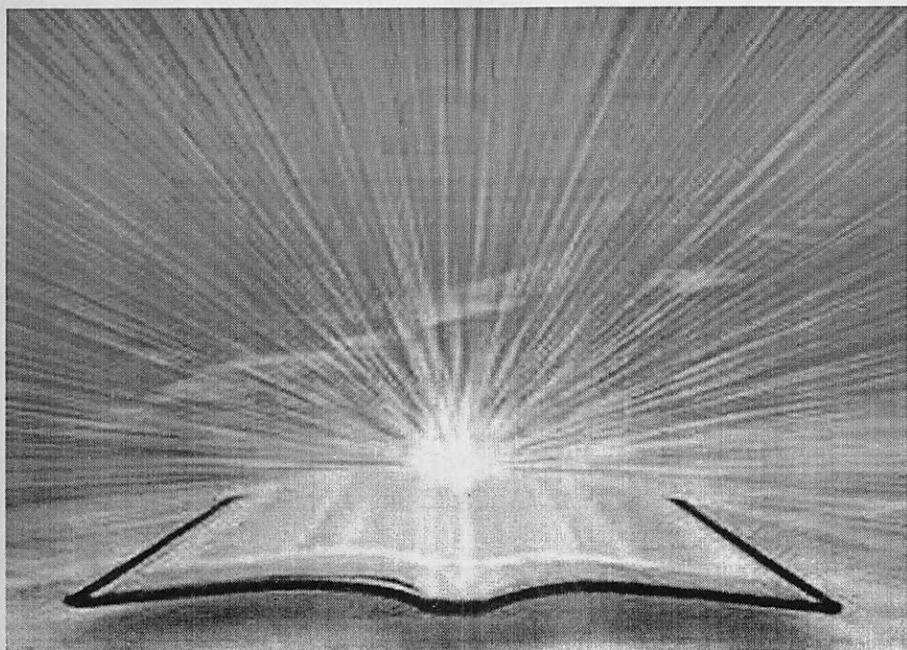


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THE BIBLE TEACHER



Our Plea

Let the Truth Prevail

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 20:20, 21).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

“Church” Is “Ekklesia”

THE ENGLISH WORD CHURCH, as it appears in the English Bible, instead of the Greek word *Ekklesia*, which Christ, in fact, had used when He had promised to build or establish it, as we read in Matthew 16:18, does not convey the same meaning. The word church has been derived from the Latin word “*chirche*”, which was commonly used for a Pagan house or place of worship, when John Wycliff, in the year 1380-84, had first translated the Bible into the English language. In his translation Wycliff anglicized the Latin word “*chirche*” to church. On the other hand, “*ekklesia*”, which is the correct word for the church, and which is used in the Greek New Testament wherever the word church appears in the English Bible, does not mean “a house or a place of worship”, But *ekklesia* means “an assembly of people, or a body of people.”



Thus, the apostle Peter, speaking of the church said, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9,10). Church, therefore, in strict biblical terms means: “called out people of God”, called out of the world, or the body of the people that God has called out of the world. Speaking of His followers, therefore, Christ said, “They are not of the world.” (John 17:16). What I am trying to say is that

we need to think *ekklesia* whenever we read or speak of the church, instead of a building in which the church assembles. The church of the Bible is not a building made of bricks and mortar, but it is the called out people of God whom He has purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28).

This, in fact, shows how a translator sometimes would translate a certain word in a sense which would be understood in its most common current usage. Just as, today, if someone wants to learn the meaning of the word "baptism" from a dictionary, it may say something like this: "A Christian sacrament, marked by ritual use of water, or a Christian ceremony in which a few drops of water are sprinkled or poured." Yet, the Bible says very differently and clearly that baptism is a burial in water and coming out of water. (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; Acts 8:36-38). *Baptisma*, the Greek word, from which the anglicized word "baptism" is derived, means burial and not sprinkling or pouring.

John Wycliff, who made the first English translation of the Bible, lived in a time when the word "*chirche*" was most commonly used in the religious world for a place of worship. Since Christians came together in a place on the first day of the week for worship (1 Corinthians 11:17, 18; Acts 20:7), Wycliff used the word church, anglicizing the Latin word *chirche*, for "the called out body of Christians." A dictionary, therefore, today describes or defines "church" as a building where Christians come together for worship, or as a place of worship.

As a result, people all over the world think and believe today that the church is a religious building, because of the inaccurate translation of the word "*ekklesia*." On the other hand, how wonderful would it have been if the word *ekklesia* had been left as it was, untranslated, as was done with the Greek word *baptisma*, being rendered in transliteration, baptism. Just to make a point, the translators of the Bible in Urdu and Hindi languages, which are widely spoken in India and Pakistan, have done rightly so, with both Greek words *ekklesia* and *baptisma*, rendering them as *Kalisia* and *Baptisma*.

Christ, according to the Bible, is not only the builder of the church, but He is also the head of the church, which is His spiritual body, and which He has purchased with His own blood. (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23; Acts 20:28). Let us think of the *ekklesia* of Christ, when we read or speak of the church of Christ and it will help us to understand how valuable and important is the church of Christ.

