THIRD ANNUAL SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP

OCTOBER 24—25, 1998

"LESSONS FROM THESSALONIANS" To Be Held At The CHURCH OF CHRIST

HIGHWAY 144 EAST RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA PHONE: 756/4970

Saturday So	chedule	
9:00 A.M.	I Thess. 1:7 "Examples To All That Believe"	Ryan Tuten
40.00 4.35	1 Th	D 11.4.
10:00 A.M.	I Thess. 2:12 "Walk Worthy Of God"	David Atnip
11:00 A.M.	I Thess. 3:8 " Stand Fast In The Lord"	.Miles Peeples
12:00 P.M.	LUNCHProvided by the Richmond Hil	ll Congregation
1:00 P.M.	I Thess. 4:14 "Them Also Which Sleep In Jesus"	Erman Hager
2:00 P.M.	I Thess. 5:6 " Watch and Be Sober"	Dennis Morris
3:00 P.M.	II Thess. 1:12 " That The Name Of Our Lord JesusM	ay Be Glorified" Allen Wright
Sunday Sch	edule	
2:30 P.M.	II Thess. 2:11 "God Shall Send Them Strong Delusion"	.Randy Vaughn
3·30 P M	II Thess 3:6 " Withdraw Vourselves"	Ronnie Illrev



THE FOURTH ANNUAL
SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 23,24 1999
HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST
RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA HWY.144
EAST

Editor: Riley Nelson

"LESSONS FROM I & II PETER"

DEDICATION

This book, which contains the outlines and manuscripts of the Fourth Annual South-East Georgia Lectureship, is dedicated to the members of the Church of Christ meeting in Richmond Hill Georgia.

This congregation has freely given of their time, talents and monies to insure that this lectureship takes place each year. Countless hours of work and planning are needed for a successful lectureship to take place. They show a great love for the presentation of God's word by hosting this event.

Riley Nelson, Director and Editor Fourth Annual South-East Georgia Lectureship

Held at the Church of Christ Richmond Hill Georgia Highway 144 East P.O. Box 786 Richmond Hill Ga. 31324

FORWARD

The Fourth Annual South-East Georgia Lectureship deals with the books of I and II Peter. This study is one that Christians need for our day. We live in a time when it seems that, although there is no physical persecution, there is religious persecution. To stand for what is right today makes one an out cast in many circles.

It is hoped, that as we study these two books that speak of a people who were suffering persecution, we can draw comfort and courage from the words of the apostle Peter, as he encouraged those of his day.

The speakers have prepared either an outline or manuscript on their assigned topic. It is the fault of the editor that brother Nichols lesson is not in this book. I do apologize to him and to you the reader for the oversight.

It is hoped that this written record will be used by all who read it to stand for God even when others are faltering, and that an improved knowledge of these letters will help us all to be better Christians.

> Riley Nelson October, 1999

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"LOVE ONE ANOTHER"

(1 Peter 1:22) Erman G. Hager

A Brief Introduction to the Book

Author: The author Peter, whose name is affixed at the beginning of the book, leaving no doubt as to authorship. To disavow this, one might as well disavow the entire epistle.

Date: While the date cannot be definitely fixed, it is believed by most scholars to be about AD 63.

Place: Babylon (ch. 5:13). There were two known cities of Babylon, during this period; one on the Euphrates River, the other one in Egypt. The epistle is believed to have been written from Babylon on the Euphrates.

Purpose: Although written to "...the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythynia, (ch.1: 1), the epistle is universal.

The following is not intended to be an extensive outline, but simply a brief description of the book.

Chapter 1: To give assurance and comfort, during trials and persecution.

Chapter 2: As a spiritual house and royal priesthood, Christians should be obedient to both God, and governments of men, even if it means that we suffer wrongfully.

Chapter 3: Advice to Christian women and their husbands, a plea for unity and peace among brethren, and further exhortation to be willing to suffer for the cause of Christ.

Chapter4: An appeal too godly living among a land of unbelievers and persecutors, and appeal for fervent love among brethren, and encouragement to glorify God when we suffer as Christians.

Chapter 5: Exhortation to elders to faithfully execute their office, to the younger to be submissive, and encouragement to trust in God, and to cast our cares on him.

"LOVE ONE ANOTHER"

(1 Peter 1:22)

Introduction:

In Luke 22:32 our Saviour said to Peter, "...when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren". In this book, the apostle writes to a persecuted people, and recognizing the strength of love, appeals to them to have a fervent love for each other.

- I. WE ARE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER: "Seeing ye have purified your souls".
 - A. While it is God that saves, we must do our part.
 - (1) Acts 2:40 "...save yourselves..."
 - (2) Phil. 2:12 "...work out your own salvation..."
 - (3) Mark 16:16 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..."
 - B. "Purify", Gr. Hagnizo to cleanse from defilement (Vines p. 233).
 - (1) Since our hearts have been purified, we must abstain from those things which defile.
 - (2) Put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy talking (Col. 3:8). These things hinder our love for one another as well as defile the soul.
 - C. Leaving the world of sin behind, we are now a changed people.
 - (1) Dead to sin (Rom. 6:11).
 - (2) Sin no longer has dominion (Rom. 6:14).
 - (3) Must not walk after the flesh (Rom. 8:1).
- II. WE ARE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE WE HAVE OBEYED THE TRUTH, THROUGH THE SPIRIT.
 - A. The Holy Spirit is the revealer of truth (John 16:13).
 - (1) That truth has now been written down for us (John 20:31).
 - (2) The revelation of that truth is complete (II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:3).
 - B. One cannot abide in truth and refuse to love his brother.
 - (1) "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34,35).
 - (2) "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is a liar" (I John 2:9).
 - (3) "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer;..." (I John 3:15).

III. UNFEIGNED LOVE

- A. "Unfeigned" Gr. "Anupokritos" without dissimulation, or hypocrisy.
- B. Unlike that of Annias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10).
- C. Paul declared that his love for the Corinthians was unfeigned (I Cor. 6:6).
 - (1) His love for them can be seen as non-hypocritical.

- (2) He fed them with milk (I Cor. 3:2).
- (3) He thought of them as his children (I Cor. 4:15).
- D. Love that is not real is worthless; even dangerous.
 - (1) Our Lord told of the difference in real love and fake love.
 - (2) John 10:11-15 "...an hireling...seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth.
- E. Unfeigned love will manifest itself in:
 - (1) A willingness to sacrifice (Gal. 2:20).
 - (2) Patience (Rom. 15:5). "...the God of Patience..."
 - (3) Care (Phil. 2:20) "For I have no man likeminded, (Timothy) who will naturally care for your estate.
 - (4) Discipline (I Thess. 5:14; II Thess. 3:6).

IV. LOVING ONE ANOTHER IS NOT:

- A. Lying and making excuses for one another.
- B. A failure to correct one another. (Gal. 4:16; II Tim. 4:2; Eph. 4:15)

CONCLUSION

"For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3).

Hear (Rom. 10:17)

Believe (John 8:24)

Repent (Acts 17:30)

Confess (Rom. 10:10)

Baptism (Acts 2:38)

"Our Relationships and Responsibilities"

(1 Peter 2:5-10)
Keith Dixion

Introduction

- 1. Text 1 Peter 2:5-10
- 2. A Christian is not an isolationist.
 - a. We are to be a part of a spiritual community.
 - b. The Holy Spirit through Peter rules out "solitary religion."
- 3. In our text there are three relationship describes
 - a. The Christian is a living stone in a spiritual house. 1 Peter 2:5
 - b. The Christian is in a holy priesthood. 1 Peter 2:5
 - c. The Christian is a citizen of a holy nation. 1 Peter 2:9
- 4. The relationships impose responsibilities.
- 5. Let us study these relationships!

II Discussion

- A. The Christian is a living stone in a spiritual house. 1 Peter 2:5
 - 1. Jesus called the church a building. Matthew 16:18
 - 2. This building has a sure foundation. 1 Peter 2:6-7; Isaiah 28:16; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20-21
 - a. The chief cornerstone holds the building together.
 - b. It is a foundation tested by the greatest power over man, that is death . Acts 2:24; Rom 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:1-4
 - 3. This building is God's "holy temple." Eph. 2:20-22
 - a. This is a spiritual temple. Acts 17:24; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19-20
 - b. This temple is a place of beauty and worship.
 - c. The church reflects the beauty of holiness. 1 Peter 1:15-16
 - d. The church worships God in spirit and truth. John 4:23-24
- B. The Christian is in a Holy Priesthood. 1 Peter 2:5,9
 - 1. Under the Law of Moses, the priest officiated in worship.
 - 2. Christians are God's true worshipers today. John 4:23
 - 3. Worship means "acts of reverence paid to God."
 - 4. Thus Christians are to offer up spiritual sacrifices. 1 Peter 2:5
 - a. Worship demands heart involvement.
 - 1. Singing, Eph 5:19
 - 2. Giving. 2 Cor. 9:7
 - 3. The Lord's Supper. 1 Cor. 11:17-28
 - 4. Prayer. James 1:6
 - 5. God's Word is to be held in respect.
 - 6. If one believes that worship is unto God, how could he:
 - a. Willfully miss the worship service?

b. Fail to worship from the heart?

- C. The Christian is a Citizen of a Holy Nation. 1 Peter 2:9
 - 1. The word "holy" means separation for use to God.
 - 2. The Christian has been called from the world!
 - a. He has been called by the Gospel. 2 Thess. 2:13-14
 - b. He has been called "out of darkness." 1 Peter 2:9; Acts 26:18
 - c. He has been called "into God's marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9; John 8:12
 - d. He has been called unto great honor and love to be the people of God. 1 Peter 2:10; 1 John 3:1-3
 - e. He has been called to mercy. 1 Peter 2:10; Jude 21
 - 3. A Christian is dedicated to God and His service. 1 Cor. 6:19-20
 - 4. This holy nation is a monarchy with Jesus as King. 1 Tim 6:15
 - a. A citizen of this nation cannot live as he desires, but as the Lord (ruler) directs. 1 Peter 1:14
 - b. The people of the Lord are to be zealous of "good works."
 Titus 2:14

III Conclusion

- 1. The Christian does not take lightly the privilege of fellowship 1 Peter 2:17
- 2. The Christian realizes that he has responsibilities to others.
- 3. He also enjoys rights and rewards.
- 4. Would you become a part of God's house (1 Tim. 3:15), God's priesthood, God's holy nation? You may if you will!

Source: God's definition of a Christian sermon outlines from 1 Peter by Tom Holland. GA commentary on 1 Timothy. AT Robertson, Word Studies, General Epistles.

"While They Behold Your Chaste Conversation"

(1Peter 3)

Randy Vaughn

Theme: To show that by living the Christian life of submission, people who won't obey the gospel might be won by your good example.

Introduction

What kind of people do you prefer to keep company with? Do you like to be around bossy people? Or, people who fly off the handle all the time? What about someone always filled with gloom, depressing everybody in his or her wake? Of course, no one desires to be around people with these social taboos. We prefer to be around those who are friendly, encouraging, happy and helpful.

But, have you ever stopped to ask yourself if you would prefer your own company? Do you look for good behavior in others which you do not practice yourself? Jesus commanded, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). We all like to have good friends; and so, we need to be the kind of friend to others that we would want for ourselves. Solomon wrote in (Proverbs 18:24), "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly...."

Just what is a good friend? (Proverbs 17:17) says, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." A friend stays with you even when others have left you, especially in the midst of trouble. Nevertheless, a man might have good friends, or bad friends. Job frustratingly said to his wannabe friends, "...miserable comforters are ye all" (Job 16:2).

It is certainly the case that NOT everyone is the kind of friend they should be. The reason is that we all tend to be selfish. We want to receive, but we do not want to give. It is never easy for a prideful person to lower himself in humiliation, but when he does, his humility is always to his own benefit. If we will stop to think about it, the solution to many of life's problems about getting along with others, or handling difficult situations is to learn the biblical concept of "SUBMISSION." This is a very needful topic that Peter addresses in his first letter.

Submission in 1 Peter

The Apostle Peter wrote this short letter to Christians of the Dispersion, Christians who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. It is very likely that he wrote to several smaller churches in different cities of the Empire. As he wrote, the flames of persecution were just beginning to heat up for this new fledgling religion of the Nazarene. Peter wanted to show early Christians how to handle this oncoming problem they would soon face. His solution is **submission to suffering**. He calls Christians to holiness during the troubled times ahead. He points out that their suffering can be a gift from God. No fewer than seven Greek words for "suffering" are used in this short epistle, suggesting the intensity of their persecution.

The most striking feature of this letter is Peter's emphasis on "SUBMISSION" as the Christian's response under pressure. "Submit" or some form of it is used six times in 1 Peter. The Greek word is *hypotasso*. This is a military term meaning, "to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader." The idea then is to place yourself under the ranks of

another. In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden." One's submission may be forced (as the demons who submit to God, Luke 10:17). But a Christian's submission is to be voluntary.

In this letter Peter actually lists a number of areas in which Christians are to submit. Notice how we are to submit according to 1 Peter:

- 1) We are to submit to Secular Authorities or Governments (2:13-16; cp. Rom. 13:1).
- 2) Servants submit to their Masters (2:18-20; cp. Eph. 6:5-9).
- 3) Wives submit to their own Husbands (3:1-6; cp. Eph. 5:22-24).
- 4) The Younger are to submit to the Elder (5:5; cp. Heb. 13:17).
- 5) And, all are to submit to one another (5:5; cp. Eph. 5:21).

There are some fascinating facts we can learn from this list, which show the biblical concept of "SUBMISSION." Consider the reasons we submit to authorities, "for the Lord's sake" and "to put to silence" ignorance by well doing. Doing good is always in the framework of every society. There is never a law against doing good. Consider the way servants submit to their masters, "with all fear." But notice, this is fear or reverence toward God, or for His sake. Though their master legally had the right of life and death over their slaves, the slave should fear: not having terror for his own life, but having reverence toward God. Consider also, Peter says the slave is to submit to his master regardless of the master's character, "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the perverse." God is especially pleased when we suffer wrongfully without retaliation.

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God (2:19-20).

And so, the main, underlying reason we should submit to others is for the Lord's sake.

Peter next mentions Jesus as an example of suffering and submission, so that we might follow in His steps (vss 21-25). Christ's example shows what God's idea of true submission is. Notice:

- 1) Jesus submitted by keeping his mouth, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."
- 2) Jesus submitted by <u>keeping his temper</u>, "Who, when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

¹ (From The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, Copyright (c)1993, Woodside Bible Fellowship, Ontario, Canada. Licensed from the Institute for Creation Research.)

² A note on the Greek word *hypo-tasso* (to set under or "be subject") and anti-tasso (to set against or "resist"). Both are from tasso (to set, place or arrange). In 1Peter 5:5 both words are used in the same verse, making an interesting contrast. (I.e. "God resists the proud", so be in submission according to your position in life).

³ (Col. 3:22) shows that slaves are to obey their masters "fearing God." God is the object of their fear. So, we might ask in (1 Peter 2:18), is the Christian slave to direct his fear toward his master or to God?

These two points are the necessary ingredients for Christ-like submission. Without both of these restraints there is no real submission.

It is often the case in the Bible that one's subjection is directly related to his or her speech. We show our submission by the silence of our mouth. The Bible teaches this is a basic and necessary part of submission. It is so serious that (James 1:26) says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." James 3:1-10 gives two illustrations: the bit in a horse's mouth and a ship's small helm. Both of these bring larger and more powerful things into subjection. And like them the small tongue must be made subject or it will destroy the whole body. In (Titus 3:1-2) we are to be subject to principalities, by not speaking evil. And, (2 Peter 2:10) says there are those who, "Despise governments...not afraid to speak evil of dignities." (Jude 8-10) mentions those who, "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." Even Michael, the archangel, did not rail against the devil, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee."

Peter shows the relationship between speech and submission several times in this first epistle. In chapter 2:13-15 we are to obey governments putting to silence foolish men. In 2:21-25 Christ suffered by having no guile in His mouth and by not reviling again when He was reviled. In chapter 3:1,4 wives are to submit to their husbands quietly. In 3:8-10 we are to submit to one another by not rendering railing for railing. And in 3:10-11 if one will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue. How often today do we speak against things we do not like or understand? Christians must learn to be in subjection. Some Christians will speak against the President or the Government. Some will talk about their employers. Christian wives speak against their husbands. Our speech displays whether or not we have a submissive spirit. When we speak against any kind of authority, we do not have the meek, submissive spirit that God wants in us.

It is also the case that **subjection is directly related to our temper.** (**Proverbs 25:28**) says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." Before you can keep your temper, you must first be in subjection to yourself. If you cannot subject yourself, by controlling your own temperament, how can you be subject to someone else? In (**Matt 5:44**) Jesus commands us to submit to those who mistreat us, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." But you cannot do this while your heart is set on revenge and filled with anger. God wants us to be a submissive people, not only to those who treat us well, or to those with whom we agree, but also and especially to those who are perverse, wicked and abusive (2:20). We cannot be submissive if we are always losing our temper.

So the Bible teaches there are two important things necessary to being submissive. We must keep our mouth from speaking against the authority to which we submit. And we must keep our temper from resentment or rebellion against that authority. This will give us a better understanding of what God expects when He commands us to be in submission. Now let us look at some specific areas where Peter says we are to practice this submission.

Submission in the Home (1 Peter 3:1-7)

The Wife (vss. 1-6)

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.

Peter is referring here to a spiritually divided home. Since being married, this wife has come to obey the gospel but her husband is not yet a believer. Peter describes how the Christian wife can win her unsaved husband to the Lord, by being submissive. He uses the word, "Likewise." Referring back to chapter two where the servant is commanded to be subject to his master and where Christ gave us an example of submission, Peter says the wife is to be submissive in the same way. This does not mean a Christian wife "gives in" to her unsaved husband in order to subtly manipulate him and get him to do what she desires. This kind of selfish psychological persuasion ought never to be found in a Christian's heart.

Rather, she is submissive "for the Lord's sake" (see 2:13). Remember, it was God who said to the woman way back in Eden at the fall, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). The Christian wife must remember that God is the ultimate object of her submission to her husband. If she will not submit to him, then it is against God that she has rebelled, and it is before God that she will one day answer.

Peter says the husband may be won without the word. This does not mean he will be saved without the word of God (i.e. without the message of the gospel). In fact, the preaching of the Word of God is the only thing that can save anyone (1Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16). Rather, Peter is saying that the unsaved husband may be won without talking, or without the wife constantly trying to persuade him with argument. Her submission is that she be quiet and instead of preaching to him, show her husband the purity of a Christian life. One story was told of a zealous wife who once tried to convert her husband by keeping a religious radio broadcast on all evening, usually very loud, so that her husband would "hear the truth." She only made it easier for him to leave home and spend his evenings with his friends.

While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

It is the pure conduct of the wife that will win her lost husband. He will behold her life "coupled with fear." Twice Peter uses this word "fear", here in verse 3, and in verse 6. Paul said in (Eph. 5:33), "And the wife see that she reverence her husband." The word "reverence" is the same word as "fear" in 3:2. This means the husband can see, not only his wife's holy lifestyle, but also see her deep reverence or respect for him, which is a tremendous motivating factor. Verse 6 tells the wife not to be, "afraid with any amazement" (not afraid with any terror). Peter means that if she does well toward her husband and acts as a faithful wife, she will not be living under the fear of being found out with infidelities or improper conduct. (Proverbs 3:25-26) says, "Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken." It has been said that anger assails men; fear assails women. Christians need not fear men when doing right. Would it not be impressive for a woman to do her husband's bidding, reverence him devoutly, and yet, at the same time, he knows she is not terrified of him in the least?

In (verse 4) Peter further describes the reverence a wife should have for her husband. She is to have "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." This shows again the **two necessary ingredients for biblical submission**: 1) keep the mouth

(i.e. have a quiet spirit) and 2) keep the temper (i.e. be meek). Submission is the way to true beauty, which comes from within. This beautiful spirit of submission will not go unnoticed by her husband.

For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah....

Next, Peter points to Sarah as a model for Christian wives to follow. Sarah was not perfect, but she proved to be a good helpmeet to Abraham. Her submission to her husband was so strong that she called Abraham "lord" or master, showing how deep her reverence was for him. For many centuries afterward among the Jews, a young maiden was taught to have this kind of reverence for her husband. In their rabbinical writings the following illustration occurs:

A certain wise woman said to her daughter before her marriage: "My child, stand before thy husband and minister to him. If thou wilt act as his maiden he will be thy slave, and honour thee as his mistress; but if thou exalt thyself against him, he will be thy master, and thou shalt become vile in his eyes, like one of the maidservants." ⁴

The contrast between Christian women and pagan women during the time of Peter's writing was vast. John Chrysostom mentions one of his teachers saying, "Heavens! What women there are amongst the Christians." Their pure and holy life was a rarity among women in the pagan world of the Roman Empire. The Roman satirist, Juvenal, calls a chaste wife a "rara avis in terris" (i.e. a rare person in the world). And Christian women were noticed for these differences. Remember too that the ancient world was not known for their gracious treatment of women.

Woman was placed almost on the same level with the slave. She differs, indeed, from the slave, according to Aristotle, but has, after all, really no will of her own, and is hardly capable of a higher virtue than the slave. Shut up in a retired apartment of the house, she spent her life with the slaves. ⁷

Because women were considered to be so base, their treatment by men was also contemptible. She became the living property of her husband who could lend her out, as Cato lent his wife to his friend Hortensius, and as Augustus took Livia from Tiberius Nero. The pagan husband had ultimate power over his wife.

(He) was invested with the plenitude of paternal power. <u>By his judgment or caprice her behavior was approved or censured, or chastised; he exercised the jurisdiction of life and death; and it was allowed, that in cases of adultery or drunkenness, the sentence might be properly inflicted. She acquired and inherited for the sole profit of her lord; and so clearly was woman defined, not as a person,</u>

⁴ Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Chapter 9, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1999 by Biblesoft

Philip Schaff, <u>The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers First Series</u>, Volume 9 (The Ages Digital Library Collections, Version 6) p. 203.

⁶ Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 2, p. 286.

⁷ Ibid., p. 284

In a footnote on this Gibbon wrote, "It was enough to have tasted wine, or to have stolen the key of the cellar, (Plin. Hist. Nat. xiv. 14.)."

but as a thing, that, if the original title were deficient, she might be claimed like other movables (e.g. furniture), by the use and possession of an entire year. 9

In such a misogynistic culture, a woman already had a lot against her. It is no wonder that the apostle Peter instructed Christian women how to behave before their unbelieving husbands. A wrong move on an already potential powder keg could have literally put her life in danger. Thus, no better advice could be given to a Christian wife than to submit to her husband and respect, or quite literally fear him. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that any Christian's submission is ultimately before God. To refuse to submit to God-ordained authority, such as the husband-wife relationship, is to refuse to submit to God's authority.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. (1Corinthians 11:23)

To despise your husband, your government or your master is to despise the authority of God. "Submit yourselves therefore to God" (James 4:7). One of the ways we submit to God is by submitting to the authorities that God has placed in our lives, whether they are good or bad. It is understood however, that when these authorities tell us to go against God or the church, we have no recourse but to obey God (Acts 5:29). Unfortunately, the thinking of many Christians today is that "if I don't like what they command, I don't have to do it, because it violates my conscience before God." Be careful that this does not become an excuse not to submit to God's authority. There are not that many times something will come up that will compel me to go against God. Therefore, we all need to submit to God by submitting to our own authorities as much and as often as is possible.

The Husband (vs. 7)

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

As Peter wrote to the Christian husbands, he reminded them of four areas of responsibility in their relationship with their mates.

Physical—"dwell with them."

This implies much more than sharing the same address. Marriage is fundamentally a physical relationship: "*They two shall be one flesh*" (**Eph. 5:31**). Of course, Christian couples enjoy a deeper spiritual relationship, but the two go together (1 Cor. 7:1-5). A truly spiritual husband will fulfill his marital duties and love his wife.

The husband must make time to be home with his wife. One survey revealed that the average husband and wife had thirty-seven minutes a week together in actual communication! Is it any wonder that marriages fall apart after the children grow up and leave home? The husband and wife are left alone—to live with strangers!

"Dwell with them" also suggests that the husband provide for the physical and material needs of the home. While it is not wrong for a wife to have a job or career, her first responsibility is to care for the home (Titus 2:4-5). It is the husband who should provide (1 Tim. 5:8).

Intellectual—"according to knowledge."

Edward Gibbon, <u>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</u>, Vol. 2, Chapter 44, Part 5, (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Great Books of the Western World) pp. 83-84.

Somebody asked Mrs. Albert Einstein if she understood Dr. Einstein's theory of relativity, and she replied, "No, but I understand the Doctor." In premarital counseling it is interesting to give a young couple some pads of paper and ask them to write down the three things each one thinks the other enjoys doing the most. Usually, the prospective bride makes her list immediately; the man sits and ponders. And usually the girl is right but the man wrong! What a beginning for a marriage!

It is amazing that two married people can live together and not really know each other! Ignorance is dangerous in any area of life, but it is especially dangerous in marriage. A Christian husband needs to know his wife's moods, feelings, needs, fears, and hopes. He needs to "listen with his heart" and share meaningful communication with her. There must be in the home such a protective atmosphere of love and submission that the husband and wife can disagree and still be happy together.

"Speaking the truth in love" is the solution to the communications problem (Eph. 4:15). It has well been said that love without truth is hypocrisy, and truth without love is brutality. We need both truth and love if we are to grow in our understanding of one another. How can a husband show consideration for his wife if he does not understand her needs or problems? To say, "I never knew you felt that way!" is to confess that, at some point, one mate excommunicated the other. When either mate is afraid to be open and honest about a matter, then he or she is building walls and not bridges.

Emotional—"giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel"

The word "honor" means value or dignity. The husband should treat his wife with value, like fine china or delicate crystal, like an expensive, beautiful, fragile vase, in which is a precious treasure. Chivalry may be dead, but every husband must be a "knight in shining armor" who treats his wife like a princess. (By the way, the name Sarah means "princess.") Peter did not suggest that a wife is "the weaker vessel" mentally, morally, or spiritually, but rather physically. There are exceptions, of course, but generally speaking, the man is the stronger of the two when it comes to physical accomplishments.

When a young couple starts dating, the boy is courteous and thoughtful. After they get engaged, he shows even more courtesy and always acts like a gentleman. Sad to say, soon after they get married, many a husband forgets to be kind and gentlemanly and starts taking his wife for granted. He forgets that happiness in a home is made up of many *little* things, including the small courtesies of life.

Big resentments often grow out of small hurts. Husbands and wives need to be honest with each other, admit hurts, and seek for forgiveness and healing. "Giving honor unto the wife" does not mean, "giving in to the wife." A husband can disagree with his wife and still respect and honor her. As the spiritual leader in the home, the husband must sometimes make decisions that are not popular; but he can still act with courtesy and respect.

"Giving honor," means that the husband respects his wife's feelings, thinking, and desires. He may not agree with her ideas, but he respects them. Often God balances a marriage so that the husband needs what the wife has in her personality, and she likewise needs his good qualities. An impulsive husband often has a patient wife, and this helps to keep him out of trouble!

The husband must be the "thermostat" in the home, setting the emotional and spiritual temperature. The wife often is the "thermometer," letting him know what that temperature is!

Both are necessary. The husband who is sensitive to his wife's feelings will not only make her happy, but will also grow himself and help his children live in a home that honors God.

Spiritual—"that your prayers be not hindered."

Peter assumed that husbands and wives would pray together. Often, they do not; and this is the reason for much failure and unhappiness. If unconverted people can have happy homes without prayer (and they do), how much happier Christian homes would be with prayer! In fact, it is the prayer life of a couple that indicates how things are going in the home. If something is wrong, their prayers will be hindered.

A husband and wife need to have their own private, individual prayer time each day. They also need to pray together and to have a time of "family devotion." How this is organized will change from home to home, and even from time to time as the children grow up and schedules change. The Word of God and prayer are basic to a happy, holy home (Acts 6:4).

A husband and wife are "heirs together." If the wife shows submission and the husband consideration, and if both submit to Christ and follow His example, then they will have an enriching experience in their marriage. If not, they will miss God's best and rob each other of blessing and growth. "The grace of life" may refer to children, who certainly are a heritage from God (Ps. 127:3); but even childless couples can enjoy spiritual riches if they will obey Peter's admonitions.

"Suffering as a Christian"

(1 Peter 4:1-19) Ryan Tuten

It is indeed a glad day in heaven when sound Bible study programs such as this 4th annual South East Georgia Lecture are conducted. The child of God must not think that all is gloom and doom in the eternal kingdom these days. These venues of serious Bible study are truly helping to strengthen the church of our Lord at this most critical time in our society. May the good Lord continue to bless Brother Riley Nelson, his family and this congregation in their efforts to reach out and teach the precious gospel to others each year.

Numerous passages in the New Testament connect the idea of suffering and Christianity. Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who suffer for righteousness' sake. Such makes them as the persecuted Prophets of the Old Testament. (Matthew 5:10-12) Christ would later state that those who follow Him would be cross bearers before they would become crown wearers. (Mt. 10:38; Mk. 8:34-38; Lk. 9:23-27).

In 2 Timothy 2:12, the Apostle Paul placed suffering with the Savior before reigning with the Redeemer on heavenly high, as he stated, "If we suffer, we shall reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." In one of the last chapters of Scripture written by the apostle Paul, he stated, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). The suffering saints at Smyrna (Rev. 2:10) were promised a heavenly crown upon successfully overcoming Satan and sin.

First Peter offers an arsenal of arguments on why a Christian should endure with courageous success whatever sufferings may be inflicted. This entire epistle is full of lessons, which encourage the Christian today to fight the good fight, finish his course, and keep the faith.

Peter wrote this letter to counter the pressures to which those living throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia were being subjected. They were strangers fleeing persecution. (1 Pet. 4:4) This ostracism and persecution was an attempt to force them back into sin. This persecution coupled with the remembrance of the pleasures of their past life styles, served to entice them to return to a servitude of Satan. Peter details their past escapades in verse three.

"For the time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revellings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries."

The climax of the list is abominable idolatries, identifying the scandalous idol temples as the general source and encouragement of Gentile licentiousness¹. They had previously to their conversion, frequented the pagan temples, partaken of the drunken orgies, been immoral with the temple prostitutes, and consequently were susceptible to enticements to return to such riotous

living.2

Peter, in 1 Peter 4:1-10, exhorts them to persevere in righteous living in spite of the pressures they felt. This is the same plea we as Christians stress today. To many people love the pleasures of the world and are so satisfied with where they are, they are not willing to repent and make the change necessary to have a home in heaven for eternity. They love the world, and that is why the writer John warned, "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15) We as Christians need to be at all times under God's control and striving to live righteous. In the first ten verses of this letter, Peter gives at least five reasons why we should live righteously under God's control.

1. Living Under God's Control: (1 Peter 4:1-10)

Live Righteously because the Savior suffered sacrificially (1 Peter 4:1). In exhorting them to live righteously, Peter begins by reminding them of the sufferings of Christ. He wrote:

"For as much then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

Peter reminds them, the prophets had foretold Christ's suffering (1 Peter 1:10-11). No doubt the description of the suffering Savior which Isaiah wrote about in Isaiah 53, weighed heavily on his mind. Christ suffered for us that He might save us from sin. As we suffer for Him—and with Him—we learn to hate sin and love Him more.³ Peter encourages them to have the mind of Christ and to realize that their identification with Christ means victory over sin. Of Christ suffering Peter wrote,

"For even here unto were ye called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threaten not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who is own self bare our sins in his body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:21-24).

It seems to me impossible, for anyone to reflect upon the sufferings of Christ, learning how He was scourged, beaten, cursed, the crown of thorns placed on His head, the mocking, and all the rest which accompanied the events leading up to His death even the fact that He nailed to the cross on the hill of Calvary, without being impelled to righteous living. Being redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as a lamb without spot, we should be motivated to live for him (1 Peter 1:18-19).

2. Live righteously because we are partakers of Christ suffering (1 Peter 4:1-2).

Jesus, in Matthew 20:22-23, revealed that His disciples would be baptized with the baptism he was baptized with and drink of the cup of which he drank. While they did not fully comprehend the significance of His words, Jesus was warning them warned that they would be partakers of His suffering. Peter refers to this several times throughout his epistle. In 1 Peter 4:12-13 he wrote.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trail which is to you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

Now the suffering they had, and would endure, should serve to encourage them to persevere. They had too much invested to turn back. In **1 Peter 4:1**, after describing the suffering of Christ, Peter wrote,

"Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

Their faithfulness to Christ through past suffering should serve to give them confidence to successfully resist whatever future temptations they may face without apostasy.

But let us not overlook another thought, which may be implied by this verse. In baptism these individuals, as well as those who obey God today, who are immersed into Christ's death, have been made partakers of His suffering. One who has been baptized into Christ's death, has put their old man of sin to death (Romans 6:3-6). In and through Christ's death they had been freed from sin (Romans 6:7-8) thus sin had ceased from being a way of life for them. Barclay expounds on this saying, "In that act of baptism the man is identified with Christ. He shares the sufferings and even the death of Christ, and he shares Christ's risen life and risen power, and therefore, a victor over sin."

3. Live Righteously because Life is Brief. (1 Peter 4:2-3)

Peter gives some subtle reminders in this next passage of Scripture to the fact they had wasted enough of their lives living in sin, and therefore now needed to spend each remaining day living the abundant life by the will of God. He wrote,

"That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lust of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revellings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries."

There was no doubt several, who had spent many years engaging in the lewd acts of worshiping idols and living for the pleasures of this world. But now that they were Christians, they had only a few years left. How were those years to be spent and how were these individuals suppose to live? Peter's answer is very clear and plain: "According to the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2). How long do you have to live? No man knows, no man is promised tomorrow, James tells us, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). We must all do what we can while we have the opportunity. As a Christian our life should be conforming wholly, 100 percent, to the will of God. A life which is built any other way is like a life which is built upon shifting sand and is doomed to destruction (Matthew 7:24-27). Make sure the life you live is built upon the only true foundation which no man can lay, that is Jesus Christ. There are times though when looking back at our past lives would be wrong, because Satan could use those memories to discourage us or try to tempt us. But God urged Israel to remember that they had once been slaves in Egypt (Duet. 5:15), but because of their cries, God delivered them keeping the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We sometimes forget the bondage of sin and remember only the passing pleasures of sin, when we should be remembering the new covenant that God has made with man. Because our lives are "but a vapor and appears for only a little time", we should be concerned only with doing the will of God.

4. Live Righteously because Judgment is coming (1 Peter 4:5-6).

Peter, in exhorting Christians to live uprightly, writes of the coming judgment:

"Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

Peter was trying to emphasize the importance of righteous living as he was telling them of the coming judgment in this verse as well as **1 Peter 3:19**. Many have tried to suggest the false doctrine that teaches one will have an opportunity for salvation after death, thus encouraging men to postpone repentance and continue in sin. In the commentary written by Barclay, he quotes the ancient writer Justin Martyr, "The Lord, the Holy God of Israel, remembered his dead, those sleeping in the earth, and came down to them to tell them of the good news of salvation."

Many have tried throughout the years to misconstrue these passages and give rise and support to the various doctrines which teach a second chance for salvation after death. The

Romanist teach a doctrine called, "Purgatory, which is a place which departed souls are supposed to be confined, and in which their final destiny may still be effected by the purifying fires which they endure, by the prayers of the living, or by a message in some way conveyed to their gloomy abodes...in which such sins may be expianted as do not deserve eternal damnation"⁵

Close akin to the doctrine of purgatory is the Mormon doctrine of baptism for the dead. Based on the concept of there being a second chance after one has died, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints interprets or should I say, "misinterpret" these passages as well as others including **1** Corinthians 15:29, to support their false doctrine of having a second chance after death. While this doctrine of second chance is found largely in the Catholic and Mormon teachings, the church has not escaped its influence. In the 1850's Jesse B. Furguson almost destroyed the church in Nashville, teaching the doctrine of second chance.⁶

If this passage does not teach this doctrine of second chance, what does it teach? In **1 Peter 4:6,** Peter may have been referring to those to whom the gospel was preached during their earthly lives and who have since died physically. "The reference may be to those who are spiritually dead, but it seems better to understand the term as referring to those to whom the gospel was preached during their earthly life and they have since died physically."⁷

In contemplation of this verse several things must be made unmistakably clear, namely, (1) that the Gospel is preached to all men, (2) that it must be preached to men while they are alive physically, though they may be dead spiritually, (3) that there is no evidence that anyone will have "another opportunity" to hear the Gospel subsequent to death.

As Peter exhorted these Christians in Asia to live righteously, he was not teaching a second chance, but that it is appointed unto a man once to die, and after death there is the judgment (**Hebrews 9:27**).

5. Live Righteously because the End is at Hand. (1 Peter 4:7-10)

Peter's final exhortation to these Christians for righteous living began with the revelation, "But the end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7). Then based upon that revelation he exhorted; be sober, watch unto prayer, have frequent charity, use hospitality and minister one to another (1 Peter 4:8-10). Yet to have a full understanding of this great exhortation. First, we must understand to what end he is referring?

The commentator Barclay suggests the end may refer to the approach of death. He wrote, "For everyone of us, the time is near. For every one of us the hour is hastening on. The one thing that can be said of every man – and the only thing that can be said of every man — is that we will die. For everyone of us the Lord is at hand." Many other writers and commentators suggest different ideas including: Peter was making them aware that they were living in the last dispensation or last age, noting there would not be another age before the return of Christ.

Peter, within all likelihood, was referring to the end of the Jewish economy. Peter, a Jew, wrote this epistle about 65 AD Within five or six years, the world in which he lived would undergo a tremendous change. Coffman describes it: "The Neronian persecution broke against the Christians, sending countless thousands of them to their flaming death, as torches to light the orgies in Nero's gardens, or feed the wild beast in the coliseum, or to be crucified, tortured, burned alive, beheaded, or suffer any other horrible death the pagan mind could invent. All earthly possessions of Christians perished in the holocaust." It wasn't long after the death of Nero, the pagan empire organized a war of extermination against the Jews. Jerusalem was soon utterly destroyed and the Romans butchered some 1,100,000 of its population, including the Jews. The temple that was so dear to the Jews was burned with fire, demolished stone by stone, and completely ruined never to be rebuilt again. And Peter, an apostle, being aware of this coming destruction which was at hand, gave several admonitions relevant to righteous living, the first of which was, "Be ye therefore sober" (1 Peter 4:7)

Sobriety, from the Greek term "sophrones" is rendered "to think soberly, be of a sound mind" this describes a person who is balanced and self-controlled. As the Christians were being faced with the destruction of their society at the hands of the Romans, they desperately needed to keep a sane and clear mind on the view of life. The devil loves to try to get our minds off God and the wonderful things which he has done. With their minds as well as our minds focused on the things of God, it will help us be able to keep our guard up against the fiery darts of Satan.

Peter, seeing the end approaching, exhorts, "Watch unto prayer." To watch and pray was the admonition which was given by Jesus unto Peter, James, and John in the garden (Matthew 26:41). In every trying circumstance, Christians need to watchfully pray.

In view of all the trials these Christians were about to face. Even the very fact that many of them would lose loved ones, friends and even their own lives, Peter exhorted them saying, "Have fervent charity among yourselves." (1 Peter 4:8). Peter, in enjoining love, used the term "agape" denoting the high Christian love of intelligence and purpose, the love that is always seeking out the good of its object. This love that Peter speaks of is not the mushy emotional love so often referred to today. Agape love, the love that covers a multitude of sins, is a love that wishes it object well, and then endeavors to make that wish a reality. This is the type of love that each Christian should express. This love is seen in the examples where Christians go to an erring brother or sister and explain the corrections they need to make in their lives to live righteously before God.

Hospitality is the Greek word "philoxenoi," which literally means "friendly to strangers." In that day there were not many inns and even the ones which did exist, many times would not cater to people of low morals. 11 Thus being faced with the persecution of this day, Christians needed to stand up to the plate and be hospitable and do so cheerfully. Christ demands no less of us today as we live in a society where all seems impersonal and often cold. Let us take

every opportunity to do good to all men and especially to them of the household of God (Galatians 6:10).

In these first ten verses of chapter four, Peter gives us five simple, yet powerful reasons for living righteously:

- because of the Savior's sacrificial suffering
- as partakers of Christ suffering
- because life is brief
- for judgment is coming
- the end is at hand

II. Suffering as a Christian

The second great part of this chapter begins here in verse 12 as we move from Living under God's Control, to Suffering as a Christian. Peter wrote for their encouragement, as found in verses 12-19.

Jesus while on this earth, talked with the disciples concerning their reaction to persecution. Some, He said, would not remain faithful when put to the test. In the context of the sower, the Lord noted,

"But he that receiveth the seed into stony places, the sane is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matthew 13:20-21)

Those who have turned away from the faith because of hardships would be lost; only those would be eternally saved who were "kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1:3-9).

During the last part of this chapter, please consider with me some great and extremely powerful lessons regarding suffering for the name of Christ.

1. Suffering as a Christian is expected: (1 Peter 4:12)

As one reads these next verses of Scripture, as well as the entire story which the Bible tells, one can't help to be reminded of the great battle and conflict which exist between good and evil, between God and Satan. As a Christian, we must all be on guard ready to defend ourselves against the wiles of the devil. Satan is trying every thing possible to entice us and get us to stray away and fall into the temptations of the world and be separated from the presence of God for all eternity. John warns us as he wrote,

"Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the love of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:15-16)

Christ and Satan are at war! Christians therefore are arrayed against the armies of the devil. Because we are soldiers of Christ, we can expect the same kind of cruel treatment that the Lord endured, from wicked men. Even while Christ was on this earth, He warned His disciples saying,

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the world that I have said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they have kept me from saying, they will keep you also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." (John 15:18-21)

So as one opens their eyes to the conflict of good and evil, he cannot help but to see the suffering which was foretold by our Savior. He concealed nothing when He discussed with His followers the cost of being a true disciple. He spoke of self-denial and cross bearing. Persecution is not, nor should it be, foreign to the Christian life. That is why Peter's words come as no surprise when he stated,

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trials which is to try you, as though some strange thing has happen to you." (1 Peter 4:12)

So, yes, there is a battle, and yes, we as soldiers of the cross have been warned by Christ that we would suffer persecution, but the apostle continues and gives us some reasons why suffering as a Christian can be an occasion for rejoicing,

"Bur rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of the glory of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified" (1 Peter 4:13-14)

Rejoice when persecuted? How can that be possible? Too, to many that sounds very strange. Yet, Peter sets forth some reasons for our consideration.

First, we as Christians can rejoice because suffering for Jesus' sake brings the Christian into a beautiful relationship with the Savior! In this experience we become, "partaker's of Christ's suffering" (1 Peter 4:13). We share with Him who suffered for us, giving us a greater appreciation of what Christ did. We all should be ready to endure any trials and tribulations which might bring us closer with our Lord and Master.

Second, as a Christian having shared in Christ's sorrow, we can someday share in His joy. Many people think that the Christian life is "peaches and cream" or a "bed of roses" and as soon as they hit the first bump in the road, they bail out. That is not what Christianity is all about. If we are willing to walk in the footsteps of the Savior through the dark times or the valley's, then we will one day also join Him on the mountain tops. We as children of God are heirs of heaven 1 Peter 1:3. And no power on earth or heaven can keep us from our inheritance if we but "endure to the end" (Matthew 10:22, Romans 8:35-39). What a beautiful thought and reason for rejoicing!

Peter, also states a third reason for rejoicing in tribulation, and that is so that God may be glorified. Through the suffering of those who patiently endure the trials and tribulations this life has to offer, when one is faithful and endures, this glorifies our Lord. That is what Peter is speaking of in 1 Peter 4:14. It is sad to see Christians today give up and constantly make excuses. If we all stand tall and count the cost, the Spirit of God, the Father and the Son will all be magnified.

When we consider these benefits, rejoicing in persecution for the sake of Jesus not only becomes possible but also reasonable. Yet I believe one more benefit should be noted which is not in our text, and that is the Christian commitment. Our commitment is strengthened. Persecution will "weed-out" the half-converted. It eliminates the worldly-minded.

Yes, Peter was right when he suggested that Christians rejoice in suffering.

2. Suffering for the name of Jesus is no need to be ashamed. (1 Peter 4:15-16)

Not all who suffer in the world are victims of injustice. Some receive their just punishment for the lawless deeds which they have committed. For example, one of the two thieves on the cross on the hill of Calvary as Christ was being crucified, stated, "And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." (Luke 23:41). Many people spend their lives trampling on the rights of others, taking that which does not belong to them, and some even take the lives of others! Peter is quick to remind his readers that there is no glory in enduring such treatment (1 Peter 2:20). On the other hand, God's people were sometimes abused just because they claim to be His. Christianity was viewed by some and is still viewed by some today, as criminal! To be called a "Christian" was, in many people eyes, reason for ridicule, beating, imprisonment, or even death.

The apostle reassured his brethren with these words,

"Let none of you suffer as a murder, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:15-16)

The one who was being punished for breaking the law and his lawless deeds, should be embarrassed, but the one who suffers for being a friend to Jesus could and should hold their heads high. Let him be proud to wear the Savior's name.

3. Victory is promised to those who faithfully endure. (1 Peter 4:17-19)

The church was to be sorely tried (1 Peter 1:6-9; 4:12). Satan's best weapons would soon be brought to bear upon the army of spiritual Israel. Judgment Day was at hand! Listen to Peter,

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteously scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

(1 Peter 4:17-19)

The question one must ask himself after reading these words of this epistle is. What "judgment" does the apostle here refer? Many times over the past this verse has been applied to the final judgment at the end of the world. One must decide, is this the day which Peter refers? I believe not. The "judgment" alluded to her was imminent. "For the time is come..." (4:17). If the apostle was writing of the time that Jesus would come again, then his warning was at best premature, for that day has yet to come, now some nineteen centuries later. In connection with the judgment" which is under consideration, the faithful saints of God would "scarcely be saved" (4:18). Many people and even good faithful brethren have misinterpreted this verse as to mean that even the righteous will "just barely make it" to heaven. I do not believe this verse says this or in any way alludes to this thought. Could one imagine God sending His only Son to earth to die for the sins of the world, and then make it hard to get to heaven? If this verse does mean that faithful, righteous saints will just barely make it to heaven, then it conflicts with other passages of Scripture which Peter wrote. For an example, the apostle assured Christians in his second epistle with the words,

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do the things ye shall never fall; For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you

abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:10-11)

Does Peter teach that faithful Christians will just slip into heaven by the skin of their teeth? Far from it! The word "scarcely" comes from a word which means "with difficulty" (comp. Acts 14:18; Romans 5:7; Acts 27:7,8,16). Peter was letting the people know that there would be "great difficulty" that they would have to endure as God's people in the "judgment" that lay just ahead.

The "judgment" mentioned in our text had to do with the many trials that were soon to come and that would try the faith of the Christians. Persecution by the Roman State was becoming even more intense. Followers of Christ were considered criminals in the eyes of the emperor because of their loyalty to another "king". In addition to the persecution, the destruction of Jerusalem was drawing near and the church of God would be caught up in the misery and torture that would accompany this tragedy. Jesus also spoke of this great judgment and time of tribulation and persecution (Matthew 24:21-22).

What then should the attitude of all Christians be? Listen to the words of Peter.

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19)

The "ungodly and sinner" (4:18) would be without any assistance from God, but not the believer. A child of God is the son of the "Creator." There is no need to be scared and terrified of the enemies which try to destroy the truth. Our heavenly Father will see us through! Thus he should "commit the keeping of his soul" to Him!¹² (Matthew 28:20; Philippians 4:13).

It was because of this assurance and such unwavering trust that the apostle Paul was able to endure conflict and persecution day after day. He stated,

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12)

Exactly how much had the one-time persecutor of the church "committed" to Christ? Everything! Even his own life! (Cf. Phil. 3:4-14). What a great example Paul, Peter and many of the other apostles set for us as Christians. The Christian who does not understand the hardships and suffering which accompany Christian living is in a threatening position. He may not be ready or able to endure them with patience. His faith is vulnerable.

Conclusion:

The words of the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 4:12-19, not only trumpet the coming of the fiery trials for the people of God, but sound the call to victory as well. We are blessed to live in such a land where physical persecution is forbidden by civil law. No one is going to beat us, or imprison us, or kill us upon the sole ground that we are Christians. However, there are Christians today enduring these very things for the name of Jesus Christ on other continents. And the day may come in America when Christians will face imprisonment or death because of our faith. If that day should come, may God grant us the grace to capture the victory that He has promised those who trust Him.

- 1. Coffman, Commentary on I and II Peter, p. 240
- 2. Sixth Annual Southwest Lectures, <u>The Epistles of Peter and Jude</u>, April 1987, p. 154
- 3. Warren Weirsbe, <u>1 Peter chapter 4</u>,
- 4. Barclay, <u>The Letter of James and Peter</u>, p. 293
- 5. Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, p. 1424
- 6. Alexander Campbell, <u>The Millennial Harbinger</u>, pp. 313-316
- Fritz Reinecker, <u>Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament</u>, ed. Cleon Rogers, 1980, p. 762
- 8. Barclay, p. 297
- 9. Coffman, p. 246
- 10. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. IV, p. 44
- 11. Kelcy, The letter of Peter and Jude, p. 89
- 12. Sixth Annual Southwest Lectures, <u>The Epistles of Peter and Jude</u>, April 1987, p. 171

"FEED THE FLOCK"

(1 Peter 5:2)
Stacey W. Grant

Chapter five of First Peter speaks to every member of the church. It contains instructions relative to church leadership (v 1-4), Christian conduct (v 5-7), alertness and the necessity of unfeign faith (v 8-10). Lastly, it closes in beautiful fashion (v 11-14).

CONCERNING THE ELDERS

Elders are a very integral part of the local church. A good eldership is not an option if a congregation is going to reach its full potential. Sadly, many congregations suffer because of poor, unconcerned "leaders."

ELDERS MUST BE QUALIFIED

Elders must be qualified (v1). If one desires the office of an elder, he must meet the qualifications set forth in the Scriptures (Tim. 3:1-11; Tit. 1:5-9). He must count the cost of being an elder before he considers seeking the office (Luke 14:25-35). He must be able to connect Matthew 6:33 and 1Timothy 3:1 in his mind, relative to the work of an elder; he must conclude, "If the Lord has blessed me - and He has greatly - the least I can do is give Him and His kingdom my best." Training truly begins when one is yet a lad. Godly instruction and guidance by faithful parents may inspire a young man to desire to become an elder. He would express his aspirations to his chosen mate for life. Together, they would work as a team to this end.

ELDERS MUST BE EXHORTED

Elders must be exhorted (v1). A good eldership honors only the Scriptures as its guide in matters of faith (2Tim. 3:16-17). As was the case with this eldership, the Scriptures exhort all elders to admonish the saints to continue in "well-doing" (4:19). Such admonishment would help the flock endure difficulties (1Pet. 1:6-9; 2:13-25; 3:8-17; 4:12-19; 5:8-10). Such admonishment would remind the elders of the seriousness of their work.

Also, elders need to be encouraged by the membership. A good eldership should be honored, prayed for, frequently fellowshipped and viewed as a part of the church family by the membership (1Tim. 5:17).

ELDERS MUST BE CARING AND COURAGEOUS

Elders must be caring and courageous (v2). The Scriptures exhort elders "to feed" or "to shepherd" or "care for" the flock. The term "pastor" (**Eph. 4:11**) is the noun form of the verb "to feed." Pastors who understand their roles truly care for the sheep committed to their care. They show care in supporting the weak among the flock (**Rom**. 15:1-2). They seek those who stray away from the flock (**Gal. 6:1-2**). They courageously

protect the flock from predators (1Sam. 17:34-37; Acts 20:17, 28-30). They weep with those in pain and supportively share in the joy of those who are blissful (Rom. 12:15). If need be, they would discipline a rebellious sheep (2Thess. 3:6, 13-14).

ELDERS MUST BE MINDFUL

Elders must be mindful (v2). Although the work of an elder has its share of burdens, it should not be viewed as a burden. The words "taking the oversight" derive from the word meaning "bishop" or "overseer". Again, bishops are obligated to direct the affairs of their respective congregation (Heb. 13:17). Elders should be mindful of three important principles when shepherding the flock.

First, they are to exercise "not of restraint" i.e., not feeling forced to serve or having their "arms twisted" or declaring, "well, if no one else wants the job, I guess I will take it". Their service must be "willingly" from pure motives.

Secondly, no elder should misuse his position to gain "filthy lucre". This term describes money gained by dishonorable means. It is scriptural for a congregation to support an eldership financially (1Tim. 5:17); however, a hireling is one of disrepute (John 10: 12-13)! In contrast to the hireling, the faithful elder possesses a "ready" or an "eager" mind, his service springs forth from pure motives. His heart motivates the shepherd; the hireling is motivated by his wallet.

Lastly, elders are never to abuse their delegated authority! They have no power to legislate laws; they are not to rule with "iron fists". The phrase "being lords over" suggests an arrogant, domineering spirit. Such an abuse of power would surely cripple the work of any congregation.

ELDERS MUST BE RESPECTFUL

Elders must be respectful (v2-4). "Feed the flock of God" is the imperative. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage" (charge allotted ASV) is yet another reminder to elders to remain in their God-appointed place. Christians are a people of God's own possession (I Pet. 2:9-10). To God, every one of His sheep is precious. The terms "God's heritage: means "to be chosen by lot," as the dividing up of land (Num. 26:55). In this context it refers to the congregation of which the elders are members. Ironically, the word from which "God's heritage" is translated, from which the English word clergy derives, the denominational world applies to the preacher instead of the members!

Instead of being dictators, elders should be leaders. They should lead by example. Sheep cannot be driven; they must be led. Elders should lead the way by effectively and frequently communicating with the membership. Elders should lead the way in evangelism by persistently conducting personal Bible classes. Elders should lead the way in showing hospitality. Elder should lead the way in demonstrating pristine humility. Elders should lead the way in supporting the good works of the minister. Elders should lead the way in exhorting the brethren to remain faithful.

ELDERS MUST BE LOCAL

Elders must be local (vv1-2). "The elders which are among you ...feed the flock of God which is among you" is clear evidence of the elders' being members of the congregation they oversaw. Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5 also reveal that each congregation was governed by a local eldership consisting of a plurality of qualified men. Once again, God's infinite wisdom shines forth ever so brightly; would to God those practicing perverted forms of Christianity would return to the New Testament for guidance pertaining to all doctrines!

FAITHFUL ELDERS WILL BE REWARDED

Faithful elders will be rewarded (v4). Verse four correctly and perfectly follows the verses preceding it. Faithful elders will "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). They will only follow the "chief Shepherd" (v4). Faithful elders serve with joy (Heb. 13:17). They will never fall asleep on the job. Faithful elders are always alert to the fact that a soul is more precious than any other substance known to man (Mk. 8:36-37). Faithful elders truly will hear the blessed words, "well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Mt. 25:21).

CONCLUSION

Every congregation should work inexhaustibly to obtain the type of spiritual and numerical growth experienced by the great church at Philippi. This congregation started with only a few precious souls (Acts 16:11-40). Later, it was commended from heaven for its strong leadership and evangelistic zeal. No doubt the eldership contributed immensely and unselfishly to this congregation's success (Read Philippians).

Dear reader, **good elderships do not happen by chance or overnight**. Good elderships are the result of honest-hearted Christians sincerely seeking to do the Lord's will. When love and respect are reciprocated between the eldership and membership, only good things will occur.

"Make Your Calling and Election Sure"

(2 Peter 1:10)
Alan Wright

Can we guarantee our own salvation? Your immediate response to this question is likely a resounding "No." Some would argue from the Calvinist position, affirming that salvation is completely an act of God. Therefore if we are one of the elect, we will be called by God, irresistibly moved to faith and obedience, and sealed as one of his children for all eternity. And if we are not of that number, there is nothing that can be done to accomplish salvation. In either case, no amount of effort on our part can in the least affect our destiny. However, those of us who would utterly reject Calvinist theology will still have difficulty with the idea of guaranteeing our salvation. After all, in rejecting Calvinism, we reject the notion of "once saved, always saved." Many who have stood strong in the faith have later gone into complete apostasy. Knowing this, many of us seem to believe that we must just do our best, and hope that things work out in the end. We have no assurance or confidence.

But in reading the New Testament, we see a much bolder faith. Indeed Peter urges all of us,

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1:10).

Is it really possible to "make your calling and election sure" without falling into the trap of "once saved, always saved?"

In order to answer this question, we need first to address the Biblical concept of election. We could go into great depths in discussing such an issue, but for the sake of simplicity and brevity, let us ask three simple questions and allow the Bible to speak for itself. First, what is election? Jesus speaks of the elect "whom he hath chosen." (Mark 13:20) Election then is a choice made by God. (In fact, the Greek word generally translated "elect" is also often translated "chosen.")

Second, who are the elect? Paul writes to the Thessalonian brethren,

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel Came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:" (1 Thessalonians 1:4-6)

The elect then are those who have heard the gospel, received it, and become followers of the Lord.

Third, **how is election accomplished?** Peter writes to those who are,

"elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:2)

Notice the four elements of election: God's foreknowledge, the Spirit's sanctification, man's obedience, and Jesus' death. Election is accomplished by means of a plan designed by the Father, executed by Jesus, revealed by the Spirit, and followed by men. Understanding then that election involves both what God has done for us in designing, executing, and revealing the plan of salvation and what we do for ourselves in believing and obeying the plan of God, let us proceed to analyze what Peter says to those of us who are among that number. How do we make our calling and election sure?

What God Has Done

In the opening verses of 2 Peter 1, Peter lists seven blessings that come from God to those he has chosen. He speaks of faith, grace, peace, life, godliness, glory and virtue as gifts from God for his people 1. (2 Peter: 1-4)

- 1) Faith is conviction and trust that leads to obedience. In what sense may this faith be considered a gift of God? Simply in that God has demonstrated his faithfulness, which inspired our confidence in his word. (rf. Hebrews 10:23) Notice that Peter says that there is a "like precious faith" for all Christians, both those who have been eyewitnesses of the majesty of Jesus (rf. vs. 16) and those who have learned of Jesus through the preaching of others. This faith serves as the foundation on which to build our Christian life. (rf. vs. 5)
- 2) Grace is the outpouring of God's love into our lives through the many blessings he provides, both physical and especially spiritual. Grace is unmerited favor. God's grace should bring forth graciousness in our own lives. (rf. 2 Peter 3:18)
- 3) Peace is that state of harmony and fellowship that exists between God and his children. It is more than merely an absence of conflict, but includes the unity of purpose and the shared life of all Christians. Peter urges us to "be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace" when he comes again. (2 Peter 3:14)
- 4) Life is the spiritual vitality that characterizes those who have been born again. Just as in physical life we are able to experience the physical world around us through our senses, so in spiritual life we have an awareness of spiritual matters that the unregenerate cannot experience. (rf. John 17:3) Peter says that Christians, "being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." (1 Peter 2:24)
- 5) Godliness is a life of reverence and devotion to God. It affects every aspect of the Christian's behavior. The Scriptures speak of godly sincerity (2 Corinthians 1:12), godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10), godly jealousy (2 Corinthians 11:2), godly edifying (1 Timothy 1:4), and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28). Peter asks, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Peter 3:11)
- 6) Glory is the majesty and exaltation that comes with being a child of God. It is through our association with Jesus that we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory." (2 Corinthians 3:18) Peter took honor in being "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."

(1 Peter 5:1)

7) Virtue is inner strength that comes from a spiritual courage. The word derives from a root meaning "manliness, valor." It is basically the personal commitment to do what is right and good regardless of cost or consequence. Every Christian should have this sense of honor and integrity.

These priceless gifts from God equip the Christian so that he may face every challenge life brings. And notice that the gifts come through knowledge. Twice in the opening verses Peter refers to knowledge as the means by which these blessings come into our lives. This knowledge is to be found in the things that God has revealed through his prophets and apostles. The Christian life is a life of listening to, learning from, and living by the word of God. Jesus said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:45) The most certain path a Christian can take to jeopardize his eternal salvation is to stop reading, stop studying, stop listening, and stop believing what God has said.

Contained within this knowledge received from the word of God are "exceeding great and precious promises." Peter specifically singles out two of them. First, God wishes us to be "partakers of the divine nature." Some would make this refer to the final glorification of the body, while others take it to mean the spiritual rebirth that happens when we become Christians. In reality, these are merely the two terminal points of an ongoing process. The transformation of our being which begins at baptism and is completed at the resurrection is primarily effected by an inner change, which Paul calls "the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)

Second, Christians have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." God created the world with everything good and pleasing to him. (rf. Gen. 1:31) But when man brought sin into the world, corruption and wickedness became the order of things. God seeks to help each of us rise above this society of selfishness, violence, greed, sensualism, and apathy. He cleanses us from sin, and calls on us to live our life in purity. In so doing, we escape not only the present corruption of the world, but also its final perdition.

What We Must Do

After having spoken so eloquently about God's blessings, Peter turns to our responsibility. Keep in mind that he is not here telling those who are outside of Christ how to gain salvation. This is written to Christians telling them how to build on the blessings God has given. The word that Peter chooses to describe this is "add." The Greek word from which this comes originally meant to bring together a chorus and provide for its upkeep. Such choruses were frequently used in Greek dramas, and wealthy men would become a patron of the theater by supplying such choruses. We may borrow from this old meaning to illustrate this passage. Peter here describes a chorus of Christian traits which when brought together and allowed to work in harmony produce a spiritual masterpiece in the Christian's life.

1) First, we must supply virtue. As mentioned earlier, virtue is moral courage that insists on doing the right and honorable thing no matter what. There is no value in a faith without virtue. It is easy to have faith when we are called to do that which is convenient or that which we wanted to do anyway. But virtue calls us to trust God enough to obey him even when it seems that it may cost us dearly. As Peter himself once said when under threat of persecution,

"We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

- 2) Next, we must supply knowledge. We have already seen that God's blessings are bestowed through knowledge. The Greek word used here is a simpler form than that used in the earlier verses. This knowledge is not the comprehensive education of life's experiences, but the accumulation of facts and information that makes up such an education. Christians must take seriously the responsibility of learning. What is the point of virtue, the commitment to do what is right, if we don't know what is right? In the words of the Psalmist, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11)
- 3) After this, we must supply temperance. This is the self-discipline that resists the temptations of the moment. It is self-control over appetites and ambitions, over hot tempers and hissy-fits, over greed and gluttony, etc. We may have great faith in God's word, the best of intentions to do the right thing, and a clear understanding of what needs to be done. But none of this will matter if we are swept away by our passions and emotions. Paul compared this trait to the athlete who keeps his desires in check while training.

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

- 4) Then we must supply patience. This is not simply a willingness to wait without complaint, though such an attitude may sometimes be necessary. This word involves persistence and steadfastness. It is the resolve to "keep on keeping on" even when we are drained, discouraged, despondent or disappointed. Again notice how this trait is essential to fulfilling those which have preceded it. Our faith, virtue, knowledge and temperance are worthless if we give up before we are finished. As Paul writes, "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing" (2 Thessalonians 3:13).
- 5) Next we must supply godliness. Peter has already indicated that God has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness." We often define this word as "God-like-ness." But it would be more accurate to say it means "God-ward-ness." In other words, godliness is the devotion that directs a life toward God. Godliness is what lifts the Christian above those who would dabble at religion. It makes us fervent in our worship, sincere in our service, humble when we excel and penitent when we sin. Without godliness, our faith and virtue, knowledge, temperance and patience would all be nothing more than self-righteousness. Jesus spoke of such people, saying,

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto

them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23)

- 6) After this, we must supply brotherly kindness. This is the attitude that treats people with courtesy and consideration. It is literally the love of a brother. We should be people known for hospitality, friendliness and generosity. As with every preceding trait, this one carries our development a necessary step further. It prevents us from being cloistered in some cathedral, practicing a religion that has no room for its fellow man. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17)
- 7) Finally we must supply charity. This word is often translated love, but it is not just the transient emotion that people "fall into" and "fall out of." This is a deep-seated commitment to the welfare of another. It can look beyond faults and shortcomings, but it doesn't pamper and spoil. It is willing to sacrifice its own comforts and even needs in order to provide care. We are commanded to love God (Matthew 22:37), to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:39), to love one another (John 13:34), to love our families (Ephesians 5:25), to love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17), and even to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). This is the crowning trait in the Christian's life. Paul tells us, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6).

Now notice that these seven traits, if properly supplied in the Christian's life, can "make your calling and election sure." Using the phrase "these things," Peter says that they can prevent spiritual barrenness, spiritual blindness, spiritual amnesia, and spiritual instability. How simply he resolves our dilemma. He reminds us of the wonderful blessings God has brought to our life to provide all that we need. He tells us that we can take advantage of these blessings by adding those character traits that will utilize the gifts of God to make us what we ought to be. He speaks of the assurance of our eternal destiny, not as a "once-saved, always-saved" proposition, but as the combination of divine grace and human faithfulness. "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:10,11) Can you guarantee your salvation? Yes, if you "make your calling and election sure" by receiving the blessings of God through the knowledge of his word and supplying the character traits that make you fruitful in that knowledge.

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"AGAIN ENTANGLED THEREIN"

(2 Peter 2:20-22) Ronnie Ulrey

The title suggest becoming entangled in the things we were tangled up in before we became Christians. Almost every preacher dabbles in things of the world, but we want to discuss becoming tangled up in such a way that it pulls him away from his life as a Christian and puts his soul in jeopardy. Also we are not just discussing preachers but every Christian that is pulled away from Christ by some human endeavor.

We Become Tangled In

The Affairs of This Life

We do this even though we are warned about it in God's word (II Tim. 2:4). We become so deeply involved that it ruins our involvement with Christ. Some people seem to get so wrapped up in human affairs that they are drowned by them.

Yokes of Bondage

Not only are we pulled away by what is involved in the first point, but by "yokes of bondage". One such yoke is mentioned in Gal. 5:1. There we find that the early church, especially the Jews, tried to mingle the Law of Moses with the Gospel of Christ. They even tried to get the Gentiles to conform to both the Law and the Gospel, which was impossible.

Peter knew what it was to get tangled up with Satan when Jesus told him Satan desired to "sift him like wheat" (**Lk. 22:31,32**). He became involved in rejecting Christ, lying and finally topped it off by cursing and swearing. Later he repented and was restored to his work with Christ. Not all-human stories of bondage end like this, others have a more tragic end.

The World

The "pollution" that entangles many is "the world" (II Peter 2:20). It seems that Satan has an uncanny way of pulling many otherwise good Christians back into the world. He makes them begin to look and act like the world even though the Lord through John says, "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Satan seems to make everything in the world shine like gold or silver and many Christians become dazzled by it and are pulled away. What is involved are the strongest temptations known to man, i.e. "The lust of the flesh", "The lust of the eyes", and The pride of life"— no wonder it is so hard to resist the pull of the world.

Sin

The last entanglement we get into is "Sin". It seems to have a mind of it's own! The wise man says, "In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare" (**Prov. 29:6**). The elements of sin are contained in each of us and when we lose control many times we imply that God has something to do with it. We might as well forget that, because James says,

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed (James 1: 13,14).

The enticement of sin is the way it makes itself seem like righteousness and man just wades into it, and becomes entangled. Sin then brings forth its evil work. "... and sin when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

Here Is How We Do It

Relationships

How do we become entangle? Through the "relationships" we form in this world with those who have great influence over us. We are warned by the Apostle Paul, "Be not deceived: evil companionships corrupt good morals" (I Cor. 15:33). These are not just incidental relationships but close relationships that are formed by business associations on which livelihoods are based. These are really entanglements mentioned in II Corinthians 6:14,15. "Unequally yoked" ..."fellowship with unrighteousness"..."concord with Satan (Belial)", and those who are so entangled are told to "come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (v 17). There are just some people that have too much influence over us and we can not let them mold us into the way they are (Rom. 12:2).

Investments

Our "investments" also get us tangled up with those who have not our spiritual future in mind. The excuses mentioned in Luke 14: 18-19, are examples of how much influence investments have over our decisions. When the invitation was given to come into the kingdom they began to make excuses. The first said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it" Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. A third said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come". Many times these investments are made with others and these verses are warning us that such investments can numb our spiritual response to Christ.

Marriage

Another medium of entanglement is "marriage" to the wrong person. Just recently a preacher student we were supporting married a woman that told him that she definitely would not stay married to a preacher. His response was to leave the school of preaching where he was

attending and become a truck driver. I think he married the wrong woman! Judges 16: 4-22 tells of the judge Samson who married a woman who caused him to lose everything he had and finally caused him to lose his life. Not only can marrying the wrong person cause a shock like in Jacob's case (Gen. 29:25) but also it can ruin our lives.

Fear of Men

The "fear of Men" can also cause us to become entangled in things we do not need to be a part of and some things of which we must not be a part. In Gal. 2: 11-13 we find Barnabas entangled in a situation that shocked Paul. Peter had withdrawn himself from the Gentiles and it seems that Barnabas went along with it out of fear. In conniving ways men will sometimes involve men in schemes that they would never have become a part of except out of fear. We can not let people have this kind of power over us for any reason. Christ must have the supreme position in our lives.

Popularity

Seeking worldly "popularity" causes us to make foolish decision in our lives. In John 12:43 the chief rulers made a foolish decision because of their love of popularity. The believed upon Jesus but would not confess him or obey him because they "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God". Also, Pilate remained tangled in his politics because he did not want to go against the crowds and release Jesus when he knew Jesus was innocent. Even his wife's plea was turned away because of his constituency. Being popular has caused many a person to turn from what he knew was right and become entangled in things that finally would cause him to lose his soul (Matt. 27:24).

False Teaching

"False teaching" can cause our lives to become vain in view of Christ teaching. In Matt. 15:9 Jesus stressed the teaching of doctrine that was false caused mans worship to be vain. The only way we can know truth is through doctrine. Doctrine directs worship, obedience and faithfulness. Without doctrine we would not know God's plan of salvation. We would not know his plan of worship and we would not know how he wanted us to live. Is not it strange that many religious teachers hate doctrine? They say it causes division because it offends those who believe differently than we do. Doctrine is what offended the Pharisees but Jesus told his disciples,

But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch (Matthew 15: 9-14).

What Jesus told them was, let them stay offended, because they are lost and do not want to be saved.

Lusts

Furthermore "lusts" can cause us to become entangled again and overcome. Peter said, "Fleshly lusts…war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11). According to Titus 2:11,12 we must deny fleshly lusts which "war against the soul", if we would take advantage of the grace of God. Lust is a part of every list that tells of things that will keep us from going to heaven.

How to Avoid Entanglements

Know the Truth

We must study so that we will "know the truth" (John 8:32). The only way to keep from becoming entangled is in these words, "And ye shall know the truth and the truth will make you free". The truth keeps us from all kinds of situations that would entangle us and ultimately destroy us.

Pleasing God

"Pleasing God" and not trying to please men will keep us free. Paul wrote, "No man that warreth entangleth himself in the affairs of this life: that he may please him who hath chose him to be a soldier" (II Tim. 2:4). When we know the truth, then we know what it takes to please God, which will keep us from becoming entangled.

Repentance

Another way to avoid entanglements is to learn to "repent". To repent is to turn away from whatever it is that entangles us. Jesus said if we fail to repent we will perish (Lk. 13:3,5), and he demands it of all His children (Acts 17:30).

Watch and Pray

Two other necessities are to "watch and pray". Hear Jesus again,

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *so* that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man (**Luke 21:34,36**).

Do Good

The apostle also gives us another simple solution that will help us remain untangled, "do good" which keeps us from being overcome by evil. Good will overcomes evil every time. Good is stronger than evil, even though evil has more allies (Rom. 12:21).

Resist Satan

The last point under this heading is to "resist Satan". James wrote, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). It is not always easy to resist the devil, but when entrapped there is no other alternative. There will come a time when resistance is all you have left, so being always close to God will enhance resistance.

The Results of Entanglements

The results are numerous but a few should be sufficient to keep us on our toes.

Overcome

Being entangled in pollution will cause us to be "overcome", crushed, defeated, by the power of sin (II Peter 2:20). Being overcome lands us in a "state worse than ever" which means we are worse off than we were before we ever knew the truth. Whatever else is means it has to mean that we are now lost having the knowledge of the truth of being saved. In eternity it will be awful to remember that we had the knowledge and the opportunity to be saved. We actually had a "taste of the good word of God" (Heb. 6:5), but failed to do what it takes to be saved.

God Departs

One bad thing leads to another and in this case "God departs" and we are alone with the truth and our failure to use it to go to Heaven (II John 9). We end like Samson did in Judges 16:20, suffering from our own turning away from the One who wanted desperately to save us.

Destruction

The final end to this is "destruction" because we have left out of our lives the only one who could bring us to God (John 14:6). Look at the sad picture drawn by the inspired pen of Peter, "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 (II Peter 2: 2122). This circumstance happened to the Prodigal son in Luke 15 showing us how hard it is on those who leave the truth and finally end up in the hog pen of life.



"LESSONS

FROM





THE FIFTH ANNUAL
SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 28,29 2000
HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA HWY.144 EAST

Editor: Riley Nelson

"LESSONS FROM HEBREWS"

DEDICATION

While reading the various manuscripts found in this book, the editor could not help but to think of the work in Southeast Georgia. Having been a part of this area for over nine years I have come to know many of the faithful, laboring, workers for the Lord. Their faithfulness for the way of Christ and their love for God is seen in their work. Therefore this book is dedicated to all the congregations of Southeast Georgia who seek to teach the "better way" and to bring lost souls to the Lord.

Riley Nelson, Director and Editor Fifth Annual Southeast Georgia Lectureship

Held at the Church of Christ Richmond Hill Georgia Highway 144 East P.O. Box 786 Richmond Hill Ga. 31324 **PREFACE**

The book of Hebrews is a book all Christians should make a part of their personal

study. It is in this book one learns that we now are guided by the words of the Son of

God. We find the creation of all things by God reinforced, and His love for mankind

made manifest by His scheme of redemption. The writer of this book warned Christians

of not growing in the gospel, and having to be taught again the basic tenements of

Christianity.

What greater treatise can be found to explain the change in the covenants and in

the priesthood? This is a book that tells of the greatest High Priest ever known, and how

it by His blood mankind's sins can be forgiven.

May this volume be used by any and all who seek to follow God according to His

plan. May it help those who are searching for God to come to know Him, and those who

are striving to live for Him have an easier way.

Riley Nelson

Richmond Hill Church of Christ

October 28, 2000

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GOD HATH SPOKEN

(Hebrews 1)

By Ryan Tuten

INTRODUCTION

The background to any book of the Bible is exceptionally important. This is especially true concerning the epistle written to the Hebrew Christians. The message of the Hebrews is always relevant: Jesus Christ is worthy of our faith. The religion of Christ is put in contrast with the religion of Abraham's seed, under the Mosaic covenant, and Hebrews emphasizes that God has made a "new covenant," and that men are sanctified by the will of Christ (Hebrews 8:10).

AUTHOR:

The author of this Divine book is unknown, although many internal and external evidences point to the apostle Paul as the probable author. Concerning some of the external evidences men such as Pantenus, who was a great scholar and teacher around 100 AD. attributed the writing to Paul.¹ Clement of Alexandria, in the 3rd century stated that Paul was the author.² Origien, a great writer and historian, also claimed Paul as the writer.³ The church in the East (Greek Orthodox) believed Paul wrote Hebrews and this idea was later adopted by the church in the West.⁴ It should also be noted that not only have past church fathers, writers, historians and teachers attributed the authorship of this epistle to the apostle Paul, but also many internal evidences can be found. It is clear by Hebrews 13:23, that the writer was a close companion of Timothy.⁵ Paul and Timothy worked together on the first and second missionary journeys (Acts 16:1-5; 17:14; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4). Timothy was with Paul during his first imprisonment (Phil.

1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:1). Paul sent for Timothy during his second confinement in Rome (2 Tim. 4:9-13). If Paul were the writer, 13:23 would necessarily refer to the time following his release from the first imprisonment in Rome.⁶ Hebrews 13:24, the writer was obviously writing from Italy and quite possibly Rome. Paul was in prison in Rome and had written other epistles from there like Colossians and Ephesians, which have similar themes. Hebrews 13:25, definitely sounds like the closing remarks of Paul. Also, the fact that Paul's name does not appear is thought by some to be proof in favor of his authorship.⁷ He knew that the Jews were prejudice against him because he was an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; Acts 22:22), and he did not sign his name that they might more readily receive the letter.⁸ Let us make a conclusion from the evidence given. Paul was a friend of Timothy; he had been in prison in Rome and ended other letters with same salutation as this letter. In conclusion of this evidence, Paul is most likely the author.

Though there are some, however, who make arguments against the Pauline authorship. Their first argument is, the apostle signed his name to thirteen epistles, but it is not affixed to the letter to the Hebrews.⁹ Second, the writer of Hebrews seems to have been dependent on those who heard the Lord for his message (2:3-4); however, Paul received his doctrine directly from Christ (Gal. 1:11-12). ¹⁰ Third, the author of the book never claims to be an apostle.¹¹ Fourth, the one who wrote Hebrews quoted only from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament), but in his writings Paul cited the Hebrew and Greek Old Testaments.¹² Fifth, many scholars believe the Greek style and vocabulary do not belong to Paul.¹³ Thus because of this evidence many suggest the authorship to Barnabas, Luke, Apollos, Clement of Rome, Silas, Philip, and Priscilla and Aquila (joint work).¹⁴ The masculine participle, translated as "to tell" or

"telling" (11:32) excludes a female as the writer; hence Priscilla cannot be seriously considered. ¹⁵ Clement should also be excluded, as there is no evidence that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. No one can be truly certain of the writer's identity.

