The lives of Christians are different to those of the world, because they are looking in another direction and being guided by that which can be seen only by the eye of faith (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

II. They Were Wise Because They Were Seeking the LORD. The object of one's seeking determines whether he is wise or foolish. One who is seeking fame, fortune, education, pleasure, etc., as the primary object in life is not wise (Cf. Matt. 6:33; Isa. 55:6). So the wise men were seeking the right object, and it must be the object of our seeking. And the Lord is not hidden to those who truly seek Him (Deut. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Matt. 7:7).

III. They Didn't Let Others Do Their Searching for Them. They didn't send others to search for them as Herod did (V. 8). Herod represents all those who let others do their searching. Many today embrace a religion that others have found and proclaimed as the right one. But finding the Lord and His way is an individual responsibility (2 Tim. 2:15; Rom. 14:12). Neither parents, husband, wife, or preacher can do this for us. "*Seek YE out of the book of the law and read.*" (Isa. 34:16). This same principle applies to us today to prevent being deceived by false teachers (1 John 4:1). Only those who come to know the Lord by personal study, conviction, and obedience become beneficiaries of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:11).

IV. In Following the Light God Gave Them. The only light they had to guide them to the baby Jesus was the

miraculous star. They did not depend on their wisdom, feelings, and thoughts to guide them. And these things cannot be substituted today for the light of God's revelation (Jer. 10:23; Isa. 55:8,9). God has always provided divine guidance as He did the star for them. For us He has provided the "glorious light of the gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4). God's word and the revelation it provides is the only guidance God has provided for us (Psalm 119:105,130). Those who are lost in sin must seek the light (the proper understanding of God's word) to be saved, and the saved must walk in their light of God's word or be lost (1 John 1:7). If we are walking in such light (understanding) as we have, with the desire to do God's will, we will gain more light (John 7:17; Psa. 145:19).

LESSONS FROM THE WISE MEN

(Matt. 2:1-12)

Lesson 2

We are continuing our lessons from the wise men. When we began to explore Matthews' account of the visit of the wise men with the baby Jesus, we discovered more lessons than we had originally anticipated. For that reason we were forced to continue the discussion to this month. Those who read the preceding will have no difficulty in establishing the continuity of thought. We shall consider additional lessons from the wise men.

V. They Would Not Be Sidetracked Until They Found the Baby Jesus. They went to Jerusalem first because of a misconception as to where He was to be born, but they

did not find Him there. When they did not find Him there, they stayed only long enough to get further instructions. With further instructions they proceeded to Bethlehem, having refused to be sidetracked.

We can get sidetracked in our search for Him. He cannot be found where He is not. He cannot be found in worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 1:21), human philosophy, denominationalism, the Book of Mormon, the Koran, etc. *We must come to the Bible to find Him.* He is the center of both the Old and the New Testaments (John 5:39). Until we have learned of Him from divine revelation and obeyed from the heart the plan of salvation authorized by Him and added to His church (Acts 2:47), *we have not found Him.*

VI. They Showed Their Wisdom in Obeying God, Rather Than Men. Herod demanded that they return to him, but God warned them not to (V. 12), and they obeyed God. It did not matter to them that Herod was a king. They knew they could depend on what God said, and they obeyed Him.

We must obey God rather than men. Even when it is unpopular to do so (Acts 5:29). Man has suggested substitutes for every command that God has given. Wisdom is shown in obeying God rather than men (Psalm 111:10; Matt. 7:21-27).

VII. They Were Wise Enough to Worship Christ, Not Mary. (V.11). This was the purpose of their journey (Vs. 2,8). There is as much authority in the New Testament for the worship of Mary as there is for worshipping any other human being, *which is none.* Jesus said, "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*" (Matt. 4:10). "Serve" in the Greek includes the idea of worship.

These wise men realized a longing within which could only be satisfied by the worship of Christ, who is from above. There is something in all of us that earth and earthly things cannot satisfy (Matt. 4:4). Indeed, one does not really live who does not worship the God of the Bible. He may exist, but he does not live life to the fullest.

VIII. They proved their Wisdom by Giving the Best They Had. (V. 11b.). They gave gifts fit for a king, the best they had. Can you imagine these coming before Him offering garbage? They gave the best they had, not leftovers. (Cf. 2 Sam. 24:24). No gift was required of them, but they gave spontaneously and willingly, which is the only kind of giving that God accepts (2 Cor. 8:12; 9:7).

CONCLUSION: ARE WE AS WISE AS THEY WERE?

THE CHAIN OF DIVINE AUTHORITY

This subject is of the utmost importance, because whatever authority one accepts determines what he is religiously. If one accepts human authority, he is what man wants him to be religiously. If one accepts divine authority only, he is what God would have him to be religiously. It is the purpose of this article to show how one may know when he has divine authority for what he is and does in religion, or **HOW GOD SPEAKS TO MAN TODAY**. Nothing less than divine authority will suffice.

TWO KINDS OF AUTHORITY

There are two kinds of authority: Primary and delegated. Primary refers to that which is first in position or importance. It is that right which belongs to and naturally resides in the person who exercises it. It is original, absolute, and underived. Delegated authority is the opposite to primary authority. To delegate is defined thusly: "To authorize, send, or appoint as a delegate; to entrust (authority, power, etc.) to a person acting as one's agent or representative."

ONLY GOD HAS PRIMARY AUTHORITY

God is our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, by reason of which he has the absolute right to command. It is stated in the very first verse of the Bible. It says, "In the beginning God" (Gen. 1:1). In 2 Cor. 5:18, Paul states that "All things are of God". The highest authority in the universe IS GOD. His authority rests entirely on his sovereignty. Webster defines a sovereign as "Above or superior to all others; chief, greatest; supreme". God possesses the absolute right to command. Someone rightly said, "The ultimate in respect for the authority of God is to accept it, and submit to it because it is God speaking." By this authority God gives positive commands--commands for which no logical reason is apparent but must be obeyed because God said it.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Christ stands nearest to God in authority, but it is delegated authority. Paul says, "God was in Christ,

reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). God now speaks to us by His Son (Heb. 1:1,2). We shall learn later HOW the Son speaks to us. We must not disregard any of the links in the chain of divine authority. God delegated authority to Christ (See Matt. 11:27; John 5:26; 17:7, 8; Eph. 1:22,23). Since the Son was as divine as the Father, no mistake could have been made in the transfer of this authority from the Father to the Son. Jesus said, "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me" (John 14:24). And, "All authority hath been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18ASV). Christ exercised this authority personally while on earth (Matt. 9:6), but in order to atone for sin he would have to die, be raised and return to the Father. Other provisions for the transferral and continuity of this authority had to be made. So he selected twelve apostles for training to become his personal representatives after he ascended. But at this point the human element entered into the chain of delegated authority. How were these apostles with their human weaknesses insured against error in speaking for Christ? The answer is in what follows.

HOLY SPIRIT PROMISED TO THE APOSTLES

As protection against error in their teaching and in writing the New Testament, the apostles were promised the Holy Spirit in miraculous power. Read John 14:16, 17, 26; 16:13, which were promises to the apostles to send them the Holy Spirit and what the Holy Spirit would do for them in making them infallible as they spoke for Christ. The apostles were to speak what the Spirit revealed to them (See Matt. 10:20; John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:10-13). Therefore, Christ's authority was executed

through the Spirit-guided apostles. In praying to the Father, Jesus said, "I have given unto them (the apostles) the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8). They were given the power to bind and to loose, that is to state the terms or conditions, which when obeyed or rejected, sins would be either forgiven or retained (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 20:22,23). They were endowed with miraculous powers to confirm that they were Christ's personal representatives on earth and to confirm that their message came from God or that it was divine revelation (Mark 16:17-19; Heb. 2:1-4). Miracles were their credentials that they were ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). This insured them against the possibility of any error or mistake in the exercise of this authority or in transferring it from Christ to the apostles, or assurance that the chain of authority was not broken.

WHAT THE APOSTLES SAID IS IN THE WORD

By the use of their credentials (miracles) their confirmed revelation is what we have preserved in the New Testament. Follow Paul's description of the chain of divine authority in 2 Cor. 5:18-20 from God, the source, to the "word of reconciliation". Note carefully John's affirmation in 1 John 4:6, "He that heareth us (the apostles) heareth God, and he that heareth us not (the apostles), heareth not God." Paul said. "Every scripture is inspired of God" (2 Tim. 3:16).

COMPLETENESS OF THE LAW DELIVERED

Various passages in the New Testament affirm the all-sufficiency, completeness, and finality of God's revelation in the Bible (See 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; Jude. 3). This does not leave any room for creeds, articles of faith, disciplines, and church manuals compiled by men to supplement the Bible. There is no need for further revelation, therefore, no further need for miracles. When perfect revelation was completed, miracles ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Anyone who claims the power to work miracles today, or that God works miracles through them, is a false teacher. The purpose of miracles was to confirm the word of the apostles, and that word carries its own confirmation. It needs no further confirmation. Those who claim further revelation are, also, false teachers. How could the passages cited above be true if God's revelation in the Bible is not complete?

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
What more can He say, than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

--George Keith

HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO MAN TODAY?

The Bible answer is: Through God's inspired word and only through that word. If you are a member of the church you can read about in the Bible, you have divine authority for so being. If you obeyed the plan of salvation authorized in the Bible, you have divine authority for

what you did to become a Christian. If you worship according to the system of worship authorized in the New Testament, you have divine authority for your worship. If you can find the name you wear in religion, and the name of the church you are a member of in the New Testament, you have divine authority for them. If you are a member of a church whose only organization is that of elders, deacons, evangelists, and members in the local church, you are such by divine authority. Dear reader, examine your religion in the light of this article and see if it is divinely authorized. Jesus said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted will be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

ADDING SIN TO SIN

(Text: Isaiah 30:1,2. Read First)

Sin is cumulative, that is one sin generally leads to another. From the context of our text we learn how Israel had done this: (1) They distrusted God (V. 2); (2) They deserted God (V. 1); (3) They relied on Egypt instead of God for help against the Syrians (V. 2). God described what they were doing as "*adding sin unto sin.*" They committed one sin by forsaking the counsel of God and added to that the sin of trusting in the help of Egypt. We need to learn the peril of adding sin to sin.

Sin is rarely single, because one sin drops the seeds for another sin. There is also a strange tendency in man to do a second time what he has done once successfully. On this basis many criminals are caught. The progressive nature of sin is depicted several ways in the Scriptures. Through Jeremiah God said Israel had

committed two sins--forsaking Him and hewing them out cisterns that could hold no water (Jer. 2:13). In Psalm 1, the writer describes the progressive nature of sin in three steps: (1) One WALKS in the counsel of the wicked; (2) Then he STANDS in the way of sinners; (3) At last SITS in the seat of the scornful. James pictures this progressive nature of sin under the figure of a conception and a birth (James 1:15).

I. SOME BIBLE EXAMPLES: Cain's substitution as the result of a lack of faith was rejected by God, which made him angry and jealous of his brother, which led to the murder of Abel. When called upon by God to account, he lied (Gen. 4). Joseph's brethren hated him (the first sin); were jealous of him which motivated them to conspire against him to slay him and cast him into a pit. By Reuben's intercession he was instead sold into slavery in Egypt. They later deceived and lied to their father to try to cover their sins (Gen. 37). David in idleness (the first sin) lusted to the extent of committing fornication with another man's wife. This led to treachery in conspiring to have the man killed so David could take his wife (2 Sam. 11). *Sins have a fearfully attractive and accumulative power.*

II. MODERN EXAMPLES: Many young people take their first drink for a thrill. That first drink leads to drinking enough to feel it, which is intoxication. But those drinks lead to other drinks until one becomes an alcoholic. It all started with taking a drink for a thrill, but terminated in addiction. This also applies to drugs. If one never takes the first drink for a thrill, or experiments with drugs, it is certain that he will never be an addict.

A nominal Christian who can't have his way (the first sin) becomes offended, grows slack in his attendance

and lies about it, nurses a grudge, and eventually quits the church altogether. *Truly, sin is added to sin!*

III. *RESULTS OF ADDING SIN TO SIN: (1) Fruitless Expenditure.* Jehovah told Israel that after going to all their trouble and expense it would not save them from the Syrians (v. 5). (2) *Bitter Disappointment.* Isaiah said Egypt helped in vain and to no purpose (V. 7, see also 2 Kings 18:21); (3) *Shame and confusion.* (V. 3).