THE ERRING CHRISTIAN

J.C. Choate



IT IS WONDERFUL TO know that God has provided man, the alien sinner, with a way of escape. But sometimes, after a soul has obeyed the first principles of the gospel, there is a falling away. Hence, we refer to such an individual as being an erring Christian, or erring child of God.

Someone is ready to ask: "If a person falls from grace is there any chance of restoring him?" "What must a person do in order to return to his first love?" "Can a person be eternally saved if he remains in that state until he dies?" These questions, and many others, have been asked time and time again, but they are very simple, for the Bible readily answers them.

It is sad to see a person drift away from God, but it is even sadder to see that soul remain in such a condition. Thus, it should be understood that if one strays away from the fold it is possible for him to return, even as the prodigal son returned to his father in the long ago. (LK. 15). Of course, this takes faith in God's will and humility to carry it out.

As suggested, one must have faith in God's word in order to return to his first love. In other words, one must acknowledge God's plan for the erring Christian and follow it step by step. Such would mean that one would have to repent of his sins, humbly confess his faults, and pray that God might have mercy and forgive him. James says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16). Then in Acts 8 we have an example of where Simon had sinned and Peter asked him to do the very thing which James submits. According to the scriptures he was forgiven inasmuch as he returned to the will of God.

Yes, God has promised to forgive every erring one who will return. But be it known, that God has nowhere, and at no time, promised to forgive those who refuse to meet his terms of pardon. Such people will not only be lost, but will at the same time, drag others down to hell with them. What a terrible way to depart from this world.

Who must confess his faults? Why, everyone who has sinned. But whether a person should make a public confession or not all

depends on his sin. Hence, keep this in mind: A person's confession should be made just as public as his sin. Therefore, if an individual has sinned in his heart he should repent and ask God to forgive him. But if a person has sinned against his neighbor he should take it to that neighbor and scripturally settle it. On the other hand, if a child of God has so sinned that the community knows about it, and that sin has brought shame and disgrace on the Lord's name and the Lord's people (and it certainly has if the sin is of a public nature, that soul should take the matter before the church, and with a penitent spirit, confess his faults, and ask the congregation, and God to forgive him. Now that's the Bible way.

Some brethren do not attend the assemblies. Still others attend but will not partake of the Lord's Supper. Well, this, and other things, is an indication that such people need to go before the church and confess their faults. One cannot scripturally serve God until all matters have been straightened out with him.

Of course, there are always those who feel that they are too good to go before a congregation and confess their faults. Some have too much pride; still others love the world too much. But when a person fails to do God's will it means condemnation.

All should want to become Christians and remain Christians. But if one has drifted away for one reason or another, he should return and resolve to ever be true to the Saviour; for Peter has said: "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Pet. 2:21,22).

THE GREATNESS OF GOD

Maxie B. Boren

IT IS BEYOND ANYONE'S capabilities to adequately verbalize how great God is! After all, God spoke heaven and earth into existence! *"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth"* (Psalm 33:6). *"Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast"* (verses 8,9). David declared in praise to God, *"Before the mountains*

were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God" (Psalm 90:2)! The apostle Paul spoke of the *"living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is"* (Acts 14:15).

Try your very best to plumb the depths of God's creative genius and power. Reflect on the myriad forms of life and contemplate One so wise and powerful as not only to "think up" all the creatures we know to exist, but also to design them with infinite wisdom, and then to actually bring them into existence. It is mind-boggling! And consider further the vastness of the cosmos—it is staggering in its magnitude! God has placed us in a universe so immense that distances are measured in thousands upon thousands of "light years" (remember that light travels at 186,000 miles per second!). So when frail humanity reflects upon the enormity of it all, and considers the omniscience and omnipotence of the Creator, no wonder there is failure to magnify Him fully.

Fathoming to some extent His *"everlasting power and divinity"* (Romans 1:20), yet we fall short in our ability to enunciate the eternal attributes of Him who upholds *"all things by the word of His power"* (Hebrews 1:3). Quite honestly, it just can't be done. I feel so inept in my preaching to convey to others how truly great God really is! But I know He deserves our praise, and *"the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever and ever"* (Ephesians 3:21).

The Lion and the Lamb

Hugo McCord

FROM THE ISLAND OF Patmos the apostle John *"in the Spirit"* ascended into heaven, and saw in God's right hand a scroll *"sealed tightly with seven seals"* (Revelation 1:9; 4:1-2; 5:1). When no one *"could open the scroll,"* John *"wept much"* (Revelation 5:3-4). One of the 24 elders said to him, *"Do not weep. Look! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the descendant of David, has conquered! He can break the seals and open the scroll"* (Revelation 5:5).

However, the one who took the scroll from God's hand was not a Lion, but a Lamb (Revelation 5:6-10). What is the explanation?

All 66 Bible books are interlocked. The history of the Lion and Lamb pattern begins in Genesis. About 1706 B.C., the patriarch Jacob prophesied about one of his sons: *"Judah will stoop and*

crouch as a lion, and as a lion, who will arouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until the Peacemaker comes, and him the peoples will obey" (Genesis 49:9,10).