DATE:

The letter was surely written before AD 96 because at that time Clement of Rome cited it in his first epistle to the Corinthians. Apparently the temple, which was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, was still standing when this letter was written (8:4, 10:11). However, the Judaism then being practiced was nearing its end (8:13; 10:25; 37). There is no reference to the Jewish rebellion against Rome, which occurred in AD 66-70. All of these facts considered, the probable date for the book is AD 63-66.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this letter is many. It was written to Christians to encourage them to be faithful in the performance of all Christian duties in life, in worship and in service to God according to the terms of the new covenant that they might enter finally into God's eternal rest. Thus this letter is written to prevent apostasy, by showing the superiority of Christianity over that of Judaism. It needs to be also noted that the author encourages the Jews in Jerusalem which had become Christians that they needed to grow, remain faithful to the services of the Lord's church, assemble and persevere.

This epistle surely shows the superiority of Christ. Christ is superior to the angels 1:1-

2:18. ¹⁸ He is superior to Moses, 3:1-4:14. Superior to the priest of Levi, 4:14-7:28 and the new covenant which was established by Christ is superior to the old law 7:11-8:13. ¹⁹ The sacrifice given by Christ is superior to any animal sacrifice 9:1-10:39. ²⁰ The blessings of Christianity are superior to Judaism, 11:1-40. We have a superior reason to live faithfully 12:1-13:25. ²¹

HEBREWS 1:1-14

GOD HAS SPOKEN, MAN SHOULD LISTEN (1:1)

The author logically begins with the most profound thought in all the expanded realm of human relations. God hath spoken!

"God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;" (Hebrews 1:1-3)²²

Notice the author begins with, "God"! All things must begin with God. "In the beginning God" (Genesis 1:1). Throughout all of time man has realized we are in need of heavenly guidance. The prophet Isaiah many years ago stated through inspiration, "Hear the Word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His Word..." (Isaiah 66:5). We all must realize that the way of man is not in himself (Jeremiah 10:23). When God speaks that is final, He forbids man to take away or add to His Divine Word (Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6, Revelation 22:18-19). His Word will stand forever (Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 24:35, 1 Peter 1:25).

GOD HAS SPOKEN IN TIME PAST: (1:1)

In telling us that God has spoken, the writer with one brief stroke of the pen draws a dividing line between the age in which we live and times past. Contrasting the way God has revealed His will to us with the ways He revealed His will to the fathers. Thus as we study the Scriptures as it says, "In times past", it must be understood this was speaking of an age prior to that which we live. Whatever may be said for the time covered in this statement, it is past, a closed book so far as we are concerned. What God spoke then was for the fathers and the things said unto them was not for us, except as Paul instructed to the Romans, that it was written for our learning (Romans 15:4). The covenant, or law, of the Old Testament is said to have been made specifically with them, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb" (Deuteronomy 5:2).²³ In the ages past, God spoke at sundry times and did not make a complete revelation of His will at one time. He spoke at the beginning of time (Genesis 1:28; 3:9). He spoke to Noah at the time of the flood (Genesis 6:13). God spoke directly to Abraham at the time of giving the promise (Genesis 12:1). He spoke to all Israel at the giving of the Law (Exodus 19:25) and to all of the patriarchs and to Israel all through their period of history (1 Peter 1:10-12).²⁴

GOD HAS SPOKEN IN DIVERS MANNERS: (1:1)

As God spoke to these fathers in time past, he did so in divers manners, not in one particular way. For example:

- 1. In person (Genesis 3:9).
- 2. Out of a burning bush (Exodus 3:2).
- 3. Out of clouds of fire and smoke (Exodus 19:18-25).
- 4. By angels (Genesis 19:1-11).
- 5. In dreams (Genesis 28:12-17).
- 6. By the mouth of an animal (Numbers 22:28).

7. By the prophets (2 Peter 1:21, Luke 1:55, John 7:22, Acts 13:32).

GOD HAS SPOKEN IN THE LAST DAYS: (1:2)

As one continues to read the Scriptures, verse two begins, "*Hath in these last days...*" This suggests a change in time, distinct from that mentioned before. The law which was given to the fathers was never intended to stand forever (Galatians 3:19, 3:16, 24).²⁵ The law of the Old Testament was to find its fulfillment in Christ (Matthew 5:17, Romans 10:4).²⁶ When it brought the people to Christ it fulfilled its purpose and was taken out of the way (Colossians 2:13-15, Ephesians 2:14-15).²⁷ The people were then brought into a "*new covenant*" (Hebrews 8:8), thus marking a change in time.

GOD HAS SPOKEN IN THE LAST DAYS TO US: (1:2)

Not only has God spoken in the last days, but he also hath spoken unto "us". The revelation to His will to us has been completed; hence, the term "hath spoken" is past tense. God's will, revealed through Christ, is for all time to come and cannot be altered or changed in any way.

"I marvel that you are soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preached any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9)

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things written in this book." (Revelation 22:18-19)

GOD HAS SPOKEN IN THE LAST DAYS TO US BY HIS SON: (1:2)

Another beautiful thought the author pens unto us is, that God hath spoken unto us by "His

Son". God has only one way of revealing His will to man today and that is through the testament of His Son.²⁸ All claims of revelation from God today through dreams, visions, or mysterious voices are utterly false. People today are looking for something else other than God's Divine Word. Christ taught as the father taught Him, "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my father hath taught me, I speak these things." (John 8:28); and His word was transmitted to us through the apostles by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things..." (John 14:26). Jesus later stated, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth..." (16:13-14). This "truth" which the apostles received and taught to others is known as the new covenant or New Testament of which Christ is the mediator (Hebrews 8:6, 9:15).²⁹

HONOR IS ASCRIBED TO CHRIST: (1:2-3)

There is great honor ascribed to God's Son who hath spoken unto us. The Scripture reads that He became "heir of all things." The inspired writer John wrote that "The Father loveth the

Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35). No other being ever claimed or received such honor. To share this honor with Him one must be adopted into God's family and become joint heir with Christ (Romans 8:16-17). Through God's grace, men can become heirs of God, but only through His Son. Paul stated, "That the gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6). Therefore only those who obey the gospel of Jesus Christ can become a joint heir or adopted into the family of God (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Romans 8:14-15).

Honor is also ascribed to Christ in the fact that the "worlds were made through him". John proclaimed Christ was a part of the creation as he penned these words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3). Paul in writing to the church at Colosse wrote, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven above or that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17). To no other being has this honor ever been ascribed, no angel, prophet, priest or king.

CHARACTERISTICS ASCRIBED TO CHRIST: (1:3)

In looking at verse 3, one sees the characteristics imputed to Christ. The Scripture teaches us that Christ is the "brightness of His Fathers glory." John declared that the "Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead

bodily (Colossians 2:9). He declares the father to men (John 1:18, Matthew 11:27) and men can only see the Father through the Son (John 14:9-10). To behold the Christ, is to see God.³² He is God in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16).

THE POWER ASCRIBED TO CHRIST: (1:3)

Not only does the Hebrew writer ascribe honor to Christ, but also great power is attributed unto him. The power of "His Word upholds all things." He spoke the worlds into existence (Genesis 1:1, 3, 6, 9; Psalm 33:6-9). It is by Christ that all things consist (Colossians 1:17). Therefore much power is in the Word of God, Paul stated, "he was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power (emphasis mine) of salvation" (Romans 1:16). The Hebrew writer wrote, that the "Word of God is alive and powerful (emphasis mine) and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). But not only is His Word powerful, but also "His blood is what purged our sins." The Hebrew writer later instructed the Hebrew Christians that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). It was by that great sacrifice on the hill of Calvary that He made that our sins are atoned (1 Peter 1:18-19). And it is because of this that we may have the opportunity to reign with Him for an eternity (Revelation 1:5-6).

Because of the power of His Word and His Blood, He is "exalted to sit on the right of the Majesty of high." Peter said that He was raised up to sit on David's throne (Acts 2:30-32). Paul told young Timothy that Christ is the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15). Paul said that He must reign until all enemies are subdued (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Therefore, Christ being the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person, having the

honor of the worlds being made by Him, and power to uphold all things by His Word merits the devotion, obedience, and loyalty of all men.³⁵

CHRIST IS MADE BETTER THAN THE ANGELS: (1:4-5)

Christ obtained a more excellent name than the angels did. Christ is made better than the angels both by His incarnation and by making purification for sins through His death and resurrection.³⁶ This made the Son of God superior to the angels in rank, dignity, authority, and power (Ephesians 1:20-23).³⁷ By virtue of His sufferings, death and resurrection He "hath by inheritance" obtained a more excellent name than they (Philippians 2:9-11; Romans 1:4). He is the only begotten Son of God (John 1:14), and is known as the "first born from the dead" (Colossians 1:18). He is the "Savior", "Redeemer", "Deliver", "Prophet", "Priest", "King", and "Lawgiver".³⁸ These terms cannot be applied in anyway to angels.

"Unto which of the angels said he at anytime, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." (v. 5). No such statement is ever made in prophecy concerning angels. Angels by reason of their nature have not been born from the dead.³⁹ Angels and authorities and powers must be made subject to Christ (1 Peter 3:22).⁴⁰

CHRIST RECEIVES HOMAGE OF THE ANGELS: (1:6-7)

"When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world" (1:6). When Jesus was born in the world the angels came and worshiped Him (Luke 2:13-14). 41 After Christ had been tempted by Satan in the garden, the angels came and ministered unto Him (Matthew 4:11). At the resurrection, the angels gave praise and reverence unto Him (Matthew 28:2; Luke 24:4-6; John

20:12). At the ascension, the angel's worshiped Him (Acts 1:10-11). Thus it can be easily seen that Christ receives worship from the angels.

"Who maketh His angels spirits" (1:7). This statement is contained in prophecy as the Psalmist stated, "Who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire:"(Psalm 104:4).⁴² Since Christ has inherited a more excellent name than the angels by His sufferings, death and resurrection; and is exalted as the Son of God above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, and since all the angels of God are required to bow down and worship Him, we should count it all honor to be governed by Him, and rejoice to worship God in His name.⁴³

THE THRONE IS TO BE ETERNAL: (1:8)

This statement made by the Hebrew writer was also established in prophecy. It was foretold a thousand years before Christ ever came into the world that God would establish His throne forever (Psalm 45:6-7). The prophet Daniel prophesied that God promised to establish an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14). The angels that announced the birth of Jesus told Mary that He should reign over the house of David forever (Luke 1:30-33). The apostles spoke of the everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ that has been established (2 Peter 1:11). The writer used these well-established and well-known facts to encourage his Hebrew brethren to be loyal to Christ as King.

The throne of God's Son does not end with this world (1:8-12). God laid the foundations of the earth (Psalm 102:25-27; Isaiah 48:13; Jeremiah 32:17). The heavens are also the work of His hand (Psalm 8:3). These were not created to stand forever, but shall perish (Isaiah 65:17; 2

Peter 3:7-10).⁴⁴ Their nature is not adapted to an eternal existence. Christ is as Divine as God, His Father, and is eternal with Him. Therefore, His years fail not and His government shall not end (John 1:1-2; 8:58; James 1:17).⁴⁵

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE PREDOMINATE FEATURE IN HIS GOVERNMENT: (1:9-14)

The Hebrew writer states that righteousness is the scepter of Christ's kingdom (1:8). "Scepter" is a badge or emblem of authority. 46 It was because of His love of righteousness that Christ was suited to be king of God's people and he was vested with authority as such (Psalm 40:7-9; 45:7). God had said that David's throne and kingdom should be established with justice and righteousness (Isaiah 9:7; 32:1-2). God respects no man's person, but righteousness is the principle by which one is accepted with Him (Acts 10:34). Paul in his sermon on Mars Hill stated that God would judge the world by righteousness (Acts 17:31). Christ's judgment is true because it is of God. His judgment is just and righteous because it will be according to the Word of God that He has revealed to man (John 12:48). God has not committed to the angel's authority to rule over man. They are simply servants sent forth to minister to man and help man in his struggle against unrighteousness in what ever way God's will allows. For example:

- 1. They stopped the mouths of the lions so that Daniel suffered no hurt in his loyalty to God (Daniel 6:22).
- 2. They ministered to Jesus at the time of the temptation when human strength was exhausted (Matthew 4:11).
- 3. They opened the prison doors for men who were bound for preaching the gospel when human power could not overcome (Acts 5:19; 12:7).
- 4. They made it possible for earnest worshipers of Jehovah to hear the gospel (Acts 8:26-27; 10:3-6).
- 5. They gave encouragement to men who were loyal to God (Acts 27:23).

Considering the eternal nature of Christ's throne, the fact that the heavens and earth shall pass away with all the governments of the earth, considering the righteous nature of His judgment, and the help of the angels in our efforts to be righteous, every Christian should be encouraged to be faithful in serving God through Christ.

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HOLDING FAST TO OUR SALVATION

(Hebrews 2)

By Richard Mansel

Introduction

Christianity is fraught with many challenges that can either strengthen our resolve or lead us into dangerous waters. In that vein, the Holy Spirit has left sober warnings in Hebrews for us to remember as we maneuver through our lives (2:1-4; 3:12-19; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:25-29). We can hold to the Lord's hand or we can let Him slip into the background. The choice is ours. The consequences are dire.

"Two young men were fishing above a low dam on a river near their hometown. As they were concentrating on catching fish, they were unaware that they had drifted until they were not far from the water flowing over the dam. When they realized their situation, the current near the dam had become too powerful for them to keep their boat from going over.

Below the dam the water was dashing with strong force over great boulders and through crevices in the rocks. Caught by the swirling waters under the rocks, they never came to the surface. After days of relentless searching, the divers finally found one body, and then two or three days later, the other."

In this grievous story we find a powerful lesson of what can happen when we fail to be attentive to our faith. Life is like a hamster on a wheel. We run around and around, never seeming to get anywhere. Sleep, work, eat, sleep, work, eat. The routine becomes paralyzing and if we let it consume us then something will be expendable. Often, God becomes an item on that list. Then one day we awake from our self-imposed slumber and years have passed and God is nowhere to be found. We have drifted away and the rapids are fast approaching.

When we go to the beach and recline on a raft we close our eyes and let the sun wash over us. In our leisure we fail to notice that we have drifted far from our point of origin and we are lost and possibly in danger. Likewise, we can do the same thing spiritually. Therefore, we need someone to awaken us from our slumber so we can stay on the road to heaven. Peter wrote, "Be

sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (2 Peter 5:8). We cannot be vigilant if we are napping.

We must understand that drifting requires no real effort, physically or spiritually. We as sinful people (Romans 3:23) must realize that there is nothing that we can do to earn heaven (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, nothing is exactly how we can earn hell. Scripture is conclusive on the sin of omission. We can turn to the parables of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) and the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) for examples. The danger is that when we leave God there is nowhere else to go but into the arms of Satan.

Determining the Context

The author of Hebrews is addressing a group of Christians who are considering apostasy. Specifically, they are contemplating a return to Judaism and its safe confines. Lindars' words ring true.

They have lost their original fervor and hanker after the temple worship with its splendid ceremonial and miss the security of the traditions of their Jewish past. The aim of the letter is to persuade them to remain in the church with renewed confidence in their Christian (walk). ²

Accordingly, the author of Hebrews, who is unknown, presents an argument in order to dissuade them from this decision. Describing Christ as the Savior and the new covenant as superior to the Law of Moses, he offers the following evidence to build his case. In 1:1-4 he establishes Christ's Sonship and Deity, His superiority to angels (1:4-14) and His High Priesthood (2:16-18). Then in 2:1-3, the author appeals to the veracity of the Word delivered by the Holy Spirit and the evidence of signs and wonders (2:4).

Finally, 2:1-3 could almost be a parenthetical statement nestled between 1:14 and 2:5. In so doing, the author is offering a further examination of the "salvation" mentioned in 1:14.

Alert to Dangers (2:1)

Hearkening back to 2 Peter 5:8 and the "roaming lion" we clearly see the danger of being asleep on our Christian walks. We need to be alert, and God has often reminded His children of such a necessity. Joel 3:9 reads, "*Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men.*" Likewise, in Judges 7, God is reducing Gideon's army for battle so that His power could be exhibited. One of His methods was to have the army take a drink from a stream. Those who stayed alert and scooped the water in their hands were selected while those who were prostrate to drink were sent home. Soldiers must be ever wary of enemy attack.

We simply must, as Christians, be more attentive to the traps that the Devil has laid in our paths. Revelation 12:15 soberly describes these traps as a "flood of evil" which he has "spewed" upon God's people. Sadly, he is often very successful.

Veith in his book, *Postmodernism Times*, cites studies that exemplify the victories that Satan has wrought among those who profess to be Christians, in a broad sense. According to these polls conducted by George Barna and published in his book, *The Barna Report: What*

Americans Believe. ³ We find these troubling statistics.

66% of Americans do not believe in absolute truth.

72% of those 18-25 do not believe in absolute truth

53% of evangelical Christians do not believe in absolute truth.

56% of fundamentalist Christians engage in sex outside of marriage.

49% of Protestants are pro-choice

49% of evangelicals believe in euthanasia.

Drifting has caused so many to be easy prey to Satan. As used in 2:1, "drift" means to "flow past, glide by." ⁴ Proverbs 3:21 (NIV) uses the same concept. "My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight."

Christianity requires more than just showing up. With freewill, we have the daily decision to keep Christ before us. He understands when we fall, but He expects us to get up and continue the journey to heaven. Moreover, grace is strong when we are weak, but will not be there when we choose to turn away. God will, so to speak, never let go of our hand. However, we can let go

of His. When we do, we may find ourselves in the situation described in 6:4-8 where we can never return.

In addition to the sinful natures and attitudes that we can so easily lapse into, we must be alert to the dangers of false teachers and those who would de-emphasize the Word of God. Three quotes will be sufficient. First, not too long ago, I heard a speaker say, "...those who think they will be saved by their knowledge of God's Word." Apparently, we should depend on something else for knowledge of God. Secondly, I read the following in an article online. "Inerrancy is a red herring. We must still rely on study and prayer, informed by the Spirit, to know the truth." ⁵ Finally, we have Max Lucado's legendary statement; "There is no secret code. The Bible is a love letter as opposed to a blueprint. You don't read a love letter the same way you read a blueprint." ⁶ These attitudes are troubling as men move away from the principles of Scripture and into the subjective nature of human thought and emotion. With the latter, they are able to sway the hearts of men and lead them away from God for a man-made doctrine.

We must stay in the Word so that we can avoid such pitfalls (1 Timothy 2:15).

Attention to Experience (2:2)

The Hebrews author uses a method of argumentation called *qal wachomer* which means "light and heavy." Thompson writes, "if such things had validity under the old covenant, represented as the 'lighter' situation, how much more must they be true in the 'heavy' case?"(Cf. Matthew 12:11-12; 2 Corinthians 3:7-11). ⁷ Here he argues, "if there was such a thing as retribution under the old covenant declared by angels, how much more retribution there will be in a covenant declared by a Son?" ⁸

God's retribution in the Old Testament was swift and absolute. One need only ask Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2), Onan (Genesis 38:4-10) and Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:3-8) if God's Word is certain and retribution swift. They chose to reinterpret the Word of God for their own purposes and found their hasty demise. Fear came upon the people as a result of their deaths. However, the fear was short-lived as men quickly turned away from the same God who had stopped the hearts of His enemies.

But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger that one brings reproach on the Lord, and he shall be cut off from his people. Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off, his guilt shall be upon him (Numbers 15:30-31).

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself (Ezekiel 18:20).

This hard line has brought controversy to the minds of many concerning God. When the Old Testament records the wrath of God toward evildoers, the reader shudders. However, in the New Testament we do not read of such retribution. How can this be true?

Marcion, in the early church, saw this as impossible to reconcile. How can the vicious God of the Old be the same loving, patient God of the New? He decided that there were two Gods and that one was good and loving and the other vengeful. Subconsciously, many have believed the same thing in that grace will cover rebellion and reinterpretation of God's Word.

Today's mantra is "why are we afraid to let grace cover doctrine?" Why? For fear of my soul. If this passage yields anything, it is that God will be no more tolerant of defamation of His Word than he was in days of old. If I alter the Word of God here on earth, God will alter my name in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12). As John Donne said, "...mighty and dreadful thou art so."

Finally, the Hebrews writer says that the Old Covenant was delivered by angels as described in Deuteronomy 33:2, Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19. This Word proved true and the basis for an entire civilization and code of living for the people of God for generations. The audience of these words held this Word dear to their hearts. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses had commanded them to teach their children the teachings and laws of God and make it a part of their very souls. So, if this "proved steadfast" (2:2) then the new covenant was to be even more valuable (Hebrews 8-9) because it was delivered by the Son of God (2:3; cf. 8:6). Therefore, they were to hold it even greater reverence.

Anchored to the Rock (2:3)

If we are to prevent a shipwreck of our faith, we must find something on which to moor in the raging storm. God's Word provides that anchor.

Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast (Hebrews 6:18b-19a).

God's immutability should be a stalwart in the life of a Christian. Knowing His unconditional love and His faithfulness (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5) we can be assured that our lives are safe in His harbor. We have His Word as confirmation.

Over 2,000 times, Scripture claims to be of God. We can be certain of its inspiration because of the internal evidence of its assertions and the fulfillment of prophecy (2 Samuel 23:2; Jeremiah 1:9; Psalm 119:97; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17, et al). Moreover, we can also be assured of the veracity of the external evidence because no one has been able to deny its truths by logic, archeology or science. It has withstood the measure of time and opposition.

Jesus taught His disciples and then, before His departure, sent them to the world by His authority (Matthew 28:18-20) to spread the gospel. They would remember the words of Christ and be led in their missions by the Spirit (John 14:25-26; 16:13). Therefore, we can know that the Word they taught and the words they, and others led by the Spirit, wrote are of the highest of standards. The Old Covenant was delivered by angels (Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19) while the New Covenant has been delivered by His Son, Jesus (8:6). Therefore, the Hebrew audience should weigh this against their thoughts of apostasy.

For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him (2:2-3).

Considering the certainty and swiftness of God in the Old Testament, we have only to consider the gravity with which God holds His Word in this new covenant. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse" (John 15:22). We must listen or perish. "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matthew 12:30).

How can we neglect this wonderful salvation? If we were suffering from a ravaging disease with certain death and refused a cure then the onus would be on our head. There would, therefore, be no pity. Likewise, how can we "neglect so great a salvation?" Christ came and died a cruel, agonizing death so that we could be forgiven of our transgressions. How could we let that be of no effect? How could we have let Him die in vain? "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

There are no excuses and none will be allowed on the day of reckoning (Luke 14:16ff). Romans 5:6-11 tells us of the possibilities that exist for the remission of sins, if we will take it.

"God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Additionally, He will always be there for us if we will stay with Him. However, if we drift away through neglect or reject Him then there can be nowhere else to go but to Satan. God will let us go, with tears in His eyes, and if we still have life in our veins and breath still courses through our lungs then we have the hope of returning to His loving arms. As the song says, "where could I go but to the Lord?" ⁹

- ¹ Billy Norris, *Gospel Guide*. Copied from an online sermon from Mark A. Copeland's Executable Outline Series, March 29, 2000.
- ² Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of The Letter to the Hebrews*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1991), 4.
- ³ George Veith, *Postmodern Times*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books), 16.
- ⁴ W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Iowa Falls: World Bible Publishers, 1981), 339.
- ⁵ Steve Falkenberg, "Bibliolatry–Bible Worship," 6/17/00.
- ⁶ Goebel Music, "Behold the Pattern (Pensacola: Austin McGary & Company, 1991), 114.
- ⁷ James Thompson, The Letter to the Hebrews, in The Living Word Commentary, edited by Everett Ferguson (Austin: R.B. Sweet Co, 1971)15:35.
- 8 Ibid
- ⁹ J.B. Coats, "Where Could I Go?" in *Songs of the Church*, compiled and edited by Alton H. Howard (West Monroe: Howard Publishing, 1971), 425.

HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS

(Hebrews 3)

By Mark Mosher

I am indeed grateful and honored by the invitation to be a part of this lectureship. The book of Hebrews is timely and much needed in the brotherhood and world today. The subject assigned me is "Harden Not Your Hearts" from Hebrews 3:8 with an overview of Hebrews 3.

To understand and appreciate the great chapter, one must study it in light of the purpose and background of the book. The Hebrew people were forsaking New Testament Christianity to return to Judaism. A number of reasons can be connected to this departure. The first generation of the church had passed and the church had not risen above persecution. There was the social eloquence of those who practiced the Law of Moses. The high priest was one who was highly respected. Those who continued to follow Christianity were scorned by those who did not. The old concepts of ritualism and circumcision were being taught on a grand scale. As a result, the author sets forth to show that the new covenant was superior to the old. The high priest and the Law of Moses cannot compare to the high priest of Christ. Therefore, having shown Christ to be greater than the prophets and the angels (Chapter 1) and showing as a result one should hold fast the Word of Christ (Chapter 2), he therefore declares the superiority of the priesthood and house of Christ.

No doubt, this book should be studied by those who have been raised in the church and have turned Christianity into a mere ritual through long-standing practices brought about by forgetting God's purpose. No doubt, those who are looking for something new should study this book and great in religion yet have been settling on emotionalism and neo-Pentecostalism. In Christ and His church, there is always something better. This should cause many to be drawn to Christ and

to never harden one's heart to one so great. Yet, the one who does not consider God nor fails to love God will allow sin to deceive his heart and be hardened and then fall because of unbelief. Let us therefore see what it takes to not harden our heart before God.

ONE WILL NOT HARDEN HIS HEART IF HE CONSIDERS GOD (HEBREWS 3:1-6)

The author of Hebrews wants desperately for us to consider the Christ. Robertson as defines the word "consider", "To put the mind down on a thing, to fix the mind on." It is used by Christ in Matthew 7:3 to describe the hypocrite who fails to see the obvious beam in his own eye. It is used by Christ in Luke 12:24,27 to teach us to closely look at how God cares for His creation. If God cares for the birds and the flowers, how much more He will care for those created in His image.

As we consider the greatness of Christ, we are called to consider His apostleship. The term "apostle" simply means, "one sent forth".² He was thus sent by the father to finish the work that began after man's fall (Psm.119: 126)³. This work was the work of the redemption of man. Christ was therefore sent to provide a way of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18-21). This work of man's reconciliation back to God was finished when Christ died on the cross (John 19:30).

As we consider the greatness of Christ, we are called to consider the significance of His priesthood. The significance of His priesthood is seen through the understanding that everything necessary to our salvation is centered on it. His priesthood brings to us salvation, protection, and forgiveness of sins. Through His priesthood, one can have reconciliation with God (Heb. 2:17). Through His priesthood, He is able to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). Through His priesthood, one can obtain eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12). This priesthood, being superior to the priesthoods of patriarchal and Mosaical laws, is an everlasting priesthood (Heb. 7:17, 24).

Although Moses was an apostle of God sent to Egypt to free God's people from slavery, Christ's apostleship saves man from sin. Although Moses mediatorship saved the people from God's wrath, Christ's mediatorship pays the price for sin.

The significance of this priesthood is seen in the church, the place over which Christ is high priest (Heb. 3:2-6). It is described in Hebrews 10:21 as the house of God. Paul declared in II Timothy 3:15, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God..." If one truly considers the Christ, he will not harden his heart but rather be drawn to the blessings of Christ's priesthood. He will want to be a part of the family of God, the household of God. The house of Christ is in contrast to Moses' house. Moses was a servant in his house while Christ is a servant over His house. He owns His house, for He built it and purchased it. Therefore, we can "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6b).

ONE WILL NOT HARDEN HIS HEART IF HE LOVES GOD (HEB. 3:7-11)

The example the Hebrew writer gives to encourage one not to harden his heart is Israel in the wilderness. One of the core causes of the fall of the first generation in the wilderness was their misconception of God. When they left, it was not long before a complaint was heard. They encamped before the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army behind them and said,

... Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness (Exo. 14:11-12).

Although God through Moses parted the Red Sea and swallowed up Pharaoh's army, they continued to complain at Mara over the bitter waters and Rephradim over lack of water and food.

What was never heard in the wilderness was how God took care of the bitter waters and how God gave them water from the rock and how God gave them food from heaven and how God gave them victory over the Amalekites and how God caused their clothes and shoes to not wear out. Their blindness toward the goodness and gentleness of God caused them to proclaim that God hated them (Deut. 1:27). It resulted in a discouraged and hardened heart (Deut. 1:28).

One of the grave dangers we face in the church today is the danger of familiarity. We read of the house of God in the Bible (Eph. 3:17-19). We hear often how Christ laid down His life (I John 3:1-3). Yet, when we worship God and partake of the Lord's supper and hear those great proclamations, does it make an impression on us? Does it move us to greater devotion to God? And yet this love is a love that is undeserving. Christ declared in Matthew 5:43-48.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

We learn from this text that God does not love those who are worthy of it. For if God loved so, no one would receive His love and all would be lost. How great it is to receive the great blessings of God. To know that no matter what the world may cast at me, it cannot curse me (Matt. 5:11). To know that God will see me through the rough times, and therefore I do not have to dwell on them. To know that God's love will see me all the way to heaven. Yet, how sad when we become so familiar that it does not move us to greater things. That is a form of a hardened heart. When we fail to be active in the church and reach out to those lost or in need, we have hardened our hearts toward the Christ. When we fail to stand with truth and oppose

error, we have hardened our heart toward God. When we support those who divide the very body of Christ, our actions imitate him to the soldier who pierced His side. If our heart is hardened toward God, then it will not be willing to give the whole of self to God. Israel was told by Moses just thirty days before his death, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:4-5, emphasis mine). Our love for God cannot be divided. When choices are to be made between self or God or and world and our choices turn to self or the world, we have divided our love for God. Yet "the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4-5). The scribe commenting on Christ's answer said to love with all your heart is "more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33b). Jesus then replied, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God . . ." (Mark 12:34). This scribe had learned something we must all learn. If you love God with our whole heart, you will do what God says in the way He says do it. You will not harden your heart to the message.

Moses declared to Israel in Deuteronomy 7:9,:"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him, and keep His commandments to a thousand generations." (emphasis mine) To love God does not require mere emotion. The love of the Bible always produces active obedience. God's love for man and man's love for God is always a disposition of mind that results in a faith that is expressed in obedience (Rom. 10:10). Re: Daniel. How sad when God's people forget that love and harden their hearts toward Him. Daniel's prayer in Babylon was a remembrance of God's mercy and love and an acknowledgment of Israel's hardened heart and rebellion toward Him (Dan. 9:3-7). Their rebellion was a manifestation of an improper heart toward God and an improper attitude toward His commands. John encourages Christians today to not fall into the trap when he stated,

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and His commandments are not grievous (I John 5:3). The Greek word "barerai" from which grievous is derived is defined as "heavy or burdensome." Christ never promised that complete obedience to Him would always be pleasant. On the contrary, He stated, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). Therefore, certain commands I keep may not always be pleasant. Yet, now matter how unpleasant, they never become a burden. Those who harden their hearts toward God have turned obedience into a burden. Those who are inactive in the church and attendance have turned the obedience of God into a burden.

Yet, there is another danger that was manifest in Israel that led to their fall. It was a sin that began in their heart that led to an improper way to think about God and one's relationship to Him. Israel at Mt. Sinai had at that time seen the manifestation of the power of God to take care of them. Yet, when they saw Moses leave, they felt God too had left. That thinking led them to build an idol and worship it, giving in to passion and sensuality. Their complaining of God and God's leaders and all God had done for them did so consume them they felt they were all alone in their trials. When one gets to the point in his spiritual life when all he can see is the negative and all he can do is murmur about all he has to do for God and he becomes frightened about the future and begins to insist that he must do it by himself, he has hardened his heart to the point were Israel was and there fell 23,000 in one day. Paul, in reminding us of Israel's thinking, warned, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed let he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). When we think we are standing without God, we must be careful because our hearts harden against God, and we look only to self and the end is unbelief (Heb. 12:18-19). Therefore, Paul said to flee from that thinking (I Cor. 10:14). To love God necessitates that I believe His promise, "... *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*" (Heb. 13:5b).

ONE WILL NOT HARDEN HIS HEART IF HE REFUSES TO BE DECEIVED BY SIN (HEBREWS 3:12-13)

One of the attributes of sin is that it deceives. Sin will rob one of the ability to see truth and love truth. Those who do not fill their minds with God's Word never come to the place where they can make righteous judgments. The Hebrew brethren had not studied the Word of God so as to exercise their senses to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14). There are those today who will use statements such as, "It sounds all right to me" or "I don't see anything wrong with it." From their viewpoint, they may not see it, but sin has deceived their thinking. Unless one studies the Bible, he will not be able to see truth or hear truth or speak truth. Therefore, one must guard his heart carefully so as to not harden his heart toward righteous thinking.

When one has filled his heart with truth, when he sees the truth and hears the truth and speaks the truth, he then is in a position where others will not deceive him. Moses warned Israel,

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ve shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee. If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy father; Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon

him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (Deut. 13:1-10).

Sometimes the very people who will mislead us and deceive us are those closest to us. Jesus declared, "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household, 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. 10:36-47) If I allow one close to me to be the determining factor in what I do spiritually, I have hardened my heart toward God. The Hebrew writer warns us that others should not deceive us.

CONCLUSION

The quotation of Hebrews 3:7-9 was taken from Psalm 95:7-11. The Psalmist warned many years ago to rely on God's strength and therefore listen to God. To do that, he must give his heart to God. The heart of man is the very seat of his affections, passions and thoughts. The heart is that which includes the intellect, will, and emotion of man. If one continually rejects that which is right, he puts himself in a position of total rebellion. The entire forty years of Israel was characterized by rebellion. May we not fall into their trap but rather give our hearts to God.

BIOGRAPHY

Mark Mosher was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1965. He is the son of Keith, Sr. and Dorothy Mosher. Brother Mosher graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1987 with the equivalent of BS and also in 1991 with the equivalent of an MA In 1991, he received his B.A. degree from Southern Christian University. He has preached in Arkansas, Mississippi, and has spoken on several lectureships. He has taught part time for the Florida School of Preaching. He has been with the Wesconnett Church of Christ in Jacksonville, Florida, since 1993.

Brother Mosher is married to the former Beckye Bell, and they have three children: Caitlin, Cassidy, and Callahan.

End Notes

- ¹ Archibald Thomas Robertson, <u>Word Pictures In The New Testament</u>, Vol. V: <u>The Fourth Gospel The Epistle To The Hebrews</u> (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1932), p. 353.
- ² W. E. Vine, Vine's <u>Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words</u> (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company), p. 65.
- ³The Holy Bible, King James Version (World Bible Publishers, n.d.(Every Bible reference in the manuscript is to this version.
- ⁴ Robertson, Thomas Archibald, Vol VI, p. 238.

LET US THEREFORE FEAR

(Hebrews 4)

By Stacey W. Grant

It is indeed an honor to have the opportunity to speak in this great series of lessons. The author also commends Brother Riley Nelson and the great Richmond Hill congregation for their love for the Truth and hosting this much-needed event.

Not to long ago, there was an updated movie version made of an old science fiction television show entitled, "Lost In Space". One of the more notable traits of the show was the robot's sounding the alarm of imminent danger. His, "danger, Will Robinson! Danger!" was always taken seriously by the Robinson family. The most memorable individual of the cast was Doctor Zachary Smith. When the show began, Doctor Smith was bold and brazen. As the show progressed, he digressed to become one of the biggest cowards ever known on network television. With each new adventure or challenge, he became more cowardly. He truly was a coward among cowards.

In many ways, the author of this epistle is similar to the robot with his sounding the alarm of imminent apostasy. He knew that the greatest danger these Christians faced was not the threat of persecution, indeed they had suffered a great deal for their faith, but the threat of not persevering their trouble times. His love for their precious souls led him to declare, "danger, my fellow Christians! Danger!"

These Christians to whom the epistle was addressed can be compared to doctor Zachary Smith. They, like he, started their journey with much confidence. However, they because of the difficulty of the task before them, decided that it was more advantageous to abort the mission, to turn and run away. They possessed fear, but it was the wrong type, the type that was detrimental to their spiritual well being.

Christians today can benefit tremendously from the powerful, prevalent message of Hebrews chapter four. Chapter four contributes to the epistle's great theme by: (1) warning that unbelief results in absolute failure; (2) revealing the superior rest which awaits the faithful; (3) giving an expose' of the work of the Word; and, (4) by presenting Christ as the compassionate High Priest.

THE DANGER OF UNBELIEF (VV.1-3)

It is not mere supposition, but a proven FACT that every Christian can fall from grace (Gal. 5:4); this is why there is the admonition, "let us therefore fear" (v.1). "Us", no doubt, encompasses all Christians. The Bible reminds us that God has already given the antedate to sin and the deterrent to apostasy to us. The Father contributes by providing our every need (Psa. 37:25; Jms. 1:17) and acknowledging our prayers (1Pet.3: 12). Christ provides us complete pardon of sin and the guilt thereof (Mark 16:15-16; 1John 1:8-11), the perfect example to follow (Phil.2: 5-8), constant companionship (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:15), competent representation before the Father (1Tim. 2:15; Rom. 8:34), and rest from worrying (Matt. 6:24, 11:28-30). The Holy Spirit supplies guidance through the Word (Psa. 119:11, 105; 2Tim 3:16-17), strength through the Word (Eph. 6:10), assistance in prayer and confession (Rom. 8:26-27). (These verses declare that the Spirit does something for us, not to us, as some brethren now proclaim).

The local church helps the individual Christian avert the danger of apostasy by offering him stability and support, the opportunity to grow in knowledge and service, establish meaningful relationships through the avenue of fellowship and to worship together with those of like precious faith (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:24-25).

The individual Christian must first accept personal responsibility for his spiritual growth (2Per. 3:18). He can avoid apostasy by adjoining himself to a local congregation in his community which is sound in the Faith (Jude 3). He should be a participant instead of a spectator at his local congregation (2Cor. 8:1-5, 12). He should be constant in prayer (1Thess. 5:17). He should be fervent in his personal study of God's Word (Psa. 1: 1-3; Acts 17:11), being honest when teaching God's Word (2Tim. 2:15) and being fruitful personally and evangelistically speaking (2Pet. 1:1-11). If he follows God's plan, "to give diligence to make your calling and election sure: fir if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2Pet. 1:10), he will avoid the highway to hell, the road of certain destruction (Matt. 7:13-14).

"Fear" is the word phobia which means to frighten, to be alarmed, to be sore afraid". The import of the lesson from chapter three verse seven through chapter four verse eleven is to inflict fear in the minds of those contemplating desertion from Christ. The word "fear" is a part of the family of words from which the English word phobia comes. If one possesses a phobia of someone or something (e.g. heights, spiders, and snakes), he tends to avoid it as much as possible. In this case, Christians are to avoid the fallen Israelites' example of unbelief. Their ungodliness prevented them from entering into the land of promise (Num. 13-14). Christians today can miss out of "entering into his rest", that is, heaven, if unbelief rules their lives.

Interestingly, the author states that the Gospel (*eueengelismenoi*) was also preached to the Israelites. The term gospel means, "to announce good news, declare, bring glad tidings." Israel surely did receive good news; sadly, to them it was "bad" news. Comparatively, the "good news" (Num. 13-14) they heard was inferior to the "good news" God gives or declares today.

THE REWARD OF OBEDIENCE (vv.4-11)

Those of us who watched the Super Bowl this past January may still remember that the Tennessee Titans came up a yard or two short of victory. How disheartening it had to be for the Titans to be so close, yet not win the world championship.

Likewise, Israel came up short of God's blessings because they failed to comply with the conditions given relative to their promised rest (v.1). With each blessing God gives, there are conditions, which must be met. Take note of these scenarios: (1) Noah's Ark (Gen. 6); (2) the walls of Jericho (Josh. 6); (3) Naaman (2Kgs. 5); and (4) salvation (Mark 16:15-16). Israel, like many today, desired the blessings, but failed to comply with the conditions attached (v.2).

The author alludes to the two rests offered under the Old Covenant (vv.4-8) (1) Sabbath day (Gen. 2:2; Ex. 20:11), and (2) the rest Israel enjoyed under Joshua's leadership (Josh. 21:44, 22:4).

Verse seven refers to an argument made from Psalm 95:7-11. And from these well known historical facts David warns and admonishes his own contemporaries, and through all subsequent generations, not to do as the rebellious Israelites had done under Moses; but to promptly enter God's rest whenever invited to do so. If ye hear his voice today, obey it today. And hence it is clearly implied that even in the time of David, the Israelites, though in possession of Canaan, had really not entered into God's rest. ¹.

"Jesus" in verse eight refers to Joshua. Both names are identical in Hebrew and Greek. This verse mentions that: (1) through Joshua perfect, complete rest did not occur; and (2) another

day of rest was mentioned. Conclusion: "there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (v.9). Rest under the Old Covenant is inferior, temporary in comparison to the rest, which awaits the faithful (Rev.14: 13). God's admonition: "Let us labor (give diligence) therefore to enter into that rest" (v.11).

THE WORK OF WORD (vv.12-13)

The Bible is not a compilation of dead letters! It is a living Book with a living message! The main argument of verses twelve and thirteen is that: the Bible will reveal the true you (Rom. 10:17, Jms. 1:22-25). Its importance should never be taken lightly. God uses the Word to test our commitment or the lack thereof to Him. As stated earlier, each blessing has a condition attached to it. Yes, the Word is quick (living) and powerful (active).

It is what the Spirit uses to convict the sinner of his error (John 16:7-8; Acts 2:36; Eph. 6:17). It is what the Lord uses to comfort His saints and offer them hope (1Thess. 4:13-18). How excellent is God's infallible Word!

The Greek word translated "sword" means a short sword or dagger". The emphasis is on the Word's power to penetrate and expose the inner heart of man. The Word is also a "discerner" or "critic". The Word exposes our true intentions. It reveals how God views us. The honest heart will resolve, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ecc. 12:114, Psm. 119:11, 105). Obedience to God's Word is the Christian's only viable option (Matt. 7:13-29).

The Bible reveals that whatever the Spirit does to man, He does so through the medium or agency of the word. As a mechanic uses a wrench or as a lumberjack uses a saw, so the Spirit uses the Word. The two are inseparable.

Holy Spirit Action Word

John 16:8 convicts Acts 2:36

John 16:13 guides 2Tim.3:16-17

Gen.1:2 created Heb.1:3

John 14:16-18 comforts 1Thess.4:18

2Thess.2:13 sanctifies John 17:17

Rom.8:11 indwells Col.3:16

John 3:8 saves 1Pet.1:23-25

John 14:17 Truth resides in John 17:17

Acts 5:1-4 Lives forever 1Pet1:25

JESUS UNDERSTANDS (VV.14-16)

Remember reader, these Christians were experiencing some very difficult times. Christ is now pictured as a caring, sympathetic High Priest, Who is always willing to assist His followers.

First, He is able to assist us because He is "great" or "superior" to all other high priests before Him. Second, He is in the presence of God at all times. So, He is able to make intercession for us at any time. Third, He can relate to the difficulty to temptation. He understands our weaknesses. His overcoming sin reveals to us that victory over sin is possible. Fourth, all Christians are afforded the privilege of accessing God's throne "boldly" or "with confidence" knowing that God will assist them because He is true to His word (Matt. 28:20).

CONCLUSION

This powerful chapter of this power epistle reminds Christians today: (1) never to be ruled by unbelief; the end results are unimaginable; (2) the rest offered today is far superior to any God offered before it; (3) the word is living and active and accurate; and (4) Christ is only a prayer away. Faith is the victory!

^{1.} Robert Milligan, A Commentary On The Epistle To The Hebrews, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1987) p. 165

THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION

(HEBREWS 5)

BY BARRY GILREATH, JR

INTRODUCTION

The book of Hebrews is one of the greatest efforts found in scripture of a man trying to save the church from apostasy. From the moment the book is read, one is immediately impressed by the writer's monumental attempt towards the salvaging of his brethren's souls. If the book of Acts could be described as the book of conversions, the book of Hebrews could be described as the book of restoration. The restoration of the souls of these people was the writer's utmost concern.

Although there has been considerable debate concerning the authorship of the book, for whatever reason, the Holy Spirit did not choose to reveal this information to readers. However, few would doubt that the original audience did not know this man, whom we will refer to in this lecture as simply the Hebrew writer. Perhaps he was a preacher. Perhaps he was an elder, an Apostle, or just a concerned Christian. It can not be known for certain, but it is for sure that if the church had more concerned Christians like the Hebrew writer, there would be far fewer sons of God leaving the church with no intentions of ever returning again.

It is evident from a study of the book of Hebrews that the writer is passionately trying to convince Jewish Christians in particular not to return to their former lives in Judaism. These Christians for whatever reasons where on their way out of the "door of the church" and seemingly had no desire to even look back. You might say that they had lost their "amen". They had lost the zeal and love for the Lord that had originally attracted them to the gospel. Some time had now past since the establishment of the church on Pentecost and their former lives

under Judaism now looked more favorable to them than their present state. They were downtrodden and discouraged, and so the writer encourages them to lift up their hands that hang down and feeble knees, and be healed of their spiritual ailment (12:15). Now it is not unheard of that individual Christians and even whole congregations will sometimes fall prey to discouragement and loose their "amen". But the problem with these Christians is that they weren't down on all four looking for it. They seemingly just didn't care.

Seeing this great tragedy in the making, their friend and fellow brother in Christ Jesus, rises courageously and urgently to the pressing need. Sometimes he begs. Sometimes he warns. Sometimes he commands, exhorts, and pleads with these brethren. to soberly consider what they were about to give up. It is true in life that some things you give up, you do not get back (Hebrews 12:15-17). What a heart-rending tragedy it would be indeed to give up the greatest gift ever offered to mankind. The challenge for the Hebrew writer was to get them to see the error of their way. Sometimes he was stern. Sometimes he was gentle. However, always in every word penned, he was passionate in his reasoning. Argument after argument is carefully laid before their eyes in an attempt to convince them that returning to their former lives would be to walk away from something greater and grander than that from which they would leave.

I. AN EXPOSITION OF THE CHAPTER

The Role of the Priest (5:1-4)

Throughout the entire book the writer reflects upon many allusions from the Old Testament that were so important to the Jews. It is evident that he knew his audience quite well, not so much by name, but by their affections and interests. By using that which they loved and held dear, he would attempt to convince them of the legitimacy of the Christ they had once

bowed their knee to in obedience. Chapter five is a continuation of the many Jewish allusions and their relationship to Christ.

The writer constructs his arguments in the chapter seeking to prove the right of Christ to hold that blessed title of the High Priest of God's people. He reminded his brethren that Jehovah selects every high priest. The high priest does not elect himself to such a position, nor is he chosen as such by a popularity vote. Unlike the elected positions that men often hold within worldly circles, God alone chose whom His high priest would be. The selection is therefore by divine appointment, and should not be disregarded or rejected as these Christians seemingly were now disregarding the Lord, the high priest of the New Covenant.

The writer reminds his audience that the high priest is selected from among men so that he might be mindful of the weaknesses and shortcomings of his brethren. In the previous chapter he had penned concerning Jesus that, "...we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15)." Jesus was from the Father in that he could help them, but He was also from among them in that He would help them. "Therefore, we can come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (4:16)."

In the section under consideration the Hebrew penman specifically mentioned one of the beloved figures of Israel's history. Aaron is noted by the writer as an example of one who held the office of high priest. Aaron was one of the Jew's most memorable and respected characters. In addition to being the brother of the great lawgiver Moses, he was also the very first man to serve as high priest for Israel. Likening Christ's divine appointment to Aaron's was certainly reason enough to not forsake this Jesus, High Priest of the New Covenant. To forsake the blessings of this high priest, Jesus, would be just as foolish as if their forefathers had rejected Aaron, the great high priest of the Old Covenant.

The Revelation of Christ as Priest (5-6)

Just like Aaron, Jesus was divinely appointed. His appointment should not have been a surprise at all to these Jews. The revelation of His appointment was foretold by the great prophets of old. The Hebrew writer specifically referred to a prophecy of one of Israel's greatest and most influential prophets, David. David foretold of this great High Priest Christ. Using the words of the great king and prophet David, the writer reminds the Hebrews of one of those prophecies that had been made known in earlier days. "Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee (v. 5; compare Ps 2:7)." As great as Aaron was, the high priest that would latter follow him would be even greater. Unlike Aaron who was of the loins of Abraham, Jesus was of the divine family of God Himself.

The author of Hebrews also directs his audience to another one of the psalmist's prophetic utterances. Seemingly he is trying to counter any objections to Christ's physical lineage. The priests of the Old Testament were from the tribe of Levi. Jesus was of Judah. But this should pose no problem to Christ's rightful appointment as high priest since the psalmist also said, "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (v. 6; compare Psalm 110:4)." This order was of a higher and greater order than even that of Levi. The Hebrew writer spends more time dealing with this subject matter in the seventh chapter, but the point is clear. If Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, the forefather of Levi, and Jesus was after the order of Melchizedek, then Jesus is greater than Levi and his order of priests, and yes, even Abraham himself.

The Responsibilities of Christ the Priest (7-11)

Some apparently were questioning the Lord's death at Calvary. If God delighted in Christ, why was He permitted to die? This was a similar question others had raised in ridicule while Jesus hung on the cross (Matt. 27:41-43). The Hebrew writer assures his audience that God did hear Him because He "feared" God. The word carries with it the idea of putting one's trust in another, hence submitting to that one. Jesus was obedient to the Father. Although He did suffer, His suffering was not an indication of God's displeasure, but rather and indication of His submission and obedience. The cross served as a means for the learning of obedience. He always did the Father's will (John 8:29), but the cross provided the ultimate opportunity to experience that obedience unto even His own death. He left an example for these Christians to follow (Rev. 2:10). "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb 5:8-9)."

The Rebuke of Christians who have forsaken their High Priest - Christ (12-14).

Despite the fact that the writer wanted to discuss further with them the implications of Melchizedek and Christ, he was unable to do so, due to their failure to continue in their study and growth as Christians. Some issues are more easily understood and comprehended by those who are strong in the faith. Entering into such discussions with spiritual babes is to spend time in a futile effort due to their lack of study or preparation. The Hebrew writer made it clear that such was the case with these "babes" in Christ. They should have continued on progressing in their learning, but they had failed to do so. These, who had roots in the worship of Jehovah, should have grown in the faith and become teachers themselves, but they had not continued to grow.

When something ceases to grow, it begins to die. Therefore, he felt he must again lay forth the elementary principles of the teachings of God to revive their dying faith.

II. THE AUTHOR OF OUR ETERNAL SALVATION

Jesus, the Perfect Son

The Hebrew writer revealed that Jesus was perfect. Certainly He was perfect in many respects. Consider first his origin. He was from the Father. As the Son of God, He shared in all aspects of the divine nature. Just as a son will carry within him the characteristics of his father, so Jesus possessed the characteristics of the Father fully and completely. Paul wrote, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9)." Jesus Himself said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works (John 14:9-10)."

He was perfect in his manner of life. In the things he said and did, He demonstrated that perfection. Had Jesus been sitting in an assembly and someone asked if there was anyone in the room who could honestly say that they had never sinned, Jesus would have been able to raise His hand and truthfully affirm His sinlessness. Peter wrote, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Peter 2:21-24)." In fact Paul used Christ as an example of perfection, encouraging us to model our lives after His. "Till we all come in

the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4:13)."

Being therefore perfect in His origin and in His manner of life, he brought to Calvary the necessary perfection that such a sacrifice required. God has never accepted a sacrifice marred by a blemish (Ex. 12:5; Lev. 3:1). Should we be surprised that the sacrifice at Calvary demanded one without spot or the stain of sin. Peter wrote, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1:18-19)." The Hebrew writer affirmed that Jesus was tempted like any other man, yet He never fell prey to sin (Heb. 4:15). Yes, Jesus was the Perfect Son of our Salvation!

Jesus, the Skilled Author

Christ was also the skilled author of our eternal salvation. An author is one who is the source of a book or some piece of literature. Jesus authored "a book". He wrote the book of redemption. The first chapters were "penned" in the mind of God at the founding of the world. John describes Jesus as a lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Latter the prophets came along and made known in bits and pieces the revelation of the Christ who was still yet to come. So fascinating was the story of Christ and His saving message that even the angels themselves were curious of the details (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Finally the climax of redemption was reached at Calvary, where the author Himself, having fulfilled all things, gave His life, so that the book of redemption would become a reality, and not just a fantasy in the minds of lost humanity. Since that time and from that day the conclusion of the Lord's book of redemption has been meditated upon by countless thousands and thousands. It still offers to men today the same blessings of that wonderful redemptive story that Christ, the skilled author provided.

Jesus, the Source of Life Eternal

The Hebrew writer makes it clear that Jesus is the source of eternal life. But for whom is he that source? Was he the source of eternal life to the Jew only? Certainly not! He is the source for ALL! Everyone who is willing may come. John recorded, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17)." Jesus said, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw (John 4:14-15)."

However, just because a remedy for some disease is available doesn't guarantee that everyone who needs it will partake of it. A remedy does not do any good if the remedy is refused or neglected. Likewise, the Hebrew writer reminds his audience that Christ is the source of salvation only to those who obey him. Obedience in Christ is the remedy to sin. He did not say that He is the author of eternal salvation to those who claim to believe in Him and do not submit to His will. He did not say that He is the author of eternal salvation to those who call Him Lord, Lord, but do not the things which He says (Luke 6:46). He is the author of eternal salvation to them that **OBEY** Him. Paul wrote, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18)." Paul was clear in the second letter to the Thessalonians that obedience was essential to salvation. "And to you who are troubled rest with

us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thes. 1:7-9)." Peter wrote, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God (1Pet. 4:17)?" Yes, Jesus is the source of eternal life. He is a source that all are welcomed to partake of, but his eternal salvation is reserved only for them that obey him!

CONCLUSION

The book of Hebrews reminds us of the compelling need to revive those who are downtrodden and spiritually weak. In the example of the Hebrew writer we find one who would not stand idly by and let these Christians slip away into apostasy. The fifth chapter of the book represents one of the tremendous efforts of the writer to inform them of the great tragedy realized in rejecting God's high priest today, Jesus Christ. To reject Jehovah's high priest was to reject the atonement for sin, and ultimately was the rejection of Jehovah God Himself.

There is no doubt that the Hebrew writer loved the souls of his fellowman. Most of us would affirm an affection for our brethren. However, he loved them enough to take the time to "interfere" with their misguided choices. Chapter five offered compelling arguments that would prompt any downtrodden Christian to rethink any thoughts of abandoning the only author of our eternal salvation.

LET US GO ON UNTO PERFECTION

(Hebrew 6)

By Alan Wright

Are we setting our standards of Christian living too low? The writer of Hebrews lays before us a daunting challenge, saying, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection..." (Heb. 6:1) How are we to achieve this goal? Is it even possible? The chapter before us gives us answers to these questions. But before we can examine the text, we need to understand the controversies involved. A brief survey of church history shows how difficult it is has been to reach agreement even on the definition of perfection.

The ancient ascetics pursued a course of deprivation in their quest for a holy perfection, denying themselves such amenities as property, luxury and family, and devoting themselves to long hours of prayer and meditation. Origen taught that Christians may be divided into two classes: those who simply do what is required and are unprofitable servants (rf. Luke 17:10), and those who perform acts of supererogation, going above and beyond the call of duty, and thus become good and faithful servants (rf. Matt. 25:21). He singled out specifically poverty, celibacy, and martyrdom as acts of higher perfection.

Augustine, on the other hand, believed that perfection was a state achieved through an irresistible act of grace upon the human will. This grace, according to his view, works progressively in the elect, producing such fruits as faith, obedience, devotion and asceticism, and finally leading to a state of perfection by which a man may enter heaven.

A fourteenth-century work entitled *The Ladder of Perfection* takes an entirely different approach. The author argues that fasting and other acts of asceticism are without merit. Instead

perfection is achieved by those who, through contemplation on love for God and man, can reach a state of mental and spiritual dissociation from worldly things. Thomas à Kempis echoed these sentiments in *The Imitation of Christ*, stating, "If you would persevere in seeking perfection, you must consider yourself a pilgrim, an exile on earth" (Book I, Chapter 17).

John Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, says very bluntly, "No saint ever will attain to perfection, so long as he is in the body" (Book II, Chapter 7). Again he writes "... perfection is altogether unattainable by us, so long as we are clothed with flesh..." (Book III, Chapter 14). He does speak in many places of a perfection which is set before the Christian as a goal, yet he viewed this goal as one that can never be fully reached in this life.

John Wesley wrote a pamphlet entitled *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in which he argued that at some point subsequent to a Christian's salvation, God performed a second work of grace, which he called sanctification. At that time God completely removed the desire to sin from the Christian's heart, thus making him perfect. He writes, "... they are now in such a sense perfect as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers." Though he might make mistakes through ignorance or poor judgment, he would never again commit willful sin. Wesley's teaching was later adapted by the Holiness movement.

In order to clear up the confusion, we must, as always, turn from the writings of men to the sacred text of Scripture. Yet even here, we are faced with a paradox. On the one hand, perfection seems to be an impossibility. Paul writes, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Thus Job cries, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse" (Job 9:20).

Yet many passages of Scripture teach that perfection is possible. For one thing, it is commanded. When giving the covenant of circumcision, God told Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Jesus directed the disciples at the sermon on the mount, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Common sense tells us that God would not command us to do something that could not be done. Secondly, perfection is the goal of gospel preaching. Paul said that he and the other preachers and apostles of the New Testament worked "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28). Indeed the very reason God gave us the Scriptures was so that "the man of God may be perfect" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). If perfection is not possible, then the Bible is useless and preaching is a futile effort. But perhaps the most obvious proof that perfection is possible lies in the fact that, according to God's word, some have achieved perfection. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation" (Gen. 6:9). Job was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1).

Paul was certainly aware of this paradox. He writes of his own shortcomings, saying, "*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.*" Yet three short verses later, he writes, "*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded*" (Phil. 3:12,15).

What then is this thing called perfection which both is and is not attainable? The Bible (in the King James Version) uses the word "perfect," or some form thereof, 128 times. A number of different Hebrew and Greek words are used in these occurrences, but the overwhelming majority derives from three original words. The first is the Hebrew word "tamiym," from the root "tamam," meaning "to come to an end, to be finished or completed." It is used in several ways throughout the Old Testament. For instance, in Genesis 47:18, when the Egyptians came to Joseph to make arrangements to purchase grain, the word is used twice. First we are told that the

year "was ended," and then they tell the governor that their money "is spent." It is the nature of time that it passes, and the nature of money that it is spent. Each had fulfilled its designated purpose. This word is used often to describe the sacrificial animals required by God under Mosaic law, usually translated by the phrase "without blemish." In Leviticus 22:21 it is translated "perfect" (another word is used for "blemish" here), and then in the next three verses several specific physical defects are listed as rendering an animal unacceptable for sacrifice. The point is that the animal was to have no flaw, but to be in its proper physical condition. The word is used to describe the work of God (Deut. 32:4), the way of God (Psa. 18:30), and the law of God (Psa. 19:7). In each case, the idea is simply this: whatever God does is exactly as it should be. (rf. Eccl. 3:14) Thus when this word is used to describe a person's moral condition, it means that his life is on the proper course set by God. He is fulfilling his purpose. He is without spiritual blemish. He is living exactly as he should. Therefore we see the word translated "upright" (Prov. 11:20), "undefiled" (Psa. 119:1), and "in sincerity" (Josh. 24:14). It is in this sense that Abraham was told to be perfect, and that Noah was called perfect in his generations.

The second word that concerns us is the Hebrew "shalem," from the root "shalam," meaning "to make restitution, to pay what is owed." Thus, when Boaz commends Ruth's behavior, he says "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel..." (Ruth 2:12) The word "full" is "shalem." A businessman under the law of Moses was required to conduct himself honestly with his customers, using "a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure" (Deut. 25:13-15). This word is used several times in the books of Kings and Chronicles to describe the spiritual virtue, or lack thereof, of the kings of Israel and Judah, and of the people themselves. For instance, David charged his son Solomon to "know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart" (1 Chron. 28:9). But when

Solomon turned to polygamy and idolatry, it is said that "his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God" (1 Kings 11:4). The prophet Hanani reminded King Asa, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9). In these verses, "perfect" means a heart that is given fully in submission to God.

The final word that we must examine is the Greek noun "teleiotas," together with its related verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and cognate nouns. All of these forms derive from the root stem "tello," meaning "to aim." The word here then refers to hitting the target, or achieving the goal, at which one aims. Perfection in this sense is the successful completion of a task or undertaking, and when a thing is finished or complete, it may be said to be perfect. For instance, in speaking of spiritual gifts, Paul contrasts "that which is in part" with "that which is perfect," the incomplete versus the complete (1 Cor. 13:10). This word is used when Jesus' parents had completed the observance of the passover feast, stating that "they had fulfilled the days" (Luke 2:43). It is the word Jesus uses when he declares to his Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). And Paul uses this word when he says, "I have finished my course" (2 Tim. 4:7).

Thus when we put the three terms together, we may derive a reasonable Biblical definition of perfection. It is the fulfillment of a given purpose, the full payment of an obligation, or the successful completion of a process. We can understand then why there is one sense in which a person could never be called perfect, for in every life sin has produced its blemishes. Yet, when those sins are removed by the blood of Christ, and we work to give ourselves fully in service to our Lord, there is a real sense in which we can be called perfect, being the sort of person that God would have us to be. The perfect man, according to Scripture, is one that is free from

abominable practices (Deut. 18:12,13), obedient to God's law (1 Kings 8:61), generous with his blessings (Matt. 19:21), patient and persistent in his faith (Jam. 1:4), watchful of his words (Jam. 3:2), etc.

In the book of Hebrews, the word "perfect" is used in some form eleven times in the King James text, and the original Greek uses the word twenty different times. Many of those references refer to the work of Jesus. Jesus himself was made perfect through the sufferings he endured (Heb. 2:10; 5:8,9). Though the law made nothing perfect, the hope brought to us in Jesus does (Heb. 7:19; rf. 7:11; 9:9; 10:1). Jesus has created a more perfect tabernacle (Heb. 9:11), and makes us perfect through his sacrifice (Heb. 10:14; rf. Heb. 11:40; 12:23). Thus Jesus is the author and finisher (literally, perfecter), of our faith (Heb. 12:2). But there is also in Hebrews a call for us to bring ourselves to a state of perfection, or completeness. We should hold fast our confidence and rejoicing unto the end (literally, unto perfection) (Heb. 3:6,14; rf. Heb. 6:11). Thus we come to our text, in which the challenge is laid down, "let us go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6:1).

By looking at the context, we can gain a better understanding of the nature of perfection as considered here. The previous verse speaks of those who are "of full age." That is the same word translated "perfect." Thus perfection in this context is described as having reached maturity. The author chastised the readers for their immaturity in the word (Heb. 5:11-14). Notice four specific accusations: (1) They are <u>dull in hearing the word</u>. The Greek word translated dull is **nothros**, meaning "slothful, lazy" (rf. Heb. 6:12). Their problem was not simply ignorance, but indolence. The Christian must be willing to put forth the effort required to come to the knowledge of God's word. He must study. (2) They are <u>delinquent in teaching the word</u>. In saying that they "ought to be teachers," the clear implication is that they were not. Obviously

they had been Christians long enough to expect them to be able to teach others, but their lack of study disqualified them. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10). You cannot teach what you do not know. (3) They are deficient in using the word. The word for "use" here is the Greek metecho, meaning "to take part in." The idea is that the Christian should make the word a part of his life. His should apply its teaching to his daily routine. These readers however were unskillful in this, from the Greek apeiros, literally meaning "untested." They had made no attempt to put the message of God's word to work for them. (4) They are defenseless in discerning the word. Because they had not matured in their knowledge of God's word, and had not gained experience in applying that word, they could not discern between that which was good and that which was evil. They were at the mercy of any false teacher who might come their way.

If this then is the description of an immature Christian, then a mature Christian (or we might say, a perfect Christian) is one which diligently studies the word of God, faithfully teaches it to others, regularly applies it in his daily life, and carefully tests everything he hears by its message. This is the goal set before us in the challenge, "let us go on unto perfection."

To do this we must build upon what the author calls the "principles" of the doctrine of Christ. The word is translated from the Greek **arche**, meaning "first, beginning." If we would progress unto maturity, we must begin by building our lives firmly upon the fundamental truths of the gospel. The author lists six specific items: (1) "repentance from dead works," (2) "faith toward God," (3) "the doctrine of baptisms," (4) "laying on of hands," (5) "resurrection of the dead," and (6) "eternal judgment." All of these are basic concepts (although one may study the Bible for years without exhausting the breadth and depth of each topic), and any misunderstanding or false teaching in these areas will seriously corrupt the Christian's attempt to

grow spiritually. Thus perfection, the maturity that is the final product of Christian growth, must begin properly. The beginning and the ending are tied together. These two ideas, and in fact the two Greek words, are also connected in Hebrews 3:14: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning (arche) of our confidence stedfast unto the end (telos)."

The author goes on to admonish his readers against failing to progress spiritually. In fact, he is emphatic in stressing the dangers of falling away, warning them that "it is impossible... to renew them again unto repentance." While many have wrestled with the meaning of this passage, it should be noted carefully that he does not say it is impossible for them to repent, but that it is impossible for others to renew them to repentance. In other words, when a man rejects everything that is basic and fundamental to the truth of God's word, and turns his back on every spiritual blessing which God would pour out in his life, there is nothing left to use to appeal to his conscience. If we cannot win a man's faithfulness through the gospel, we have no other recourse to reach him. If he spurns the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and thereby crucifies the Son of God afresh, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Heb. 10:26).

The text of Hebrews repeatedly warns against the dangers of apostasy (e.g. Heb. 2:1-3; 3:12; 4:1,11; 10:26-31,35; 12:15,16). When the writer again raises the alarm in chapter six, we should take it seriously. Far from teaching the impossibility of apostasy, the book of Hebrews (and indeed the entire New Testament) assures us that there is a very real danger of falling away. To emphasize the point, he gives an illustration of two pieces of ground. In the first, the ground receives God's blessings and brings forth fruit. The second piece of ground, though it no doubt received the same rain, brings forth nothing but thorns and briers. The meaning is obvious. While some Christians receive the spiritual blessings like showers from heaven, and use them to produce fruit in their lives, others have nothing to show for their Christianity, and their "end"

(from **telos**, the same Greek root as "*perfection*") is to be burned. In other words, we are all moving toward one end or the other, either the perfection of Christian maturity and the blessing of God, or the destination of a wasted life and the condemnation of God.

The need for bearing spiritual fruit is further drawn out by the commendation of the readers whose "work and labour of love" would be rewarded by God. We should note that going on unto perfection is not merely increasing our level of spiritual knowledge, as important as that may be. We must use that knowledge in living a godly life, and ministering God's love and grace to those around us. We must "followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

The chapter ends with the assurance that God is utterly faithful in keeping the promises he has made. This was clearly demonstrated in the life of Abraham. We can live with confidence, knowing that it is "*impossible for God to lie*," and therefore whatever he has pledged to give us will most certainly be ours if we finish what we have started, if we go on unto perfection.

THE PRIESTHOOD

(Hebrews 7:1-8:6)

By Ronnie Ulrey

The very make-up of man and his consciousness of the need to make a sacrifice for the sins he commits is the reason for such a system as the priestly system. Another reason that God ordained a similar system in the New Testament was so that the Jew would feel some familiarity in the new covenant, and it would make it easier for him to become a Christian, who is also a priest (I Peter 2:5). There is no one who knows more about the Jewish system than the Jews and we know that God knew that the Jewish nation would have a hard time leaving everything about the old system to become a New Testament Christian, and so he entwined the priestly concept into Christianity, with so many changes but some familiarity.

The Levitical priesthood was ordained from the Tribe of Levi.

Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel. And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; (Numbers 3:6-12)

Aaron was the first High Priest, and after him, his eldest son Phinehas (Judges 20:28). Jesus could not be a priest after the Aaronic Priesthood, because

he was from the tribe of Judah. No one from another tribe could become a priest, and this is why Christ's priesthood was after the order of Melchisadek

The Levitical priesthood was God's arrangement for the people to make offerings for their specific sins. Every person had a way to find forgiveness; from the high priest to the ruler, to the ordinary person and even the whole congregation of Israel,

If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering (Leviticus 4:3).

When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty; (Leviticus 4:22)

And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty; (Leviticus 4:27)

And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty; (Leviticus 4:13)

The person who sinned was told what he was to offer for his particular sin. Some sins, when committed, cost more for an offering than others. The guilty party brought the offering to the priest and the priest had to make the offering for him. Each year the whole congregation of Israel had to make an offering for their sins to be pushed forward for another year. When an offering was made for someone, they had to place their hand upon the head of the animal before it was killed, (Lev. 4:29). After the animal was killed, the priest took the blood on his finger and put it on the horns of the altar and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar. If a person could not afford an animal then he could bring flour and make a sin offering with that. The priests had to know what offering each was to offer for a particular sin. This was a burdensome system.

The priesthood of Melchisadek, it seems, was a part of the Patriarchal system (Gen. 15:18-20), before the Levitical priesthood was set up, but there is very little said about it except in the excerpt in Gen. 15. Melchisadek may have been the only priest in the system Heb. 7:1-3, but he was greater than Abraham.

There are vast differences in the two priesthood's: First of all, Jesus was directly chosen of God which is expressly mentioned in Heb. 7:17 and that means that Christians are also chosen by Christ to be his priesthood. **Second**, Christ is an eternal priest while the priests of the Old Testament were changed by death (Heb. 7:21), but Jesus and Christians are priests "forever" after the order of Melchisedek (Heb. 7:21). Third, our offerings are of a spiritual nature and not bloody sacrifices. Jesus was our blood sacrifice forever (Heb.8:27). Fourth, our prayers are as the sweet smelling incense that the Levitical Priesthood offered, therefore we do not actually burn incense to God (Rev. 8:3,4). **Fifth,** the church is the true tabernacle and it was built by Christ (Matt.16:18), and not by men as was the first tabernacle (Heb. 8:2; Ex. 26). Sixth, the Old Testament priests communicated with God through the High Priest. He wore a breast plate mounted with twelve precious stones and two sacred objects called the Urim and Thummin (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8) which were used to ascertain the Lord's will in important matters (Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8; I Sam. 14:37-42, 28:26). Some regard the Urim and Thummin as two small stones which were cast as lots to determine guilt or innocence. The other twelve stones simply signified that the high priest ministered to all twelve tribes of Israel. Our High Priest communicates with God directly and always understands what the will of God is in every matter (Jn. 12:49).

All of the priests wore elaborate garments which the Scripture says were for "glory and beauty." The difference between the high priest and the other priests garments was the breastplate with the fourteen stones in it. The ordinary priest had two stones on the shoulders with six tribes written on each of them according to their birth (Ex. 28:2). God evidently wanted His priests to wear nice, beautiful clothing when they came to worship Him, and as far as we know He still does (Matt. 22:11, 12).

The High Priest was to wear the breastplate and bring all of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel before God each time he came. The material of the garments was of the finest quality and it had Pomegranates and bells woven around the hem of the garment. The bells were between the pomegranates and they rang as Aaron walked so that the people could hear him when he went into the Tabernacle (Ex. 28:29, 33-35). Also, Aaron wore the words: Holiness To The Lord" upon his forehead on a plate of gold (Ex. 28:38). All of the priests wore linen breeches under their priestly garments that reached from their loins to their thighs (Ex. 28:42). The above type clothing were only worn when they came to minister in the Holy place (Ex. 28:23). They evidently wore more appropriate clothing when they killed the offerings for the altar of burnt offerings.

Exodus 29 tells of the anointing of the priests when they took office. A bullock was to be killed after Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon its head. This was a sin offering (Ex. 29:10-14). Then two Rams were to be offered to the Lord upon the altar. The blood of the second ram was to be put upon the right ear, the right hand, and the big toe on the right foot of each priest, and the rest of the blood was to be sprinkled upon the altar. The blood on the altar was to be mixed with anointing oil and sprinkled upon Aaron and his sons (Ex. 29:20, 21).

The Old Testament Priesthood was an elaborate arrangement and very difficult to carry out, but they did it faithfully on most occasions. Jesus said unto us that if we come to Him that His "yoke is easy, and His burden is light", Matt. 11:28-30.

The Covenants

(Heb. 8:7-10:39)

By Ronnie Ulrey

God has always loved to make covenants, because the keeping of a covenant tells whether a person or nation is honest or not. A covenant is simply a "mutual agreement" between two or more persons. God has made covenants with individuals, groups and even nations. It is a serious matter to agree to keep a covenant and then break it. God has made many covenants and has never broken a one, because "God is not slack concerning his promise" (I Peter 3:9), whereas most men have to preface what they say by saying the word "promise" before they feel that it is wrong to fail to keep their word. A man's word ought to be his covenant.

Another thing a covenant does is keep before the participants what they have agreed to and what is expected of them. Many covenants have been broken by one or both sides simply because they forgot what they agreed to. Breaking a covenant made with God is a serious matter and could result in punishment and condemnation (Eccl. 5:4,5). It would be better not to make an agreement than to make one and fail to keep it. God's word is always his covenant.

God has made many covenants with many people and we will discuss some of these.

GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH ADAM AND EVE.

After the creation was complete, God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and made a covenant with them concerning his expectations of them in reference to the garden. They had the responsibility to "dress and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). They also

could partake of the fruit of the trees with but one restriction. They were not to partake of the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" or they would die (Gen. 2:17). Thus with only one restriction, they had full control of this beautiful Paradise. The only reason they had this restriction was that God wanted them to have a choice in the matter and not be forced to keep his plan for them. Man has always been a free moral agent, which means that he had a choice in reference to everything that was set before him. Though man belongs to God, he still has a choice of whether he will serve God or not (Josh. 24:15). Adam and Eve, as you know, chose to break the covenant which God made with them and were cast out of the garden and lost their close relationship with God, and begin to die from that very day (Gen. 2:17).

Even though the contents of this covenant only apply to us in principal, such as our free moral agency, this was an agreement between God, Adam and his family, and not a national or international agreement. It would only apply to us in come spiritual ways today.

GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH NOAH AND HIS FAMILY.

When the people of the world became extremely wicked, God told Noah that he would destroy man and start over again. God chose Noah's righteous family to be the family to replenish the earth's population. He commanded Noah's family to build an ark according to the specifications he gave them and it took them 120 years to build it (Gen. 6:1). For the earth's repopulating Noah was to gather two of each animal so that in the world the flood would leave, the animals would replace the animal life and Noah's family would replace the human life in a clean, pure world. The flood covered the whole world, even the mountains, and all animals and people died who breathed the breath of life (Gen.

7:20-22). Because of the enormous destruction of the flood, God sealed his covenant with a sign which is still seen, that he would never destroy the earth again by water (Gen. 9:8-15). When Christians see the rainbow in the sky, they remember both the great flood and the promise of God never to destroy this earth again by a flood. This covenant still lasts.

GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM.

God told Abraham to leave his fathers family and take his family and go into "a land which I will show thee" (Gen. 12:1). God further told him that he would make of him "a great nation" and would bless him and make his "name great", and "bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him" (Gen. 12:2,3). Abraham believed God and began to travel through the land of Palestine and God told him "I will make of thee a "great nation" (Gen. 12:2), and "unto thy seed I will give this land" (Gen. 12:7), and he would multiply his seed "as the stars of heaven" (Gen. 15:5), and as "the sand upon the seashore" (Gen. 22:17). God even told him that "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). This verse is referred to in Gen. 3:16 in reference to Christ being born of Abraham's seed, and in Gal. 3:26-29 Paul said when we become Christians we too are "Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

GOD ALSO MADE A COVENANT WITH JOSHUA: JOSH. 7:15.

This covenant concerned Joshua and his army of Israelites. After taking Jericho, they were told to take the city of Ai, a short distance from Jericho. It was a small city, but they were forbidden to take any of the spoils. When 3000 of his men went up to take this little city, they were defeated and their army ran from the few men of Ai. After praying to God about it, Joshua was told that his men had taken the "accursed thing" and that they could not stand before "their enemies until the accursed thing was taken from among

them" (Josh. 7:13). God even told them that he would not be with them anymore until they had destroyed the one who had taken the accursed thing (Josh. 7:12). The tribes of Israel were to be brought before the Lord, family by family, and the one who had done this would be pointed out by the Lord. Finally, after passing the tribes and families before the Lord, the family of Zabdi was taken and after each man was passed before the Lord, Achan was the one who was guilty and had hidden the silver, gold and clothing in his tent. Joshua and all Israel took him and all his family and stoned them and buried them under the stone where they were stoned. They were also burned. The name of the place was called "the valley of Achor (Trouble)." The moral of this happening is that it is a serious matter to break the covenant of the Lord concerning anything!

GOD'S LAST AND GREATEST COVENANT - THE NEW COVENANT.