CONCLUSION: So sin follows sin. First men lose their faith in God; then they neglect to seek and obey Him, then they turn to mere human helpers. "*Oh what a tangled web we weave, When first we practice to deceive.*" (Sir Walter Scott)

FIT FOR THE MASTER'S SERVICE

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use and prepared unto every good work". (2 Tim. 2:21).

There are some in the Lord's church who cannot be used because they are not fit for service. Every professing Christian should have a strong desire and determination to become fit for the Master's use. Many cannot take advantage of opportunities presented to them because they are unprepared and therefore unfit. We can grow in fitness if we set our minds to it. Many of us are of little use to the Lord, because we are not fully dedicated to making ourselves fit. If one keeps himself separated from the world and applies himself in the development of his talents, he can be very useful, in the church. What are the requirements of being "meet (fit)

for the Master's use"?

1. *He must love God supremely, or with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength* (Matt. 22:37, 38). This is the reason the Lord following His resurrection interrogated Peter so thoroughly. Peter was not prepared to feed sheep or do anything else for the Lord unless he loved Him (Jno. 21:15-17).

2. *One fit for the Lord's service places himself at the Lord's disposal.* He must have the attitude expressed by Christ as He faced the cross when He prayed, "Not my will but thine be done" (Lk. 22:42). Or that of Isaiah when he said in answer to God's call, "Here am I: send me" (Isa. 6:8).

3. *One fit for the Lord's use must prepare himself.* Some cannot be used by the Lord because they are not prepared. Opportunities of serving will be plentiful to those who adequately prepare themselves. We need to be busy putting on the whole armor of God to be prepared when the door of opportunity is opened (Eph. 6:15). Sometimes the preparation is longer than the term of service. Moses was eighty years preparing for his work of forty years.

4. *One fit to serve in the Lord's vineyard must be a student of the word.* This is his weapon (Eph. 6:17). If he does not believe it, know it, and know HOW TO USE IT, he is rendered helpless and useless.

5. *Finally, he must be a man of prayer.* This is a part of his duty as a good soldier (Eph. 6:18). All the great men of God in the past were strong and mighty in prayer. They prayed as though everything depended on God and worked as though everything depended on them.

Are YOU fit for the Lord's service? If not, do you not

think that it is time to start preparing yourself? Only eternity would reveal what could be accomplished in the Lord's service, if more professing Christians would strive to make themselves FIT FOR HIS SERVICE.

"AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER"

(Gen. 4:9)

This question is Cain's reply to God who had just previously, asked "Where is abel thy brother?" Cain's answer and attitude were a renunciation of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Since God is the Father of us all, we are all brothers in the human family. *"Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?"* (Mal. 2:10). Thus, the brotherhood of man requires that we be our brother's keeper. Failure to recognize this has caused untold suffering. "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." *"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth"* (Acts 17:26). Until we are blind to race and color we have not in any way mastered the Bible concept of the brotherhood of man. Failure here caused Cain to renounce any responsibility toward his brother. What else kept Cain from being his brother's keeper?

I. **ENVY.** (1 Jno. 3:11,12). His uncontrollable and spiteful envy caused him to murder his brother (Gen. 4:8). *"Envy is the rottenness of the bones,"* said Solomon (Prov. 14:30). Envy is a root sin, which leads to many other sins. It was this same attitude that brought about the crucifixion of Christ. (Matt. 27:18). *"Love envieth not."*

(1 Cor. 13:4). "When you feel yourself turning green with envy, you are ripe for trouble" (E.C. McKenzie).

II. SELFISHNESS PREVENTED CAIN FROM BEING HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER. He was too concerned about himself to be concerned about his brother's welfare. This same merciless indifference toward the welfare of others was exhibited by the priest and the Levite who passed by on the other side (Lk. 10:29-37). "Let no man seek his own, but his neighbour's good" (1 Cor. 10:24 ASV). "Look not every man to his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4). The selfish spirit of Cain is the spirit of the world, but it cannot be the spirit of those who follow Christ. Recognizing my duty to the welfare of others, I will be willing to share with them in their time of need.

III. BEING OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER IS DEMANDED BY THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN. As brothers in the human family, we have duties and obligations to others. In recognition of being my brother's keeper we must: (1) Love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:39); (2) "Do good unto all men" (Gal. 6:10); (3) "Give to him that needeth; (Eph. 4:28); (4) "Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15); (5) Bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2); and (6) Treat others as we wish to be treated (Matt. 7:12).

CONCLUSION: Jude said that some in the first century had gone in the way of Cain (Jude 11), which is the way of envy, selfishness, inhumanity to man. Millions today are walking in the same way. The crime wave that is sweeping our country is rooted in the same thought-patterns of Cain. Wouldn't this old world be a much better place to spend our sojourn if every man practiced being his brother's keeper?

***“If any little love of mine,
May make a life the sweeter,
If any little care of mine
May make a friend's the fleeter,***

***If any lift of mine may ease
The burden of another,
God give me love and care and strength
To help my toiling brother.” —ANONYMOUS***

STEWARDSHIP

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” (1 Cor. 4:2).

Very few, including professing Christians, have the stewardship concept of their responsibilities to God. But this metaphor is used frequently in the Scriptures. We would do well to ponder the teaching of these passages.

A steward is one who acts as supervisor or administrator, as of finances and property for another or others. A good steward is a trusted servant to whom his master has delegated responsibility to promote his affairs. And such is our relationship to God; we will have to give an account for all that has been entrusted to us, which is much more than most of us realize.

Where there is stewardship, there is also ownership. We hold all we have, and are, as stewards of God. We are God's possession by creation (Gen. 1:26); by right of redemption if we are Christians (Jno. 3:16; Eph. 1:7);

and by His providential provisions for us (Acts 14:17; 17:25, 28; Matt. 6:26-30). Paul said to the Corinthians, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (I Cor. 6:19,20). In the absolute sense, we do not own anything (Psa. 24:1). All time, abilities, and resources have been entrusted to us by the Lord to be employed in his service. Time is a trust from the Lord and how soon it passes! (Jas. 4:13,14; Job. 1:21). Abilities all come from God (Deut. 8:18; Matt. 25:14, 15; Jas. 1:17). Resources all come from above (I Tim. 6:7). The rich fool said, "MY fruits and MY goods." God said, "THEN whose shall these things be?" (Lk. 12:16-20).

Thomas Horne expressed it thusly: "Our children, relations, friends, honors, houses, lands, and endowments, the goods of nature and fortune, nay, even of grace itself, are only lent. It is misfortune, and our sin to fancy they are given. We start, therefore, and are angry when the loan is called in. We think ourselves masters, when we are only stewards, and forget that to each of us it will one day be said, "Give an account of thy stewardship."

Stewardship involves: (1) Faithfulness (I Cor. 4:2). (2) Obedience or taking orders (Deut. 10:12,13; 11:26-28; Matt. 7:21-23). (3) The priority of God's claims upon us over our obligations to family, friends, and the civil state (Matt. 10:37-39; Lk. 5:10,11; Acts 5:29).

***We give Thee Thine own,
Whatever the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.***

**May we Thy bounties thus
As stewards true receive,
And gladly, as Thou blessest us,
To Thee our first-fruits give.**

—W.W. HOW

GIVING GOD OUR BEST

(Scripture: Genesis 22:1-19)

This subject suggests something most of us have never really tried—giving God our best. Giving God our best requires making our service to God primary in our lives. With many of us religion is just a sideline. There is no better example in the Scriptures of one who gave God his best than Abraham (Gen. 22). Abraham demonstrated great faith in God on other occasions, but this was the most severe test of his faith that he would give God his best. Let us examine this test.

I. GOD CALLED FOR ABRAHAM'S BEST. He was commanded to offer Isaac his only son by Sarah, through whom all of God promises to Abraham were to be fulfilled. There were many difficulties connected with this command. First, God had never before required a human sacrifice, although it was a common practice among heathen peoples (Cf. Psa. 106:37, 38). Second, it was opposed to the natural feelings of humanity. It involved not only the shedding the blood of a man's son, but that of a favorite son. It had the appearance of being extremely inhumane. Third, it was a violation of the divine law previously set forth (Gen. 9:6). Abraham had to have been thinking: "Is God now requiring me to violate His own law?" Fourth, Abraham was not called

upon to offer his second best, Ishmael, but his best and his dearest. From the standpoint of human reason, the command violated all of ABRAHAM's paternal and natural feelings and instincts.

In spite of the cost, Abraham gave God his best. It cost him his domestic comfort. Think how Sarah, Isaac's mother, may have re-acted to God's command. Consider the conflict of soul that must have characterized Abraham. It appeared to him that it would cost him his hopes regarding his future posterity as God had promised him. Isaac was the long-promised seed. But there was no hesitation on ABRAHAM's part, no making excuses or alibis. He arose early and entered upon that awful ordeal. But when he gave God his best, he began to receive God's best. God made a greater covenant of blessing with him (Gen. 22:15-18, and he let Abraham live for the whole world through Christ. He received children as numberless as the stars Gen. 15:5. (Gal. 3:29).

II. GOD CALLS FOR OUR BEST: He calls for the best of our love (Matt. 22:35-40). Nothing else is allowed to be first in our affections. God calls for the best of our gifts (Lev. 22:22; 27:30-33; Mal. 1:7-14). He will not accept the crumbs and leftovers following the gratification of every selfish lust possible. God calls for the best of our labors--that seeking His kingdom and its righteousness must have priority in our lives (Matt. 6:33: 10:37, 38; 6:27). He also calls for the best of our loyalty (Lk. 9:23-26, 57-62). Our allegiance to Him must take precedence over everything else.

CONCLUSION: When we give God our best, we will receive God's best, also, He gave His best to redeem us (Jno. 3:16). Most professing Christians have never

received God's best, because they have never given God their best. If we place all on God's altar, God will give us His best--the blood of Christ, remission of sins, receive us as His children, all spiritual blessings, and finally heaven. Our obedience must be as prompt, deliberate, and preserving as was ABRAHAM's. But we will not give our best until we give ourselves (2 Cor. 8:5; Rom. 12:1). ARE YOU GIVING GOD YOUR BEST?

MAY I PREACH WHAT YOU PRACTICE ?

Frequently, we hear members of the church say that they believe preachers, Bible class teachers, or even Christians, should practice what they preach. With this I agree one hundred per cent. But I am asking: may I preach what YOU practice? If you say one's practice should be in harmony with his teaching, then I should be able to preach what YOU practice. But if I did, could I preach what the Bible teaches? Suppose we examine a few areas of practice, and YOU tell me if I could teach the truth in these areas preaching what you practice.

1. TEACHING OTHERS. This is not only the preacher's duty, but every Christian's duty (Matt. 28:19, 20; 2 Tim. 2:2; Acts 8:1,4). How many have YOU led to Christ in the past five years? If you have to say, none, may I preach that no one is required to win a soul to Christ in five years? This would be preaching what you practice. "He that winneth souls is wise." (Prov. 11:30). What, then, about, the one who doesn't win souls?

2. ATTENDING SERVICES. If you attend only one service a week, may I preach what you practice? How could I teach Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 10:25 and

make them consistent with your practice? If you do not know what these passages teach, it might help if you would read them. If my understanding of them is wrong, will you correct me so I can change what I teach they mean? I understand them to teach that a Christian should attend EVERY service that is humanly possible. If I am wrong, will YOU prove to me that I am?

3: ENCOURAGING THE DISCOURAGED. It seems that some always need encouragement, but never give any encouragement to others. They are always on the receiving end, not on the giving end. Are YOU one of those? If so, does I Thess. 5:14; Heb. 10:24; 12:12 not include YOU? Or do you know what they say? MAY I preach what you practice in this area and never encourage anyone in my teaching privately or publicly? Do you ever need encouragement? Do not all of us need encouragement? If you never encourage others knowing you need it yourself, would you be practicing the "Golden Rule"? Josiah was one of the good kings of Judah who restored "the priests in their charges, and ENCOURAGED them to the service of the house of the Lord." (II Chron. 35:2). May I preach what you practice in encouraging others?