Apparently because the lion is the king of the jungle, God planned that a descendant of Judah would be given a king's scepter of *"all authority in heaven and on the earth,"* and, as a lawgiver, the King would issue *"the law of the Spirit of life,"* the words of which will *"judge"* all people *"in the last day"* (cf. Matthew 28:18; Romans 8:2; John 12:48).

Isaiah added to Jacob's prophecy that the coming lion-like King would be a direct descendant of King David: *"And a throne will be established in loving kindness, and one will sit thereon in truth, in the tent of David, judging, and seeking justice, and swift to do righteousness"* (16:5). *"Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and on his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this"* (9:7).

Other prophets spoke of the coming monarch as a second *"David"* (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:24; Hosea 3:5). But we are shocked to read that Jacob's prophecy of a lion-like king among his descendants (Genesis 49:9-10) would be: *"like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep is silent before his shearers, so he will not open his mouth"* (Isaiah 53:7).

How could a king sitting *"upon the throne of David"* (Isaiah 9:7) be *"like a lamb"*? Or be called a *"servant of rulers"* (Isaiah 49:7)? Seven times Isaiah called him a *"servant"* (42:1; 49:5, 6, 7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11). As a lion and a lamb are opposites, so are a king and a servant.

Indeed, Jesus, *"the son of David"* (Matthew 1:1; 9:27), was a servant: *"The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve"* (Matthew 20:28). Everywhere, He *"went about doing good"* (Acts 10:38). When *"Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with fever,"* Jesus *"went to her, took her hand, and raised her up. The fever left her"* (Mark 1:30-31). On another occasion, *"Jesus took a towel and wrapped it around himself. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to dry them with the towel"* (John 13:4,5).

Jesus' purpose in coming to the earth was to be *"the offering for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world"* (1 John 2:2). He volunteered his life as a *"ransom"* (Matthew 20:28). A

ransom for the release from the guilt of sin is impossible by *"perishable things, as silver and gold"* (1 Peter 1:18). Ours was a debt we could not pay. When John the immerser *"saw Jesus coming"* he exclaimed, *"Look! The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29).

The blood of the Lamb has *"purchased for God men of every tribe and language and people and nation"* (Revelation 5:9). The Lord adds to the church day by day every saved sinner (Acts 2:47, KJV; Acts 5:11), and so it can be said that *"he bought"* the church *"with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). Baptism puts a sinner *"into Christ"* (Galatians 3:27), and *"in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

While the Lamb was on the earth, He was not a king (John 6:15). But after He had given *"his life as a ransom"* (Matthew 20:28), then He *"conquered him who had the power of death, that is, the devil"* (Hebrews 2:14), and so He *"led captivity captive"* (Ephesians 4:8), and *"stripped rulers and authorities, boldly exposing them in his triumph"* (Colossians 2:15). He had entered *"the house of the strong man"* and had bound him (Matthew 12:29). In so doing, He *"indeed abolished death, and has brought to light life and immortality through the gospel"* (2 Timothy 1:10).

On His return to heaven, having been raised from the dead to be *"set"* on David's throne (Acts 2:30), He became the *"King of kings and Lord of lords"* (Revelation 17:14) on Pentecost Day. (Acts 2:1-47). He *"must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death"* (1 Corinthians 15:25,26). *"Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God"* (1 Corinthians 15:24). Thanks be *"to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 15:57).

How did Jesus become a lion, a conquering king? Only by first being a submissive lamb. *"Although he was a Son, he learned obedience from the things which he suffered, and after he was made complete, he became the cause of eternal salvation to all who are obeying him"* (Hebrews 5:8,9). His path to the crown was preceded by his path to the cross. The way to the top began down below. Like *"a lamb"*, He *"humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross"* (Isaiah 53:7; Philippians 2:8). He won by losing. He gained by giving up.

When the 24 elders and four living creatures in heaven saw the Lamb who was able to open the scroll, they combined their voices in a new song of praise to him: *"You are worthy to take the scroll*

and to open its seals, because you were murdered, and with your blood you purchased for God men of every tribe and language and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests for our God, and they reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9,10).

The Passing of the Baton

Byron Nichols

VAST NUMBERS OF FOLKS all over the globe have become captivated by the thrills and spills of sporting events, and by the accompanying jubilation of victory or the almost unbearable agony of defeat.

Races of most any kind are particularly popular sporting events. Whether it is a race involving humans, animals, or vehicles, there is lots of excitement surrounding the competition as the contestants jockey back and forth throughout the course of the race, with the greatest excitement usually being at the last part when one of the competitors manages to finish ahead of the others.

The New Testament at times describes the spiritual adventure of the individual Christian as a race. It seems that the apostle Paul, more commonly than the other inspired writers, may have employed the similarities of living the life of a devoted disciple of Christ and those of an athlete competing in a race. For example, he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:24, *"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it."* He wrote in the same fashion in Philippians 2:16, *"... holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."*

There are many things that could be said about how the successful Christian will have duplicated several kinds of activities and efforts that are common to the winning runner in an athletic race. This is both true and important, but it focuses strictly on the running of the individual Christian race. Is it possible to expand or broaden the comparison of the athletic race and the individual Christian to make application to Christianity in a wider sense? I believe that we can do that without any injustice to the Scriptures, as long as we don't get careless in doing so.