This is the covenant that we live under toady. This New Covenant is a "better covenant", established upon "better promises" (Heb. 8:6). The first covenant with Israel had faults, which suggests that the New Covenant is faultless (Heb. 8:7,8); and the New Covenant is not the same as the old (Heb. 8:9). The New Covenant was not placed upon stones, but put in the "mind" and "heart" of God's people. In other words it is a spiritual covenant that each Christian will know because we are disciples of its teaching (Heb. 8:11). Under the New Covenant "our sins and iniquities God will remember no more" (Heb. 8:12). Under the old covenant the sins of the people were remembered each year and a sacrifice was made for them. The old covenant was carried out in a Tabernacle made by the men of Israel, but the New Covenant is carried out in the "perfect tabernacle," not made "with hands" but built by Christ (Matt. 16:18; Heb. 9:11). The old Testament priests entered the Tabernacle with the blood of bulls and goats, but the Christ

of the New Covenant entered in by His own blood once and "purchased eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12). In other words, the first covenant was sanctified by the "precious blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18,19). It is not possible to have the forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22), but it is also not possible for animal blood to take away sin (Heb. 10:4). In the New Covenant, we must have the blood of Christ to take away our sins (Heb. 10:10-12).

If you have a Bible in your possession, when you pick it up, you are holding the greatest covenant that has ever been made, and it came from the God of Heaven (Jn. 12:48,49).

WITHOUT WHICH NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD (Hebrews 12)

By Randy Vaughn

Introduction

The Jews under the Law of Moses believed that to actually look upon God would bring certain and immediate death. God had said to Moses, "No man can see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). Manoah, the father of Samson, said, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God" (Judges 13:22). The prophet, Isaiah, said, "Woe is me...for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

And yet, in earlier times, the Patriarchs before Moses did not seem to have this fear. Job writes, "Yet in my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:5). Even earlier, Enoch is said to have walked with God. Abraham, on one occasion dined with God, speaking face to face (Gen. 18). On another occasion, Jacob went so far as to say, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved", calling the place of his wrestling, Peniel (i.e. "the face of God"; Genesis 32:30). It should be noted that in these Patriarchal theophanies, God most likely appeared in the manifestation of the second member of the Godhead, Jesus Christ before His incarnation (Cp. John 5:37). The Holy Scriptures unequivocally state that no man has ever seen God (John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12).

And yet, The Bible has a lot to say about *seeing God*. It is considered a great privilege to see God, which holds a very special significance. In Exodus 33:20-23 God showed His glory to Moses. Chapter 34:5-8 explains that God descended in the cloud and proclaimed His name to Moses by describing His character and nature. What Moses really *saw* on that deific occasion was not an actual, visible appearance of God. Rather, God came down in the dark cloud and

basically gave a description of Himself, proclaiming His name to Moses. Therefore, the Bible quite often uses the expression, "seeing God" to mean learning and understanding God.

When the Bible describes *seeing God*, some references are meant to be taken literally; while other references should be understood in tropes and figures. The Bible promises that all men shall see Him (Revelation 1:7; Jude 14). Nevertheless, to see God will mean different things for different people:

- (1) For some people, seeing God has meant and will mean <u>CONDEMNATION</u> (Hebrews 9:27; 10:26-27). God avenges sinners and the ungodly that have opposed Him (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7; Jude 14). What a terrible and frightening thought that some will see God as an avenger setting Himself in battle array against them. Who can stand against God?
- (2) If anyone will see God, it must be done through the eyes of <u>consecration</u> (Hebrews 10:19-22). In the Ancient East, none but great favorites were admitted to see a king (2 Samuel 14:24). We must be a separate and peculiar people for God. It is the "pure in heart" who will see God (Matthew 5:8). In this case, as already explained, seeing, means understanding. Compare this to 3 John 11 where those "that do evil have not seen God"; that is to say, they have not known God or His holiness. The Light has come into the world but men loved darkness (John 3:19). Are we rejoicing in the Light?
- (3) For Christians, seeing God will be a great <u>CONSOLATION</u> (Hebrews 9:28). It will be a sweet and wonderful day when He shall come back to claim His own, knowing that death has been conquered, and that troubles, fears and sicknesses have been abolished (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). What a blessed hope and comforting thought?

It is however very unfortunate that the sight of God will not be a blessing for everyone. All of mankind should desire to see and know God, yet for many it will be the greatest nightmare. In the key verse of Hebrews 12 (and perhaps key to the entire book of Hebrews), the writer says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (12:14). If

you want to "see the Lord", to know and understand Him, then there are certain things that you will have to do. The Hebrew letter is very succinct in describing how a man comes to see God.

The first prerequisite to accomplish this divine vision is faith. Hebrews 11:6 explains that it is impossible to please God without faith. In this verse, faith includes the conviction that God rewards "them that DILIGENTLY SEEK Him" (i.e. look for Him). (2 Corinthians 5:7) also says, "we walk by faith not by sight." Faith then is the eyeglass by which we view the spiritual. Hebrews 11:27 confirms this showing that Moses, "by faith saw Him who is invisible." Let us now trace the Hebrew writer's thoughts about this noble faith that is looking to see "the Great God and our Saviour" (Titus 2:13).

Exposition of Chapter Twelve

Hebrews 12 lists three areas in which we are to train our eyes in our search to *see God*. **First**, we must <u>look to Jesus</u> as our example (vs. 2). **Secondly**, we are to <u>look to ourselves</u> (vs. 15) to ensure our direction. And **finally**, we are to <u>look to His certain word</u> (vs. 25) to gauge our journey.

I. Looking Unto Jesus (Verse 2)

Chapter twelve starts this great search of faith by comparing it to a race. In a race we must "lay aside every weight" and have endurance to reach the final goal. The apostle Paul, (whom I believe wrote Hebrews), would often allude to sporting events in his writings. His analogies of the Olympic games of ancient Greece are unmistakable. The history of the first Olympiad (according to tradition) was July 1, 776 B.C. These games were discontinued at the end of the 4th century A.D. due to professionalism. They were originally meant to be amateur sporting events. Nevertheless, it is the case that for several centuries the ancient world knew about and enjoyed

these international competitions. The first Olympics were confined to running; other events were not added until later. There are several references in Paul's letters to running, since this was the oldest and most popular of the events. Here are a few of these other references to show an interesting comparison: (1 Corinthians 4:9; 9:24-26; Galatians 2:2; 5:7; Philippians 2:16; 3:14). Paul also referred to other events in the games. He mentions wrestling (Ephesians 6:12) and boxing (2 Timothy 4:7; 1 Corinthians 9:26).

So Hebrews 12:1-3 compares the quest to *see God* to the idea of running a race. Notice some things that go along with the analogy of a foot race:

- (1) We are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." These "witnesses" were introduced in chapter 11. They are the heroes of faith. This is not suggesting that they are now in heaven watching us as we run the race like people seated in a stadium. The word "witness" does not mean "spectator." These witnesses are not witnessing what we are doing; rather, they are bearing witness to us as examples of Bible heroes who have overcome, showing us that we also can overcome. If they can do it, so can we. We should learn from the examples of others. 1 Corinthians 10:11 says about the Israelites in Moses' day, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." We can learn from them so that we do not follow their rebellious ways.
- (2) We are to "lay aside every weight." The word, "weight" refers to a bulk or mass, to things that slow down a runner's progress. The concern of the Greek runner was not simply whether something was bad or good, immoral or moral, but rather how it would affect his race. The obstacles of the best runner might not always be the worst things. Under ordinary circumstances those obstacles might even be good. However, while running the race even a good thing might become a hindrance to the runner and he must lay it aside.
- (3) We must "run with patience the race that is set before us." God himself has entered every Christian into this race. It is not just for preachers, elders or deacons. God also sets the

pace of each runner. Notice that the usual words for race (δρόμος, *dromos* or σταδίον, *stadion*) are not used here, but rather the Greek word ἀγών, *agon*, from which we get our English word "*agony*." This is a serious race. Every runner is expected to finish and win.

We can endure the hardships and achieve the victory by keeping our eyes on the goal, "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." The word, "looking" is literally, "looking away", (i.e. to keep a steadfast, intent and continuous gaze). Hence, we are to run the race while focusing on Jesus.

Why should we focus on Jesus? Notice these references from Hebrews teaching the proper view of Jesus. He is called, "the <u>brightness</u> of God's glory, and the <u>express image</u> of His person" (1:3). "<u>We see Jesus</u>...made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" (2:9) and "once in the end of the world hath <u>he appeared</u> to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:26). He shall also, "<u>appear the second</u> time without sin unto salvation" (9:28). "<u>Seeing then</u> that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (4:14). How easy it is to get our eyes off Him and look away to the left or right. Certainly Hebrews stresses how important it is to keep our focus on Jesus.

II. Looking Diligently Lest Any Man Fail (Verse 15)

Secondly, chapter 12 also shows that we must take a close look at ourselves if we will see God face to face. Are we the kind of people God would have us be? There are many pitfalls that can hinder us from seeing God. The phrase, "looking diligently" is from the Greek word, ἐπισκοπέω (episkopeo), "to oversee." It is used only here and in 1 Peter 5:2, and is from the same root as the word translated in English as "bishop" or "overseer."

There are three warnings in 12:15 that we are told to watch out for, indicated by the word "lest." The first warning is "lest any man fail of the grace of God." Without God's grace no one can be saved. But do Christians need to concern themselves with falling from grace? Consider this. We are warned not to "neglect so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:1-3). We are warned not to be "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-14). We are warned to be diligent (Hebrews 4:1,11). We are warned not to "sin willfully" (Hebrews 10:26-31). And now, we are warned to look to ourselves that we do not lose the things we have worked so hard to attain (cf. 2 John 8). If we cannot fall from the grace of God, then there would be no need for us to be "looking diligently." One beautiful thought is that for the Christian, God's grace can be just a prayer away (Hebrews 4:16).

The second warning is, "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you." Bitterness can be a stumbling block in our pursuit of peace (vs. 14). It destroys the peace within the person who harbors it. Medical science today shows that emotions like bitterness and anger can cause physical problems like headaches, backaches, allergic symptoms, ulcers, high blood pressure and heart attacks. It can destroy the peace in a congregation when it springs up. Bitterness also becomes a stumbling block in our pursuit of holiness (vs. 14), because the problems it creates cause many to be "defiled" (i.e. unholy).

The third warning to watch for is, "<u>lest there be any fornicator or profane person</u>..." Fornication is a generic term for any sort of sexual immorality (including pre-marital sex, adultery, homosexuality, etc.). The will of God regarding sanctification is that we abstain from fornication (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). God will judge fornicators (Hebrews 13:4). And fornication will certainly keep one out of the kingdom of heaven.

Also, the Christian must not become a "profane person." The word "profane" comes from the Greek word, βέβηλος, meaning, "unspiritual, unhallowed, common, opposite to that which is holy" (the Latin, profanus, from which we get our English word, literally means "outside the temple" or not belonging to God). A worldly person profanes holy things by placing them on a common, worldly level. A profane person does not have to be outright wicked; he can displease God by cheapening that which is important to God. Esau is the example of a profane man (Genesis 25:29-34). He was a man who lived for the world. There is no indication that Esau was a fornicator, but he was a profane person because he did not have a proper estimate of the value of his birth rite. Later, he wanted the blessings of his birth rite, but it was too late. Despite his tears, it was too late to change his father's mind ("he found no place of repentance"). We too can become "profane" by thinking too little of our spiritual blessings. In Christ we have a spiritual birth rite (redemption, fellowship with God, the hope of eternal life). But we can let our jobs, hobbies, friends; even families come between us, and the things of God. Are you willing to sell your birth rite for a morsel of food?

III. See That Ye Refuse Not Him That Speaketh (Verse 25)

In the third main section of chapter 12, we learn that we should be very circumspect that by no means accidental or otherwise, we might refuse the Christ who now speaks to us through the gospel. Hebrews 1:2 teaches that God speaks today through His Son. Hebrews 2:1-4 says His word is, "so great salvation spoken by the Lord." Therefore, we should consider "Him that speaketh" for several reasons:

1. There is the importance of that message He is speaking. That which Jesus speaks concerns our soul and our everlasting destiny. It is God's wisdom, mercy and plan by which we

may be saved. If this were not an important matter we would not have to be so intense about receiving it, but of all things under heaven, nothing so concerns us as the gospel. See then that ye refuse not this precious Word, which alone can save your souls.

- 2. We should consider Him that speaketh because there is an enemy out there who will do all he can to convince us to refuse that divine speaker. Satan is always busiest where the gospel is most earnestly preached.
- 3. We should consider Him that speaketh because there are many ways to refuse Him, and we might have already fallen into one of these. Some examples of these many ways are:
 - a) Some refuse Him that speaketh **by not listening or by not going** where Christ can be heard, where He is preached every Lord's day. They will close their eyes and ears to His preaching (Matthew 13:15). It becomes much easier to ignore Christ, when we do not expose ourselves to the public proclamations of His teachings.
 - b) Others come to hear, but will refuse because they **hear carelessly**. They have gotten used to hearing the gospel for so long they have no cause of alarm. They refuse day by day Him that speaketh (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18).
 - c) Still some will hear carefully but actually **refuse to believe** the message. They reject the very testimony of the Christ (John 8:43-45; Acts 7:51). The evidence is paramount, yet they are blind (John 9:41).
 - d) Still yet, there are others who are **offended at the gospel**. Even in Christ's day when He came to a tender point in His preaching, they went back and walked no more with Him (John 6:66). The gospel galls these kinds of people because at some point, it touches their prejudices, or favorite sin and they are vexed and irritated. They should be angry with their sin, but they are angry at Christ instead (James 1:18-19).
 - e) So also, there are some who refuse Christ **out of complete indifference**. The great masses of mankind have not thought above their meat and drink. What do they care for heaven or the pardon of sin?
 - f) Some reject Him because of their **self-righteousness**. They are good enough and need no Savior (Matthew 23:27; Revelation 3:17-18). Their morality is superlative in their own estimate, and they conclude that God must be pleased with them. But God is not pleased (Rom. 8:8).

g) Some will reject Him **out of fear**. Shall we lose our souls to escape the sneers of fools? (2 Timothy 1:7-8; 1 Peter 4:14).

When we refuse to hear Jesus, we are despising the highest possible authority. When Moses spake in God's name; it was no light thing to refuse such an ambassador. Still, Moses was but a man. But Jesus Christ is God by nature. See that we refuse not Him that speaketh. Hear this parable about those who would reject Jesus:

There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons (Matthew 21:33-41).

To reject Jesus Christ, to refuse Him, to refuse His gospel; it fills our souls with horror to think that anyone should refuse the Almighty God. For God in His wrath is a "consuming fire" (12:29).

Conclusion

Do you desire to see God? The joy of seeing Him on that last great day, as He is in all His splendor and glory will be such a magnificent and wonderful sight. But, to have this vision of joy, we must, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (12:14). Let us then focus on "Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" as our goal that we might run the race which God has set before us.

JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TODAY, AND FOREVER

(HEBREWS 13:8)

Ronnie Ulrey

Jesus has always remained constant. Being divine and knowing and seeing everything. He never has to change his position or stance on anything. This should be a consolation to us as Christians, knowing that when we get to the end there will not be any surprises or changes that we did not know about.

Those who change and alter the truth will have some serious problems at the Judgement and those that add to or subtract from the worship or other responsibilities will have to account for this lack of understanding of the divine nature of Christ. We must not tolerate the altering and changing of things written in the Scripture that relate to our pleasing God in our worship.

I want to talk about some things that Jesus cares about that are personal with us ...

He always has and He always will ... HE CARES.

HE CARES ABOUT OUR FAITHFULNESS

There is no question that he expects us to attend, as a part of faithfulness, the services of the church (Heb. 10:25). This is a direct command, and many people feel no compunction of conscience in missing certain services of the church. They dismiss their absence by saying that it is only necessary to attend Sunday morning worship, and there is not anything further from the truth and there is no sin that is more public than forsaking the assembly. This sin is against every faithful member of the Lord's church. The writer of Hebrews says "the assembly" not "a assembly", and every faithful Christian

understands the difference. The "assembly" means every assembly that is designed to teach and edify the Christian, whether it be Sunday bible Study, Sunday evening worship or Wednesday night Bible Study. Jesus has promised he would be present in every assembly where Christians are gathered in His name, or by his authority, whether it be to partake of the Lord's supper (Mat. 26:29), or gathering to do evangelistic work (Mat. 28:20). We are certain that he has never missed a service or a gathering of Christians since the church was established and he has promised a reward for faithfulness (I Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6; 9; Rev. 2:10).

HE CARES ABOUT OUR UNFAITHFULNESS

Being unthankful is involved in being unfaithful. According to Jesus' teaching ninety percent of those he blesses are unthankful. This is the figure we get from those ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19. Only one of the ten "turned back and with a loud voice glorified God, and he was a Samaritan. Jesus told the Ephesians to "give thanks always for all things" (Eph. 5:20), but the figures do not bear out the fact that all of us do. The fact is that there are a large number who are very unthankful for the fact that they have services to attend, and their lack of thankfulness is shown by their lack of attendance. Many just do not avail themselves of the opportunity to attend and it is shown when we compare the numbers from Sunday morning through the Wednesday night Bible Study. According to I peter 3:12, Jesus is watching what we do and do not do. How thankful are we that we found the truth amid about 34,000 false religions of this world that could have deceived us? YES, JESUS CARES ABOUT OUR UNFAITHFULNESS.

HE CARES ABOUT OUR SORROWS

Jesus is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" about our emotional crises in this world of illnesses, accidents and death. He experienced the pangs of sorrow when his friend Lazarus died (Jno. 11:35) and the Scripture says he "wept". All that is seen in this account is a good, sensitive man crying because he had lost a good friend and he could feel how Mary and Martha felt at the loss of their brother. Sometimes it hurts worse to see how some tragedies hurt other members of the family than it does about the one who suffered the tragedy. The Scripture says that "Jesus is touched by the feeling of our "infirmities" (Heb. 4:15) because he feels the things we suffer, and the Bible says " the trying of you faith worketh patience" (Jas. 1:3), and that "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, and are called according to his promise (Rom. 8:28). So where there is "no pain", there is "no gain", but where the brokenhearted is the Lord is also there (Ps. 84:18).

HE CARES ABOUT OUR TEMPTATIONS

All are tempted sometimes, with the same type of temptations, no matter who we are (I Cor. 10:13), but these temptations cannot crush us, regardless of how powerful they are (Rom. 8:35-39), if we will seek the way of escape that is provided (I Cor. 10:13). This is a promise that is based upon the "faithfulness of God" (I Cor. 10:13). So then, instead of giving in to the next temptation, look for the "way of escape". Sometime we have to resist the temptation (Jas. 4:7), and sometimes we are told to "flee" the temptation (I Cor. 6:18; 10:14; I Tim. 6:11; II Tim. 2:22). So whatever it takes to get away from it, in the end it will be worth it. It is not God's fault that we are tempted because He does not temp anyone (Jas. 1:13), but we are tempted when our own lust draws us into it (Jas. 1:14). We

must always be aware that if we want out of something evil we must find the "way of escape" that is provided by our Lord (I Cor. 10:13). When we find the way of escape, and take it, we will be much stronger Christians (I Peter 1:6,7).

HE CARES ABOUT OUR NEEDS

I suppose that sometime in virtually everyone's life there comes a time of need, whether it be because of our own carelessness or something that happened that was beyond our power to control. Sometime hazards like accident, fire, hurricanes, tornadoes etc. cause some to be in need, even if it is only temporary, but the Bible says that our need are known before we ask for help (Matt. 6:8). Someone may say, "If He already knows what we need then why ask?" the answer is because he wants us to ask. When we ask, it humbles us, and we are at our very best as Christians when we are humbled (Matt. 6:8) God has never forsaken the good (Ps. 37:23-28; Heb. 13:5). But the evil are without these promises (I Peter 3:12), because God will not be mocked (Gal. 6:7). God is against those who reject his counsel and then turn to him in time of trouble for His help (Prov. 1:24-33). His promise is that Christians do not need to worry about food, clothing and shelter because He will provide them if we are faithful to keep the church first in our lives (Mat. 6:25-33) His reasoning goes like this: If I take care of the birds, flowers etc. then I will take care of you because you are much better than they.

HE CARES ABOUT THE LOST

Our Lord came into the world and did many things for the people. He miraculously fed and healed them. It is said that there are about thirty-four instances where the Lord healed the people of almost every illness of His day, but this His primary reason was not to heal, but to save (Lk. 19:10) Everything else was secondary. He said

that He did not come to "condemn" but to save (Jno. 3:17). He has not changed! He still wants everyone (II Peter 3:9) Recently in the world census, there are six billion people on this earth, and the Lord want every one of them. But they have to come through the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4; Jno. 14:6). Although man people in this world are uneducated, the Gospel is so simple that "the wayfaring man, though he be a fool, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). Jesus is still calling men and women as he always has Mat. 11:28-30), but someday He is going to stop begging and knocking (Rev. 3:20), and the door will be shut (Matt.25: 10). Someday each of us will sing our last song, hear our last sermon, pray our last prayer and breathe our last breath, and then all opportunity to be a Christian will be gone. The truth is that the Lord has room for every one of us if we will make up our minds to come (Jno 14:1-3).

APPENDIX

WITHOUT FAITH

(Hebrews 11)

By Riley Nelson

In the planning of the Fifth Annual Southeast Georgia Lectureship, the decision was made to exclude chapter eleven of the text from being presented as an oral lecture. This decision was based upon the availability of time and of speakers. It was decided to include chapter eleven in the written work so as to cover the entire book of Hebrews in our studies.

In some fifteen years of congregational work, one thing that comes up from time to time is the individual who says, "I think I am losing my faith". Such a statement should be viewed as a great cry for help. The "balm" needed to be used here is a dedicated study of the Bible, and practical work experience in the "vineyard" of the Lord. One who knows little about the word and has no sweat from working for the Lord has little or no interest in growth that will bolster their faith. A person needs to have hands on experience in laboring for the Lord, in order to grow as a Christian (II Peter 3:18).

The writer of the Hebrew letter was a person facing a group of people who were "losing their faith". By inspiration he set about to tell them of the great things of the Christian dispensation. How that God had delivered to them such a better covenant than that to which they were tempted to return. He showed them the history of their people and how their ancestors had looked for just the time in which they were now living. They

were shown how that a lack of faith cost some of their people the "promise land". This writer re-introduced to these Christians the Son of God, their High Priest. It is with these thoughts in mind we come to what has been called "Faith's Hall Of Fame".

I. FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE

Faith in God gives one confidence in Him and His promises. The assurance that there is a Supreme Being in whom trust can be placed. The faithful child of God reads the scriptures and accepts them as God gives them. There is no question, because of the confidence in God.

This kind of faith was seen in the lives of all heroic followers of all ages. By their trust and actions they received God's approval. And it is by faith one knows that God created the heavens and earth. It matters not what ideas and theories that man may produce to try and explain creation. Some have tried to combine the creation story of the Bible and man's theories to explain creation. They seem not to realize that true faith in God declares that man's ideas are not needed. Genesis chapter one simply explains it, "In the beginning God created..." (Gen. 1:1).

True faith in God is seen in the lives of men and women down thru the ages. The Hebrew writer gives illustrations of how faith worked in the lives of many of God's children. It is faith in God that leads men to go beyond their abilities and desires to serve Jehovah.

II. EXAMPLES OF FAITH

The writer begins with Abel, who offered a "more excellent sacrifice" (Heb. 11:4). His offering was made complete confidence in God, hence "by faith". God

counted him as righteous by his offering. Even in his death his faith still speaks for all to know of his faithfulness and desire to please God to the best of his ability.

Enoch is next given as an example of faith working in the life of a man. Enoch's life was lived walking with God. His very being was given to the Father, and his faith was seen. He was translated, perhaps, as those faithful will be when the Lord comes to claim His children at the end of time. Surely this man serves to show how important a strong faith in God must exist in the lives of His followers.

Perhaps one of the most quoted verses of the New Testament is verse six of our text. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). In this verse is seen the kind of dedication God expects His children to have for Him. One who does not have the confidence or assurance in God to place their very being in His care cannot be pleasing to God. Men can and do many good things, such as helping the poor, caring for the sick, and other such things. Yet if these things are not done out of a dedicated faith in God, even they are not pleasing to God. God's desire is that man comes to know Him and place his trust fully in Him. This is seen many times in the scriptures as God proved to kings and nations that He is Jehovah.

True faith in God will lead the individual to turn his life fully over to God. Many decisions of life will be much easier for the answer will always be "What would God have me do"?

Noah was a man of great faith. His works told about in the book of Genesis testify of his great faith. Imagine being told of a great flood, and the need to build such a vessel as the ark, when such a thing had never happened. Think of how those about him must

have questioned him and yes even poked fun at his labors. Yet in the face of all these things the hammers kept hammering, the animals kept being gathered and the preaching continued. God told him what was going to happen, and what he was to do, that was all he needed. He was a man of faith.

Abraham and his descendants are the next examples of faith to be given. Abraham had faith in God even before he left his father's house. He was told:

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3)

The very next words recorded in Genesis twelve show Abraham's faith in God. "So Abram Departed" (Genesis 12:4a) So began a lifetime of travels and toils for the Lord. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). His faith led him to believe that this city did exist, and that one day he would find just that place. God blessed Abraham and Sarah with the promised child Isaac, and from him sprang the innumerable generations. They spent their lives as nomads. Yet as they drove the tent poles in the ground on their last day upon the earth, their eyes and hearts were filled with the view of this great promised city. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

The writer continues giving name after name of the faithful. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, the Judges, the prophets, and more. Ones time would be well spent researching each of the names and instances mentioned in our text. Understanding the one factor, which enabled these faithful ones to distinguish themselves in service to God. It was their faith. Their complete trust in God. They were willing to lift

their eyes beyond this life to eternity. Knowing that by their obedient faith they would find that city for which Abraham looked.

To a people who were "loosing their faith" this part of the letter serves as a means of exhortation for them to turn again to Christ and to rededicate them to the cause to which they had given themselves. By the example of the faithful, they would be able to see that though hard times might come upon them and men might persecute them, God would be there for them. The decision was theirs to make. The good report of the faithful was before them.

All of those of whom the writer had referred had lived either under the patriarchal system or the Law of Moses. Those to whom he was writing lived under a "better way". They lived in the Christian age. The mysteries that the ancients had wondered about were now made manifest to the Christians. It is as Paul told the Ephesians brethren, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Ephesians 3:8-12).

CONCLUSION

This chapter in fact this entire book explains the kind of faith, which God expects from his followers. Being a Christian is not a thing to be taken hap hazardly. It is a serious matter. May we all seek to develop our faith in God more each day that we may

also be of a good report concerning our faith. As has been seen in the lesson from chapter twelve, what ever would hinder us from running the Christian race must be put aside. May God bless us as we labor in His vineyard.

"LOOKING



AT ANTI-ISM''





THE SIXTH ANNUAL
SOUTHEAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
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Editor: Riley Nelson

PREFACE

While laboring with the Central Academy congregation outside of Batesville, Mississippi, I was approached by a lady who wanted to worship with us. She had visited a time or two and was known by some of the members. While talking with her, she informed me that she considered the congregation to be liberal, and that she was conservative. Anyone who knows me can guess my reaction. I wanted to know how we were liberal, of this I had never been accused. She told me that because we ate in the building and would support an orphan's home this made us liberal. This was my first real encounter with one of the Anti belief.

This term "anti" is seen by those who hold to its doctrine to be a term of derision. However it simply states their position. They are against certain things such as supporting an orphan's home, helping non-Christians, using more than one communion cup, having Bible class, congregations cooperating together, and several other things.

Over the year's congregations throughout the world have gone through pain and suffering over these issues. Congregations have split, and in some cases buildings have been taken from those faithful to the word. A generation exists now that knows little or nothing about the anti-doctrine. It is hoped that this book will help educate those who need more knowledge about this subject. Many good and honest people have been caught up in the snare of these beliefs. This work is put forth so that the subjects may be studied in light of the Bible. The Bible must be our authority. All must realize that things cannot be bound where God has not bound.

Riley Nelson Richmond Hill Church of Christ October 27, 2001

"LOOKING AT ANTI-ISM"

DEDICATION

It is an honor and privilege to dedicate this book, "Looking at Anti-ism" to Sister Carolyn Thompson. She has been the volunteer secretary at the Richmond Hill congregation for many years. Almost every Thursday you will find her at the building running the bulletin, writing letters, typing up the announcement sheet, putting out visitor cards and many other tasks that most take for granted. She is known for her hospitality and kindness to others. She is loved by all in the congregation. Carolyn a is great example of a Christian lady.

Riley Nelson, Director and Editor Sixth Annual Southeast Georgia Lectureship

Held at the Church of Christ Richmond Hill Georgia Highway 144 East P.O. Box 786 Richmond Hill GA. 31324

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LOOKING AT ANTI-ISM

WHAT IS ANTI-ISM?

By Ryan Tuten

INTRODUCTION

What a wonderful privilege it is to be a part of this great lectureship again. The congregation at Richmond Hill is to be commended for their work in this lectureship program. Their love for the Lord and His Word is more evident with each passing year.

My objective in writing this opening chapter is to identify, describe and discuss the influence the "non-institutional" group has had on the churches of Christ. The task of writing this chapter is not a pleasant one. In fact it is heart breaking. But it **must be done**. Why? Why must we speak out and expose this sect? (1) To alert the sleeping giant of our brotherhood and warn them of the Trojan Horse in our midst. (2) To provide assistance and encouragement to those who have encountered the destructive elements of "anti-ism." (3) To reaffirm the simple truth of God's will to all who will listen.

As we begin this study of looking at anti-ism, let us first consider and examine the **Love of God**. Millions of people are suffering every day through no fault of their own because of war and natural disasters. They become destitute, hungry and many times homeless. Little children become helpless and have no one to care for them. Because of the Scriptures and the teachings of Christ and their love for Him, faithful churches of Christ and others who care, send food, clothing, medical supplies and money to those in need. They provide help for the helpless and homes for the homeless. They remember the words of our Lord, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40)

Sadly however, there are some in the Church of Christ, who teach that money from the church treasury <u>cannot</u> be used to support children's homes, homes for the elderly, or to supply

the needs of those who are not members of the church. Some have gone to such extremes as to teach that the church is **hell-bound** if it helps non-saints out of the church treasury. They teach that it is a **sin** for the Church to do so. In 1963 (March 22) a proposition was signed in Meridian, Mississippi by A.C. Grider which stated,

"The Bible teaches that it is a sin for the church to take money from its treasury to buy food for the hungry destitute children, and those who do so will go to hell."

The "anti" doctrine (all phases included) has divided many congregations of the Lord's church who were at one time united, faithful brethren (1 Corinthians 1:10). These groups call themselves "non-institutional" but they are also known as "saints only" and "anti-orphan home" groups. While twenty-two children die of starvation each minute on this planet, it is time to take a sobering look at this heartless doctrine. This doctrine is of man and not of Christ!

ALERTING THE SLEEPING GIANT OF OUR BROTHERHOOD AND WARN THEM OF THE TROJAN HORSE IN OUR MIDST.

During the 1100's or 1200's, a war took place, in which ancient Greece defeated the city of Troy. The Greek army had laid siege on Troy for nearly 10 years but could not conquer the city. Various classical literary works describe these battles as fierce and brutal with many harsh struggles. The war began to go sour for the Greeks after Achilles, their bravest warrior, left the battlefield. Achilles refused to fight any more battles because one of the leading Greek commanders insulted him. The Trojans, then led by Hector, drove the Greeks back to the sea and into their ships. Yet the Greeks never gave up, they built a huge wooden horse, which has come to be known as the *Trojan Horse*, and placed it outside the city walls of Troy. Odysseus and some other warriors hid inside the horse while the rest of the Greeks sailed away. Several of the top officials in the city warned against them taking the horse into the city. But Sinon, a

Greek prisoner, persuaded them that the horse was sacred and would bring them great protection of the gods.⁷ The Trojans then pulled the huge wooded horse into the city. That night, they fell asleep after celebrating their apparent victory. The Greeks then crept out of the horse and opened the city gates for the rest of the warriors, who had returned from a nearby island.⁸ The Greeks took back Helen, slaughtered almost all the Trojans, and burned the city of Troy.⁹

This story, which may possibly be mostly fictional, yet describes exactly what is happening in our brotherhood today concerning the Lord's church. The false movement of "anti-ism" which fought for many years and was so out spoken is now just like the *Trojan Horse* and is in our midst. Many Christians today have the attitude of those in Troy and feel like the battle is over and we have won the fight. Yet while we celebrate, the Trojan Horse is on our midst.

In the early stages of this study, I ask various individuals who are members of the Lord's church these questions: (1) "Do you have any problem with attending a non-institutional church of Christ?" Or do you have any problem, "Being in fellowship with those who hold the "anti" doctrine?" It overwhelms me, how many faithful brethren, had no problem worshiping or being in full fellowship with those teaching this doctrine. Out of fifteen people I asked these questions to, twelve stated they had no problem attending or being in fellowship with the "anti" group. They also made statements to me such as: "I don't think there's a problem with anti-ism today" or "There's no need to worry about that doctrine it's dying out." I even heard one say, "I don't have as much of a problem with the anti doctrine as I do with the Liberals."

Friends this scares me! Have we lost sight of the dangers in the teachings of false doctrines? Have we lost sight of the scriptures and turned our face from error? Does not the Bible teach to avoid and mark them which teach error and divide the body of Christ (Romans 16:17)? The ostrich syndrome will not make the "Anti" problem go away. Far too long, we have all been told "it's only a matter of opinion." The "Anti sect" does not consider it a "matter of opinion" and will not fellowship those who disagree with their teachings. What they teach is a major doctrinal error. It is time that Christians all across this land wake up and realize that this error is right in the middle of each of our lives and these who teach this false doctrine are

stealing our youth and condemning others to hell. If we desire to be the New Testament church, we better wake up and realize that we have invited the enemy (Trojan Horse) into our very midst. If we continue to sleep and celebrate a victory that has yet been won, we will surely lose the battle.

TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHO HAVE ENCOUNTERED THE DESTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS OF ANTI-ISM.

Brother Roy Deaver, editor of Biblical Truths, once wrote, "The "anti-orphan-home" sect is a dissident group representing themselves to be the church of Christ.¹⁰ They betray Christ's teachings of compassion and love for his children and the unfortunates of this world.¹¹ They seek to separate the individual and the church to such a degree that they teach the Lord is pleased if the individual cares for the "fatherless and widows in their affliction" but it is a sin if the church cares for the fatherless and widows.¹² "He continues and states, "These brethren have sinned. They have split the body of Christ all across this land."¹³

It is sad, but the words are many times echoed everywhere. The sect known as the "non-institutional" group has no problem dividing the body of Christ. There are now more than two thousand churches in the United States, calling themselves Churches of Christ, and these numbers are growing every day. In the 60's and 70's the church was planted in most counties in Georgia. In (1977) they were only 27 anti congregations in the state, now there are more than 70. ¹⁴ To go back and replant these congregations is ridiculous without first facing and addressing the problems that destroyed and weakened so many congregations. ¹⁵ In almost every community where there is a church of Christ, there is division over caring for the homeless and the helpless. Many small and large congregations of faithful Christians have encountered this destructive element and many hearts have been broken, many tears have been shed, individuals having their faith challenged, buildings and lands have been taken and souls have been lost. Yet

there is encouragement! When we begin to realize that there are various institutions in this world some good and some evil. We come to realize not everyone desires to please God and keep His commandments (John 14:15). We can know, we are a part of the Divine Institution, the church, from God, for God, and for the salvation of man's soul. God never said it was going to be easy. Peter stated, "If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:16). The Lord even stated while on this earth, "only those who endure to the end, shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). We cannot give up! We are a part of the greatest institution on this earth, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ established His church, set it up as His spiritual body, or society, with a particular object, to present the gospel to all the world and save the lost souls. There is no institution on this earth that can be compared to it. And those who are apart of this great institution must realize there is work to do. There are those however, who try to distinguish between the work of the church and the work of Christians, indicating one to be divine and the other human. 16 This is erroneous reasoning! The church is composed of Christians; what the church does, Christian's do, what Christian's do; the church does, generally speaking.¹⁷ We cannot separate the Christian's work from the work of the church. The encouragement is, that as we do the work of the church (James 1:22) and practice pure religion undefiled (James 1:27) and go that extra mile and help ALL those in need (Galatians 6:10), God will be with us (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:7). When a congregation cooperates with other faithful brethren in doing the will of God (supporting orphan homes, feeding and clothing their bodies, and feed their bodies with the gospel of Christ) it enriches their lives and lifts them up, planting their feet on the ground. Surely that is a work of the church, which would be most pleasing to Almighty God!

REAFFIRMING THE SIMPLE TRUTHS OF GOD'S WORD TO ALL WHO WILL LISTEN.

The simple truth of God's Word! God's Word is simple! The Prophet Isaiah stated, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." (Isaiah 35:8). The way to God and the way to please God is so simple. Yet many people arrive at erroneous teachings concerning the will of God. Our Lord stated, "...and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." (John 8:32). God's Word is the truth (John 17:17) and the reason most do not know what the truth, is that they don't study and read for themselves (2 Timothy 2:15, Ephesians 3:4). Friend's one cannot arrive at such erroneous teachings such as the "non-institutional" sect, simply by reading God's Word. 18 This "antiorphan-home, saints only, non-institutional" doctrine must be diligently and continuously fed into willing minds. 19 It is a maze of contradictions of God's precious Word. 20 Children are the most precious gifts from God. To let them suffer, with the lame excuse that Jesus doesn't allow His Church to provide for their needs, is inexcusable. 21

Christians have a job to do! The Christian religion is a "**DO**" religion, a religion of action! It is the duty of both individuals and congregations of Christians to preach the Gospel, to rescue the perishing and care for the dying, to visit the fatherless and widows, relieve the oppressed, and assist those in their affliction.²² In addition to this let us all listen to the words of our Lord:

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto

you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:34-46).

The great sermons of our Lord, put into practice, especially the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew chapters 5,6 and 7), and His exhortation on the last judgment (Matthew 25), is pure and undefiled religion - the church at work, both as individual Christians and congregations of Christians.²³

It is regretful that we have brethren today who are spending much time, energy and money trying to convince churches of our Lord that it is sinful for them to support orphan homes and other cooperative works of the church. The simple truth is these brethren are seeking to bind laws upon God's divine institution, the church, which would cause congregations to practice a religion that is "vain" (Mt. 15:9).²⁴ This indeed is a serious matter...trouble comes when brethren legislate where God has not legislated and seek to bind where God did not bind. Brethren seek many times to force their opinions of HOW and WHERE upon the church, even if it divides the Lord's church and makes an unholy spectacle of the church before an unbelieving world.²⁵

Congregations of the Lord's church cannot afford to be bound by dictates and factious brethren. It is sinful to legislate where God has not legislated. Hear the words of the inspired apostle Paul:

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to

perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. (Col. 2:20-23)

When Christians give their support and consent to false teachings, they cannot escape the consequences. The divine injunction of God is plainly given:

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 1:9-11)

To fellowship, give comfort and encouragement to error, is displeasing to God. To be a "partaker of evil deeds" is not without guilt of sin. There is a simple truth (John 17:17) and that is just do what the Bible teaches and leave all other theories and practices alone.

CONCLUSION

My friends, I do not want to meet God in judgment having been guilty of teaching congregations that they should cease to be doers of the word and cease to practice pure religion. God being my helper, I will not be guilty of teaching congregations of the Lord's people to substitute theory for practice.

How many orphans are you helping to care for? How many widows in affliction are you supporting? How many missionaries in our own land, or in foreign countries are you sending to preach the gospel? Regardless of how small or large a congregation may be, you have a responsibility which must be accounted for in the day of judgment. It will be too late in the judgment to say, "Our preacher told us it was wrong to do it." Then there will be but one answer, and what a tragic and fateful answer! In His sermon on the "Last Judgment," Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but for the righteous eternal life."

End Notes

1World Book - Childcraft International, Inc. <i>The World Book Encyclopedia</i> , 1980 USA; Volume 19, page 366.
2Ibid., pp 366
3Ibid., pp 366
4Ibid., pp 366
5Ibid., pp 367
6Ibid., pp 367
7Ibid., pp 367
8Ibid., pp 367
9Ibid., pp 367
10Roy Deaver, <i>Biblical Notes</i> , December 1970, (A Letter to Eugene Greer, minister in Center Texas) Volume IV.
11Ibid
12Ibid
13Ibid
14Warren Chancey, (Notes, Letters and Bulletins concerning Anti - Doctrine) 1998-2001, Cordele, GA.
15Ibid
16V. E. Howard, <i>Institutionalism - Orpah Homes and Church Cooperation</i> , 1970 West Monroe, Louisiana, (Tract)
17Ibid.,pp.5
18Ibid.,pp.5
19Chancey (Notes, Letters and Bulletins), Ibid
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21V.E. Howard, Institutionalism - Orpah Homes and Church Cooperation, Ibid.,pp16
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24Ibid.,pp.17,18

25Ibid.,pp.18

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- 1. Holy Bible, King James Version
- 2. Memphis School of Preaching Class Notes, 1998
- Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship, "God Hath Spoken, Affirming Truth and Reproving Error," 1999
- 4. Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship, "The Apostle Paul," 1998
- 5. V. E. Howard, "Institutionalism Orphan Homes and Church Cooperation," Tract, 1970.
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LOOKING AT ANTI-ISM

HELPING OF SAINTS ONLY

By Wayne Rodgers

INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin by thanking the Richmond Hill congregation for this lectureship. It is a great duty for congregations, as a whole, to stand up for the truth in such a bold fashion, and this congregation certainly rises to the occasion. My thanks and appreciation goes to Riley Nelson for his direction of this lectureship, his immutable stand for the truth, and most especially for the guidance and friendship he has shown to me.

A knock at the door and you jump up to see who it might be. You're not expecting anyone at this time of morning. A family of three is standing outside the door. They seem to be a fairly young couple with a little girl less than five years old. They have been walking for some time now. The story you hear may be one that's been told before and you approach with skepticism; but as you inquire more about their situation, they are heading back home to live with her parents, because of a layoff at a big plant down south. As the last week has gone by, all that they have was packed into a mini-van, some things strapped to the roof, and they travel back to where her parents are waiting for them. Their van has now left them stranded beside the road a few miles south of here. You invite them in to sit down and take a load off while you inquire more of their situation. A tow truck is called to pick up the van and take it to the local garage. The young lady's parents are called and notified about the situation. Everything about their story seems to check out. The parents say that they can help a little, but the repairs are costly, the

family has but a few dollars to their name, nowhere to stay, no money for food, and the little girl's clothes aren't clean. This family is destitute and in need of help.

Inquiring, we find out this family is not members of the Lord's church. What a great opportunity! Should we not take advantage of this opportunity and reach out to this young couple. Realizing now this couple is in need of more than just physical things (food, shelter, clothing, money for repairs). At this point, it is apparent of their spiritual needs, as well. We should desire to do those things, which will show our love to them, but more importantly, God's love for them. We go through our respective preaching duties always looking for opportunities to teach the gospel to the lost. Yet many times opportunities present themselves.

While we sit and ponder this situation, as bad as it seems, our heart goes out to this family who has come upon poverty and need, BUT...once again, we are reminded these people are not members of the Lord's church. One piece of information that you don't know is whether or not this couple knocked on my door at home or at the church building. While for some this may not seem like an issue, however, many consider this the deciding factor of whether or not to help this family in need. To be more specific, if they were to knock on an individual's door, it would be okay for that individual to help a "non-member of the body of Christ." Yet, if the knock came at the church building, and they were inquiring about help from the church, they would have to be turned away not being members of the church. These individuals, who would turn away this couple, claim that any congregation helping non-Christians from the church's treasury would be "hell-bound".

FROM WHENCE DOES THIS TEACHING COME?

This teaching of anti-ism is referred to as "saints only." It has stems from those who claim and teach that churches cannot give from the church treasury to an orphan's home. These

different "anti" doctrines that we are discussing today have been debated on numerous occasions in years past. Yet today, we find ourselves here today refuting this same hateful doctrine as if it were a new issue. For others, and myself who are younger members of the Lord's church, this is somewhat of a new issue for us. But, as the works of Gus Nichols, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Guy N. Woods, Thomas B. Warren, and many others who stood for the truth reminds us, this doctrine has divided the church of Christ throughout the world. Brethren have stood against brethren debating this doctrine of "anti-ism." In recent years, it has seemed to slip into the shadows and pass away. Yet, we look around and find "anti" (or non-institutional) congregations everywhere we travel. These men mentioned earlier, as well as many others, stood against this doctrine not because of their own positions, but because of their love for the truth and the constant reminder of the apostle Paul's warnings about division:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

This doctrine has been the cause of a disturbing number of once faithful brethren dividing the church of our Lord. As mentioned previously in the introduction of this book, several local congregations have had devastating splits, where faithful brethren have lost their buildings and even ended up in court against their own brethren and family.

COMMON ARGUMENTS USED

Usually verses such as James 1:27 and Galatians 6:10 are used to argue for the right of an individual to help the needy from his own bank account, but not the church's treasury. First,

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

In this verse, the advocates of the "saints only" doctrine state that this is individuals only, not a collective effort funded by the church's treasury. One thing that one should notice when reading this verse is that it does not say to attend to the needs of the fatherless and widows who are saints. A simple reading of Revelation 22:18,19 should suffice to teach us that we should not "add to" the inspired scripture, as they attempt to do. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. makes a statement concerning Galatians 6:10, but can be applied here as well:

These advocates of anti-ism have "...devise(d) a combination of ideas that would rob the verse of the forthright simplicity of its statement and dispose of the admonition for general collective benevolence." ²

Another verse commonly used is:

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10)

In this verse, it is contended that this verse is for the individual Christian, not the collective effort of the congregation. Wallace again says:

"That this passage was an apostolic admonition for a general collective benevolence 'for all men,' but with priority for 'the household of faith,' was never disputed until the frustrated efforts of this (group)...And all of this to establish the tenet of no collective aid or support for an orphan or any other person not a member of the church. If their contention is true, then it splits the verse. According to their concept, the church can do the lower half of this verse but cannot do the upper half of it—yet, it is addressed to precisely the same, the selfsame identical people, the churches of Galatia—and to separate the injunction, to make the bottom half of it collective but the top half individual is undiluted disregard for all principles of scriptural exegesis and rule of sentence structure." ³

Also, one should note that if verse 10 is asserted to be individual, we may assert that verse 6 is individual also, and the collective support of a preacher by a congregation is thereby cancelled. It would be the individual's responsibility to do so. When comparing various

passages where specific duties of an individual or congregation are to be determined, consider the passage in 1 Cor. 11:23-34, concerning the Lord's Supper. The apostle Paul warns: "Let a man examine himself..." Wallace states:

"If 1 Cor. 11 requires a man to collectively perform the individual duty to observe the Lord's Supper in the assembly, it follows because it must follow, that the a man or the every man of Gal. 6, may collectively perform the individual duty in the giving of money for benevolence 'to all men' as well as 'to them that are of the household of faith.' The apostolic order to observe the Lord's Supper was a command to the individual, as shown in verses 28 and 34 of 1 Cor. 11, but that it required collective compliance cannot be denied. If this is true of the Lord's Supper in assembly worship, it is nonetheless true of benevolence in congregational procedures."

A good Bible student will be swift to agree that in 1 Cor. 16:1-4, this collection taken up on the 1st day of the week was for the purpose of helping the needy saints in Judea. Brian Kenyon asks this question:

"Is this the only reason why a collection can be taken upon the 1st day of the week? Why do those who claim to see an exclusive pattern for the distribution of church funds refuse to accept an exclusive pattern for the collection of church funds? There is no explicit example of a collection being taken from Christians for any other reason than helping those in need. By what authority, therefore, do the 'only saints' brethren even have a church treasury? By what authority do they write checks from that treasury for anything other than benevolent aid to Judean saints? To claim that the Bible authorizes 'only' by what it explicitly 'says' (or exemplifies) and then do something other than 'only' what the Bible explicitly 'says' is hypocritical." 5

Another argument against this doctrine of "anti-ism" is that while they advocate that only individuals can help those who are non-members of the church, the Bible teaches that every individual member of the body of Christ must give "as he has been prospered" into the treasury on the 1st day of the week. Logically speaking, if the member fulfills his obligation and duty to

give, he has nothing left to give individually. If the church cannot scripturally help the one in need and the individual is not economically able to do so, it follows that the destitute can receive no benevolence at all from either the church or the individual! ⁶

Paul Sain had this to say:

Ones who advocate help to "saints only" would have Paul saying, "...do good unto the household of faith (all men), especially unto them who are of the household of faith." "All men" in Galatians 6:10 must refer to those other than the "household of faith." We can notice (for further clarity) additional uses of the same word translated "all men" in Gal. 6:10.

In 2 Cor. 9:13 – Paul refers to their liberal distribution "unto them" (saints) and unto "all men" (all others who were not saints).

In John 12:32 – All men refers to any and all who can be drawn to the Saviour. If we suggested "all men" refers only to "saints" we would thereby espouse the false doctrine of Limited Atonement by Calvin.

In 1 Thes. 3:12 – The inspired writer exhorts these brethren to increase and excel in their love "one toward another" (saints) and toward "all men" (those who were not saints).

In 1 Thes. 5:15 – Christians must not render evil for evil, but follow that which is good "among yourselves (saints), and to all men (all others)." 7

CHRIST SPOKE OF BENEVOLENCE

Going back to the beginning of this lesson and being reminded of the couple who found themselves in a time of need, the "saints only" doctrine would withhold contributions of the church and leave them standing at the door. This is not even as those who James mentions with no faith who would say, "Be ye warmed and filled," because this is such an unfriendly, unloving act toward someone who is in need. This certainly should bring to our minds what Jesus himself said, as he described the judgment scene:

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I wan a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Matthew 25:41-46).

In this judgment scene, Christ banishes those who were not doers of the Word from the presence of the Lord, confined to the eternal pits of darkness, and everlasting punishment, not because of what they did, but for what **THEY DID NOT DO!** From this passage, it is easy to see that Christ takes this personally (v. 45). How could we possibly take this doctrine before Christ on the Day of Judgment claiming this is why I was not able to offer any help? I couldn't! I won't! Wallace points out that this doctrine of "saints only" presents a "selfish Christianity that becomes a contradiction in terms."

CONCLUSION

We should keep in mind, as a good Bible student will, that when looking at one verse and attempting to interpret that verse, one has to keep it in within the context of the verses surrounding it. After determining what that verse might mean, we should consider the meaning of that verse in light of the rest of the scriptures, asking ourselves "if the verse means this, how does that fit within the rest of the Bible's teaching?" If it does not fit within the teaching of the rest of the Bible, then you have not determined the correct meaning of the verse. The Bible does not contradict itself! This is what these groups who hold this doctrine of anti-ism should consider, because the rest of the Bible teaches one to be benevolent in his work. We all have heard of the three-fold work of the church being: evangelism, benevolence, and edification (Eph.

4:11-15). While that is certainly true, consider this: As we are to be carrying out the great commission (Mark 16:15-16), we do benevolence to evangelize, we edify to evangelize, and we evangelize to evangelize. In other words, our work as members of the body of Christ is to evangelize. Notice again:

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all (men), especially unto them of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:9-1)

We should always be evangelizing and looking for prospects, and we're told (v. 9) "not to be weary" in doing so. We should not lose our zeal for doing the work of the Lord. If we do not lose heart "in doing well," then we shall reap the reward of heaven. "While the season for the sowing lasts, it is imperative that all should make useful every favorable juncture of circumstances for the doing of what is good unto all men, without and within the church, but with due priority to them that are in the family of God" (9).

This "saints only" doctrine is a false doctrine as are the rest of the teachings of anti-ism, and one should always be equipped to stand for the truth (1 Pet. 3:15). It is my hope and prayer that the brethren who teach anti-ism, binding where the Lord has not bound, will repent and live once again in harmony with God's word, rather than superseding it (Rev. 22:18,19).

End Notes

- ¹ Paul Sain, "Helping Non-Saints from the Treasury error," 1999 Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship. Memphis, TN. Pg. 613,614
- ² The Current Issues by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. found on The Complete Library of Foy E. Wallace, Jr. on CD, 1997. Pg.43.
- ³ Ibid. pg.44
- ⁴ Ibid. pg 44-45
- ⁵ Brian Kenyon, "The Only Saints Doctrine of Benevolence," 1999 Florida School of Preaching Lectureship, Lakeland, Fl.
- ⁶ The Current Issues by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. found on The Complete Library of Foy E. Wallace, Jr. on CD, 1997. Pg 26
- ⁷ Sain, p. 620
- ⁸ Wallace, p. 25

LOOKING AT ANTI-ISM

EATING IN THE BUILDING

By Richard Mansel

1INTRODUCTION

The divisive topic on the table is whether we have the scriptural authority to eat in a fellowship hall constructed with church funds. Within the churches of Christ there are a sizeable number of congregations who hold that fellowship halls are contrary to the Word of God. This group has collectively been given the name "anti's" by those who disagree with their views. This is considered derisive by those who constitute this group. ¹ They simply refer to themselves as "conservative" and others as "liberal." I will use the more common appellation attributed to them today and will refer to them as "non-institutional" (NI) brethren. Non-institutional brethren constitute approximately 2,000 congregations with nearly 120,000 members. ²

STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

No more sacred book exists than the Word of God. Isaiah 40:8 says, "the grass withers, the flower fades. But the Word of God stands forever." Its truths were "settled in heaven" before man ever received its treasure (Psalm 119:89). We have only to bow down before it.

John 1:1 introduces us to the *logos* or God's thoughts "uttered so that men could understand them." ³ Later, in 1:14, John tells us that the "Word became Flesh and dwelt among us." In 14:10, John records the words of Jesus, "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me." In 16:13 we are told that the Holy

Spirit speaks only that which God has spoken. Therefore, because of their humility and care for truth, we have no right to speak of our own authority. Thomas Campbell's words continue to ring in our ears, "we speak where the Bible speaks and we are silent where the Bible is silent."

Sound exegesis has focused on three primary means of ascertaining Biblical authority.

We must find a command, example, or necessary inference for all that we teach and practice.

As we seek to mine the wealth of truth in Scripture we must always be cognizant of context. Woods writes, "an elementary rule of interpretation is to observe carefully the significance of that which goes before and that which follows the passage under study, before attempting to reach a conclusion as to its intended and proper meaning." ⁴

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Do we have the scriptural authority to eat in a fellowship hall constructed with church funds? I am aware of the possible ambiguities of this statement. In the written discussion between Ray Hawk and James P. Needham on this topic, they spent close to half of their discussion space attempting to establish their propositions and terms. From this reader's perspective, they never did.

Needham initiated the written debate by questioning Hawk's mention of a fellowship hall in his bulletin. Hawk responded by offering a very reasonable proposition. He wrote, "the Scriptures teach that the church may/may not (depending on affirmation or denial, RDM) come together and eat a common meal on property paid for out of the common church treasury." No doubt Hawk was surprised when this was rejected. Needham wrote, "There is no way I would debate these propositions. I wouldn't deny your proposition, and don't know anyone who would."

Needham's new proposition read, "The Scriptures teach that the elders may call the church together to eat a common meal on church property, namely, in the church building or on church grounds when said meal is designed for social and/or recreational purposes."

Needham considered dining in the building as acceptable as these two quotes show.

I sometimes eat my lunch in my study. Back in the country we used to carry our dinner to church and eat it on the grounds because we could not get home and back for the evening service in a horse-drawn wagon. I believe that was necessary, and essential. It was not done for a social purpose. ⁶

I do not deny that the congregation could eat on the premises when it is essential or necessary to the work of the church. I deny that they can eat on the premises for a purely social or recreational purpose. I deny that the church can pay for facilities for recreational purposes.

Jeff Asher writes, "the dinners on the ground of our parents' and grandparents' day were not a forty-second cousin to the church sponsored recreation of our day. What was done in the past as an incidental thing to the Sunday assemblies does not authorize the social meal." ⁸

Larry Fain adds to the confusion.

Sometimes a preacher might even take a meal inside the office. Many preachers take a sack lunch to their office just the same as an accountant might do. It is expedient. Eating in the church building is not always sin. There is a difference, though, between a preacher taking a meal in his office as an expedient and the church providing a kitchen for that purpose or a 'fellowship hall' so that all the members, or even a portion of them, may also partake in a meal. ⁹

The issue apparently then is not "eating in the building." Nor is the "social meal" aspect an issue either. The minute those families of old, visited or allowed their children to run and play, they were recreating on church grounds. When they wanted to eat and visit and talk of secular things did they have to go outside in inclement weather? Or, did they go in the building?

When their children got restless did they have to stay in the inclement weather or go inside to play?

They went inside and ate their fellowship meals and had social time together. Since their actions were acceptable then, we can presume that at some point social meals were acceptable. Only two explanations exist. Either cars made fellowship meals sinful or they became so when someone developed a doctrine claiming they were sinful.

Consistency is a great challenge for anything we practice. Concerning the inconsistencies of our brethren's practice in the pre-automobile days, one writer says, "does the antiquity of the practice make it right?" Not entirely, but the support of so many NI brethren for these fellowship meals in the building is destructive to their doctrine of no fellowship meals in the building. When faced with the inconsistencies concerning eating in his office, Needham also finds himself cornered by his illogic and says, "Suppose I can't justify eating my lunch in the building, does that prove his (Hawk's) proposition?" ¹⁰ Actually, yes (Colossians 3:17).

SCRIPTURAL PRECEDENT

I shudder to think of a congregation as troubled as the Christians in Corinth. Paul wrote them as many as four letters trying to solve disputes and correct false doctrine. What we refer to as 1 Corinthians address several conflicts.

The immediate purpose of the Epistle was obviously to answer the letter Paul had received from the Corinthian church. But that this was not primarily in his mind is seen in that not until 1 Corinthians 7 does he turn his attention to the letter he had received. Much more important to Paul were certain matters that the Corinthians had not mentioned. He wrote to set things right. His primary concern was with the divisions in the church and the spirit of factiousness that these divisions proclaimed to all. ¹¹

They were embroiled in factious behavior. First, false teachers had banded together to recruit others to their side. Second, 1:10-17 finds Paul attacking this immediately following the introduction. Symptomatic of their disunity, they had chosen sides in who their "favorite" teachers were (1:12-13). Paul then discusses the spiritual immaturity of man's wisdom as compared to God's (1:18- 2:16). He applies it to them. "For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (2:3). In chapter five, they are harboring an incestuous relationship. Notice, 5:1 says it is "among you" and they were afraid to remove him from "among (them)." In chapter six, they were going to court against one another and no doubt also divided over that dispute.

Examining Paul's answers to the problems of the Corinthians sheds light on the matter under consideration. The solution to divisions over teachers was to humble themselves before others and perform the task God's way. This was his answer to all the squabbles. With the incestuous man they were to unify in humble obedience to God's plan and discipline the man. In the situations with the lawsuits and the spiritual gifts they were to place others before themselves and submit to God's way.

When we come to the abuse of the Lord's Supper why should Paul's solution be any different? Why would he come to this problem and tell them to eliminate the situation rather than deal with the root? Why did he not offer that as the answer to the conflict over spiritual gifts? Stop using all spiritual gifts and the conflicts will cease. In the case of the lawsuit why did he not just say, "just forget this petty problem and let it go"? Why did he say, "is it so that there is not a wise man among you, not even one who will be able to judge between his brethren?" (6:5). It would be completely out of character for Paul's answer to the abuse of the Lord's Supper to simply eliminate the whole situation rather than force them to deal with their godly

responsibilities. Why not teach them the principle of patient love and concern for others rather than sending them home to further seethe?

Paul repeats himself so many times in this passage that it would be impossible to misunderstand him. In 11:17 he writes, "since you come together not for the better but for the worse." In 11:18 he writes, "when you come together..." Two verses later he adds, "therefore when you come together in one place..." (11:20). In 11:33 he says, "when you come together" and then in the last verse of the chapter finalizes it by summarizing, "lest you come together for judgment."

Why have they come together? This is clearly demonstrated in 11:20 when he criticizes them by saying, "when you come together in one place it is not to eat the Lord's Supper" and outlines their abuses. Conclusively, they have "come together" for worship on the Lord's Day.

Thayer says this reference to "come together" means to "assemble with regard to place."

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Here the word is a technical term for the coming together of the Christian congregation, esp. to administer the Lord's Supper. Paul attacks scandals in Christian gatherings, e.g., divisions, the lack of order and discipline at the Lord's Supper. ¹³

Paul says in 11:18, "when you come together as a church..." Thayer interprets this as "an assembly of Christians gathered for worship." ¹⁴ A. T. Robertson adds that when Paul prefaces his comments with "first of all" it shows that "this is the primary reason for Paul's condemnation and the only one given." ¹⁵ Paul is only condemning the factious spirit of their gatherings. Once again, the reader need only return to 11:20. The New Revised Standard Version reads, "When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper." Who among us

would say that Paul would condone eating the Lord's Supper on any other occasion but during worship on the Lord's Day? (Acts 20:7).

Examining the purpose of this passage is to establish that Paul is referring to behavior during worship. I have been in the church for over 20 years and have never heard of any congregation anywhere who has had a fellowship meal during worship!!

In other words, this does not even address the fellowship meals in our churches today which take place outside of worship. Interestingly, we find very few examples of Christians meeting outside of worship. The situation just never arose to discuss Christians meeting outside of worship so we have no right to say that we have clear guidelines concerning their behavior when together! To do so is to bind on earth what is not bound in heaven (Matthew 16:19).

Curiously, there are those who, in agreement with me, say that this passage is silent concerning fellowship meals outside of worship. However, they turn it around and say this silence is prohibitive. One says, "when it comes to social meals among brethren, such are completely excluded from the assembling of themselves together as a congregation (1 Corinthians 11:22,34)." ¹⁶ How can a passage concerning an abuse of the Lord's Supper have anything whatsoever to do with an event outside of worship? Must we, for example, only used unleavened bread at our dinner tables?

One NI writer states, "understand first that Paul is not correcting the misuse of a meal, but the misuse of the Lord's Supper. The clear implication is that some had turned the Lord's Supper into a common meal." ¹⁷ Then, he adds that Paul did not say, "eat your meals separately from the Lord's Supper;' or, 'Make sure to eat your meals together and share what you have." ¹⁸ The insinuation he makes is that when Paul said "do you not have houses to eat in" he condemns all social meals in the building. I disagree on the following grounds.

Deaver defined inferences or implications as "when an action, fact, or teaching is absolutely demanded by the Biblical information at hand-without being specifically stated—then that action, that fact, or that teaching is a matter of implication." ¹⁹ If this passage refers to activities during worship then we cannot possibly imply/infer that it contains prescriptions for activities post-worship! This no more speaks of the proper handling of fellowship meals than it does our meals at home.

Paul was addressing a specific situation in worship. Utilizing the reasoning of some, when Paul says, "do you not have houses to eat and drink in?" he means it would be sinful to ever eat anywhere but home. NI brethren say that we should meet in homes to eat together as a group of Christians. However, under their reasoning that is sin! "You" (individuals collectively) must eat in your home only. Paul violated this at every meal he ate because he had no home.

In close examination we see that 11:20 says specifically that they came together to eat of the Lord's Supper, hence at worship. Then in 11:21 Paul presents the problem (previously alluded to as 'division' in 11:18 and 'factions' in 11:19) as 'in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk." They were guilty of greed, gluttony, drunkenness, being respecters of persons, etc. Paul's answer is, "What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?" (11:22).

History tells us that they did have meals associated with the Lord's Supper. I don't find this prescribed in Scripture so it must have been an extension of Jesus's institution of the Lord's Supper in the context of the Passover meal. Everett Ferguson in *Early Christians Speak* quotes from Tertullian who said, "we take the sacrament of the Eucharist, which was commanded by the Lord at meal time and for all alike." ²⁰

I am aware of the warning of Riggs who said, "it seems to me that anytime anyone must rely on the church fathers to prove a doctrine, it shows a weakness of position." I concur that a reliance on Church Fathers is sometimes specious. We can see the language Tertullian uses and see the signs of apostasy rising up in the church.

We can most certainly accept the veracity of an enemy of Christianity because they have no reason to lie! Pliny writes of meals that Christians partook of. In reporting to Roman Emperor Trajan on the practices of Christians he wrote, "...it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble [in the same place as worship, RDM] to partake of food - but food of an ordinary kind." ²² Later, he wrote, "The gathering later in the day, presumably in the evening, was for dinner. The meal was likely the love feast which was observed in the evening at the time of the main meal of the day." ²³

Paul's admonition that they "eat and drink at home" is taken to mean that we must never eat socially at the building. This is in addition to the eating in the church building by the minister, by workers doing construction in the building, children getting snacks in the building, drinking from the water fountain, dinner on the grounds and in the building in olden days and meals for 'edification' allowed by NI brethren.

Further frustrating this doctrine is Paul's answer to the problems in 11:22ff. In 11:29 he says they were eating of the Lord's Supper "*unworthily*" and were driving people away from the Lord by their avarice (11:30). Because of this they will be judged by the Lord (11:31-32).

Paul says, "therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another." Remember, in a contextual study of Scripture, the most important thing is always the most important thing. Reading this and his words in 11:34, "if anyone is hungry let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment" we find the answer to this debate.

When they came together they were abusing the Lord's Supper by turning it into an orgy of gluttony and drunkenness. Paul's prescription is to be humble and wait to eat until all have arrived and have taken their portion. When they "wait for one another" they will avoid the problems enumerated. This is exactly as Paul dealt with all the problems in this epistle. Solve the root problem instead of eliminating the conditions. Taking meals to the home and away from the meeting place would not allow for them to "wait for one another" unless they could somehow determine at what moment each family ate in their own homes so as not to eat before another! They would have to practice "synchronized dining."

The reason Paul says again in 11:34 that "if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home" is that they were coming to the Lord's Supper ravenous and were letting their bellies control their actions. Instead, they should take care of their hunger to the extent that they can patiently await everyone else. The point in the Lord's Supper was God and the sacrifice of His Son on the cross of Gethsemane and not their bodily appetites. They had turned the communion into selfishness.

Due to the limitations of space, I will very briefly give some other reasons as to why I feel Scripture does not condemn social meals.

First, we know that church buildings were not constructed until at least the third century. So, to speak of "eating in the church building" during New Testament days is pointless. We know they met in homes (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16;19). If NI doctrine were true these hosts could never eat in their own houses and, as noted, would be committing sin if they ate anywhere else! Starvation is a disincentive to hosting a house church.

It is said that we can and should fellowship in homes with other saints. Yet, no one has been able to explain to me where the authorization is for eating in homes that would not also apply to eating in a church fellowship hall outside of worship time. Certainly not 1 Corinthians 11.

Second, church buildings are not sacred. In fact, the church is the people not the building.

Third, it is said that Jesus's words in John 6 is a prohibition of fellowship meals. Jesus fed the multitude and they came back to Him for more bread. He refused to give them more physical bread saying they should seek spiritual bread. Therefore, we should not come to church seeking physical bread. This is faulty logic. Jesus condoned and even led the giving of physical bread after giving them spiritual bread. The second group wanted physical bread *instead* of spiritual bread! How can we have Bible classes and then worship and then sit down to a meal and say that people are getting physical bread without spiritual bread? This passage does not apply.

Fourth, when we read Acts 2:42ff we see the unity of mind and fellowship that they had.. In 2:46 the text says, "continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart." Two questions. First, how did the church grow daily? They went to the temple and house to house teaching the word. Second, (remember we must exclude 1 Corinthians 11) if they had had a church building as we do and were together daily and united in every way would we actually be so presumptuous as to say they never would have eaten a fellowship meal in their building!?!

In the kingdom we are all to be united and bonded together in Him. As a Christian family we are to form a community of faith. "*Fellowship*" in Acts 2:42 is eloquently defined as "sharers in a common life." ²⁴ Philippians 2:1-4 calls us to be united in mind and spirit under His Word. Hebrews 10:19ff tells us to "*draw near*" each other to always have a support system in addition to prayer. As a fact, we do not spend enough time together as Christians. We forsake meals and visitation together for worldly activities. This is a sad testament to how we have left God's plan.

Yet, this disparity should not condemn fellowship meals at the church building because we have no scriptural prohibition against the practice. Having no prohibition, we need to be finding more opportunities to gather rather than less. The building we utilize for worship is just a central and convenient location for this gathering.

I offer this paper with all humility and respect to brethren who differ on these matters. If in my further study on this matter I come to the conclusion that fellowship meals in the building are sinful I will teach it and practice it with all of my being. To this point, I find no Scriptural reason for its prohibition. May we all, though, continue to "search the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).

End Notes

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LOOKING AT ANTI-ISM

ANTI - CLASSES

By Keith Dixon

Thank you for inviting me to speak on this timely lectureship. The problems that are being discussed here have been a thorn in the side of the church for a long time. Some have made laws where there are no laws in God's Word. Most of these problems we are discussing on this lectureship, if they were left to the realm of opinion and no test of fellowship made; there would be no problem. It is sad that some have made it a test of fellowship and split the church. Some of my own family members are caught up in these teachings. Matt 28:19-20 says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." 2 Timothy 2:2 says, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." We have the command to teach! We have the command to teach others how to teach. So the problem comes in the how we are to carry out these commands.

Those who are opposed to classes, in my study I found out are not opposed to classes nor dividing into classes, but women teaching these classes. Yes there was some mention of dividing the assembly but for the most part it was women teaching classes. Then it is not so much women teaching, but women teaching classes. It was said that a woman could teach someone else privately and not publicly. If a woman did teach in a public way it violated scriptures. It is interesting that what is meant by public was never defined is any real sense. It is

also not so much as a class to teach Bible but how many classes can there be. Is one class ok with a man teaching it? Which most would say is fine. Are two classes ok with men teaching in each one of them. Although this was not discussed it does present a dilemma Are three classes ok with men teaching in each of them? Can a preacher training school have two different classes going on at the same time? These were questions that were never asked but the answers need to come from them.

I want to make it perfectly clear today that worship and classes are different times. Where I preach we have classes first and there is a break between classes and worship. Class time and worship time are different times and must not be confused to being the same time.

Another thing I want to mention quickly is that a woman cannot teach over a man nor can she usurp authority over a man. 1 Timothy 1:11-12 says, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence". A woman can teach but she cannot teach over a man neither can she usurp authority from him. We will deal more with this later in the lesson.

What I want to show in this lesson is that first women did teach. Secondly classes are not wrong. Thirdly, we want to deal with some problem passages.

Did women teach? Before showing that women did teach I want to define a term so that we can have a better understanding about the point of this lesson. We must define "prophet" then "prophetess." "Prophet" whether true or false. True prophets were mouthpieces of the true God (Ex. 7:1). The background of this statement is Ex. 4:10-16 where Moses argued his inability to speak clearly. Hence, he could not go before Pharaoh as God's spokesman. God promised to appoint Aaron to be the speaker (Deut 18:20). This word has a feminine form, "prophetess" (nebi'ah), which appears 6 times. In Ex 15:20 Miriam is called a "prophetess." Isaiah's wife, too,

is called a "prophetess" (Isa 8:30. This usage may be related to the meaning "a companion and or follower of a prophet." OT:5031 feminine of **OT**:5030; a prophetess or (generally) inspired woman; by implication, a poetess; by association a prophet's wife: Miriam was not a prophet's wife! She was a prophetess (Numbers 12:2; Ex 15:20-21). She taught God's word!

Then in the New Testament we find this word and therefore must define it also. **NT**:4398 prophetis (prof-ay'-tis); feminine of NT:4396; a female foreteller or an inspired woman:³

There are several women who taught. Miriam, who has already been discussed, Deborah (Judges 4:4,6) She is called a prophetess (verse 4). According to the definition that we had of prophetess under the Old Testament words she was a mouthpiece for God. She worked with a man (verse 6) hence there is no violation of any passage of scriptures.

In the New Testament we find Anna (Luke 2:36-38). In this passage notice that she is called a prophetess (verse 36); notice also in this passage she is said to have spoken "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (verse 38). Mary, Mary Joanna and other women taught the apostles about the Lord being resurrected (Luke 24:1-10). Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos more perfectly the way of God (Acts 18:26). Thus here is a husband and wife teaching team. No one could say she did not teach for she is part of the team. Philip had four daughters prophesy, but the question is to whom did they prophesy (Acts 21:9)? Would they violate any passage of scriptures? Could they have taught other women and children without violating any passage of scriptures? The answer is a resounding, YES! Lois and Eunice are next; we find them teaching Timothy the way of God (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). Older women are to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-4), but the question is how are they to teach them? Must they teach them one on one, and they could but can we say they must? Could they call them together and teach them collective? Yes they could and they would not violate any passage of scriptures. When I preached this at

Hartley Bridge Road all agreed that we are to sing. Women are then to sing thus they are to teach (Eph. 5:19; Col 3:16-17).

Therefore is not wrong for a woman to teach, but can they teach in a class so this brings us to our next point, are classes wrong?

Why do we have different classes in our public school? Is a first grader in the class with a senior? Why or why not? If it is wise for them to have class divided are we not wise to have it divided classes also? Matthew 10:16 tells us to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

In the Old Testament Moses had classes (Exodus 18:16,20,25). In verse 16 Moses told his father-in-law that he was to "make them know the statutes of God, and his laws." Moses was the only one that met with God and received the commandments of God. These commandments are more than just the Ten Commandments. He, that is Moses, was told to make all things according to the pattern shown him in the mount. God taught him what He wanted done. Moses was making known God's law to the people; this is a class. Also Moses' father-in-law gave him some advice to have others help him and Moses is to "teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work they must do" (verse 20) again this is a class. Moses followed the advice of Jethro and "chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens (verse 25). Moses had to teach these men to teach others this is one class. Then these rulers had to teach the people God's laws, statutes and ordinances, thus another class. There were classes in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament we find first of all Jesus teaching in smaller groups. "Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field" (Matthew 13:36). Jesus is teaching a class

of 12. Next we find Jesus teaching an even smaller class. "And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them (Mark 9:2). These three men were taught something in a class.

Next consider the church in Acts 2. In verse fourteen Peter is stand up with the eleven, did they all talk at one time If they did were all things being "done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). If no, then how long was that day? There will be three thousand baptized that day. If they divided up into classes where each heard them speak in the own language wherein they were born (verse 6, 8). Was this a day of confusion or order? If in order then how was it done? If it were not done by classes then how else could it be done in a 24-hour period?

In Acts 18:26 we find Aquila and Priscilla taking Apollos aside and teaching him the way of God more perfectly; this is a class. We have classes with only one student in it at Hartley Bridge Road; I wonder if there are any other congregations that have classes that only have one student in it?

How else could Philips daughter teach Acts 19:9? Knowing what the scriptures teach in other places could they have violated them and been secure with God? Of course the answer they could not, so these girls had to teach in a situation that did not have men present and where they did not have authority over a man! This passage Titus 2:3-4 tells us that older women are to teach younger women, how was it done? Did they have to teach one on one? If another woman came into the room would they have to cease teaching? If they taught two women at the same time, what passage did they violate? If they could teach two, why not three or four or why not three hundred or four hundred women at a time

Now let us deal with some seemingly problem passages the first in 1 Corinthians 14:23. We will not the space to quote this passage but let the reader take notice of something in this passage. Do we have any services like this today? Do we have tongue speaking today? Do we have some revelation being made known today? This is new revelation, if so then there are other passages that are violated such as 2 Peter 1:3 and Jude 3 which state plainly that we have all we need to go to heaven and that it was once delivered unto the saints. Do we have interpreting of languages today? This would be a language that one did not know and that person could interpret what was being said. Do we have prophesying today? Some one foretelling the future? No we have all we need to get to heaven and it has once been delivered to the saints and we are warned about the future. We need to be prepared by being ready when the Lord comes again.

Let us look closer at the passage by noticing the word "silence" in verses 28 and 34. "Moreover the 'silence' enjoined on the woman of 1 Cor. 14:34, 35 was absolute in nature. The word translated *silence* occurs also in 1 Cor 14:28: 'But if there be no interpreter, let him keep *silence* in the church' – i.e., let him refrain from being heard in any sense. The silence thus enjoined would not admit of answering questions, making confession or singing. Any audible activity is prohibited. The women of 1 Cor 14 were totally and completely silenced." Yet women are commanded to sing Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16 which says that in singing we are teaching. So how can a woman keep complete silence and teach at the same time? Therefore this kind of assembly is not valid today and this passage applies only in principle 1 Cor 14:40.

The second problem passage is 1 Timothy 2:11-12. This passage has that a woman is to learn in silence; she is not to teach nor usurp authority over a man. "But did not Paul forbid woman to teach in 1 Tim. 2:11,12? If so, it is wrong for a woman to teach English grammar in the public school! 'Oh, but Paul meant that she is forbidden to teach the Bible!' Well, in that

event, she cannot teach Bible stories to her own children at home. 'Oh, no; that is not what he meant. He meant that she cannot teach the Bible *publicly*." She may, then teach the Bible *privately*?' 'Yes.' Well, the passage not only forbids her to teach, it also prohibits her from usurping authority over the man. She is, then, forbidden to teach and usurp authority *publicly* over the man; *she may teach and usurp authority over men all she pleases, providing she does it privately*? Is that it? Our anti-brethren are hardly prepared to make this concession; and yet their position on this passage lead irresistibly to this conclusion." "It is quite significant that the Holy Spirit, in selecting the word 'silence,' in 1 Tim, 2:12 *did not* use the word found in 1 Cor. 14:35, which designated total, complete absence of all sound, but one which denoted quietness." This passage does not forbid women speaking or teaching in a public assembly but it does forbid her from usurp authority from the man. Therefore if she were the teacher in a class she would usurp authority over a man and violate this passage. If she took a leadership roll in any of the worship this passage would be violated and her worship be vain.

Women are commanded to worship God John 4:23-24. In our worship all are to sing! "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in palms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16). Women must teach through singing. This is a public teaching! She is not usurping authority over a man if she carries out this command.

Women must confess. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him for the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10). Is a woman to confess the Lord Jesus? Is she to confess with her

mouth in a public way? If she can and not violate any passage then why can she not teach a class of ladies and not usurp authority over a man.