Writing this article has really aroused my curiosity about this matter. Would YOU really be willing for me to preach what YOU practice?

I WOULD HATE TO GO TO HELL

It is a terrifying thought to go to hell from any place. Why would it be worse to go to hell from any place the saving truth is proclaimed? I had much rather stand

before God on the judgement day unprepared having lived in Russia, Red China, or even in dark Africa than to die unprepared having heard the truth repeatedly. WHY? Because of our greater advantages and opportunities to make the necessary preparation.

Jesus said in Matt. 11:22, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you" (The Jews that lived at that time). Why? Their opportunities were greater than those of the people of Tyre and Sidon. Again, the Lord said, "And the servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke 12:47) God no longer excuses ignorance. (Acts 17:30). However, to know the Lord's will and deliberately refuse to do it, will bring the severest of punishment, and to neglect our opportunities will compound our punishment. Think of the many opportunities we have who have heard the gospel that people do not have in other parts of the world--opportunities to attend Bible classes and to learn God's Will; to worship regularly and transform our lives into God's likeness; and to have the fellowship and encouragement of other Christians. We should wake up to our opportunities before it is too late!

Instead of using our opportunities, many of us are crucifying the Lord afresh. I would as soon stand before God in the judgment with the literal spear in my hand still dripping blood from the Lord's side, as to stand before that august throne as a nominal Christian who crucified the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame (Heb. 6:4-6). Some who profess to love the Lord are figuratively nailing Him to a cross and dragging Him through the roads of their communities by their failure to take advantage of their opportunities and to do what they

know they should be doing.

To go to hell from any place where the saving truth is proclaimed would be like starving to death in your own grocery store, or dying of thirst while standing in a cool, bubbling brook. Few of earth's people have the opportunity of serving God as we do. We are privileged to live in a land where Bibles are available and granted religious freedom.

Yes, if I must go to hell, I would rather if be from a place where there are not so many opportunities to hear and obey the gospel. God has made every provision necessary for our salvation, and the church has proclaimed His grace from the roof-tops. Great efforts are being put forth to keep the saved faithful. But many are going to hell anyway. Not only would I hate to go to hell as an alien sinner, but having been a nominal member of the Lord's church.

“THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION”

“ . . . That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.” (Philippians 3:10)

In the text above, Paul speaks of the power of His resurrection. We are living in a power-conscious age. We know there is power in steam, in water, in electricity, in explosives, in the wind, etc. In more recent times we have heard about atomic and nuclear power: but Paul spoke of a different power—the power of Christ's resurrection. This power is revealed in the following ways:

1. *In the Institutions and Ordinances It has*

Established. One of these is the church. Christ promised to build His church in spite of His death (Matt. 16:18). He was made head of the church through His resurrection (Eph. 1:19-23). Had He not been raised from the dead His church would have never been built. His resurrection gives meaning and authority to the conditions of entrance into His church (Acts 2:37,38). Baptism is a symbol of His burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 2:12). Without His resurrection, He would not eat and drink with us in the Lord's Supper, as he promised (Matt. 26:29). His resurrection sets apart and specializes the Lord's day (John 20:1; Mk. 16:9; Rev. 1:10).

2. *In the Faith It Creates.* It established the fact of Christ's Messiahship and his divine nature (Acts 2:36; Rom. 1:3,4). If Christ had not been raised, He could not have been accepted as the Christ of God and there would be no basis for our faith. Without His resurrection our faith would be vain (I Cor. 15:12-27).

3. *In the Hope It Inspires.* When Jesus was crucified and buried, His disciples lost hope (Lk. 24:13-21). This hope was revived and vitalized by His resurrection. It is His resurrection that gives us hope of immortality (I Pet. 1:3,4). Peter describes it as a living hope and an inheritance that fadeth not away. His resurrection gave Him power to raise us and this begets hope in us (Jno. 5:28,29; I Thess. 4:13,14). What a glorious hope!

4. *In the Transformation of Life It Instills.* Before the resurrection His disciples were filled with fear and dismay (Matt. 26:31-35,56,58, 69-75). After His resurrection they became bold and aggressive. They began a mighty campaign to evangelize the world (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-20; Acts 2:14; 4:18,19; 5:29). Genuine faith in Christ and His resurrection changes one's life

(Col. 3:1-4). It is the power that enables us to subdue sin (Rom. 6:1-14).

5. *In The Victory It Gives over Death.* The world of humanity dies nearly three times in a century. All the forces of earth cannot halt the ravages of death. But through His resurrection we can overcome death (II Tim. 1:10). His resurrection is a pledge of our resurrection (I Cor. 15:20-23, 51-57).

Thank God for the power of Christ's resurrection! Do you desire to know this power as much as Paul did? This is the support of the entire Bible--the law, prophets, and the gospel. And the fact of His resurrection makes all of His promises good.

ARE YOU KEEPING YOUR APPOINTMENTS WITH THE LORD?

"Does the Lord make appointments with His people?" you may ask. He most certainly does and He expects His people to keep those appointments. But by the way they attend services, many professed Christians indicate that they do not attach very much importance to their appointments with the Lord. Judging by the way THEY do, one would be led to believe that the Lord does not make appointments with His people today, or if He does, it is not obligatory with man to keep those appointments. God, however, DOES make appointments with His people and He NEVER FAILS to keep those appointments. We may stand the Lord up, but He does not stand us up.

When Moses had successfully led the Israelites across the Red Sea and to the foot of Mt. Sinai, God

made an appointment with them to meet Him on the third day (Ex. 19:10,11). This was such a momentous appointment that the Israelites were required to make two days preparation before keeping it. God kept this appointment, and it is fearful to think what might have happened to Moses and the people had they failed to meet God at the appointed time.

The Lord today has set appointments for His people to meet with Him. And just as He assured the apostles that where two or three of them were gathered together in His name, He would be in their midst (Matt. 18:20), just that surely He meets with us at the times appointed. At the time He instituted the Lord's Supper, he also promised to eat and drink with those who remembered Him in the observance of this feast. (Matt. 26:29). By approved apostolic example, weekly observance on the first day of the week has been authorized (Acts 20:7). Sometimes it is said: "I have never read in the Bible where it says to attend every service of the church." Oh yes, it does! Not just in those words, but did the Lord have to say it just that way to make it obligatory? Here's HOW the Lord said it: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25). WHEN? Unless we have a hindrance which only providence can remove, any time the church is supposed to assemble. Hence, whenever it is announced that the church will assemble on a certain date at a certain hour, EVERY member of the church has an appointment to meet the Lord at that time. No other appointment on that date at that hour--business, social or otherwise--surpasses in importance that appointment with the Lord. Do you suppose that some of us will have to keep two other appointments of God (death and the judgment—Heb. 9:27) to realize, when it is too late, how important our appointments are

with the Lord? Some of us must not understand what our commitments are to the Lord, or we could not stand Him up and disappoint Him so often. Can you picture the Lord's dropping His head in disappointment when we fail to remember Him (eat and drink with Him) in the Lord's Supper for frivolous reasons. Are YOU still reading? Are YOU thinking? Every service set by the church is an appointment with the Lord. How often do you stand Him up???

ARE YOU ONE IN TEN?

"And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17).

Ingratitude has been described as "the blackest and most despicable sin." It is cataloged as one of the great sins of the Gentiles in ages past (Rom. 1:21). And Paul said it would characterize those in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1,2).

We may have some virtues and be lacking in others. The nine lepers who were healed, but gave no thanks, had faith that Christ could heal them; they even prayed for healing; and obeyed the Lord's instructions to present themselves to the priest. But only one of the ten had a sufficient sense of indebtedness to return to Christ to offer him thanks. Is this proportion average? Why were the nine ungrateful?

1. *Failure To Consider.* Thoughtlessness is at the root of all ingratitude. The nine lepers were Jews and thought, perhaps, they should receive healing because they were Jews. This was a besetting sin of Israel. "My people do not consider." (Isa. 1:3d). Jehovah repeatedly reminded Israel that they had forgotten all that He had

done for them and pleaded for them to consider, but they persisted in their ingratitude.

He wants us to consider how great things He has done for us. (1 Sam. 12:24). *"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits"* (Psalm 103:2). He made possible our very existence; sustains us in life (Acts 17:28); and has made possible our redemption from sin. Failure to recognize one's benefactor and to show appreciation thereto is ingratitude of the rankest sort. And the ratio that emerges from the text of those who give thanks to their benefactors is one in ten. ARE YOU ONE IN TEN??

2. *Another Cause Of Ingratitude Is Pride.* The Samaritan that returned and gave Jesus thanks was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel. The nine, being Jews, may have thought that they received healing as a matter of right, because they were descendants of Abraham. There was also a temptation on the part of the Samaritan to spiritual pride (*he, too, claimed descent from Abraham*), but there was a deeper sense on his part of unworthiness, and therefore a deeper sense of gratitude. *"Humility is at the root of gratitude, and when we have learned to humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, we shall have learned at least the first principle of gratitude."* (James Hasting).

3. *Failure To See The Benefactor May Cause Ingratitude.* When the ten lepers were healed, the Benefactor was out of sight. At the moment of awe and blessing they did not see Him. No shadowy form hovered over them; no word was spoken over them; and no hand was raised in benediction, but healing came, but HOW they could not tell exactly. Because we do not see the eye of the Lord as He blesses us should not

affect our gratitude. *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."* (James 1:17).

CONCLUSION: There are many blessings that result from gratitude. (1) Those grateful receive a greater blessing (Lk. 17:19). (2) It moves to action. One will do much more prompted by gratitude than by fear or hope of reward. Paul is a classic example. (Rom. 1:14). (3) Gratitude lives in deeds, not in words only. Gratitude can suffer and toil, but one thing it cannot do is feel that it has done enough for its benefactor.

"We are the recipients of a thousand blessings daily, both spiritual and physical (Eph. 1:3; Jas. 1:5,17). But often we forget the hand that feeds us! The majority live on the level of the hogs which eat the acorns under the trees without ever looking up to see from whence they come." (LEROY BROWNLOW) ARE YOU ONE IN TEN??

"WHAT DO YE MORE THAN OTHERS?"

SCRIPTURE: *Matthew 5:47.*

This question was raised by our Lord in his Sermon on the Mount. He was teaching the high standard of loving our enemies in contrast with what the law of Moses allowed (Matt. 5:38-45). Some have thought it impossible to love an enemy, but Jesus enjoined such love to the extent of praying for and blessing our enemies (Matt. 5:44). Even the despised publicans lived by the standard of returning good for good, of loving those who loved them, and saluting their own brethren

only (Matt. 5:46,47), which were all demands of the average. Being satisfied to be average is going to cause many to be lost eternally. If this is not true, why did Jesus propound this question?

I. How Much More Do We Than Denominationalists?

Is it not true that many members of the church do not give any more, attend any more, study any more, or work any more than denominationalists? If Catholics can meet at 7:00 a.m. to worship in error, we can meet earlier, if there be a need, to worship in truth. If Mormons can give 10% to support error, we can give more to support truth. If Jehovah's Witnesses can circulate much literature to spread error, we can circulate more to spread truth. If not, WHAT DO WE MORE THAN OTHERS?

II. This Question Proves That Christians Are Expected To Live Better And Do More Than Sinners.

Jesus teaches by this question that our religion is worth little, if it does not make us better than the average. And Christians are in constant danger of being satisfied with the average. "Thou shalt not kill" meets the demands of the average, but Jesus demands more (1 Jno. 3:15). "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is average law, but Jesus demands more (Matt. 5:39). Defrauding within the law is called good business and average, but Jesus gave a higher standard (Mk. 10:19). The average standard is based on selfishness, but God views it differently (Phil. 2:4). All of these examples are sufficient to prove that Christ requires that we surpass the average.

III. If The Church Helps Saints Only Out Of Its Treasury, What Does It Do More Than Others? All denominational bodies will do this. In fact, Jesus said, "If

you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" It may be said that this is individual action, but we (the church) are to do good unto all men (Gal. 6:10; 1:2). Caring for widows and orphans is practicing pure religion (Jas. 1:27). **CAN THE CHURCH PRACTICE PURE RELIGION?** If it cannot, what do ye more than others? Any doctrine that does not permit such practice lowers its standard to the level of the ancient Pharisees and is condemned by Jesus (Matt. 5:20).