A majority of races involve individuals competing against one another. There are other races, however, that are team races, such as relay races. An example of a relay race is the 4X100 meter race. This is a team race in which the first runner runs 100 meters, carrying

a baton in his/her hand, which is then handed to a teammate who then runs the second 100 meters and passes the baton to the third team member, who then runs the third 100 meters and passes the baton to the fourth member of the team, who runs the final 100 meters. This kind of race requires more than just speed — teamwork is just as essential if the team is to be victorious.

A study of the Scriptures reveals that in spite of the fact that we race *individually*, we do not race in *isolation* from everyone else. Our race is to be witnessed by others, and if our race is victorious, we will have a favorable impact on others, even while we are running for ourselves.

As we near the completion of our race, should we not have been making preparation all along to “pass the baton” on to our family members, so that they too will continue running the race, always keeping the finish line in mind? As we live among many different families, we see many differences in the spirituality of those families. In some, the faith and perseverance is obvious from one generation to the next, but other families don’t always exhibit that continuing consecration to the Lord. Why is that? Surely at least part of the answer is because “the baton” has not been passed along in some families, while other family groups have been conscious of the ongoing necessity of every member running the race so that all will one day share the very same exhilarating victory.

We see the same things happen in congregations that we see in families. Some congregations are much more dedicated to the continual success of all of the members as they run the race, and the elderships make provision for the right kind of spiritual nourishment and exercise so that each Christian is better equipped for competing against the devil with skill and determination. This results in “the baton” being continually passed along from generation to generation, resulting in those congregations becoming stronger all along.

Just imagine what this would mean for the Lord’s church, as a whole, if all of our families and all of our congregations would understand that our race is more than just for ourselves, individually, but it is also for ALL of God’s children. The only way for the judgment day scene to be what it can and should be is for every one of us to earnestly run the race ourselves, and to determine that we will also “pass the baton” on to others.

May God bless us all with the wonderful crown of victory!

APOSTASY: Its Cause and Cure

Jerry Bates

APOSTASY HAS ALWAYS BEEN a serious problem in the Lord's church, and I suppose that it always will be a problem. Much time is spent discussing what causes it and the solutions. I do not presume to provide the final answer to that dilemma, but let me offer one consideration which I believe is often overlooked.

In pondering this question, let us consider the nation of Israel as an example. In Hebrews, chapters three and four, the writer uses the nation of Israel as a warning to the Lord's church not to revert to their former lifestyle. Christians are plainly referred to in this section, because they are called "holy brethren," and "partakers of the heavenly calling" in 3:1, and again called "brethren" in 3:12. These Christians were tempted to leave Christ and go back to keeping the Mosaic Law as their way of serving God. However, by so doing they would lose the reward they were seeking. Thus, they were urged to remember what happened to the nation of Israel.

God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage without them fighting a single battle. They had seen that, but it did not cause them to *trust* God more. In actuality the result was the opposite. They hardened their hearts, and when confronted by the walled cities of Canaan, they wanted to return to Egypt. In spite of all the great things they had seen God do, they thought He was inadequate for the challenge of Canaan. Israel suffered because of unbelief. It wasn't that they did not *believe* in the existence of God. Rather, they did not *trust* Him, and that led them to heed human voices of despair rather than listen to the voice of God. Thus, God condemned an entire generation of people to die in wilderness wanderings and never enter that land of Canaan to which they had looked for centuries.

Why was Israel unable to enter Canaan? Hebrews 3:19 said they could not enter because of *unbelief*, although 4:6 pronounces they did not enter because of *disobedience*. Unbelief or lack of trust in God is the root cause of disobedience. Israel believed mentally in God. His evidence was all around them in the cloud by day and the fire at night. But that mental assent did not translate into trust or obedience.

Israel lacked confidence in God's ability to fulfill His promises. They saw great signs of God's power, yet never developed an ability to walk by faith, not sight. They continually yearned to return to

Egypt. We have a hard time understanding why they would desire slavery. After all, we cannot even imagine wanting to return to such hardship. Hebrews 3:13 mentions the deceitfulness of sin. Sin caused Israel to forget the hardships of Egypt and to remember only the good things, the meat and vegetables to eat, and probably a permanent house in which to dwell rather than a tent.

How does this relate to our temptation to leave God and return to a life of sin? I believe that many of us never really make a commitment to serve God—especially if you, like me, were “raised in the church”. Your parents, and possibly grandparents, were Christians, and you were taught the will of God from birth. Going to church services and being baptized into Christ was just something you did as a member of your family.

However, at some point, each one of us must make a heartfelt commitment to God. The majority of the people of Israel never made that commitment. They were *born* Israelites, and believing in God was something everyone did as a member of their nation and society. However, that mental assent never made it into their hearts, because when faced with the obstacles of the walled fortresses of Canaan, they listened to human wisdom rather than the promises of God.

If we never make a commitment to God from the heart, we will do the same when faced with the obstacles of life. Christianity brings its share of temptations and afflictions, and sin offers us pleasure, if only for a short time. We need to have the wisdom and courage to look beyond the temporary and gaze at the end result of a life of faith. We must be like Moses who *“chose to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”* (Hebrews 11:25).