In conclusion we are all to teach Matt 28:19-20; 2 Tim 2:2. This is a command. We cannot set this command aside. Women can teach Titus 2:3-4 and must teach to keep the scriptures. Women can teach in classes. Women do not have to teach in a class but they can but one thing is certain she cannot teach over nor usurp authority from a man. This we know for sure. Thank you for listening.

End Notes

¹ Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers. PC Study

Bible

- ² Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright 1994 Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.
- ³ Ibid
- ⁴ Questions and Answers Open Forum Freed-Hardeman College Lectures by Guy N. Woods. Copyright 1976 p. 107
- ⁵ Ibid p 111
- ⁶ Ibid p 108

Other sources: Porter – Waters Debate 1950 Issues discussed were the cup, the number of drinking vessels to be used in the Lord's Supper and dividing into classes to teach the Bible.

Whitten – Lanier Debate Date of debate is unknown but the book is copyrighted in 1980 (I think the debate was way before this) It is a written discussion involving classes and women teachers. Whitten gave up his position after this debate. This is stated in the introduction.

Whiteside – Clark Discussion This debate took place in the pages of the Firm Foundation in 1906. It is copyrighted in 1969 and published by Miss Inys Whiteside, Denton TX

LOOKING AT ANTI-ISM

ANTI-LITERATURE

By Keith Young

INTRODUCTION

I am very appreciative of this opportunity to be included in some small way with the work at Richmond Hill. It is wonderful that this congregation has had the foresight to provide this lectureship on a yearly basis. I hope that it grows and that it will continue to be beneficial to all that are involved in it.

This is a very interesting situation for me to be writing this lecture manuscript because the very fact that I am writing a manuscript would be in direct opposition to the doctrine that I am assigned to address in this writing. This group consists of those who are opposed to literature or who are anti-literature. They do not believe in the use of any writings outside of the Bible, in dealing with Spiritual matters. They believe any writing that is not the result of the inspired pen and recorded in the Bible is not to be used. Many would go so far as to say that if a person were to use a book (classroom book, lectureship book, etc.) other than the Bible for spiritual reasons that person would be committing a sin. Is this true? Did God bind on us the command to abstain from the writing of others in spiritual matters? We will seek to answer these and other question as we examine the anti-literature teaching that has been taught by some of our brethren. We will seek to do this: by examining the background which leads to this teaching, by studying some of the arguments of this teaching and by examining the Bible's teaching on this matter. From this study I hope that it will become evident why this movement started and whether or not it is something that should be continued.

BACKGROUND

The anti-literature movement is similar to many other doctrines that have been produced in past years in that it originated in answer to another problem. In this case, it was in response to the church using classroom materials that were produced by the denominational world. In answer to this, people attacked all things that pertained to the idea of Bible class.

There were various types of Bible classes known to exist earlier, but the idea of the modern Sunday school seems to be the work of Robert Raikes (1736-1811). From his origin of the movement it spread through the British Isles into Europe and North America.² In the United States, each denomination generally established its own policy for it education programs, although interdenominational cooperation often did exist. The first interdenominational Sunday school association in the United States was organized in 1791.³ In this type of association, denominations would go together and write classroom material for all the different denominations to use across the United States. This material became very popular and some of our brethren began to use this material. After a time, our brethren began to question the use of this material. This movement away from this denominational material became so strong in some that they attacked the whole idea of Sunday school being Scriptural. This movement became very volatile with its greatest concentration in Texas, but its presence could be felt from Florida to California.⁴ It seems that one of the problems our brethren had was disassociating Sunday Bible class from the Denominational idea of Sunday School. Notice the words of Austin McGary:

"All I care to say about Sunday School literature at the present is, if it is literature adapted to the common Sunday School, it is worthless stuff and necessarily evil in its tendency.

But literature prepared in light of God's truth and harmony with it, adapted to unfolding the tender mind of children the Scriptures cannot be condemned, until we condemn the work of bringing children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."⁵

It took brother McGary some time to come to the realization of this difference that he just indicated in our last quote. Because of problems such as this, people began going from one extreme to the other on the subject of Sunday School. There were two extremes that became prevalent in opposition to Sunday School. The first was termed by some as anti-Sunday School and the second was termed by some as anti-literature. It is important to notice that those two extremes came out of the movement against using the materials and practices of the denominational idea of Sunday School. They were both instances where people went from one extreme to the other. To help us understand the subject of anti-literature, I would like to spend a short time on anti-Sunday School. This is by no means comprehensive as this subject is also dealt with on this lectureship.

The anti-Sunday School movement is probably the stronger and longer lasting movement that came out of this ordeal. In this movement, some of our brethren went so far in opposition to the use of denominational Sunday School material that they decided that the whole idea of Bible School must be unscriptural. They argued that there was no divine example or command for Bible School, therefore this could not be practiced in service to God.⁷ This argument, however, is inaccurate as there is a command that proves that Bible classes on Sunday or any other day is Scriptural. This command is found in Matthew 28:18-20. When we are commanded *to "teach all nations"*, we have our authority for Bible class. This is because the command to teach is a generic command. ⁸ There are many ways to teach. A lesson can be taught in person, by a tract, by radio, or by television among other methods because each of these methods meets the

command to teach. Sunday School when used properly is just another way to fulfill the generic command to teach. We see this very plainly in the command to "go ye therefore and teach all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). "Go" is a generic command, therefore it does not matter if we drive, walk, fly or sail as long as we go. Many of our brethren can understand the generic command to "go" but cannot understand that the command to "teach" is used the same way. This is a generic command. It allows for many different methods which include Bible class.

Yet, they still argue that Sunday School classes are wrong. In their arguments they have two verses that they use as evidence that Bible classes are wrong. The first is I Cor 14:21.¹⁰ They use the "all prophesy one by one" to prove Bible classes are unscriptural because it has many teaching at once and not "one by one." This verse is taken out of context as this passage refers to a miraculous service which cannot be performed today. This service had nothing to do with Bible classes, but with how to use Spiritual gifts in a Worship service. We no longer have miraculous gifts; therefore we cannot use this as an example because we do not have the same situation. On top of this, this passage is in reference to a worship service and is not making a specific command of how to teach. Teaching is still a generic command and classes are not eliminated as a method to do this. The second is Heb 10:25.11 They claim that classes cause the division of the assembly and therefore cause people to "forsake the assembly" and sin. This is not true because during worship the whole congregation is together. Class occurs as an expediency to teaching. It is not part of worship, but for convenience its time is usually linked to the time of services for worship. It is not forsaking the assembly because the church is not assembled at that time for worship. There is much more to say on that subject, but I will leave it to my brother who was assigned this subject. Now that we are acquainted with its sister movement, let us examine anti-literature.

ANTI-LITERATURE

The anti-literature movement came out of a response to people deciding that they should not use the Sunday School literature that was being produced by an interdenominational group. It was an extreme reply where individuals went from having denominational materials to deciding that all Bible classes were wrong. It was an extreme response. Yet, there are a few arguments for this belief.

One of their biggest arguments for being against literature is that they claim that there is no example of this to be found in the Bible.¹² This is the same argument that we mentioned concerning the anti-Sunday School movement. The individuals who are anti-literature fail to see the authority of using literature that is given in the generic command to "teach" (Mt 28:18-20). In this generic command, we have the ability to use many different methods of teaching. We are not limited to one method of teaching because God did not specify that only one could be used. Therefore, literature can be used as a teaching method as well as any other. It is just another method that God has given us in our quest to teach all nations.

Another argument that could be used for being against literature is that its use attacks the all-sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. It could be claimed that "all Scripture" is all that is needed to "thoroughly furnish" the man of God (II Tim 3:16,17). It could also be claimed that we are to "study" or to "rightly divide the word of truth" not any other word or book (II Tim 2:15). However, verses like this do not prevent us from using other literature sources. We know there are other writings that we do not have in the Bible that were written to churches to help them. Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians that we no longer have (I Cor 5:9). This letter taught them "not to company with fornicators." Would they consider Paul a sinner for promoting to others and using a letter that is not part of our collected Bible today?

To use other literature sources, does not attack the all-sufficiency of the Bible, instead these materials should be used in conjunction with the Bible to help one get a clearer picture of what the Bible teaches. We know that these books and other forms of literature are not inspired. We must study the Bible to make sure these things that they write are true, but is this not just another tool to help teach? Even those who do not believe in the use of any literature outside the Bible must realize that the Bible writers quote or use uninspired authors and books. This is not to say that the recordings of these writings are not inspired but that the one who said it was not inspired. For example, would anyone say that Satan was inspired when his words are recorded in the temptations of Jesus (Matt 4)? What about the Cretian prophet that Paul quotes to describe the Cretians (Titus 1:12)? Was he inspired? This should show us that the Bible not only records the words of uninspired persons, but that it also used non-inspired sources to teach when it was beneficial. If Paul could do it, then why do people try to limit us?

When one really considers the heart of this subject, they must realize that the man who preaches against the use of literature is asking the congregation to disobey the anti-literature command every time he preaches. Throughout the Bible, we see instances of both written and spoken teachings from God. Both methods are used effectively. For what is the difference between using spoken or oral comments and written words to teach?¹³ The same message will be given from either source if the same author is used. In fact, I do not doubt that those who would preach against literature use notes every time they preach. Is this not uninspired literature? Would not all their arguments condemn this also? Why is it so different for them to preach a message than to write it down? Are they not asking the congregation to use an uninspired source just like they would have to if they used literature? This position is hypocritical. If they truly believed that all literature was wrong, then all we could do is read the Bible out loud because any

preaching would be using an uninspired source and according to their teaching wrong. We know this not to be the case, but like any source outside the Bible all literature must be compared to the Bible to see if its true.

CONCLUSION

It is unfortunate that in opposing things that are wrong that many times people will go to an extreme. There is nothing wrong with the use of uninspired literature. We just need to remember that it is never to supersede the teachings of the Bible, and therefore all literature as oral teaching should be compared to the final authority, the Bible. May we learn from the lessons of the past and not allow ourselves to be taken to extremes but to stay with God's Word.

End Notes

- ¹ Encyclopedia Britannica "Sunday School", Copyright 1994-1998 from CD
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Paul Hayes, "A Protest,P Gospel Advocate, XLVI (May 19,1994).
- ⁵ Austin McGary, "A Suggestion to Brother McGary", Firm Foundation, 308 VI (May 23, 1899), 329.
- ⁶ Thomas B. Warren, Church Cooperation and Orphan Homes, (Jonesboro, Ark: National Christian Press, Inc., 1963), 16.
- ⁷ Gus Nichols, Freed-Hardeman Lectures, (Nashville, Tn: Gospel Advocate, Co., 1970), 116).
- 8 Ibid.
- ⁹ Guy N. Woods, Questions and Answers, Vol. 1 (Nashville, Tn: American Corporate Literature, 1976), 112
- ¹⁰ Thomas B. Warren, Church Cooperation and Orphan Homes, 29.
- 11 Ibid.
- ¹² Gus Nichols, Freed-Hardeman Lectures, 116-118.
- ¹³ N.L. Clark, "Editorial Notes," Firm Foundation, XXILL (Jan. 29, 1907). 4

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LOOKING AT ANTI-ISM

ANTI-COOPERATION

By Stacey W. Grant

INTRODUCTION

Once again this preacher is honored to be invited to participate in these great lectures. This fine congregation does a masterful job hosting this superb event. As always, brother Riley Nelson does an excellent job addressing and assigning timely topics as well as editing all manuscripts. Hopefully, upon sincere and earnest investigation, many dear souls and congregations will benefit from the assigned topic.

Through the providence of God, this author was blessed to hear the Gospel in Its absolute purity. After obeying the Truth, he was, of course, on fire and full of joy. He also was very naive about many things concerning the Lord's precious body. For instance, he supposed that since the church of Christ is the only church with Heavens, seal of approval to exist, all members are serious about their salvation. He surmised incorrectly.

As a matter of fact, he soon discovered that many of those with whom he shared this like precious faith were not as sincere about their covenant relationship with the matchless Master as they should have been. Being a babe in Christ, the author was dismayed over the lackluster attitudes being portrayed before him by those who should have been examples for him to imitate. The local minister, through a series of Bible studies, educated the author about the various types of attitudes, which exist in the church. Those lessons were invaluable; they allowed the author to

recognize very early in his Christian sojourn how some professing saints truly view the Bible's authority.

THE NEED FOR BALANCE

While matriculating at the Memphis School of Preaching, the author was reminded on numerous occasions by the fine, caring staff to be **balanced** in his ministry. "Don't get on a hobby horse," they frequently would warn.

Sadly, many brethren in our beloved brotherhood are riding "hobby horses". They are unbalanced in their approach to and application of God's Word. Unbalanced brethren breed unbalanced doctrines. Unbalanced doctrines breed confusion and division. Our "hobby horse" brethren wound the precious name of Christ and His majestic bride. The very reason brother Nelson chose this theme, and rightly so, is to remind us of the severity and proximity of these unbalanced doctrines. BE ADVISED: EVERY FALSE DOCTRINE IS THE RESULT OF ILLOGICAL, REFUTABLE PREMISES.

A SAD DAY INDEED

Ironically, and sadly, the very day this author was loading his belongings into his car, being blessed of God to graduate from the Memphis School of Preaching, a brother approached him from one of the local congregations. The brother was out canvassing the neighborhood, inviting individuals to worship, etc. The author identified himself as a member of the Lord's church. This affirmation lead to an interesting conversation. Tragically, the brother was a

member of a congregation which insisted the Bible teaches very lucidly that only <u>one</u> assembly is permitted to take place on the Lord's day; to miss it is inexcusable.

Anxious to get the dear brother to see the error of his ways, the author used as an illustration the oath and responsibility medical professionals must honor seven days a week, anytime of the day. The misguided brother was asked what would he do were he a medical professional on his way to worship and came upon an automobile accident which resulted in serious injuries. His response: "I would call 911 and proceed on to worship." WRONG ANSWER, BROTHER! He simply ignored the ageless principle of being a "Good Samaritan." Worship is important; however; it does not supersede the opportunity to do good (Gal.6: 9-10). Such "reasoning" is heretical in nature.

The dear brother's position is close kin to Jesus' enemies ill-fated "Sabbath" argument (Mark 2:233-3:6; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6). It also possesses the same DNA or "genetic code" as the Pharisees poorly constructed "premise" pertaining to paying taxes and the Sadducees "disproving" the reality of the resurrection (Matt. 22:15-33). How magnanimous is the Lord's declaration, "ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29)! How malignant are the doctrines of the "hobby horse," misguided, unbalanced, etc., brethren among us.

THE LAW OF THE EXCLUDED MIDDLE

As stated earlier, every false doctrine originates from a false premise. The premise can be the result of a lack of education in hermeneutics (the science of interpreting Scriptures), prejudices, selfish ambitions, carnality or a sectarian spirit. Only when the Bible is allowed to interpret itself will all the division which exists among brethren dissipate.

In the field of logic there is a law known as the Law of Excluded Middle. This law states simply: "Something either is or it is not; there is no middle ground; there is no room for compromise." This principle or law must be used to test every doctrine taught or promoted; no exceptions allowed.

Concerning the "controversy" relative to mankind's origin: (A) man is the product of something lifeless and inferior (dead matter supposedly spontaneously generating to life, and, then, producing intelligent life); (B) man is the product of Someone Who is far superior to him in every conceivable way. There is no room for compromise.

If man were close kin to or "evolved" from monkeys: (A) there would be verifiable evidence to substantiate such a theory; (B) countless "monkey-men" or "missing links" would have been discovered; (C) organ transplants would not be so rare; man could simply borrow an organ from his "cousin".

Congregations would be (A) permitted by Scripture to cooperate in matters of fellowship, evangelism, and benevolence; (B) forbidden by Scripture to participate in the aforementioned scenarios.

THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDIENCY

Unbalanced brethren suffer tremendously because of their lack of understanding of or total disregard for the principle of expediency. Many congregations have been torn asunder, the church has suffered shame, the Gospel has been hindered, the needy has been neglected and souls have been **LOST** simply because the "blind are leading the blind".

Expediency allows the church to carry out its mission. For example, Mark 16:15 instructs us Christians: (1) what to preach; (2) To whom to preach. However, the "how" is left up to us. The mode of travel can be a plane, train, bicycle, car, motorcycle, etc. Also, the "how"

of communicating the Message is left to the Christian's discretion. One can preach the Gospel via radio, person to person conversation, newspaper, television, computer, etc., without violating Scripture. Only if the dear misinformed brother were versed in this inestimable principle!

THE LAW OF AUTONOMY

Another law which first must be understood relative to this study is the law of autonomy. Most "seasoned" Christians are familiar with this principle. It is all but ignored in the world of denominationalism. It reveals the multi-sides of the Father's endless wisdom.

The basic meaning of the term "autonomy" is self-governing. Each congregation is govern by a group of leading men; rather it be elders (Act 14:23, 20:17-31; 1Pet. 5:1-5) or a group of faithful men (2Tim.2: 1-2; Tit.1-5).

Elders from congregation "A" have no authority over the eldership of congregation "B". For the eternal command to each eldership is, "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight there of" (1Pet.5: 2). Therefore, each eldership jurisdiction is limited to the congregation of which it is a member.

THE PRINCIPLE OF COOPERATION

The early church was known for its spirit of love and cooperation. Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37 reveal this very fact. (Be it known that every indication seems to suggest their actions to be voluntary in nature). The Gospel had so affected their lives to the point that material possessions were not the priority; the care for their beloved brethren took precedent. Such a beautiful, visible illustration of Matthew 5:14-16 must have had a profound influence on those blessed to witness love flowing like a mighty river! Dear reader, this is that for which the Lord prayed (John 17:20-

23). Selflessness conjoined with doctrinal purity is the key to unity, fellowship and joy in the church.

Brethren at Jerusalem were experiencing some very difficult times; their need was verifiable. The church at Antioch purposed to assist their fellow saints in their time of need (Acts 11:27-30). The church at Corinth was aware that the apostle Paul was gathering funds for the Jerusalem church, and apparently they had written to inquire how they could participate in this collection. Paul's response to their inquiry is found in I Corinthians 16:1-2. Churches from the Galatian area participated in the collection as well (I Cor. 16:1-4). The Macedonian brethren also participated (2 Cor. 8:1-2). Paul, an apostle, actually collected the funds. How overwhelming is the mountain of evidence that this matter had Heaven's seal of approval stamped all over it!

More so, the Spirit says they took the collection, "and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:30). Did the elders at Jerusalem violate Scripture for receiving funds from other congregations? Were Barnabas and Saul misinformed about the principle of church autonomy? Where do you suppose the elders kept the funds? In their personal accounts or the church treasury?

Not only can congregations cooperate in matters of benevolence; they also can cooperate in matters of discipline. If a member is withdrawn from by congregation "A"; congregation "B" must honor the withdrawal warranted that the withdrawal complies with Scripture (2 Thess. 3:6, 13-14). The reason being is God's Law is universal in nature (Matt. 28:18; Acts 17:30).

If the withdrawal of fellowship is only limited to the congregation of which the guilty party is a member, no other congregation would be obligated to honor the withdrawal. Such a scenario would make church discipline a non-factor. The guilty party simply can "move on" to

another congregation without violating any commands of the Lord. It should be obvious to you, dear reader, that congregations must cooperate in some matters if the Lord's work is to progress.

Because Christians share the "*like precious faith*" it is scripturally permissible for two or more congregations to come together for various scriptural reasons. Concerning exhortation, members from various congregations can participate together in youth rallies, teacher workshops, marriage seminars, etc. 2 John 9-11 allows the aforementioned to take place. If both congregations are in fellowship with God, they can fellowship one another (I John 1:3).

Also, members from various congregations can assemble to discuss doctrine. Acts 15 makes this crystal clear. Paul was not violating Scripture, although he was not a member of each local congregation located in the region of Galatia, for denouncing their error (Gal. 1:6-10, 5:1-4). His actions did not violate the principle of congregational autonomy; again, the universal nature of the body of Christ allows for brethren to address a matter as important as what took place in the region of Galatia.

Brethren also can cooperate in matters of evangelism. There is not one verse of Scripture which even remotely suggests it is a sin for multiple congregations to pool their funds together to support evangelism. One can deduce, "since it is permissible relative to benevolence, it is also permissible relative to evangelism". Acts 11:21-26 states that the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to the church at Antioch. Again, there is not one hint of the brethren at Jerusalem usurping Antioch's authority by sending Barnabas.

CONCLUSION

The thing to remember dear reader, relative to these matters is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Autonomy is an ingenious, unique concept; it benefits the body of Christ

tremendously. Those among us who oppose congregational cooperation are not protecting the borders of church autonomy; they are opposed to it. "Let us endeavor, to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent". Let's simply follow I Corinthians 11:1.

LOOKING AT ANTI-ISM

THE ONE CUP ISSUE

By Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

The term "Anti-ism" has been denounced as a derogatory and inappropriate term by the targets of this invective. Their reply being that they are not dissenting AGAINST points of contention, but STANDING UP FOR the truth. Nevertheless, the term "Anti" is a very appropriate term, because the issues that are brought up constantly deal in word-plays, distinctions of things that are really similar or things that only breed contention and strife within the Lord's church. Brother Gus Nichols aptly said:

Anti-ism is a form of Legalism. Anti-ism treats the generic commandments of God as if they were specific. It treats matters of opinion as if they were matters of faith. They are guilty of changing the word of God on many points. They take items of generic authority and legislate them into specific law. They make law of matters of expediency, and thus cause divisions contrary to the Law of the Lord, and are to be marked and avoided the same as Liberalists (Rom. 16:17-18). This is, if and when they press their man-made laws to the disruption of the fellowship of Christians.

It is difficult enough to try to keep oneself holy and pleasing to God, without somebody coming along, adding more difficulties and unnecessary burdens. Jesus said of the Pharisees, "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:4). While we will not impugn motives like hypocrisy to these modern day burden binders, their fruits are the same

as that of the old-time Pharisees. They argue for more burdens to be laid upon men and take less care and concern for their souls.

It is also regrettably realized that what we say about our Anti-brethren is exactly what our denominational neighbors say about us. That many things like baptism, instrumental music, the frequency of taking the Lord's Supper, etc. are not important and should not be bound upon people. The difference, however, is that these particular things are both explicit and implicit commandments taught in the Bible. The distinction then between legalism and liberalism must be carefully studied. We are ever more urged with that biblical injunction, not to remove the ancient landmarks. Thus, the matter before us, as with all things in religion, is a question of authority, specific versus generic authority.

THE PROBLEM STATED

The most solemn commemoration in this present dispensation is the Lord's Supper. Every Christian is commanded to partake and remember the Savior in this solemn feast. Nevertheless, throughout the history of Christianity the Lord's Supper has been filled with controversy and trouble. Basically, two extremes have existed. 1) Some have wanted to make this feast so sanctimonious that no one is fit to partake except the elite. So most Christians do not even get to share in this fellowship. 2) Others have degenerated the Supper into something so common that it becomes unworthy of the Christian's consideration. It has become some trivial option. It does not matter if it is observed or not. In either of these extremes the resulting conclusion is the same. Christians have neglected to partake of the lasting commemoration of the Savior.

The Church of Christ is not protected from this area of controversy either. Among our Antibrethren has come the idea that when Jesus took "the cup" on that woeful night, He only took one container. They claim that the Bible does not authorize more than one container. Therefore, the use of multiple containers in the Lord's Supper is sinful.

The idea of using one cup to imitate as precisely as possible the actions of Jesus that memorable night is at least as old as our Restoration Movement. Several pioneer preachers had some unique ideas about "the cup." The very capable gospel preacher, Benjamin Franklin, once said about one of the annoyances he had:

To pour the wine, or divide it into several cups before thanks, at the Lord's table. We thank the Lord for the cup, and not cups. Thanks should invariably be given for the one-cup, while the wine is in the one cup.²

It seems he was against dividing the fruit of the vine before a prayer was spoken. Afterwards Brother Franklin did not seem to have a problem with dividing the cup into as many containers as was necessary.

Along the same line of thinking, Barton W. Stone argued for the one loaf used in the Lord's Supper. He strongly states,

In the Lord's supper there should be but one loaf, to represent the Lord's body that suffered on the Cross—Two or more loaves destroy the very idea of the ordinance, as not representing the one body of Christ suffering and dying.³

It would seem that the early Restorationists had their own ideas about how the Supper should be observed. It comes as no surprise that certain brethren today have taken up a gauntlet, and pointedly condemned everyone for not doing as they do by using only one cup in the Supper. What is really surprising, however, is that they do not argue for the one loaf, as did Barton Stone. It would seem weightier to contend for only one loaf more than for one cup, since the body of Christ is one. At least that would be sensible argument dealing with unity.

So then, is the use of multiple cups for the Lord's Supper going beyond the Bible? Before answering let us first ask, when does a specific example become binding? An example becomes binding when there is a direct commandment behind it. For instance, we are commanded to take the Lord's Supper (1Corinthians 11:28). There is an example of when it was taken in the first century (Acts 20:7), "upon the first day of the week." The example, "upon the first day of the week" becomes binding because of the commandment underlying the fact that IT MUST BE TAKEN. But our Anti-brethren will argue that the command to "drink ye all of it" (Matthew 26:27) makes the incidental "cup" binding in its singularity.

If this is really an example underlying a direct command then the Anti-brethren would be correct and it is a binding example. But is this really the case? Consider another question. Do the words, "the cup" in Matthew 26:27 definitely prove that Jesus only used one container?

It is interesting that some people will base their entire case on a grammatical point. Grammar is always a perilous foundation when used by itself. Upon close investigation of the original text it is observed that "the cup" in Matthew 26:27 is based upon a textual variant. The UBS text of the Greek New Testament and the Nestle-Alund, Novum Testamentum Graece differ from the Textus Receptus and the Majority Text. The former Greek texts do not contain the definite article, thus rendering the phrase, "kai labwn pothrion" ("and he took a cup"), but the T.R. and Majority texts say, "kai labwn to pothrion" ("and he took the cup"). The Gospel of Mark also has the same variant between the two text types. Though this might seem insignificant, there is a great distinction between "a cup" and "the cup." Did Matthew really intend to place the emphasis on the singularity of the word, "cup"? The very fact that this is a variant reading, should caution one not to make too much of the word argument, "THE cup." However, the harmony in Luke chapter 22 does use the term "the cup" in both types

of Greek texts, but Luke also has a unique chronology dealing with the beginning and end of the supper between verses 17 and 20 (cp. John 13:2).

The one-cup brethren also say that this phrase is a figure of speech called metonymy. They explain "the cup" is "a metonymy of the container for the contained." A metonymy is "a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated." For example, in 2 Corinthians 3:15 Paul said, "even unto this day when Moses is read..." But, Moses is not literally being read. He is dead and gone. But his writings are still being read. Moses is a metonymy for his writings. Another example is seen in the phrase, "the kettle is boiling." The kettle is not really boiling, but the water in the kettle is boiling. The word kettle is used as a metonymy for the water it contains. So also, when Jesus said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20), He was using the word cup as a metonymy for the fruit of the vine that was in it. The one-cupper argues that just because "cup" is used as a metonymy, it is no less important or real than the item contained in it.6 Thus, according to this argument the figure is as real as its representation. Hence the figure becomes literal. What an absurd idea!

The fact is, the phrase, "the cup" is not just a metonymy it is also a synecdoche, a figure of speech in which a part is used for the whole. The entire idea that "the cup" refers to only one container is altogether a misunderstanding of the Passover feast of the Jews. The Anti-brethren have failed to regard the background and Jewish customs during the Passover. These customs give a great deal of insight into what actually took place with Jesus and the disciples. Let us look at a few facts about that fateful night in which Jesus took bread.

THE PASCHAL FEAST

The Paschal lamb was one of the few Old Testament sacrifices in which the people were able to partake of the sacrifice. This celebration was pointing to the time when Christians would enjoy that communion with Christ, when He would give His flesh and blood for them to eat (John 6:53-58). The fulfillment of this figure is most certainly the Lord's Supper. Here we see the supreme instance of God as a host who provides the materials for a meal and invites the disciples to participate. The following is a summary of the pattern for the Passover meal, described by Farrar. Notice particularly that there were at least four ritual cups during the extent of this ceremony.

- 1. Before the meal began, <u>THE FIRST CUP</u> was poured and each drank a cup of wine called, "*The Cup Of Consecration*," followed by a blessing.
- 2. Hands were washed, a table carried in, on which were bitter herbs, unleavened bread, the paschal lamb, dates and vinegar.
- 3. The father dipped a morsel of unleavened bread and bitter herbs, about the size of an olive (the sop), in the vinegar, giving it to each in turn.
- 4. A SECOND CUP of wine was poured, and the Passover story was rehearsed.
- 5. The first part of a special song, the Hallel (i.e. Psalms 113-114), was sung.
- 6. Grace was said and a benediction pronounced, after which the food, as in (3), was further distributed to all.
- 7. The paschal lamb was eaten and A THIRD CUP of wine was had, often called "The Cup Of Blessing," referred to by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:16.
- 8. After another thanksgiving, A FOURTH CUP, "The Cup Of Joy," was drunk.
- 9. The rest of the Hallel was sung (i.e. Psalms 115-118).

Alfred Edersheim, a Jewish historian, says that the Talmud explains the four cups of the Passover to correspond to the fourfold mention of the cups of consolation given to Israel: 1) "The Lord is the portion of my cup" (Psalm 16:5); 2) "My cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5); and 3, 4) "I will take the cup of salvation" mentioned twice (Psalm 116:13, 17).8

During the Passover meal these four cups were divided in one of two possible ways. 1) Either, <u>THE HOST ONLY</u> would drink from a cup (there was a minimum amount that was required to be consumed before the next cup), then it would be refilled for the following cups. 2) Or, if everyone drank, then <u>EACH FAMILY MEMBER WOULD HAVE HIS OR HER OWN CUP</u>. Each of the four ceremonial cups being divided into containers for as many people as were partaking of the Passover in that house. Also, John Gill, a former expert in Jewish customs said,

There were four cups of wine drank at the Passover, which the poorest man in Israel was obliged to drink; and over each of which a blessing was pronounced.... After this everyone drank of HIS cup, and put it on the table ¹⁰ (emphasis RV).

Therefore, these four cups were ceremonial, and were not indicating one container, but rather four separate fillings of wine around the room. There were as many containers as there were people in the house.

This helps to explain the chronological difficulty of two cups in Luke's account of that evening at supper. Notice in Luke 22:17 Jesus "took the cup", and again in verse 20, "Likewise also the cup after supper." The first cup was apparently the "First Cup" poured before the actual Passover meal began (see list above). The cup in verse 20 was the "Third Cup." The Jews called this "the cup of blessing." Edersheim said of this cup,

There cannot be any reasonable doubt that this was the cup which our Lord connected with His own Supper. It is called in Jewish writings, just as by St. Paul (1Corinthians 10:16), "the cup of blessing." 11

Notice in Luke 22:17, at the pouring of the "First Cup," Jesus told the disciples to "divide it among yourselves." This indicated that there was more than one container. It was called "the cup" not because it was limited to one container, but because it was part of the Passover ceremony.

Summary

The one-cup mindset has made two mistakes. They have tried to literalize what they themselves will admit is figurative. And they have failed to recognize that a singular noun when used as figure of speech called synecdoche, could be plural, for example we might speak of "seven head of cattle," or Paul saying salvation is "to the Jew and to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). "The cup" in the Lord's Supper is a synecdoche. It is not referring to a single container, but to the ceremonial "Third Cup" of the Passover, used by Jesus in the institution of His Supper. The phrase does not have anything to do with the number of containers used. The importance is to be place with the element contained in the cup and the blood of Jesus associated with it.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Gus Nichols, "Christian Fellowship," Freed-Hardeman Lectureship, 1962
- ² Benjamin Franklin, "Improprieties and Annoyances", <u>Book of Gems</u>, p. 409
- ³ Barton W. Stone, "The Lord's Supper," <u>The Christian Messenger</u>, 1834, p. 176
- ⁴ George A. Hogland, <u>Did Jesus Use Individual Cups?</u>, p. 7
- ⁵ The American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd Edition, Electronic Version
- ⁶ Hogland, op. cit., p. 7
- ⁷ George R. Bliss, <u>An American Commentary on the New Testament</u> (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: The Judson Press), Vol. II, Luke, pp. 313-314
- ⁸ Alfred Edersheim, "The Paschal Feast and the Lord's Supper," <u>The Temple Its Ministry and Services</u>, Ages Software, p. 156
- ⁹ Rabbi Michael Fleischmann, at the Congregation Bnai Brith Jacob, Savannah, Georgia
- ¹⁰ John Gill, "Luke 22:17", Exposition of the Old and New Testaments,
- ¹¹ Alfred Edersheim, op. cit., p. 161

LOOKING AT ANTI-ISM

ANTI-ISM AND THE ORPHAN HOME

By David L. Downour

INTRODUCTION

One of the many problems that has troubled the Lord's Church in the last fifty years is the serious problem of anti-ism. It especially began to cause problems in the 1950's and it still to this day is a problem in many areas of the country. This anti movement has caused much division, heartache, strife and contention, so it is therefore a problem sound brethren need to confront. Since the Lord's Church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15), we therefore have the responsibility to defend the truth! (Phil. 1:17; Jude 3). One of the oddities of anti-ism is their opposition to orphan homes. I have been given the assignment in this lecture to discuss some of their positions concerning this matter, and a refutation of these erroneous arguments, and along with this, I want to make a few other comments concerning this problem of anti-ism.

TWO EXTREMES

There are two extremes, which has caused serious problems in the Lord's Church, and that is Liberalism and Anti-ism. We need to understand the difference between these two extremes. First of all, we need to understand concerning Liberalism that the liberal is a man who treats a matter of faith as if it were a matter of opinion. They uphold things which the scriptures do not authorize. Secondly, we need to understand concerning anti-ism that an anti is a man who takes a matter of opinion and treats it as if it were a matter of faith. They seek to bind their own

human creeds on the brethren. While liberalism upholds things which the Scriptures do not authorize Anti's condemn things which the scriptures do authorize such as (1) Condemnation of Bible classes (2) Condemnation of located preachers (3) Condemnation of individual communion cups (4) Condemnation of churches of Christ involved in cooperation in various ways, and (5) Condemnation of churches sending funds to orphan homes so that the needs of orphans might be supplied. Concerning this matter, brother Thomas B. Warren made an excellent comment in his book which he wrote concerning the refutation of anti-ism:

"There are those who go beyond that which is written; there are those who bind laws which the Lord did not bind. The one evidence disrespect for the authority of God's word; the other evidence a failure to understand the liberty and expediency involved in carrying out god's will. These two extremes of liberalism and anti-ism have constantly plagued the Lord's people. The way of righteousness and truth is neither "liberalism: nor "anti-ism." Let us be careful not to go beyond that which is written; let us be careful not to condemn that which the Lord allows."

Friends, we need to clearly understand that those involved in Anti-ism are guilty of binding human laws and adding to the word of God. The Bible ALWAYS plainly taught that adding to God's word is absolutely forbidden! (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; I Corinthians 4:6 (ASV); Revelation 22:18-19). Our Lord powerfully rebuked the scribes and Pharisees concerning this matter of trying to add to God's word and binding human laws (Matthew 15:1-6,9,13-14). Jesus said that when men try to worship God according to the doctrines and commandments of men it will make for "vain worship." Human doctrines will be "rooted up" by the Lord, and it will cause men to be spiritually blind! We can also read of certain men who came down from Judah with the purpose of binding human doctrines and were therefore guilty of "subverting their souls" (Acts 15: 1-24).

It is certainly agreed by all who believe, love, and teach the truth, that the Bible does indeed teach that the Lord's Church has a responsibility to the poor and needy, the orphan and the widow! This fact was made clear by Christ and the inspired writers. The Old and New Testaments make clear that God has always wanted his people to have the right attitude toward the poor and needy. It was spoken of by David (Psalm 41:1), Solomon (Proverbs 29:7), our Lord (Mark 14:7), Paul (Galatians 2:9-10, 6:9-10), James (James 1:27), and the Apostle John (I John 3:17).

We need to understand that the Church **DOES** have a responsibility toward orphans, but we also need to understand that God **HAS NOT** specified the details as to how a church is to meet it's obligation in connection with orphan children! Brother Warren in his great book on Anti-ism, made the following statement:

"When God gives an obligation and specifies the manner by which this obligation is to be met, then the manner becomes as binding as the obligation. However, when God specifies the obligation, but does not specify the details as to how this obligation is to be met, then the details involved in meeting this obligation are left to the realm of human judgment and expediency."²

OBJECTIONS CONCERNING ORPHAN HOMES

I want to now take a close look at some objections, which are made by those who hold to the anti view concerning orphan homes.

OBJECTION NUMBER ONE: "I object to the homes because the church is authorized to help only members of the Church." This is indeed a pitiful objection! We must ask "**WHERE** is the passage of Scripture which makes such a distinction? There is none! The bible plainly teaches that God's law of love extends to **ALL MEN**! Not only to the just but also to the unjust! Our Lord in a number of passages makes this fact very clear (Matthew 5:43 – 48; Luke 6:27-35).

Notice also Paul's statement in Galatians 6:10 which says, "As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto ALL MEN, especially those who are of the household of the faith."

OBJECTION NUMBER TWO: "I object to the homes because visitation of orphans is an individual obligation, not a church obligation." This matter is another totally absurd objection, and there is much in the word of God to refute such an idea! We can read of several passages in the Scriptures where CHURCH action was authorized in the care of the poor and needy (Acts 11:27-30; II Corinthians 8:1-5). The Apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:35 that they were to "help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus the He himself said, it is more blessed to give than to receive." James 1:27 says, "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Every child of God has this responsibility! The Church is composed of children of God; therefore it IS A RESPONSIBILTY OF THE CHURCH! Brother Jim Massey in his good book of charts on anti-ism made the following comment: "In I Timothy 5:16 it says that the Church is to relieve widows indeed. This verse plainly authorizes the Church to relieve widows indeed. Add to this James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the worl" which makes providing for the needs of the Fatherless a part of pure religion, just as is providing for widows, and the conclusion is that since God wants his people to relieve widows, he certainly also wants them to relieve orphans. Or can you believe in a God who wants His Church to relieve widows but forbids the Church to relieve orphans, when relieving widows and orphans is pure religion?"³

OBJECTION NUMBER THREE: "I object to the homes because they are human institutions doing the work of the Church." Two things are wrong with this objection. First of all,

the home is **NOT** a human institution. Secondly, a home does **NOT** do the work of a church, but of a home! A home is not a human institution because God instituted it some 4,000 years before the Church (Genesis Chap. 1-4). Also, we need to understand that an orphan home is a home receiving funds from churches so that the needs of children might be adequately supplied! When this occurs, the home is **NOT** doing the work of a church, but is doing he work of a home! Brother Guy N. Woods made an excellent comment along this line:

"Concerning an orphan home observe that it's not in conflict with the church because it's not performing the function of a church as a church. It's performing the function of a home as a home. It's not in conflict with the home that was destroyed because that home is gone. What is the orphan home? It is the reestablishment of the home which the child had and lost, established according to state authority and statutes."

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear to see that anti-ism is based solely on human laws and commandments, therefore, anti-ism and its human laws must be rejected. Let us never try to become lawmakers, but law obeyers (Hebrews 5:9)! Obey the law of Christ (James 2:12)!

¹ENDNOTES

 ^{1 &}quot;Church Cooperation And Orphan Homes" - Thomas B. Warren, Page 5
 2 Ibid. Page 148
 3 "Twenty Charts on Non-Cooperation" - Jim Massey, Page 17
 4 "The Woods-Cogdill Debate" - Guy N. Woods, Pages 37-38

APPENDIX

The following material on the subject of Cups and Classes is provided for further study on this matter. This material is used with the permission of Rod Rutherford.

CUPS AND CLASSES

Are They Scriptural?

A Study of the Non-Bible Class, One Cup Faction of the Restoration Movement

A Term Paper

Presented to Professor Curtis A. Cates

Memphis School of Preaching and Alabama Christian School of Religion

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Alabama Christian School of Religion

by

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CUPS AND CLASSES

ARE THEY SCRIPTURAL?

INTRODUCTION

When I was a boy of seven or eight, I sometimes attended a rural congregation with my grandparents. Men sat on one side of the assembly and ladies on the other. The fruit of the vine was kept on the Lord's Table in a glass decanter. It was poured into two separate glasses, one for each side of the auditorium, to serve the Lord's Supper. A few years passed, progress came to the church, and the decanter and glasses were replaced by a set of multiple communion cups. Nobody raised any objections so far as I know for the Lord's Supper was still eaten as it had always been.

Therefore, it came as a shock to me to learn several years later that there were some in the church of Christ who not only bound one cup on congregations, but actually condemned the use of multiple cups as sinful and refused fellowship with those who used multiple cups. In recent years, I have learned of several occasions where one-cup advocates have divided congregations in Africa and Asia over the number of cups to be used in the Lord's Supper!

When I was growing up in small rural churches, I attended Bible classes with children of my own age, often held in a corner of the auditorium with other classes going on in the same room. The Bible was our textbook. We read and studied directly from it. Apparently lesson books were unavailable or unknown to the leaders of the church. In the course of time, however, lesson books began to be used. The Word of God was still being taught so no one raised any objections as far as I am aware. It came as another shock to me in later years to learn of brethren in various places who condemned Bible classes as sinful

innovations, Godly women who taught classes of small children as apostates, and the use of Bible study aids as unauthorized additions to the Word of God.

There is today scattered among the churches of Christ a tiny segment who oppose multiple cups in communion and Bible classes on the Lord's Day to teach the Word of God. Most bind their opinions in these areas and will have no fellowship with the majority who make use of these expedients. However, there is little unity among those of this segment for they are further divided and subdivided into additional factions with most of them declaring non-fellowship with those who share their opposition to cups and the Bible school but disagree with them on these other matters.

- J. Ervin Waters, for many years a leading preacher, writer, and debater among one cup, non-Bible class brethren, has pointed out the multiplication of divisions among them. The two major divisions are as follows:
 - 1) One cup, no Bible classes.
 - 2) Multiple cups, no Bible classes. There are, however, many other sub-divisions in these two groups.

It is virtually impossible for one outside these factions to keep it all-straight as to who believes what and who fellowships whom. Some of the issues which have caused division among one cup and non-class brethren are:

- 1) Is it Scriptural for a church to have a located preacher?
- 2) Should fermented or unfermented wine be used in the Lord's Supper?
- 3) Does Matthew 19:9 allow the innocent party in a Scriptural divorce the right to remarry?
- 4) Should the one officiating at the Lord's Table symbolically break the bread or should each communicant do it for himself?

- 5) Does the work of an evangelist continue today or was it limited to the apostolic age?
- 6) Are orphan homes Scriptural expedients to care for homeless children?
- 7) Does Acts 2:42 provide the order in which we are to observe the required acts of worship?
- 8) Is it Scriptural to use lesson books in teaching the Word of God? (Q, pp. 3-6).
- 9) Is it Scriptural to serve the Lord's Supper on Sunday night to those who were unable to be present at the morning service? (L, pp. 45,46).

In this paper, we shall confine our discussion to the major issues in this segment of the brotherhood: 1) Are Bible classes on the Lord's Day Scriptural? 2) Is it Scriptural to use multiple cups in serving the Lord's Supper? We will begin by giving a brief history of the division which occurred over the respective issues. Then we will give the chief arguments made by those opposing Bible classes and multiple cups in the communion and reply to them from the Word of God.

THE CONTROVERSY OVER BIBLE CLASSES

Robert Raikes, editor of the Glouchester Journal in Glouchester, England, is credited with being the founder of the modern day Sunday School Movement. Raikes was a kind man who was concerned with the plight of those less fortunate. One Lord's Day in 1780, he passed through a slum area of Glouchester. He saw the streets filled with children. Upon inquiring of them, Raikes learned that they worked in factories six days a week and had no opportunity for education or moral training. He determined to change that. He started having regular classes in the slums on Sunday for these disadvantaged children. He taught them to read and drilled them in the catechism of the Church of England.

In 1793, Raikes began to promote the idea of Sunday Schools through the columns of the Glouchester Journal. The idea quickly spread. By 1797, over 250,000 children were enrolled in such schools. (N, pp. 24,25). Soon churches in America learned of Raikes' Sunday Schools. In 1786, William Elliott in Virginia founded the first Sunday school in the New World. The American Sunday school Union was soon formed. Most denominations in the early 1800's began their own Sunday Schools. (N, p. 27).

The early leaders of the Restoration Movement were opposed to the Sunday Schools as practiced by the denominations. In the first issue of the Christian Baptist in 1823, Alexander Campbell wrote of the first century Christians:

"Their churches were not fractured into missionary societies or education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such in the world. The head of a believing household was not in those days a president or manager of a board of foreign missions; his wife, the president of some female education society; his eldest son, the recording secretary of some domestic Bible society; his eldest daughter, the corresponding secretary of a mite society; his servant maid, the vice-president of a rag society; and his little daughter, a tutoress of a Sunday school. They knew nothing of the hobbies of modern times. In their church capacity alone they moved..." (N. p. 27).

Campbell, however, was <u>not</u> opposed to classes for teaching children the Bible. His objection was to the sectarian abuse of such. In the April, 1847 issue of The Millennial Harbinger, he wrote:

"I never had but one objection to the administration of the system—never one to the system itself. That objection was simply to the sectarian abuse whenever any bias was given either in the Sunday school itself or in the tracts or little volumes presented as premiums. . "(N. p. 28).

Barton W. Stone, another leading pioneer of the Restoration Movement, had a view of the Sunday school which would be accepted by the majority of members of the churches of Christ today. He opposed the Sunday school as a separate organization or institution but clearly advocated that children be placed in classes to be taught the Word of God on the Lord's Day. He wrote:

Let us not neglect to meet every Lord's Day for worship Let a part of the day be devoted to the instruction of our children in the Scriptures. Choose one or more pious and intelligent men, who shall preside over the class of children. . . (N. pp. 28, 29).

The practice of having Bible classes on the Lord's Day early became accepted among churches of Christ. Few seriously questioned its Scripturaleness and effectiveness until the latter part of the last century. The early opposition to Sunday Schools came from writers and editors of the Firm Foundation, a journal begun by Austin McGary in 1884. McGary opposed the Sunday school as it was set up in the denominations as a separate institution from the local church. He did not, however, oppose a church having Bible classes on the Lord's Day for the edification of. its members (N, pp. 34).

Two other Firm Foundation editors became leaders of the growing non-class movement among brethren especially in the state of Texas. The first of these was George A. Trott who was both a lawyer and a medical doctor. Trott began preaching in 1889 and became one of the Foundation's editors in 1906. (N. pp. 29-32). The other Firm Foundation editor who opposed Bible classes on the Lord's Day was N. L. Clark, a graduate of the University of Mississippi, who obeyed the gospel in 1895 and began preaching soon thereafter. Clark has been termed "the father of the non-class movement. He was also added to the editorial staff of the Firm Foundation in 1906." (N, p. 34).

The division, over classes occurred in the first decade of our century. Not only did those who opposed classes question their Scripturalness but they also opposed lesson books to teach the Bible and women being used to teach the children. (N, pp. 34, 35). They elevated their contention over these things to a matter of faith and declared non-fellowship with those who practiced them. George W. Phillips said:

All commands must be obeyed. If we fail in one point, we are guilty in all. I say he will be lost unless he repents, quits his Sunday school with its division of classes and women teachers (P, p. 32).

The message is plain. The brethren who oppose Bible classes on the Lord's Day condemn those of us who disagree with them to an eternity in Hell!

The cause of the non-Bible class brethren in Texas was greatly strengthened with the opening of Gunter Bible College in 1903 with N. L. Clark serving as its first president. This school flourished for a time but eventually closed its doors for lack of financial support. (N. p. 37).

In 1908, G. H. P. Showalter purchased the Firm Foundation and began to oppose the anti-class teaching of editors Trott and Clark. Because of this, a new paper representing the non-Bible class movement was begun in 1913. This paper was called the Apostolic Way. George A. Trott was one of its editors. (N, p. 39). The Apostolic Way continued as a leading paper among the non-class brethren until it finally ceased publication in the 1950's. (Q, p. 2).

ARGUMENTS AGAINST BIBLE CLASSES

ANSWERED FROM THE BIBLE

The first argument against Christians meeting on the Lord's Day for a period of Bible study preceding the worship assembly that we shall consider is that the Sunday School is of human origin having been started in Glouchester, England by Robert Raikes in 1784. Further, it is borrowed from the denominations. (E, pp. 27-32).

It is true that the first recorded Sunday school in modern history was started by Robert Raikes. It is also true that denominations were using Sunday Schools before the Restoration Movement began. Neither of these objections proves that Bible classes on the Lord's Day are unscriptural. John Gutenberg invented printing by moveable type in 1450. Does that prove that it is wrong for us to use printing to spread the gospel through books, tracts, and periodicals? Of course not! Denominations have many doctrines and practices that are wrong because they clearly violate the Scriptures. But all will agree that denominations also do some things that are right. Do we do wrong if we practice the same things denominations practice which are right? Of course we do not!

A second objection against simultaneous Bible classes on the Lord's Day before the assembly for worship is that there is neither command, example, or necessary inference in the Scriptures for such an arrangement (E, pp. 9-10). Therefore, such an arrangement for teaching is wholly without Heaven's authority. It is in the same category as the use of mechanical instrumental music in worship or missionary societies to do the work of the church or sprinkling for baptism, it is argued. (A, 85; P, 23).

It is true that the Bible authorizes by command or direct statement, by inspired apostolic example, and by necessary inference or implication. It is also true that Bible commands may be either generic or specific. For example, God commanded Noah to build an ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). This is a specific command. Had God simply said, "Build an ark," Noah would have been free to build the ark out of any material he chose. But since God commanded gopher wood, Noah would have been disobedient if he had use anything else. Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples. He said: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19). The command is "go." This is a generic command. He did not specify how to go. If God had said: "Go by ship," it would be disobedient to God to go any other way.

But God gave a generic command to go. How one goes is left up to his judgment. Any expedient method will do.

God also said "*Teach*" in the Great Commission. It is clear from Mark's account that that which is to be taught is the Gospel. But God did not specify how the teaching was to be done. It certainly can be done by public preaching as well as privately in home Bible studies (Acts 5:42; 20:20). It can be done in a "one on one" situation (Acts 18:24-26). It can also be done by means of the printed page, radio, television, films, records, tapes, etc. No one has ever questioned this for "*teach*" is generic. The Gospel must be taught but the means by which it is taught is in the realm of opinion. Teaching the Word of God to Christians and to children on their age level is certainly an expedient way to carry out the Great Commission. It does not violate any passage of Scripture!

Sprinkling, however, is clearly wrong. Baptism is plainly taught to be a "burial" in the New Testament (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-38). The Greek word used by the Holy Spirit means to dip, immerse, submerge and emerge (See Vine, Thayer, or any standard Greek lexicon). Therefore, the command to be baptized is specific. It requires immersion. No other way can fulfill the requirement of God. Sprinkling and Bible classes are in no way parallel!

Instrumental music is <u>not</u> commanded of God in the New Testament. There is no example of it being used in New Testament worship, nor is it a necessary inference. It is not an expedient for carrying out the command to "sing" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). In order to sing as a congregation, we must have a song that we all know and can sing in unison. Songbooks are an expedient to carry out the command to sing, but the instrument is not. It is another, unauthorized kind of music. When one uses a songbook, all he has done is sing. When one sings and plays on an instrument, he has done <u>more</u> than God has authorized. When one teaches God's Word in a Bible class arrangement, he has simply carried out God's command

to teach. He has not altered the command in any way. He has not added to it or taken from it.

Therefore, Bible classes and the use of instrumental music in worship are not parallel!

God has commanded the Gospel to be preached to the whole world. This is to be done by God's people, the church (I Tim. 3:14,15). No other organization is needed. However, God's church is free to use legitimate methods such as printed page, radio, Vacation Bible schools, Lord's Day Bible classes, etc. A missionary society is more than a method. it is an unauthorized organization which takes over and does the work which the church has been equipped by God to do. It violates the autonomy of the local church (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; I Pet. 5:1-4). Such certainly is not the case with Bible classes. They are not an organization separate and apart from the local church. They in no way violate the autonomy of the local church. They are simply an expedient means for the local church to carry out its God-given mission to teach (Matt. 28:19,20). Therefore the missionary society and Bible classes on the Lord's Day are not parallel!

A third objection brought against having Bible classes on the Lord's Day is that women are used to teach the children. Since God's Word forbids a woman to teach or to usurp authority over man (I Tim. 2:12), and commands her to keep silence in the assembly (I Cor. 14:34,35) it is argued by anti Bible class brethren that the practice of women teaching children's classes is unscriptural. (L, p. 144).

It is certainly true that in the assembly for worship, women are forbidden to speak or teach and preach publicly (I Cor. 11:18-14:40). However, not <u>all</u> speaking is forbidden for women are commanded to sing in the assembly (Eph. 5:19). They may also confess their faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9,10). Christian women may confess their sins (Jas. 5:16). The speaking in the assembly that is forbidden is that which "usurps authority over the man" (I Tim. 2:12). Preaching is to be done with authority (Tit. 2:15). Therefore women are forbidden to preach or to act in any way which is not in subjection to man.

Women are commanded by God to teach. Aged women are to be "teachers of good things: that they teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:4,5). But women are forbidden to teach in the assembly or in any place where they usurp authority over men. Where then may they teach? The Bible classes on the Lord's Day, conducted by a local church under the oversight of its elders, is one place where this may scripturally be carried out. Godly women may fulfill their God-given responsibility teaching younger women and children (A, pp. 15-17). Therefore, Lord's Day Bible classes with Godly women teaching other women and children in no way violates the Scriptures but it is an expedient way that women may fulfill their responsibility to teach.

A fourth objection brought against Bible classes is that all ages must study the same lesson (C, p. 1) It is argued by anti Bible class brethren that Deuteronomy 32:2 "My doctrine shall drop like the rain" is applicable to the teaching of the Bible:

The rain's just right for every plant, for the little tomato plant and the big oak tree. It's perfectly adapted to every one of them. The doctrine of the Lord is going to drop just exactly like that. Do you think the rain must be weakened for the little tomato plant? Is the tomato plant too weak to take the rain? No, the rain is perfectly adapted to it. The word of God is adapted to every age. (A, p. 54).

This argument simply will not "hold water." The rain is needed by all plants, but sometimes it can come down too hard on certain plants and kill them. When we lived in Zambia, we planted tomatoes at the beginning of the rainy season. The heavy rains killed the plants. A kindly African farmer explained to me that I need to raise the tomato plants in pots sheltered from the rains. only after the plants had reached a certain size and strength were they to be set out.

In the Lord's church, there are people in various stages of physical, mental, and spiritual development. The Bible clearly recognizes this (I Cor. 3:1,2; Heb. 5:11-14; I Jno. 2:12-14). There are old men, young men, old women, young women, and children. There are fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, servants and masters (Tit. 2:1-6; Col. 3:18-4:1). These various groups are at different levels of development and therefore have different needs. The Bible provides the instruction all need but the amount needed and the way it is presented will vary from one age or level of maturity to another (K, pp. 71-73). Babes in Christ need spiritual milk but full-grown men in Christ need to feed on the "meat" of God's Word (Heb. 5:11-14). Bible classes provide a Scriptural way that all can be taught according to their needs and abilities.

A fifth argument brought against Bible classes is that the same principle which allows them will also allow the "children's church" or "junior worship." (L, p. 10). The Scriptures command an assembly of the saints upon the first day of the week for worship (Heb. 10:25). An inspired apostolic example of such an assembly is recorded in Acts 20:7. This assembly was one in which the Lord's Supper was eaten (I Cor. 11:18-33). It required all the saints to "come together into one place" (I Cor. 11:20). The "children's church" violates the command to "come together into one place." When the saints meet on the Lord's Day for the breaking of bread, it is required that all be in the assembly. The children's church violates that by taking the youngsters out of the assembly, along with older saints who will instruct them, into a different assembly. Thus there are two rival, simultaneous worship assemblies. But Bible classes are not worship assemblies. They are private groups for the purpose of teaching. They are not held at the same time as the worship assemblies. When the Bible classes are over, the worship assembly is still held with all present (I Cor. 11:20). Therefore, Bible classes before the assembly and the children's church which divides the assembly are not parallel. Bible classes are a Scriptural expedient. The children's church is a sinful violation of I Cor. 11:20.

The practice of having Bible classes on the Lord's Day is a Scriptural and wise expedient to fulfill God's command to teach (Matt. 28:19,20; II Tim. 2:2). Please note these facts which cannot be denied: 1) It is proper and right for the church to teach the Bible; 2) A time and a place is necessary for the Bible to be taught but God has not limited Bible teaching to any particular time or place; 3) With but one exception, Bible teaching may be done any time. The one exception is the time and place of God's prescribed worship assembly. Nothing must interfere with it; 4) Any time, other than the worship assembly time, the Bible may be taught by the church to individuals or groups, on the Lord's Day or any other day, in the church building or out of it. God has set no limitations; 5) Women are commanded to teach God's Word. Such Bible classes provide them an opportunity to fulfill this requirement without violating restrictions put upon them in the worship assemblies. When Christians are involved in such classes, they are simply doing what God authorizes to be done, in a manner in which He authorizes it to be done, and for the purpose for which He authorizes it to be done (A, pp. 183,184).

THE ONE CUP CONTENTION

Ronny F. Wade, a leading writer and preacher among one-cup advocates says:

For some time now there has been disagreement over the number of drinking vessels to be used in the distribution of the fruit of the vine. Some claim that the cup means nothing and therefore as many as are desired can be scripturally used. With this, we disagree. We believe the Bible proves conclusively that one-cup should be used in each congregation of disciples (0, p. 11).

Wade not only says the Bible teaches conclusively that one cup should be used, but he also implies that fellowship should be withdrawn from those who use more than one (0, p. 17).

How did this one-cup contention arise? When did it become an issue which caused division in the body of Christ? All writers agree that until the 1890's individual communion cups were not used by churches generally. Assemblies were served by one cup, or in the case of larger assemblies, two or three or more cups were used. This was to change as a result of an invention by Dr. John G. Thomas, a physician in Ohio, who also served as a minister in the Congregational Church. Dr. Thomas was concerned about disease being spread by the use of a common cup in communion. In 1893, he began using individual cups. He then devised a special tray to hold the individual cups. In March, 1894, Dr. Thomas received a patent on his invention from the United States Government. (J, pp. 71,72).

Ironically, the controversy over individual cups began in the Christian Church, not the church of Christ. In the March 11, 1893 issue of the Christian Standard, a writer who identified himself only by the initials "W. A. R." asked the editor for his opinion on individual cups. The querist was especially concerned that some thought the common cup spread disease. The Standard's reply ridiculed the argument for individual cups based on sanitation and came down squarely on the side of one cup in the communion. (J, pp. 68,69).

In the March 31, 1900 issue of the Christian Standard, the renowned Bible scholar, J. W. McGarvey, came out against individual cups. In the Standard of June 25, 1904, McGarvey made it clear where he stood:

Whatever may be the special pleading in excuse for this innovation, it is perfectly clear that it aims to avoid that which the Lord enjoined in instituting the Supper; that is the use of the same cup by a number of individuals. He could have directed each of the twelve to drink from his own cup, had he adjudged that to be the better way. But he did not, and we shall be far more likely to please him by doing what he did than by doing what he avoided. If it is wrong to change in the slightest degree the order of baptism, it is still worse, if possible, to change the ordinance of the Lord's Supper (J, pp. 74,75).

When the non-Bible class group separated from the mainstream churches of Christ, "the seed of further division was already in its bosom" according to J. Ervin Waters, veteran champion of the one-cup faction. Leading non-class preachers such as George A. Trott and H. C. Harper believed in one cup only. N. L. Clark did not oppose several cups being used in an assembly but opposed individual cups. In 1928, Harper split with the Apostolic Way and began a paper in Florida called The Truth. Located preachers and offering the Lord's Supper twice on Sunday were opposed by Harper. It was the mid-1930 before any of the non-Bible class churches began using individual cups. (Q p. 3).

The issue of cups had been discussed in the journals among churches of Christ during this period, however. C. E. Holt had an article in the July 11, 1911 Gospel Advocate in favor of individual cups. David Lipscomb, the Advocate's venerable editor, at first opposed multiple cups but in an editorial in the January 7, 1915 issue of the Gospel Advocate, came out on the side of individual cups (0, pp. 65-67).

One-cup advocates credit (or blame) G. C. Brewer for introducing multiple communion cups into the church of Christ about 1915. They quote from Brewer's biography the following admission:

I think I was the first preacher to advocate the use of the individual communion cup and the first church in the state of Tennessee that adopted it was the church for which I was preaching, the Central church in Chattanooga, Tennessee (G, p. 4).

The Apostolic Way, the chief organ of the non-class brethren had opposed multiple cups from the start but in the mid-1920's, a split began to appear in its editorial staff. G. A. Trott and H. C. Harper opposed multiple cups. N. L. Clark would not make the use of multiple cups a test of fellowship nor would R. F. Duckworth. When Duckworth became its chief editor, the Apostolic Way came out in favor of multiple cups while still opposing Bible classes on the

Lord's Day (0, pp. 69-72). Those opposed to individual cups then rallied behind H. A. Harper's paper, The Truth. In 1931, Harper turned The Truth over to J. D. Phillips and Homer L. King. They changed the name of the paper to Old Paths Advocate and its place of publication to Lebanon, Missouri. This paper continues today as the voice of the non-Bible class, one-cup faction (0, p. 105).

ARGUMENTS AGAINST INDIVIDUAL CUPS

ANSWERED FROM THE BIBLE

The first argument against the use of multiple cups in the communion is that they are a human innovation and not of divine origin. They were invented by a denominational preacher, John G. Thomas, in 1893 and patented in 1894. They were first introduced into the church of Christ by G. C. Brewer in 1915 (G, p.4). To this we reply that no one questions that they were invented in 1893 or brought into the church in 1915.. The point to be remembered is that Christians Scripturally partook of the Lord's Supper before the advent of individual communion cups and Christians continue to partake Scripturally of the communion today. The use of multiple cups has not altered the purpose of the Lord' Supper to show forth the Lord's death till He came one whit (I Cor. 11: 26)! The bread is still eaten and the fruit of the vine is still drunk "in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:24,25)!

Saying that G. C. Brewer was the first to introduce individual communion cups in the church of Christ no more proves that they are unscriptural than saying that a certain brother was the first to preach the Gospel over the radio makes radio preaching unscriptural (M, pp. 101,102). The use of individual cups does not in any way change the Lord's Supper. It is simply an efficient way of serving it. Preaching on the radio in no wise changes the teaching of the Gospel. It is simply an efficient way to get it out to many people.

The second argument that one-cup advocates make that we shall note is that the Bible specifically says that Christ used one and only one cup in the institution of the Supper.

The following Scriptures are cited to prove this contention: Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:20, and I Cor. 11:25. (0, pp. 13,14). Furthermore, it is argued that:

"The Bible does, indeed, establish a <u>pattern</u>, <u>example</u> or <u>approved</u> <u>account</u> of action with regard to the authorized mode of drinking the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper. Jesus 'took the cup' (singular) and gave IT to the apostles and commanded them to, 'Drink ye all of it.'" (F, p. 2).

Surely no one doubts that the Lord used a cup in instituting His Supper. It is necessary to have a container for the fruit of the vine. But one-cup advocates make the mistake of emphasizing the wrong thing! The container is <u>not</u> the point of emphasis. It is <u>that which is contained</u> in the container. The emphasis is upon the fruit of the vine, which represents the blood, which Christ shed on the cross for our sins. The container is a mere <u>incidental</u>. It is no more significant than the fact that Jesus and His Apostles were assembled in a large upper room (Luke 22:12) on the occasion of the institution of the Supper (M, p. 25). It is tragic indeed that one-cup advocates have built an entire elaborate theology upon a mere incidental and have divided the blood bought body of Christ over it! it is even more tragic that in their quibbling over a mere incidental, they may miss entirely the purpose of the Lord's Supper—to remember our Lord's sacrifice for our sins!

When Jesus "took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it" (Matt. 26:27), He was not speaking of the container itself but that which was contained in it. He employed a figure of speech called "metonymy" which is simply the employment of one name or word for another. The particular kind of metonymy employed by our Lord is "metonymy of the subject" where the container is put for the contained. Strangely, one-cup advocates admit this:

To be more specific, the figure involved here is Metonymy OF THE CONTAINER FOR THE CONTAINED. The literal cup is named to suggest what it contains because of the close relationship between the container and the contents. (D, p.6).

The important thing then is not the container but that which is contained! The number of vessels is irrelevant. Whether one container or many, the fruit of the vine is still used to represent the blood of Christ and to recall His sacrifice to the mind of the worshipper.

Let us notice some other examples of this same principle. In Luke 22:17, it is written, "And he took the cup and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves." If Jesus is talking about a container, in order to divide it among themselves, the Apostles would have had to cut or break the container in pieces and each swallow a part. (B, p. 3). Again, in this connection, please turn to John, chapter four, where we read of Jesus' interview with the woman at Jacob's well. The woman said to Jesus:

"Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us this well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" (vs. 12).

How did Jacob drink of the well? Was it the well which contained the water or the water contained in the well that he drank? Did he put his lips to the wall of the well, tip it, and drink from it? Or did he and his children drink from it by using vessels to dip the water out of the well and then pouring it into various containers from which they drank? The answer is obvious to any honest person of average intelligence.

Again, Jesus said in Mark 9:41:

For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

What if a thirsty, dehydrated person comes to you and you need to give him two cups of cold water to satisfy his thirst? Or three, or four? Will you lose your reward? Of course not! But according to one cup brethren since Jesus referred to a cup (singular) on the Lord's table, we are sinning if we use two or ten or one hundred. By this same type of reasoning (?), one would have to interpret Mark 9:41 to mean that if one gave one cup of cold water to a thirsty man, he would be rewarded. But if he gave two or more, he would lose his reward. Who can believe it! The water is the cup under consideration by the Lord. The water is that which is important. The kind of vessel or number of vessels employed is irrelevant. (B, pp. 3,4).

Let us notice one more passage on this point.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which- is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you (Luke 22:19,20).

Jesus said the "cup is the New Testament." He spoke of one New Testament, only one! There is only one New Testament but the one New Testament may be contained in many different books with different bindings, different prints, etc. In just the same way, there is but one cup, the fruit of the vine which represents the blood of Christ, but it may be contained in many different vessels. The fact that the one New Testament is bound in many different bindings does not change the fact that there is but one New Testament. The fact that the fruit of the vine may be contained in many different vessels does not change the fact that there is but one cup. (B, p. 4).

A third major argument made by one-cup advocates is that there are three elements in the Lord's Supper. In their zeal to bind one container only in serving the fruit of the vine, they have actually given the cup, an incidental to serving the elements of the Lord's Supper, a sacramental significance. We have only one covenant which is ratified by His blood; and that is the cup's spiritual significance. Thus we have the body represented by the bread; the blood represented by the fruit of the vine; and the New Testament represented by the cup containing the fruit of the vine. These three are spiritually inseparable. (H, p. 3).

Thus it is said there are three elements in the Lord's Supper, not two as we have always thought but three! This is adding to the Word of God (Rev. 22:18,19)! The Bible speaks of only two elements in the Lord's Supper—the bread and the fruit of the vine. The cup which contains the fruit of the vine has no more significance than the plate in which the bread is placed. When Jesus said: "This cup is the new testament in my blood," He was using another figure of speech called a "metaphor." A "metaphor" is a comparison which does not employ the signs of comparison such as "like" or "as." When Jesus said of the bread, "This is my body" and of the fruit of the vine, "This is my blood," He was employing metaphors. He did not literally mean the bread was His body and the fruit of the vine was His blood but that they represented His body and His blood. So also the phrase "This cup is the new testament in my blood" simply means that the cup (the fruit of the vine which it contained) represented the shed blood of Christ which sealed the New Covenant. (H, p. 3). There is no significance to the cup other than that it held the fruit of the vine.

Conclusion

The non-Bible class, one-cup brethren are zealous to follow the Word of God exactly. This is commendable. However, in their zeal to be strict, they have actually gone beyond that which is written and made laws where God has made none. They are guilty of binding where God has loosed. It is a sin to loose where God has bound! This is the error of liberalism. But it

is equally as great a sin to bind where God has loosed! Neither position really respects God and His Word. Both positions elevate human opinion above Divine decree.

The non-class, one cup brethren are a slowly dying segment of the Restoration Movement, it appears. Ronny Wade, a leading preacher among these brethren predicts that the non-class churches which use multiple cups will adopt the Sunday school and become "liberal." But of the more conservative group which rejects both cups and classes, Wade admits they are slowly, but surely getting smaller." (N, pp. 188-190).

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"LOOKING AT





LIBERALISM"





THE SEVENTH ANNUAL SOUTHEAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP OCTOBER 26 – 27, 2002 HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN RICHMOND HILL, GEORGIA

Editor: Riley Nelson

PREFACE

The apostle Paul penned these words by inspiration, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28,29). Later he wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4:2-4). How true the words of inspiration are in our day. In many congregations "innovation" is the catch phrase of the day. While not every thing new is unscriptural, each idea should be examined in light of what is taught in the Bible. As Jesus taught in His day, "Search the scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

Liberalism, has reached the point that it no longer is said to be creeping in, it is running full speed in many areas. The use of instrumental music has plagued the church for hundreds of years. Some even in congregations where it is not used, have been heard to say, "I do not think it is a matter of salvation, only choice." The clapping of hands at a baptism, or after a lesson is becoming popular in some areas. Women are being placed in roles God did not intend for them to take. Homes are being destroyed by divorce for any and every reason, because men fail to follow God's plan for the home. Generations of new converts are not hearing the distinctive plea for the one church from many pulpits.

We must hold fast to sound doctrine and walk in the old paths (Titus 2:1; Jeremiah 6:16).

It is not a matter of our wants and desires, but rather what does God desire us to do when it

comes to worshipping Him and serving Him. It is the hope of this editor that those who read

these pages will heed the lessons given, and will "search the scriptures to see if the things taught

are so." It is not a matter to be taken lightly. The eternal destiny of souls is at stake. This volume

is offered in hope that some may be turned back to the "old paths", and that those who stand firm

in the truth of God's word may be encouraged to know that not all knees have been bowed to

"Baal".

Riley Nelson

Richmond Hill Church of Christ

October 26, 2002

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"LOOKING AT LIBERALISM"

DEDICATION

In March of 1991, a group of people gathered to discuss forming a congregation of the Lord's people in Richmond Hill, Georgia. The idea had been tried before, but with little success. This group of people realized the need for the church to be firmly planted in the Richmond Hill community. The area was having one of the fastest growth rates of anywhere in Georgia.

Leading this drive was Brother Louis Cowart. Upon learning that the former Christian Church building was for sale, brother Cowart began securing both funds and individuals to help in this effort. Before long he, with the help and support of several others, had accomplished the task and the church was opened in Richmond Hill.

Not only was brother Cowart instrumental in getting the congregation started, he has given both time and talent to the existing work. Many tasks are performed by brother Cowart that go unnoticed.

It is with great pleasure this volume is dedicated to Louis Cowart.

Riley Nelson

Seventh Annual Southeast Georgia Lectureship

Held at the Church of Christ Richmond Hill Georgia Highway 144 East P.O. Box 786 Richmond Hill, GA 31324

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LOOKING AT LIBERALISM

WHAT IS LIBERALISM?

By Ryan Tuten

INTRODUCTION

What a wonderful privilege it is to be a part of this great lectureship again. The congregation at Richmond Hill is to be commended for their work in this lectureship program. Their love for the Lord and His Word is more evident with each passing year.

My objective in writing this opening chapter is to identify, describe and discuss the influence that "Liberalism" has had on the churches of Christ. The task of writing this chapter is not a pleasant one. In fact it is heart breaking. But it **must be done**. Why? Why must we speak out and expose this faction of the Lord's church? (1) So that we can learn from the past and the mistakes of others. (2) To teach us not to turn to the right hand nor to the left, but to stand steadfast and unmovable (I Cor. 15:58) (3) To reaffirm the simple truth of God's will to all who will listen and see the challenge set before us.

The Bible teaches that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son... (John 3:16)." Of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, it was said, "Greater love hath no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Christians are commanded to love and always act in a loving manner (I Peter 1:22; I John 4:7; Hebrews 13:1). Every page of this book and every word of this lectureship is sent forth in love - love for God, love for Christ, love for the truth, and love for the souls of men. We strive in all that we do to speak "... the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Sometimes speaking the truth in love, defending the faith, and speaking the oracles of God include positive as well as negative matters (Ephesians 4:15; Philippians 1:17; Jude 3; I Peter 4:11; II Timothy 4:2). Certainly included in the responsibility of serving faithfully as a child of God, according to the inspired Word of God, is the obligation to edify, encourage, exhort, etc... one another. But we must further recognize the need, the God-given

obligation, to warn of immediate and eternal dangers. Faithful Christians are obeying their Father when they act in **love** and **warn** others of the dangers, **mark** (draw attention to), and endeavor to **stop the mouths** of false teachers (Acts 20:28-31; Romans 16:17; Titus 1:9-11).

In view of our love for God, Christ, truth, and the souls of men we seek to encourage others to faithfulness by making them aware of dangerous doctrines, attitudes and actions of brethren among us. It is not our desire to merely spread rumors, opinions, or personal feelings.

There can be no doubt that Satan has sought the destruction of man from the beginning of mankind in the Garden of Eden, to every person in our very day. He is alive, active, aggressive, militant, cunning and deceitful. The devil, the god of this world, has servants who appear as "servants of righteousness" (II Corinthians 11:13-15). Children of God, in order to remain faithful, we must ever be on guard, alert, ever aware of his evil ways (II Peter 5:8).

The church (bride) of Christ has been under attack from the time of its establishment in the first century. Reflect for a moment concerning the various conflicts during the last fifty to one hundred years: orphan's home issue, one cup, ladies' covering, missionary society, premillenialism, authority of elders denied, Crossroads obsessions, translation perversions, Boston movement, women's role in leadership, marriage, divorce and remarriage, worship and many others.

Satan has not ceased to plague, attack and militantly seek the destruction of the church collectively or the Christian individually. He wants to destroy your faith. He wants YOU to be lost eternally! He is a vicious enemy even trying to damn our children eternally! Satan has voted and is working toward your being lost.

In the long ago God's children were "destroyed for a lack of knowledge..." (Hosea 4:6). This lack of knowledge was just a stepping stone which would later be responsible for the decline and fall of Israel. This "lack of knowledge" which the Prophet Hosea spoke about led to "Pride" (Hosea 5:5) which in turn led to "Instability" (Hosea 6:4). Liberalism flourishes where people are ignorant of the Bible. The Instability of Israel then led to them being like everyone

else and "Mixing with the world" (Hosea 7:8). This led to "Corruption" (Hosea 9:9) and "Backsliding" (Hosea 11:7), and finally progressing to the point that they had literally turned their backs on God completely and began to worship "Idols" (Hosea 13:2). This is what happens when one loosens the law of God - one sin (looseness of the law) leads to another, which leads to another, etc... Liberalism does nothing more than begin one down the "slippery slope" of destruction!

My purpose and goal of this chapter is simply to stand for the truth, inform and warn the brethren of the evil ones and their evil doctrines, and make sure one is aware of the Liberal elements in the church today!

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

Paul, writing to the Romans stated, "whatsoever things that were written aforetime were written for our learning..." (Romans 15:4). As one studies the precious, Divine Word of God, one cannot help but to notice the numerous lessons that are taught throughout the pages of the Old Testament which God desires man to learn. The sad truth is, that most of those involved in teaching liberalism, do not learn from the mistakes of the past. The Old Testament should help one to develop an attitude of respect and a sense of reverence for God and His Word!

One who teaches and or believes the teaching of liberalism, should shudder and tremble as they hear the names Nadab and Abihu. Looking at these two men of the Old Testament, it doesn't take long to make some comparisons with many today. Just like many today who have assumed the liberal spirit, Nadab and Abihu had a rich spiritual background and were raised in a religious home. In chapter nine of Leviticus, Moses recorded how God had authorized every aspect of the Levitical service to be done. The "fire" of 9:24 symbolized and signified to the congregation his satisfaction with their close adherence to his prescribed law. God would remain with them as long as they conducted themselves according to His authorized will. Though the story of Nadab and Abihu is sad and negative - it is also needed! It is needed in that

we might learn how to approach God. In chapter ten of Leviticus, one notices that Nadab and Abihu were authorized to do this part of worship. Both of them used the proper incense on the censers.⁴ Nadab and Abihu's sin was not that they were unauthorized to do this worship; nor, that they used censers that God had not commanded; nor, that the fire was not to be used in this part of the worship.⁵ It was not even the case that there was a problem with the incense that they used (Ex. 25:38; 27:3; 23; 28:3; 20:34). The problem was in the ORIGIN of the fire that they used. It was unauthorized fire, because it was not the fire God SPECIFIED!⁶

God alone has the right to change His will. In Nadab and Abihu's actions they had altered God's representative system. Man must learn from their mistake and understand that God will not tolerate changing His Word or will (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). Man must learn that respect, wisdom, justice and righteousness of God is nothing less than a speedy compliance with His will. Any system or individual which teaches otherwise is a false teacher or a false system (Galatians 1:6-9).