CONCLUSION: Refusing to do more than others is measuring ourselves by others and is not wise (2 Cor. 10:12). It is foolish to measure ourselves by other members; it is much worse to measure ourselves by non-members. Christ, instead of man, is the Christian's standard (1 Pet. 2:21).

(NOTE: Some of the thoughts in this article were gleaned from Leroy Brownlow.)

SACRIFICES THAT COST NOTHING.

"I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing". (II Samuel 24:24)

This was David's declaration regarding a threshing floor he was interested in buying on which to build an altar to Jehovah. Araunah, who owned the threshing floor, wanted to give it to David and throw in the sacrifices for good measure. But David refused the threshing floor as a gift saying, "No, but I will buy it of you for a price; I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing" (II Samuel 24:24).

Isn't the true measure of any gift to God what it costs

the giver? Of how much value is any gift if it doesn't cost the giver? Was not this the measure by which Jesus valued the widow who gave only two mites (Mk. 12:41-44)? Her gift itself was not expensive, but it WAS COSTLY, because it was all she had. Christ's sacrifice for our sins was costly—in incomparable and unspeakable suffering. But had he not paid the price, we would still be in our sins (I Pet. 3:18). It should, therefore, not be difficult to understand that before our gifts can be acceptable to God they must cost something.

But we live in a day of covetous bargain seekers and regrettably too many are looking for a bargain in Christianity. Most want costly living for self and cheap giving to God. We expect God to welcome us into heaven without any cost or trouble on our part. We do not want to make any sacrifices; we act as though we insist that God should be pleased with our spare time and our spare cash. It is impossible to read the New Testament without being impressed with the call and demand of heaven that only costly sacrifices receive heaven's approval. Basic to everything else, we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1,2).

To be a genuine Christian is going to cost some money. The Macedonians sent costly gifts to the poor saints in Judea—not costly in amount, but in proportion to their poverty (II Cor. 8:1-5). Their secret? "They first gave their own selves unto the Lord" (V. 5). Our Lord commended the widow who gave all of her living (Mk. 12:44). Are you giving only that which you would not miss?

Being a faithful Christian costs some time. One-hour-a-week Christianity is sapping the life of the church.

What are your sacrifices costing you in time? Someone recently calculated that if one obeyed the gospel early in life and attended every worship and Bible study period of the church until he was 70 he would have given only 18 months of his life to these activities. Could such be described as sacrifices that cost nothing? How much time has God given us in addition to these? It is really detestable to think of making such a division-- earmarking my time and God's time. **IT ALL BELONGS TO HIM!**

It is our firm conviction that we should consider more carefully the cost of our gifts to God. It is certain that God does.

WHAT PRICE TAG HAVE YOU PUT ON YOUR SOUL?

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt.16:26). Jesus said that the soul (yours or mine) is worth more than the whole world. This is the value He placed on YOUR soul. For what will YOU exchange for YOUR soul? What value have you placed on your soul by your priorities? What price tag is showing on your soul? Are you trifling with YOUR soul, the only possession you have that you can take into the next world?

We put a price tag on our souls by the priority we give to seeking its welfare, or by the lack of priority we give its welfare. Some make saving their marriages a priority to saving their souls. Some are more interested

in pleasure and sports than the eternal welfare of their souls. Money and the making of it is pre-eminent in many lives. Some place a low value on their souls by spasmodic, irregular attendance of the services of the church.

Life is a "Vanity Fair"--a market where all are shoppers buying those things on which we place value. Many of us are buying the frivolous, trivial, and the paltry--those things that are momentary in their nature. But in this market there is offered us dressing for the soul, which is eternal. It is listed as the "pearl of great price" (Matt. 13:45,46), but many are passing it by, and in doing so place a low value on their souls.

What is the "world" in the Lord's comparison? Pleasure, honor, and wealth. John calls them the "lust of the flesh, the vainglory of men, and the lust of the eyes." (1 John 2:16). So it includes all the pleasure, all the honor, and all the wealth that the world can bestow. To lose one's soul for any of these is to exchange it for a mess of meat, as Esau did his birthright.

That which makes the loss of the soul so tragic is that it can never be recovered. If we stand on the eternal shore, having bartered away our souls, it will be impossible to buy it back just as Esau could not buy back his birthright (Heb. 12:16,17). One who saves his soul eternally and loses everything else has not been a failure. But one who gains everything else and loses his soul eternally is a miserable failure.

Have YOU reduced the value of YOUR soul to the price of sensual pleasure, half-hearted service to the church, or minding the things of men more than the things of God? JUST WHAT PRICE TAG IS ON YOUR SOUL? How does it compare with the value Jesus put

on it? ARE YOU THINKING RIGHTLY??

MAN'S GREATEST SPIRITUAL DANGER

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:2)

What one thing is going to cause more people to be lost than any other? Will it be ignorance, pride, selfishness, prejudice, rebellion, greed, indifference, or lusts of the flesh? All of these will cause many to be lost, but the major cause will be **NEGLECT**. Man's greatest danger of losing his soul is **NEGLECT**. Few people intend to be lost, but they neglect to do anything about it until it is too late.

Neglect is so easy to do. Many think that because they intend to do certain things in time that they are all right because their intentions are good. It is more than a cliché to say, "That the way to hell is paved with good intentions"; it is an undeniable fact. Knowing and intending right are not enough (James 4:17; 1:22,25). The foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), Felix (Acts 24:25), and Agrippa (Acts 26:28) neglected to make sufficient preparation and were lost. Do they represent you?

In our text the writer poses a rhetorical question. It would be difficult to surpass this question in logic. It is a rhetorical question, which answers itself. It implies danger, provision for escape from that danger, neglect of the provision, a consequent increase of danger, and hopelessness of finding any other escape. One who neglects this great salvation exposes himself to the wrath of God, and what a fearful thing to do! (Heb.

10:26-31).

Of all sins, the sin of negligence is the most dangerous, because of its deceptive nature and because it requires no effort. **All one has to do to be lost is do nothing!** It is also a root sin; from it many other sins grow. A neglected field will soon be filled with thorns and thistles. "As the farmer will lose his harvest by simple neglect, as the business man will become bankrupt by simple neglect, as the scholar will strip himself of his attainments by simple neglect, so the surest way by which to accomplish the irremediable ruin of the soul is just to 'neglect so great salvation.'" (Pulpit Commentary).

It needs to be remembered that our text is addressed primarily to Christians, but it applies to all. We may not mean any harm, but we will have to pay the penalty for neglect--ETERNAL MISERY AND ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD. "Indifference to God is equal to disrespect and irreverence, and constitutes the essence of disobedience."--Clarence S. Roddy.

THOSE WHO WILL NOT LISTEN

"Amaziah would not hear." (2 Kings 14:11). *Israel would not hear.* (Nehemiah 9:29).

Amaziah, ninth king of Judah under the divided kingdom, challenged Jehovah, king of Israel, to a test of their armies. Because of his superior forces, Jehovah used a little parable to indicate to Amaziah what the consequences of such would be—that he would be like a thistle trodden down by a wild beast. (2 Kings 14:9).

"But Amaziah would not hear." Read 2 Kings 14:11b-14 to learn the consequences.

After some of the Hebrew captives had returned to the land of their fathers under Nehemiah and the priests assembled the people to confess their sins, they confessed that the primary reason that they were carried into captivity was because *they would not hear* (Neh. 9:29; 2 Kings. 18:12). They would not hear what God had commanded through Moses or the warnings of the prophets.

It has been said that none are so blind as those who will not see. It is equally true that none are so deaf as those who will not hear. We shall examine in what follows why some will not hear.

I. BECAUSE OF RELIGIOUS BIAS. The Scribes and Pharisees refused to hear Christ because of their pre-conceived concepts regarding the Messiah. Many now cannot study God's word with an honest and good heart because they are prejudiced toward an ancestral religion. Several years ago this writer was granted permission to show the Jule Miller film strips to a party who was a member of a denominational church. But it became apparent before showing all of them that the party was not listening to determine what God's word said and that I was wasting their time and mine. If this had been the attitude of Saul of Tarsus, he never would have become a Christian. He had to give up his parents' religion to follow Christ (Gal. 1:13,14). One who listens now with an open heart may have to do the same thing. In the first service of one of our tent meetings in the early 40s, the tent was filled with religious people. But because they were not willing to study God's word with an open mind, they never came back. Saving faith

comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17), and those who will not hear cannot be saved.

II. FAILURE TO HEED ADVICE. These hear but they do not heed. Solomon said, "In the multitude of counsellors is safety" (Prov. 11:14). It is also wise to seek the counsel of those who are older, more experienced, and wiser. "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise" (Prov. 11:17). But some go contrary to ALL the advice given them—they *would not hear*—and wonder why life has given them such a "bum rap." "He that hearkeneth to counsel is wise" (Prov. 13:20).

Many are warned against the consequences of experimenting with drugs (including alcohol which is a drug), *but they will not hear*. So they experiment until they are addicted. One of the surest and quickest ways to destroy oneself is to start on a course that leads to drug addiction, but *so many will not listen!* There is no person on earth more miserable than one who has a drug dependency. The line of funeral marches to the grave of premature deaths would be greatly shortened *if more would listen to wise counsel.*

THE BENEFITS OF AFFLICTIONS

'It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.' (Psalm 119:71)

Adversity is common to all mankind. "*Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.*" (Job 5:7). No one is exempted by state or condition of life. The effect of adversity is determined by the attitude we assume

toward it. Afflictions are tests of character. "Count each affliction, whether light or grave, God's messenger sent down to thee." (*Aubrey T. De Vere*). An old Chinese Proverb says, "The diamond cannot be polished without friction, nor the man perfected without trials." What are the benefits of affliction?

I. They Are Beneficial by the Lessons They Teach.

In affliction we are led to feel our nothingness and unworthiness. In affliction there is a tendency to reflect on our omissions of duty, our imperfect service, and our sinfulness. This tends to keep us humble and submissive. "*Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word.*" said the Psalmist (Psa. 119:67). Lack of prosperity and good health are often found connected with thoughtlessness and lack of concern for spiritual values. Afflictions also impress us with our mortality—that "*it is appointed unto men once to die.*" (Heb. 9:27). So afflictions show us our utter dependence on God, our true condition as sinners, and our dying state.

II. Afflictions Are Beneficial Because of the Feelings They Produce If Viewed Properly. They have a tendency to produce tenderness of spirit, sensibility and sharpness of conscience. They also have a tendency to remove moral lethargy and indifference. In contrast, health and prosperity tend to pride and self-satisfaction. Afflictions also make us loose to this world and more mindful of our eternal resting-place. "Thus affliction places the world in its true light, showing us that worldly honors are a mere breath, worldly pleasures a delusion, worldly riches are as dross, and all worldly scenes as a passing panorama." (*Jobez Burns*). "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn*

thy statutes." (Psalm 119:71).

III. Afflictions Often Produce a Greater Love for Divine Things. If viewed right, they will produce a greater love for the Bible as the solace of this life and the only guide to immortality. They produce a greater love for prayer as the only exercise that can bring relief to the spirit; and peace and hope to the mind. They also produce a greater love for chastening as a sign of God's love. *"For whom the Lord loveth he chastened, and scourged every son whom he receiveth."* (Hebrews 12:6).

Conclusion: Have afflictions been of profit to you? The blind Helen Keller once said, "I thank God for my handicaps, for through them, I have found myself, my work, and my God." Full trust in the beneficence of God is essential to the successful endurance of trials. After Job had lost all things earthly, he said, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."* (Job. 13:15).

*"Sweet are the uses of adversity;
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."*

Shakespeare

EXCUSES! EXCUSES! EXCUSES!

"And they all with one consent began to make excuse." (Like 14:18).

Anyone who has had experience in visiting delinquent members of the church can fully appreciate and understand the Savior's statement above. Some

delinquent brethren are about the most prolific excuse-makers on earth. They wax eloquent in excuse-making, if such is possible. These excuses range all the way from an aching toe to the death of cousin ten times removed, *ad infinitum*. (If you do not know the meaning of this term, look it up in a dictionary.)