The people of Israel never learned to completely trust God, and thus were unable to believe God either could or would lead them to victory in Canaan. Satan is constantly trying, likewise, to destroy our confidence in God and His promises. Many do not believe that we *need* God's help or that He *will* help, thus we try to do everything on our own. Many doubt that God actually means what He says, thus we do what God forbids or we fail to do what He requires. We are constantly tempted to put our trust in people or things rather than in God. A lack of confidence in Him will likewise cause us to disobey His will.

Christians should also be constantly encouraging one another. The Hebrews were told to encourage one another daily (Hebrews 3:13). Notice the writer said to encourage one another “today”. This adds a sense of urgency and emphasizes the vital nature of

exhortation. Furthermore, we are to encourage "one another" daily. Christianity is a "one another" religion. God never intended for His followers to be lone rangers but to associate with one another, and thus exhort one another on a regular basis, even daily.

It is easy to become discouraged while following God. Virtually all of the great servants in the Old Testament had their times of discouragement. When the church in Jerusalem heard about people in Antioch being converted to Christ, they immediately sent Barnabas to them, and one purpose in going was to "encourage" them (Acts 11:19-23). We are told that one purpose of our assemblies is to encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24). Today, we have largely turned this around. **We encourage to assemble rather than assembling to encourage.**

We have seen that two ways to keep from apostatizing from God is to make a firm commitment to serve God, and then accompany that with a strong dose of constant encouragement from our fellow Christians. The Israelites failed in both respects, and thus they failed to remain true to God. May we never follow their example.

Christ in the Old Testament

Louis Rushmore

PRECURSOR AS TO WHETHER Christ can be found in the Old Testament, either by way of prophecy or physically active on earth, is the question as to the nature and eternality of Christ. Respecting the latter, which says much about the former, Jesus Christ affirmed of Himself His pre-existence to the Incarnation when He uttered, "*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am*" (John 8:58; cf. Exodus 3:14 KJV). Add to that our Lord's statement, "*And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*" (John 17:5). Christ existed before "the beginning" (Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:16; 1 Peter 1:18-20) and was coequal with God the Father (John 1:1-3, 14, 18) and the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:2). There are three, eternal, coequal Divine Persons (Matthew 28:19) Who possess the quality and essence of being God or the Godhead (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 2:9). Since Christ is a Member of the Godhead and has existed eternally, it should be of no surprise were we to discover Christ in the Old Testament through prophecy, some activities on earth prior to His

Incarnation or both.

Everywhere one looks with discernment in the Old Testament, he sees the eternality of Him best known to us as Jesus Christ. Just one specimen is the Old Testament passage the first century Jews (Matthew 2:4-6; John 7:42) and Christians today without the least hesitation invoke as prophetic as to in what city the Savior was to be born. *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"* (Micah 5:2).

In a marvelous prophecy concerning the coming Messiah, the prophet Micah described Him as being the one "whose goings forth are from old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2) With this statement in mind, it must be understood that the Lord's conception and birth into the world was not the beginning of His existence. Rather, this phrase identifies Him as already existing: He is "from everlasting." He is eternal and has no beginning or end. Furthermore, respecting Old Testament prophecies and New Testament fulfillments concerning Jesus Christ, J.J. Turner and Edward P. Myers make the observation that "many passages in the Old Testament that refer to Jehovah are found to be fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus in the New Testament. Thus, the Holy Spirit (as He inspired men to write) gives His testimony to the fact that Jesus is Deity by asserting His pre-existence in that Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament" and the Jehovah of the Old Testament is Jesus of the New Testament." For an example, compare Isaiah 40:3, "The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God"(ASV) and Matthew 3:1-3, "And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (ASV).

One does not have to merely muse as to whether Christ can be found in the Old Testament, since Jesus Christ Himself forcefully avowed that the Old Testament declared Him before His birth and subsequent earthly ministry. Following the resurrection, Jesus specifically instructed some of His disciples about this very thing. *"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures*

the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27 KJV). The primary, divine theme of all the prophets, our Lord averred, was about the Christ; the Old Testament is replete with references to Jesus Christ. "You can find Christ in every part of the Old Testament Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27). What a delight it is to meet Christ in the Old Testament Law, the types, the Psalms, and the writings of the prophets" (Wiersbe).

Of course, long before His death, burial and resurrection, at the commencement of His ministry, Jesus declared His divine Role as the anointed One, and He did this by applying an Old Testament prophecy to Himself. Entering the synagogue in Nazareth, our Lord volunteered to read Scripture, whereupon He unrolled the scroll of Isaiah to what is now 61:1,2, *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings..."* *"And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"* (Luke 4:21). Clearly, Jesus claimed to be the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Savior at the onset of His earthly ministry. One commentator remarked, "In all the Word of God there is not a page that does not testify of Him." It is generally acknowledged that there exist approximately 333 specific prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah that are completely and minutely fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