Has "Liberalism" learned anything from this sad story? It seems many times, it has not! If we fail to learn form the mistakes of those in the past, how can we ever learn what we must do to please God? Looking at the example of Nadab and Abihu, we must learn that as we enter into the presence of God with unauthorized acts of worship, that God is not pleased. Many today teach ~ "well it's no big deal how one worship's God." Friends, it is obviously a very "BIG DEAL" to God, just ask Nadab or Abihu!

Nadab and Abihu died without mercy (Hebrews 10:28) for intruding into God's presence with strange fire. The Hebrew writer stated, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:28-29).⁷

Moses reminded the children of Israel to "Remember and forget not" (Deuteronomy 9:7). A failure to remember the mistakes of the past is the seed for the inevitable duplication thereof.

Jeroboam, the first King of the Northern tribe of Israel is another great example of one who made the decision to change, modify and literally mutilate God's pattern for worship.

8

"Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense." (II Kings 12:25-33)

Notice how Jereboam changed the object of worship from God to calves of gold. He changed the place of worship from Jerusalem in the south to Bethel and Dan in the north. He changed the priesthood from the tribe of Levi to various other tribes. He also changed the date for the Feast of Tabernacles from the authorized seventh month to the unauthorized eighth month.

It is not possible to exaggerate the destructive nature of these deviations from God's worship pattern for the nation of Israel. These changes served to undermine the spirituality of the northern kingdom and ultimately serve as its destroyer. At the beginning of his reign, Ahijah the prophet informed Jereboam's wife, "And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of

Jereboam, who did sin, and who made Israel sin" (II Kings 14:16). Two hundred fifty years later, the national light of Israel was snuffed out in Assyrian captivity. Notice the words of God which rang in their ears as they were driven from their homeland:

"For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; Until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." (II Kings 17:21-23)

Consequently, at the beginning and at the end of Israel's national life, God pointed to Jeroboam's tampering with His pattern of worship as the basic reason for the spiritual deterioration and ultimate destruction of the nation.¹⁰

As a result, Jeroboam's liberal, self-willed, change-agent mentality wreaked catastrophic consequences on the northern kingdom of Israel. From the past, Jeroboam screams to the present, urging man to give the strictest heed to God's pattern of worship.

What has liberalism learned from Jeroboam's tragic error? That there is no such thing as a pattern for approaching God in worship; that grace covers deviations from God's will; that experiences that fail to stimulate the flesh are not spiritual; that old ways of worship must bow to new ways if we are to attract a crowd; that placing the flesh with worship that feels good is more important than glorifying God by yielding to His will; that approaching God in worship with unauthorized acts is "no big deal"? Are these the lessons that God intends for man to learn from the endless biblical emphasis on Jereoboam's transgressions embracing two hundred and fifty years of history? Tragically, liberalism does not learn form the past!

TURN NOT TO THE RIGHT HAND NOR TO THE LEFT

For 120 years while Noah was preparing the ark, he preached God's righteousness to the wicked people of that day. The Bible does not specifically tell of how they responded, but since none were saved except Noah and his immediate family, one can safely conclude ~ human nature being as it is ~ that they mocked Noah's preaching. No one was going to tell them what to do!

Many years later this same attitude is seen manifested in the children of Israel, "every man did that which was pleasing in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Continuing a study of God's Word, one sees those who lived during the days of the prophet Jeremiah and we again find this arrogant and self-righteous attitude prevailing. In Jeremiah 6:16-17 as they were admonished to seek after the old paths of God, the people replied, "We will not walk therein...we will not harken."

This same attitude was true in the days that Christ walked upon this earth, (John 5:39-40, Matthew 23:37) and, friends, it is true TODAY!. It needs to be understood, however, that all refusals to walk as God has commanded, do not come in the form of an outright verbal rejection. The opposing of God's word often comes in the preaching of a perverted gospel (Galatians 1:6-9) by the adding to and subtracting from God's commandments. Jesus warns us of such teachers in Matthew 7:15; that they would come in "sheep's clothing" but were actually ravening wolves. Paul echoed this same thought in Acts 20:29 when he wrote, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." And in the very next verse he adds that from "your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

So from pulpits of the Lord's church, the trumpets are being sounded that are giving uncertain sounds. The commandments of God are being changed by man to satisfy the whims of man. Those who liberally defy the word of God are using forms of entertainment with choirs, solos, drama presentations, and the such like and are replacing the "spirit and truth" of our

worship services. In essence, these individuals are telling God, "we'll walk as we please regardless of what you say." Notice carefully, Deuteronomy 5:29-33:

"O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! Go say to them, Get you into your tents again. But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it. Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess."

Herein God tells Moses to teach the children of Israel His commandments. He puts it in terms that cannot possibly be misunderstood. He told them, "ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." When Moses died and Joshua succeeded him, God gave him the same instructions in Joshua 1:7. He declared, "Turn not to the right hand nor to the left." The efforts of the many today who try to change, modify and mutilate God's Word is not only difficult to understand and comprehend, but it is appalling! How is it possible for the creature to know better than the creator as to what is best?

When we fail to give a "Thus saith the Lord" for all we teach and practice in Jesus' name, then what we are doing is perverting the word of God, His gospel. To do this is to reject His authority and to face His wrath in the day of judgment (John 12:48; Matthew 7:24-27).

Once again, in Proverbs 4:26-27 we are told, "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."

REAFFIRMING THE SIMPLE TRUTH OF GOD'S WILL AND LOOKING TO THE CHALLENGE SET BEFORE US

The simple truth of God's Word! Friends, God's Word is simple! The Prophet Isaiah stated, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). The way to God and the way to please God is so simple. Yet many people arrive at erroneous teachings concerning the will of God. Our Lord stated, "...and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." (John 8:32). God's Word is the truth (John 17:17) and the reason most do not know the truth, is that they don't study and read for themselves (II Timothy 2:15, Ephesians 3:4). One cannot arrive at such erroneous teachings such as the "liberal" sect, simply by reading God's Word. These "liberal" doctrines must be diligently and continuously fed into willing minds. These liberal teachings are a maze of contradictions of God's precious Word. To allow false doctrines and practices to be taught in the church of our Lord and proclaimed from pulpits with the excuse that God's grace is big enough to cover any mistakes we make, and as long as we have unity and diversity (agreeing to disagree) is inexcusable.

Christians have a job to do! The Christian religion is a "DO" religion, a religion of action! It is the duty of both individuals and congregations of Christians to preach the Gospel, to rescue the perishing and care for the dying, to visit the fatherless and widows, relieve the oppressed, and assist those in their affliction.

It is regretful that we have brethren today who are spending much time, energy and money trying to convince churches of our Lord that it is simply no 'Big Deal' when one does their best in the worship to God, even if that means doing that which is not commanded. The simple truth is these brethren are seeking to loosen laws upon God's divine institution, the church, which would cause congregations to practice a religion that is "vain" (Matthew 15:9). This indeed is a serious matter...trouble comes when brethren legislate where God has not legislated and seek to bind and loosen where God did not bind or loose. Brethren seek many

times to force their opinions of HOW and WHERE upon the church, even if it divides the Lord's church and makes an unholy spectacle of the church before an unbelieving world.

Congregations of the Lord's church cannot afford to be bound by the dictates and factionist brethren. It is sinful to legislate where God has not legislated. Brethren, the Bible is THE standard, the only authority! It, and it alone, defines what is right and what is wrong. We must follow the Lord's will (Matthew 7:21), which is absolute (John 17:17; John 8:32) and understandable (Ephesians 5:17; John 8:32).

We ask ourselves the question, "Where do we go from here?" Will the twentieth century churches of Christ in America be swept away by the raging currents of liberalism? We do not believe so! We are convinced that there are as yet thousands of faithful brethren who will rise to the challenge when they are alerted to the need. What can we do to address this urgency? I would like to suggest a couple of things:

- (1) First, we must not panic and become reckless, "shooting at everything that moves" so to speak. Some see a liberal under every bed and a modernist behind every tree. Not every sincere disagreement between brethren is a mater of "liberalism." Yet some things are so flagrant that anyone with any understanding of the Bible can discern the error. Such issues CANNOT be allowed to pass. If there has ever been a time to stand and fight it is surely on the fundamentals of this nature.
- (2) Second, our brotherhood has lapsed into a state of monumental ignorance. Biblically speaking, we know less about more than we have ever before. Elders, preachers and responsible church leaders must pledge themselves to a vast education program for the children of God. People all throughout time have been destroyed for a "lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

CONCLUSION

My friends, I do not want to meet God in judgment having been guilty of teaching congregations that they should cease to be doers of the word and cease to practice pure religion, or attempt to loosen any law which God has given. God being my helper, I will not be guilty of teaching congregations of the Lord's people to substitute theory for practice.

ENDNOTES

¹Frank Chesser, *The Spirit of Liberalism*, Publishing Designs Inc., Huntsville, Alabama, March 2001, pp. 18

²Ibid., pp. 19

⁴Ibid., pp. 19

⁵Ibid., pp. 20

⁶Ibid., pp. 22

⁷Ibid., pp. 24

⁸Ibid., pp. 24

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 26

LOOKING AT LIBERALISM

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

By Wayne Rodgers

INTRODUCTION

It is truly an honor and a privilege for me to speak on this year's lectureship. I commend the brethren at the Richmond Hill church of Christ for their valiant effort in standing for the truth and approaching this timely topic of Liberalism. My family and I are indeed grateful for the warm welcome of this congregation through the past years that we have been associated. The topic of the Role of Women in the church has been assigned to me for discussion.

For the past few years there has been an ever-growing pressure in the Lord's church for women to assume leading roles in worship assemblies of the church. This has stemmed from movements that are beyond the church itself. Notice what Winford Claiborne wrote,

One of the most ungodly, immoral, and illogical movements this country has ever witnessed has been variously called "radical feminism," "the Women's Liberation Movement," or simply "the Women's Movement" ¹

An article that appeared in *Florida Times Union* on June 17, 2001, entitled "Women's Work," said according to a recent study by the Employment Policy Foundation, a non-profit research group, the number of women in the clergy had increased from six percent in 1989 to eighteen percent in the year 2000. The author of the article, Sarah Skidmore, wrote, "Female clergy are often more welcomed in liberal religions, such as Unitarian Universalists, than in more conservative faiths." Although she is correct in her statements, eventually most significant movements in society seem to invade the Lord's church in some form or fashion, and the same is

true involving the "Feminists Movement." Women have been called upon to assume leadership roles in the church by those advocating their doctrines of Women's Liberation.

SUPPORT FROM THE PULPIT

As this error has crept in to the Lord's church, it has not stood alone. Many preachers, elders, and brethren have advocated that our long time understanding of plain verses such as is found in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2 should be laid aside, because it was only contextual for the first century church and not for today. A paper titled, "Faith and Gender: Reflections on Discussions at the Stamford church of Christ, was written by Dale Pauls, preacher for the Stamford Church of Christ in 1994 stating,

Traditionally, churches of Christ have held, as most churches have until recently, to an understanding of I Cor. 14:33-35 and I Tim. 2:11-15 that *does not examine context* and that even *denies the relevance of context*, and on that basis, they have prohibited women from exercising "leadership" roles in their public worship.³

On October 20, 1996, Eddie Sharp delivered a sermon to the University Church in Abilene on "Women in the Lord's Church." After discussing I Cor. 14 and I Tim. 2, he stated:

The rules laid down in I Cor. 14 and I Tim. 2 were proper for Christian women in the first century context...However, the rules for the proper conduct of women in those particular contexts no more call for the continuing restriction of women for all time in the church than the rules for being a proper Christian slave in the first century setting call for the continuing enslavement of one man by another. ⁴

With preachers standing in pulpits and teaching in our schools that do not "hold fast the form of sound words" (II Tim. 1:13), it is easy to see why congregations have let down their guard and have let women take leading roles over the men in the church. While there are many strong brethren with much wisdom and understanding of the scriptures that have put a stop to this liberal teaching, we have some brethren who do not study for themselves the word of God and only hear

some preacher's words. Brethren, we have a responsibility as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11 "to search the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." We also have a responsibility to study God's word so that we might be "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [handling aright – ASV] the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). The preacher may or may not speak the truth and if the audience is unprepared they are easily swayed to "his" or "her" way of thinking.

Notice comments from some members of the church who are making it their goal to promote women in leadership roles in the church:

For a time were making good strides in this area. However, lately we have come to a stand still or maybe I should say moving frustratingly slow. One important area that we have made changes in is prayer. Women cannot lead a public prayer in the assembly unless it is open to everyone. Once every three months we have a prayer service and this service is open to every believer who wants to pray men and women. This has been a very humbling experience for all of us. Women are also encouraged to pray at our prayer meetings and in our committee meetings. We are striving to be a "house of prayer." We have seen many many answers to prayer. It is truly exciting to see God moving in and around us. We have a praise team that is made up of 75% women. We have occasional solos from women. The praise team stands in the back with microphones as to not give the impression that women are leading the worship even though our eldership does not feel their is anything wrong with women song leaders. We have women on almost all committee's from building to worship planning. Of course, there is a male figure head over all committee's. And I am not speaking of the eldership

What do you think the church of Christ needs to do to change direction when it comes to women's role?

grace, Julie

Pat posted on 6/26 11:36 AM Reply RE: Women's role: Where are you?

It has to start with the leadership (maybe some gentle prodding from the flock) - pray always, continue to educate, and initiate change slowly (now my definition of slow is not very slow to some), but never stop changing and growing. If we remain humble, always giving God the glory, always being willing to be molded, and trusting that God knows what He is doing - it seems to me that we should

have no problem with whatever comes along. For we are only His vessels to be used for His pleasure and purpose!! However, this will take a lot of courage especially from the leadership. This is no place for timid leaders.

Mark posted on 7/1 10:28 PM Reply RE: Women's role: Where are you?

I'm glad you all are having this discussion. All year long it seems a friend and I have found this discussion creeping into our conversations. (I think it has something to do with our both attending a church that just recently completed a reevaluating of women's roles in public worship.) I am wondering- where and why do we draw a line for women? I have heard many say that "preaching, or eldership" is not grounds for a woman. I am wondering where our "philosophy of theology" is on this subject. I know many conservative-minded who would rather keep from venturing down that 'slippery slope' of where the line for the roles of women should be drawn. The important thing we should be considering is, "What is our foundation for understanding what women can and can't do?" If we are not to take the bible's verses about women being silent literally, (because of time and context) then how can we make judgements about roles of gender at all?? (i.e. women leading singing is okay, but women preaching is not okay) I'm not proposing we just keep pushing the envelope, I'm asking, "How do we define where our envelope is anyway?" puzzled,

Mark 5

These are from a conversation had on a discussion board on the Wineskins' website, which is edited by senior editors Mike Cope and Rubel Shelley.

Because of the pressure from out and now within the church of Christ, feminists are succeeding in their goal, which is to eliminate marriage, motherhood, and love claiming that marriage is legalized servitude. That male-female relationship is the basis for all human oppression. As one can see, the goals that underline this movement are actually anti-family, anti-God. ⁶ Goebel Music records in his book, Behold The Pattern, an instance at an Annual Youth Minister's Seminar, speaker Randy Mayeux saying,

You want to talk about the issues in the 90's. In one youth group... there is a woman, a teenager...that wants to be able to preach in some fashion to men and women when she gets older. You want to kick her out?...The bottom line is that in the 1990's diversity is

the only game in town,...Can a woman lead prayer in a mixed group? It's a good question. And the answer, of course, is yes she can. I mean because it is happening. ⁷

It is amazing what is taught in some of our schools! Where is the Bible to back up anything that he has said? His argument is simply, "It is happening." So, because it is happening, we are supposed to accept it. Not so! In the days of the Judges, (Judges 21:25) the statement is made that "every man did that which was right in his own sight." This is the case here. No authority needed. Just do what you feel is right.

Brethren, the difference is that we are not a denomination; We are the Lord's Church! We are given his word as our authority (Matt. 17:5; 28:18; II Tim. 3:16,17). "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17).

A CLEAR DIFFERENCE IN ROLES

In Romans 12:21-32, we see that people forgot who they were, i.e. their human roles. Because of this, the Bible is full of admonitions for people to keep clear about the difference between a man and a woman. Notice how Paul, in I Corinthians 11:1-16, speaks of the headship, referring to authority, not source:

Verses 3,7-9: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God...for a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."

Paul makes clear a difference in the role of man, the role of woman, and the role of Christ. No doubt there is a difference in each role, beginning with God as head of Christ, Christ as head of man, and man as head of woman. There is nothing degrading in anyway about this passage. This simply shows the Divine roles as assigned by God. To further illustrate, consider the fact that

"headship" is specifically related to authority and subjection. Notice that Christ was subject to the Father (John 4:34; 14:28), even though he existed from the beginning with the Father (John 1:1-3), he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). In the home, husbands are the head, wives are to be subject; Christ is the head, let the church be subject (Eph. 5:23,24). Submission works like this: Wives to husbands (and husbands, love your wives), children to parents (fathers, nurture your children), servants to masters (masters, remember your Master in heaven). Because submission works in this fashion, it keeps those at the head from being selfish and inconsiderate of those who are the subordinate.

PERTINENT PASSAGES

God's commandment for male leadership in spiritual matters is clear. Not only does the New Testament specifically state a husband's headship over his wife; it specifically prohibits women from leading men in worship and spiritual teaching. One passage that should stand out is **I**Tim. 2:8-15. In these verses, there is a comparison of men and women and the behavior (I Tim. 3:15) acceptable from each. The context is not limited to just the assembly, but speaks of "everywhere." Men are told their role, and then the women are contrasted. "Men pray everywhere...in like manner, women adorn themselves in modest apparel" Two admonitions are given to the women. The first is to de-emphasize their outward appearances ⁸, rather concerning themselves with inward beauty, character, and good works (I Tim. 2:9-10). Peter also gives this admonition: "While they behold your chaste conversation [behavior – ASV] coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart; in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after

this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands" (I Pet. 3:2-5). The second admonition to women is that they quietly receive instruction in complete submission. ⁹ "Let the women learn in silence [quietness – ASV] with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence [quietness – ASV]" (I Tim. 2:11,12). The point of this passage is emphasizing the idea of learning with a quiet and meek spirit instead of taking the lead over a man. Speaking is not forbidden here, nor all teaching, but rather leading or exercising authority over a man by teaching. Certainly, as all Christians are, women are commanded to "teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). Certainly, women were praying in I Corinthians 11:5,6.

The key is that they are not to lead the prayer or lead the singing when men are among those they would be teaching or leading the prayer for. There are two reasons given in I Tim. 2: 13,14 for the submission of women to men: Man was created first; woman was deceived and sinned first.

Some limit that application of I Timothy 2 to just the assembly of the church as the principles of I Corinthians 14 is applied. However, I Timothy 2:8 says "everywhere." It could be during the assembly, but there is nothing that suggests it is limited to just the assembly of the church. For instance, are women to be modest only in the assemblies? Are women to adorn themselves in good works only in the assemblies? Of course not!

Notice what Cecil May, Jr. says concerning this:

Because some think these prohibitions against women leading men only apply "in the church," women lead prayer in college convocations, women teach Bible classes containing men at lectureships and in congregational classrooms, and women deliver religious lectures (sermons?) at scholarly conferences and seminars. "But this is not the church," we are told, "so it is all right." By this reasoning we may expect women to deliver the evening lectures at Christian college lectureships, but I Timothy 2

does not say women are not to exercise authority over men "in the assembly." It forbids women leading men "everywhere." ¹⁰

These verses do not regulate women in business or other secular situations. The "everywhere" contextually points to spiritual matters, i.e. "the life of the church in general." ¹¹ "Everywhere" prayer, worship, teaching, etc. is taking place, the women are not to lead or usurp over men.

CONCLUSION

We need to remember that we are not to conform to this world, we are to conform to Christ. We must be holy as He is holy (I Peter 1:16). We have to remember that God knows what is best for us even if it contradicts "Our" society and culture today. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction that man of God may be perfect throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16,17). "Man" is generic meaning "mankind, human being, etc." Therefore, the scripture is God-given to make "man-kind" perfect furnished for good works. We should each heed our God-given roles, that we might be acceptable to our God, remembering that different roles do not imply a difference in worth, value, or ability. It is our responsibility to make sure that we fit into God's arrangement, and not God into ours. ¹² May we all bow humbly in submission before the God of Heaven.

END NOTES

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LOOKING AT LIBERALISM

THE ONE CHURCH

By Stacey W. Grant

INTRODUCTION

This author is tremendously honored to be part of this great lectureship. Brother Nelson is to be commended for the wonderful and efficient job he does directing the annual South East Georgia Lectureship. The Richmond Hill brethren are always kind and very supportive of the speakers. Richmond Hill Church of Christ truly is a model of a sound congregation.

"If anyone comes to you and does not bring **this** doctrine, do not **receive** him into your house nor **greet** him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds" (II John 10-11). This passage clearly sets the tone and lays the foundation for this study. The doctrine of Christ **only** reveals the Church of Christ. There are those "among" us who no longer teach this critically important fact. They would have us to believe we are the offspring of Alexander Campbell. Meaning: "The Church of Christ can only trace its history back to the period in which Campbell lived."

Sadly, the brother who taught this author the Gospel now espouses the illogical, ungodly doctrine of the Community Church movement. This author, per the commands of Ephesians 5:11 and Jude 3, exposed the error of his father in the Gospel. In one conversation between the author and apostate brother, the author asked, "Are not we to speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent?" Of course, this is the command of I Peter 4:11. The apostate brother referred to above declaration as "church of Christ spin". Yet, the apostate brother insisted that he still teaches undenominational Christianity.

There are multiple false "isms" being upheld and praised by some brethren. However, no matter how many choose the broad way (Matt. 7:13-14), the one church will **never**, **ever** become a man-made entity! There are various reasons why the one church will **never** succumb to the evil of false doctrine.

IT WAS ETERNALLY PURPOSED BY GOD

"To the intent that now the manifold (many-sided) wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). Humans are incapable of understanding eternity. God's ark of safety reveals unto us various sides of His wisdom. To the contrary of some false doctrines, the church was **never** an afterthought. It stands as an example of the Lord's creative genius. Who could have devised such a meticulously elaborate plan save He? This fact alone destroys Catholicism and its offspring denominationalism. These two false views of Christianity can only trace their histories back a number of centuries. In contrast, the Lord's church can trace its history all the way back to the eternal mind of the Divine Creator! "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: It is high, I cannot attain it" (Psa. 139:6).

IT WAS DIVINELY PRESENTED TO MAN

The manifestation of God's Plan of Salvation was not left to the discretion of mere mortals. "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). Again:

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come unto you, searching

what or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into: (II Pet. 1:10-12).

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation (origin), for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved (directed, guided) by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet.1:20-21).

Maybe the most profound of all attestations concerning Jehovah's eternal intellect being manifested to man is recorded in Daniel 2:19-22, 27-29, 44.

Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him... Daniel answered in the presence of the king and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. "But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days... And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Daniel revealed five characteristics exclusive to the then promised kingdom: (1) It was to be of Divine origin; (2) it was to come into existence at God's appointed time; (3) it was to be unconquerable; (4) its Sovereignty, Lordship was never to change, (5) it was to consume all kingdoms.

Daniel even named the three world powers that were to precede the fourth kingdom. Babylon, of course, was the first (Dan. 2:37); the Medo-Persian Kingdom was second (Dan.

5:24-30); the Grecian Kingdom was third (Dan. 8:1-21). The stage was set; the time line was given. Deuteronomy 18:20-22 would prove Daniel to be either a prophet of God or of the Devil. As Daniel had so accurately predicted, Jesus arrived according to Jehovah's script. "When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born (made, KJV) of a woman, born under the law" (Gal. 4:4). Jesus was born during reign of the Roman Empire (Luke 2:1; 3:1).

Isaiah also received Divine revelation pertaining to the new temple/house Jehovah promised to establish:

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths" For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:1-3).

All needed preparations were completed. The bright and morning Star, the central Figure of the prophecy was revealed — King Jesus! His message: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (is near)" (Matt. 4:17).

The Chief Prophet introduced yet another aspect of the coming kingdom. He referred to it as the *ekklesia* or church. For He pronounced, "And on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). The term *ekklesia* was not foreign to those of Jesus' day; however, it was to receive a meaning far superior than previously known.

This group of called-out individuals would comprise of the most important institution ever known to mankind.

Jesus, through His eternal wisdom, used the terms "church" and "kingdom" interchangeably (Matt. 16:18-19). He also gave the identical entrance requirements for the kingdom and church (Mark 16; 15-16; John 3: 3-5).

IT WAS ESTABLISHED AT THE PRESCRIBED TIME

The prophets Isaiah, Daniel, Joel and Micah foretold the kingdom/house of God's being established in the "last" or "latter" days (Isa. 2:1-2; Dan. 2:28-45, 7:13-14; Joel 2:28-32; Mic. 4:1-2). Acts chapter two confirms all the aforementioned prophecies. Again, take note of Hebrews 1:1-2. Also, concerning Jesus: "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Pet. 1:20). Samuel and David's prophecies were also fulfilled on that great day of Pentecost (II Sam.7: 12-17; Psa. 132:11; Acts 2:29-35). Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to affirm Christ as the King in the present tense, not future tense as Premillennialist would have us to believe; consider the undeniable affirmation rendered: "Then comes the end (not beginning), He delivers (not establishes) the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end (no thousand year reign considered) to all rule and authority and power (I Cor. 15:24). How can one escape Jesus' bold declaration: "All power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt.28:18)? The Lord did not say, "I will be getting all power." How terribly tragic it is to see some apostates among us extend the right of fellowship to those who deny the existence of Christ's Kingship and kingdom!

IT WAS FOUNDED AT THE RIGHT PLACE

In their respective prophecies, both Isaiah and Micah stated: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3; Mic. 4:2). Zion was a very special place for the faithful under the Old Covenant. Consider its significance:

Physical Zion was the steep hill in the southeastern section of Jerusalem on which David had built his fortress and on which Solomon later built the temple. It became a symbol of an impregnable stronghold against enemies and the dwelling place of God among His people. The word Zion came to be used in prophecy to refer to the spiritual Zion to come, that is, the dwelling place of God among His redeemed people where they find security and peace. ²

Jerusalem was where the apostles were commanded to wait for the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8). Jerusalem was chosen by Jehovah because: (1) it was where God placed His name (Deu. 12:1-11, I Kgs. 11:13); (2) it was where the ark of God resided (I Chr. 15:1-3); (3) it was where the house of the Lord was located (II Chr. 3:1), (4) it was the place where worship occurred (Exd. 23:14-17; Luke 2:41-50; John 4:20-24; Acts 8:26-27).

"Law" refers to instruction or teaching. This is a lucid reference to the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13). It is also known as the Apostles' Doctrine (Acts 2:42). Jesus refers to the New Law as the incorruptible Seed (Luke 8:11; I Pet. 1:22-25). The Father, Son and Holy Spirit to establish the unconquerable kingdom used the incorruptible Seed.

According to Acts 2:47 the church was now a reality. God's wonderful plan to reconcile fallen man to Himself was culminated via the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, the Gospel delivered and the church established (Luke 24:44-49; Mark 16:15-16).

On that great day of Pentecost, with estimated millions in attendance, the message of

God, or first Gospel sermon, was preached. The result: "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:41-47).

IT IS SINGULAR IN NATURE

The main contention of faithful members of the church of Christ is the undeniable fact that the Lord's church is **singular** in nature. The prophecies relative to this truth say so. "The Lord's house", not houses is the wording of Isaiah 2:2. Further, "all nations (plural) shall flow to it (singular) (Isa. 2:3). Additionally, "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set a kingdom (singular)" (Dan. 2:44). "Repent for the kingdom (singular) is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). "And on this rock **I** (first person singular subjective) will build **my** (singular possessive, denoting sole ownership) church (singular)" (Matt. 16:18). Also, "And the Lord added to **the** church (note very carefully; the passage does not say "a", but the church) daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

The above verses leave absolutely **no room** for Catholicism, denominationalism, Mormonism, Adventism, Islam, "Jehovah Witnesses" or any other man-made institution.

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock; among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd **the** church of God which He purchased with His own blood " (Acts 20:28). The very message of this verse truly is beyond human comprehension. Deity shed His pure, precious, perfect blood to purchase His church (I Pet. 1:18-19). "Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee; how great Thou art; how great Thou art!"

The evidence continues to mount against Catholicism, denominationalism, etc., and apostate brethren: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed (transferred, KJV) us into **the** kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13).

Hell is awaiting all those who will have us to believe the Savior is an adulterer. The Lord's love for the Truth is expressed in Philippians 2:5-8. For the Father's pleasure pertaining to Christ's unswerving obedience is affectionately stated, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matt. 17:5). Additional evidence of the inseparable bond between the Holy Father and Son is expressed by Jesus Himself: "That they all may be one, as You Father are in Me and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21). The Father and Son are **perfectly united** when it comes to doctrine.

Jesus restated God's original law as it relates to marriage, divorce and re-marriage (Matt. 19:1-9). How profound is the eternal declaration, "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate!" Christ and the church are joined together by God (Eph. 5:22-32). Denominationalism, Catholicism, etc., if they were of God, would make Jesus a polygamist/adulterer. A careful study of the Scriptures would reveal that only **one** church possesses the identification marks which qualifies it to be the bride of Christ, the church of Christ, the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). Woe unto those who promote the "church of your choice" damnable doctrine! Such indicts Jesus as violating His own doctrine, thus disqualifying Him from being Savior and Lord (Acts 2:36).

Only **one** church was mentioned in prophecy. Only **one** church is revealed in the New Testament. Only **one** church was purchased with Jesus' precious blood. Only **one** church qualifies to be the body and bride of Christ. Only **one** church is God's kingdom on earth. Only **one** church is where God adds those who are being saved. Only **one** church is the pillar and

ground of the Truth (I Tim. 3:15). Only **one** church deserves to wear the Lord's name. "Greet one another with a holy kiss, the churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16).

As it pertains to the church, Christ is the Architect (Matt:16:18-19), Provider of the blue print (Rom. 6:17-18), Source of the material (Luke 8:11), Purchaser (Acts 20:28), King/Lord (Acts 2:29-36), Savior (Acts 4:11-12), Redeemer (I Pet. 1:18-20), Groom (Eph. 5:22-23), and Chief Shepherd (I Pet. 5:4). "To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever, and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

The infallible principle of a seed producing only after its kind is taught us via Genesis 1:11-12. It is beautifully portrayed in Second Kings twenty- second and twenty third- chapters. Alexander Campbell and others of his day used this same principle. Faithful servants of Christ must continue to travel down the same path.

ADDENDUM

As this author was writing his manuscript, the Central Church of Christ, Macon, Georgia, was involved in a very heated, internal battle. This battle escalated to the point of the elders dismissing the preacher. Sadly, the preacher was allowed to preach his "new" found beliefs for years with very little resistance from the "leadership." His "new" beliefs were right from the pages of the Community Church movement's blueprint, *The Purpose Driven Church*. He was also promoting the likes of false teachers Max Lucado and Mike Cope. Many of the faithful left Central, much to the dismay of the "shepherds," who promised, "We guarantee you, brethren, we will deal with this matter very quickly." Others stayed behind to fight the error that was being promoted.

Upon his being dismissed, the preacher secured the services of a lawyer, who is also a denominational preacher. He, the dismissed preacher, called for an emergency meeting of the membership under the pretense that it was the elders doing. He then asked the members to sign a petition in favor of his remaining employed as the located evangelist because he was **unfairly** dismissed. His lawyer informed him that the elders' had violated the church's by-laws. He contended that he was hired by a "majority" vote of the membership. His employment was indefinite in nature. He has demanded, via the legal system, a vote by the membership concerning his employment status. Hopefully, the leadership will not cave in to this denominational form of church leadership.

The night of the meeting, one of preacher's supporters, a "brother" called one of the local news stations to report an alleged case of sexual molestation. The news crew showed up, but was informed by one of the good brothers that no such incidence had occurred. Also, one of the preacher's supporters brought along two very large men for "muscle" in case the preacher

needed "rescuing." The meeting occurred on a Tuesday. Later that night, the dismissed preacher had the locks on all the doors of the church building changed, along with changing the alarm system security code.

A few days later the elders and some of the other faithful, mature brothers were served with a restraining order, thus prohibiting them from coming onto the church property. The dismissed preacher filed the order claiming one of the elders threatened his life. The order was effective the first Lord's Day following the apostate brother's dismissal. Sadly, at least in this brother's eyes, none of those mentioned in the restraining order assembled with the saints at Central on the Lord's Day in question. This preacher pleaded with the brothers to honor God instead of man; all concluded that the law had spoken concerning the matter. Additionally, two brothers showed up to the assembly with their **GUNS** on their waist to protect the dismissed preacher. They stood at two of the exits policing the assembly that Lord's Day morning.

Central's "leadership" allowed the apostate brother to teach the Pentecostal view of the Holy Spirit, to promote "testifying," to promote handclapping, to teach tithing as a New Testament requirement, to utilize a "praise" team, to participate in the now defunct Jubilee, to fellowship denominations, to promote and use denominational based materials for class studies, to have a special parking place for him and his wife, etc. The apostate brother began to push for women to be used in various capacities in the mixed assembly. He was allowed to teach that 1Timothy 2:8-15 is restricted only to husbands and wives, not male and females. This, this author supposes, was the "straw that broke the camel's back." The leadership had, as it were "enough."

On the very day he had the leading brethren barred from the premises, a notification appeared in the local news paper legal section indicating that the apostate brother had filed a

petition with the state to begin the Charise Community Church, with his home address as the head quarters. He and some of his denominational preacher friends decided to join forces in this matter.

At the present time, the Central church is very fragmented. Some members are confused; others are angry; still, the majority feels betrayed. This preacher tried on many occasions to warn the leadership of the apostate brother's intention, but they did not heed his warning.

The congregation and the dismissed preacher are now engaged in a legal battle for the property the church owns.

Those who sometimes choose to ignore the warning signs of apostasy may see the name "church of Christ" replaced on the marquee.

This author has a very keen interest in the happenings at the Central congregation. Central is the former Plant Street congregation, the congregation where this preacher was added to the body of Christ. It was Plant Street who gave him his vision of world evangelism; it was Plant Street who supported the author when he attended the Memphis School of Preaching. To see it and the former minister drift so far away from the Lord's precious Truth hurts this preacher very deeply.

END NOTES

¹ All quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted. ² Homer Hailey, *A Commentary On Isaiah*, (Religious Supply, Inc., 1992), p.47. ³ Stuart K. Hine, *How Great Thou Art*, S.K. Hine, 1953.

LOOKING AT LIBERALISM

HAND CLAPPING IN WORSHIP

By Keith Olbricht

INTRODUCTION

The Preacher wrote, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The things that he lists in the verses that follow vividly illustrate that *change* is a frequent part of life. It has frequently been said that the more things change the more they stay the same; but it would appear to be just as true that the more man changes things, the more man desires things to be changed. Once change has begun, it is hard to stem the tide. The timely topic of this series of lectures deals with liberalism, a loosing where God has not loosed, i.e., a change from that which God has established.

The specific topic being addressed in this chapter is hand clapping in worship. This act has crept into acceptance in many places, taking many different forms. Some of these forms include a rhythmic clapping during the song service, applause following baptisms, and the applause of approval for a song leader, or a group of singers in the worship, or for the speaker of the hour.

It is crucial that a proper understanding of the worship that God desires be attained. Time and space will not permit an exhaustive study of this topic, but allow a few things to be noted. First, notice that God *desires* that worship be offered to Him. God told the children of Israel, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and furthermore, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God..." (Exodus 20:3, 5). Second, God regulates how worship is to be offered to Him. Jesus proclaimed to the Samaritan woman: "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"

(John 4:24). By use of the imperative "must," Jesus showed the importance of honoring the desires of the Almighty. These two basic facts illustrate that there is a need for recognizing and abiding by the authority, which God has established.

THE PLACE OF HAND CLAPPING IN SOCIETY

Merriam-Webster Online defines clap as: "(1) to strike (as two flat hard surfaces) together so as to produce a sharp percussive noise; (2) to strike (the hands) together repeatedly usually in applause." Both of these definitions are extremely relevant and important to this study. The world recognizes that clapping is something done for a specific purpose. The first use of the word, making a sharp percussive noise, could be done to gain the attention of someone, perhaps to warn them of danger, but this action is most frequently performed as an accompaniment to keep time with music. The second usage, applauding, is done "to express approval of." These constitute the two basic purposes of clapping the hands together.

THE PLACE OF HAND CLAPPING IN THE SCRIPTURES

The word "clap" (and its derivatives "clapped" and "clappeth") occurs nine times in the King James Version of the Bible (II Kings 11:12; Job 27:23; 34:37; Psalm 47:1; 98:8; Isaiah 55:12; Lamentations 2:15; Ezekiel 25:6; Nahum 3:19). If one should seek New Testament authority for such a practice today, one would be greatly disappointed, for all of these occurrences are in the Old Testament. Many today make the feeble attempt to justify the use of a mechanical instrument of music based upon its usage under the Law of Moses. Paul pointed out to the churches of Galatia in Galatians 5:3 that if one desired to cling to a single facet of the old law, circumcision, he was constrained to keep the old law in its entirety! Does that apply to

circumcision only? There were those in the days of the apostle Paul who sought to bind circumcision upon the Gentile Christians as a necessary part of their salvation. This certainly seemed a logical thing to accept, since circumcision was important under the Law of Moses, the primary sign of the covenant between God and His people. Yet Paul illustrates to them the *fullness* with which the old law was done away (cf. Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14). The Old Law was put away; therefore the authority of the Old Law expired as well. No longer possessing authority, it is impossible for the Law of Moses to be used by man on this side of the cross of Calvary as a justification for the use of practices it contained.

Furthermore, even if it were possible to successfully justify a practice based upon its Old Testament usage, a study of the context of the above mentioned passages clearly shows that not one of the instances of clapping in Scripture was related to worship!⁴ There exists within the Bible not a single *command* to clap the hands nor *example* showing the clapping of hands in worship to God. What place does hand clapping have within the Scriptures? Simply stated none. Still, the practice has gained acceptance in many quarters of the Lord's body.

THE PLACE OF HAND CLAPPING IN WORSHIP - "AMEN" Vs APPLAUSE

It was once common practice for brethren to say "amen" more often than at the close of a prayer. Sadly, many young people today treat the word as if it means "the end." The word, however, played a significant role in Scripture, had a certain significance to the early church, and should hold great significance to the church of the current generation. Keeping in mind that dictionaries merely provide current usage of words, it is no wonder that its meaning to the saints has changed today. Merriam-Webster Online defines "amen" as follows: "used to express solemn ratification (as of an expression of faith) or hearty approval (as of an assertion)." The

later definition (modern usage) is closely related to the definition of applause (to express approval of).

Biblical usage, however, varies from the modern. Mounce's *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* gives the following: "in truth, most certainly; so be it." Wilson similarly defines the usage within the Old Testament: "to be true, let it be granted, let it be done, and unalterably confirmed." The word was used, therefore, to show the binding certainty and truth of that which had been spoken. Contrary to applause, which is primarily utilized to show pleasure, the things to which "amen" is spoken do not of necessity have to be pleasurable. In Deuteronomy 27:11-26, Moses gave the directive for the reading of the curses from Mt. Ebal. Twelve curses were to be read, and to each of these, all of the people were to say, "Amen." Certainly, no one today would desire to respond to a curse with the clapping of hands! Many today seek to simply replace the use of the term "amen" with applause, but this is not possible.

Within the Lord's church today, the instance in which applause has taken the place of "amen" most often is following baptisms. Doubtlessly, this is a joyous occasion. Without fail, the new Christian ought to be encouraged and edified. Is applause, however, the correct response? To applaud is to express our approval. (Does someone need *man's* approval to become a Christian? Cf. Acts 2:47.) Furthermore, who are we applauding, the person or the action? If the person, then they have been elevated to the status of a performer; if the action, it has been changed to a performance. Baptism, though, is not a performance. It is symbolic of the cross of Calvary, where Christ died for our sins (Romans 6:3-4). The idea of clapping while Jesus hung on the cross is absurd and preposterous! To clap when one follows that type should be viewed in the same manner.¹⁰

THE PLACE OF HAND CLAPPING IN WORSHIP – APPLAUDING IN WORSHIP

It is only natural for mortal man to want to experience and feel what is taking place, since man is so dependent upon the empirical senses: touch, taste, feel, sight, and sound. Perhaps this is why religion in general has taken such a sharp turn toward becoming an emotional phenomenon within the past few decades. Of course excitement is enjoyable! Of course a warm and emotional feeling is pleasurable! Hand clapping is a natural way of expressing that.¹¹

When the President addresses a crowd and makes a statement that inspires patriotism, the crowd will respond by applauding. When speakers at graduations proclaim their pride in the graduating class, the class will respond with applause. When the chairman of stockholders meeting projects great expectations for the coming year, that announcement will be met with applause. Why? The one who is delivering the message is being praised. Likewise, when a preacher is met with applause at a particular point in his sermon, he is the one who is being given the honor, not God.¹² Focus is being placed less on *what* is being said than *how* it was said.

THE PLACE OF HAND CLAPPING IN WORSHIP – WITH OUR SINGING

Another contemporary fad that has gained in popularity is the addition of hand clapping during the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the Lord (as well as other sounds not directly produced with a mechanical instrument of music). Those advocating such additions proudly proclaim that a mechanical instrument of music is *not* being used, and it must, therefore, be acceptable. The Bible, however, does not justify this line of reasoning by saying, "Do not use a mechanical instrument of music in your worship." Rather than tell what *cannot* be done in worship, God's Word directs what *can* be done. Singing, speaking to yourselves, teaching, and

admonishing is what *can*, *should*, and *must* be done (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Emotionalism and unbiblical reasoning cannot take the place of doing "...*all in the name of the Lord Jesus*..." (Colossians 3:17). Hand clapping, "doo whap," and "bop baa dow" are without New Testament authority.

CONCLUSION

Just in the past few months, this author has witnessed a song leader, who when directing singing, could not refrain from swaying, snapping his fingers, waving his arms in the air, and clapping his hands. When asked about his behavior before the congregation, he responded by saying, "I just can't help it. When I sing, this is what it does to me." Yet this same man when sitting amongst the congregation while someone else is leading the song service will invariably appear more asleep than awake. Why is this mentioned? This is simply a reminder that the emotionalism and performance-mindedness of current society cannot be allowed to remove us from the purpose and object of worship: God. The trend of hand clapping in any aspect of worship shifts the emphasis from spiritual to temporal, and causes the creature to be worshipped more than the Creator (Romans 1:24).

END NOTES

- ¹ All Scripture references will be from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.
- ² Internet, Merriam-Webster Online, Http://www.m w.com/dictionary.htm.
- ³ Internet, Merriam-Webster Online, Http://www.m w.com/dictionary.htm.
- ⁴ Glenn Colley, "Clapping, Shouting, Dancing in Worship," God Hath Spoken, Affirming Truth and Reproving Error, 1999 Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship. Edited by Curtis A. Cates, p. 594.
- ⁵ Internet, Merriam-Webster Online, Http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm.
- ⁶ William D. Mounce, The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), p. 65.
- ⁷ William Wilson, Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), p. 13.
- ⁸ Dave Miller, Piloting the Strait, (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1996), p. 236.
- ⁹ Miller, p. 237.
- ¹⁰ Colley, p. 595.
- ¹¹ Miller, p. 237.
- ¹² Colley, p. 595.

LOOKING AT LIBERALISM

PROMISE KEEPERS

By Keith Dixon

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for allowing me to speak on this lectureship program again this year. Brother Nelson is doing a wonderful work and I for one appreciate all he has done and is doing for the cause of Christ in this area. The congregation here is also to be commended on the wonderful job it does in supporting and hosting this lectureship each year. It takes a lot of work to organize and host this event and we thank you for the good work. Last years theme was a very timely theme and one that needed to be heard. This years theme is also timely. This message needs to be proclaimed throughout the brotherhood, to bring Christians back to the "Book".

There is a group of men trying to "help" men to become better husbands and fathers. This group had its beginning in the early 1990's. I thought the movement had about died out, but while preparing this manuscript I received a brochure in the mail from the group called Promise Keepers. So apparently they are not dead (according to some they are on the way down).

The theme for the 2003 convention is slated to be "Come Near To Me." Looking at the brochure one will find Max Lucado as one of the speakers. "Max Lucado is the Senior Pastor of the Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio." This is the same man, who has said, "But if I should leave Oak Hills, I couldn't see myself going to another Church of Christ. I would go anywhere the Lord sends me. I think I would make a good Baptist."

The home is the foundation of any society. As the home goes so goes that society. If the home begins to break down so does that society. So who can complain about a group of men trying to get men to make themselves better husbands and fathers? Who could be against a group

of men trying to help other men to be all that they ought to be as husbands and fathers? We have no training schools for these jobs. Here we have someone trying to do some training for husbands and fathers. What could be so terrible about this group? These are questions that must be answered.

In all things spiritual we have a guidebook called the Bible. If this group is going to interject spiritual ideas into their training program then we heav the right and the obligation to "try the spirits whether they are of God" (I John 4:1). We have the right and the obligation to see if they are "speaking as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:11). We have the right and the obligation to see if they are "preaching the word" (II Timothy 4:2). We have the right to see if they are "turning unto fables" and scratching the ears of some (II Timothy 4:3,4). We need to make sure that what we are hearing will take us, not down the broad way to hell, but to the strait gate (Matthew 7:13-14) that leads to Him who is preparing us a place (John 14:1-3). We are told to "beware of false prophets which come to us in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). We are told that we can know these individuals "by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16-20). Thus we need to be as the Bereains who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). We are to "study to show ourselves approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). Thus with these thoughts in mind, let us see what this group is about.

THE PROMISES

This group has seven promises that one is to keep.⁴ As listed in their brochure on page twelve the promises are:

- A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit
- 2. A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.
- 3. A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.
- 4. A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.
- 5. A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor and by actively giving his time and resources.
- A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.
- 7. A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

PROBLEMS WITH PROMISE KEEPERS

I want us to look at seven problems that I have found with this group. 1) They have a wrong concept of the Holy Spirit, 2) they have a wrong concept of the church, 3) they have a wrong concept of salvation, 4) they have a wrong concept of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, 5) they have a wrong concept of fellowship, 6) they have a wrong concept of unity, and 7) they have a wrong concept of worship.

Now let us start with our first point, they have a wrong concept of the Holy Spirit. Over and over again in their literature this is seen. Mr. James Ryle who is on the board of directors of Promise Keepers and is Bill McCartney's [The founder of Promise Keepers] "pastor" has claimed, "dreams visions and prophetic words from God with staggering frequency and accuracy." You see Mr. McCartney depends upon his, "pastor to help define the word of God for me. I haven't been to seminary. I haven't studied... I need to stay under constant monitoring and tutelage."

Even in the first Promise of the Promise Keepers we find this misconception of the Holy Spirit. "Promise #1 A man and His God: A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit."⁷ What is meant by "in the power of the Holy Spirit?" Is this talking about the Holy Spirit working directly upon the hearts of men and that one needs something special from the Holy Spirit to understand the Bible? I think so in both cases. Mr. Cammenga listened to some tapes of the 1995 meeting in the Pontiac Silverdome and came to this conclusion; "There was an obvious emotionalism and intentional stirring up of the emotions of the audience. There were spontaneous shouts and arm waving, alleged smitings of the Holy Spirit". 8 Also Mr. Ryle believe in "signs and wonders" and claims "that God continues to give him special revelation for the body of Christ"9. If this is the case and I don't believe it for one moment, then why do we have the Bible and is it our sole source of authority in matters of religion? Either the Bible means what it says or it doesn't. I think and believe that the Bible does mean what it says. Listen to what Peter said by revelation about what we have today, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3). I will stick with Peter.

Further, 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 will also affirm that we have no need for any other revelation today or for miracles. Knowledge has not ceased today, but we do not obtain knowledge miraculously today, we must study! Tongues or languages have not ceased today. There are many that speak different languages. But how do we know these different languages? One must study or be taught them. We do not obtain this ability to speak a different language today the same as the apostles or those on whom they laid their hands and gave this gift to. This is not the only place that they have a misconception of the Holy Spirit about either.

In the work of converting the sinner and sustaining the believer the Promise Keepers movement has a problem with the Holy Spirit. "They believe that the Holy Spirit operates directly and miraculously upon both believer and unbelievers." The Holy Spirit does work but only through the Word of God in convicting and converting the sinner (Rom. 10:13-17; 8:14; Acts 2:37; Eph. 6:17). This needs to be understood and preached about more from our pulpits for I fear that many preacher and members do not understand this themselves.

The Promise Keepers also have a misconception of the church. Mr. Cammenga understands this point quite well. His criticism #3 reads, "Promise Keepers is a para - church organization that usurps the prerogatives that God has given to the church." If this man can understand this why can't our brethren? [Cammenga is of the Reformed Church] Maybe we have not preached on the problems of the Missionary Societies. The Promise Keepers organization is taking the place of the church. It is doing the work of the church. This can be seen in promise number seven. It says, "A promise keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)." Ephesians 3:10 says, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and power in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (emphasis mine KED). Then

in chapter 4:12 Paul, by inspiration says, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" and giving the church three areas of responsibility. One of those areas is the work of the ministry, that is going into the entire world and preaching the Gospel to it. Promise Keepers has no need in doing the work of the Church!

Another misconception of the Promise Keepers is that of the plan of salvation. When a person asks the question, "What must I do to be saved" what will they tell that individual? Their response is "We are not left in the dark we are told plainly. First one must admit your spiritual need. Secondly, Repent. Thirdly, believe. Then Receive through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and live. Here is the prayer. "Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I believe you died for my sins and then rose from the grave. Right now, I turn from my sins and open the door of my heart and life. I receive you as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank you for saving me, Amen." 12 Several things are wrong here. One, how can you admit your spiritual need unless you know something about Christ and believe that He is the one you need? Secondly, how can one repent unless he believes? One must learn of and believe in Christ before he will know that he is in error and the need to repent. Then where in the Bible is a person ever told to pray for salvation? When the question is asked, "What must I do to be saved" in the New Testament, where are they ever told to pray? I can find that they are told to be baptized, but never to pray. Then look closely at that prayer, did you notice how they ended that prayer? It was just, "Amen." That is not how we are told to ask for things in the New Testament. We are told to ask in Jesus name (John 14:13-14). Promise Keepers must not believe that it is important to do spiritual things according to what God desires.

Another concept they have wrong is the idea of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Mr. Cammenga is again right on target of his condemnation of this group. Listen to his comments

about them, "... Promise Keepers condone unbiblical divorce and remarriage. Multitudes of men at the Promise Keepers conferences are encouraged to go home and live faithfully with their wives. But for many of these men, the wife they are encouraged to go home to and live faithfully with is their second or third wife. They are not called to break-off the unbiblical union and in repentance return to their original spouse. Instead their adultery is countenanced. Where is the promise keeping here?"

Oh that some of my brethren could understand the Bible as well as this man. Repentance needs to be understood. If one converted a homosexual can he/she stay in that relationship after baptism? If a man has a woman that he cannot be married to before he is converted and baptized what makes anyone think that he can still have her after baptism. Has he truly repented? John told Herod that it was unlawful for him to have the woman he was married to (Matthew 14:4). He lost his head over it, some brethren are afraid of, not losing their head, but their jobs, for they would never tell anyone that they have to break up a marriage to be right with God.

The Promise Keepers also have a wrong concept of fellowship. Ephesians 5:11 says, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Promise #6 says, "A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity." That means if I am going to be a good Promise Keeper, I must fellowship all kinds of people. Those who teach false doctrine, I must fellowship with if I am going to be a good Promise Keeper (2 John 9-11). Those who are fornicators they want me to fellowship with (see above section). Those who are idolaters the Promise Keepers want a person to fellowship with. The Bible condemns any fellowship with these kinds of persons. Paul said so, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or

extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such an one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:9-11). This also has to do with their false concept of unity too. What they are asking for is union not unity. Jesus prayed for unity in John 17:20-21. Listen to Him, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me." The Promise Keepers want us to unite no matter what one believes; the Bible does not allow for that (2 John 9-11; Jude 3; Galatians 1:6-9). What these people are asking for is to put away what we believe and accept anything and everybody. The Bible won't allow that therefore neither can I.

The last concept that I want to notice wrong with the Promise Keepers is the idea of worship. They will use the instrument of music in worship to God. If I am going to sing, psalms, hymns or spiritual songs to God they must be in accordance with His word. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find that the instrument was used in the worship service to God. If God has stated how He wants us to worship Him, I have no right to change that worship. It is God's worship and I must worship Him as He as demanded. John 4:24 tells us to worship God according to truth. God's Word "is truth" (John 17:17). If there is no authority for the instrument of music, then I have no right to use them.

CONCLUSION

There are many more things that could be said about this group but this is enough to show that we need to be on guard. We should not have anything to do with this group. Some one

might say that they are doing a good work, but that does not mean we can be a part of this group just because they do some good things? We can never do evil that good may come of it (Romans 3:8). If we want to be better husbands and fathers then let us do that by studying and applying God's word to our hearts and lives. It will take time and effort, but the results will be worth it. If we would spend as much time studying God's word as some doing going to the events of the Promise Keepers they could be better husbands and fathers. The time would be better spent as well.

Thank you again for allowing me to be a part of this program.

END NOTES

- ¹ The Promise Keepers Pastor & Leadership Conference, February 18-20, 2003 Phoenix, Arizona
- ² Ibid. p.5
- ³ Toby Druin, "Max Lucado: King's author" *Baptist Standard*, August 6, 2001, http://wwwbaptiststandard.com/2001/8_6/pages/lucado.
- ⁴ Ibid. p.12
- ⁵ B. J. Clark, A Closer Look At Promise Keepers, Sain Publications, 1998
- ⁶ Ibid. p.14
- ⁷ Ronald Cammenga, "Promise Keepers: What Should Be Our Response? http://www.prca.org/articles/artcle 6.html
- ⁸ Ibid. Criticism#4
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰Clark, A Closer Look At Promise Keepers, p.26
- ¹¹Cammenga, Promise Keepers: What Should Be Our Response?, p.4
- ¹²Clark, A Closer Look At Promise Keepers, p.45
- ¹³Cammenga, Promise Keepers: What Should Be Our Response? p. 10
- ¹⁴The Promise Keepers Pastor & Leadership Conference, February 18-20, 2003 Phoenix, Arizona, p. 12

LOOKING AT LIBERALISM

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

By Alan Wright

INTRODUCTION

Do you have the Holy Spirit in your life? Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) And Paul taught, "... if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9) If the Holy Spirit is not in your life, then you cannot belong to Jesus or enter into the kingdom. Surely then each of us will want the Holy Spirit in our lives.

But how can we know that the Holy Spirit is in our life? With so much hanging on the answer, we certainly do not want to be mistaken in this matter.

Some claim that they know the Spirit is with them by the warm feeling in their hearts. As important as strong feelings are in our spiritual lives, FEELINGS CAN DECEIVE US. Many every day are rushed to hospitals, on the verge of death from heart attack or stroke, when only moments before they were feeling fine. The newlywed who is head over heels in love with his new bride may unexpectedly find himself in divorce court. In the book of Genesis, we read of the treachery of Joseph's brothers, as they sold him into slavery and carried his coat, stained in the blood of a young goat, to their father. The Scripture tells us that when Jacob saw his son's coat, he concluded that some beast had killed him. We then read, "And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days." (Genesis 37:34) When his family tried to comfort him, he refused, saying, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." (vs. 35) Now we know in reading this

passage that Joseph was alive and well in Egypt. Yet Jacob's grief was real, just as if his son were truly dead. Indeed, our feelings can be wrong.

Others point to specific examples of something they were inexplicably led to do, which brought them good fortune. Certainly we should be grateful for God's providence in our lives, but INNER LEADINGS CAN DECEIVE US. How many times have we heard the news report about some murderer who claims that a voice from God told him to commit his terrible crimes. Actually these inner leadings can be grouped into two categories. First, there are instincts, or "gut feelings," which come from subconscious thought based on previous experiences. Such instincts certainly can be very helpful at times. But they can also let us down. Just ask the gambler who bets all his money based on that gut feeling that the dice would land on a certain combination. For every one who wins at such a bet, there are thousands more who lose. Second, there is the inner conviction of conscience, which tells us that certain actions are either right or wrong. Although our conscience is a valuable Godgiven gift, it is important to realize that the conscience can be mistrained. Consider the example of Saul of Tarsus, later known as the apostle Paul. Though he had spent much effort in times past persecuting and killing Christians, he was able to say, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23:1) Truly then inner leadings, whether from instinct or from conscience, can be very wrong.

Still others believe that they have the Spirit because of the sense of excitement in their worship, including some who jump and shout and claim to speak in tongues. Again, we ought to be enthusiastic and excited about worshipping God, but EMOTIONAL FERVOR CAN DECEIVE US. One of the most exciting worship services in the Scriptures is described in I Kings 18:20-40. In this chapter, we read of those who leaped and shouted and

prophesied from early morning until well in the evening. Yet when the day was done, it was the simple prayer of Elijah that was heard by God, and those excited worshippers of Baal were all destroyed. Nor is such misdirected emotionalism confined to idol worshippers. Jesus himself said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:22,23) High emotions and exciting worship are no certain guarantee that we have the Spirit of God with us.

How then can we know that we have the Holy Spirit in our lives? In order to help answer this question, let us begin by looking at the reasons Jesus sent the Holy Spirit among his people in the early days of the church.

THE HOLY SPIRIT SENT TO THE APOSTLES

In the book of John, we read of the evening Jesus spent with his disciples on the night he was betrayed. As Jesus spoke to these men of his impending death, he emphasized that they ought not to be disheartened. One reason that he gave was the coming of the Comforter, which he identified as the Holy Ghost. Notice the following verses:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26)

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:" (John 15:26)

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:" (John 16:8)

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13)

From these four verses we learn of six different roles that the Holy Spirit would play in the lives of the apostles. He would serve (1) as TEACHER: "he shall teach you all things," (2) as HISTORIAN: "he shall...bring all things to your remembrance, (3) as WITNESS: "he shall testify of me," (4) as PROSECUTOR: "he will reprove the world," (5) as GUIDE: "he will guide you into all truth," and (6) as PROPHET: "he will shew you things to come."

Who were these men to whom such promises were made? The apostles were men specially selected by Jesus for a mission. They were the chosen instruments through which Jesus would send out his gospel into the world. Jesus prayed to God in their behalf, and then said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word:" (John 17:20) Notice that it was through the word, or preaching, done by the apostles that others would come to believe. Since that gospel is God's power to save, (rf. Romans 1:16), this placed an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of these men. Indeed, in giving them the great commission, Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15,16) The salvation of souls depended on the work that these men were to do.

With so much hanging on the proclamation of these chosen men, it was vital that they not be left to depend on their own insights and recollections. This was the reason that Jesus promised that they would receive the empowering of the Holy Spirit. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Ten days later, this promise was kept. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4) Thus began the great work of the apostles in carrying the message of the gospel to the lost of all nations.

One effect of the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles was that he "gave them utterance." This simply means that the words used by Peter and the others were not their own, but were given them by the Spirit. Paul taught, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (I Cor. 2:12,13) Thus we can rest assured that the very words used in the teachings of the apostles were given in direct communication from the Spirit of God, and are the precise words that God would have us to hear.

Because this message, which the apostles proclaimed through the power of the Holy Spirit, was so vitally important, they were given the power to perform supernatural acts known variously as miracles, signs, or wonders. These miracles served to gain the attention of an audience, and demonstrate that the message proclaimed was from God. We read of the message of salvation "...which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebrews 2:3,4) And after recording Jesus' great commission to his apostles, Mark writes, "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." (Mark 16:20) From these texts we learn that the miracles performed by the apostles served the purpose of confirming their message, establishing that they were in fact inspired of God.

So we see that the Holy Spirit was sent to the apostles to reveal and confirm the truths of the gospel, so that they might faithfully and fully carry out their mission of proclaiming the good news of salvation to the world.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH

As the apostles carried out their mission, many believed the things they taught, and became obedient to the Lord. Thus the church was planted in various locations. Since the apostles could not personally oversee the work of each new congregation scattered throughout the nations, the Holy Spirit was sent to enable the Christians in each place to carry out the work of the church. Members were empowered with various spiritual gifts, or miraculous abilities. Paul lists these various gifts in one of his letters. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another

faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (I Corinthians 12:7-11)

In continuing his discussion of the spiritual gifts, Paul emphasizes the purpose that these gifts served. He writes, "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church...Let all things be done unto edifying." (I Corinthians 14:12,26) Edifying is the process of building up or strengthening one another. The gifts of the spirit were not to be used for self-indulgent boasting, but for the encouragement and motivation of fellow Christians. Whether prophecy, tongues, healing, or whatever gift a disciple might possess, it was given to help the infant church sustain itself in the days when there was not yet a written word to guide God's people.

THE END OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S SUPERNATURAL WORK

We have learned that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his apostles to reveal and confirm the truth of the gospel that they were to preach. Furthermore, the Spirit provided empowering gifts to first-century churches so that they might be strengthened in their service. These two great works, revealing truth and empowering Christians, have ended. In order to understand this important fact, let us consider what the Bible says regarding each of these activities of the Holy Spirit.

First, let us consider the revealing of truth. Remember the words of Jesus to his apostles: "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13) Put yourself in the place of one of those men sitting there at supper with Jesus. What would

the promise of all truth mean to you? Surely you would have to conclude that you and those with you in the room were going to receive the entire body of truth within your lifetime. It would not be reasonable to believe that there would yet be truth unrevealed many generations after your death. If that were so, then Jesus would have been lying. Consider a simple illustration. Suppose you go to the bank and request a balance. The teller informs you that you have \$100.00 in your account. You say, "I would like to withdraw all of that money." The teller then gives you the \$100.00, and you go on your way. The next day, you return to the bank and ask to withdraw more money. You are informed that there is no more. You have withdrawn it all. Now in the same way, when the apostles received all truth, there was no further truth to be revealed.

This truth which the apostles received was the message of the gospel. Paul says, "as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak." (I Thessalonians 2:4) Contained in that gospel was everything that was needed to save a man from sin and instruct him in righteousness. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (II Timothy 3:16,17)

This gospel, revealed by the Holy Spirit and proclaimed by the apostles, was and is the only hope the world has against the condemnation of sin. Because of this, strong warnings are given not to alter or corrupt the message of the gospel. For instance, Paul writes, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and

would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9) No one, whether he claims to be a preacher or a prophet, an apostle or an angel, has the right to change the message presented by the Holy Spirit to the apostles.

Since the apostles were led into all truth, and since that truth contained in the gospel preaching of those apostles was all-sufficient for salvation and Christian living, and since it was not to be perverted or altered in any way, then anyone today claiming to have a new revelation from God must be either deceived or lying.

But what of the Spirit's work in empowering the church through spiritual gifts? To put it simply, this work is no longer needed. The apostle Paul specifically deals with this matter in his discussion of spiritual gifts referred to earlier. He writes, "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (I Corinthians 13:8-12)

This passage is especially important to our understanding of the cessation of the spiritual gifts. So let us examine it in detail. Paul says in verse 8 that prophecies would fail, tongues would cease, and knowledge would vanish away. In other words, the time was

coming when the spiritual gifts would end. When would that happen? Paul answers, "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." The question is, "That WHAT which is perfect, and that WHAT which is in part?" Some say "that which is perfect" refers to Jesus, the only perfect person to ever live. Plug that into the verse and see how it reads. "When that Jesus which is perfect is come, then that Jesus which is in part shall be done away." That makes no sense. Others suggest that the perfect must refer to heaven, the perfect place. Let's try that. "When that heaven which is perfect is come, then that heaven which is in part shall be done away." Again, we have a meaningless sentence.

What is Paul referring to when he mentions that which is perfect, and that which is in part? We do not need to speculate, for Paul himself tells us what he is talking about. He says in verse 9, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." He is speaking of knowledge and prophecy. Now put that into our expression, and see what results. "When that knowledge which is perfect is come, then that knowledge which is in part shall be done away." "When that prophecy which is perfect is come, then that prophecy which is in part shall be done away." That makes sense! Paul is saying that when God has revealed all of the knowledge and given all of the prophecy, then the spiritual gifts would end. As we have already seen, that was to happen within the lifetime of Jesus' apostles, whom the Holy Spirit would guide into all truth.

In order to emphasize how much better it would be when the revelation was completed, Paul gives a series of "before-and-after" pictures. First, he speaks of childhood versus adulthood. During the first century, the church was in its infancy. Just as a child has limited capacity in his speech and comprehension, so the church was given the revelation of the gospel "in part" through the various spiritual gifts. But as a child becomes a man, he

"puts away childish things." In other words, he learns to speak and think in more complex ways. Likewise the church outgrew the partial revelations and was able to take in the fullness of God's truth. Secondly, he compares dimness to clarity. He says, "Now [with the partial revelations of spiritual gifts] we see through a glass, darkly; but then [when the revelation is complete] face to face." The spiritual gifts provided only a dim view of God and his truth, whereas the completed revelation allows us to see clearly what God would have us to know. Thirdly, he contrasts partial knowledge with complete understanding. "Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." As he has already stated, the revelations received by spiritual gifts were given in part. They met the immediate need, and nothing more. However, with the fullness of the gospel revealed, we may know as we are known. That is, we may see ourselves in the mirror of God's word as thoroughly as God sees us. Those today who insist on the need for spiritual gifts in the church would have us to return to infancy, to dim our vision, and to rely on less than the full knowledge of God.

Since all truth was given to the apostles within their lifetime, and since the spiritual gifts were to end when all had been revealed, then anyone today who claims to possess these supernatural gifts of the Spirit is either deceived or lying.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY

But someone will surely object, saying that if the Holy Spirit is neither revealing truth nor imparting spiritual gifts, then he is doing nothing for us at all today. How can we claim to believe in the Holy Spirit, and preach the importance of having the Spirit in our lives, if we say that he is doing none of those things that he did in the first-century church? The answer is simply that the Spirit does for us exactly what he did for those first Christians, but not in the

same way. In the first century, he worked by supernatural means. Today he works through a natural medium, the message of the gospel.

Remember that the entire purpose of the revelations and the spiritual gifts was to bring the gospel into existence, and nurture the church while that gospel was being revealed. It was never the mission of the Spirit to put on a show with visions and miracles, but rather to work with the apostles and prophets of the church in order to bring the gospel to light.

In order to better appreciate the Spirit's role in our lives today, let us consider some of the things he did in the lives of God's people in the first-century, and then see how those same things are accomplished for us today. What does the Holy Spirit do for us?

- 1. He converts. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) The Holy Spirit is active in bringing about the new birth.
- 2. He saves. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" (Titus 3:5) We could not receive God's mercy without the Holy Spirit.
- 3. He sanctifies. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (I Corinthians 6:11) Through the work of the Spirit, Christians are set apart for God's service.
- 4. He leads. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

 (Romans 8:14) The Spirit guides Christians in their daily lives.
- 5. He indwells. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Corinthians 6:19) The Holy Spirit lives within us.

- 6. He strengthens. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;" (Ephesians 3:16) We may face trials and tribulations because of the Spirit's influence in our lives.
- 7. He comforts. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." (Acts 9:31) When the Christian is discouraged or apprehensive, the Spirit is there to encourage and embolden.

This is of course only a partial listing of the many blessings the Holy Spirit provides. These things were the results of the Spirit's work in the first century, and they are the same things the Spirit does for us today. In the first century, he did these things supernaturally. How does he accomplish this work today?

- 1. He converts by the Bible. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." (Psalm 19:7) The message revealed by God's Spirit has the power to change the hearts of men.
- 2. He saves by the Bible. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21) It is in the Spirit's message of the gospel that the way to salvation is made known.
- 3. He sanctifies by the Bible. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17) As we follow the message of Scripture, we dedicate ourselves in God's service.
- 4. He leads by the Bible. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path...The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

(Psalm 119:105,130) We learn what to do by listening to the Spirit-revealed truths of God's word.

- 5. He indwells by the Bible. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16) We hold the Spirit in our hearts and we commit his teachings to memory.
- 6. He strengthens by the Bible. "Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it;" (Deuteronomy 11:8) As we follow God's laws, we find the strength to go forward.
- 7. He comforts by the Bible. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4) In reading the Scripture, our hearts are made lighter.

This understanding of the Spirit's work is vital to a proper appreciation of his role in our lives. We must realize that it is through the message of the Bible revealed to us by the Holy Spirit that God directs and influences our daily lives. If we fail to allow the Scripture to be our guide, then we are dishonoring all that the Holy Spirit has done. When Stephen preached to a group unwilling to believe the gospel message, he said "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51) We resist the Spirit when we refuse to listen to his message. And from the book of Hebrews we read this warning, "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways." (Hebrews 3:7-10) The Holy Spirit is grieved when we harden our hearts against his teachings. Paul urges, "Quench not the Spirit." (I Thessalonians 5:19) And Isaiah speaks of those who would not yield to God's commands, saying, "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." (Isaiah 63:10)

One of the sternest warnings found in Scripture is in regard to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Jesus warned, "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:" (Mark 3:29) How might one blaspheme the Holy Spirit? Luke records concerning Paul's preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." (Acts 13:45) Notice that when they spoke against what Paul preached, they were guilty of blaspheming. Therefore if we today speak against what the Holy Spirit has taught in the message of the New Testament, we are blaspheming the Spirit. Since the gospel revealed by the Spirit is the only means of forgiveness available to us, then when we reject it, we are indeed in danger of eternal damnation.

CONCLUSION

How can we know that we have the Holy Spirit in our lives? The Holy Spirit is alive and well in the hearts of every child of God who listens to and obeys the message he has given us. To be guided and influenced by the Holy Spirit, we must read the Bible, study its teachings, commit its words to our memory, hold to its promises, and obey its commands.

Do not deceive yourself with false impressions of what the Spirit might want you to do. Instead pick up your Bible and read what he has written for you in black and white. You can be certain the Holy Spirit will never direct anyone to do anything other than what is recorded in the Bible. That which does not originate from the authority of the holy Scriptures is not from the Holy Spirit. Do you have the Holy Spirit in your life? Only if you believe and obey the Bible.

ADDENDUM TO "WORKS OF THE SPIRIT"

Prepared for Richmond Hill Lectures, Oct 2002

The preceding article was developed a few years back from a sermon that I have preached a number of times on this subject. It addresses such doctrinal concerns as are often encountered when teaching people from various denominational backgrounds. However since this lectureship is concerned with doctrinal aberrations within our brotherhood, the editor of this book requested that I provide this addendum, demonstrating that this topic is at issue among our brethren currently.

For a great many years, good and sincere brethren have differed over certain details relating to the Spirit's role in the life of the Christian, especially pertaining to the manner of his indwelling. For the most part, those involved in these discussions have maintained an attitude of respect and humility, and have seen no need to abstain from fellowship with those who may disagree with them. I will certainly not take this occasion to deviate from that honorable tradition.

But in dealing with the denominational doctrines so prevalent in our society, we are often called upon to answer certain fundamental questions regarding the work of the Spirit. Two in particular are confronted repeatedly: "Does the Holy Spirit provide inner promptings and urgings which are designed to guide the Christian in his daily activities?" and "Are supernatural gifts available to Christians today through the Holy Spirit?" We have, by and large, responded that the age of revelation and miracle has passed, that we are fully equipped for all needs today through the written word of God, and that so-called modern revelations and leadings have been

the source of confusion and division. This has been the position I have taken in the preceding article.

There are however some of our brethren today who are answering these questions quite differently. They seem to believe that our brotherhood has been in error in this matter, and that consequently the church of Christ today has suffered from a lack of spiritual development. As illustration of this sort of thinking, I present summaries of two articles by current writers. I have selected articles that are written by the proponents themselves (as opposed to second-hand accounts, reviews or critiques), and which are currently available on the internet (so that you can access the full texts if you desire.)

The first article is "The Direct Guidance of the Holy Spirit," by Paul Woodhouse, published in the December 2000 online edition of Grace-Centered Magazine [http://www.gcmagazine.net/dec2000.html]. Woodhouse is the minister of Grace Church of Christ (aka Grace Church), Fayetteville, Arkansas. In this article, he says that James 1:5,6 is a promise to all Christians of Holy Spirit guidance, separate and apart from the Word. "James stated that if we ask for heavenly wisdom, divine direction, we should be confident that we will receive it and we should not doubt ... If the whole of God's wisdom is in scripture then James would have stated, 'If a person lacks wisdom, he should open his Bible and read it.' Instead, he commanded believers to pray to God for wisdom and God would give it."

He then states that the book of Acts gives numerous examples of Holy Spirit guidance that is still available today. "To cavalierly dismiss these biblical examples as being limited to the first century is to play fast and loose with scripture in the same ways we so readily criticize others." He lists the following citations to illustrate his point – Acts 2:17; 8:29,39; 9:17; 10:19; 11:28; 13:2; 16:6-7; 20:22,23; 21:4,11.

Finally, he gives a personal example. "Recently, I contemplated a visit to one of my hospice patients (I am a chaplain in a regional hospice program.). He was surrendering his spirit to Jesus, slowly and in suffering. My schedule looked like I could not fit him in for a couple of days, but something or someone inside of me kept pushing, directing me to see him that very day. The notion would not leave. It was persistent and I surrendered to the inner prompting. The following night, in the early morning hours, this patient died. Because of the "inner voice" I was able to pray with him and speak with him one last time. Was this the voice of the Holy Spirit I heard? I heard no words, just the strong inner prompting that I needed to go immediately. There was no sounding of trumpets or the pounding of drums. No audible voice. Just an irresistible impetus to do this one thing."

The second article is "Power from On High: Baptism of the Holy Spirit," by Edward Fudge, author, lecturer, and elder at the Bering Drive Church of Christ, Houston, Texas. It is published on the online site Edward Fudge Ministries He begins with the premise: "The greatest need of every Christian and every church today is a sustained consciousness of the personal Presence and power of the Living God." He points to several passages from the psalms and prophets to sustain this premise. He then says, "The means of God's Presence in the day of messianic salvation, joy and praise will be God's own Spirit..." [http://www.edwardfudge.com/written/pentecosttext.html].

He then takes up an extended discussion of Pentecost as record in Acts 2, maintaining that the baptism of the Holy Spirit came upon the entire company of believers, and that this event constitutes the beginning of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to be with all disciples to the end of the age. He says, "There is no suggestion anywhere in Acts (or in the rest of Scripture, carefully read) that the baptism of the Holy Spirit or any of its manifestations were temporary, or that they were intended to end with some period or event now ancient to us. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Jesus promised his Presence throughout the present age (Matt. 28:20)."

In this discussion, he lists a number of effects produced on different occasions by Holy Spirit baptism, including wind and fire, speaking in tongues, signs and wonders, shaking of houses, spiritual visions, a sense of awe, a spirit of generosity, gladness and joy, a praise-filled life, boldness in proclamation of the gospel, cleansing of the soul, and prophesying. He then states, "In view of this striking scriptural diversity, we must say two things. First, that when someone is baptized in the Holy Spirit, we may expect any of these manifestations, or any others which may please God who is sovereign and who gives the Spirit. Second, that we must not require any particular manifestation on any given occasion, or judge the experience to be inauthentic solely by the absence of any particular biblical effect."

He points to examples such as John and Charles Wesley, Charles G. Finney, and Dwight L. Moody, stating that "God has been pouring out his Spirit for nearly two millennia now, on sons and daughters, young and old, servant and master, just as Joel prophesied and Peter proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts chapter two." He concludes the article with an invitation to all believers to invite the Spirit into their hearts.

Let me state categorically that I do not know these men personally, and do not wish to impugn their motives or intentions, or to cast aspersions on their character. However, I wholeheartedly disagree with their arguments. Having laid out my case in the preceding article, I only add here that a life based on regular and diligent study of the Scriptures and the steadfast application of its principles is infinitely more satisfying, more secure, and more spiritual than a life based upon such an insubstantial thing as an "inner prompting" or an "irresistible impulse."

LOOKING AT LIBERALISM

Church Discipline

By BJ Clark

Introduction

GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE (1)

In this permissive age, the very mention of the word "discipline" often evokes a negative reaction. This is really not surprising, considering the fact that society is bombarded on a daily basis with the messages: "Have it your way," "Do your own thing," and "I did it my way." Hence, the basic attitude of society toward the subject of discipline is vastly different today than just a few decades ago. Teachers in the public schools are intimidated to initiate discipline with unruly students for fear that they will incur the wrath of permissive parents.

This attitude has even infiltrated the Lord's church; a large percentage of congregations of God's people have abandoned the practice of discipline altogether, apparently believing that such will not be tolerated by the broadminded members occupying the pews.

The intent of this chapter is to investigate the instructions contained in the Holy Scriptures pertaining to the practice of discipline. The Bible contains all that one needs to know pertaining to the practice of discipline. Although there is ample evidence of the practice of discipline in the Old Testament, the primary focus of this investigation is discipline in the New Testament.

From the New Testament we learn that there is no greater joy than to be in fellowship with God and with the people of God. Conversely, it can be said that there is no greater sadness than the sadness of being out of fellowship with God and his children. It would be marvelous indeed if the blessed ties of fellowship never had to be severed. However, the same inspired

book, which reveals unto us the means by which fellowship can be enjoyed, also records for us, the means by which fellowship is to be severed and withdrawn. Thus, the task before us is to investigate the New Testament for divine guidance concerning the practice of discipline. What saith the Scripture?

THE MANDATE FOR DISCIPLINE

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us ... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (II Thess. 3:6,14). In dealing with the problem of the man at Corinth committing fornication with his father's wife, Paul commanded the brethren to "deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh" and not to company with fornicators (I Cor. 5:5,9). He instructed Timothy to withdraw himself from false teachers (I Tim. 6:3-5).