It is even touching to hear some of the brethren attempt to excuse themselves from attending the services. Some of the excuses brethren offer for not doing their duty makes us feel so sorry for them we almost weep "crocodile tears". To listen to some of them tell of their physical handicaps, you would think they should have been dead a long time ago. Spiritually, they did die long ago. POOR BRETHREN! WHAT TALES OF WOE! Sometimes you wonder if they are going to drop dead in your presence. It is a wonder they can carry on their work, but you can always see them at work, at school functions, athletic events, shopping etc. Of course, we know some are truly handicapped physically; this does not apply to them.

How can brethren continue to make excuses without any embarrassment? An older preacher used to say that an excuse is a skin of a reason stuffed with lies. Have brethren not learned that excuses are the crutches on which the weak lean? Have they not learned it is *TO GOD* that they must give account, *NOT MEN*? Would they want to tell God these excuses at the judgment? Have they not learned that the other members, the preacher, and God can see through their excuses?

Excuses are salve for the conscience, and salving our consciences with lame and flimsy excuses will cause our souls to be lost. Uncalled-for excuses are practical confessions, such as: "I just didn't make it." This is an

admission that they are ashamed to tell you the real reason they did not make it.

“TO THIS END WAS I BORN”

(John 18:37)

These words were spoken by Christ concerning his birth. In this text he speaks of one of the purposes of His birth—to bear witness to the truth. To think of the birth of Christ without considering the purposes of it is to fail to understand why he was born. The supreme event in the history of the world is the birth of Christ, and it will remain the supreme event until He comes again. His birth served several divine purposes. What were those purposes?

I. HE CAME TO FULFIL THE SCRIPTURES. (Matt. 5:17,18). In doing this He fulfilled the requirements of the old law perfectly, which no other had ever done, because the law required perfection (Heb. 4:15). He fulfilled the predictions of the prophets concerning him (Lk. 24:44; Jno. 5:39). He fulfilled the types and shadows of the Old Testament (Heb. 10:1; 9:11,12). In fact, everything in the Old Testament pointed to his coming.

II. HE CAME TO REVEAL GOD'S WILL. (Jno. 6:38). He is the prophet whom Moses said would come to speak for God (Deut. 18:18,19). In these last days (age), God speaks through Christ (Heb. 1:1,2). In making known God's will, Christ and his apostles gave us the New Testament (Heb. 7:22; 8:6; 2 Cor. 3:6). In this last will and testament, he reveals how to become a

Christian and how to live the Christian life. This revelation is final and complete in every respect (Jude 3; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17).

III. HE CAME TO BE KING. (Jno. 18:36, 37). It had been prophesied that He would be a king (Jer. 23:5,6; Isa. 9:6). He preached this during his earthly ministry (Matt. 4:17; Jno. 18:37), but He emphasized that his kingdom would be spiritual in nature (Jno. 18:36). His coronation at the right hand of God was announced by Peter on the first Pentecost following his death, burial and resurrection (Acts 2:29-36). He is NOW reigning over the ONLY kingdom He will ever reign over, and it will be delivered up to God at His second coming (1 Cor. 15:24, 25). Those who teach a future reign of Christ on earth are giving people a false hope.

IV. HE CAME TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST. (Lk. 19:10). This seems to be the grand summary of all the purposes of His coming into the world. In all that He did and in all that He suffered He had one objective--to save the lost. The world was lost in the quagmire and guilt of sin and the law could not remove that guilt (Rom. 3:23; Heb. 10:1-4). So to save the lost He had to shed His blood (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 3:25,26). During His personal ministry, he personally sought the lost (Lk. 19:1-10; Jno. 4:1-26). His example of interest in saving the lost is to be emulated by us (1 Pet. 2:21).

CONCLUSION: What has His coming meant to you? Has the truth He revealed convinced you of your sin and your need of a Savior? Have the sacrifices made by Him touched your heart? Has He become YOUR Savior and King, as a result of your obedience to His will? This is the only proper way to show appreciation for His birth.

SALVATION AND GRACE

INTRODUCTION

Grace is one of the most profound subjects that can engage our minds. I have always felt inadequate in discussing it, because of man's inability to comprehend it fully. When discussing the subject, it makes one feel like he has come to an ocean from which to drink with only a teaspoon to use in drinking.

Not only are we saved by the grace of God, but all blessings that we receive are by the grace of God, both temporal and spiritual. All the water we drink and use for other purposes; all the air we breathe, the food we eat—everything that sustains us in our physical lives is by the grace of God. Even those who deny God's existence are sustained in their physical lives by HIS grace.

MEANING OF GRACE

Grace simply means the unmerited favor of God given to man. There are two erroneous conclusions that many have reached regarding grace. First, some have concluded that if salvation is by grace, it is unconditional. Second, those who reach the first conclusion have also concluded that salvation by grace excludes all works of obedience. But we kindly submit that these are false conclusions.

How is one saved by grace? Conditionally or unconditionally? If one is saved unconditionally, then all will be saved, because the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared to ALL MEN (Tit. 2:11). God is not a respecter of persons, and if He saves

unconditionally, He would be obligated to save all unconditionally. Nothing short of universal salvation would be consistent with the character of God, if salvation by grace is unconditional. But if salvation by grace is conditional, then only those who obey the terms of salvation will be saved (Hebrews 5:8,9).

WHAT GRACE DOES

First, God's grace provided the plan of salvation. When man was lost in sin, and without strength to provide a plan by which he could be saved, God made the necessary provision for the salvation of the world (Jno. 3:17). An acceptable atonement was needed, because animal blood could not take away sins (Heb. 10:1). And sin could not be eternally forgiven without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). By God's grace Jesus came and shed His blood for our sins (Mat. 26:28; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rev. 1:5b). This sacrifice was for all who would accept its benefits (Heb. 2:9; 2 Cor. 4:14,15; 1 Jno. 2:1,2). Man had been separated from God by his sin (Isa. 59:1,2; Rom. 3:23). Therefore, a mediator was needed who would approach God in man's behalf, and then stipulate the conditions upon which God would accept man back into His favor (1 Tim. 2:4,5; 2 Cor. 5:18-21). He "became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8,9). He announced in the "Great Commission" the terms upon which we are now saved (Heb. 2:3,4; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). Having done all this to save man, the Lord ascended to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth, so that all men might know God's provisions for their salvation (Jno. 14:26; 16:13). On the divine side of the plan of salvation ALL is done by

grace.

MAN'S PART IN HIS SALVATION

"For by grace have you been saved THROUGH FAITH, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9). The two sides in salvation are represented in the words "grace" and "faith." All that God does in our salvation is by grace, while all that man does to be saved by grace must be done by faith. But what kind of faith saves? James affirms repeatedly that faith without works (obedience) is dead—does not avail, or will not save (James 2:14, 24, 26). To be saved by faith does not exclude grace, but it is the embracing of the grace that God has bestowed. But some object by saying that, "It is no more by grace but is merited if we submit ourselves to the conditions of salvation." Complying with the conditions stipulated are appropriative acts rather than meritorious acts. Suppose a man is in a well and you let a rope down to him, he takes hold of the rope and you pull him out. Did you save the man? Yes. Did he save himself? Yes, he did! How? By taking hold of the rope that was extended to him. It was simply an appropriative act. In the same way, we by an obedient faith lay hold of the grace of God and He saves us.

CONDITIONS OF SALVATION BY GRACE

It needs to be remembered that the conditions with which man must comply are appropriative, not meritorious in nature.

Faith is a condition, but we believe through grace

(Acts 17:28; Rom 4:16). If all conditions are eliminated, that would therefore exclude faith.

Repentance is also a condition (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 17:30, 31), but we repent through grace also.

Confession of faith in Christ is a condition (Rom 10:10; Acts 8:37); this is also done through grace.

Baptism in water is a condition (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21), and it also is by grace. Baptism is no more meritorious than faith, repentance, and confession. They are all appropriative acts!

Baptism is the real test of one's faith, because human reason cannot see any connection between being baptized and the remission of sins. In all the cases of conversion in the book of Acts, no one was ever described as rejoicing in his salvation until he was baptized. In obeying all these conditions, the sinner is doing nothing more than reaching up to take hold, or to appropriate to his soul, the grace of God. He is not trying to merit his salvation, but as a lost soul sinking into ruin, he is simply reaching up to grasp the rope of salvation that God's grace has offered him.

HARMONY OF PAUL AND JAMES

When one understands that Paul and James are referring to different kinds of works, there is no contradiction. It is perversion and exegesis of the worst sort to lump all words together and claim that we are not saved by any kind of works. In Rom 4:4,5; 3:19, and Gal. 3:24, Paul was speaking of the works of law of Moses, meritorious works. These do not save. But the works spoken of by James (2:14-26) are the works of obedience. Let no one say James was referring to the

obedience of a child of God, because one of the examples he cites is that of Rahab, who was not a child of God, but a pagan, and she was saved by an obedient faith!

If faith produce no works, I see

That faith is not a living tree.

Thus faith and works together grow;

No separate life they e'er can know:

They're soul and body, hand and heart:

What God hath joined, let no man part.

--Hannah Moore

IS YOUR RELIGION PLEASING TO GOD?

Very often people say, in a defensive manner more or less, "I am satisfied with my religion." The implication is: Since such a person is satisfied, that his religion is God-approved and all right. But TRUE religion is something that involves not only man but God, also. It is the binding of an individual back to God, as the term "religion" (re-ligio, to rebind) suggests. Thus, the fact that an individual is satisfied with his religion may not in any way make it acceptable to God. The important question is this: "IS GOD PLEASED WITH OUR RELIGION?"

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

When Jesus was here on earth, most of the Jews were satisfied with their religion, but Jesus strongly

indicated that God was not pleased. They added many things in the practice of the Jewish religion that God did not authorize. (Matt. 15:7-9). Paul, also, found many of the Jews satisfied, and even zealous, in their religion, but they had rejected the righteousness of God. (Rom 10:1-3). Saul of Tarsus was satisfied with his religion prior to his conversion to Christ (Acts 23:1; Gal. 1:13,14), but that did not make it acceptable to God.

GOD ONLY APPROVES THAT WHICH HE AUTHORIZES

God has always authorized that which He approved. If He does not authorize a thing to be done, He does not approve it. In Heb. 11:4 we learn that Abel offered that which God had authorized and it was approved. "By faith" means by the authority of God's word. (Rom. 10:17). Cain's offering did not please God, because he offered that which God had not authorized. In Leviticus 10 it is recorded that Nadab and Abihu "offered strange fire", which God had not authorized, and they were consumed by fire. God authorized the type of fire He approved, and God through Christ and His apostles has authorized what He approves today. Any religious practice for which there is no authority from God does not meet with His approval.

HOW CAN WE KNOW WHAT PLEASES GOD IN RELIGION?

Only by what God has revealed in His word can we know what pleases Him. (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17). And God is pleased with the DOERS of the word, not

hearers only. (Matt. 7:21; James 1:22). Therefore, whatever we practice in religion for which there is no authority in the Word does not please God. In Luke 20:4, Jesus asked the chief priest and scribes the following question regarding John's baptism: "Was it from heaven, or of men?" Christ's question implies only two sources of authority—either from God or men. If what we practice in religion is from heaven, there is authority for it in the New Testament. (Heb. 1:1,2; Jude 3; 1 Cor. 4:6; 2; Jno. 9-11). If our religious practices are from men, they are condemned. (Matt. 15:9, 13; Gal. 1:6-12). Will YOU apply the test Jesus suggested to YOUR religion? Do you have divine authority for what YOU practice in religion?

DID YOU OBEY A PLAN OF SALVATION AUTHORIZED BY GOD?

From the accounts of the Lord's final commission, we learn that He enjoined faith, repentance, and baptism. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15,16; Lk. 24:46,47). In every case of conversion in Acts of Apostles, the Spirit-guided apostles bound the same conditions, and Jesus said they would be bound in heaven. (Matt. 18:18). Would anything more or less please God, since they would not be authorized by God?

WHICH CHURCH DID HE AUTHORIZE?