In addition to the Old Testament being filled with prophetic Scripture references to Jesus Christ, the work of the Second Person of the Godhead—Christ—is evident on earth in the Old Testament. For instance, the Angel sent ahead of the wandering Israelites (Exodus 23:20) is commonly understood to be a reference to the One we know best as Jesus Christ. "We view the 'angel' as the pro-incarnate Logos—Christ in the Old Testament. Israel's guide was the Son of God—the same Divine Person who is now conducting 'many sons unto glory,' and who is become 'the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him' (Heb 2:10; 5:9) (Spence and Exell). This same Angel or reference to Christ appears in Exodus 19:14, and the Angel speaking from the burning bush (Exodus 3:2) is a reference as well to Christ; the context of Exodus 3:2-8 identifies the Angel speaking from the burning bush as Deity. The inspired penman Luke recorded the inspired words of Stephen, which confirm that Christ was the Angel at the bush and Who gave the commandments to wandering Israel. *"This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us"* (Acts 7:38). In addition, the apostle Paul with no

less inspiration declared that Jesus Christ participated directly with wandering Israel.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

Other Old Testament passages refer to the "Angel of [“Jehovah” ASV] [“the LORD” KJV] where the reference pertains to the Second Person of the Godhead—Christ. “The first mention of this special angel is found in Genesis 15. The appearance occurs in the context of a crisis in the life of Hagar”. It was the Divine Person we know best as Christ who appeared to Hagar (Genesis 16:7-13). The “Angel of Jehovah” stayed Abraham’s hand as Abraham was about to slay Isaac (Genesis 22:11-18 ASV) and further identified Himself as Jehovah who promised blessings upon Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 22:16).

The Second Person of the Godhead is far more active in the Old Testament than many people imagine He was. It is my deep conviction that He often came to earth on missions for the First Person. These He did as the Angel of the Lord, Angel of Jehovah, My Angel or Angel of His presence. Too many just assume that the basic meaning of angel is that of a created being such as Michael or Gabriel. However, the basic meaning of angel is that of messenger or agent. The Second Person often came to earth as Messenger or Agent for the First Person.

This Angel of the Lord is portrayed in the book of Joshua, in the book of Judges and in the lives of David, Elijah and other great worthies of the Old Testament. Zechariah... The Angel of the Lord figures prominently therein. Besides this, Jehovah appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18:1) along with two angelic companions (Genesis 18:2) and declared that He would give Abraham and Sarah a son (Genesis 18:13 -14). Later in the chapter, the two angelic companions to Jehovah went to Sodom to rescue Lot’s family and to destroy the cities overcome in homosexuality; Jehovah, though, remained behind, and Abraham attempted to negotiate with Jehovah the safety of any innocents in the cities (Genesis 18:20-33). Throughout the Old Testament, though, the word “Jehovah” sometimes refers to the Father in heaven, frequently, it refers to the Second Person of the Godhead before His Incarnation.

WHEN SHOULD MY BABY BE BAPTIZED?

Charles E. Burch

WHEN ASKED BY SOME who were lost, *"What shall we do?"* the apostle Peter stated, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."* (Acts 2:38). Notice the purpose of baptism is for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, for one who is not a Christian to receive the forgiveness of sins, baptism is a must.

As we search the Scriptures, we cannot find a single command or example of infants being baptized. There are three prerequisites to baptism that an infant cannot do. He cannot **believe** (Mark 16:15,16); he cannot **repent of sins** (Acts 2:38); he cannot **confess Christ with the mouth** (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10). These points prove that baptism is not necessary for infants. Is it not strange that the Bible does not mention, or command, or illustrate a practice so widely believed and practiced in religion today? The silence of the Scriptures on the point of infant baptism speaks loudly. Infants evidently are not born in sin, or they *would be subjects for the New Testament baptism*.

Sin is personally committed. The very fact that the judgment day will be based upon the deeds each person has done disproves the theory that we inherit someone else's sin. Notice what Paul said, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:10). To the Romans he wrote, *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:12). No one will answer for another's sin, but only for his own. Again God's word says, *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son..."* (Ezekiel 18:20). The child does not inherit sins from his parents or anyone else.

Therefore, your baby is in a saved relationship with God and does not need to be baptized until he/she has reached the age of accountability. Yet it is sad that many today are being deceived, believing that they are going to heaven because they were sprinkled as infants. Please search the Scriptures, for they will judge everyone on the great Judgment Day. Jesus said, *"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" (John 12:48). No man has the right or authority to change God's Word. The Lord would have all to be saved. The apostle Peter wrote, *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). God sent His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for the sins of all who are willing to obey. If we are saved it will be on God's terms, and not on man's. Without obeying the Gospel, one is lost (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

HOW DOES THE LORD OPEN THE HEART?

Mike Benson

QUESTION: "Please explain Acts 16:14. What does the Bible mean when it says, '*...The Lord opened her [Lydia's] heart...*'? By what means did He accomplish this? Does He open our hearts in the same way today?"