To the Romans, he wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17; Comp. 2 John 9-11). He commanded the Ephesians to withhold their fellowship from the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11).

Regarding personal offenses between brethren, Jesus directed that certain steps be followed in an effort to bring about reconciliation. If these preliminary steps are not successful, the last step is for the church to withdraw her fellowship from the individual and to consider him/her to be as socially unacceptable as the heathen man and publican were considered to be in the time of the New Testament (Matt. 18:15-17).

No one who respects the authority of God's word can ignore the mandate given in Scripture to withdraw from disorderly brethren. Whether we think the action of withdrawal is proper is not the issue. There is a way that seems right unto man, but the end thereof is death (Prov. 14:12). We must recognize that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and that his ways are not our ways. His wisdom is as high above our wisdom as the heavens are above the earth (Isa. 55:8,9).

Notwithstanding the plain declarations of Scripture, the practice of church discipline in our brotherhood has been meager in recent years. Our desire to restore the practice of New Testament Christianity must include a commitment to restore the New Testament practice of withdrawing fellowship from those who walk disorderly. We must not preach the importance of keeping the commandments of God and then ignore the plain command to withdraw fellowship. It is inconsistent for us to chide the denominational world about the commandments that they ignore while we ignore the commandment to practice withdrawal of fellowship. The command of II Thessalonians 3:6 is no less sacred or significant than the command of Acts 2:38. God's mandate must be honored.

THE MEMBERS SUBJECT TO WITHDRAWAL

From whom should fellowship be withdrawn? Only members of the body of Christ are subject to the disciplinary action of withdrawal of fellowship. Proof of this is clearly seen in the language of Scripture. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to withdraw from **every brother** that walked disorderly (II Thess. 3:6). The fornication at Corinth was found within the church. The key phrase, "**among you**", demonstrates that a member of the body of Christ committed this transgression (I Cor. 5:1-2,13). It is interesting to note that the male in this text is subject to the disciplinary action of the church whereas the father's wife is not mentioned as a subject of church discipline. Evidently, she was not a member of the Lord's church.

Paul distinguishes later in the text between the church's jurisdiction over members of the body and those outside the body:

"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then ye must needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:9-13).

To be more specific, there are certain members of the body of Christ who are subject to the punitive action of withdrawal of fellowship. Those specifically mentioned in Scripture are:

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    False teachers (Rom. 16:17; I Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 1:9-13; 3:10,11; II John 9-11);
    Those who refuse to work (II Thess. 3:6-14; I Tim. 5:8);
    Fornicators (I Cor. 5:11);
    Covetous (I Cor. 5:11; Lk. 12:13-21; Eph. 5:3; Heb. 13:5);
    Extortioners (I Cor. 5:11);
    Idolaters (I Cor. 5:11);
    Railers (I Cor. 5:11);
    Drunkards (I Cor. 5:11);
    Members who refuse to rectify personal offenses (Matt. 18:15-17) and
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(10) all who walk disorderly (II Thess. 3:6).

The last item mentioned from II Thessalonians 3:6 deserves elaboration. The word "disorderly" is the English translation of the Greek word "ataktos". The word was applied to military personnel who walked out of step from the rest of the soldiers. It signified one who had broken rank. Thus, any action by any member of the Lord's army that is out of step with the will of the Commander-in-Chief, can lead to the action of withdrawal of fellowship. For example, one who deliberately and persistently forsakes the assembling of the saints together is one who has broken rank and is walking out of step. Therefore, such an individual may be legitimately withdrawn from if he refuses to repent. Some have suggested that there is no Biblical authority for withdrawing from anyone for any sins except those explicitly mentioned in the withdrawal

passages. If this were true a church could not withdraw from a homosexual since there is no specific mention of a church ever doing so in Scripture. However, a homosexual who will not repent is walking disorderly and must be Scripturally withdrawn from by the church. Thus, any member who walks disorderly is a member subject to church discipline.

GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE (2)

We have already seen that God mandated the church to discipline the disorderly (Matt. 18:15-17; I Cor. 5:1-13; II Thess. 3:6). Moreover, we established that church discipline is only intended for those who are disorderly members of the church of Christ (I Cor. 5:1-13; II Thess. 3:6).

THE MOTIVATION FOR WITHDRAWAL

It is extremely important that we have the proper motivation in withdrawing fellowship from a brother or sister in Christ. The model for us to follow is found in the missives of Paul. The motivation for withdrawing from the transgressor in Corinth was so that his "spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5:5).

Contrary to the view of some, the action of withdrawal is an act of love! Biblical withdrawal of fellowship is never done out of spite or hatred. It is done out of love for souls! I remember a young girl asking me some years ago to show her the Scripture which gave the church the right to "kick people out of the church." As I probed and asked questions, I learned that the church had recently withdrawn from one of her relatives. I tried to explain to her that the action of withdrawal was not so much an effort to "kick people out" of the church as it was an effort to reclaim them and bring them back home.

Love and discipline are not mutually exclusive (Rev. 3:19). Rather, they are twin companions that complement each other beautifully. This harmonious connection is affirmed in

both the Old and New Testament. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24).

The writer of Hebrews makes this same inspired observation in Hebrews 12:5-11. The passage declares that the Lord chastens or disciplines those whom he loves. Neither the giver nor receiver of discipline enjoys it when it is administered. Yet, the results of this infliction of pain are worth it after all.

Likewise, when the action of withdrawal of fellowship is carried out, it is not a joyous time for either the church or the member being disciplined. Yet, if the action taken leads to the reclamation of a lost soul, the infliction of pain will certainly have been worth it all. It is better to go through the emotional pain of being withdrawn from, and then restored, than it is to wander away from the church, die lost, and suffer the everlasting pain of a devil's hell.

A second motivation for withdrawing fellowship is to preserve the health of the body of Christ. Paul warned the Corinthians of the damage done by unreproved and unrebuked sin. He rebuked the Corinthians for being tolerant of this sin when they should have been mournful instead (I Cor. 5:1-2).

It is amazing to contemplate that the Corinthians were actually proud of their tolerance. We could more easily identify with the text if it reported that they ignored the problem and procrastinated in dealing with the issue.

Paul rebuked them and asked, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (I Cor. 5:6) In other words, just as a little leaven will spread out and affect the entire loaf, so will sin spread and affect the entire body if it is not dealt with properly. Sin is like a cancer (II Tim. 2:17-18). If it is allowed to spread unchecked, it will eventually destroy the body. This is precisely why Paul commanded the Corinthians to purge out the sin in their midst so that the body might be pure and unleavened.

Two passages from the Old Testament demonstrate that God has never been willing to tolerate rebellious sin in the presence of his people. When the time came for the people of God to possess Jericho, they were given very explicit instructions not to keep any of the spoil for themselves. Rather, they were to consecrate it unto the Lord.

But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel" (Josh. 7:1).

As a result of Achan's transgression, the men of Ai soundly defeated the Israelite army (Josh. 7:2-5). This stunning defeat caused Joshua to rent his clothes and ask how it could have happened. God's answer was unmistakably clear.

"Israel hath sinned ... Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies ... Neither will I be with you anymore, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, 0 Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (Josh. 7:11-13).

God refused to bless his people until they had properly disciplined the sinner. Likewise, God will not bless his church until she properly disciplines the sinners in her midst.

The seventh of eight night visions received by Zechariah is additional proof of Jehovah's unwillingness to tolerate sin in the midst of his **people (Zech. 5:5-11).** In this vision, Zechariah sees a basket with a woman sitting inside. As he watches, the woman is described as being the personification of wickedness and thrust down into the basket. A heavy lead lid falls shut. Subsequently, two women lift the basket and carry it out of the presence of God's land into the wicked land of Shinar.

The symbolism of this vision is clear enough. God wants wickedness shut up and removed from the presence of his people. Thus, our withdrawal of fellowship from the wicked among us is not only for their benefit, but for ours as well.

So far we have established that God has mandated that certain members of the church be withdrawn from in hopes that their souls may be restored before it is everlastingly too late. But how should the church go about the task of withdrawing fellowship from the disorderly? Has God provided any information as to how this procedure is to be carried out? Indeed He has! In fact, the methodology of withdrawal will be the focus of our next article.

GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE (3)

THE METHOD OF WITHDRAWAL

Does the Lord give us any exact methodology to follow in withdrawing fellowship? The answer is both yes and no. Jesus prescribes very specific steps in handling personal disputes. If brother B is trespassed against by brother A, brother B must first go to brother A and tell him and him alone. He is not to get on the telephone and call brothers C, D, and E first. However, if brother A is not receptive to brother B's attempt to reconcile matters, then brother B is to take two or three witnesses along with him to visit brother A again so that the matter may be established at the mouth of two or three witnesses. If this still does not result in reconciliation, then the matter is to be taken before the entire congregation. If no one in the church can influence brother A to repent, then the withdrawal of fellowship is to be carried out (Matt. 18:15-17).

There is not any one passage that gives the same kind of detailed procedure for withdrawing from individuals who commit sins of a different nature. Nevertheless, a compilation

of several passages provides us with the principles and method needed to execute the process with dignity and biblical order.

First, there must be meticulous care to make sure of the guilt of the brother or sister under consideration. Deuteronomy 13:12-14 and 17:4-6 is a good example of this principle. These passages list an order of steps that would be wise to follow in disciplinary matters within the church. It is not enough to hear that thus and so is true. we must inquire diligently. If the thing be true and certain and can be established by witnesses as being true (I Tim. 5:19), then the punitive action can begin. Second, the guilty brother or sister must be lovingly confronted concerning their transgression. Paul instructed the Thessalonians to warn the unruly (II Thess. 5:14). We who are spiritual have a responsibility to seek to restore the fallen brother (Gal.6:1-2) knowing that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death,, and hide a multitude of sins (Jas. 5:19,20).

The responsibility for this loving confrontation should not be confined to the preachers and elders for it is the responsibility of every Christian to seek and save the lost. The elders need to lead but they also need to plead. They need to plead with each member to exert every possible influence over the erring brother or sister.

A period needs to be given to the brethren in an effort to accomplish the goal of restoration. Just how much time should be given? No exact time period is given in the Scriptures. Each church is autonomous, and each eldership has the right to determine a sensible period of time during which to attempt the restoration.

Most churches that do practice withdrawal of fellowship are prudent enough to give a couple of warnings to the erring member in the form of a letter before actually enacting the withdrawal. The Bible does speak of a first and second admonition. "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3:10).

Of course, it is possible to go to extremes. Some may pull the trigger too quickly and withdraw before ample time has been given to try to restore the erring one. On the other hand, some continue to excuse their lack of action by claiming that they are just making sure that enough time is available for the sinner to repent. The days turn quickly into weeks and months and before you know it, so much time has gone by that withdrawal of fellowship is either forgotten altogether, or it becomes practically meaningless if pursued. A balance between the two extremes needs to be the goal of each congregation.

Third, after every effort has been exhausted, ample time has been given and warnings have been tenderly and firmly issued, if there is still no repentance, the congregation has no choice but to obey the will of God and withdraw from the wayward sheep. Please note that it is the congregation that withdraws from the erring member—not just the elders. Some have the mistaken notion that withdrawal of fellowship is an eldership action rather than a church action. The action of withdrawal should be announced during the assembling of the saints. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5:4,5).

The decision to withdraw fellowship is not made in the hidden corner of a dark room unbeknownst to the rest of the congregation. Of necessity, it must be publicized so that the brethren can know to avoid fellowship with the disciplined member. It also needs to be publicized to the surrounding churches so that they might know how to deal with the member should they come and request to place membership.

Fourth, the withdrawal of fellowship must be observed by each member and by all of the surrounding churches. It is vital to understand that the occasion of the announcement of withdrawal is not the withdrawal itself. If an announcement is made and no one pays any attention to it, withdrawal of fellowship has not actually been observed.

Members are not allowed to eat a social meal with those who have been withdrawn from (I Cor. 5:11). Yea, verily, members are not allowed to even be in social company with those who have been denied fellowship (I Cor. 5:11; II Thess. 3:14). It is tragic indeed to see certain members of the church deliberately ignore the command to withdraw from a certain erring brother or sister. Such behavior is completely counterproductive to the goal of the church and does great harm to the effort to bring about restoration.

God will not hold guiltless the individual/individuals who seek to countermand the order to withdraw fellowship by ignoring the decree and maintaining the status quo of joint participation in social activities with the withdrawn from member. In fact, one who ignores the command to withdraw fellowship is walking disorderly and thus becomes subject to church discipline as well.

Fifth, the withdrawn from member should not be counted as an enemy, but should be warned as a brother (II Thess. 3:15). Though social fellowship is forbidden, there may still be opportunity to continue to warn our fallen brother.

We should not run down the street in the opposite direction at the very sight of the withdrawn from member. Let us not be afraid to lovingly walk right up to the wayward disciple and encourage them to come back home to God. Of course, throughout the entire process, meekness should characterize our approach to the wandering sinner.

GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE (4)

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF WITHDRAWAL

When withdrawal of fellowship is properly practiced, certain results will begin to be made manifest. One of the first manifestations of the action of withdrawal just might be the restoration of the withdrawn from child of God. Withdrawal works It worked in the case of the man in I Corinthians 5. Referring to the punishment inflicted upon this man, Paul said, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him" (II Cor. 2:6-8).!

The withdrawal of fellowship had been sufficient to jolt the offending brother into repenting of his sins so that his fellowship with God and his brethren might be restored. Incidentally, if there is no feeling of fellowship between the erring one and the members to begin with, the action of withdrawal will not be much of a jolt. The withdrawn from member must feel a sense of loss. Now that the brother has returned, Paul admonished the Corinthians to forgive him and accept him back with open arms.

Countless other instances of the effectiveness of withdrawal are known of by this author. Withdrawal works because it is God's way and God's way is the best way. This is not to suggest that every individual who is withdrawn from will definitely come back to the sheepfold. Regardless of the decision of the one withdrawn from, the action is proper and will strengthen the body of Christ.

A second manifestation of the action of withdrawal is that the other members of the church will be more reverent and aware of what their lot shall be should they decide to walk disorderly.

When the rest of the brethren saw the punishment inflicted upon Ananias and Sapphira, they were moved with great fear (Acts 5:11). There was no doubt in their minds that God meant business and that he expected them to learn a lesson from what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. Paul wrote Timothy, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (I Tim. 5:20).

Thirdly, the action of withdrawal by the church will cause many in the world to respect the church for its strong stand. This is precisely what occurred after Ananias and Sapphira were punished for their transgression. Fear came not only upon the church but upon as many as heard these things (Acts 5:11).

The prevailing view today seems to be that withdrawal of fellowship makes us look unloving to the world about us and that to practice it is detrimental to our cause.

The truth is that we ought to be more concerned about what the world will think of us if we put up with sin than we should about how they will view our loving, yet firm attempts to deal with sin. It is true that there will always be those who are turned off by any kind of rigid stand. No one can deny that many in the world criticized the church for its withdrawal of fellowship from Marian Guinn in Collinsville, Oklahoma. When sister Guinn appeared on the Donahue Show along with her lawyer and brother Garland Elkins, there was certainly an element of the audience that considered her to be the martyr in this case. Many hissed at the very mention of the Bible and its teaching on the matter. However, there are also many in the world who gained a greater respect for the Lord's church and its courage to stand up for what the Bible teaches.

The church in Jerusalem experienced multitudes of additions of both men and women to the body immediately following the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:14). Likewise, when the Lord's church faithfully, consistently and lovingly practices discipline today, the result will be greater respect and greater numbers of believers added to the body of Christ.

Besides, even if the latest Gallup poll showed that 99.9% of all Americans were opposed to a church having the right to withdraw fellowship from its disorderly members, we must ignore the masses (Ex. 23:2) and obey God rather than men (Acts. 5:29). God's way works!

A fourth manifestation of practicing withdrawal of fellowship would be a major reduction in the number of false teachers circulating throughout the brotherhood today unmolested.

As already pointed out, the Scriptures demand that we mark, withdraw from and refuse to bid God speed to false teachers (Rom. 16:17; I Tim. 6:3-5; II John 9-11). Instead, many praise, invite and support the false teachers of our day to come and speak on a workshop, lectureship, youth day or gospel meeting.

Imagine what a tremendous impact could be made if the elders, charged with the oversight of these preachers, pulled the plug on them and removed them from the pulpits because of their false stands. We must quit providing false teachers with a forum for propagating their erroneous doctrines.

- One way to keep young boys from getting on the wrong track is to use better switching facilities.
- A boy is like a canoe—he behaves better if paddled from the rear.

GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE (5) THE MALPRACTICE OF WITHDRAWAL

There is no question that one of our greatest problems in the church today is not the malpractice of withdrawal, but refusing to practice it at all. However, there are some churches guilty of malpractice when it comes to withdrawal. They practice it, but do so improperly. This can be done in several ways.

First, there is the problem of partiality in practicing withdrawal. Some churches are choosy about whom they will and will not discipline. The heavy contributors to the church often receive a special dispensation of grace and mercy whereas someone else guilty of the very same sin, but not as wealthy, is immediately considered as subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Some churches practice withdrawal upon its members who are guilty of sexual sins while ignoring members who are walking disorderly in other ways. The covetous man is just as disorderly as the fornicator (I Cor. 5:11), yet how many churches have withdrawn from members for covetousness? The church that will withdraw from the fornicator but not the persistent forsaker of the assembly is guilty of spiritual malpractice in the realm of church discipline.

The problem of partiality in withdrawal of fellowship is also seen when close family members who are walking disorderly are overlooked while someone else in the same congregation not related to the elders or other members is disciplined for the same transgression.

Family ties do not negate or cancel out the church's responsibility to administer discipline. Deuteronomy 13:6-10 powerfully demonstrates this very point. Even if a family member suggested the worship and service of other gods, the family member to whom it was suggested was to report this transgression so that the guilty party might be executed. As a disciplined his own grandmother and removed her from being queen because of her idolatrous practices (II Chr. 15:16). We must not allow family ties to interfere with our obedience to the will of God (Matt. 10:35-39; 12:46-50; Luke 14:25-33).

Other areas of malpractice include: (1) withdrawing before ample time has been given to attempt restoration; (2) procrastinating and allowing too much time to pass before disciplinary action is undertaken; (3) withdrawing in a manner that is negative and mean-spirited; withdrawing in order to silence an enemy or to gain a form of personal vengeance and retaliation; (4) counting the withdrawn from member as an enemy and (5) ignoring the withdrawal decree and fellowshipping the person anyway.

This last form of malpractice is committed by members in the local church, members of surrounding churches and even by members who lead our academic institutions. While it is true that a Christian College is not the church, the members who lead these academic institutions are still members of the Lord's church and thus bound by the Scriptures to refuse to fellowship false

teachers who have been legitimately marked. Unfortunately, some of our academic institutions ignore their responsibility in this regard and bow to monetary and political pressures from outside, hiding behind the cloak of being an academic institution and thus not being accountable to the decree.

Every Christian is responsible for refusing to fellowship those who have been scripturally disciplined. Let us avoid both the extreme of no practice and malpractice concerning withdrawal of fellowship.

THE MAJOR OBJECTIONS TO WITHDRAWAL

A myriad of objections have been raised by those who are opposed to withdrawal of fellowship. In the remainder of this article we will examine two such objections and see whether or not they will stand the test of scrutiny. Then, in next week's issue of *The Searcher*, we will take up some of the other objections which are commonly leveled against the practice of church discipline.

First, we are told that the withdrawal of fellowship violates the prohibition to judge others (Matt. 7:1ff). This objection ignores the type of judging forbidden by Jesus in Matthew 7. The type of judging forbidden in the Matthew passage is a judging that is harsh, hypocritical and censorious.

The same Lord who forbade judging in Matthew 7 commanded it in John 7:24 when he said, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Also, in the very same context in which Jesus forbade hypocritical judging, he commanded the disciples to judge the fruits of false teachers (Matt. 7:15-20).

Paul commanded the Corinthians to judge those within the body by practicing discipline upon them (I Cor. 5:12,13). Thus, there is a type of judging that is forbidden and there is a type of judging that is commanded. Therefore, when an eldership determines that one is walking

disorderly and needs discipline, such a decision is in perfect harmony with the principles of making righteous judgments.

A second common objection heard is the statement, "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone." The statement is taken from the account of the woman caught in adultery in John 8. The argument is that since none of us are sinless, we have no right to withdraw from someone for their sins.

In reply, we ask, Were not the Corinthians all guilty of sin? Yes. Yet, they were commanded to withdraw from the fornicator among them. Were not the Thessalonians transgressors of God's law and thus sinners? (I John 3:4). Why then, did Paul command them to withdraw from the disorderly brother? Didn't Paul know that all were sinners (Rom. 3:10,23)? Why did he still command sinners to withdraw from sinners?

The difference is between penitent sinners and persistent sinners. The Mosaic law made a distinction between sinning through ignorance (Lev. 4:2,13,22,27; 5:15-19) and sinning presumptuously, sinning with a high hand (Num. 15:24-31; Deut. 17:12). David prayed for cleansing from his secret faults while asking to be kept back from sins of presumption (Psa. 19:12-13).

We must make a distinction between the sinner who stumbles and falls through ignorance and weakness and the sinner who rebelliously walks away from God with no intention of coming back.

Jesus knew that the scribes and Pharisees who brought the adulterous woman to him had serious sin problems of their own. They did not have the right to inflict punishment upon the woman because of their own corrupt hearts. However, those who are walking in the light (I John 1:7), willing to confess their sins and own weaknesses (I John 1:9; Gal. 6:1,2) not only have the right to judge righteous judgment upon rebellious sinners in their midst, but the obligation to do so.

There is a vast difference between the intent of the scribes and Pharisees in John 8 and that of faithful and godly elders who want to reclaim a lost soul.

SHORT SHOTS

- Discipline ... is to strengthen and restore, not condemn or destroy.
- · A gem is not polished without rubbing, nor a man made perfect without trials.
- · Adversity introduces a man to himself.
- · Ask not that all troubles end, for when troubles end, life ends too.

GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE (6)

In previous sections of this manuscript, we examined two objections that are often offered by those who are opposed to the practice of church discipline. In this article we will consider some of the other objections to church discipline and see whether they have any merit.

Some contend that the church cannot withdraw from those who have already withdrawn themselves. In fact, this was the major contention of Marian Guinn in Collinsville, Oklahoma. She and her lawyer claimed that since she had already essentially withdrawn from the congregation, the congregation had no right to subsequently withdraw from her.

Such reasoning is fallacious for several reasons. First, it ignores the purpose of discipline. Our God decreed that withdrawal of fellowship be carried out so that the erring member might be ashamed enough to repent. If a person is allowed to just quit, they do not feel ashamed, but rather puffed up for controlling their own affairs. The one that withdraws himself is still in a lost condition and must be caused to realize this. A member might "withdraw himself" from the church and still expect to maintain the social fellowship and friendship shared in the past. The practice of withdrawal of fellowship denies him of such a privilege and will hopefully cause him to be ashamed of his condition before God.

Second, it seeks to countermand God's command to withdraw. Regardless of the decision of a brother or sister in Christ to leave the church, we must obey the mandate of God to discipline them for so doing. If the church is unable to withdraw from those who withdraw themselves first, then the church is unable to address one of the most prevalent sins within its ranks, that of members permanently forsaking the assembly.

Third, the good shepherd seeks the wayward sheep (Luke 15:3-7). He does not conclude that since the sheep wandered off of his own accord, that his hands are tied and there is nothing he can do.

Fourth, the relationship of God to Israel and Judah demonstrates the fallacy. Both Israel and Judah forgot God and forsook him. They withdrew themselves from serving him. Yet, God still considered them to be eligible for disciplinary action. He punished them at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Their withdrawal did not circumvent the purpose and will of God.

Fifth, the world doesn't know that the member has been withdrawn from. If we are silent concerning the behavior of the member, those in the world may construe our silence to be equal to condoning their behavior. Finally, such a view defies all logic. If an employee embezzles funds from his employer, can he escape punitive action merely by quitting before he is arrested? A soldier who withdraws himself from the army and goes A.W.O.L. does not absolve himself of discipline simply because he leaves first.

Another objection, raised by some, is based upon an erroneous interpretation of the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24-30). However, a careful analysis of the text shows that the separation under consideration in the parable is not about members of the church being separated from other members of the church. Rather, it deals with members of the church and members of the world being separated from one another on the day of judgment.

t is not the church's right or responsibility to punish the wicked of this world. God will take care of that on the day of judgment. Yet, other passages show that God expects his followers

to engage in punitive action against those disorderly members of the body of Christ in the here and now.

The same Jesus who uttered this parable also uttered the words of Matthew 18:15-17 where he commanded the observance of withdrawal of fellowship. Jesus wouldn't approve of in Matthew 18 what he condemned in Matthew 13. Therefore, the parable of the wheat and tares is not a prohibition against the practice of withdrawal of fellowship.

Still others contend that so much time has transpired since discipline was practiced that there would be too much of a complicated backlog of brethren to try to restore if such a process were initiated.

One thing is certain--past neglect does not justify or excuse future neglect. Elderships who have not practiced discipline in the past should confess this shortcoming to the congregation and explain that things will be different in the future. A program of restoration for delinquent and disorderly members should immediately be enacted. If these efforts of restoration are not successful, withdrawal of fellowship should be implemented.

Some churches excuse their failure to practice withdrawal of fellowship on the basis that they have no elders. Though it is certainly ideal to have an eldership to lead the way in this process, there is no evidence in Scripture that God exempts churches without elders from the responsibility to discipline the disorderly. There is no absolute proof that the church in Corinth or Thessalonica had elders, yet they were commanded to exercise withdrawal of fellowship.

n churches which are not fortunate enough to have elders, concerned members must join together to seek and save the wandering sinners that go out from among them. If they are not able to reclaim them, they must withdraw from these erring members in an effort to arouse them out of their spiritual lethargy and bring them back home. The absence of elders in a church does not absolve that church from doing that which will be in the best interest of the sinner.

CONCLUSION:

The subject of withdrawing and withholding fellowship is a vital and volatile one. A cursory glance at the practice in our brotherhood in recent years reveals a mediocre and measly fulfilling of our disciplinary mission.

We need to give more attention to this subject in our sermons, writings and Bible classes. It would be wise for churches to spend an entire quarter in Bible class investigating this subject. These are critical times. The age is permissive. We need a good strong dose of loving Biblical discipline to start turning things around. Let us repent for our failures of the past and look forward to rejoicing in the successes of the future.

LOOKING AT LIBERALISM

Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

By Ryan Tuten

Introduction

Marriage is the foundational unit of all societies. It has its origin in the mind of God. It is God who ordained it and regulates it. Each one of us should and must be concerned about the things God is concerned about, and God is concerned with the home, the family and marriage. Thus in this lesson we shall address the marriage God desires and the marriage that is in harmony with God's Word. Because marriage was instituted by God and it is the concern of God, we must do all we can to make it an institution of harmony.

Marriage in our society is hurting, suffering and being destroyed! The last-reported U.S. divorce rate for a calendar year is **0.41%** per capita per year, the provisional estimate for the year 2000 from the National Center for Health Statistics.\(^1\) Since every divorce involves two people, the percentage becomes somewhat more meaningful if you double it. The center has recently released total state and regional marriage and divorce numbers for the years 2000, 1999, and 1998. The total numbers of U.S. divorces (excluding the non-counting states ~ California, Colorado, Indiana and Louisiana) reported finalized annually are **957,200 in 2000**, 944,317 in 1999, and 947,384 in 1998.\(^2\) The total of U.S. marriages (including all states) reported celebrated annually are **2,355,005 in 2000**, 2,366,623 in 1999 and 2,267,854 in 1998.\(^3\) The Census Bureau's projection/prediction report often cited "50%" rate, which since has been revised downward to roughly "43%" by the National Center for Health Statistics but was moved back up to around **50%** by the Census Bureau in 2002.\(^4\) The National Center for Health Statistics recently released a report which found that 43% of first marriages end in separation or divorce within the first fifteen years.\(^5\) The divorce rate has quadrupled from 4.3 million in 1970 to 18.3 million in 1996.\(^6\) The marriage rate has fallen nearly 30% since 1970 and the divorce rate has

increased about 40%.⁷ Over the past 30 years a consistent 96% of the American public has expressed a personal desire for marriage.⁸ Almost three-quarters of adult Americans believe that "marriage is a lifelong commitment that should not be ended except under extreme circumstances.⁹ Even 81% of divorced and separated Americans believe marriage should be for life.¹⁰

Again as one reads and listens to various statistics, one cannot help but to ask, "Is America concerned?," "Is the world even aware that God has spoken concerning marriage and divorce?" The present state of affairs has obviously come about because men refuse to believe the plain, simple teaching which God has given on this subject. In direct violation of Scripture, man holds to the mistaken belief that he can direct his own steps. The prophet Jeremiah reminds us, "it is not in man to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). The result of this type of attitude is mass confusion with every man doing that which is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).

Yet, there is a God in whom knows all things and to whom we must all answer to. God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33). In any event God has promised that He has given us all we need that pertains to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His glory and excellence (II Peter 1:3).

There are many in our society today who teach and believe that the teaching on the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage is too vague and ambiguous. If this is true ~ what HOPE do we have? In dealing with these issues, as well as any other issues which face and plague us today, the first question we should ask and consider is ~ "What does the Bible say?" One needs to be less concerned with man and his thoughts and more concerned with God and His Word. With this in mind, one should consider the study of God's directions carefully and prayerfully and bend our will to conform to God's will. While there are some things which may be hard to understand, to distort them, ignore them or abuse them would be grave. Remember the statistics on divorce here in America: since the 1960's divorce is increasing daily at an alarming rate and in the 1970's divorce overtook death as the leading cause of breakup in the

home.¹¹ Because of this alarming rate of divorce our government is trying to tighten marriage and divorce laws and seek to help couples stay together. Do we need more legislation, or do we simply need to practice marriage as God ordained it? Acts 17:11 encourages us to be like the noble Bereans and receive the Word with readiness of mind and search the Scriptures 'daily' making sure the things which are taught are in accordance with the Word of God. With this in mind let us see what the Bible teaches.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT MARRIAGE

Marriage is not some human invention. It was instituted by God and originated with God. Marriage is tied up in God's divine will for man's happiness. God brought about the union of man and woman in order for man to accomplish the things which God desires for him to do while he is upon this earth. God is the one who joins people in marriage. And because it was God who instituted and originated marriage ~ it is also God who has set the guidelines concerning marriage. In Genesis 2:18-25; notice that God in the beginning had a law concerning this union between man and woman:

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Genesis 2:18-25).

God's plan was and is still today ~ one man for one woman, for life! Not man with man nor woman with woman, regardless of what society says. Society today calls same sex marriages an "alternative lifestyle" ~ God calls it fornication, SIN! Christians must inform themselves as to the facts. They must be about the business of insulating their own families from these destructive forces. Sexual perversion is rampant in our society. The homosexual movement is on the verge of achieving complete social, legal and political sanction. They are militantly attempting to force the American public to accept homosexuality (as well as other deviant sexual behaviors) as an equally legitimate lifestyle that ought to be promoted and as a valid approach to life. One of the underlining strategies that has been extremely effective in advancing of the homosexual agenda is convincing Americans that homosexuals are victims of discrimination and civil rights violations. The strategy has drawn attention away from the fact that homosexuality is a **choice** and **behavior**. It perpetuates the myth that homosexuals are "born that way." 16

Brethren, it is later than we think. We are witnessing the disintegration of an entire civilization. Homosexuality is just one more destructive force that is wreaking havoc upon the fundamental building block of the human race - the home. Homosexuality was not God's plan in the beginning nor is it His plan today! God's plan is that one man be with one woman for life \sim and they two leave father and mother and cleave to each other and become one flesh!

One cannot study and discuss the idea of marriage without asking the question, "How long is marriage to last?" In God's sight, marriage is a PERMANENT arrangement, and He has not, nor will not, change His mind about this! It is customary that during our wedding VOWS we repeat one to another ~ "Till death do we part!" Friends, that is exactly what the Bible teaches:

"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she

is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." (Romans 7:1-3)

And because this is what the Bible teaches and it is the will of God, then marriage should not be entered into lightly!

In God's plan for marriage, one must consider the responsibilities of both the husband and the wife: the home as God designed it and as we should want it to be, placed man in the position of the head. By the fact that man was first created, and then woman was taken from him, gives us evidence that man is better suited for ruling the home than is the woman. God through His inspired word said, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man." (I Corinthians 11:8-9). Furthermore he penned, "For Adam was first formed then Eve..." (I Timothy 2:13). This is God's plan and we must be willing to accept it! In the Christian home, the husband is to be the strong band around the house, thereby giving it the unity and stability that God intended, although the wife's sphere of influence in the home is also singular in its power and influence. God never charged the woman with the responsibility of the husband.

It is important in the understanding of God's design for the home and family to understand that the man (husband) is the head of the home and no institution can correctly function without a head. Paul wrote, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). Therefore, as Christ insures peace, stability, and order for those who will be guided by His word, so it is with the husband in directing the home. Not only is the husband the head of the home, but he also must love his wife and family. Love should be the motivating factor as a husband seeks to rule, provide and protect his wife and family. Husbands are commanded by God to love their wives: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." (Colossians 3:19). One should look carefully at Christ and His attitude toward the church and allow this great example to teach

us what God desires. Christ dedicated His life to the building of the church ~ a husband should have this same devotion to his wife and family. This love a husband is to promote should also include honor. Peter wrote, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (I Peter 3:7). A husband needs to be interested in making his wife's life full of joy and happiness. To honor her is to have empathy, sympathy, and understanding to her needs and responsibilities. One's wife is honored and strengthened by her husband when she knows she is a participant in the whole of her husbands life. His concerns are her concerns and vice versa. Not only is a husband to be the head of the home, to love and honor, but also he must be faithful. It seems that today in our society man has forgotten the law of God and the necessity of faithfulness. God's Word still after all these years declares, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). Furthermore, Paul wrote, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2-3). These Scriptures as well as the whole Bible teaches the need and necessity of being faithful.

Just like the man (husband), God has also made very direct and simple commands for the woman (wife). When God created man He knew it was not good for man to be alone. Therefore He created him a help-meet (Genesis 2:18). The woman was the crowning act of all of God's creation and certainly the most precious. With this creation of man and woman, God instituted the home, and the home is the bedrock to any society. The problems that families face today are because man has left the fundamental principles God established for the home out of our lives.

In looking at the wife, one surely sees her role relating to the home: she is the helper! God created woman for the man to be one who is a suitable helper to the man (Gen. 2:18). The word "help-meet" simply comes form the Hebrew word meaning to succor, to help, give aid. A woman must be a sharer with the man. She must share in his joys and sorrows, his trials and

successes. The man and woman are to go throughout life together as one. There is no greater help a woman can be within the home than to help her husband and her children get to heaven. A great example of a couple who helped one another and kept God in their lives is Zacharias and Elizabeth: "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). These two individuals were BOTH living righteous before God and helping each other in their journey of life to get to heaven. What a great example to follow!

The wife is also to love, honor and respect her husband. Paul wrote concerning this, "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). There are many ways a wife may show reverence to her husband:¹⁷

- (1) When they get married and exchange their vows she shows respect and reverence by taking and wearing his name (Genesis 5:2)¹⁸
- (2) She also shows reverence by being in submission to him (her husband) (Eph. 5:22-24).¹⁹
- (3) She shows respect and reverence by fulfilling her obligations in the home (Titus 2:5).²⁰
- (4) A wife who has respect for her husband will not criticize him in front of others. She is always building him up!²¹

A wife must be faithful to her husband. The marriage vows are a sacred trust that must not be broken. A wife must put her husband first and never allow him to feel second. It is a wonderful situation in the home when both the husband and the wife fulfill God's desire in the home. When the husband and the wife exercise and practice God's plan ~ there will be peace, love and happiness in the home.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT DIVORCE?

Unfortunately, divorce is rampant but **God hates divorce!** The prophet Malachi in speaking to those who were hiding behind the leniency of Moses on the subject of tolerating plurality in marriages stated: "For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously" (Malachi 2:16). Jesus deals with this same problem during His earthly ministry with the religious leaders as they asked: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matthew 19:3). Divorce is the breaking of the marriage bond and covenant. God has never wanted individuals to divorce for any reason. Many times during the personal ministry of Christ, He was tempted or put to test by the Jewish religious leaders. The Pharisees tried to trick our Lord and trap Him against the writing of Moses. They did this so that they may have free reign in the matter of divorce. Yet look to the profound answer given by our Lord:

"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matthew 19:3-9).

Jesus also addressed this same problem of divorce in His powerful sermon on the Mount:

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matthew 5:31-32).

Man cannot end the marriage covenant "except" it be for fornication. Remember the words of the prophet Malachi ~ God <u>HATES</u> divorce! This is serious, souls are at stake! The only way a marriage can end without sin (a transgression of God's law, 1 John 3:4) is death to one of the spouses: "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." (Romans 7:1-3).

One must understand this is God's law and not man's! The breakup of a marriage was envisioned only under the rigid point of one of the parties being sexually unfaithful. In other words, the Bible teaches that, so long as one's scriptural spouse is still living, there is *one* – and *only one* – legitimate reason for divorce and remarriage: fornication (marital unfaithfulness) on the part of the one "put away" (Matthew 19:9 cf. 5:31,32).²²

There are those who contend that non-Christians (those outside the church, that is, in the world) are under (amenable to) civil law only and not under (amenable to) Christ's law on *any* subject. Since they thus contend that those people who divorced and remarried before entering the church (that is, before becoming Christians) do not sin in so doing, even when such action is in violation of the conditions set forth in Matthew 19:9, provided the civil law to which they are amenable is not violated.²³

Let us understand clearly just what this false doctrine is. Those who espouse this view object to the affirmation which I have made in this chapter being too narrow – they say it places many under sin whom the Scriptures do not. They say a fourth class should

be added to the list of those who can marry without sinning:²⁴ those who divorced and remarried before being baptized into Christ (into the church) so long as they obeyed the *civil law* under which they were living, even if such marriages were in violation of the conditions set forth in Matthew 19:9. They contend that all men out of the church are amenable to civil law *only* – that they are *not* amenable to the law of Christ in any point.²⁵ They contend that the law of Christ (the gospel) is addressed to the *church* only. This leads them to the contention that – as long as they obey the civil law under which they live (no matter *what* that civil law may be as pertains to divorce and remarriage) – men out of the church may divorce and remarry in violation of the instructions given in Matthew 19:9 without sinning. Their claim is, therefore, that a fourth class should be added to those who can marry without sinning. Is this a true contention? Let us see. Let us examine the arguments which are advanced in support of this contention:²⁶

1. Some who hold to this view feel that Romans 8:7 offers support for it. Romans 8:7 reads as follows: "Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." But those who hold to this view usually make the verse read like this: "Because the world (those out to the church) are not amenable to the gospel." A study of the specific words and of the general context of the passage will reveal how absurd is this "switch" of words. Paul is not discussing the question of amenability – he is not saying that men out of the church are not amenable to the gospel. He is saying that so long as one has a "mind of the flesh" he will not submit to (be obedient to) the law of God. But this does mean he is not amenable to that law. Note that Paul is writing to the members of the church at Rome. He shows them that if they do not now live correctly (even after being baptized into Christ) they will be lost. Compare 8:13. A criminal may hate the civil law under which he lives and may violate it every chance he has – but this does not

mean that he is not *amenable* to that law! The argument here made would demand the logical consequence that those who hate civil law cannot be punished for breaking it and those who refuse to submit to the law of God are not amenable to it. A "fine" way to rid the world of the Lord's authority! Here is a question for all who hold this view: "Is it possible for a member of the church to have a 'mind of the flesh'?"²⁷

 A second passage used in an effort to uphold this view is Romans 2:14. As stated by

Paul, this passage reads: "For when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves." By those who hold this view, it is made to read: "For when the world (all out of the church), which has not the law of Christ (the gospel)..." But Paul is not comparing the world and the church; he is comparing the Jew and the non-Jew (Gentile). The expression "have not the law" refers to the Gentiles not having the law of Moses. This refers to a time anterior to the gospel dispensation. At that time the Jew was amenable to the law of Moses; the Gentile was not amenable to the law of Moses. Now (after the gospel has come into effect) neither Jew nor Gentile is amenable to the law of Moses – it was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). But all men (both Jew and Gentile) are amenable to one and the same law – the law of Christ, the gospel! See Mark 16:15,16. Further, if this contention is true, then (since the command to be baptized is a part of the law of Christ) those out of the church are not commanded to be baptized! Such a view is contradictory both of the present context and the New Testament in a number of other points. 28

3. In the third place, let us note an argument which is based on emotions: "Violations of

Matthew 19:9 and 5:32 must be overlooked in cases where children are involved."

This means that the law of Christ must be set aside in cases which tug at our

heartstrings. But if this is true with divorce and remarriages, then it is also true with the plan of salvation. If it is true with these two, then it is true with everything. This would, to all practical purposes, set aside the law of Christ as having any purpose or authority whatsoever. Of course, this is not true. If it were true, then it would violate the contention of those who make it: that the church is amenable to the law of Christ on divorce and remarriage. This would follow as a consequence to this argument because members of the church sometimes get themselves into situations in violation of Matthew 19:9 when children are involved. If this highly emotional situation sets aside the law of Christ for those *out* of the church, it would do the same for those *in* the church. In Matthew 19:12, Jesus pointed out that some make themselves "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Perhaps the man and woman could continue to live under the same roof for the sake of the children, but they certainly would not be entitled to the privileges of husband and wife – they would have to become "eunuchs" (willfully deprive themselves) for the kingdom of heaven's sake!²⁹

This view that men outside of the church are not amenable to the Law of Christ is a *False Doctrine*; a teaching that is contrary to the Word of God. Notice some of the objections to this view from the standpoint of what it *allows*:

It would allow polygamy - so long as the civil law under which the parties are living is obeyed.³⁰

It would allow numerous divorces and marriages for any flimsy cause so long as the civil law recognized those conditions are sufficient - this means an individual could marry and divorce for any reason (perhaps because of simple 'incompatibility of temperament' as some civil laws allow) to do the same thing with another and another. This individual could remarry repeatedly so long as one remained unbaptized, he could

do this many times and still rest under God's pleasure in so doing since he obeyed the civil law in every instance.³¹

It would allow "group marriage" so long as civil law allowed it - group marriage is just what the name implies - a marriage of a group to each other, and all the men would have marital privileges with any and all women of the group. According to this doctrine: these who are in such a marriage as long as they remain unbaptized - are pleasing to God. And if repentance does not require that one sever relationships which violate the law of Christ, then one could remain in such a group even after being baptized.³²

It would allow concubines - a man could have a number of women and wife purchases - and if such relationships would not have to be severed, he then could keep them after he was baptized.³³

It would mean that homosexual "marriages" would be acceptable to God provided (a) the "marriages" were contracted prior to the parties involved being baptized and (b) the civil law under which the parties involved allowed it- this means that a man would not be guilty of any sin whatsoever if he "married" a man, provided he did this before he was baptized and provided that civil law under which he lived allowed such. Further, this false doctrine entails the position that following his being baptized, he could remain in this marriage (having homosexual sexual intercourse) and still be regarded by Christ as a faithful child of God.³⁴

Friends, the gospel is addressed to ALL men and ALL men are amenable to the gospel. The gospel contains instructions both as to how to become a Christian and how to live after becoming a Christian. This also includes instructions on marriage, divorce and remarriage. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus gives sexual unfaithfulness upon the part of

one's marriage partner as the *only* legitimate reason of remarriage so long as one's former companion is yet alive. This is God's Law, and all who attempt be more narrow or more broad than that, err in their teaching.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT BEING REMARRIED?

Remarriage is a rare thing with God! Having expressed God's desire for married people not to separate and end their marriage in divorce, the Lord gives only the ONE exception under which divorce is permitted by God. Apart from the dissolution of a marriage due to death (Rom. 7:1-3), the Bible gives only ONE legitimate reason for which a union can be dissolved and one of the parties be eligible for remarriage. Again from the mouth of our Savior, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matthew 19:9). The ONLY justifiable ground for divorce and remarriage is adultery, sexual unfaithfulness. Only the one sinned against when his/her partner committed fornication is free to pass on to another marriage without sin.

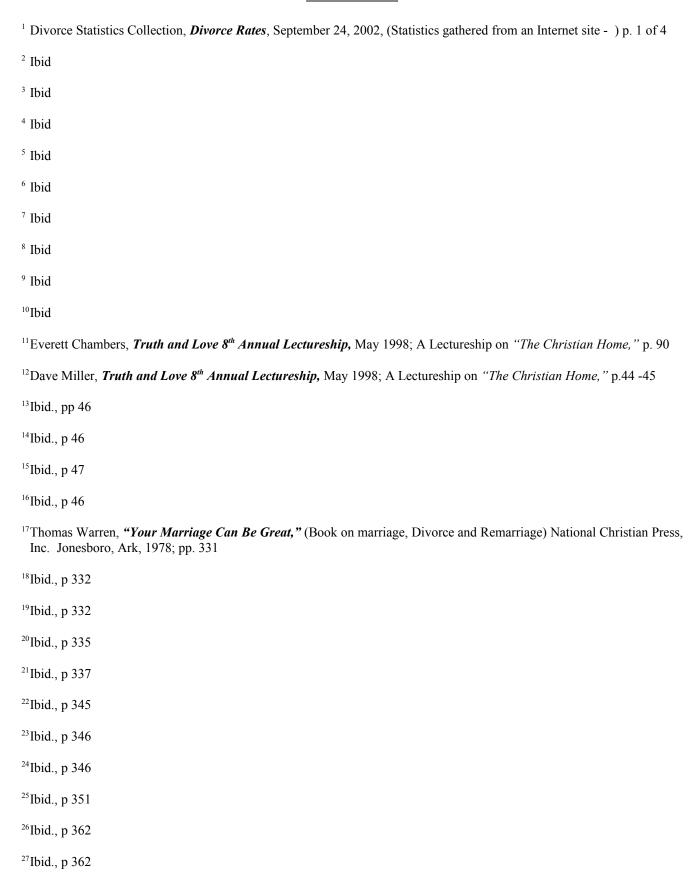
So what about the party that has been put away because he/she has been sexually unfaithful? Is he/she free to remarry? Do his/her obligations before God end when his/her mate has remarried? After all, he/she is not the one who initiated the divorce. Why should he/she be consigned to a life of singleness? Surely he/she should be free to remarry if his/her spouse has divorced him/her and moved on.

Sadly the answer to these sad questions, which again pull on our heart strings is, NO! No matter how compelling these arguments are for remarriage, Jesus legislated only ONE reason which is acceptable to God. May we all strive to fulfill His will.

CONCLUSION

There is much value to be gained from marriages being successful. The lives of the partners in such marriages will be intensely enriched. All such will gain happiness they would never otherwise gain. Let each one of us sincerely and prayerfully strive to become more adequate persons so that we may thereby become more adequate partners in our marriage. Let us all realize that we do not face one another to worship one another but that side by side we face toward God, each striving to help the other to so live as to spend eternity with God when this life is over. Let us all remember that the Lord wills that the union of marriage should be severed only by the hand of death. May the Lord bless the home and be with us all!

END NOTES



END NOTES

²⁹Ibid., p 362

³⁰Ibid., p 364

³¹Ibid., p 364

³²Ibid., p 365

³³Ibid., p 365

³⁴Ibid., p 366

LOOKING AT LIBERALISM THE CASE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

By Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

In our modern age of fast-pace luxury and entertainment, we have come to expect our choices and preferences to predominate every thing we do. We have fast food, quick pickup, home shopping, overnight delivery, express mail and the list goes on. While it is true that service has become a competitor's market to attract the customer, this "have it your way" mindset has spoiled the public into thinking that every endeavor we undertake is just another opportunity to be served

It is very dangerous to approach God with the attitude, "God, what can you do for me?" when our thinking should rather be, "God, what can I do for Thee?" The Bible gives warning, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil" (Ecclesiastes 5:1). After the death of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron serving in the tabernacle, God said to Aaron, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace" (Leviticus 10:3). The wicked, egocentric way of thinking, "I want things done my way" has been a deadly deliberation to people throughout the ages.

This self-pleasing approach is the very heart of the issue of instrumental music in worship to God. The pervasive question to be asked is: *do I worship to fulfill my needs and desires, or do I seek to fulfill God's desires?*

Instruments in the worship of God have ever been a blight to God's people. Sadly, those proponents who defend their instruments feel they have thoroughly answered their antagonists with their subjective suavity and that any controversy on the issue is based upon the crotchety opinions of traditionalistic troublemakers who have no grounds to challenge their stand. So, the issue is closed in their minds. Nevertheless, the opposers of the instrument do stand upon solid ground and with good reasoning and sound argument time and again have put to silence the ignoble innovators. But the issue never seems to die. In every succeeding generation the battle has to be fought anew.

Consider three points that should soundly convince any reasonable person of the evils of using the instrument in the worship of the churches of God.

THE INSTRUMENT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

It is the case that in every place where the instrument of music was introduced, division and destruction followed in its wake. And inevitably more loosening of Bible principles in other areas followed. Upon its initial introduction into the church McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia said,

The general introduction of instrumental music can certainly not be assigned to a date earlier than the 5^{th} and 6^{th} centuries; yea, even Gregory the Great, who towards the end of the 6^{th} century added greatly to the existing Church music, **absolutely prohibited the use of instruments.**¹ (Emphasis mine – R.V.).

Even within the Western Latin Church there were major dissenters who did not desire the instrument in their worship. To show how major the disagreement was the historian, Philip Schaff writes,

...The Latin church introduced it pretty generally, but not without the protest of eminent men, so that even in the Council of Trent a motion was made, though not carried, to prohibit the organ at least in the mass.² (Emphasis mine – R.V.).

Also, in the East, the Greek Church disapproved the use of organs.³ Showing the attitude of early reformers, McClintock and Strong also say,

The early Reformers, when they came out of Rome, removed them (instruments) as the monuments of idolatry. Luther called the organ an ensign of Baal; Calvin said that instrumental music was not fitter to be adopted into the Christian Church than the incense and the candlestick; Knox called the organ a kist [chest] of whistles. The Church of England revived them, against a very strong protest, and the English dissenters would not touch them. (Emphasis mine – R.V.)

The condemnation of the instrument in worship was the unanimous opinion of many of history's greatest religious leaders. Were all these men quacks, traditionalists, and troublemakers? Or, did they have a strong foundation in principles of Biblical understanding that is greatly neglected today? It is true that the opinions of men are not authoritative, yet one must not ignore the wisdom of those good men who fought so hard and so long on so many great issues of error to free us from the yoke of Romanism.

Let those who advocate the use of the instrument consider this question. Is the instrument a matter of necessity or a matter of desire? In other words, will people "go to hell" because they do NOT use the instrument? No one would dare say so! Yet the proponents still force their will to demand the instrument. Just consider how much division it has caused. Without even emphasizing its lack of scriptural warrant, the ugly sin of casting a stumblingblock before one's brother has been committed. Even if the instrument were in the realm of liberty or opinion (which it is not), history would show that the proponents of the instrument would still be guilty of this sin. On this principle the Apostle Paul said, "But take heed lest by any means this liberty

of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak" (I Corinthians 8:9). It is the case that the promoters of the instrument only perceive the weakness on the part of their anti-instrument opponents. For the sake of argument let us suppose those who are against the use of the instrument are the "weak brother." Nevertheless the lovers of the instrument wilfully ignore their "weak" (so called) brethren and thus cast a stumblingblock. The Apostle also says, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (I Corinthians 8:13). Paul was willing to deny himself anything to keep unity among his brethren. However, where the instrument has gone this is not so. Unity and Christian love have been ignored just to indulge the whims of those who desire to "have things their way." Even they admit they could do without it. If a man believes the instrument is permissible, yet his brother in Christ believes it is wrong, why would he force its use upon his brother who cannot in good conscience worship God with it? This is nothing short of despotism and tyranny. Certainly this attitude is divisive and sinful. But this is exactly what has taken place in the history of churches where the instrument was introduced.

Notice some examples of the division caused by the instrument among denominations.

1. Among the Methodists, their founder John Wesley was certainly opposed to the instrument. He once made the statement, "I have no objection to organs in our chapels, provided they are neither seen nor heard." Adam Clarke, a Methodist, and one of the best Bible commentators known, said,

I am an old man and a minister; and I declare that I never knew them *(mechanical instruments)* productive of any good in the worship of God; and I have reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire; but **instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor.** This is the abuse of music and I here register my protest against all such

corruption in the worship of the Infinite Spirit who requires his followers to worship him in spirit and in truth. 6 (Emphasis mine – R.V.).

Later Elder Barton Stone would write about an event among the Methodists in Europe (though his source may have been spurious).

We have just received an extraordinary account of about 30,000 Methodists in England, withdrawing from that church and connexion, because the Conference disapproved of the introduction of instrumental music in the churches. The full account shall appear in our next. To us, backwoods Americans, this conduct of those seceders appears to be the extreme of folly, and it argues that they have a greater taste for music, than they have for religion.⁷

2. <u>Among the Presbyterians</u>, John Calvin, their founder, certainly was opposed it. For he said,

Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this as well as many other things, from the Jews.⁸

There was dissent among the Regulars over instruments and the singing of the Psalms instead of uninspired hymnodies. To this day the Regulars among the Presbyterians refuse the instrument in their worship.

3. Among the Baptists, the contention was also sharp. The Primitives or Hard-shells still refuse its use in their services. Even in Georgia they have an interesting history. In 1900, the Valdosta Baptist Church decided to buy an organ. When this act called up a storm of protest, the Church sold the organ in October 1901. Apparently, the Church later obtained another, for in February 1906, A.V. Simms offered a resolution to discontinue the use of the organ. The Church resumed the use of the organ in July 1907 because dissension with other churches had not ceased with its discontinuance and the church ignored several protests which arrived during the ensuing

year. At Brushy Creek Baptist Church in Irwin County, those in favor of an organ sought to present the church with a fait accompli. The musical party purchased the instrument and secretly installed it on Saturday night. On Sunday morning the congregation gathered and stood about pondering the innovation, a small cabinet style pump organ on casters. One zealous old pillar of orthodoxy advanced to it as though struck with admiration, and when he saw a clear path, shot it toward the back door of the meetinghouse, where a steep set of steps would have diminished its value to the going rate of kindling and brass scrap. Only a last minute flying tackle by some of the organ party saved it. 10

In 1909, the Baptist churches of Concord, Bethsaida, and Bethlehem sent letters to Salem demanding that they take a stand against the organ, which they called a "Babylonian" and "barbarian" innovation without warrant in the Bible. Salem refused and so lost their fellowship. Salem did not adopt the organ for its own use.¹¹

4. Among the Restorationists, in 1844 a melodeon was used in a children's Bible class in Georgetown, Kentucky. In 1850 John Rodgers said that he felt like it was a great issue. In 1854 Benjamin Franklin spoke out strongly against the use of it in worship and Dr. L.L. Pinkerton of Midway, Kentucky took offense. Beginning in 1859 he wrote:

I am the only preacher in Kentucky of our brotherhood who has publicly advocated the propriety of employing instrumental music...and that the church of God in Midway is the only church that has yet made a decided effort to introduce it.¹²

That effort was dramatic. Since the singing was "deplorable," a Saturday night song practice was announced, and a melodeon was brought in to help get the right pitch. But that next morning at church services the melodeon was still there, and so it was easy to use it to accompany the singing. Adam Hibler, an elder, objected so strongly, that one night later that

week he brought his slave, Reuben, and through a window they removed the melodeon and took it to Adam's house. Another melodeon, however, was soon brought into the auditorium again, and it finally stayed and was used thereafter. Over a hundred years later the second melodeon is kept "in a place of honor" in a glass case at the library of Midway College. ¹³

Afterward the instrument was introduced at Thorp Spring, Texas. Here, another sad record of church splitting is recorded dividing not only a congregation, but also setting a father against two sons. After an organ had been installed, a peaceful effort was made against its use.

On Sunday, February 20, 1894, Joseph Addison Clark, a gray bearded man of 78 years, walking with a cane, took a seat along with his wife at the front of the auditorium. His son Addison Clark, was in charge of the services. The father arose, walked to the pulpit, took a paper from his pocket, and presented it to his son. It was a petition signed by the father and by more than one hundred others. It requested that the organ not be used "on the ground that it was not authorized in the New Testament."

The son, Addison, "read the petition, conferred briefly with his brother, Randolph...turned to the organist and said, 'Play on, Miss Bertha.'" As the organ and singing started, Joseph Addison Clark "arose with his wife and led the opposition out of the auditorium." About 140 followed the elderly Clark. Many remaining in the auditorium began to weep. Later on Don Morris wrote,

My father...was present, and he told me many times about Uncle Joe Clark – how **he appealed to the audience not to use the organ**, and how he led a group out of the auditorium.¹⁴ (Emphasis mine -R.V.).

Thus the Thorp Spring Church, which had followed the slogan, "Speak where the Bible speaks, be silent where the Bible is silent," since its founding in 1873, abandoned that slogan in 1894.

Nearly a hundred years later there is now a commercial musical band, advertising themselves as "A Cappella Band," selling performances to any denomination that will invite them. They do not add mechanical instruments to their program. But they accompany their beautiful gospel singing with vocal imitations of the sounds of various musical instruments. Thus their songs have an accompaniment, but true a cappella singing has no accompaniment. They are misusing a good name.

Later the instrument was also added at St. Louis, Missouri and Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1863 McGarvey said that the instrument in worship was going to be here, that we might as well discuss it. The issue was hotly debated during the years 1864-70. Some of the earliest strong opponents of the use of instrumental music in the Restoration Movement were Moses Lard, J.W. McGarvey, I.B. Grubbs, Tolbert Fanning, and David Lipscomb. Many public debates were later held on the subject. Particularly noteworthy was the debate between Ira Boswell and N.B. Hardeman in 1923 in Nashville.

With these examples and many more that could be produced, it is easy to see that the use of musical instruments in churches has been the cause of much division throughout history. It's divisiveness and other problems certainly outweigh any supposed benefits it seemingly offers. The principle of brotherly consideration must be honored. We must not cause each other to stumble by forcing our desires on others, especially about things that in the mind of the proponents of the instrument are not even matters of necessity. If one person in the church is against its use, that alone should be enough to settle the issue for conscience's sake. But history has shown that wherever the instrument has gone, there were those who have forced their hand and overridden the desires of others. This is why the instrument has been the cause of much division.

THE USE OF THE INSTRUMENT REJECTS THE RESTORATION PLEA

The term RESTORATION is defined as "the act of bringing back into an original condition." ¹⁵ It is necessary in A PLEA FOR RESTORATION not to compromise on any point inconsistent with the original. The Churches of Christ in America were based upon a return to the most ancient order of things. We can be certain of the purity of the church only by putting away the man-made opinions, dogmas, and traditions that have been heaped up through the ages. We must go back beyond the clutter and insist upon a return to the pristine teaching of our Saviour and His apostles, which today are contained only in the New Testament scriptures.

We must RESTORE the church to the New Testament NOT REFORM into another denomination. The very idea of reforming, modifying or updating the church is a misnomer. To say that the doctrine must be reformed is to admit some defect in God's revelation. To say that there is a need for the creeds and traditions of men to assist us in our understanding is to imply that Jesus' teachings are inadequate and that fallible man could or should somehow improve upon them. How can man be wiser or more benevolent than God? We must not. We cannot reform "that which is perfect" (I Cor. 13:10). No! Mortal man can do nothing but RESTORE himself to that original perfect pattern. Only then can he know that he rests upon solid ground, and only then can all believers be united under the authority of Christ. This is not an insignificant point. Our understanding, our faithfulness and our very souls will depend upon our compliance to the New Testament.

However, there are many who believe a plea to restore the church is not feasible. Some believe this plea is **outdated** and we have outgrown it. Others believe a restoration is **impossible** to achieve. Still others will say that it was **never** the purpose of the New Testament to be a

pattern **for correcting deficiencies**, especially in the church. Yet, Paul tells Timothy the scriptures are profitable to correct (II Timothy 3:16). The elders at Ephesus were warned of some in their own number who would speak "perverse things" as a sign of progress or growth. Departure is not progress. Departure is only possible if there is something from which to depart. The fact that apostasy was predicted by the apostles and did occur teaches us that there was an original pattern of perfection.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some SHALL DEPART FROM THE FAITH, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. (I Timothy 4:1-3, emphasis mine – R.V.)

Also.

PREACH THE WORD; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (II Timothy 4:2-5, emphasis mine – R.V.)

The <u>RESTORATION PLEA</u> is a valid and legitimate effort.

Since that is the case, then anyone concerned with restoring the church to its <u>ORIGINAL ORDER</u>, need only ask; did the New Testament Church use instruments of music in their worship? The answer to that question is a resounding, <u>NO</u>! Every scholar, every historian and every piece of evidence corroborates this answer. Consider these sources: 1) The New Testament is GRAVEYARD SILENT about the use of mechanical aids to praise God. 2) Uninspired writings of that time period also show that EARLY CHRISTIANS RESISTED THE IDEA of using instrumental music in their worship. One encyclopedia says, "the music of the church was at first merely vocal, to be sung

by the priest, a unison choir, and soloists; the church fathers had been opposed to instruments." ¹⁶ 3) Church historians make no mention of it in their accounts of the worship of the early church. **Mosheim** says not a word about it. **Bingham**, a highly reputed writer of antiquities says,

I should here have put an end to this chapter, but that some readers would be apt to reckon it an omission, that we have taken no notice of organs and bells among the utensils of the church. But the true reason is that there were no such things in use in the ancient churches for many ages. **Music in churches is as ancient as the apostles, but instrumental music not so.**¹⁷ (Emphasis mine – R.V.)

The imminent Greek scholar, Marvin R. **Vincent** in his classic work also says on Bingham's remark:

Clement of Alexandria, while forbidding the use of the flute in the agapae, permitted the harp. But neither Basil nor Ambrose nor Chrysostom, in their panegyrics upon music, mention instrumental music, and Basil expressly condemns it. Bingham dismisses the matter summarily, and sites Justin Martyr as saying expressly that instrumental music was not used in the Christian Church. (Emphasis mine – R.V.)

These men were historians, and could not record a fact that did not exist.¹⁹

There are other observations, which show the early church did NOT use instrumental music.

1) There is the etymology of the word "A CAPELLA." This word comes from Italian originally meaning, "in chapel style, or as the church does." Yet this very word has come to mean vocal music without the accompaniment of instruments.

2) There is the fact that the Eastern Greek Orthodox Church, which broke from the Western Church in 1054 A.D., NEVER implemented instruments of music or "holy" images as the Western Roman Catholic Church did. This shows that before that break, the early churches were not using instruments.

3) Also, the AGREEMENT of

the leaders of the Reformation Movement was against its use. Brother McGarvey once commented:

In the earlier years of the present Reformation, there was entire unanimity in the rejection of instrumental music from our public worship.²⁰

Now some <u>CRITIC</u> will say, your attempts at restoring the original church is inconsistent because the original never had buildings, chalkboards, songbooks, overheads or parking lots. This quibble is easily answered by studying the design and nature of the word COMMANDMENT.

When the Bible gives a command, then anything needed to fulfill that command is a part of that command. For example – when the Bible commands us to meet, we are authorized by that command to set up a time to meet. This elaboration is not an addition to the Bible. Please notice:

- 1. (II Corinthians 9:7) <u>How much are we to give?</u> "As we have been prospered." One widow gave two mites. Barnabas gave a fortune. Which one of these disobeyed this command?
- 2. (Hebrews 10:25) Where are we to assemble? Some early Christians met in the temple, some in synagogues, some in homes. Which of these added to the command to assemble together?
- 3. (Mark 16:15) When are we to preach? One time Paul preached at midnight, once Peter preached in the morning. Which of them disobeyed or added to the command to preach?

In every command there will always be certain expediency left to our discretion and common sense to figure out how the command is to be accomplished.

On the other hand, there are things that are superfluous to a command. These are things that are not necessary or have no bearing upon the fulfillment of the command. These things would be additions to that commandment. For example God commands us to sing. When using a songbook, we are doing nothing more than singing. However, when <u>PLAYING</u> an instrument, we

are now doing more than singing. The songbook is an aid to singing but the instrument is an addition not authorized by the commandment to sing.²¹

Some commands are specific in design and others are more general. God commands us to teach the gospel. Since this command is general in its design, anything that will help us teach the gospel is an aid in fulfilling that command (such as chalkboards, overheads, pamphlets, etc.). However, teaching "ANOTHER GOSPEL" (Galatians 1:7) would be an addition to that command and thus sinful. We are commanded to assemble upon the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1-2). Where we meet is an expediency we must decide. Meeting on another day INSTEAD OF and for the purpose of REPLACING the first day of the week would be an unauthorized addition. For even more examples of this principle notice chart at the end of this chapter.

Distinctions must be made between elaborations upon a command and additions to the command. Otherwise the entire concept of authority in every walk of life, not just in religion, becomes ridiculous.

The solid conclusion, therefore, of the incontrovertible cases of history is that the original church did not use instrumental music. Therefore, if any church innovates instrumental music, that church automatically denies that it is trying to restore the original New Testament Church. And, if a church does not even try to follow the New Testament church, then what right does it have to exist? Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

<u>SILENTIA SCRIPTORUM – CONDEMNS THE INSTRUMENT</u>

Advocates for the instrument deny that the silence of the scriptures forbids anything. In the early years of the Reformation, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli argued over this point. Of the two, Zwingli realized the importance of the principle of silence. According to D'Aubingne's History of the Reformation: "Luther was desirous of retaining in the Church all that was not expressly contradicted by Scripture, while Zwingli was intent on abolishing all that could not be proved by Scripture. The German reformer wished to remain united to the Church... (that is, the Roman Catholic Church), and sought only to purify it from everything that was repugnant to the word of God. The Reformer from Zurich passed back over every intervening age till he reached the times of the apostles; and subjecting the Church to an entire transformation, labored to restore it to its primitive conditions." Unfortunately, Zwingli's work was overshadowed by that of Luther, and it remained for the Restorers to properly emphasize this vital principle over two centuries later.²²

The Scriptures are an infallible rule of faith and practice (II Timothy 3:16-17). They are supreme, perfect and sufficient for all the needs of the Church. The scriptures include everything necessary for sound doctrine, government and worship and exclude anything not commanded in them. Does the Bible ever make arguments based on silence? Does it ever use silence as proof of a point? It certainly does! In Hebrews 7:14 the Hebrew writer argues that because the Old Testament Law "said nothing" about Judah as a priestly tribe, then our Saviour could not be a priest under the Old Testament system. This is an argument based on silence. In Leviticus 10:1-2 two priests, Nadab and Abihu, offered strange fire on the inauguration day of the

Tabernacle which God "commanded them not." And they were killed, burnt with fire from God, for their presumption.

Moses gave strict commandment about modifying the Law that was delivered by him. He said:

...Remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye <u>SEEK NOT AFTER YOUR OWN HEART AND YOUR OWN EYES</u>, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. (Numbers 15:39-40, emphasis mine – R.V.)

Ye shall <u>NOT ADD</u> unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye <u>DIMINISH</u> <u>OUGHT</u> from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you (Deuteronomy 4:2, emphasis mine – R.V.).

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou **shalt <u>NOT ADD</u>** thereto, <u>NOR DIMINISH</u> **from** it (Deuteronomy 12:32, emphasis mine – R.V.).

Centuries later Solomon would write, "ADD thou NOT unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6). The New Testament does not lack for similar warnings.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall <u>ADD</u> unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall <u>TAKE AWAY</u> from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Revelation 22:18-19, emphasis mine – R.V.).

In Matt. 15:9 Jesus said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Here is a plain statement of two undeniable facts: 1) These Scribes and Pharisees were worshipping God. Jesus did condemned what they were doing, but it was worship, for Jesus himself so pronounced it. 2) But it was vain worship, because they were

doing, as religious service, things which God had not commanded. Even the small matter of washing the hands was among the things severely condemned by Jesus; but is it wrong to wash hands? No, if it is done outside of religious service; BUT YES, if it is done in religious service when there is no command of God for it. An act, such as washing the hands, which is wholly sinless outside of religious service, is, nevertheless, sinful when performed in religious service in the absence of any command of God. Therefore, although engaged in worshipping God, men may, at the same time, be under the condemnation of Jesus, because they are doing that which is ordered by man, and not by the Lord, which Jesus says is VAIN WORSHIP.

CONCLUSION

The use of instruments of music in worship to God has been the cause of much division. By using them those Churches admit they are not trying to restore or even be like the New Testament Church. To put it more succinctly, as one Primitive Baptist preacher said, when asked why his church didn't use instrumental music, "There ain't no Bible for it!"

It is wrong to use instruments of music in the assemblies of the church in praise or worship God.

COMMANDS AND INCIDENTALS

THE COMMAND	INCLUDED IN THE COMMAND	VIOLATIONS OF THE COMMAND	Incidentals
B uild A n A rk <i>Gen.</i> 6	Gopher Wood Size of Ark Number Of Doors, Windows	Pine Change Size One Story Door in the End	Tools Size & Number of Rooms
GO Matt. 28; Mark 16	Go Everywhere All The World	If We Stay If We Add "Must Walk" Or "Must Go By Two's"	Walk-Ride-Fly Alone Or In Campaigns
TEACH ALL NATIONS Matt. 28	Whole Counsel <i>Acts 20:27</i> Faithful Men <i>2 Tim. 2:2</i> All to Teach <i>Heb. 5:12-14</i> In Love <i>Eph. 4:15</i>	Pervert the Gospel <i>Gal. 1:7</i> Women Preachers In Wrong Spirit Add, Subtract, etc. <i>2 John 9-11</i>	Publicly Acts 20:20 Privately Luke 10:23 In School Acts 19:9 Radio-TV-Class Use Literature
Baptize Them Matt. 28:18-20	Bury <i>Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12</i> Believers <i>Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36ff</i> For Remission <i>Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16</i> In Name <i>Matt. 28:18-20</i> In Water <i>Acts 8:27ff; 10:47</i>	Sprinkle, Pour Baptize Infants Saved Before Baptism Wrong Authority Acts 19:1-7 Baptize In Oil, Milk, etc.	River, Ocean, Lake, Pool Baptistery Still or Running, Cold or Warm Water
"Whole Church" Come Together Into One Place" 1Cor. 14:23	"Whole Church" "In One Place" Not to Forsake Decent, Orderly	Many Places "Must Have Nice Building" "Must Meet at 11:00 a.m." etc. Forsake Assembly Disorderly	Meet in Grove, Tent, School, or Church Building Time to Assemble
Sing Eph. 5:19 Col. 3:16 Heb. 2:12	Sing Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs Teach, Admonish	Sing Worldly Songs Sing Unscriptural Songs Play With Musical Instruments	Song Book Shaped Notes Four Part Harmony How to Get Pitch
Prayer Luke 18:1	To God, Rom. 10:1 Eph. 3:14; Col. 3:17 In Name of Christ John 16:23,24 According to Will 1 John 5:14 In Faith – Jam. 1:6 Pure Heart, Psa. 66:18	Pray To Saints Not Pray In Christ's Name Pray Contrary to God's Will Not in Faith With Impure Heart	How Often To Pray How Long To Pray Posture in Prayer Using A Microphone
Lord's Supper Matt. 26:28-30 Mark 14:22-26 Luke 22:19,20 1 Cor. 11:27-30	Unleavened Bread, Fruit of the Vine First Day of Week <i>Acts 20:7</i> In Memory of Christ Examine Ourselves 1 Cor. 11:28 In Kingdom, Luk. 22:30	Fail To Take It 1 Cor. 11:24,29 Take It Quarterly, Yearly, etc. Use Steak & Soda Pop Turn It Into A Common Meal 1 Cor. 11:33,34	Use Plate Or Basket Number Of Cups To Use Sit, Stand, Or Kneel Use White Or Red Juice Have A Cloth Over Table
Do Good Unto All Men Gal. 6:10	Ability & Opportunity Gal. 6:10 Unto All Men 2 Cor. 9:12,13 Do Not Support False Teachers 2 John 9-11	Refuse to Support Preachers Support Saints Only 2 Cor. 9:12,13 Support False Doctrine Rom. 16:17,18	Out Of Church Treasury Out Of Your Own Pocket Either An Orphan's Home Or Family Home

END NOTES

- ¹ "Music, Instrumental", McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2000 by Biblesoft.
- ² Philip Schaff, "The Organ and the Bell", <u>Schaff's History of the Church, Vol. 10</u>, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1999 by Biblesoft.
- ³ Ibid.
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- ¹³ Spiritual Sword, October, 1978, p. 20.
- ¹⁴ Reported by Don Morris and quoted in <u>Spiritual Sword</u>, October, 1978, pp. 18-19.
- ¹⁵ The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from InfoSoft International, Inc. All rights reserved.
- ¹⁶Americana Encyclopedia, 1958, Vol. 19, p. 626.
- ¹⁷Works, Vol. III, p. 137, Goold's Ed.
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- ¹⁹ John L. Girardeau (Professor in Columbia Theological Seminary, South Carolina, 1888), <u>Instrumental Music In Church</u> Worship, by, p. 156
- ²⁰ J.W. McGarvey, "Instrumental Music in The Churches", Millennial Harbinger, 1864, p. 510.
- ²¹ The Early Church did have some songs in writing. There was also the O.T. book of Psalms. Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 show that hymns and odes were known. And some of these hymns were written down. So the criticism of no song books in the early church would be incorrect.
- ²² Roy Deaver, "World Vision For Christ" <u>Freed-Hardeman College 29th Annual Bible Lectureship</u>, January 31 to February 5, 1965, p. 62

LOOKING AT LIBERALISM

THE SILENCE OF SCRIPTURES: PROHIBITIVE OR PERMISSIVE?

By Richard Mansel

INTRODUCTION

Once again I am honored to have the opportunity to write and speak for this lectureship. I have great respect for this congregation and its leadership. The topic at hand is of immeasurable importance and I pray it solidifies our resolve against all forms of error.

I have been asked to speak on The "New Hermeneutic." ¹ In consideration and discussion with Brother Nelson, I have decided to address the crucial area of the Silence of Scripture. How we view this aspect of the Holy Writ will determine how we interpret Scripture. Randy Fenter writes, "The stand for or against most divisive issues has generally revolved around silence. Instead of uniting us, our understanding of silence has often alienated us." ²

UNDERSTANDING THE DIVERGENCE

In 1809, Thomas Campbell stood before a group of religious leaders near Washington, Pennsylvania and said, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent." Campbell sat down as a hush fell over the room. Finally, Andrew Munro said, "Mr. Campbell, if we adopt that as a basis, then there is an end of infant baptism." Campbell replied, "of course, if infant baptism be not found in the Scriptures, we can have nothing to do with it." ³

Ever since, we have battled this permissive attitude exemplified in Munro's words.

Simply put, most religious divisions arise, not from what the Bible does say, but out of what the Bible does not say. This is the result of two radically different

attitudes toward the area of God's silence. One position is that silence is permissive and that we are free to do whatever we desire in silent teaching or activity. The second position is that silence is prohibitive and that we are to do what God did say. From these two hermeneutical perspectives arise two different worlds in religion. ⁴

Alexander Campbell wrote, "'If all Christians 'spoke the same things' they would doubtless be of the same mind." ⁵ If we will find the unity Christ prayed for in John 17:17-21 it will be after a resolution of our differences on the Silence of Scriptures.

Woody Woodrow has surmised, "In short, the silence of Scripture has no different function from silence in normal human discourse and should not be assigned prohibitive force solely on the basis of a presupposed exhaustive blueprint." ⁶ Ryan Ross boldly asserts that the belief that silence is prohibitive is "ludicrous" and will "result in total chaos." ⁷

WHAT ARE OUR MOTIVATIONS FOR ACTING ON SILENCE?

Why are some so bent on transcending the Silence of Scripture? I will approach this with a secular illustration.

Ben is sixteen years old and his father sends him on an errand. His Father owns a business with an old friend, Theodore. Ben is told, "Take these tax papers straight over to Theodore's house and come right back home."

Ben has a decision to make. Will he do exactly as his Father has commanded? Or, will he choose to go to his girlfriend's house on the way and to Sonic for a milkshake on the return trip? He chooses to make the two additional stops simply because he wants to do so.

Ben stops over at his girlfriend's house on the way to Theodore's house. On the way back home, he stops at Sonic and enjoys a milkshake. He gets home and his father is furious.

As Ben faces his father's anger, what are his options? First, he can apologize and admit his disobedience. Second, he can lie and say that traffic hindered him. Third, he can rationalize and justify his actions. He chooses the latter.

From Ben's perspective, why did he choose the third option? He knew his Father felt he had overstepped his bounds. Yet, in Ben's mind he had convinced himself that he had actually carried out his Dad's wishes. His Father did not say he could not go to his girlfriend's house or to Sonic. But, which came first in Ben's mind, his desire to do as he pleased or the rationalization? Of course, the desire came first. He knew what his Father had told him to do. However, that contrasted with what he wanted to do. Therefore, he rationalized hoping he could get what he wanted and his Father's approval. He wanted the best of both worlds.

The question is was Ben deciding what to do based on his Father's word or his own desires? The latter won out. So, when we are rationalizing we are choosing our independence over what we have been commanded to do. If Ben totally loved and trusted his Father, this would not have been an issue. Ben, though, loved his desires more than he loved his Father.

DO NOT GO BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN

The debate on the Silence of Scripture is centered around 1 Corinthians 4:6. We can either ignore it, explain it away or deal with it as written. It says simply, "do not think beyond what is written" (cf. 2 John 9-11). This attitude is by no means original to this one verse.