Is the church of which you are a member anywhere mentioned in the New Testament? Is it from heaven or men? In the New Testament we read of Christ's promise to build HIS church (Matt. 16:18); of the "churches of

Christ" (Rom. 16:16); of the church Christ purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28); and no other. There is ONLY ONE church mentioned in the New Testament which exists by God's approval. (1 Cor. 12:12,20; Col. 1:18). Christ is the Savior of that church. (Eph. 5:23). If the church of which you are a member is from man, it is not essential—yea, it is dangerous! (Matt. 15:13). But if from God, IT IS VITAL.

WHAT ABOUT THE NAME YOU WEAR?

Can you find the name you wear in religion in the New Testament? The name "Christian" was divinely given. (Isa. 62:2; Acts 11:26; 1Pet. 4:16; Acts 4:12). To wear this name, and it only, without a doubt pleases God. Any other name is from man and does not please God. (1 Cor. 1:13; 3:1-3).

ARE CREED BOOKS FROM HEAVEN OR MEN?

The Bible affirms its all-sufficiency (2 Tim. 3:16,17), and warns against additions, subtractions, or substitutions. (1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18,19). In view of these facts, all creed books other than the Bible are from men. If you are believing and practicing things authorized by them, how could it please God?

WHENCE MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC?

Is the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship from heaven or of man? SINGING is authorized in 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16. But there is no New Testament authority for playing instruments in

worship. Is God pleased with such when His Word does not authorize the use of them?

WHAT ABOUT SPECIAL DAYS AND SEASONS?

Is the religious observance of special days pleasing to God? If Gal. 4:10 means what it says,¹ and it does, such does not please Him. Col. 1:16,17 clearly state that observance of such is returning to the shadow (law of Moses) and, therefore, an addition to the law of Christ. By what authority, then, does one observe Christmas, Easter, Lent, etc., religiously?

CONCLUSION

If YOUR Religion does not Meet The Aforementioned Tests, GOD IS NOT PLEASED. There is simply no way to please Him without obeying His will--what He has authorized in His Word. (Acts 10:34,35). Do YOU want to face Him in judgment, having practiced in religion that which displeases Him? Would it not be wiser to displease all others rather than God? WILL YOU obey God's will and say with Paul: *"For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? If I were pleasing men, I would not be a servant of Christ."* (Gal. 1:12).

CHRIST'S CHURCH--NOW AS THEN

Can the church of this century be what the church was in the first century? We believe that it not only CAN BE what the apostolic church was, but that it MUST BE

in order to be the virgin bride of Christ (See 2 Cor. 11:2, Eph. 5:25-27).

By using the pattern God gave Moses for the Jewish Tabernacle (Heb. 8:5), would it be possible to reproduce it today? Everyone who thinks for himself would answer this in the affirmative. By using a dress pattern handed down to her, my wife could reproduce a dress for herself exactly like the one that was worn by her great-grandmother. In the New Testament, God has provided a perfect pattern or model of what He wanted the church to be **then and now**.

To employ another figure of speech, in order to know what the church should be now, all we need to do is consult the divine blueprint. We learn from the New Testament the characteristics of the apostolic church. God is not the author of departures from the apostolic pattern, and departures by preference are an expression of man's will as opposed to God's will.

OUR AIM

It is the abiding aim of churches of Christ to reproduce in this twentieth century the apostolic church as it existed in the first century. For this to be a reality, the church now **MUST** have the characteristics of the church then. From a careful study of the New Testament we learn that the church today **MUST** possess the following characteristics:

I. Divine Origin

Since the Bible is a divine book, anything authorized by it would be divine; and there is a church authorized in

the Bible. It also has a divine founder (Matt. 16:18) and it was divinely organized (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28). Although it was divine at the beginning it cannot cease to be divine and still be the true church; it cannot adopt changes, innovations and departures authorized by men and be like the apostolic church. Therefore, no human institution, nor combination of institutions for which there is no divine authority, can ever be of God. If there is a divine pattern to follow, are we not more than presumptuous in following one of human origin?

II. Divine Names

From the New Testament we learn that a variety of names are applied to the church collectively and to its members individually. Collectively, they are called "the churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16), "the church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2). Individually, they are called "Christians" (Acts 11:26), or "saints" (Phil. 1:1). Any of these names are of divine origin and have special significance. The church today that is governed by divine authority will accept these divine names only. Names unknown to the New Testament would be a departure from the divine pattern and would prevent the church's being now what it was in the first century.

III. Divine Government

If the church now disregards the government appointed by God in the New Testament, it would not still be the same church. "Its congregations are not bound in the coils of an ecclesiasticism as merciless as it is unscriptural. Its bishops are not diocesan, but congregational. There is not a plurality of churches,

under one bishop, but a plurality of bishops in one church. Its government is not in the hands of a legislative body, but it is under the legislation of Christ, executed by the several congregations." (**The Church, Falling Away and Restoration** by J.W. Shepherd.)

IV. Divine Worship

The church now that is governed by divine authority has the same form of worship that it had in the beginning. Departures in worship mar the pattern as departures in origin, name and organization mar the pattern. Divine worship meets two divine requirements: (1) IN SPIRIT (2) IN TRUTH (See John 4:24). Since God's word is truth (John 17:17), divine worship is that for which there is authority in the WORD OF GOD. Any deviations therefrom and additions thereto would be an apostasy from the divine pattern.

V. Divine Unity

There were no denominational walls in the church at the beginning. All of the apostles of Christ and the early Christians were members of one and the same church, and those apostles enjoined unity THEN and NOW (See 1 Cor. 1:10 Eph. 4:1-4). Christ prayed for the unity that exists between the Father and the Son (See John 17:20, 21). This unity can never exist in denominationalism; neither will Christ's prayer be answered in such. To contend that such unity is impossible is to contend that Christ prayed for the impossible. If the church now is to be what it was then, there must be the same unity that characterized it then.

VI. Divine Law of Reproduction

"The word of God is the seed of the kingdom" (Mat. 13:19; Lk. 8:11). Each seed produces after its kind (Gen. 1:11,12). This seed produced "Christians" when first planted by the apostles. If we plant the same seed today, we will have the same product. The germ of life, or power of reproduction, is in the seed. If there were not a Christian on earth today, you might become one by believing, repenting and being baptized, as they did under the preaching of the apostles (Acts 2:37-42). If there were not a church of Christ on earth, we might start one immediately by following the same gospel which the apostles preached. For example, the apostle Paul went to the city of Corinth and preached the gospel (Acts 18; I Cor. 15:1-4), and "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Paul later addressed them as "the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27). When we preach the same gospel and the people obey it as they did then, it will make of us religiously exactly what it made of them--"Christians", members of the body of Christ--no more, and no less.

CONCLUSION

The plea for a return to the divinely-revealed way has as its fundamental basis the conviction that Jesus Christ fully revealed His will for His followers for all time (Gal. 1:6-9; Jude 3; II Tim. 3:16; 17). This being true, God's Word to the twentieth-century man can only be found in the first-century book known as the New Testament. The revealed way is the only sure way.

SOME FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

ORIGIN OF THE CHURCHES

In condensed form, the following are historical facts as to the time, place, and person by whom the denominational churches originated. Documentary and unimpeachable proof can be furnished for all statements.

1. *Roman Catholic Church* (the first and mother of all denominations), crystalized into its present form in 606 A.D. with Boniface III as the first pope.

2. *Lutheran Church* (the first Protestant denomination), founded by Martin Luther in 1521 A.D. at Wittenburg, Germany, in protest to the selling of indulgencies and other corrupt practices of the Roman Catholics.

3. *Church of England* (later known as Episcopal in America), founded by Henry VIII in 1534 A.D., the final break with Rome coming about in 1543 A.D. because the Catholic Church would not annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon so he could marry Anne Boleyn.

4. *Presbyterian Church*, grew out of Calvinism which was first taught in Geneva, Switzerland, around 1535 A.D. The name is derived from their form of church government with presbyters in each local congregation.

5. *Congregational Church*, grew out of Puritanism in England in 1602 A.D. in favor of congregational church government.

6. *Baptist Church*, founded by John Smyth (who baptized himself by affusion) in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1607 A.D. First Baptist Church in America founded by Roger Williams at Providence, R.I., in 1639 A.D.

7. *Quakers* (also called the Society of Friends),

founded by George Fox, 1650 A.D. at Derby, England.

8. *Methodist Church*, founded by the Wesleys (Chas. and John) at Oxford, England in 1739 A.D. in opposition to the formalism and ritualism of the Church of England, in which they lived and died as members. Name derived from their insistence upon using certain methods in their practices.

9. *Mormon Church*, founded by Joe Smith at Fayette, N.Y. in 1830 A.D.

10. *Seventh Day Adventists*, founded by William Miller in 1845 A.D. at Low Hampton, N.Y.

11. *Christian Scientists*, founded by Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy (she was multi-married) in Boston, Mass, in 1879 A.D.

12. *Jehovah's Witnesses*, founded by Charles T. Russell in 1884 A.D.

13. *Church of God (Holiness)*, founded by Richard G. Spurling in East Tennessee in 1886 A.D. according to the Minutes of the 42nd General Assembly of the Church of God held at Birmingham, Ala., Aug. 28-31, 1948.

14. *Nazarene Church*, founded by P.F. Bresee and J.P. Widney at Los Angeles, Calif; in 1895 A.D. so states the Nazarene Church Manual.

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

A casual reader can see from the foregoing historical facts that all of the churches listed are too young by many hundreds of years to be the church revealed in the New Testament. They were likewise established at the wrong place by the wrong person to be the church of the Lord. In contrast to them, the church of Christ was

established by Christ (Matt. 16:18) in the city of Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4; Lk. 24:46-49; Acts 2) on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ in 33 A.D. The first denomination did not come into existence until approximately 600 years later, as is shown in the preceding. All of the other denominations have been founded since that time, as can be seen from the foregoing also.

Churches of Christ everywhere plead for the restoration of the church just as it was (without addition or subtraction) in the first century under the direction of the inspired apostles of Christ. They are not seeking the reformation of any existing institution, which started many of the Protestant denominations, but they seek to go back of Catholicism and Protestantism and restore the New Testament church in name, organization, worship and practice as it was set in operation by Christ's apostles. In the modern sense of the terms, they are neither Protestant nor Catholic, because no such divisions existed in the days of the apostles.

Churches of Christ are undenominational in nature, since they are not a denomination or part of any other existing body of religious people, as the term "denomination" implies, but they are the body of Christ. (Col. 1:18) "Their whole appeal is to speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent" to have a "thus saith the Lord, either in express terms or by approved precedent." Their mottoes are: No book but the Bible; no creed but the Christ; no name but the divine; no plea but the gospel; no basis of unity, but the scriptural; in all essentials unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things, charity.

Churches of Christ recognize no earthly head, but

exalt Christ as the ONLY head of the church (Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:18; Eph., 1:22,23). And, the headquarters is with the head in heaven. Their aim is to save souls through the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15: 1-4; Gal. 1:6-9); teach Godly living (Titus 2:11,12; I John 2:15-17); and help all of those in need (Gal. 6:10; James 1:27). They "call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways." (I Pet. 4:11). They also plead for unity upon the scriptural plan of salvation as set forth in the following:

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

This is the most important question ever asked by mortal man. It should be the chief concern of every accountable person, because it is both personal and imperative. The right answer can be found only in the word of God, the Bible. It is asked three times in the book of Acts of Apostles and answered many more times.

To be saved man must have his name written in the "book of life," for all whose names are not found written therein will be "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). All those who are members of the "church of the first born" have their names written in heaven (Heb. 12:23).

Thus one must be a member of Christ's church to be saved. In fact, the church is the saved and the saved are the church (Eph. 5:23; Acts 2:47).

To be saved one must obey the gospel of Christ. When Christ comes again, He will come "taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord" (2 Thess. 1:6-8).

Jesus commanded, and the apostles guided by the

Holy Spirit taught, that in order for one to be saved from past sins he must:

1. *Hear God's word* (Rom. 10:14-17; John 8:32; I Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18; Acts 15:7).
2. *Believe in Christ* (John 8:24; 20:30, 31; Heb. 11:6).
3. *Repent of all past sins* (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30).
4. *Confess faith in Christ* (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37).
5. *Be baptized (immersed) into Christ for the remission of sins* (Mk. 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:26, 27; 1 Pet. 3:21).