The passage reads, *"Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyratira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul."* Several observations are in order. Note:

- 1. The term "heart" is used here in a figurative sense and refers to Lydia's intellect.** Scripture teaches that when a person engages his or her heart, he/she "thinks" (Matthew 9:4; Hebrews 4:12), "understands" (Matthew 13:15), "reasons" (Mark 2:6), "perceives" (John 12:40 NAS), and/or believes (Romans 10:10). Thus, when Luke, through inspiration, recorded that Lydia's heart/intellect was "opened", he simply meant that she had come to a comprehension and acceptance of Paul's message (cf. Luke 24:45; Acts 26:18); she had been receptive to the Gospel (verse 15; cf. Acts 8:6,12; Hebrews 12:1,2). Compare Ephesians 1:18, *"The eyes of your understanding (heart-NIV) being enlightened...."*
- 2. The Lord opened Lydia's intellect by means of His Truth** (Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 15:1,2; James 1:12). Truth removed all obstacles which would have prevented Lydia from accepting the good news about Jesus being the Messiah. All wrong ideas

were removed so she could believe (Jerry Moffitt, "Acts," *Moffitt's Bible Commentary—the New Testament*, Vol.1,180). Likewise, the Lord opens our hearts (Luke 8:15) through the very same agency (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14; Psalm 119:104,105,130; 19:7a) today (John 6:63; 8:31,32).

3. **Lydia's heart would have been considered closed had she refused to hear and obey.** Compare 2 Corinthians 3:15, "*But even to this day, when [the law of] Moses is read, a veil [covering-ERV] lies on their heart.* As one author notes:

The statement that the Lord opened Lydia's heart implies that previously her heart was in some way closed. It was certainly not closed by the hardness of a sinful life, or by inherited depravity; for such a supposition is forbidden by the steadfastness with which, under great temptation, she had previously clung to the worship of God. It was closed in the sense in which the pious and earnest heart of a Jewish worshiper might be closed. Every Jew, and every Jewish proselyte, was at that time so wedded to the belief that the coming Christ would establish an earthly kingdom, as to have the heart very tightly closed against the conception of a crucified Christ, whose reign as a king is purely spiritual. It was this that had caused the mass of the Jews to reject the Christ while he was still on earth and it continued to be their "stumbling block" (John 5:44; 1 Corinthians 1:23). Whether Lydia was a Jewess or a proselyte, this was "the hope of Israel in which she had been instructed, and for which she had been taught to devoutly pray; and if the natural effect of it had not been removed from her heart, she must have rejected the gospel, as did the mass of those who had been her teachers. The statement then that the Lord "opened her heart" means that he removed this mistaken conception through the Truth.

What Is "Baptism With Fire"?

Royce Frederick

JOHN, THE FORERUNNER OF Jesus, said, "*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*" (Matthew 3:11). Who is "you" in this verse, and what is the baptism with "fire"?

YOU—Jesus was talking to the Pharisees and Sadducees (3:7),

but He clearly used the word “you” in a general way to mean “people”.

1. *“I indeed baptize you with water...”* John did not baptize the Pharisees with water. *“And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him”* (Luke 7:29,30; see Matthew 21:25). So, “you” meant people in general, without telling which people.
2. *“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit...”* The New Testament tells of only two occasions of baptism with the Holy Spirit, in Acts 2 and Acts 10. These did not include the Pharisees and Sadducees. Again, “you” meant “people”.

So, like the others, *“He will baptize you with...fire”* reveals that Jesus would baptize people with fire, but it does not reveal which people.

John was not telling them who would be baptized. He was telling them who has the greatest power! John was a mere human and could only baptize with water. But Jesus, the Son of God, has the power to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire!

BAPTISM WITH FIRE—In Matthew 3:10-12, John mentions fire three times: *“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire ...He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”*.

John is not referring to the *“tongues, as of fire”* on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:3. “Baptize” means “immerse”. The apostles were baptized (immersed, overwhelmed) with the Holy Spirit, but not with fire. The *“tongues, as of fire”* sat on the head of each apostle; they were not immersed with fire that day.

Matthew 3:10 and 12 show that 3:11 is not referring to a *“trial by fire”*, as in some verses (see 1 Peter 4:12).

John was speaking of eternal punishment in fire. He was warning the Pharisees and Sadducees that the wrath (3:7) of God would come upon all who do not truly repent. Jesus often spoke about the punishment of eternal fire which awaits all who reject God and *“those who do not obey the gospel”* (2 Thessalonians 1:8; see Matthew 13:40-42, 49,50; 25:41; Mark 9:43-48; John 15:6). At the end of the

world, all people will be raised to life and judged by Jesus Christ (John 5:28,29; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10). He will cast the disobedient into the eternal lake of fire, baptizing (immersing) them in fire forever (Revelation 20:14,15). John compared it to throwing a fruitless tree and chaff into a fire (Matthew 3:10,12).

Jesus has the power to punish sin. All of us sin and deserve to be separated from God forever (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Jesus also has the power to save us through His death from our sins, and you have the power to accept His grace by being baptized into Him for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)!

GOD USES TRIBULATION TO PREPARE US FOR GREATER SERVICE

J. Lee Roberts

“I AM THE TRUE vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:1,2).

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:6,7).

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:7-11).

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word" (Psalm 119:67).

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4).

Loving God Under Trials

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James. 1:12).

"For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined"" (Psalm 66:10).

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son" (Hebrews 11:17).

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12,13).

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).