Scripture is complete (Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) and therefore we should have a hands off approach to its Words (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). In Jeremiah 26:2, Jeremiah is told to stand before the nation of Israel and speak "all the words that

I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word (cf. 23:16-22,30-32)." Galatians 1:8 says, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed."

An examination of the phrase "it is written" in Scripture would fill this entire paper. "The Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it" (Joshua 1:8). At the end of this book, God says, "Therefore be very courageous to keep and do all that is written in the book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left" (Joshua 23:6).

"As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak" (1 Kings 22:14). Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever; that we may do all the words of this law."

Our attitudes about Scripture should be exemplified by the attitude of the Son and Spirit. In John 14:10, Jesus says, "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works." Moreover, the Holy Spirit does not "speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak" (John 16:13). It would be blasphemous to speak of our own authority when neither the Son nor the Spirit would dare do so.

John 12:48 offers us a singular perspective that makes this entire discussion very personal. There, Jesus says, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." Combine these words with John 1:1-3,14 and you find all of Scripture included in this sobering promise.

The Words contained in this book will be what will judge us on the last day. We will not be judged on the Silence of Scripture. So, does that mean that it is harmless? The short answer is no! There are two reasons why.

First, John 12:48 tells us that the words of Scripture will be our judge. And since Jude 3 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that the Word is complete, then we have all we need. 2 Peter 1:2-4 assures us Scripture is sufficient.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of our God and Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you my be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Therefore, since we have been given "all things that pertain to life and godliness" and we have enough for us to "escape the corruption of the world" and "partake in His divine nature" then why do we need to wander in silence? If God has spoken, why do we do we need to go where His voice is not heard? Why would we need to seek other fields?

That leads us to the second reason why silence is dangerous. If we will be judged on the Words of Scripture on the last day then we will not be judged on the words of silence. Consider that the words of silence cannot add to our salvation. They can only remain neutral or detract. In other words, they cannot make us be more saved but they could possibly contribute to our being lost. So, if you think silence is permissive then you must answer this question. Is the item you desire worth losing your soul over?

We must now look at the rest of 1 Corinthians 4:6. It says that the reason someone would want to "think beyond that which is written" is because of vanity. We should stay within the parameters of God's will or be "puffed up."

In our illustration, Ben went outside of his Father's command because it did not include the things he wanted to do. So once again, is the thing that you desire worth your soul?

HERMENEUTICAL FIRESTORM

We must now examine the liberal view of the silence of Scripture. It is a part of the conflagration over the proper form of Hermeneutics raging throughout the brotherhood. Fountains of ink are flowing from liberal writers trying to convince us of the abject failure of the "command, example and necessary inference" hermeneutic. Soon, they say, we must find a new one or become completely irrelevant.

The authors of the *Crux of the Matter* write, "The truth of God does not change, but God is a living person who seeks a relationship with us humans. Constantly changing human conditions demand a constantly renewed approach to Scripture." ⁸ This is the heart of their contention. Scripture is a living document that must change as times change. Since the aforementioned quote acknowledges that "the truth of God never changes" it is not difficult to see where this constant updating will occur. Obviously, they see many possibilities for the Silence of Scripture. Jesus Christ, and by extension the Word, is *the "same yesterday, today and tomorrow"* (Hebrews 13:8). Silence is obviously a renewable resource.

In their minds, the source of all hermeneutical evils lies within the word, "patternism."

A patternistic hermeneutic tends to blind us to these dimensions of the the Bible's teaching for the church. As we mean it here, patternism assumes that the Bible is an assortment of specific rules dictating belief and practice in select areas, mainly the institutional topics of church polity, public procedure and membership requirements. ⁹

The Dictionary defines "conservative" as "Favoring traditional views and values; tending to oppose change." ¹⁰ These battles are the same ones constitutional conservatives face.

The liberal view of the constitution will hold that it is open for interpretation and can legitimately mean different things to different people as time goes by. Somehow to suggest that with a changing society comes a changing constitution. The left will argue that attempting to determine the founding fathers originally intended meaning is frivolous and relative to the different readers. ¹¹

The argument is made that we have developed this pattern and so constricted Scripture that we have failed to notice that it does not address every situation. Therefore, we should loosen up on silence because that is where God allows us to maneuver through changing times.

HANDLING AREAS OF SILENCE

Liberals heap scorn on those who would be so presumptuous as to see silence as prohibitive. Ryan Ross speaks of those who hold the "command, example and necessary inference" hermeneutic as studying the Bible through a "Legalist's Lens." ¹² He says this position is "ridiculous" and used "erratically." ¹³

Ross goes on to discuss the "Law of Legalistic Ludicrousness" that shows our position to be "wacky." ¹⁴ In his blatant attempts at humor he assembles a traditional laundry list of perceived inconsistencies such as the "holy kiss," "foot washing," and "veils." ¹⁵

Originally, Ross says that our "system" would mean that the Bible is irrelevant! Luke addresses "The Gospel According to Luke" and "The Acts of the Apostles" to Theophilus. He says the Law of Exclusion would mean that these books could not be read by anyone else. ¹⁶

He charges that our "system" would mean that the collection could not be spent but held until an Apostle comes and picks it up and that prayer meetings must be held on riverbanks. ¹⁷

Fenter surmises that our erroneous understanding of silence branches from our faulty methods of Biblical interpretation. He questions the notion of "necessary inference." Fenter says, "One pilot which we have often employed to navigate these treacherous waters is 'necessary inference.' The difficulty is obvious: who decides what is necessarily inferred and what is not?"

Then Fenter moves to "approved examples" and asks who the authority is to determine which ones are "approved"? ¹⁹

Dudrey derisively mentions Thomas B. Warren's use of "syllogistic logic" and says,

In view of such thinking I would suggest a reexamination of where to locate 'all-sufficiency': If we locate it in an idea of exhaustive, blueprint -pattern revelation of propositional truths, our movement will continue to face its current impasse. ²⁰

F. LaGard Smith wrote, "Whenever any document is held to be authoritative, respect for silence must exist, otherwise why consider the text authoritative?" ²¹

THE LAW OF EXCLUSION

The "Law of Exclusion" says, "whenever God requires something it automatically eliminates adding to it, subtracting from it or substituting something else." ²² This is a very basic concept that no one has any contention with in secular society. Yet, in religion this seems to be the equivalent of quantum physics.

If we go to a business complex and see a sign on a door that says, "Authorized Personnel Only" we know that it does not have to list everyone that is not included. It only has to say who is authorized to be there and therefore everyone else is excluded. Or, we are stopped for speeding and we tell the Police Officer, "I know the sign said the Speed Limit was 65, but it did not say I could not drive 85." Do so and you would likely be asked to slowly exit the vehicle. Finally,

when you give a script to a Pharmacist for a specific medicine authorized by the doctor, he must give you what is prescribed or be in violation of the law.

Heaps of ridicule have been heaped upon this concept despite its simplicity.

The Law of Exclusion *speaks* where the Bible is silent. It manufactures words like 'only,' 'always,' and 'never,' and it squeezes them between the lines. These added words then become battle cries for religious warfare. ²³

Briefly we will examine what the Law of Exclusion means utilizing a variety of texts. God told His people who He wanted to perform certain tasks. For anyone else to perform them would be to violate God's Will, which is sin.

The most famous (or infamous, if you are liberal) is Genesis 6:14 where God tells Noah to use "gopherwood" in construction of the Ark. If Noah had used any other wood he would have disobeyed God. He stayed true to all of God commands and was found pleasing to God (Genesis 6:22; cf. Joshua 6; Numbers 20:7-13).

In Leviticus 10:1-2 Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu *offered "profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them"* and God struck them dead for their disobedience.

1 Samuel 15 finds God commanding Saul to go to war with the Amalekites. "Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey" (15:3). Yet, Saul keeps the king and the best of the animals. God's anger grows as He says through Samuel, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king" (15:23).

In Numbers 1:50-51, God commands that the Levites shall be over the Tabernacle as priests. Then in Hebrews 7:14 we read, "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood."

Deuteronomy 10:8 says, "At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord." Later in 1 Chronicles 15:2 we read, "Then David said, 'No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen them to carry the ark of God, and to minister before Him forever."

CONCLUSION

This paper is too short to adequately cover this subject. I pray that, nonetheless, it is useful to the readers who spend time with it. There are other aspects that need to be discussed such as "generics" and "specifics" and the place of "command, example and necessary inferences" in the study of silence.

If Scripture is complete (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and will judge me on the last day (John 12:48) and adding to or taking away is a sin (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6 and Revelation 22:18-19) then what right do I have to act on the Silence of Scripture? I'm not brave enough to place my desire to do something above my soul. That is a gamble I am not willing to take.

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"LESSONS FROM



THE EIGHTH ANNUAL
SOUTHEAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 25 -- 26, 2003
HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA

Editor: Riley Nelson

PREFACE

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4 KJV). While these words as they were penned by the apostle Paul had to do with Old Testament writings, the same words can and do apply to the teaching of the New Testament. This volume concerns lessons to be learned from the book of First Corinthians.

Today some would have us believe that this letter is not for the church today to study, as there were so many problems in the congregation at Corinth. Instead they say we should only study about Jesus and His love. Common sense should tell us that by looking at their problems and how they were dealt with; we might avoid the problems altogether or at least know how to handle them when and if they do occur.

A study of First Corinthians will also help us to realize that no matter how wicked a locality may be the gospel can reach some of the souls who live there. Corinth was known far and wide for her wicked, immoral ways. Yet Paul was able to establish the church there. While it is true that the congregation had many problems, they were not problems that could not be handled. It is important to note that though there were problems; Paul had not given up on restoring this congregation back to the truth. This speaks volumes to those who are quick to write off congregations because Satan has gotten hold of some of the membership. Paul never compromised on doctrine, but he had both boldness and patience to give them time to correct their problems. Jesus once said as He was sending His servants out, "be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16 KJV). It should also be noted that Paul did not "overlook" the problems that existed, he dealt with them directly. Today some will overlook

problems, and allow souls to be lost because of their indifference. This is not a lesson learned from Paul's words to the Corinthians.

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons taught in this epistle is that of love. Paul shows both the

importance and scope of love. As it is explained by the inspired apostle, this love will cause

Christians to care about and serve God, as well as to care about and serve others. This seems to

be the commentary to what Jesus said when He was asked, "Master, which is the great

commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy

heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:36-39 KJV).

This caring love will cause the faithful to try and reach those who have strayed away, realizing

that discipline is needed, just as God has prescribed in His word.

This volume is put forth in hopes that its study will help to turn those who have strayed from

the truth to see their way back, and to help the faithful learn how to deal with problems. May we

all work together to remain faithful to the Lord until the final victory is achieved. "But thanks

be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved

brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as

ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:57,58 KJV).

Riley Nelson

Richmond Hill Church of Christ

October 26, 2003

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"Lessons from First Corinthians"

DEDICATION

When congregations of the Lord's people are actively working there are many tasks to be performed. Some of these require that people be seen while they work. These people may times receive accolades because they are in the public eye. However many times a lot of the work goes on behind the scenes by many individuals. Such is the case at the Richmond Hill congregation, and we appreciate all who help out with the work.

The congregation has many activities throughout the year; a banquet for older members, a youth day, a senior member day, Vacation Bible School, a Bible bowl, and our annual lectureship. With most of these activities either refreshments or a meal is required. For this to be handled correctly someone must be in charge of organizing. Sister Angela Cowart is the one to whom we turn. She makes menus, prepares lists, enlists volunteers, and sees that the "mission" is accomplished, including the cleanup. If she cannot be present she makes sure that everything is taken care of. She also serves as one of our teachers in our Bible School Program.

It is with great pleasure this volume is dedicated to Angela Cowart.

Riley Nelson

Eighth Annual Southeast Georgia Lectureship

Held at the Church of Christ Richmond Hill Georgia Highway 144 East P.O. Box 786 Richmond Hill GA 31324

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WHY STUDY CORINTHIANS?

By Ryan Tuten

What a wonderful privilege it is to be a part of this great lectureship again. The congregation at Richmond Hill is to be commended for their work in this lectureship program. Their love for the Lord and His Word is more evident with each passing year.

The study, which has been assigned to me, is: "Why study Corinthians?" In this study we will look at the Corinthian letter in various ways: (1) Basic introduction to the letter including author, time of writing, and basic geography, and the occasion of the writing, (2) The city of Corinth in her greatness and her wickedness, (3) The Gospel going to Corinth and the church established, (4) Lessons we must learn.

Introduction

The Author of the Epistle

Regarding First and Second Corinthians it is virtually unanimous among scholars of a conservative disposition that the claim of First Corinthians 1:1 is true, Paul the apostle, formerly Saul of Tarsus, authored the epistle. First and Second Corinthians also fit the tone, character, style and vocabulary of Paul. Aside from the abundant internal evidence, (and so much of this is in agreement with the actions of Paul noted in the Acts of the Apostles), there is the valuable evidence of the "church fathers." These notables, reaching back in time to just after the apostolic age, ascribe the epistle to Paul the apostle. In the writings of Polycarp, known as the "bishop of Smyrna," in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, in the writings of Tertullian, and in the writings of Irenaeus, etc., there are citations from First and Second Corinthians and noted as

being from Paul.² The epistle is also included in the Mutatorian canon, one of the earliest collections of the New Testament epistles.³

Beyond these things, there is an abundance of other material dating from the second century onward, wherein points found in First and Second Corinthians are alluded to by the writers. All of this amounts to a wonderful body of confirmation to the epistle as being an authentic letter from Paul, an apostle of the Lord!

DATE OF THE EPISTLE

Paul had already been in Corinth when he wrote the first epistle to the church. He had established the church in the city during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1ff; 1 Corinthians 2:1-3). When he penned the letter, he was on the verge of returning to them (4:19; 16:5). Luke reports (Acts 19:21) that Paul did not pass through Macedonia en route to Achaia (where Corinth was located). He also relates that Paul made that journey after leaving Ephesus, where he had spent about two years in evangelizing and edifying (Acts 19-20).

It seems certain that Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote this letter. He sent greetings to them from the churches of Asia (1 Corinthians 16:19); Ephesus was situated in Asia, and Aquila and Priscilla sent their greetings to the brethren at Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:19) and they were in Ephesus at the time (Acts 18:26).

The date of the letter can be placed between 54-57 A.D. He arrived in Ephesus sometime during the year 54 A.D., and was there two years and three months. He spent three months disputing in the Jewish synagogue (Acts 19:8); afterwards, he taught in the school of Tyrannus for two years (Acts 19:9-10).

GEOGRAPHY OF THE CITY OF CORINTH

Corinth was built upon the narrow neck of land called the isthmus or "neck of Corinth," that connects the Peloponnesus with the mainland, 4it was one of the best located cities of the day. This gave it the command of the land traffic from north to south. While from the two ports on the Ionian and Aegean seas, Cenchreae and Lechaeum, much of the traffic between Asia and the west was brought to its harbors and portage because of its convenience. The water route afforded by the Saronic Gulf on the east of the isthmus shortened the route to the west many miles and obviated the perilous voyage around the southern coast of Greece. Once the cargo arrived at either port, it was then carried across the isthmus for further transport. A road that was about five miles long was built across the isthmus on which small vessels were often hauled. The value of this shortened route is evident from the fact that plans were made in Paul's day to cut a canal through the isthmus. This canal would bring relief to their already huge metropolitan areas and the world's busiest seaports.

Excavation work in and around the ancient city of Corinth was begun in 1896 by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Corinth had been the scene of many battles. The capture of Constantinople by the Venetians and the crusades in 1204 had brought the surrender of Corinth. In 1446 the Turks overtook the region; but, in 1689 the Venetians took the city again. By 1715 the Turks had gained control once more, but, in February 1858, the city was nearly completely destroyed by an earthquake.⁶

The excavations that have followed have revealed to us several important facts concerning this region. As in other Greek cities, the agora was the center of the towns' life, and was surrounded by colonnades, buildings, shops and monuments.⁷ The road from Lechaeum entered the agora from the north side through and ornate gateway.⁸ The foundation of Pierene

was situated just east of this, and the road to Cenchraea ran from the eastern end of the marketplace.⁹

One of the features of the agora was the elevated platform undoubtedly marking the very spot where Paul faced his Jewish accusers in the presence of Gallio (Acts 18:12-17). It has also been discovered in the agora there were shops used for vending meats and other perishable food items.⁹ It is interesting to note that these were equipped with an underground channel connecting to a well.

THE OCCASION OF THIS EPISTLE

About three years after Paul had left Corinth, while he was in Ephesus, some 200 miles to the east, across the Aegean Sea, doing the most marvelous work of his life, a delegation of leaders of the Corinthian Church was sent to Ephesus to consult Paul about some very serious problems and disorders that had arisen in the church. Sometime before this letter, Paul had written to them concerning keeping company with fornicators (5:9). It was because of the serious problems reported to Paul (1:11; 7:1) that Paul writes this letter of concern and help.

CORINTH THE CITY

THE GREATNESS OF CORINTH

A glance at the map will show that Corinth was made for greatness. The southern part of Greece is very nearly an island. On the west the Corinthian Gulf deeply indents the land and on the east the Saronic Gulf. All that is left to join the two parts of Greece together is a little isthmus only four miles across. On that narrow neck of land Corinth stands. Such a position made it inevitable that it should be one of the greatest trading and commercial centers of the ancient

world. All traffic from Athens and the north of Greece to Sparta and the Peloponnesus had to be routed through Corinth, because it stood on the little neck of land that connected the two.

Not only did the north to south traffic of Greece pass through Corinth of necessity, by far the greater part of the east to west traffic of the Mediterranean passed through her by choice. The extreme southern tip of Greece was known as Cape Malea (now called Cape Matapan). It was dangerous, and to round Cape Malea had much the same sound as to round Cape Horn had in later times. The Greeks had two sayings, which showed what they thought of it – "Let him who sails round Malea forget his home," and, "Let him who sails round Malea first make his will."

The consequence was that mariners followed one of two courses. They sailed up the Saronic Gulf, and, if their ships were small enough, dragged them out of the water, set them on rollers, hauled them across the isthmus, and re-launched them on the other side. The isthmus was actually called the *Diolkos*, the place of "dragging across". The idea is the same as that which is contained in the Scottish place name *Tarbert*, which means a place where the land is so narrow that a boat can be dragged from loch to loch. If that course was not possible because the ship was too large, the cargo was disembarked, carried by porters across the isthmus, and reembarked on another ship at the other side. This four mile journey across the isthmus, where the Corinth Canal now runs, saved a journey of two hundred and two miles round Cape Malea, the most dangerous cape in the Mediterranean.

It is easy to see how great a commercial city Corinth must have been. The north to south traffic of Greece had no alternative but to pass through her; by far the greater part of the east to west trade of the Mediterranean would choose to pass through her. Around Corinth there clustered three other towns, Lechaeum at the west end of the isthmus, Cenchreae at the east end

and Schoenus just a short distance away. ¹⁵ Farrar writes, "Objects of luxury soon found their way to the markets which were visited by every nation in the civilized world—Arabian balsam, Phoenician dates, Libyan ivory, Babylonian carpets, Cilician goats' hair, Lycaonian wool, Phrygian slaves." ¹⁶

Corinth was the Vanity Fair of the ancient world. Men called her "*The Bridge of Greece*"; some called her, "*The Lounge of Greece*".¹⁷ It has been said that if a man stands long enough in Piccadilly Circus he will in the end meet everyone in the country.¹⁸ Corinth was the Piccadilly Circus of the Mediterranean. To add to the concourse which came to it, Corinth was the place where the Isthmian Games were held, which were second only to the Olympics.¹⁹ Corinth was a rich and populous city with one of the greatest commercial trades in the ancient world.

THE WICKEDNESS OF CORINTH

There was another side to Corinth. She had a reputation for commercial prosperity, but she was also a byword for evil living. The very word *korinthiazesthai*, to live like a Corinthian, had become a part of the Greek language, and meant to live with drunken and immoral debauchery. The word actually penetrated to the English language, and, in Regency times, a Corinthian was one of the wealthy young bucks who lived a reckless and riotous life. Aelian, the Greek writer, tells us that if ever a Corinthian was shown upon the stage in a Greek play he was shown drunk.²⁰ The very name Corinth was synonymous with debauchery and there was one source of evil in the city, which was known all over the civilized world. Above the isthmus towered the hill of the Acropolis, and on it stood the great temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. To that temple there were attached one thousand priestesses who were sacred prostitutes, and in the evenings they descended from the Acropolis and plied their trade upon the streets of

Corinth, until it became a Greek proverb, "It is not every man who can afford a journey to Corinth."²¹ A guide in the ancient city said the prostitutes had "follow me" written on the soles of their shoes so that when they walked in the sand the sailors and other men would know how to get to the temple.²² In addition to these cruder sins, there flourished far more recondite vices, which had come in with the traders and sailors from the ends of the earth, until Corinth became not only a synonym for wealth and luxury, drunkenness and debauchery, but also for filth.

There can be no doubt that Corinth had her reputation. Yet Paul understood and saw the need for the Gospel to be preached in this city. Paul not only lived in the city of Corinth, he addressed their needs and dealt with their problems in his preaching, his writing, and his living. Paul could see the great influence of idolatry and immorality from simply just being in Corinth. It was into this den of lost souls that Paul perhaps did his greatest work. Not only was he able to start a congregation, but also evidently had many converts even among the pagans.

THE GOSPEL GOES TO CORINTH

The eighteenth chapter of the book of Acts is centered around the latter portion of the Apostle Paul's Second Missionary Journey. The Apostle travels with the accompaniment of Silas only (Acts 15:40), for there has been a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas concerning John Mark (Acts 15:37-39). Therefore the brethren, having the same purpose in mind (Acts 15:36), have gone different routes. Further, as Paul and Silas entered Berea, their preaching of the Gospel was well received (Acts 17:10-11). As a result, the Jews of Thessalonica came thither to Berea, purposing to stir up the people against Paul (Acts 17:13). All of this led to the separation of Paul and Silas (Acts 17:14). One must notice that, all of this chain of facts tied together leads to a most important fact; the Apostle Paul enters the godless, sin-sick city of

Corinth alone (Acts 18:1). Acts 18:1-22, is the divine recorded of how for the first time, "The Gospel Goes into Corinth;"

The city of Corinth was at that time a commercial metropolis of Greece. 23 At the time the Apostle Paul entered this great city, it was one of the largest, richest, and most important cities of the Roman Empire. In terms of population, it was surpassed only by Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. Because of the city's position, it made it, in military point of view, a key setting. Further, its command of a port on two seas made it the center of commerce between Asia and Europe. This city's ancient splendor, its commercial, and its intellectual life would all contribute to social and moral decay; this would tend to highlight the grand need that the Gospel of Jesus Christ be preached. It was in a city of this kind that the Apostle entered alone to establish the church in the very shadow of Athenian Philosophy. Two minor points need to be considered under this major heading. First, the Apostle Paul preached simply that "Jesus was Christ." In Acts 18:4-5, the King James reads, "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ."

No indications can be found that the Apostle used forms of *sensational emotionalism* to induce faith; no indications exist that he compromised with the Jews at the expense of truth. How strange that there was no bonus seat, to fill the synagogue to capacity! And further, one does not find the Apostle advocating any of the "*isms*" of human understanding and reason to insure one of religious convenience. The Apostle Paul simply preached Christ. And, the Holy Spirit paints a very clear picture as to the method of Paul's preaching on this grand occasion. Once again notice Acts 18:4-5. The Apostle reasoned persistently with them to the end that he might persuade the

Jews and Greeks. His reasoning, persistence, and persuasion were based on the fact that Jesus is the Christ.

Secondly, one should note that Paul forced the gospel on no man, for the divine record states "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, your blood be upon our own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6). Once the preacher had done all within his means to reason and persuade the non-believers that Jesus was the Christ, he had no intentions of kicking down the door of man's heart, in order to force one to give obedience to the gospel. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you" (Matt. 7:6). Further, it was not Paul's position to stop preaching the Gospel because some did not believe. Luke states, "And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue" (Acts 18:7). Therefore, brethren, the Apostle teaches a great lesson of evangelism; he taught the people, they blasphemed, and as a result opposed themselves. Paul pointed out to them a plain truth, "Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean" (Acts 18:6). And he thus departed thence (Acts 18:7).

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH IN CORINTH

The city of Corinth was so wicked and had become so perverse; it became a great testing ground for the efficacy of the gospel. It was a good place for Paul to preach the true message of Christ, which is the cross. Paul had the heart of the message of salvation, and Corinth being full of potential with all its wickedness, was a prime place to sow seed and reap the harvest. The church at Corinth was established by Paul (1 Corinthians 3:6) while he was on his second

missionary journey, and after his departure from Athens (Acts 18:1ff). Paul resided in Corinth for a year and a half, first living with Aquila and Priscilla, who had recently been expelled from Rome by the Emperor Claudius. During this time, Paul preached every Sabbath day in spite of the persecutions and oppositions, especially among the Jews. Due to this opposition he turned to the Gentiles, and began to reside at the house of Justus, a Gentile who lived next to the Synagogue. While staying there and continuing his preaching, he made several converts including Crispus, a ruler of the synagogue.

LESSONS LEARNED FORM THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

Many New Testament congregations had their problems. The letter, which was written to the church at Corinth, reads somewhat like our daily newspapers today, except a proper solution was then offered. The church today still has many of the same problems they had thousands of years ago in principle. The church there in Corinth had many problems and many of these problems surely came from the background of the culture and city. Many problems in the church today also come in through the backdoor as individuals enter the church. They bring their false ideas, customs, thoughts etc. The rich want to act like the rich, the poor like the poor, the business men like the business men etc.

LET US STUDY SOME OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE CHURCH AT CORINTH AND THEREBY LEARN HOW TO SETTLE OURS

The Problem of Division

1 Corinthians 1:10 – the problem was over leadership. Not necessarily caused by the leaders, and was not between them. It was a matter of preference, favoritism, and the like. The fellowship, which Paul cherished so much, had been marred by conditions in Corinth. This entire letter is devoted to bringing harmony out of chaos. They were not all speaking the same thing and practicing the unity in which our Lord prayed for in the garden. There were extremely serious divisions among them. What a terrible loss! Joy was being crowded out by bitterness and jealously. Wasting energy in backbiting and various conflicts was paralyzing productivity. Notice that Paul stated, "I beseech ye..." Beseech is a strong word. It displays Paul's deep and great concern for their spiritual welfare. Notice his beseeching was not in the name of Paul, but in the name of Christ. It was not Paul who was being torn to tatters. It was the body of the Lord himself.

The Problem of a Christ-Centered Message

1 Cor. 1:18-27. The Jews sought signs – Greeks for wisdom (1:22-24). The gospel was the remedy.²⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:18-21. Those who are so wise in their own eyes as to shunt the cross to one side and follow weak and frail men are doomed to destruction. By neglecting the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, they continue to wallow in their own sins. However, for those who will see the sacrifice of Christ as the supreme example of unselfish love of God and

man, the cross will be an inspiration to follow the instructions of the Savior and walk the straight and narrow way to life.

The Problem of Getting All to Grow and Develop Into Maturity

1 Cor. 3:1-4. The Corinthians were still babes in Christ (Heb. 5:12-14) when they should have been growing. The church cannot thrive and grow unless the members are thoroughly taught and indoctrinated²⁵ (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Matt. 4:4). In this letter written to the Corinthians one finds a picture of immaturity over and over again. The bickering and pride, which they manifested, were not characteristics of spiritual men. They had been baptized into Christ. They had put on Christ. But they were still acting like squalling babies whose entire focus was upon their selves. They were utterly disgusting to Paul. There was much he needed to teach them. However, under the present conditions there was a great deal to be done for they were ready for that which he could have offered them.²⁶

The Problem of Discipline in the Church

1 Cor. 5:1-13. What a cynical situation existed in the church at Corinth. The case of fornication, a worse situation can hardly be imagined. A man was having sexual relations with his "father's wife." This probably means his stepmother. It was such a filthy mess that even those who had no commitment to Christ would have found it such a shame they would not even wanted to talk about it. The shame and reproach such actions bring on the church are hideous. Non-Christians are always looking and watching every move a Christian makes, waiting for a chance to justifiably criticize the church. Those who bring such reproach and embarrassment to the church must be disciplined. This was Paul's exhortation to deal with this man.

The Problem of Getting Along With Other Brethren

1 Cor. 6. The apostle had already dealt with three or four major problems in the church at Corinth. He now turns his attention to his next concern and that was about Christians not having enough confidence in their own brethren to trust them with handling difference between brethren. Paul found it difficult to believe that brethren would take their differences before the civil courts, or other third parties, rather than turning to fellow Christians. Let the church help settle the differences and may we abide by those decisions.

Marriage and Home Problems

1 Cor. 7. Avoid fornication, with the conditions as they were, if persons found themselves unable to control their desires and passions and drawn to fornication to satisfy them, it would be much better to marry than to commit fornication. Husbands and wives possess and satisfy each other (Heb. 13:4), notice the verse (2) speaks of one husband and one wife, not a plurality. ²⁷ It was God's plan from the beginning that one man and one woman be together for a lifetime. If a mixed marriage, live with the unconverted one – if he will repent and obey the Gospel, he might be saved, if he will not, remain single, or be reconciled.

Problems of Dealing with Weak Members

1 Cor. 8:9-11; Rom. 14:1-3. Let those well-informed fellowship those un-informed about meats, etc. But let the un-informed brother not forbid the informed brother to eat meats. Each one of us must keep his influence good and not cause others to stumble. This is also true of other kindred matters.

The Problem of Supporting Preacher of the Gospel

1 Cor. 9. False apostles had questioned Paul's authority and apostleship. He defended his apostleship and right to receive support, but did not exercise his right in the matter. Therefore, putting to silence the false teachers (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

The Problem of Sin, Worldliness and Apostasy

1 Cor. 10. Chapter ten points out that just because you start out strong is no proof you will remain and finish strong. Many Israelites, started out from Egypt as they departed into the wilderness strong and of a good courage. Yet most of them died in the wilderness. Only Joshua and Caleb entered into the promise land. They were exhorted to flee from idolatry. The most important thing in understanding what Paul was telling those here were about the idea of being careful about our influence.

The Problem of the Appearance of the Opposite Sex in Worship

1 Cor. 11. Men with heads uncovered; woman with covered heads. Much has been written concerning exactly what did the apostle mean. Guy N. Woods in his work, *Questions and Answers Volume I*, wrote the following;

Involved in this matter are two questions-not one- each of which must be answered before a conclusion may properly be drawn regarding this matter. Beyond doubt, a correct exegesis of this passage leads to the conclusion that in the Church in Corinth, and we may assume, in all of the churches of the first century, it was required of women to worship with covered heads and men to worship with uncovered heads- the covered head, in the case of the woman, to evidence her subordination to her "head," (man), and man to indicate his subordination to his "head,"-Christ. (Verses 3, 4, 5.) Did Paul require women to wear a covering in the church in Corinth? He did, indeed; I have never seen any other "explanation" of this passage that, in my view, has the slightest merit. I see not how any other conclusion can possibly be drawn. All efforts otherwise, such as to make the hair the covering considered; or to make man "the covering" (an absurdity!), fail in the light of the clear teaching of this passage, particularly in the Greek

text. Paul taught the Christian women I Corinth to wear a covering (veil) on their heads when they engaged in public worship. He taught that men were to worship with uncovered heads. The "covering" involved was something that could be put on or off at will, thus evidencing the fact that it was not the hair which women were to wear but something additional, otherwise, only bald headed men could pray!

Did Paul intend that this practice (of women covering their heads in worship) should be always and everywhere observed? I once thought so, but upon more mature study and much reflection on this matter I now believe that (a) Paul did not originate the custom of covered heads for women but sanctioned a practice already recognized and, (b) that while the headship relation continues, the manner by which it is indicated does not, and that Christian women who sit in public assemblies today with uncovered heads, do not thereby evidence insubordination to men.

I believe this matter is in exactly the same category as the instruction of the same apostle regarding the kiss as a mode of greeting (Rom. 16:16). "Salute one another with a holy kiss." Here is an edict addressed to the church in Rome. It bade them salute (greet) one another; and the method designated is by "a holy kiss." Are we to suppose that it was the intent of the Holy Spirit to fix this mode of greeting upon the church henceforth; and, are all of us today who do not follow this mode of greeting in rebellion against God? I do not think so; it was not a method of greeting which the apostle originated; he simply took what was already done and sanctified it –made it a holy form of greeting. Similarly, the "covering" to which Paul alludes in I Cor. 11 was established and recognized widely and he ruled that Christian women were not to veer from a practice which would subject them to the criticism of the people of that day... I also believe that such symbolism, not current in our country, not only does not betoken what Paul recognized in it in the first century Corinth, but would be meaningless were it adopted today. ²⁸

The Problem of Keeping the Worship Spiritual

1 Cor. 11:17-34. There were some serious problems concerning the eating of the Lord's Supper. The worship services were being corrupted by certain practices. What should have been supplying them with spiritual strength was instead leading to their weakness and death. Eating and drinking in an unworthy manner was precisely what the Corinthians had been doing. By doing so, they had made themselves just as guilty of the murder of Christ as those who cried out, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him," or as those who nailed him to the cross.

Problem of Spiritual Gifts

1 Cor. 12, 13, 14. – These three chapters discuss the nature, use and duration of the spiritual gifts. These three chapters are by far the most concentrated discourse in the whole Bible on these matters. If the church at Corinth were to be healed of the spiritual sickness from within, such healing would be accomplished by replacing pride and jealously with love and genuine concern for the welfare of the church.²⁹ In chapter twelve the nature of spiritual gifts are defined. In chapter thirteen, Paul deals with the proper attitude while using the gifts as well as the duration. Chapter fourteen handles the orderly use of the gifts.

Problem of False Doctrines about the Resurrection

1 Cor. 15. This chapter deals with the resurrection. There is no more fundamental area of Christian teaching. If there is no resurrection, all the rest of the words that Paul has spoken to the church at Corinth would be termed trivia.

Problem of Benevolence and Co-Operation of Churches

1 Cor. 16. In this final chapter of this great letter we read of the discussion concerning the collection of the saints in Jerusalem. When Paul was in Jerusalem the leaders there had agreed that he was to take the responsibility for getting the gospel to the Gentiles. At the same time, they urged him while doing so that he not forget the poor saints among the Jews back home. Paul took both charges very seriously. He braved much harsh opposition to preach the gospel of Christ to the Gentile world. He also never forgets the poor Jews. As he traveled from city to city, he urged the Gentiles to send a contribution to the Christian Jews in Jerusalem.

Conclusion

As Paul closes, he sends his own autograph greeting on the last page of the letter, which some secretary had taken down for him. He warns them against anyone who does not love Christ. And then he writes in Aramaic the phrase, "Maranatha," which most probably means, "the Lord is at hand."³⁰ It seems strange to me that he would choose to write this phrase in Aramaic in a Greek letter to a Greek church. The explanation is that the phrase had become a watchword and a password. It summed up the vital hope of the early church, and Christians identified each other by it, in a language that the heathen could not understand.

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul was addressing a troubled congregation. There were divisions among them. They were choosing up sides and following factions. Gross sexual immorality was accepted among members. There were lawsuits. Christian brethren were suing each other. They were confused about the marriage commitment, and the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols was tearing down the faith of some. The worship assemblies were out of control as members vied with one another to show off their spiritual gifts. The Lord's Supper was being abused. And they were in deep water doctrinally. Some doubted the resurrection of Christ.

Near the conclusion of his letter, after writing more than 9000 words addressing all of these problems, Paul sums up his advice in one sentence. He writes: "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

Indeed, without Christian love all the advice and words of wisdom offered by Paul would have come to naught. Ultimately it's love that heals division. Love does not divide. "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

But this doesn't mean that love winks at sin. It doesn't. Sometimes the church is pressured to ignore or overlook sin in a member in the name of love. The church is somehow accused of failing to be a loving fellowship if it disciplines members who sin. But that's not true. Jesus said, "*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent*" (Revelation 3:19). Christians restore erring brethren "*in a spirit of gentleness...*" (Galatians 6:11).

Furthermore, Christian marriages are only as strong as the love a husband and wife have, not for each other, but for the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the Lord's love that serves as a model for love in marriage. "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church. .." (Ephesians 5:22,25). If Christian love prevails in a marriage, the marriage will prevail. Unfortunately, the divorce rate among Christians is about the same as the divorce rate among unbelievers. Dear Christian husbands and wives "Let all that you do be done in love."

Nowadays congregations are being torn apart over how to conduct worship. Paul in the midst of correcting the worship abuses at Corinth wrote: "but earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31). The still more excellent way was love. And that is how worship issues should be resolved. The Christian's first love is God. God is the object of our adoration and worship. So we must worship to please Him and not ourselves. The Lord's desires in worship must override our own, and His Word is final.

Finally, does love trump doctrine? Some folks say that in the name of unity and love, any and all teachings, as long as they're sincere, must be accepted. But this isn't how true love is expressed. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Honoring God's commands and following His teachings are true expressions of love.

Do you want the church to be what Christ wants it to be? Then Paul has good advice. "Let all that you do be done in love."

Two last things that Paul sends to the Christians at Corinth – the grace of Christ and his own love. He might have had an occasion to warn, to rebuke, to speak with righteous anger, but the last word is love.

End Notes

¹ Bob Winton, <u>Outlined Commentary on 1 Corinthians</u>; Manchester. TN: Winton Publications, (1992), 1,2. □ Ibid, p.2 ³ Ibid, p.3 ⁴ Bert Thompson, The First Corinthians Epistles, An Introduction; Denton, Lectureship, Denton, Texas(1982), Valid Publication, p.15 ⁵ Ibid, p.6 ⁶ Bob Winton, Outlined Commentary on 1 Corinthians; Manchester. TN: Winton Publications, (1992), 3,4 ⁷ Ibid, p.6 8 Ibid, p.7 ⁹ Ibid, p.8 ¹¹William Barclay, Outlined Commentary on First Corinthians; The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Penn. 1977, p. XIV ¹²Ibid, p.4 ¹³Ibid, p.5 ¹⁴Ibid, p.5 ¹⁵Ibid, p.6 ¹⁶Ibid, p.7 ¹⁷Ibid, p.7 ¹⁸Ibid, p.8 ¹⁹Ibid, p.9 ²⁰Ibid, p.9 ²¹Ibid, p.10 ²²Ibid, p.11 ²³ Bert Thompson, The First Corinthians Epistles, An Introduction; Denton, Lectureship, Denton, Texas(1982), Valid Publication, p.18 ²⁴Ibid, p.38 ²⁵Ibid, p.38 ²⁶Leon D. Stancliff, <u>1 and 2 Corinthians Commentary</u>; Volume 5; Murfreesboro, TN. (2000) Sain Publications, p. 75 ²⁷Ibid, Nichols, p. 38 ²⁸Guy N. Woods, Questions and Answers Volume I; Freed-Hardeman College, Henderson TN. (1976) Williams p. 95-97 ²⁹Ibid, p. 163 ³⁰Ibid, p. 197

1 Corinthians 1:11-13, Religious Division

By Wayne Rodgers

I am thankful to have been able to have a part in the lectureship at the Richmond Hill congregation for the past three years. It is truly a wonderful feast of God's divine word, as well as a great source for study. I am thankful to this congregation and the work they have done in producing this book and their stand for the truth. This lectureship is a result of the efforts of the Richmond Hill Church of Christ to stand for the truth in the community and in our brotherhood. I am truly thankful and encouraged by congregations who take on such a task as this, and they should be commended for their great work.

Introduction

The lesson assigned to me is Chapter One of First Corinthians with emphasis on verses eleven through thirteen. A great multitude of writing has been done on behalf of these particular verses, as well as the rest of the book of First Corinthians. Various problems plagued the church at Corinth; problems such as: divisions (1-4), a case of immorality (5), lawsuits between Christians (6:1-8), immorality in general (6:9-20), Paul replies to their questions concerning: marriage (7), food, particularly meat offered to idols (8:1-11:1), public worship of the church, including veiling of women in worship (11:2-16), the Lord's Supper (11:17-34), the use of spiritual gifts (12-14), the resurrection (15), and the collection of funds by the church (16:1-9). It was these problems just mentioned and a report from the household of Chloe that would prompt the apostle Paul to write this letter for their needed reproof, rebuke and exhortation (2 Timothy 3:16-4:2). What a great treasure trove of scripture this letter is for Christians today.

There is so much to gain from reading and studying the letters to the Corinthian church. We will likely find some of the very same problems that we are faced with in the church today, because such is the nature of man.

CONTEXT OF CHAPTER ONE

The apostle Paul begins this letter with a greeting from himself and Sosthenes and by asserting the fact that he was truly an apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). A student of the Bible will notice the phrase "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God" (all scripture references are from KJV, unless otherwise noted.) This is very similar to what is written in the opening lines of the epistle to the Galatians: "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)" The apostle would defend the truth of his apostleship in both letters.² In his missionary trips preaching the Gospel, Paul would often find himself having to defend his apostleship, as he would write in numerous epistles: "Paul, an apostle..." (Rom. 11:13; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; 12:12; Gal. 1:11,12; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1). Paul begins this letter which deals with many problems, with a reminder of the authority with which he brings his message to them. Sosthenes is mentioned with the apostle Paul in greeting. Sosthenes was the chief ruler of the synagogue (Acts 18:17) and was beaten by the Greeks before the judgment seat of Gallio, because he was a Jew, and because he had joined with the other Jews in arraigning Paul, and had thus produced a disturbance in the city. His conversion would, therefore, excite a deep interest.³

In Verse Two, the apostle addresses the "church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's." David Lipscomb says, "The members

of the church at Corinth had fallen into many sinful habits, yet Paul recognized them as a church of God." ⁴ The phrase used in greeting these saints, as well as "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ," makes this letter's application to Christians of all ages, every place and every circumstance a must. In Verse Three, Paul offers a prayer of grace and peace to a needful congregation, a peace that certainly any with division in their life would appreciate. In Verse Four, the apostle tells the Corinthians that he always "thanked God" on their behalf and for the grace that God has already bestowed upon them through Jesus Christ. Lipscomb says the apostle in a very eloquent way is congratulating them on:

"the abundant gifts and graces bestowed on them from God, and to express his hope as to their spiritual progress; in order, by a praise calculated to conciliate their good will, to introduce, with less offense, the reproofs which their state rendered is necessary for him to administer, and which he skillfully introduces. There was much to be thankful for, and hopeful about, in the Corinthian church. And on this he first dwells, in order to appeal to their better feelings, and thus place the contrast in stronger relief, and so fix a deep conviction of sin." ⁵

In Verses Five and Six, the apostle reminds them of the many blessings and gifts bestowed on the Corinthian church. They were enriched by Him (God – emphasis wr), in all utterance, in all knowledge, and the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them. Many wonders and signs were done in their midst confirming the testimony of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 12:12-13, Paul says, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and in mighty deeds. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong."

This leads us into Verse Seven, which the apostle says that they were behind none in the gifts. They had not been lacking in the gifts of this apostolic era. Verse Eight was to encourage them to hold fast and to be blameless before the Lord. In Verse Nine, Paul assures the Corinthians that "God is faithful." The focus in these verses seems to take the focus off of the

spiritual gifts they had been given, and to look to God, who is faithful and had called them into fellowship with His Son. It is also interesting to note that this is the ninth reference to Jesus Christ as Lord, Messiah, and the one through whom all has been accomplished in the Corinthians.

THE PRELUDE TO OUR TEXT - VERSE 10

In Verse Ten, the apostle begins literally pleading his case to the Corinthians. "I beseech thee, brethren," Paul says. The word "beseech" is used for every kind of calling to a person and is meant to produce a particular effect. ⁶ The effect Paul was looking for comes within the verse: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Paul uses the phrase "brethren" in this verse. When the word "brethren" is used, it should truly be something of a fondness for one another, as in a family. "Paul, as a brother in Christ, tenderly entreats them from God, speaking For Jesus Christ and by his authority (2 Cor. 5:20), so as not to let any other name eclipse the name of Jesus Christ, by making it a rallying point around which to gather." ⁷ Closely associated with the word "brethren" gives the meaning of "brotherly love" as Hugo McCord points out in the Denton Lectures:

"As a physical family when ordered aright enjoys brotherly love, so God has planned for his spiritual family to practice and to rejoice in love of the brothers. The Greek word *philadelphia*, meaning "brotherly love," was the name of a city where one of the seven churches of Asia was located (Rev. 3:7), and it is the name adopted by an American metropolis as the "city of brotherly love." The Holy Spirit, not surprisingly, wrote much about *philadelphia*:"

"In love of the brethren (philadelphia) be tenderly affectioned one to another..." (Rom. 12:10 - ASV)

"But concerning love of the brethren (philadelphia) ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more" (1 Thes. 4:9-10 – ASV)
"Let love of the brethren (philadelphia) continue" (Heb. 13:1 – ASV)

Psalm 133 reveals the great beauty of brotherhood:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that came down upon the skirt of his garments; like the dew of Hermon, that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion: for there Jehovah commanded the blessing, Even life evermore. 8

Unity should be a constant goal of the church. What an awful thing to see a congregation who are supposed to enjoy "together" the rich blessings of Christ, fail because of contentions among themselves. It is shameful the way some "brethren" treat one another, as if there was no love at all between them, as if there was no common bond and faith they share in Christ Jesus, and as if there was no kinship whatsoever through the blood of our Lord which was shed for the church (Acts 20:28). This is the tenth time Paul mentions the name of Jesus, and it is found in a different light as it is now used to present his case for unity and not division with the established authority of Jesus Christ. There were divisions in the church at Corinth as seen in our text, verses 10-13. Paul pleaded with his brethren to not divide the body of Christ, but rather "speak the same thing...(and) be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment."

THE SITUATION WITH THE CORINTHIAN BRETHREN

Brother McCord points out that the church in Corinth had a bad case of "preacheritis." ⁹ It has always been the case that those who are especially uninformed of the scriptures have fallen prey to strong preacher personalities and fail to read and study their Bibles which leads them to

follow preachers as human leaders and not Christ, the head of His church (Eph. 1:22-23). It is interesting to note what McGarvey and Pendleton write concerning the "pride of Corinth:"

The pride of Corinth showed itself largely in philosophical conceit, and the citizens who vaunted their superior intelligence were divided into sects, of whom Aristotle, Plato, Zeno, Epicurus, and later philosophers, were the heads. The church became inflated with this same intellectual vanity, and apparently sought to make Christianity the rival of philosophy by exalting her humble teachers to be heads of religio-philosophical sects, and rivals of Christ himself. ¹⁰

It seems that there were three areas with a devastating evil effect upon the church at Corinth: Unity of Speech, Unity of Organization, Unity of Mind and Judgment. "That they all speak the same thing" brings judgment on the making of long philosophical speeches, speculative discourses and unscriptural reasonings because of the division it generally brings about. Peter said "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). However, if all in the body are speaking the same thing, then there is unity, which was the prayerful goal of our Lord (John 17:14, 17, 21). Then Paul strikes at their division within the church. We should realize the context points to division within the church, not division without. The passage in application shows us the types of attitudes within the congregation which likely led to the greater divisions that we see in the religious world today claiming to be part of the church. The weakness displayed by well-intentioned sectarians in denominations and in the Lord's church today appears to be rooted in the same soil that caused this "preacheritis" mentioned earlier found in the church at Corinth. The obvious weakness seems to be immaturity. 11 Notice 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"

The apostle also mentions the unity of mind and judgment as the ideal condition for which they should strive. McGarvey points out that the "mind" represents the inner state and "judgment" is the outward exhibition of it in action. The key phrase is very likely "perfected together" – ASV) suggesting a progress of growth being linked to knowledge of our Lord's will for his church. Perfection of knowledge brings unity of thought and action, but defective understanding brings about division.¹² The body should grow and be perfected together. It is the duty of the growing Christian to help the understanding of the Christian not growing at the same rate. It is the duty of the Christian not growing as readily to freely receive the truth and begin to grow and spiritually mature as a Christian.

Paul names his source in Verse Eleven, "the household of Chloe," which is a good lesson for all so that we do not base any argument or point to be made on "third-party gossip." Paul names his source to take away any doubt of his knowledge of their actions. Note again, "my brethren." Despite all wrongs committed, they are still his brethren. In Verse Twelve, Paul explains what he means by "contentions:" "every one of you say, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ."

Of Paul

The apostle Paul had the ever constant worry of Judaizing teachers who hated Paul and went every where in hopes of destroying his work. They would go about denying Paul's apostleship. Many who loved Paul would defend Paul very zealously, claiming to be followers of his. Paul was not eloquent in speech nor was he commanding in appearance (2 Cor. 10:10), but taught very plainly and without apology the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8).

Of Apollos

Apollos was an eloquent speaker and learned in the Scriptures, had worked among them and was now very popular with them. A party or faction had now arisen claiming him as their teacher. He was likely with the apostle Paul (16:12), knowing the horrible division and sects within the church, and also aware of the writing of this letter to the church at Corinth.

Of Cephas

Peter was truly a great influence on the church especially in Jerusalem and Judea. So, others, who had likely come from Jerusalem and now were at Corinth, claimed Peter as their leader and teacher, as he had been in Jerusalem and Judea.

Of Christ

Others still claimed to ignore all teachers and be of Christ. This too could have caused a partisan spirit among the brethren. Jesus said, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth him that sent me. ¹³

Albert Barnes raises a good point that the Corinthian church being made up of Jews and Gentiles would have been divided by the same: Paul & Apollos were basically preachers to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews.¹⁴ Parties may have divided among these lines. Whatever the case may have been, the problem still arose even though these preachers were our humble examples of how to emphasize Christ as the head of the church and not man.

Paul's Condemnation Of This Practice

In Verse Thirteen, the apostle Paul asks the questions: "Was Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Contextually, Paul condemns their dividing the body of Christ by asking, "Was Christ divided?" An answer to this rhetorical question would lead one condemning their own practice of dividing the body. Paul obviously was not crucified for them, for his blood would not serve as atonement for sin. Paul referred to himself as "chief of sinners." Only the blood of the sinless Son of God (1 Peter 1:19) could be efficacious for the cleansing of sin and bringing about redemption of man before God. Paul was certainly not baptizing people by his own authority. Paul knew wherein the authority was given to him, as he met the One with authority on the road to Damascus. As Paul answered Jesus by saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) So, Paul's rhetorical questions are to only drive the point home that their division was sinful and Paul was ashamed of their parties. In Verses Fourteen and Fifteen, Paul says, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name."

To divide and rend the church of Christ into parties is to divide Christ himself. Because of the situation that arose in Corinth, they were dividing among themselves. These are the same types of attitudes that lead immature Christians to split and divide the body of Christ even today. We have to be so careful in not catching the dreadful and sinful disease of "preacheritis." Many have been plagued with it and have caused division in the church of our Lord.

Conclusion

In application, these are the same attitudes seen in the religious world today. "I don't like this preacher" or "I don't like the way he teaches" or maybe "I don't like what he teaches" or "we're following this preacher" are just some of the attitudes that caused early division in the church. These are the same attitudes which led to denominationalism which is so rampant throughout the world today. The number of religious bodies are growing at such a rapid pace that we hear different numbers of denominations every day. The religious world has become a world of chaos and confusion, because of what is being taught. It will always go back to immaturity and ignorance and sometimes indifference of the Scriptures. People fail to read and study the Bible for themselves, setting themselves up for a fall (Hosea 4:6).

Many people have been converted from denominationalism and have been zealous in preaching against it, urging people to once again pick up their Bibles, "studying to show themselves approved unto God," and speaking where the Bible speaks (Speaking the same thing...perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment), and being silent where it is silent.

I am truly thankful that I was taught the truth, and it is truly a passion for me to preach the truths of God's word. The motivation for me is knowing that there are people looking for the truth and not just what some man thinks. This should drive each of us to deliver to them simply the truth. Stand upon the sure foundation of God, Jesus Christ, the "chief cornerstone." Divisions will only cease to be when men submit to God's teaching and accept it for the truth and put away the attitude of "me, me, me and I, I, I" and look to Jesus Christ, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). May God help us to have the strength to always stand for the

truth and beware of factions, sects, and any group who might divide the body of Christ for it is both sinful and abhorring to God!

End Notes

- ¹ Bert Thompson, <u>The First Corinthian Epistle An Introduction</u>; Denton Lectureship, Denton, TX. (1982) Valid Publications, p. 20.
- ² David Lipscomb, <u>A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians</u>; Gospel Advocate, Nashville, TN. (1935) p. 19.
- ³ Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament 1 Corinthians; Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan. (reprint 1998) p. 1.
- ⁴ David Lipscomb, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians; Gospel Advocate, Nashville, TN. (1935) p. 20.
- ⁵ Ibid. p. 27-28.
- ⁶ Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, unabridged edition. McDonald Publishing Company, McLean, Virginia. P. 121-122.
- ⁷ Lipscomb, <u>A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians</u>; Gospel Advocate, Nashville, TN. (1935) p. 26.
- ⁸ Hugo McCord, <u>The First Corinthian Epistle Unity Among Brethren</u>; Denton Lectureship, Denton, TX. (1982) Valid Publications, p. 24-25.
- ⁹ Ibid. p. 28.
- ¹⁰http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/jwmcgarvey/tcgr/TCGR311.HTM
- ¹¹Hugo McCord, <u>The First Corinthian Epistle Unity Among Brethren</u>; Denton Lectureship, Denton, TX. (1982) Valid Publications, p. 29.
- 12http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/jwmcgarvey/tcgr/TCGR311.HTM
- ¹³Lipscomb, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians; Gospel Advocate, Nashville, TN. (1935) p. 27.
- ¹⁴Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament 1 Corinthians; Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan. (reprint 1998) p. 9.

1 Corinthians 1:23-2:17, Declaring The Testimony Of God

By David B. Smith

Introduction

It has been said of the Bible,

"The Bible is to the intellectual and moral world of man what the sun is to the planets in our system -- the fountain and source of light and life, spiritual and eternal. There is not a spiritual idea in the whole human race that is not drawn from the Bible. As soon will the philosopher find an independent sunbeam in nature, as the theologian a spiritual conception in man, independent of THE ONE BEST BOOK."

DECLARATIONS OF THE BIBLE

The Bible supplies descriptions of itself -- of its power, origin, simplicity, inerrancy, benefit to man, et cetera -- so as to aid man to a right appreciation of that which God has revealed. And, in turn, those who love the Sacred Text have crowned that revelation with many laurels fine. Yet, human words seem almost insufficient to convey the uniqueness and distinguished power of that One Best Book. After all, man cannot describe the splendor of the Bible better than the Bible does for itself. Jesus Himself stated, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). To say that the words of the Bible are spiritual in nature -- affecting the very intellect, will and emotion of man -- and that those words are all-sufficient for man's spiritual life, it is an accurate and appropriate summary unsurpassed by the words of uninspired men. Man's only response then is pure thankfulness, which manifests itself in both words of praise and humble obedience (cf., 1 John 3:18; John 14:15). And men can obey that written word today with the same confidence that men in the first century had when

they obeyed the spoken words of the apostles, because that word is the declaration of the testimony of God (1 Cor. 2:1).

THE SPIRIT'S DEFENSE

Paul's exposition of this theme (1 Cor. 1:23-2:17) is equally his defense of the immutable and distinctive qualities of the Gospel. In essence, the Spirit through Paul is defending His word in the following ways:

- 1. *Content* (1 Cor. 1:23-31). Despite ill reactions by numerous men, God will not change "what" is said. The fact that some men think the message is repulsive and that others it "foolish" only indicates a heart problem within the men who so think.
- 2. *Ease of understanding* (1 Cor. 2:1-5). While it is true that Paul is defending his course of action among the Corinthians, he is nevertheless showing the capability of man to understand the simple message of the Gospel. To be sure, the Gospel does not need man's help to accomplish its goal; it speaks for itself.
- 3. *The origin of the message* (1 Cor. 2:6-17). In this, the authority of that message is supplied. The words Paul spoke (and wrote) were truly not his own, but the very revelation of the mind of God by the Spirit.

THE JEWISH VIEW

Practically speaking, it was necessary for the Epistle of First Corinthians to be designed in this fashion (at least here) because of the adverse reactions to the Gospel message in the first century. Paul illustrates the point by drawing reactions from both the Jewish and Greek communities. To the Jews, the Gospel was a "stumbling block" (1 Cor. 1:23). Barnes correctly observes that "the word stumbling-block (Gk. skandalon) means properly any thing in the way over which one may fall; then any thing that gives offence, or that causes one to fall into sin."² He adds, "here it means that to the Jews, the doctrine that the Messiah was to be crucified gave great offence; excited, irritated, and exasperated them; that they could not endure the doctrine, and treated it with scorn." One needs only to read the biography of Jesus, and then those events that follow (especially the early chapters of Acts), to know this truth. Even the apostles -- during the earthly ministry of the Christ -- struggled with the real nature of the Messiah, because of long-standing Jewish traditions. Whereas the Jews expected a physical, political leader to rub out the Roman Empire, Jesus was in fact the opposite. He was compassionate, interested in the souls of men, and allowed Himself to be murdered so as to become the victor over sin in the resurrection (cf. Gen. 3:15). To the "stiff-necked" and "uncircumcised" Jew, this was unacceptable.

THE GRECIAN VIEW

The Greeks, on the other hand, considered the message *"foolishness"* (1 Cor. 1:23). A little background is in order on this point, and William Barclay offers this good insight:

"To the Greek idea the first characteristic of God was *apatheia*. That word means more than *apathy*; it means *total inability to feel*. The Greeks argued that if God can feel joy or sorrow or anger or grief it means that some man has for that

moment influenced God and is therefore greater than he. So, they went on to argue, it follows that God must be incapable of all feelings so that none may ever affect him. A God who suffered was to the Greeks a contradiction in terms."⁴

Greek philosophers, and the people influenced by that train of thought, considered the simple message of the Gospel far beneath their own level of learning. In other words, "the Christian preacher with his blunt message seemed a crude and uncultured figure, to be laughed at and ridiculed rather than to be listened to and respected." With that said, the following points must be made:

- 1. While some men considered the Gospel a "weak" idea (to include the crucifixion of the Christ), there is nothing more powerful, vv. 24, 25.
- 2. Too, some men considered the Gospel a message without real substance -- lacking the power and abilities of their own philosophies. However, the testimony of God is "wiser than men," vv. 25, 27.
- 3. No message could be more perfect in design, since the motivating power of the message is not found in the oratory skills of the preacher (1 Cor. 2:1) but in the debt man owes to God for the death of His Son, 2:1-5.
- 4. And, the message is so designed to prevent boasting. Paul explains that God "hath chosen" the "foolish," "weak," and "base" things, "that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

THE STRENGTH AND WISDOM OF THE WORD

The last section of Paul's discourse (2:6-17) regards the origin of the message, and proves again the exact reason that the Gospel is "stronger" and "wiser" than what some men think it. To begin, he establishes the fact that this message was the very "mystery" (of which the prophets inquired in the long ago, 1 Pet. 1:10) of God (2:9). And that word itself proves the point to follow, that the Spirit revealed what was beyond man's independent capability to know -- that is, without revelation (cf. Jer. 10:23). This explains the use of the practical illustration about "not knowing the mind of another" (2:10-12). And man's confidence rests in the fact that this revelation was infallibly transmitted by the Spirit through the Apostles (2:13, 14). When all is said, the "testimony of God" is equal to the revelation of the "mind of God." Who then would denounce this message as weak, since it flows from an Omnipotent God? Who then would claim the message to be insufficient for thought, since it originates from the Omniscient God who created intellectual man?

Conclusion

With the stroke of an inspired quill, the words of this section -- in Paul's letter to the Christians in Corinth -- forever settle the controversies over the "testimony of God." It has been declared and no man can deny it. It needs no help from man; it stands alone. Its message is simple and yet profound. It is wiser than the wisest of thinkers. It is stronger than any man might think himself to be. It demands obeisance and submission to its precepts. Men could never pen it equal. And when that "testimony" is received, obeyed and cherished for life, it pronounces man

right in both this life and the life to come. "Faith," then "should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5).

End Notes

- ¹ Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1970) p. 3.
- ² Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: I Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker) n.d., p. 18.
- ³ *Ibid*.
- ⁴ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press) 1975, p. 18.
- ⁵ Barclay, p. 20.

I Corinthians 3:1-15, Jesus The Foundation

By Phillip Johnson

Introduction

When the priority changes, the urgency lessens; and the Church begins to die. What is your foundation or priority in life? Some have their foundations in their health, abilities or stocks and bonds. Obviously these are foundations that are destined to fail (Proverbs 16:25).

If individuals have foundations and priorities, so do churches. Churches place priority on beautiful facilities, the latest soul winning technique or a preacher that can reach the masses. These foundations are, also, destined to fail.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he pleads for a return to the only foundation that will enable the Church to survive. Jesus is the foundation. In this lesson, we will examine the character of the Corinthian Church, the cause of their problems, the cure for the problem and a challenge to them and to us.

THE CHARACTER-SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY

Every Christian has a character and, therefore, every church has a character. Some churches are vibrant and mature like the church at Philippi. Paul would say about them. . . "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you" (Philippians 1:3-5). Some churches are moving toward maturity. The church in Thyatira was praised for their work and love and service, but they showed their immaturity by their toleration of Jezebel.

The church in Corinth was mired in immaturity. Paul came to Corinth with high hopes. Even though the city was notorious for wickedness and the Jews persecuted him, Jesus encouraged him to stay and preach with the words . . . "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9, 10).

But as Paul received news that the church was not developing spiritually it caused Paul much concern as he says in 1 Corinthians 3:1, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as carnal." The term carnal means "to be fleshly or worldly," in other words, the church was in the world as it had to be, but the world was in the church as it ought not to be.

This problem is not isolated to the first century! Immaturity is a very real problem confronting the churches of the twenty-first century. Many churches have been in existence for thirty, forty, or even, fifty years and are no stronger or more spiritual than the day they began. We are in many ways like the Hebrew Christians in Hebrews 5:12 . . "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God."

THE CAUSE—OTHER FOUNDATIONS

Corinth was moving from the foundation of Christ to various personalities. Some were saying, "I am of Paul." Perhaps they were more intellectually inclined. Another group claimed Peter as their authority. Perhaps they reasoned that since Peter was actually with Jesus that he held more weight than Paul. Still others claimed Apollos as their champion. His might and eloquence in the scriptures held sway over their thinking.

Today, we see the same kind of transition. The church has always been tempted to conform to the worldly lust for personality worship. Some of the more emotional members have more

affinity with a thus saith Max Lucado than a thus saith the Lord. And some brethren would prefer to read Guy N. Woods' book of *Questions and Answers* than "study to shew thyself approved" (II Timothy 2:15).

This shift in emphasis always has tragic consequences. When the priority changes, the urgency lessens; and the Church begins to die. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16). Look at the Corinthian example. There were personality conflicts; "I am of Paul," "I am of Cephas," "I am of Apollos." The root of every church conflict is a shift in priority. Not what Christ wants, but what I want.

There was immorality in the membership. In chapter five, Paul reprimands the Corinthians for the sin of fornication and their toleration of it. Toleration is just conviction that has grown soft. Paul instructs "Have nothing to do with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (1 Cor. 5:11). When the priority changes, the urgency lessens; and the Church begins to die.

There were abuses of Christian liberty. In chapter eight, Paul speaks of food offered to idols. The stronger brother knew that his meat was acceptable to eat, but the weaker brother felt it was sin. This didn't matter to the strong man. He was free! But Paul teaches, "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." (1 Cor. 8:12). When the priority changes, the urgency lessens; and the Church begins to die.

There was doctrinal error. In chapter fifteen, some were teaching that there is no resurrection from the dead. How could things get this bad in such a short time? Paul came and preached the Gospel, the death burial and resurrection of Christ; and now some claimed there was no resurrection. When the priority changes, the urgency lessens; and the Church begins to die.

THE CURE-RETURN TO THE FOUNDATION OF CHRIST

In the Old Testament, God pleaded with Israel to return to its foundation. In Isaiah 33:5, 6, God declared that my "wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times." But time after time Israel lost its stability. They ran after Egypt for protection and rejected God for an earthly king. God declared their sin, "For my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me the foundation of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13).

And in the New Testament the Great Physician prescribes the same cure to the seven churches of Asia they were moving from their foundation. Repent and return to me. Jesus says "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

How May The Churches Of The Twenty-First Century Return To Christ?

By Preaching the Life of Christ

In my youth, I remember hearing many lessons on Acts and the Epistles, but not as many about Jesus. The result of the emphasis is that we became very issue oriented and less grace

oriented. A man cannot live by a no, he's got to have a yes. Where the priority changes, the urgency lessens; and the Church begins to die.

By Preaching The Cross

Have we placed more emphasis on human achievement or divine atonement? (I Corinthians 1:17). When the priority changes, the urgency lessens; and the church begins to die. Tell a man what Christ did before you tell him what to do.

By Preaching the Resurrection

It seems more Christians believe that Elvis is alive than Jesus. Paul said, "And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:" (Romans 1:4). But when the priority changes, the urgency lessens; and the Church begins to die.

Conclusion

THE CHALLENGE-BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION OF CHRIST

It is not enough to return to the foundation of Christ. We must rise up and guild. But we must be careful how we guild. Not with wood, hay and stubble, but with gold, sliver and precious stones. We need; Evangelism without gimmicks; Love without hypocrisy; Holiness without self-righteousness.

1 Corinthians 5, Deliver Such A One To Satan

By Stacey W. Grant

Introduction

Once again this author is extremely honored to be a part of this great series of lectures. The great Richmond Hill congregation is to be commended for its love and stand for the truth. Every time he visits Richmond Hill, the author is treated with the type of hospitality the Scriptures encourage. There is a special place in his heart for the brethren who make up this warm, friendly congregation. With the Lord's help, this great lectureship will continue to benefit not only brethren in this area, but others throughout our great brotherhood for many years to come. Riley's choice of examining First Corinthians is indeed timely and excellent.

THE NEED FOR INSTRUCTIVE/PERSONAL PREVENTIVE DISCIPLINE

Concerning discipline, a well known faithful Gospel preacher penned these perennially pertinent words:

One of the besetting sins in all layers of human society is a conspicuous absence of real discipline. Homes reel on the brink of disaster without it; schools, colleges, and universities have allowed it to slip from their grasp; laws of the land frequently have no teeth injected into judicial decrees; most religious bodies exclude it; the church of our Lord is largely minus the imperative presence of corrective or punitive discipline. Lack of discipline is a sure breeding ground for contempt of law and order. It produces chaos and anarchy. Orderliness cannot survive where there is no discipline.¹

The most effective and important form of discipline is personal preventive discipline. Without question, the Bible is replete with commands and examples relating to personal preventive discipline. "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word" (Psa.119:101). "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1Cor.9:27).

Main Point

Those who use the Word of God as their guide will remain in fellowship with God and avoid many of the world's pitfalls. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1Pet.5:6). "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Pro.16:18).

Key

Humility is the antithesis to pride; humility is spiritually rewarding; pride leads to ruin of reputation, influence, and life (1Tim.3:6). "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph.5:17-18). "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babblings? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine" (Pro.23:29-30).

LESSON

Consumption of alcohol makes one a fool--plain and simple. If alcohol were not involved, how many crimes and tragedies could have been avoided?

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath....Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath: Neither give place to the devil" (Jms.1:19; Eph.4:26-27).

BENEFIT

Child and spousal abuse, some forms of violent crimes (e.g. road rage), filthy language or regrettable words, etc., all can be avoided, provided one **learns** to control his temper.

The above examples are just the "tip of the iceberg." They reveal unto us how supremely valuable the Holy Writ is to the child of God. Every man of every nation, culture, language, and ethnicity can benefit from applying Biblical principles to his life. In fact, the Bible is the only book that can address every aspect of a man's life. No other book ever written can make such a claim and it be true.

Personal preventive discipline is the single best defense against weak congregations. Those who possess this needful trait free up the leadership to concentrate its energies on the supreme work of the church--evangelism; they are soul winners, seeking souls in spite of a hectic work and family schedule; they do not make excuses, but find time to fulfill their ultimate Christian duty/privilege. They are at services on time; they attend services faithfully; when it comes to learning God's Word, they use the "Berean" approach (Acts 17:11); they are prepared to teach classes-- both public and private; they are assets to the church and community in which they live; they make sure their children are being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, thus preparing the next generation to continue a family legacy of faithfulness to Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. The importance of personal preventive discipline cannot be overemphasized.

WHEN EVIL IS NOT ADDRESSED CORRECTLY

Not too long ago, this author had the displeasure of watching a documentary about a serial killer. Early in this man's life he killed two young men and savagely tortured and raped a young lady. His accomplice turned state's evidence against him and testified for the prosecution. He served almost twenty years for his heinous actions. Not too long after his release, he was found guilty of violating his probation numerous times. However, the state of Texas did not incarcerate him because its prison population was overcrowded. He would go on to commit more crimes of a violent nature, none of which resulted in the death of any of the victims. He was again sentenced to more prison time, but was paroled early to ease prison overcrowding.

His last murder spree left at least five people dead. He was Texas' public enemy number one. He was featured on the nationally known *America's Most Wanted* television show. His own father wanted law enforcement to kill him. True to the character of many villains, he had altered his image, changed his name, and moved to a relatively unknown town. One of his co-workers just happened to see the show the night it aired his case and immediately phoned the local authorities. He was finally apprehended and tried for the crimes he committed against humanity.

Ironically, he became very irate when his mother was called to testify against him as a hostile witness for the prosecution. The reason for his anger: His dear mother was in poor health and frail--a fact verifiable by her appearance in court--and he did not want her subjected to the rigors associated with the trial. What about the children whose mothers he slaughtered?

Finally, because Texas had re-instituted capital punishment, this unremorseful killer received the punishment fitting for the crimes he committed. Based on the evidence reported, law enforcement officials in Texas knew this man had demonstrated over and over he was not rehabilitated. Their gross negligence was indirectly, if not directly, responsible for the suffering and deaths of those whom the vicious assailant preyed upon after his first and second release from prison and subsequent multiple violations of his probation.

THE NEED FOR STRONG LEADERSHIP

When one reads through the New Testament, he will quickly find false doctrine of all sorts was a clear and present danger. It is evident the church in the first century had to deal with a plethora of issues on a daily basis. Likewise, the church of the twenty-first century must continue fighting against the wave after wave of attacks against it. Tragically and regrettably, the work of the church which suffers the most is discipline. This "black eye" can almost assuredly be attributed to weak or nearly non-existent leadership in local churches. Many Christians have lost and will lose their precious souls for not adhering to God's demand that the church as a whole remain doctrinally and morally pure. Regarding this issue, many elders will face an angry God on the Day of Judgment for failing to protect the flock from wolves-- foreign and domestic.

QUESTION: What is most important to God--His Word or souls? Many would automatically and emphatically declare, "Souls!" Others might find the question too difficult to answer. Unequivocally, it is impossible for God to lie (Tit.1:2). Yes, the Master loves souls very much; for this reason He sent His only begotten Son to die on the old rugged cross for the sins of all men who ever lived. God's amazing grace is bountiful and accessible (Tit.1:11-12); it is eternally connected to God's Word, the Perfect Law of Liberty (Jms.1:25). One cannot continue in sin and have a relationship with the Almighty (Isa.59:1-2). It is the same as mixing water with fire. God's grace teaches us how to become and to remain holy. Grace has never superseded law! "Not everyone who saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth (present tense) the will of my Father in heaven (Mat.7:21-23). "Will" is a synonym for law.

CONCLUSION: God is always true to His word. He will not change the rules for those who failed to seek the truth. He will not change the rules for those who are ignorant of His will (Acts 17:30). He will judge those who knew His will and chose to disobey it for the sake of preserving family or other

relations! The Lord avers: "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" (Mat.10:37). Dear Christian, nothing or no one should ever come between you and your heavenly Father.

Many have erroneously assumed that the Lord's first line of defense against the constant wave of attacks against the Holy Writ and the church purchased with the precious, pure, powerful, prevailing blood of Christ is the preacher. **All** members are enlisted in the Lord's army (Eph.6:10-18) and are required to contend earnestly for the Faith (Jude 3); **the elders** are required to position themselves, take the lead, in the most heated part of the battle against Satan and his notorious cohorts. A careful study of the duties penned by the apostles Paul (Acts 20:27-3; Heb.13:7, 17) and Peter (1Pet.5:1-4) to the elders and to the flock reveals multiple ways in which the eldership is to protect and provide for the flock.

The epistle addressed to the church at Corinth reminds us quite vividly of the need for strong leadership in the church. Unlike the letter addressed to the Philippians, there is absolutely no acknowledgement of an eldership existing at Corinth. Herein could have been the problem. God, through His eternal wisdom, commands that each local congregation be autonomous (Acts 14:23). When a congregation has matured, it can appoint **qualified men** to serve in the capacity of elders. If unqualified men are selected, nothing short of disaster will occur. Those who choose to exercise what **seems** to be a God-ordained escape clause, "If a man desires the office of a bishop" (1Tim.3:1), in some cases, are doing the church a disservice, impeding the progress of the Lord's cause (SWG).

Most brothers who shun seeking to be qualified elders often ignore some principles involved. First, one should ponder deeply and thankfully that he truly found the true reason why man exists (Ecc.12:13). Additionally, his being **blessed** to hear and obey the unblemished Gospel--considering the fact that the majority of the nearly six billion souls inhabiting earth do not have a relationship with Jehovah, nor possess accurate knowledge of His person and purpose for their lives--should motivate him

to become an elder. His life's priorities should always mirror Matthew 6:33. Secondly, he should be motivated by the principle of service involved in Christianity (Phi.2:1-4). Having the mind of Christ is the key (Phi.2:5-11). Did not the Master dedicate his life to serving others? Are not Christians to imitate Christ (1Cor.11:1)?

Thirdly, he should allow Matthew 5:16 to influence his decision concerning the office in question. Good works--those ordained of God--bring glory and praise to Jehovah. Fourthly, he can be assured that his life will be enriched by serving as an elder; he would have the privilege of assisting numerous souls gain a better understanding of God's Word, strengthen their marriages, instill Biblical principles in their children, enjoy the fellowship of the saints, recover from sin, deal graciously with pain and death, and have the blessed hope of going to Heaven. In so doing, he will become closer to the Lord he serves.

CORINTH'S SHAMEFUL BEHAVIOR IS EXPOSED

"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife" (v.1). The charge was leveled against the entire congregation. A Christian was living in open rebellion before God and no one rebuked him for his error (Gal.6:1-2). Fornication derives from the word porneia and refers to every kind of sexual impurity. In this case, the offender was having sexual relations with the woman married to his father. The evidence strongly suggests that the terminology "his father's wife" is a reference to his stepmother. Regardless, both parties were still guilty before God (cf. Mark 6:18). Their sin is said to exceed the shame and depravity of the heathens of their day. Tragically, some of our "dear brethren" would accuse Paul of using language that is too harsh or negative.

"And ye are puffed up, and have not mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you" (v.2). Some members, upon hearing this letter being read, probably exclaimed, "It is none of my business; this situation should be handled between him and his father!" Others may have said, "I am not a preacher or an elder or a church leader, what can I do? I am just a 'regular' member with no authority over these matters." Corinth's pride was in the form of not addressing the issue at hand at all--tolerance of the wrong kind. So desensitized, were they that even this horrific transgression hardly received a second thought. The offender could have been allowed to participate in all aspects of the church's work. Does such neglect exist today in churches bearing the Lord's name?

CORINTH'S LACK OF LOVE IS EXPOSED

Corinth's lack of love for the truth and for the offender's precious soul was the chief reason why restoration was not attempted. **Restoration**, according to Galatians 6:1 contains multiple key components, which cannot be avoided. First, "If a man is overtaken in a fault" implies the need for a thorough, unbiased investigation of an alleged offense. There simply cannot be a rush to judgment. Assumption and accusation of guilt can lead to destroying a fellow Christian's reputation or faith. Secondly, if needs be, there must be proper identification of the alleged sin. The guilty party may try denying his guilt. Proof must be provided, if he insists on denying his guilt. Thirdly, "ye which are spiritual" sets forth the qualifications of those who should be involved in the process. Those who faithfully follow Jesus' commands are spiritual (Gal.5:16,22-26). Those who oppose this God-ordained work are carnal, working with Satan. Fourthly, "restore such a one" involves personal intervention (Jms.5:19-20). Intervention can/does come in many forms (personal visit, phone call, e-mail, letter, post card, etc.). Fifthly, "in the spirit of meekness" demands the absence of self-righteous condemnation. A meek spirit is one which is strong, yet gentle. Sixthly, "considering thyself" requires careful, prayerful

contemplation of the task. The last thing the church needs is a member with good intentions falling prey to the same temptation as did the one needing restoration. One is not restored until he (1) acknowledges sin in his life; (2) confesses his guilt; seeks the mercy of God (Luke 18:13-14); and (3) repents of the sin in his life. Corinth had violated many commands by not addressing the issue. Matters such as the one under discussion are matters of urgency--if not addressed in a timely manner, one or more precious souls could be eternally lost.

CORINTH IS COMMANDED TO REPENT

For I verily, as absent in the body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened (1Cor.5:3-7a).

When all steps at restoration have been exhausted, if repentance is not forthcoming, the church has no recourse save to withdraw its fellowship from the offender. Withdrawing from the guilty party **must be** a complete, congregational effort, lest its effectiveness be lost. "To deliver such a one unto Satan" is the equivalent of withdrawing fellowship from the unrepentant Christian. Truthfully, there are only two kingdoms--God and Satan's. When one **forfeits** his citizenship in the Lord's kingdom (Col.1:13), he is automatically cast out into Satan's deplorable kingdom.