Those who obey these commands become such as should be saved and are added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). You cannot "join" the Lord's church. According to the New Testament one is added to the church by the same process that saves him. Those added to the church are "Christians," "saints" or "brethren" and nothing else. As such, they are to meet upon the first day of the week to worship and to eat the Lord's supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 16:1,2). To be saved eternally in heaven, a Christian must remain faithful until death (Rev. 2:10).

Dear Reader, if you are not a member of the Lord's church, you owe it to yourself to investigate the New Testament to learn about it. **YOUR SOUL IS AT STAKE!** More information will be furnished you upon request.

A LOOK AT PENTECOSTALISM

Pentecostalism is of comparatively recent origin. According to their own records, it does not date back

further than 1886 (*Minutes of the 42nd General Assembly of the Church of God held at Birmingham, AL, Aug. 28-31, 1948*). The Pentecostal Church, Inc. traces its origin back to 1899 (*Religious Bodies, Statistics and Doctrines, Vol. II, pp. 1334-5*). Both of these dates are far too late to be the church you read about in the New Testament.

There has been a revival of Pentecostalism in recent times which may be called "neo-Pentecostalism" (new Pentecostalism). All of it is completely new compared to the religion that dates back to the first century, and is revealed in the New Testament. There is a variety of groups calling themselves "Charismatics," which are rooted in a mis-interpretation and mis-application of New Testament teaching.

One of the chief promoters of the movement has been the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International. It has been endorsed and advocated by business executives, movie stars, TV personalities, and college professors. Is this movement of divine origin? Is it endorsed by the Scriptures? We shall examine some of its claims in what follows.

CLAIM TO HAVE HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

Holy Spirit baptism was promised to the apostles only. (Acts 1:8). This was fulfilled on the Pentecost of Acts 2. (Acts 2:1-4). Holy Spirit baptism that was promised only to the apostles made them infallible in their teaching and practice, guided them into all the truth, and brought to their remembrance all that Christ had said to them. (John 14:26; 16:13). There are only two cases of Holy Spirit baptism in the divine record: 1) The

apostles received it on Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4). 2) The house of Cornelius received it, as an exception to the rule that it was received by the apostles only. (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17). If one had the baptism of the Holy Spirit today, he would not need the New Testament to preach. (*The apostles preached without a written New Testament*).

If one had the baptism of the Holy Spirit today, he should remember all that Christ said without having to read it in the New Testament. (*It is inconsistent to claim Holy Spirit baptism and then have to read from the New Testament what Jesus said. If one had the baptism of the Holy Spirit today, he could not make a mistake in his teaching or preaching* (John 14:26;16:13). I have personally heard them preach while claiming to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and then cite a wrong reference in the Scriptures or misquote a passage. How could they do this, if they are baptized in the Holy Spirit? This is unmistakable evidence that they have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

CLAIM TO PERFORM MIRACLES TODAY

Through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals claim to be able to perform miracles of healing today. The baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to perform *all manner* of miracles. On the day of Pentecost the Jews from fifteen or sixteen different nations heard the apostles speak in their own tongues (languages) (Acts 2:4-12). The apostles healed the sick. (Acts 5:12-16). The apostles could raise the dead. (Acts 9:32-42; 20:8-10). These were the signs (credentials) of an apostle. (2 Cor. 12:12).

Those who claim to work miracles today cannot do all the apostles could do. (The truth is that they cannot perform any of the signs that the apostles could). The same men that Jesus empowered to heal the sick could also drink deadly poison, take up serpents (and not be harmed by it), and raise the dead etc. (Mark 16:17-20). Since those who claim to work miracles cannot do all these signs, that is undeniable evidence that their claims are false.

To claim to work miracles today is rooted in a misconception of the purpose of miracles. Miracles were never performed in the first century by the apostles, and those on whom they laid hands and imparted the gifts, except for the purpose of confirming the word. The New Testament had not been written to use as confirmation, so the leaders of the church were empowered with miraculous signs to confirm that they were messengers of God and that their message was divine. (Heb. 2:3,4; John 20:30,31). Even the apostles did not perform miracles when it did not serve that purpose. Paul did not heal Epaphroditus when he was sick "nigh unto death." (Philippians 2:25-27). He left Trophimus sick at Miletus. (2 Tim. 4:20). Instead of healing Timothy of a stomach ailment, he instructed him to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. (1 Tim. 5:23). The apostles performed miracles *only* when it confirmed their message.

God's revelation is now full and complete. (Jude 3; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17). It carries its own confirmation. (Gal. 1:6-12). These confirmatory signs were for the purpose of producing faith in Christ as the Son of God. (John 20:30, 31). Miraculous signs are no longer needed for this purpose. If you are sick and need a doctor, call the doctor! Jesus advised the sick to call a doctor. (Matt.

9:12). Paul advised Timothy to take medicine for his sickness (1 Tim. 5:23). So if you are seriously sick, see a doctor and pray for natural healing. God still heals, but through natural law (*not contrary to, or apart from, natural law.*)

One of the most common claims of Pentecostals today is to speak in tongues. But Paul said tongues were to cease when revelation was completed. (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Among the three representative supernatural gifts mentioned by Paul here is *tongues*. That which was perfect which was to come was perfect (complete) revelation. IT HAS COME! (Jude 3; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17), When John laid down the pen of inspiration in 96 A.D., revelation was finished. Miraculous gifts might be compared to the scaffolding used to build a house. As long as house is under construction the scaffolding is needed, but when completed the scaffolding removed. Miraculous gifts have been removed because they are no longer needed. God's word has been revealed and confirmed.

CLAIM FEELINGS AS AUTHORITY

Pentecostals also advocate religion as a "romantic" encounter--that "the heart of man has reasons which his mind knows not of"--in making decisions in religious matters. To them truth is altogether subjective and that what you think as a result of your feelings becomes truth. With them revealed truth is not objective and does not necessarily reveal the mind of God, but feelings are the highest authority. As a result, they have regular testimonial services.

What saith the Scriptures? According to the New

Testament, the Bible is truth. (John 17:17). This truth is not subjective, that is, it does not originate in a person's mind, but from the mind of God. The Bible must be studied and obeyed. (2 Tim. 2:15; John 8:32). It is the inspired, absolute, authoritative Word of God. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 20, 21; 1 Cor. 2:9-13). Feelings can be deceptive. Jacob mourned many years feeling that Joseph was dead, while Joseph was alive in Egypt the whole time. Jacob relied on false evidence and as a result his feelings were misguided. (Gen. 37).

Solomon said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov. 14:12). The same wise man said, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." (Prov. 28:26). When objective truth, the word of God, instructs us what to do, and our spirits confirm that we have done what God's word says, how can you have stronger confirmation than that? (See Rom. 8:16,17). The Holy Spirit bears his witness through the written word *and the written word only*.

As to testimonies, the examples of conversion in the book of Acts are inspired testimonies. The Holy Spirit placed his stamp of approval on them twice--the preacher in each case was guided directly by the Holy Spirit and Luke, who recorded them, was guided by the Holy Spirit. If my conversion in its essentials coincides with those examples, what greater assurance do I need that I am saved or have the approval of God in my Christian life? Good feelings are the result of knowing that you have followed divine and inspired testimony. (Acts 8:39; 16:34).

CONCLUSION

Error of any stripe will not save. Only the truth of

God's word saves. (John 8:32). We appeal to you, dear reader, if you are in error, throw off its shackles and return to the pristine light of God's word, *and God's word only.*

FACTS CONCERNING CHURCHES OF CHRIST

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

In Old Testament times, Christ's church existed only in promise and prophecy, the Old Testament prophets foretelling that when Christ came He would establish His Church (Isa. 2:2-4; Micah. 4:1-4).

John the Immerser, the twelve apostles and the seventy sent out under the limited commission, preached "the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 10:7; Lk. 10:9). In Matt. 16:18 Jesus said, "I will build (future tense) my church." In the next verse He promised to give Peter the "keys of the kingdom." The terms "church" and "kingdom" are here used interchangeably to refer to the same thing. In A.D. 32, Jesus told some that they would live to see the kingdom, or church, established (Mk. 9:1).

Christ's church was established on Pentecost day, A.D. 33, when the power came with the Spirit (Acts 1:8) and the kingdom with power (Mk. 9:1), as we read in Acts 2. Its members were called "Christians first at Antioch" (Acts 11:26). The Lord gave them this name (Isa. 62:2). Jesus called it "MY church" (Matt. 16:18), hence it is the church of Christ. It belongs to Him by virtue of His being the founder and purchaser (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). A plurality of congregations is called "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). It is sinful to wear human names in religion. (1 Cor. 1:12,13). The church is

the bride of Christ and as a faithful bride must wear the name of her husband (Eph. 5:22-32).

“The word of God is the seed of the kingdom” (Matt. 13:19; Lk. 8:11). Each seed produces after its kind (Gen. 1:11,12). This seed produced Christians when planted by the apostles in the first century. If we plant the same seed today, we will have the same product. The germ of life is in the seed. If there were not a Christian on earth today, you might become one by believing, repenting and being baptized as they did under the preaching of the apostles (Acts 2:36-47). If there were not a church of Christ on earth, we might start one immediately by obeying the same gospel which the apostles preached.

Churches of Christ are neither Catholic nor Protestant in the denominational sense. They are undenominational in nature having no human creed, no universal organization and no earthly headquarters. Each congregation is an independent unit of Christians with no denominational affiliation whatsoever, taking the New Testament as its sole and only guide of faith and practice and trying in this twentieth century to reproduce the church of the first century.

Are you tired of conflicting doctrines and warring sects, of the creeds, names and churches of men? If so, why not take the New Testament as your only guide: believe it, obey it and become and be just a Christian?

AIM OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Churches of Christ are identified with the great movement to restore the New Testament church. They aim to do this in the following ways:

By Wearing A New Testament Name

“The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16).

“The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” (Acts 11:26).

“Feed the church of the Lord, which he purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

By Believing A New Testament Creed

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God...Upon this rock (this truth) I will build my church.” (Matt. 16:16,18)

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 3:11).

“These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” (Jno. 20:31).

By Obeying A New Testament Baptism

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mk. 16:16).

“We are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4).

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” (Acts 2:38).

By Observing A New Testament Communion

“Upon the first day of the week when the disciples were gathered together to break bread.” (Acts 20:7).

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.” (I Cor. 11:26)

"Let every man examine himself." (1 Cor. 11:28).

By Practicing A New Testament Stewardship

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." (1 Cor. 16:2).

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give." (II Cor. 9:7).

By Living A New Testament Life

"They continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer." (Acts 2:42).

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Rev. 2:10).

OUR PLEA--The unity of all those who believe in Christ.

OUR PURPOSE—"That the world may believe."

OUR PLAN—The restoration of the New Testament Church.

WHY NO INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC

When attending services of churches of Christ for the first time, no one can fail to observe the absence of mechanical instruments of music. As a result, many think it is strange and often make inquiries. We stand ready always to give a reason for our practices. (1 Pet. 3:15) INSTRUMENTS are not used for the reasons that many suppose.

1. Not Simply To Be Different

There is no virtue in merely being different. Such does not prove one to be right. Mechanical instruments are not rejected because we like to be different, for it would be pleasant to go along with, and be like others. They are rejected because of a deep conviction based upon God's word.

II. Not the Purpose of Worship To Entertain

Instrumental music may please and attract the crowd, but that is far from the purpose of true worship. We are striving to please God and not man in worship; if we seek to please men, we are not servants of Christ (Gal. 1:10). God desires true worship (John 4:24).

III. Not To Follow Old Testament Pattern

Because David or other Old Testament characters used instrumental music in their worship does not prove that we can use such in the Christian dispensation with God's approval. Many things practiced in the Jewish age are admitted by all to have been excluded from New Testament worship, such as burning incense, animal sacrifices, etc. The same rule that excludes one of them excludes all including instrumental music in worship, for the Old Covenant has given way to the New (Eph. 2:11-19; Col. 2:14).

IV. Not Our Right To Provide for God's House

Man has a right to use anything he desires, not morally wrong, in his own house, but he has no right to put something in another's man's house without his consent. The church is God's house (1 Tim. 3:15), and Christ is the head of this house (Eph. 1:22,23; Heb. 3:5,6). Therefore, we have no right to put anything in the

church without His instruction, and He has not given his consent for instrumental music in worship.