For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

CHRISTIAN UNITY

Ephesians 4: 1-6

Jess Nutter

INTRODUCTION

- A. "Unity" defined: State of being one, singleness, absence of diversity.
- B. "Christian Unity", therefore, is when "oneness", "singleness", and the "absence of diversity" are found among Christ's followers.
- C. The purpose of this lesson is to study "Unity" from the Bible perspective.

I. CHRIST BUILT BUT ONE CHURCH

- A. His promise was, "I will build MY CHURCH" (Matthew 16:18).
- B. History reveals that for many years this "oneness" continued.
- C. The interruption of this unity was predicted (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-5).
- D. One can trace the multiplication of churches throughout history. They number over 38,000 now (World Christian Encyclopedia).

II. DOES THIS DIVISION PLEASE GOD?

- A. CHRIST PRAYED FOR UNITY (John 17:20,21).
- B. Paul condemned division (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).
- C. Church commanded to guard against division (Romans 16:17; 2 John 9-11; Titus 3:10,11).
- D. Every plant, not planted by God, shall be rooted up (Matthew 15:13).

III. UNITY IS RIGHT AND DESIRABLE

- A. It is both "Good" and "Pleasant" (Psalm 133:1).
- B. It an answer to Christ's prayer (John 17:20,21).
- C. It recognizes the "One fold" of which Jesus spoke (John 10:16).
- D. All men are reconciled to God in one body (Ephesians 2:16).

IV. THE BLESSINGS OF UNITY

- A. It gives strength and stability (Matthew 12:25).
- B. It would hasten the conversion of the world (Mark 16:15,16).
- C. It would reduce infidelity (John 17:20,21).
- D. It would eliminate wasteful spending and competition.

V. CAUSES OF DIVISION

- A. Lack of respect for the Word of God (Matthew 15:1-9).
- B. Ignorance of the Word of God (Matthew 22:29; Romans 10:1-3).

- C. Prejudice [willful ignorance] (2 Peter 3:5).
- D. Desire for preeminence (3 John 1:9).
- E. These result in CREEDS, UNSCRIPTURAL NAMES AND PRACTICES which divide. (Some would be offended if called "Baptist", "Methodist", etc, but all accept "Christian".)

VI. REMEDY FOR DIVISION

- A. All speak "The same thing" (1 Corinthians 1:10).
- B. All "Walk by the same rule" (Philippians 3:16).
- C. All "Walk by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7), which comes by the "Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

CONCLUSION

The formula for unity is a simple one. Will you renounce all human creeds and "*continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine*"? (Acts 2:42).

FRAGILE: HANDLE WITH CARE

Curtis Camp

INTRODUCTION

- A. Have seen sign on glassware, etc., "Fragile: handle with care."
 - 1. Life is like that. Is fragile and needs to be handled with great care—and prayer.
- B. Bible encourages us to pray:
 - 1. Luke 18:1,"... always to pray and not to faint..."
 - 2. Matthew 14:38, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter..."
 - 3. Colossians 4:2, "Continue in prayer, and watch..."
 - 4. 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing."
- C. Some of the fragile things of life that need to be handled with prayer:

I. PHYSICAL LIFE

- A. We take our day to day life for granted, but actually it is very fragile and deserves to be handled with care and prayer.
 - 1. "Brittle thread of life"—may be snapped at any moment by auto accident, plane crash, hunting accident, heart attack, and a hundred other things. James 4:13-15

II. MARRIAGE

- A. Fragile and needs to be handled with prayer.
 - 1. Being greatly desecrated in some places.
 - a. Divorce is all too common. Fragile! Homes being broken and lives being hurt—even destroyed.

B. Must be recognized as a sacred relationship and should be entered into in a sacred and serious manner.

1. 1 Peter 3:5-7, "...husbands, dwell, honor..."

a. When members of a family sincerely pray for each other, the family relationship will be greatly strengthened.

C. Need to give notice and praise to those married fifty years and longer. Thank God for these.

III. CHILDREN

A. I would be afraid to try to rear my children without prayer.

1. They are so young, tender, and fragile. So moldable and pliable. With all the influences to which they are subjected in this day, I would hate to try to rear them without the help of the Lord. They could be broken and ruined for life.

2. Psalm 127:3, "Lo, children are a heritage..."

a. Since they are from the Lord, should I think of trying to rear them without His help?

b. Do not need rough, harsh, cruel treatment. Need the tenderest care and prayer possible. Need the inspiration of a godly example in the home and in daily life. Need a reverence and respect for God and His Word.

c. Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way..."

IV. THE SOUL

A. If physical life is fragile and needs to be handled with prayer, how much more the spiritual life and things pertaining to the soul?

1. Alien sinner, of course, is not saved by prayer, but by belief and obedience to the Gospel. Christian, however, cannot save his soul and protect it from the ravages of sin without giving much care and prayer to it.

2. 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Let him that thinketh he standeth..."

a. At close of day — afraid to pillow head without asking God's forgiveness for every sin committed that day, thank Him for every blessing He has bestowed upon me, ask Him for strength to overcome temptation, and ask Him to bless my loved ones with physical and spiritual health.

b. James 5:16, "prayer of a righteous man..."

CONCLUSION

"O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry,
Everything to God in prayer."

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