V. Not Authorized in the New Testament

In the New Testament the kind of music to be used in worship is specified, without exception, as singing (vocal music) and this excludes every other kind (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). To contend that we are authorized to have anything not specifically condemned is to open the flood-gates for many things--ham on the Lord's table, burning incense, counting beads, offering of animal sacrifices, etc. for it nowhere says thou shalt not do these--recognized by nearly all to be wrong. We must abide by what the New Testament SAYS instead of what it does NOT say. We must be silent where the Bible is silent (II John 9-11; 1 Pet. 4:11).

IF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS A DENOMINATION, WHY?

With unrelenting frequency, it is asserted by denominationalists that the church of Christ is a denomination. It is often phrased in this way, "They say they are not a denomination, but they are anyway." Because of these unfounded assertions, we would like to ask: **If the church of Christ is a denomination WHY?**

We are not using the expression "church of Christ" in a denominational sense to refer to the church of Christ denomination, but to refer to the church belonging to Christ—the church Christ founded (Matt. 16:18), purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28), and of which He is the head (Eph. 1:22,23). We are referring to Christ's

spiritual body, which is also called "the church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2) and "the church of the firstborn (firstborn ones)" (Heb. 12:23).

We are referring to that church which had its beginning at Jerusalem on the Pentecost of Acts 2. Was that church a denomination? If so, what was its denominational name? Since all will admit that it was not a denomination (none of the denominations were started that early), if a church today is just like that one in name, doctrine, organization, worship, and practice, would it be a denomination? If so, WHY? Remember Christ established His through His inspired apostles, and they were members of it. Were the apostles members of denominational bodies? If so, to what denomination did Peter, Paul, John, James, the 3,000 of Acts 2, Cornelius, the eunuch, Lydia, the jailor and the Corinthians belong? Were they members of the body of Christ? If they were not members of any denomination, why cannot we be the same today?

What did the 3,000, the eunuch, Saul, Cornelius, Lydia, *et al.*, do to become members? They all believed, repented and were baptized (Mk. 16:15,16; Acts 2:36-41; 8:26-39; 9:1-17; 10:1-48; 16:30-34; Rom. 6:3,4; Gal. 3:26,27). If we do the same things they did, of what church would we be a member? Would we not be exactly what they were? After several became what they were, would it be possible for them to continue to meet together and worship according to the New Testament without "joining" any denomination? If they did, what denomination would they constitute? Would not they be simple Christians and members of the body of Christ? That is exactly what the church of Christ is—a group of baptized, penitent believers who have refused to join any

denomination, because the New Testament condemns division and denominationalism is division (John 17:20,21; 1 Cor. 1:10-13).

What makes the church of Christ a denomination, if it is, as many affirm? Does it have a denominational name? Will anyone be so bold as to say the designations "church of Christ" and "church of God", etc. are denominational names? These are used by inspired writers. (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:22).

Does the church of Christ have a denominational creed? They reject every creed but the Bible and contend that it is all-sufficient. (Gal. 1:8,9; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; 2 Pet. 1:3) Is it denominational to have the Bible only as a rule of faith and practice?

Does the church of Christ have a denominational organization? Each congregation is an independent unit with a plurality of elders and deacons. (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; Phil. 1:1) It has no earthly headquarters or denominational machinery which joins all congregations together in a denomination.

Does the church of Christ have denominational worship? They worship as the New Testament requires—in spirit and in truth. (Jno. 4:24) Worship IN TRUTH requires authority from God's Word for everything done in worship. (Jno. 17:17). The New Testament authorizes the teaching of the apostles doctrine, giving, the Lord's supper, praying and singing. (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; Eph. 5:19) Were the early Christians denominational in so worshipping? If we worship as they did, would it be denominational?

Does the church of Christ have a denominational origin? According to the Bible, Christ established His church in A.D. 33 in Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2-4; Mark 9:1;

Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:1-47) Many assert that Alexander Campbell started it in 1827. A Baptist historian says,

“As early as 1695, . . . there were people in North Carolina who were so zealous for baptism (as some of them expected salvation by it) that one preacher confessed, if he could get any willing to be baptized, that he would baptize them by fire-light, for fear they should get out of the notion of it before morning . . . their doctrine and practice seem to have been substantially the same that are now held by the Campbellites.” (J.H. Spencer, **History of Kentucky Baptist**, pp. 97, 98).

That was one hundred and thirty-two years before the date often cited as the time Campbell started the church of Christ. They had simply read and studied themselves into the truth. Were they “Campbellites” before Campbell was born?

In 1792 a Methodist preacher, James O'Kelley, in company with Thomas Coke, Frances Ashbury and others in Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia rejected all creeds but the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice, used the name “Christian” only and recognizing Christ as the only head of the church, rejected the episcopal form of church government and resolved themselves into a simple church of Christ in 1794. This was fifteen years before Campbell came to America and while he was still in the Presbyterian church. Were they “Campbellites” before they ever heard of Campbell?

In 1800 Dr. Abner Jones (a physician and a Baptist) started doing the same thing in Vermont. In 1801 Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian preacher, led a movement in Kentucky to restore the New Testament church and primitive Christianity. In **“The Last Will and Testament**

of the **Springfield Presbytery**" they rejected everything in religion not authorized by the New Testament. This was eight years before Campbell came to America and while he was still in the Presbyterian church. Were they "Campbellites?"

The Rocky Springs church of Christ (formerly Antioch) which still meets near Bridgeport, Ala. was organized about 1807. Letters have been preserved and affidavits are on file in the Jackson County, Ala. Probate Judge's office that prove the existence of this congregation two years before Campbell came to America and was still in the Presbyterian Church.

To show the absurdity of the assertions that Campbell founded the church of Christ, we quote a few extracts from his writings.

"We have no system of our own, nor of others, to substitute in lieu of the reigning systems. We only aim at substituting the New Testament in lieu of every creed in existence, whether Mahometan, pagan, Jewish or sectarian. We wish to call Christians to consider that Jesus Christ has made them kings and priests to God. We neither advocate Calvinism, Arminianism, Arianism, Socinianism, Trinitarianism, Unitarianism, Deism, or Sectarianism, but **New Testamentism**. We wish, cordially wish, to take the New Testament out of the abuses of the clergy and put it into the hands of the people." (Christian Baptist, Vol. 1, p. 32, Burnett's Edition)

... I have no idea of adding to the catalogue of new sects. This game has been played too long. I labor to see sectarianism abolished and all Christians of every name united upon the one foundation on which the apostolic church was founded." (Christian Baptist, Vol. 111, p. 217)

While in New Orleans on one of his preaching tours, the newspapers, in giving him several complimentary notices announcing his preaching appointments referred to him as "the founder of the denomination." The following excerpt was courteously addressed to the editors of the **Commercial Bulletin**:

"You have done me, gentleman, too much honor in saying that I am the "founder" of the denomination, quite numerous and respected in many portions of the West, technically known as "Christians" but more commonly as "Campbellites."

I have always repudiated all human heads and human names for the people of the Lord, and shall feel thankful if you will correct the erroneous impression which your article may have made in thus representing me as the founder of a religious denomination."

SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

You should know that the church was--

Built and paid for by Jesus Christ. Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28.

Built on Christ as the only foundation. I Cor. 3:11.

Not built upon Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or any other man. I Cor. 1:12,13.

Fully established in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after Christ arose from the dead. Isaiah 2:2,3; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Mk. 9:1; Acts 2nd chapter.

That in the New Testament, the church is called--

The temple of God. I Cor. 3:16.

The bride of Christ. Ephesians 5:22-33.

The body of Christ. Colossians 1:24; Eph. 1:22,23.

The Kingdom of God's Son. Col. 1:13.

The house of God. 1 Timothy 3:15.

The church. Eph. 3:10.

The church of God. I Cor. 1:2.

The church of the firstborn. Hebrews 12:23.

The church of the Lord. Acts 20:28.

The churches of Christ. Romans 16:16.

That members of the church are called--

Members. I Cor. 12:27.

Disciples. Acts 6:1.

Believers. Acts 5:14; II Cor. 6:15.

Saints. Acts 9:13; Rom. 1:7; Phil. 1:1.

Priests. I Pet 2:9; Rev. 1:6.

Children of God. I John 3:1,2; Rom. 8:16,17.

Christians. Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16.

That the three permanent classes of servants in the church are--

Elders, who are bishops, overseers or pastors. Their duty is to oversee and feed the flock. Acts 20:28; I Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Pet. 5:1-4.

Deacons to serve the church. Acts 6:1-6; I Tim 3:8-13.

Evangelists to teach and preach God's word. For their work and qualifications, see Eph. 4:11; books of 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus.

You should know that man did not--

Purpose the church. Eph. 3:10,11.

Purchase the church. Acts. 20:28.

Build the church. Matt. 16:18.

Name its people. Acts 11:26; Isa. 62:2.

Add to the church. Acts 2:47.

Give the church its doctrine. II John 9-11; Gal. 1:11.

That the church and body of Christ are--

The same. Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18,24.

You should know that Christ Himself--

Loved the church. Eph.. 5:25.

Shed His blood for the church. Acts 20:28.

Established the church. Matt. 16:18.

Adds the saved to the church. Acts 2:47.

Is the head of church. Eph. 5:23; 1:22,23; Col. 1:18.

Will save the faithful in the church. Eph. 5:27.

You should know that in the church are--

Redemption. Eph. 1:7.

Forgiveness of sins. Col. 1:13,14.

Sanctification. Eph. 5:25.

Reconciliation. Eph. 2:16; II Cor. 5:18.

All Spiritual blessings. Eph. 1:3.

That in order to get into the church one must--

Believe in Christ. Jno. 8:24; Acts 16:31; Heb. 11:6.

Repent of past sins. Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19;
17:30.

Confess faith in Christ. Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37,38.

Be baptized Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:48;
22:16; I Peter 3:21; Rom. 6:3,4.

You should know that in New Testament times there was:

One family of God. Eph. 3:15.

One Kingdom of Christ. Col. 1:13,14.

One body of Christ. Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:4.

One bride of Christ. Rom. 7:1-7; Eph. 5:22-27.

One church of Christ. Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22,23; 4:4.

**You should know that scriptural baptism requires--
Water. Acts 10:47.**

Much water. John 3:23.

Going to water. Acts 8:36; Matt. 3:5,6.

Going into water. Acts 8:38.

A burial in water. Rom. 6:3,5; Col. 2:12.

A planting. Rom. 6:5.

A washing. Acts 22:16.

A birth. John 3:5.

A raising out of water. Col. 2:12.

A coming out of water. Acts 8:39.

You should know that in baptism--

Sins are washed away. Acts 22:16.

You are saved from sins. I Peter 3:21; Mk. 16:16.

You have remission of sins. Acts 2:38.

You get into Christ. Gal. 3:27.

You get into the Church. Acts 2:37-47.

You put on Christ. Gal. 3:27.

You obey Christ. Acts. 10:48; II Thess. 1:6-9.

You walk in newness of life. Rom. 6:3-5.

You should know that the faithful church--

Must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:23,24.

Must meet upon the first day of the week. Acts 20:7;
Heb. 10:25.

Must sing (not play). Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.

Must pray. Acts 2:42; I Tim. 2:1,2.

Must edify one another. I Cor. 14:15-27.

Must take the Lord's Supper on the first day of the
week. Acts 20:7; Heb. 10:25,26; I Cor. 11:20-34.

Must give of their means. I Cor. 16:1,2; II Cor. 9:6,7.

You should know that the work of the church is--

Preaching the gospel. Mk. 16:15,16; Rom. 10:13-15;
I Tim. 3:15.

Edifying itself. Col. 2:6,7; I Cor. 14:12; Eph. 4:11,12.

Helping those in need. Gal. 6:10 James 1:27.

You should know that the same church today--

Is in your community; is not a denomination in any
sense; is faithful to God's word; is ONE in fact and
teaching; gains members by obedience to the gospel;
has the same freedom from human powers; has the
same names for its members; and has the same names
for the church.

**You should know that you can know you are a
member--**

By your spirit's testifying that you have obeyed the
testimony of the Holy Spirit through the word. Rom.
8:16,17.

By following the examples of conversion in the book
of Acts.

—ANONYMOUS