The phrase, "for the destruction of the flesh," seems to indicate some type of corporal punishment is ordered. Some false views of Christianity taught/teaches human flesh is inherently wicked. Asceticism was the result of one false view, known as Gnosticism. The epistle to the church at Colossae was written primarily to combat Gnosticism. "Thanks" to support received directly from the New International Version (Psa.51:5), the egregious error dubiously called "sin nature" is widely

taught by many in the denominational arena. Such a heresy, if it were true, would indict and disqualify Christ as Savior. If His forefather David, as the NIV alleges, were truly born a sinner, then He, too, possessed a "sin nature." In spite of the obvious oxymoron--Christ lived a perfectly sinless life (Heb.4:15)--many denominations adhere to this doctrine of devils. Sin always begins in the mind (Jms.1:14-16).

Likewise, the church does not have authority from the Lord to inflict physical punishment upon its members. So, the application must be **spiritual** in nature, identical to the commands given in Matthew 5:29-30. Christians are commanded to "mortify" or "put to death" the evil desires of the mind (Rom.8:13; Col.3:5). **IMPORTANT NOTE:** In the Scriptures, "flesh" sometimes refers to a person's way of thinking (Rom. 8:1,5-8). **APPLICATION:** Withdrawal of fellowship would bring the offender to his spiritual senses and encourage him to remove all evil from his life (1Timothy 1:19-20 serves as a commentary upon this very vital issue). Punitive discipline is designed to teach the offender the high cost he is paying for deserting the Faith.

Additionally, Calvinists cannot harmonize their fatally flawed doctrine known as the Impossibility of Apostasy/Once Saved Always Saved with 1Corinthians 5. Christians can so sin as to fall away from God's grace. The Galatian Christians were identified as being **saved**, members of the body of Christ (Gal.1:2; 3:26-29). They were also identified as being **deserters** of the Faith (Gal.1:6-10). They had so sinned the Holy Spirit declared, "*Christ is become of no effect unto you (you have become estranged from), whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace*" (Gal.5:4). Irrefutably, the Lord acknowledged ownership of the church at Corinth (1Cor.1:2). The one needing to be put away was a Christian, a fallen brother (1Cor.5:13). Calvinists' Bibles must omit Hebrews 6:4-6.

For those who are **slothful** in carrying out this good work, the wise man said it best: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully

were (1) "great fear came on all them that heard these things" (Acts 5:5,11); reverence for the Lord grew; members learned quite early that the church was not a country club; (2) "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both men and women" (Acts 5:14); the church became spiritually stronger and grew numerically.

Conclusion

- 1. Sins of varied sorts go uncontested, when there is an absence of strong leadership.
- 2. The church is in desperate need of men who will qualify themselves to serve as elders.
- 3. God-ordained discipline works every time it is implemented.
- 4. Instructive and punitive discipline strengthens the church.
- 5. Instructive discipline is the best defense against apostasy.
- 6. Punitive discipline sends a clear, definitive message to those inside and outside the church.
- 7. 1Corinthians 5 decisively defeats the false doctrines "sin nature" and "once saved always saved."
- 8. Church discipline keeps the body of Christ pure and free from sin.

Much more could be said about this critical doctrine. Seriously, all members of the church must respect the authority and wisdom of God regarding this subject. False teachers (Rom.16:17; 2John 9-11) and unrepentant brethren (Mat.18:15-18; 2The.3:6) must be disciplined, lest the church lose its influence in the community and precious relationship with the Almighty. True, united discipline against the offender can result in repentance and restoration (1Cor.5:9-11; II The.3:14-15). Remember, beloved, the Lord knows what is best for the church. "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing" (2The.3:13).

END NOTES

- 1. Robert Taylor, Jr., "Put Away The Wicked Man," ed. Dub McClish, Studies In I Corinthians (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1982). P.83.
- 2. The Holy Bible, King James Version (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers). All scripture references are to this version unless otherwise stated.

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1 Corinthians 6:1-11, Quarrels And Disputes Among Brethren

By Allan Wright

Introduction

Paul set forth the model for Christian unity when he wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). The Bible has always commended unity, fellowship, love and mutual consideration as a way of life. Abram reasoned with Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (Gen. 13:8). The Psalmist writes, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psa. 133:1). God says through the prophet, "And I will give them one heart, and one way" (Jer. 32:39). Jesus prayed for his followers, "That they all may be one" (John 17:21). We read concerning the early Christians, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). Paul exhorts us, "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. 3:16).

But there is often a difference between the ideal and the actual, between what should be and what really is. In spite of the Bible's incessant call to peace and harmony, there is at every turn conflict and antagonism. Even the church is no exception. And while God sets before us the ideal of unity, he also provides for the very real need of settling disputes among his people.

Under the old testament

Under the Old Testament, God set in place a system of judges who might resolve disputes by applying the law and its principles. "And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves" (Exo. 18:25,26). Each city apparently had a place of judgment, generally in the "gates," a place of public concourse. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes" (Deut. 16:18). Samuel held an itinerant court throughout Israel. "And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places" (1 Sam. 7:16). Under the monarchy, judges were chosen from among the Levites. "Now the Levites were numbered ... and six thousand were officers and judges" (1 Chron. 23:3,4). "Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 19:8). The king himself would often be called upon to render judgments. "But Solomon ... made a porch for the throne where he might judge, even the porch of judgment" (1 Kings 7:1,7). In the days of Jesus, we learn that "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat," that is, the seat of judgment (Matt. 23:2). Thus throughout Israel's history, God provided for a process of judgment to resolve disputes and quarrels among his people.

There were very strict rules by which judgments were to be made. It was to be without partiality, and the judge could accept no bribe. "Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the

words of the righteous" (Deut. 16:19). Witnesses were to be heard, and the case thoroughly investigated. "At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established ... the judges shall make diligent inquisition" (Deut. 19:15,18). Most importantly, judgments were to be based strictly on the moral virtues of the case. "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked" (Deut. 25:1).

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we come to the New Testament where God sets up the church as his spiritual kingdom on earth, we notice some important differences. Just as there is no separate priesthood and no clergy in the church, so there is no such office as "judge" in the church. In the history of Christianity since the close of the apostolic age there have been many occasions when ecclesiastical courts of one type or another have been established. The danger with such courts, as evidenced time and again, is that these councils become legislative bodies, defining orthodoxy and policy for the church. They are usually supracongregational, forming synods and dioceses that supersede the authority of the local congregation. Such church councils have often disregarded the authority both of elders and of the Scripture in favor of their own decrees.

Nevertheless it is evident that the church is not immune to the problem of disputation between its members, and the New Testament does provide a means for settling such disputes. Jesus gives us the essence of the process. He says that, when the brethren involved have not been able to resolve their differences, and the mediation of other brethren has proved fruitless, then "tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18:17).

What does it mean to "tell it unto the church"? Clearly it does not mean to announce before the congregation that we are withdrawing fellowship from an unfaithful Christian. Withdrawal is a separate action, which takes place only afterwards if a brother refuses to hear. Nor does this involve listing a person's transgressions openly for public shame and humiliation, a policy that is tantamount to gossip and slander.

Perhaps the most common misunderstanding is to see this as merely an extension of the previous step of taking "one or two more" (rf. vs. 16), by which many more brethren intervene, but still on an individual basis. But Jesus says to tell the matter to the "church," from the Greek ekklesia. This is the word Jesus had used earlier, saying, "upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). These are the only two New Testament references using this word prior to the church's establishment on the day of Pentecost. But the word was well known to the Jews of his day because of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, where it translates the Hebrew word qahal, which is rendered by the King James as "assembly" or "congregation." It is used repeatedly to refer to an assembly of the nation of Israel (e.g. Deut. 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8). Thus Jesus told those disciples who found themselves unable to resolve their disputes to bring the case to the congregation, to the assembled church, so that they may pass judgment on the matter.

When we come to our text then we have a Biblically based example of how this command to "tell it unto the church" was to be carried out. As with much of the first Corinthian letter, Paul addresses a problem in the manner in which that congregation was carrying out their obligation in this affair. By studying the section carefully we may note several things that will help us to understand how the church should and should not resolve disputes among brethren.

WHAT WAS THE "MATTER" UNDER CONSIDERATION?

As always, the first rule of hermeneutics requires that we examine this passage in its larger context. Paul had received news from the house of Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11), and the Corinthians had written a letter to Paul (1 Cor. 7:1). From these sources, and perhaps others, Paul had learned of several matters that disturbed him. Among those issues was an individual in the congregation who had become involved in an illicit relationship with his father's wife. (Several circumstances have been suggested that would fit this description. For one possible scenario, refer to the accounts of Reuben, Gen. 35:22; 49:4, and of Absalom, 2 Sam. 16:21,22.)

It was this case that led Paul to write the material of our text. Several factors indicate that this particular incident is still under consideration as we move from chapter five into chapter six. First, the man's transgression is specifically identified as fornication, from the Greek *porneia* (1 Cor. 5:1). This word and its related forms (the verb *porneuo* and the cognate nouns *pornos* and *porne*) are used throughout the sections before and after our text. Paul says that Christians ought not to keep company with brethren guilty of fornication (1 Cor. 5:9-11). Those who commit fornication cannot inherit the kingdom (unless they are washed, sanctified and justified) (1 Cor. 6:9-11). God did not make our bodies for fornication (1 Cor. 6:13), and we must not allow our sanctified bodies to be joined to a fornicator (1 Cor. 6:15,16). (The KJV translates the word here as "*harlot*," but it is merely the feminine form of "*fornicator*," and does not in every context refer to those who receive payment for sex.) We should flee fornication, for it is a sin against the body (1 Cor. 6:18). In order to avoid the sin of fornication, each man should have his own wife (1 Cor. 7:2). Thus our text is squarely in the middle of a longer section dealing with the sin of fornication, and is occasioned by the sin mentioned at the beginning of chapter five.

Further, Paul introduces the subject of judgment while still discussing the case of the fornicating brother. He says that he himself has passed judgment on the matter (1 Cor. 5:3). Judgment is not to be pronounced on those without, but on those who are within (1 Cor. 5:12,13). Then without a pause he moves into our section of the text, and speaks of those who "go to law," literally those who bring a matter "to be judged" (1 Cor. 6:1). He reasons that if saints may judge the world and even angels, then surely we may judge smaller matters (1 Cor. 6:2-4). In fact Christians ought not to "go to law" (literally, have "judgment") with one another for the purpose of defrauding one another, especially before unbelievers (1 Cor. 6:6,7). Throughout both chapters we find the Greek verb krino (to judge) and the nouns kriterion (a case to be judged) and krima (a sentence delivered in judgment). Clearly then Paul has not changed subjects between chapters.

One other detail may be noted which supports the view that we are still dealing with the same situation. Paul begins our section of the text by referring to a "matter" between brethren. This is from the Greek word pragma, which indicates some business to be transacted or official concern to be handled. Paul uses this word again in his second letter to this congregation, reminding them that he had previously written them in sorrow urging repentance, and that now they had made themselves "clear in this matter" (again from pragma) (2 Cor. 7:8-11). It is very likely that Paul is referring to the same incident again, indicating his approval now that they had dealt with it according to his instructions.

It is important to realize that Paul is dealing with a specific situation here. Of course the principles taught can be applied to other cases. But we must be careful not to extrapolate beyond what can be reasonably defended. For instance, this text is often cited to suggest that Christians may have no business with the civil courts under any circumstances. If that were so, then Paul

would have violated his own teaching when he appealed to Caesar for judgment (rf. Acts 25:10,11). Even a matter of business that is strictly between brethren may sometimes require involvement of the civil courts. For instance, if two brethren have adjoining property and seek to establish the true boundary between them, they may reach a private agreement between themselves, but it has no legal merit when the property is sold or bequeathed unless validated by a civil court. (As we will note below, it is not at all certain that Paul even had civil courts in mind as he wrote this).

Before we leave this question, we should examine two phrases Paul uses to describe the kind of matter he is concerned with. First, he says that Christians ought to be well able to judge "the smallest matters," from the Greek elachistos, meaning "least" (1 Cor. 6:2). Now consider the seriousness of the case at hand. Paul says this man should be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Cor. 5:5) and that an impenitent fornicator cannot inherit the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9,10). Surely then Paul does not intend to say that this is a trivial or inconsequential matter. In what sense then is it small? To understand Paul's statement, we must refer to an earlier passage. Paul had said that he and Apollos and Cephas were ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, who must be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). He then says that it is a "very small thing" (again from elachistos) to be judged by men (1 Cor. 4:3). The judgments of men are small when compared to the great judgment of God. To further elaborate on this notion, Paul says we should be able to judge "things that pertain to this life," from the Greek biotikos, as opposed to things which pertain to eternity. No human has the right to pass the great judgment of eternal reward or damnation on another, for this is reserved for the "Judge of all the earth" (rf. Gen. 18:25). Thus we may understand chapter six to be dealing with human

judgments delivered to resolve disputes between brethren concerning spiritual or ethical matters met in daily life.

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM WITH THE WAY THIS MATTER WAS BEING HANDLED?

Paul criticizes the Corinthians because they were allowing those outside the church to pass judgment on the matter. Who are these people, and how were they passing judgment? The most common understanding is that Paul is referring to the civil courts, and that he is rebuking the practice of Christians bringing lawsuits against their brethren. This view no doubt derives from Paul's choice of words, as well as the common translations of the passage. The words *pragma* ("matter", vs. 1), *kriterion* ("judge," vs. 2; "judgments," vs. 4) and *krima* ("law," vs. 7) are often used in secular Greek writings to refer to civil courts. Furthermore, the translation "go to law," (vs. 1,6,7) suggests the idea of civil courts. It is not unthinkable that the case of the fornicator had found its way into a civil court, or that the Corinthians were using civil verdicts from similar cases to handle the matter at hand. However, there is nothing in the language of the text which demands such an interpretation, and there is another possibility which may fit better with the discussion.

There are three words used to describe the group under consideration. 1) They were without (exo) (1 Cor. 5:12,13), as opposed to those who were within (eso). The word exo is derived from the preposition ex (meaning "out of"). This preposition is used twice in the context to describe the process of putting the wicked person away "from among" their number (1 Cor. 5:2,13). This word then refers to anyone not in the circle of Christian fellowship. 2) They were unjust or unrighteous (adikos) (1 Cor. 6:1,9). The list given by Paul (vs. 9,10) shows clearly that he is referring to those engaging in such immoral and wicked behavior as was the fornicator. A

form of this word (*adikeo*) is used to describe those who are defrauding their brethren (vs. 7,8). And there were those among the brethren in Corinth who had been unrighteous, but now were *justified* (*dikaioo*) (vs. 11). Thus the unjust are those who continue in their wickedness with their sins yet unforgiven. 3) They were *unbelievers* (*apistos*) (1 Cor. 6:6). This word is used to define the husband or wife who did not share their spouse's faith (1 Cor. 7:12,13,14,15), to describe those still participating in idolatrous worship (1 Cor. 10:27), and to identify those who are unlearned and without an understanding of the gospel (1 Cor. 14:22,23,24). An unbeliever then is simply someone who either does not know, or does not accept, the truth of Christianity. (A fourth expression, the "*least esteemed*," may also refer to this group.)

Now let's ask a few questions regarding the case at hand. Why did Paul demand that the man guilty of fornication be put away (1 Cor. 5:3-5), but not make any such demand in regard to the woman he had taken? What could possibly have caused the Corinthian brethren to be "puffed up" about their actions in this matter? (1 Cor. 5:2) And why would Paul take pains to state the obvious truth that we cannot escape the fornicators and other sinners of the world, but must make a point of dealing with such among our brethren? (1 Cor. 5:9-11)

We can make a reasonable deduction from the text that the woman whom the man had taken was not herself a Christian, else surely Paul would have included her in the disciplinary action. We know that there were others in the congregation who were married to non-Christians (1 Cor. 7:12-16). And surely there were any number of friendships, business relationships, and social relationships with those outside the church (rf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18). Indeed such relationships and their influences are dealt with in discussing many of the issues that Paul addressed with this congregation. Non-Christians invited them to their idolatrous feasts (1 Cor. 10:27), and visited

their assemblies (1 Cor. 14:23,24) Each disciple must constantly decide how much interaction he can have with the world and how best to influence outsiders for the Lord.

Some of the Corinthian brethren seemed to be greatly concerned about what "the world" thought of them. Paul responds that God has "made foolish the wisdom of this world," (1 Cor. 1:20,21) reminding them that "the world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21; rf. 2:6-8). But we have not received "the spirit of the world," (1 Cor. 2:12) for indeed "the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:19). The world does not respect Christianity, but "we are made a spectacle unto the world ... we are made as the filth of the world" (1 Cor. 4:9,13). Repeatedly then in the opening chapters Paul maintains that Christians cannot have their thoughts and actions dictated by the world's standards and so-called wisdom.

Yet over and over the Corinthians were boasting of their enlightened outlook, their worldly wisdom. Paul urges "If any of you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool ... Therefore let no man glory in men" (1 Cor. 3:18,21). He says with sarcasm, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ" (1 Cor. 4:10). He rebukes them, saying, "Why dost thou glory ... Your glorying is not good" (1 Cor. 4:7; 5:6). Over and over the boasting of the Corinthians is associated with trying to think like the world rather than like the Lord. Thus when we come to chapter five, Paul says that in the matter of the fornicating brother, "ye are puffed up" (1 Cor. 5:2). This is a favorite word of Paul in this letter to describe the empty arrogance of the Corinthians (rf. 1 Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4). It is not entirely unlike our modern insult that a man is "full of hot air." In other words, they were proud that they were handling this situation in accordance with the "wise" principles of the world.

And so we must ask, "What was the opinion of the world on such a matter?" Here again our common translations give one impression, while the original language gives another. We are

told that this sin "is not so much as named among the Gentiles" (1 Cor. 5:1). Other translations, using a textual variant, say that this sin was "of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles" (Revised Standard Version). We are led to understand by these translations that the Gentiles did not commit such things, and would not even talk about them. But they did talk about this very crime often, and it was committed repeatedly. True enough, there were Roman laws against incest, and many writers spoke of the practice with disgust and contempt. But it existed nevertheless, and was practiced and defended by some of the most powerful men of the time. Zeno, the father of Stoicism, wrote that intercourse is a strictly internal experience, so that it does not matter with whom the intercourse occurs, even mothers, daughters or sisters. Chrysippus, a prominent Stoic philosopher born in Soli only a short distance from Paul's hometown of Tarsus, writes approvingly in *Laertius in vita ejus* concerning the story that Jupiter had sexual relations with his mother Juno. (Indeed, Greek and Roman mythology is filled with accounts of incest by their gods and heroes.) Tertullian records, "Ctesias tells us that the Persians have illicit intercourse with their mothers. The Macedonians, too, are suspected on this point; for on first hearing the tragedy of Oedipus they made mirth of the incest-doer's grief ..." (Apology, ch. 9; see also ch. 16) It is true that Cicero referred to it as "An incredible crime, and beyond one time, unheard in all life" (Oratorio pro Cluentio, 5). But he is likely speaking in hyperbole, for he was well aware of the instances we have cited here, and many more. (Cicero was no advocate of sexual purity, for he writes concerning fornication, "When was not this done? when reproved? when not permitted?" Oratorio pro Coelio, 34)

What does Paul then mean when he says that this sin is not "named" among the Gentiles? The word is from the Greek *onomazo*, and it literally means to give a name (as when Simon was renamed Peter, Luke 6:14) or to use a name (as in Paul's exhortation to everyone who "nameth"

the name of Christ," 2 Tim. 2:19). The word is used later in this same chapter to describe one who is "called" (literally named) a brother (1 Cor. 5:11). The point then is that what is called fornication here by Paul is not called such by the world. Indeed one of the great obstacles to purity is that the world often calls that which is bad good, and that which is good bad. (rf. Isa. 5:20) (In the variant followed by the UBS text, the word **onomazo** is omitted. In fact no verb at all occurs in that phrase, leaving the translator with the duty of supplying one.)

It is with this predicament in mind that Paul says, "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:12, 13). In other words, it is no concern of Paul's (as far as the matter at hand is involved) what the world believes or practices regarding sexual purity. But we must be concerned with maintaining such purity within the church itself. And if the world does in fact hold a different standard than God's people, then, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" (1 Cor. 6:1) How dare we allow the world to set the standards by which we evaluate our moral conduct.

IN WHAT SENSE DO CHRISTIANS JUDGE THE WORLD OR JUDGE ANGELS?

Rather than allowing the world to judge the church, Paul says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor. 6:2,3) To better understand Paul's argument, let us ask a few questions.

When do saints perform this judgment? Jesus told the apostles, "... ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ve also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). A short time later he told them, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29,30). These verses give several indicators of the time involved. It is in "the regeneration," the time of spiritual rebirth and renewal (rf. 2 Cor. 3:5; Tit. 3:5). It is during the time when Jesus "shall sit in the throne," during his reign over his kingdom (rf. Mark 9:1; 1 Cor. 15:25,26). It is when Jesus will "appoint unto you a kingdom," (literally, "covenant unto you a kingdom"), during the days of the New Testament (rf. 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:6). And finally it is when his disciples "eat and drink" at his table, as we join in fellowship and memorial to his death (rf. 1 Cor. 10:16,21). Clearly the saints' judgment is not reserved for some future millennial age, nor do we pass sentence at the final judgment day, but this judgment is taking place during the present dispensation. (It should be noted that the Greek form for judge in these verses can be either future, "shall judge," or present "are judging." Context must determine which is correct.)

How is this judgment performed? Historically, judging and ruling are connected (rf. Ruth 1:1; 1 Sam. 8:5,6,20; 2 Sam. 8:15; 15:2,6; 1 Kings 3:28; 2 Chron. 1:11; Prov. 8:16; 20:8; 29:4,14; Isa. 32:1; 33:22; Jer. 23:5; Acts 7:27,35; Rev. 20:4). How then do the saints rule? Paul sheds light on this in the book of Ephesians. He tells us that God has raised up Jesus and "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all

things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:20-23). He then adds that he "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). So then Jesus has been exalted and is now reigning over all principalities and powers, and even over the angels (rf. 1 Pet. 3:22). And this reign is exercised through the church, which is declared to be the very fullness of Jesus, so that there is no part of his power or glory in this world or the one beyond that is not manifested in and through the church. The relationship is compared to that of the head with the body. Just as my mind decides, chooses, wills, and resolves, and then carries out its intentions through the actions of my body, so Jesus has a divine will that is executed through his church. When the church is truly following the direction of its Lord, it is the perpetrator of the divine will. Therefore when Jesus wishes to declare his judgment, exalting righteousness and condemning wickedness, his voice is heard in the church. Thus we judge the world as we pronounce the judgment of our King.

Is this a contradiction with Paul's statements at the end of chapter five? There he has said that we ought not to judge those outside, but those within (1 Cor. 5:12,13). But there the intent was to "put away" those that were wicked, a word meaning "to take out." It is the same word Jesus used when he taught, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out..." (Matt. 5:29). Clearly it is a strong term. Thus we both judge the world, by decrying its guilt, and yet do not judge the world, in that we can not put away the wickedness from among us, for as Paul says, "then must ye needs go out of the world" (1 Cor. 5:10).

And what does this have to do with the matter of settling disputes? Paul makes what the logicians call an "a fortiori" argument, a Latin expression meaning literally "from the stronger." If the greater is true, then the lesser included within it must necessarily be true. So Paul says that

if Christians have been entrusted with rule and judgment over the world, then surely they must be competent to judge internal matters.

How Should Disputes Be Resolved?

Apply the Doctrines and Principles of the Gospel

The knowledge needed is not the latest philosophies of the world, but that which Christians should already know in the gospel. Notice the repetition of the Greek phrase *ouk oidate*, translated "*Know ye not*," or "*Do ye not know*." Six times he asks this. Know ye not "... that the saints shall judge the world?" (vs. 2) "... that we shall judge angels?" (vs. 3) "... that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom?" (vs. 9) "... that your bodies are the members of Christ?" (vs. 15) "... that he which is joined to a harlot is one body?" (vs. 16) "... that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" (vs. 19) If we will simply apply what is taught in the gospel, we can find the best solutions to our problems.

Cultivate Wisdom in the Church

Paul chided the brethren, "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you?" (1 Cor. 6:5) Again this is not the so-called wisdom of the world, but that which James says "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (Jam. 3:17). This wisdom is obtained through study and prayer (rf. Deut. 4:5,6; Psa. 111:10; 119:98; 1 Kin. 3:9; Jam. 1:5). A church that does not promote such learning and devotion will collapse at the least squabble that arises.

Practice the Golden Rule

Paul reprimands those who would "do wrong, and defraud" (1 Cor. 6:8). When handling disputes, we must be more concerned with justice and fairness than with schemes and strategies to get our way. Indeed Jesus reminds us, "whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39). And Paul says that no man should "go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter" (1 Thess. 4:6). The word for defraud in this last passage is pleonekteo, which is the word used to describe Satan's tactics when he seeks to "get an advantage" of us (2 Cor. 2:11). Surely we don't want to stand guilty of behaving like the devil!

Remember That Souls Are At Stake

Paul says, "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9). The unrighteous includes the person guilty of immorality, such as the fornicator of our text and others that Paul lists. It also includes those out in the world whose foolishness is promoted as wisdom (1 Cor. 6:2, where the word is translated *unjust*). And it also includes those who seek to take advantage of their brother, (1 Cor. 6:8, where the word is translated *do wrong*). If we indulge unrighteousness in ourselves or in others, we are jeopardizing souls.

Show Compassion and Sympathy

The Corinthians were reminded, "such were some of you" (1 Cor. 6:11). While we do not want to be irresolute in dealing with sin, neither do we want to be self-righteous and arrogant. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. 6:1). Remember the challenge of Jesus, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" (John 8:7).

May we seek peace among brethren, and deal with our differences in the fear of God and the love of one another.

I Corinthians 13:1-13 Characteristics Of Love

By: Timothy R. Presley

Introduction

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the brethren here at Richmond Hill for the

privilege to speak to you today. This study of First Corinthians should be profitable to everyone.

The Apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthians to show them a more excellent way as is

recorded in chapter 12:31¹. For a better understanding of chapter 13, one needs to read the

preceding chapter and the following chapter. ²

A person who is reading these chapters needs to have an understanding of what the

Apostle Paul had in mind. In Chapter 12, Paul gives us an understanding of the spiritual gifts

that were given by God to the first century Christians. In Chapter 13, Paul shows us the duration

of these gifts (until that which is perfect would be revealed). In Chapter 14, we see how these

gifts were (while they lasted) to be regulated in an assembly.

At first glance after reading I Corinthians 13, a person may think that some of the gifts

from the Holy Spirit, were more prestigious and noticeable than others. But God made the body

of Christ (the church) and every part that makes up the assembly. No part should think more

highly than it ought to over another part. Each has their own function (part) as God has given the

talent in the body. In Chapter 12:25, we see that the Apostle Paul warns that there should be no

divisions in the body (pride, arrogance or a haughty spirit over the gift that they possess) but that

each member should possess care and love for one another. "A new commandment I give unto

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you, that you love one another; as I have loved you that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

Paul uses many examples to prove his point within the text (vs. 27). Some of these examples are that God gave some as prophets, teachers, some the working of miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments and a diversity of tongues (12:28). Then Paul asks a question, do all the members have the same gifts? The answer to this is No. Each one has its part within the body as God has set in order. This takes us up to 12:31. The Apostle Paul tells the Christians that they should covet earnestly the best gifts. With this, he will show them a better way or a better path that they should trod (love). The excellent way that Paul brings this to our attention is that right thinking people are satisfied with nothing less than that which is excellent. We as Christians, two thousand years removed, should have the same mindset that there is a correct way or path and that is the way of love. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him" (I John 4:16).

First of all, let us look at the definition of what 'characteristic' means. It is a distinguishing trait, quality or property.⁵ The Bible teaches us that God is love. In I John 4:8, we read, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, For God is love." ⁶ This is an eternal characteristic that God possesses and is proved within the Bible by His actions towards men. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever that believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

We can see how God has demonstrated his love towards man and is the greatest example of love by withholding nothing from us, but sending His Son to be the ultimate sacrifice to redeem us out of bondage. "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Let us now look at the four words that are used in the Bible for love. There is "storge" love which is a natural love for family. It is a natural bond in families, it can exist with other loves, it can be killed but is generally there, different from other forms of love, more ideal with "Agape" love, and can be encouraged by eating together and sharing experiences. Next we find "Eros" love. It is a passionate love or erotic love. This erotic love is not used in the New Testament but is described as two becoming one flesh, the bed being undefiled in marriage. It is a sensual sexual love, and there is nothing dirty or wrong with this form of love when it is within scriptural marriage. The writers do not use this word, but the idea is present in the Bible. "Phileo" love is described as a friendship love, a love that is involved with an object from which to derive pleasure. It appears 45 times within the New Testament. This love delights in the presence of another; it has feelings for and is affectionate. It can be expressed for God, for a friend or spouse. Jesus is a prime example of this when he had love for one of his disciples (John 13:23). "Agape" love, or Christian love, is the love that God has shown for His creation. It is an unconditional willed love, deliberate by choice and prizes the objects worth. It appears 320 times within the New Testament. The King James translates this word as charity. A better translation of this word would be love. The love that Paul uses in First Corinthians is the "Agape" form of love. A good definition of this love is found in Matthew 7:12. This love is the highest form of love and it means to seek the others welfare. It is also to put God first and obey Him. This is the kind of love that God has commanded for Christians to have. This is the kind of love that Christ had for the world and the church (John 15:13, Ephesians 5:25). This love works no ill towards his neighbors (Romans 13:10). This is the type of love husbands are to have towards their wives (Ephesians 5:25). Older women are to teach younger women to love their husbands and to love their children (Titus 2:4). This type of love also chastens (Hebrews

12:6). This love does say no at times. This kind of love is a new commandment (John 13:34-35). The Apostle Paul is trying to teach us, through his writings, that the Christian 2000 years ago could obtain all of the gifts of the spirit, but if they did not have the right motivation (Agape love) then it would be unfruitful. It is applicable for today's Christians as well.

THE PRIMACY OF LOVE, I CORINTHIANS 13:1-3

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

As we look at the "primacy of love", which is the first state of love, Paul is addressing the Corinthians that if they do not possess love first then it will profit them nothing. He uses numerous examples within this section. His first example is that you can have the gift of every language known to man and also a heavenly language that the angels speak, but if you do not have love as the basis of your motivation, then you become as one speaking in the air. The sound has no value beyond the sound itself and leaves nothing behind. Jesus has shown us a good example of the primacy of love.

"Ye have heard that it had been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:43-48).

The Apostle Paul moves on to say that one could have the gift of prophecy (Numbers 22-24, 31:16), understand all mysteries (Deuteronomy 29:29) and have all knowledge in faith (Matthew 17:20, 21:21), but without "*Agape*" love, the gifts that they possessed were meaningless. He used a third example within the primacy of love; to give away all that one had and have nothing remaining for himself or even giving his body to be burned. Without charity (love) it was nothing.⁸

Just as the Apostle Paul had in mind, the Christians 2000 years ago needed to have this "Agape" love first in their life to make these gifts more evident for the edification for the church. Today, these miraculous gifts are gone, but the principle of "Agape" love is eternal and applicable today.

THE PERFORMANCE OF LOVE I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

The Apostle Paul gave a list on the "performance of love". The performance of love is how love is supposed to be demonstrated. These eleven things are the ingredients to how love is carried out by a Christian. "*Agape*" is patient, compassionate, shows generosity, does not brag, is not conceited, is not rude, is unselfish, has a good temperament, keeps no record, rejoices not in wrong doing, but rejoices in what is right, suffers affliction without seeking revenge, believes the best in all actions, hopes in all conditions, and holds up under any kind of insult (II Timothy 2:24, 3:12).

Love is not what we say, but what we do, as we can see in Paul's writing. In other words, it is a path that a Christian should follow and these things should be incorporated into his life. There are two thoughts on how people view this section. Some view Chapter 13 as a romantic chapter and have even used it in various ceremonies. The true thought that Paul is trying to convey is that love performs under all conditions, includes all of these characteristics and never fails.

THE PERMANENCE OF LOVE I CORINTHIANS 13:8-12

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know as also I am known."

The Apostle Paul says that an eternal principle is in effect here. Charity will never fail, but the gifts of the Holy Spirit will fail and vanish away when the completed revelation is revealed.⁹ Paul is contrasting the temporary with the permanent in that as the church in its infancy stage needed the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts came bit by bit until the completed work was fulfilled.¹⁰ The church would at that time have the scriptures to guide them into spiritual maturity (II Timothy 3:16-17, Jude 3). Keep in mind that the builders are temporary, but the building is permanent. The scriptures with love should be our guide as Christians, teachers, preachers, elders, and deacons to fulfill God's will within the church today.

CONCLUSION I CORINTHIANS 13:13

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

In conclusion, the Apostle Paul states in Verse 13 that there are three that abide These are the three Christian virtues that Christians needed then and that are needed today. Within these three we see that one has an eternal consequence because faith and hope will no longer be needed in heaven, but love is eternal and will go on. The Apostle Paul had in mind for the First Century Christians that they could possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit as long as they possessed the correct attitude (love). With this love, they would not longer be fruitless but would accomplish God's will for the church in order to bring it to maturity.

End Notes

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1Corinthians 15, The Resurrection of the Dead

By Randy Vaughn

Introduction

God has reasons for the things He does. He has reasons for the creation of this cosmos and everything in it. "For thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev 4:11) and also "in bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2:10). Consequently, this cosmos is coming to a climax. The great saga of mankind will one day be consummated, when God's venerable silence is broken as His voice calls the dead to come forth. With a majestic sweep of His hand He will undo the greatest curse of the ages. The graves will be opened and God will vanquish death by the quickening of its long-held hostages. With anticipation every believer longs for this family homecoming. And with trepidation and terror the wicked dread the sentence of their impending eternal torment.

The Corinthian letter stands out as a beacon of hope to the hosts of humanity. We may study how the apostle addresses very serious errors with the Corinthians. We read about their ancient problems and as a result, knowing Paul's reaction to them inspires us in our trials to believe that perhaps we are not too far-gone ourselves.

Some Preliminaries About The Resurrection

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body (Greek, ἀνάστασις, literally, "a standing up" or "rising"; Latin, resurrectio, "rising again") is the revivification of the human body after it has been forsaken by the soul, or the reunion of the soul hereafter to the body which it had occupied in the present world. This idea is a uniquely Judeo-Christian concept.

Among the Gentiles

The <u>ancient Greeks</u> did not believe in a resurrection of the body. In general they believed in the immortality of the soul. To them the resurrection of the body was unthinkable in view of the fact that they held the body to be the source of man's weakness and sin. Death, therefore, was very welcome, since by it the soul would be liberated from the body; but resurrection was not welcome, because this would constitute another descent of the soul into the grave of the body. This was the skepticism that Paul faced at Athens (cf. Acts 17:31-32).² James Stewart, professor at the University of Edinburgh succinctly said, "Twenty centuries have echoed the laughter of Areopagus."

To this day the <u>Hindu and Buddhists</u> do not believe the body will survive death. Their doctrine of reincarnation has the soul obtaining many bodies while it journeys to nirvana. When traveling to India, this writer took note of the fact that in the country of Andra Pradesh there was no word for "resurrection" in the Telugu language. Our Indian brethren use the word "reincarnation" in their Bibles. It took some effort to convince one translator of the truth of a bodily resurrection of the dead.

In the Old Testament

Some of the Old Testament passages that suggest a general bodily resurrection are Job 19:26; Psalm 16:10; 49:15; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2 and Hosea 13:14. With but a few of these perplexing passages, the doctrine of the resurrection is not as clearly defined in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament. Note that there is virtually nothing about the future state of the dead from the writings of Moses (the Pentateuch). Nevertheless, the Old Testament is not nearly as veiled about the spirit of man and the resurrection of his body as some moderns might

suggest. Though it is not fully defined, it is most certainly found. And it is wonderfully amazing how God developed this central theme of Bible truth in both Testaments.

Jesus once told the Sadducees that they were ignorant of the scriptures because they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:29-32). It is interesting here to notice that Jesus intentionally quotes from Moses in Exodus 3:6,15 to show that even the Law did at least infer a resurrection of the dead. Again in Genesis 5:22,24 Moses mentions the translation of Enoch strongly suggesting a future bodily resurrection.

I. The Gospel of the Resurrection (15:1-11)

1 Corinthians fifteen is the great Resurrection chapter of the Bible. Certainly this chapter is the heartbeat of every Christian. To address the skepticism some Corinthians had about the future of the dead, Paul writes in a very sarcastic undertone, "Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel" again, as though they have somehow forgotten its first presentation. Notice the emphasis he puts on the gospel because he connects it to the doctrine of the resurrection. There

are five points he makes: 1) Christ died. The nature of his death was not that of a martyr or just a demonstration of God's love. He died for our sins. 2) He was buried. This is ever a reminder of the empty tomb. There has never been a reasonable argument offered to explain the empty tomb. Christ's resurrection is the only answer. 3) He rose again! And 4) He was seen. The word "seen" (Greek, ὀπτάνομαι from ὁράω) always means to see with the eyes. So the resurrection cannot be explained away by a vision. Next Paul gives his list of witnesses: Peter, the twelve, 500 Brethren at once, and James. What jury of men would refuse to give a verdict that rejected the testimony of every witness? Not one witness gave a testimony of denial. 5) And lastly, Paul mentions himself. He states that the gospel which he preached, he received as an eyewitness as "one born out of due season". Paul literally calls himself an abortion and speaks of himself as one hardly worth mentioning. Nevertheless, by God's grace he was an apostle preaching the gospel of the resurrection of Christ and of the dead.

God's work to *restore that which was lost* in the fall (Genesis 3) will inevitably be achieved at the resurrection of the dead and the glorious life following. The warning in Genesis 2:17 brought the curse of death upon mankind when Adam and Eve sinned. "...For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The enemy showed his ugly head in Eden and vilified himself bringing the curse of death upon us. Ever since that first sin, the gaping maw of death has been a ravenous hunger ever swallowing lost humanity. The grave is never satisfied, with no end to its appetite. What a curse is death! Job rightly declares that all who are born of women are of few days and full of trouble. We come forth like a flower and are cut down. We flee also as a shadow and continue not (Job 14:1-3).

Immediately after the tragedy of Eden, God set in motion a plan to rescue man. God has been undoing the destruction one piece at a time until at last He will be glorified as the ultimate victor in the greatest conflict of the ages. Only the mercy and love of God could save us from that horrible curse. But can even God reverse such a condemnation, *which is necessitated by His own holiness?* Will God be able to reverse the death sentence that for justice's sake He had to place upon mankind? Yes! One day He will stop the ravages of aging and time, the very decay of our mortal body. In Romans 8:19-23 Paul summarizes this great climax by describing our fleshly bodies as *"the creature"* waiting longingly for its glorification in the resurrection.

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

This is the great controversy of the ages. This is the Gospel which points to the splendor of a better day. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

II. Four Consequences of Denying the Resurrection: (15:12-34)

In this chapter, Paul sets up four careful deductions to prove to the Corinthian critics that there will be a resurrection of the dead. He does this by showing the consequences of their cynicism. These arguments are devastating to any who would deny it, especially while in the guise of professing Christianity.

1. Our <u>FAITH</u> in Christ is in Vain (12-17)

He states the first consequence of disbelief; if there is no resurrection of the dead "your faith is vain." What is our faith in? To the Athenian philosophers Paul declared that God "hath

given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). The word "assurance" is literally "faith." The verse actually reads, God has "given faith to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." The proof of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus appeared to the apostles and "showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). No fact of history is more evidenced than the empty tomb.

In the first great gospel sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2) Peter noted three reasons we can know Jesus was raised from the dead: **First, is the testimony of the empty tomb**. This could not be denied. Whatever explanations might be offered, the tomb was still empty. His resurrection could not successfully be denied without producing the corpus delicti. Jerusalem at that time must have buzzed with the news of the empty tomb as many foreigners arrived. There was no other plausible explanation. "The tomb is empty! Jesus is raised!"

Second, is the testimony of scripture. Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11. Speaking of the Lord, David said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27). David was not speaking of himself. His body was still in the tomb in Jerusalem. He was speaking of the resurrection of Christ! Those listening should not think the empty tomb to be a strange or unbelievable thing. David had prophesied about it through the power of God.

Third is the testimony of the witnesses. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). But could these be credible witnesses? They were Spirit-filled men! There was no other explanation for the signs that had been manifested through them. As Peter exclaimed, "he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (2:33). They had been with Jesus. Days earlier they had cowered in fear. What else could explain the power and wonders seen in them that day?

Rudolph Bultman, "the father of demythologizing," once said, "if the bones of the dead Jesus were discovered tomorrow in a Palestinian tomb, all the essentials of Christianity would remain unchanged." Paul disagreed! He argued, "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

A Moslem once suggested to a Christian that the Islamic religion enjoyed a tremendous advantage over the Christian religion. He suggested that Moslems could go to the very spot and point to the burial ground of their founding prophet. This, he said, the Christian cannot do. The Christian agreed by saying in essence, "We cannot point to a tomb and say here lies buried our founding Prophet. We have no such tomb because we have no corpse!" "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2Cor. 5:7). How sad to think these Corinthians and many still today doubt this great Bible truth. If there is no resurrection our hope is stripped away and truly, "we are of all men most miserable."

2. The <u>FALLEN</u> in Christ are Perished (18-23)

The second consequence Paul mentions is one of terrible consideration. If there be no resurrection of the dead, our comrades in Christ who have already tasted of death are gone forever and will soon be forgotten when we too shall join them in that inevitable end. Who can believe it?

Even at the time of Paul's letter there had been several Christian brethren who had departed this life. Stephen was the first Christian to be martyred (Acts 7:59-60). Following him, the Apostle James was executed by King Herod (Acts 12:1-2). Others had already departed as well for Paul asserts in vs. 6 that they had fallen asleep. For two millennia now scores of faithful Christians, friends and loved ones have been dying. What happens to the righteous dead? Job asked this long ago. "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I

wait, till my change come" (Job 14:14). Is death the end? The answer is a resounding No! It is not the end. Solomon said, "The righteous hath hope in death" (Proverbs 14:32). In a sweeping declaration Paul says, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (vs. 20). Paul pictures a grand parade marching before us, "every man in his own order: Christ is the firstfruits" (vs. 23). In the Old Testament the festival of firstfruits is when they would bring the first sheaf of grain to the Lord. This meant that there would be more to come. Christ is risen and "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

3. There will be No <u>FINALE</u> of Christ (24-28)

The third consequence of denying the resurrection is that if there is no resurrection then God's Scheme of Redemption, which He planned down through the ages, cannot come to a close. The Kingdom of God must be consummated and the ruin of Eden restored. Paul depicts two opposite ideas in verse 24. The end will be when, 1) Christ shall "deliver up" the kingdom/church. 2) When He shall "put down" all opposition. These two events are to occur at the same time as described by the word, "when." In His ascension and coronation, Jesus was given all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). However, one day He shall "put down" all rule, authority and power (vs. 24). The word "put down" here is καταργέω rendered in the KJV as "destroy, do away, abolish, cumber, loose, cease, fall and deliver." In 1 Corinthians this word is used eight times. Notice the various uses in the Corinthian letter:

- 1:28 God will *bring to nought* (καταργέω) the base things of this world.
- 2:6 The wisdom and princes of this world <u>come to nought</u> ($\kappa \alpha \tau \alpha \rho \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \omega$).
- 6:13 God shall <u>destroy</u> (καταργέω) both the belly and meats.
- 13:8 Prophecies <u>shall fail</u> (καταργέω), knowledge <u>shall vanish away</u> (καταργέω).
- 13:10 That which is in part <u>shall be done away</u> (καταργέω).

- 15:24 Christ <u>shall have put down</u> (καταργέω) all rule, authority and power.
- 15:26 The last enemy that *shall be destroyed* (καταργέω) is death.

Paul makes reference in verses 25-26 to Psalm 110:1, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." One day the church will be secured in God when all of God's enemies have been subdued. Psalm 110 is probably the most quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament. Jesus quotes it to prick the Pharisees because of their calumnious questionings (Matthew 22:41-46). Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 at Pentecost (Acts 2:33-36). The book of Hebrews refers twice to this passage (Hebrews 1:13; 10:12-13).

Who are the enemies of God? Though the list is quite extensive we can generalize it to show who must be subdued before Christ's return.

- 1) <u>Satan</u> (the adversary) is certainly top on the list (1Peter 5:8). But note: he is now defeated. Hebrews 2:14 says, "that through death he (Christ) might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (See also 1 John 3:8).
- 2) The world and its lusts (James 4:4). But note: Christ through His passion says in John 12:31, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." And again, "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17).
- 3) <u>Sin</u> is most certainly the enemy of God (Romans 5:10; 8:7). But note: sin too has been defeated. Ephesians 4:8 says, "He led captivity captive." Romans 6:6 says, "that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."
- 4) **DEATH** is the last enemy to be vanquished (1 Corinthians 15:26). And we are in the final stages of God's plan; longing and waiting to witness that exciting victory.

So, if there is no resurrection, then there can be no finish, no completion, no consummation to the end of all things and to the glorious fulfillment of God's promises.

4. The **FLOGGINGS** We Endure Are Meaningless (29-34)

The fourth consequence of no resurrection is that all of the suffering, trials and hardships one endures for Christ are done needlessly. Few people have suffered as much as the apostle Paul for the sake of the gospel. His question to those rejecters of the resurrection is, why? Why do we go through this agony? How can we rejoice when we are persecuted? Matthew 5:12; James 1:2; 1Peter 4:13-14 and other passages command us to be happy when we suffer. But, if there is no resurrection or a better life to look forward to, then none of us can be happy in our sufferings.

In verse 29 Paul asks, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" Many speculations have been made about the "baptism for the dead." This is the only mention in the Bible of such a concept. Today the Mormon Church is the most commonly known group to practice a vicarious baptism for dead people (and they have to use other sources than the Bible to prove it). Was Paul speaking about a practice that the living on earth could do to change the circumstances of those already dead? Not hardly! First, there is no other teaching in the Bible about the living baptized to assist the dead. Secondly, there is no evidence that such a custom prevailed in the time of Paul. Thirdly, it is contrary to common sense. Salvation in Christ cannot be obtained by proxy or by borrowing on another's work. Each of us must obey God for ourselves. Here's a question. If we can perform vicarious acts for the dead, why not also say that we can be baptized for the living who refuse baptism?

Who is being baptized for the dead in verse 29? Paul uses the third person plural pronoun "they" or "them" several times in verses 18, 20, 23 and 29. Verse 18 speaks of "THEY also which are fallen asleep in Christ." Again in verse 20 Christ is "become the firstfruits of THEM that

slept." In verse 23 "afterward <u>THEY</u> that are Christ's at his coming." Each of these verses is speaking about Christians who have already died. It is obvious that the "<u>THEY</u>" in verse 29 is also talking about the dead in Christ. In this context Paul uses several different pronouns to refer to different groups of people: "<u>HE</u>" = Christ, "<u>THEY</u>" = the dead in Christ and the "<u>WE</u>" in verse 32 refers to the apostles and teachers. By understanding these pronouns, verse 29 should be clear. Thus, one might render the verse as follows, "Else what shall they (the dead already in Christ) do which are baptized for (on behalf of) the dead (i.e. their own death and hope of a future resurrection)?" Whatever else might be said, it is certainly clear that Paul is not talking about some act of subrogation that allows the dead to have a second chance because the living have performed some act for them.

Next Paul gives personal examples of his own risks and dangers for Christ. If the dead rise not, all of that would have been in vain.

Conclusion

God has ordained that one day there will be a great resurrection of all the dead because Christ is risen from the dead. Notice, we do not say Christ <u>was raised</u>, but rather Christ <u>is risen</u>. This is God's promise. This is our hope. This is Christianity.

Thomas Jefferson, an American hero, could not accept the miraculous elements in Scripture. He edited his own special version of the Bible in which all references to the supernatural were deleted. Jefferson, in editing the Gospels, confined himself solely to the moral teachings of Jesus. The closing words of Jefferson's Bible are these: "There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre and departed." Thank God that is not the way the story really ends!

To close, here is an old poem that Alexander Campbell found in the American Messenger and put into the Millennial Harbinger of 1859.

The Resurrection

A seed found in the hand of a mummy two thousand years old, when planted bloomed, into a beautiful flower.

Two thousand years ago, a flower Bloomed brightly in a far-off land; Two thousand years ago, its seed Was placed within a dead man's hand.

Before the Saviour came to earth

That man had lived, and toiled, and died;
And even in that far-off time

That flower had shed its perfume wide.

Suns rose and set, years came and went; The dead hand kept its treasure well; Nations were born and turned to dust, While life was hidden in that shell.

The senseless hand is robbed at last;
The seed is buried in the earth;
When lo, the life long sleeping there,
Into a lovely flower puts forth.

Just such a plant as that which grew
From such a seed when buried low—
Just such a flower in Egypt bloomed
And died two thousand years ago.

And will not He who watched the seed And kept the life within the shell, When those he loves are laid to rest, Watch o'er his buried saints as well?

And will not he from 'neath the sod Cause something glorious to arise? Aye, though it sleeps two thousand years, Yet that sleeping dust shall rise.

Just such a face as greets you now,
Just such a form as here we wear,
But yet more glorious far, will rise,
To meet the Saviour's in the air.

Then will I lay me down in peace,
When called to leave this vale of tears;
For "in my flesh I shall see God,"
E'en though I sleep two thousand years.⁷

END NOTES

- ¹ "Resurrection", McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.
- ² "1Corinthians 15:1-2", The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press
- 3 Ihid
- ⁴ "Sadducees", Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- ⁵ "SADDUCEES," McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia.
- ⁶ "Importance Of The Resurrection Chapter 8," <u>Handbook Of Christian Apologetics</u> Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois
- ⁷ "The Resurrection", <u>The Millennial Harbinger</u>, 1859, Alexander Campbell



"LESSONS

FROM



Volume 2
THE NINTH ANNUAL
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RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA

Editor: Riley Nelson

PREFACE

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). The congregation at Corinth was in need of coming together to become a strong and unified congregation in the midst of a wicked and perverse city.

The words of Paul still are necessary today. It is the case that many congregations suffer from problems just as those in Corinth. Congregations are divided when they should be striving for unity in the body and zeal in reaching the lost. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3). This advice was also needed by the Corinthian Church.

The Church at Corinth suffered from many problems, which Paul addressed in his letter to them. Here was a congregation of people in a city where there needed to be a "light" shinning brightly for the Lord. Yet because of their many differences the light was not as bright as it should have been.

It is the hope that this volume, along with the preceding volume "Lessons From First Corinthians", might help all who read its pages to work for unity and soundness in their congregations. The Church today faces many of the same ideologies the Church in Corinth had to face. Wickedness and immorality are rampant in our world, and the Church must present a strong unified front to meet the challenges presented to us.

While Paul knew of the problems in this congregation he continued to call them brethren

and to seek their help in the work of the Lord. He had not given up on them, but neither had he

given place to their sinfulness and selfishness. He pointed out the problems and told them the

solution. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

It is our hope and prayer that this work will be beneficial to all. May we all seek to work for

the good of the Kingdom. It is with the words of the apostle this volume is sent forth. "But

thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my

beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,

forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:57, 58)

Riley Nelson

Richmond Hill Church of Christ

October 30, 2004

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"Lessons from First Corinthians"

Volume 2

DEDICATION

More times than not in a congregation of the Lord's people those who are up in years decide that they have done enough and step aside to let the "younger generation" take over. Such is not the case with the individual to whom this volume is dedicated.

There are some who seem not to know what goes on behind the scenes at a congregation. Lesson material has to be supplied for our camp sessions; the book which you are holding in your hand had to be complied, printed and bound. On occasion when Sister Carolyn is away the bulletin still has to be printed and folded.

The individual to whom this dedication goes has suffered many losses over the past few years. First her beloved husband passed from this life and then only a few short years later her son died. Someone of less character and faith might have turned their back on God, but not this lady. She volunteers countless hours; copying and binding, cataloging and helping in so many ways.

It is indeed an honor to dedicate this work to Lois Vickers.

Riley Nelson

Ninth Annual Southeast Georgia Lectureship

Held at the Church of Christ Richmond Hill Georgia Highway 144 East P.O. Box 786 Richmond Hill GA 31324

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1 CORINTHIANS 4:1, "STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD"

By Wayne Rodgers

It is truly a privilege to be asked to write and speak on this lecture program once again. It is an honor to stand with brethren that have the foresight of the great influence of the Southeast Georgia Lectures. Truly, it continues to influence a great study of God's word within and without the church.

Introduction

"The apostle Paul built for himself quite a reputation as he traveled across land and sea with the saving Gospel. Yet, he never let his audience or readers forget that the source of his success came from Christ. He could have been the object of worship, for in Acts 14:13-15, false priests of Lystra "...brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein..." Such refusal brought Paul a stoning, but rising from what the men of Lystra thought was his death, he surely rejoiced that he had given God the glory. Without doubt, he had great strength, but he always recognized such as coming from above... "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).\(^1\)

This letter to the "church of God at Corinth" was written by the apostle Paul with many regards to his own apostleship. It is a letter that deals with so many conflicts within the church at Corinth. Many of these problems likely stemmed from the background of their culture and city.

In last year's study of First Corinthians, the following topics were discussed: *The Problem of Division, The Problem of a Christ-centered Message, The Problem of Getting All to Grow and Develop Into Maturity, The Problem of Discipline in the Church, The Problem of Getting Along with Other Brethren, Marriage and Home Problems, The Problem of Dealing with Weak Members, The Problem of Supporting Preachers of the Gospel, The Problem of Sin,*

Worldliness and Apostasy, The Problem of the Appearance of the Opposite Sex in Worship, The Problem of Keeping the Worship Spiritual, The Problem of Spiritual Gifts, The Problem of False Doctrines about the Resurrection, and The Problem of Benevolence and Cooperation of Churches. The topics were outlined in the introduction and discussed in each lecture. ²

There are none who would doubt the necessity of studying these timely topics in First Corinthians, because these are problems that plague us currently, as well. The first three topics mentioned above from last year's lectures lead continuously into the topic at hand in Chapter Four, Verse One.

Early Christians fell into the easy snare of judging the preaching of the word – a sin common to modern society. Then, as now, such critics were ignorant of three principles governing evangelism: (1) Evangelists are ministers of Christ; (2) Evangelists are stewards of the Gospel; and (3) "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" – to Christ, in the Gospel.³ Not only early Christians, but also many Christians today have succumbed to "preacheritis," and have pitted one preacher against another, as if the battle was against each other and not against Satan. On the other hand, some preachers have given into a haughty quest for power, loving "to have the preeminence among them" (3 John 9) to the detriment of themselves and the Lord's body.

"LET A MAN SO ACCOUNT OF US..."

How then should the church's ministers be regarded? As our text would indicate and answer: "...as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." The apostle Paul is writing in the context of defending his apostleship in both letters to the church at Corinth. In so doing, he presents this thought on how preachers should be regarded: not servants of men,

and they are not amenable to the whimsical notions born of men – their ministry is of Christ and their stewardship is to the word (4:1). There were those who had risen up against Paul attempting to tear down the great work of the Lord in which he was involved. They set out to counteract the apostle's work; however, Paul would say: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord" (4:3-4).4

The Corinthians should have known better – shame on them! They had become "puffed up for one against another" (4:6). Paul had a relationship with them as of a father "through the Gospel" (4:15). Richard E. Black writes this concerning their being "puffed up":

The arrogant disregard of the Corinthians for truth and the true evangelist is pinpointed vividly in our text: Corinth was full, rich, reigning, wise, strong, honorable – the apostle was a poor servant, last, appointed to death, a spectacle, a fool for Christ's sake, weak, despised, hungry, thirsty, naked, had no certain dwelling place, reviled, persecuted, defamed, made as filth of the world, the offscouring of all things (1 Cor. 4:8-13). The impression is left that the church needed nothing. Therefore, it justified itself in condemning the preacher that had brought salvation to them – what a travesty! They were full, had need of nothing, they supposed. Paul was made, by them, to stand in need of everything. "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel" (1 Cor. 4:14-15). Fatherlike, Paul was not to be dissuaded from the task of admonitory rebuke – he did not concern himself with the many new teachers Corinth enjoyed or how popularly those false instructors had been received: "Learn not to go beyond the things which are written," and "learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another" (1 Cor. 4:6).5

One problem that has always faced mankind is following after leaders instead of the word of God. Too much emphasis is usually placed on the speaker or preacher and not the word to be taught. Jerry Moffitt makes the point that there is a worldly desire of some preachers and brethren to try to make Pastors of our preachers as do the denominations.⁶ The fault may often

lies with both parties – the preacher and the pew! The Corinthians seemed to be easily swayed by eloquence and style, while forgetting their responsibility. As the apostle John accounts, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). A steward is "required to be faithful" (4:2); and, if he is not, his teaching should not be accepted (Gal. 1:8-10). Then, we should "so account" properly.

"...AS OF THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST..."

In dealing with the problem of Division from the first chapter through the third, Paul again mentions those saying they were "of Paul" or "of Apollos" (1:12; 3:4). Paul then asks the question, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" (3:5). Paul reminds the Corinthians that both Paul and Apollos were ministers "of Christ". They were only servants of Christ. This is how they should be regarded! Not to be lifted up above Christ or his teaching in anyway. Yet, this seems to be what they were guilty of doing.

The apostle Paul would only encourage individuals to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). Corinth's following of men was leading them away from the word of God and into a state of apostasy. They were concerned more with the preacher than what was being preached. This is often the case today in the denominational world, but do not be foolish enough to think that this same attitude has not crept into the church of our Lord. Certainly, we have come across those preachers who because of their ego and self-willed ways are much more comfortable in congregations without elders. Immediately, they are placed into a position of power which feeds their ego.

Some preachers, who remember that they are to be "ministers of Christ," work great in those situations where a leader is needed to get the congregation where it should be in organization with bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1). As preachers, we must remember that we are "ministers of Christ." Leon D. Stancliff remarks:

We are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Paul was very careful to keep this principle in mind. Although he was perhaps the most influential among the apostles, he never seemed to seek personal adoration from men. He was but a minister serving Christ and the brethren. He was merely a steward, caring for that which God had placed within his supervision.⁷

"...AND STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD."

The apostle says ministers should be regarded as "stewards of the mysteries of God."

The word "steward" Immeans according to Thayer's Greek definitions:

- the manager of household or of household affairs 1a) especially a steward, manager, superintendent (whether free-born as was usually the case, a freed-man or a slave) to whom the head of the house or proprietor has intrusted the management of his affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures, and the duty of dealing out the proper portion to every servant and even to the children not yet of age 1b) the manager of a farm or landed estate, an overseer 1c) the superintendent of the city's finances, the treasurer of a city (or of treasurers or quaestors of kings).
- 2) Metaphorically the apostles and other Christian teachers and bishops and overseers.⁸

Ministers of Christ were entrusted with "mysteries of God." The mysteries of Christ may be alluded to in First Corinthians chapter two:

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. 2:7-12).

Paul was entrusted with the truths which were revealed from heaven. These truths were once "hidden," but now made known unto all men as Paul writes to those at Ephesus:

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." (Eph. 3:1-12)

Notice how the apostle Paul speaks that the mystery was revealed to him. So that when we read his written words, we can also understand what he knows concerning the mystery of Christ. These were truths hidden in other ages, but now are known by the teaching of the apostles and the fellowship in which we partake of today.

Conclusion

We have a great responsibility today to continue making known what has been revealed by the scripture concerning Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). May we learn from the words of the apostle Paul to those at Corinth how to regard those who preach the Gospel of Christ. We should be regarded "as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." Let each Christian understand their responsibility to make known to the world the mysteries of God for they have been revealed.

End Notes

- ¹ Bristow, Benny B. <u>Invitations for Mid-Week Services</u>; Quality Publications, Abilene, TX: (1990) p. 11.
- ² Ryan Tuten. Lessons From First Corinthians; Southeast Georgia Lectureship: Richmond Hill, GA, (2003) p. 11-19.
- ³ <u>Black</u>, Richard E. <u>Learn not to go beyond the things which are written</u>; Denton Lectureship, Denton, TX. (1982) Valid Publications, p. 66.
- ⁴ <u>Ibid</u>. p. 66.
- ⁵ <u>Ibid</u>. p. 66-67.
- ⁶ Moffitt, Jerry. Moffitt's Bible Commentary Volume One: The New Testament; Thrust Publications, Portland, TX: (1997) p. 265.
- ⁷ <u>Stancliff</u>, Leon D. <u>God's Messages Bible Commentary Series: 1 and 2 Corinthians</u>; Sain Publications, Pulaski, TN: (2000) Volume 5, p. 61.
- ⁸ Thaver's Greek Definitions; G3623, QuickVerse 6.0.

1 CORINTHIANS 7 MARRIAGE QUESTIONS

By Dave Atnip, Sr.

Introduction

The Apostle Paul had written a previous letter to the Corinthians (7: 1). And in that letter they asked Paul certain questions concerning marriage (7: 1, 2). They also apparently asked some questions about circumcision and slavery (7: 18, 21).

These questions revolved around the idea of "change" and Christianity is a religion of "change." The word "repent" means to "change the mind", and they were wondering just how far reaching these changes should be: If they were single should they change and get married (7: 1, 12). If they were married and having a difficult time with their unconverted mate should they change and leave that mate (7: 10, 11). If they were circumcised or uncircumcised should they try to change that state? (7:18, 19). If they were in slavery should they try to change that circumstance and leave their masters (7: 21, 22), in keeping with the freedom which is in Christ (Gal. 2:4)? And Paul's basic answer to all these questions was "No" (7: 20). Verse 20 seems to be a key verse in understanding Paul's answers to their questions. Paul says there "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." With this brief introduction we will now look at the questions:

"Should people who are not married get married?"

One question that they apparently asked was, "Should people who are not married get married?" (1, 25). And Paul's baseline answer to this question was "No", (1, 20, 26).

One reason Paul answered the question this way was that there was a persecution (Present distress - Verse 26) going on against the church at that time, and it would just be better not to have family ties at such a time. Jesus also addressed this problem before the destruction of Jerusalem. He said, "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!" (Matthew 24:19). Paul also adds that if single people need to get married, and want to get married, it is alright to do so (1, 9).

"SHOULD I LEAVE MY NON-CHRISTIAN MATE?"

Another question asked was, "Should I leave my non-Christian mate?" (27). Some Christians were married to non-Christians who were giving them a hard time, and they wanted to know if they should just leave them. Again Paul's answer is: "No" (10, 11, 20, and 27). The reason Paul gave this instruction was, first of all, God has laws on divorce and remarriage which apply to all married people (Verses 10, 11; Matthew 19:9).

Please note the Lord's teaching on Divorce and remarriage:

(1) God <u>hates</u> divorce - Malachi 2:16. (2) God has made a <u>rule</u> and that rule is: Divorce Plus Remarriage = Adultery (Mark 10:11, 12). (3) God has made only one exception His rule, and that is in the case of "fornication" (Sexual immorality). The Lord says in Matthew 19:9, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, <u>except it be for fornication</u>, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (4) And if one is living in adultery and will not repent of it they will be lost (1 Cor. 6:9, 10). And (5) to repent of adultery, means to dissolve the adulterous union (Matthew 14:3, 4).

But another reason Paul told them not to leave their non-Christian mate was to prevent fornication (2). Another reason was that it was possible, for the Christian to convert his non-Christian mate to the Lord (7:14, 16; 1 Peter 3:1).

"What should I do if my unbelieving mate wants to leave me over my religion?"

Another question was, "What should I do if my unbelieving mate wants to leave me over my religion?" (7:15). And Paul's answer is, "Let them leave" (7:15). What was happening here was that the unbelieving mate was saying to the believer, "I can't stand your religion", and they were issuing an ultimatum to the believer, and saying, essentially, "Either leave Christ, or I will leave you." The reason Paul told them to let them leave is that the unbeliever was trying to make a "slave" of the believer. As Christians we are married to Christ. (Rom. 7:4). And our marriage to Christ comes before any other marriage we might be involved in, (Mat. 10:37; Luke 14:26). Actually we ARE also "Slaves" of Christ. The word "servant" in verse 22 is "douloss" and it means "Slave". Now we are not to be "slaves" of men in that sense (7:23), but we are to be slaves of Christ in that sense (7:22). But the unbeliever was trying to make a slave of The Christian in that sense. The word for "bondage" in verse 15 is "dou-loss" and the Christian is only to be a slave to Christ in that sense. The Lord is simply saying to the Christian, "You are married to Me first; you are My slave, not their slave, let them depart, Do not leave Me for Them!" And such things are still happening in the world today: One woman in India was about to be baptized and she said to the preacher, "My husband gets a new wife today." And the preacher said, "Yes, isn't it wonderful, you are going to be a new creature in Christ." "No", said the woman, "you don't understand; because I am becoming a Christian my husband is divorcing me and getting a new wife." And another reason Paul told the believer to let them leave was for the purpose of promoting "peace" (Verse 15). There can no peace in the home with an unbeliever issuing such ultimatums to the believer.

"IF MY MATE LEAVES ME BECAUSE OF MY RELIGION, CAN I GET MARRIED AGAIN?"

Another question was, "If my mate leaves me because of my religion, can I get married again?" (7:10, 11). And Paul's answer is: "No" (7:10, 11). The reason Paul gave that answer is that Jesus has rules on divorce and remarriage that apply to <u>all</u> married people (7: 10, 11). Another reason they could not get remarried is because the word "bondage" in verse 15 is not referring to the marriage bond. The word for the marriage bond is, "dead-eh-tie" (39), but the word for "bondage" in verse 15 is "Dou-loss" which means "slavery". And this word "Dou-loss" (In verse 15) is never used of the marriage bond anywhere. That word is speaking of a type of slavery that should never exist in any human marriage because it would cause the believer to leave Christ.

"Should Christian widows get married again?"

Another question was, "Should Christian widows get married again?"(7:39, 40). And Paul's answer is "No, It would be better for them not to marry again" (7:20, 40,). Apparently one reason for Paul's answer was the "**present distress**" mentioned in verse 26. However, Paul also adds that if the Christian widow needs to get married and wants to get married it would be OK, but "Only in the Lord" (7:39).

Concerning the phrase "Only in the Lord," we will say a few words: Certainly it is foolish for any Christian to marry one who is not a Christian, but I don't believe the words "only in the Lord" here means that she can only marry a Christian, and she is sinning if she does not. Let's examine this: If a Christian widow is sinning by marrying a non-Christian, then she is sinning by staying married to him, for if it is a sin to get into the relationship, surely it is a sin to stay in it. But if it is a sin to stay in it, then she would have to leave it, and we would have

another reason for divorce and remarriage, that being when a Christian widow married a non-Christian. What proves too much proves nothing at all.

In the context we have here a matter of "Head ship". God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman (1 Cor. 11:3). And in 1 Cor. 7:36 the father would be the head of his virgin daughter, meaning she would be under his authority. And then the widow in verse 39 is under the "head ship" of the Lord. And thus the words "Only in the Lord" there would mean that she was under the Lord's authority and should marry only in accordance with His will. We seem to have a similar usage of the phrase in Eph. 6:1, where children are to obey their parents "in the Lord".

VERSE 20 IN THE LIGHT OF THE SUBJECT OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

In closing I want to deal with verse 20 in the light of the subject of divorce and remarriage. The verse says, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." Some have taken that verse to mean that once you are baptized you must remain in the state you are in, even if it is an adulterous relationship. But the context shows that all the relationships mentioned here are "non-sinful" relationships, such as: Being single, or getting married, or being a slave, or free or circumcised or uncircumcised. And furthermore, if a person can remain in the state he was in when he got baptized, then he could also remain in a homosexual union or a polygamous union. No, Paul was not including adulterous marriage unions when he said what he did in verse 20. And if it be objected that "We know that homosexuality and polygamy are wrong!" it must also be said

1 CORINTHIANS 8 - PROPER PERSPECTIVE

By Keith Dixon

Introduction

I would like to thank the congregation here for all the good works that you are doing. You are making a difference in this area, in the state and in the country. Please keep up the good work. This lectureship is a very good work and it is a lot of hard work. Thank you for your work and inviting me to be a part of this monumental task.

The subject of this manuscript is 1 Corinthians 8. 1 Corinthians 10 and Romans 14 also deal with the subject of eating of meats that have been offered to idols. Today, we in America do not have this problem. We do not have to worry about foodstuff that been offered to any kind of idol. So this subject will be dealt with in principle.

Brother Burton Coffman makes some introductory comments in his commentary about 1 Corinthians 8 that I find most interesting and deals with this matter. He said:

"Beginning here and through 11:1, this epistle discusses food (especially meat) sacrificed to idols; and in the culture and society of the people who first received it the problems here dealt with were paramount and practically universal. The total meat supply, in any practical sense, came from the sacrifices to the idol gods of the Gentiles, a portion of each sacrifice being the perquisite of the pagan priest, and the rest of it consumed in the temple area itself, carried to the homes of the worshipers, or sold, either by them or the priests, in the common meat markets." Coffman continues; "... the apostle Paul established four timeless principles of Christian behavior in the course of his writing on this subject, these being, (1) that which is permissible behavior for one man may, in certain circumstances, be dangerous and sinful in another, (2) that no Christian conduct should be evaluated solely from the standpoint of knowledge, but in the light of the love of brethren, with regard to its possible influence upon others, and in the light of what others may think of it, (3) that no Christian has a right to practice anything, however innocent it may be to him, if in so doing he shall damage the faith of another, and (4) that whatever is done, even to the weakest member of the body of Christ, is also done to Christ himself, and that weakening or destroying the faith of even the least and weakest of Christ's members is a sin of the greatest magnitude against Christ himself."²

James Meadows has this to say about 1 Corinthians 8, "What are some ways in which Paul's 'eat-no-flesh' principle has been applied? The late G.C. Brewer listed the following:

(1) "The individual communion cup" 'I object, and, on the Pauline principle of eat no meat, you must not use it; you offend me, your weak brother.' (2) Dividing into classes of different age groups for Bible teaching: 'I object, it offends me, and you must eat no meat, etc' (3) Using helps in Bible study – uninspired literature: 'I object; it offends me.' (4) Women teachers for children's classes: 'I object; it causes me to offend, and on the Pauline principle.' (5) Passing the basket or collection place when we should go up one by one and 'lay it on the table' just like Paul said: 'This offends me, and 'you all' must quit or violate 1 Corinthians 8:13.' (6) Putting a baptistery in the building instead of going to a river, just like Christ did: 'This offends me, and you must quit this.' (7) The budget system with pledge cards: 'This offends me, and I demand that you yield to my weak conscience and eat no meat.' (8) Offering a book for sale at the close or in connection with the service: 'I object; it's like the sects; you will have to quit it." About twenty more abuses could be listed."³

Meadows gives five points on how far a "strong" Christian is suppose to go. His fifth poignant point is: "Paul's principle would not apply in the case of a contentious brother, nor would it apply to one who is weak because he has refused to study and learn better (emphases mine, ked); but it would apply only in the case where a weak brother's conscience in involved. There is a vast difference between the conscience of a weak brother and the individual who is always objecting to something. This fact needs to be considered very carefully when dealing with this subject. We cannot let a cantankerous Christians contaminate our Christian liberty. We must take a stand for our liberty; yet not violate another's liberty. For this reason we must have the proper perspective of knowledge, idols and others. Let us study these areas of concern.

PROPER PERSPECTIVE OF KNOWLEDGE

First we must have a proper perspective of knowledge. While knowledge is good we must have the right kind of knowledge. There is a kind of "knowledge puffeth up" (1 Corinthians 8:1). 1 Corinthians 1:19-21 tells us that there is a wisdom that will take us away from God. This kind of knowledge cannot be good! Romans 1:22 tells us of individuals that "professed themselves to be wise, but they became fools instead."

Romans 1:28 tells of individual that "did not like to retain God in their knowledge."

Again this kind of knowledge that takes us away from God cannot be good. Isaiah of old told of some who would make "their knowledge foolishness" (Isaiah 44:25). With these passages alone we can understand that we must have a proper perspective of knowledge.

Yet, knowledge without other attributes is not worth much. 1 Corinthians 8:2-3 mentions that knowledge must be accompanied with love. 1 Corinthians 13:2 states that knowledge without charity will make an individual "nothing." There was a kind of knowledge that would vanish away (1 Corinthians 13:8). Now we are getting the right kind of perspective of knowledge.

There is the right kind of knowledge that God would have us to obtain, notice what Solomon said of the proper kind of knowledge: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7); again he says that we must "cry after knowledge," "seek her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasures then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord" (Proverbs 2:3-5, 10-13; 3:13; 14:6; 15:14; 23:23; 24:4-7). When Daniel and the three Hebrew youths were taken captives there were attributes that were noticed about these boys. Consider what attributes these boys had: "Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skiful in all wisdom,

and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's place, and whom they might teach the learning of the Chaldeans" (Daniel 1:4). Again we are obtaining the proper perspective of knowledge but more is needed.

Jesus said that, "Knowledge will set us free" (John 8:31-32) and that "knowledge will lead to eternal life" (John 17:3). Do we not want to be free from sin? Do we not want eternal life? To have these things we must have the right kind of knowledge. Therefore we must seek out knowledge as a treasure! We are encouraged to add this right kind of knowledge as a part of the "Christian graces" (2 Peter 1:5).

John helps us with the proper perspective of knowledge. John by inspiration said that we "can know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him, He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:2-6). John again gives the proper perspective of knowledge when he said that love is needed with knowledge (1 John 4:7-10, 13-17). This is the same perspective that Paul had given of knowledge in 1 Corinthians 8 thus it is the proper perspective of knowledge.

PROPER PERSPECTIVE OF IDOLS

With the proper perspective of knowledge now we need a proper perspective of idols. Isaiah gives a good description of an idol (Isaiah 44:6-20). First, Isaiah tells them information that they should already know, that is that there is no other God (Isa. 6, 8) He

tells them that a graven image is vanity (9-10). Isaiah even tells them how they make their graven idols (11-14). Notice carefully verses 15-17, with the same wood this person builds a fire to warm him, bakes his bread and also makes a god! It would seem that Isaiah is teasing them just a little when he talks about the "residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and said, Deliver me; for thou art my god" (Isaiah 44:17). These people also needed to get a proper perspective of the images that they were making to worship just like the Corinthians needed a proper perspective of idols!

The Philistines realized to some degree that their gods are nothing compared to the living God (1 Samuel 5:1-5) Yes, they too were getting a proper perspective of what an idol was. The Philistines captured the ark of God form Israel and placed it in their god Dagon's temple. Each morning when Dagon's priest would come in the found the image of Dagon fallen before the ark of God. One time when the priest came in the found that the head and both hands of Dagon had been cut off. What a vivid way to get a true perspective of an idol and the true God all in one lesson!

Paul gives an apt description of the living God compared to idols in Acts 17:23-31. He tells the Athenians some things about God that they did not know. One thing he told them was that God made everything (24). Next Paul tells them that God does not dwell in temples made with hands (24). He declares that God made it all and gives to man all that he needs. The comparison would be which one of the idols that they worshipped could do that? The God that they knew nothing about was the true and living God, all powerful all-sufficient! What a proper perspective of God compared to idols!

Paul says that idols are nothing and gives the proper perspective of them in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6. He does this by telling them that there is One God (4 and 6). He also declares that idols are nothing (4). Yet not all have this kind of knowledge of God yet. The Corinthians had come out of idolatry and needed time to come to the proper perspective of knowledge and idols so they needed the proper perspective of others.

THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE OF OTHERS

The proper perspective of others can be seen by whom Paul calls, "those who are weak." They were "brothers" (1 Corinthians 8:11-13; Romans 14:1, 10, 13, 15, 21). Not all "brothers" have the same knowledge about spiritual matters (1 Corinthians 8:7). Thus time must be allowed for them "to grow in the grace, and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Time to grow is needed for babes both physically and spiritually (1 Peter 2:2).

One of the brethren had a weak conscience (1 Corinthians 8:7, 10). Those in Corinth must watch out for him and not cause him to stumble. He is an important part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:22-31) and those who are "stronger" must watch what they do in order so that they will not destroy the faith of this weak brother. Time must be given to the weaker brother so that he can train his conscience (1Timothy 4:1-2).

UNDERSTANDING LIBERTY

Paul speaks of liberty along these lines. We might have liberty in Christ but we must understand this liberty! We cannot abuse this liberty. It is for <u>ALL</u> those who are "in Christ" (Galatians 2:4). We need to "stand fast in this liberty" (Galatians 5:1).

Importantly, we do not need to be "entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). Understand we do not need to use our liberty to hurt others conscience (1 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16). We must give them time to train themselves to become a Christian that will not be tossed to and fro in the wind.

Our liberty must not become a stumbling block to others. A "stumbling block" is "an obstacle for the foot to strike." We must have the proper perspective of others so that we do not become an obstacle to them.

This liberty is guided by love and knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:1, 3). It takes knowledge to know when a person needs to set aside his Christians liberty. It takes love for one another not to want to become that stumbling block to the weak brother. There are dire consequences when we do not take others into consideration.

When or if we sin against a weak brother it is the same as sinning against Christ (1 Corinthians 8:11-13). When Saul was persecuting the church Christ said it was against Him (Acts 9:1-5; 22:4-8; 26:9-14; Philippians 3:6). We must be careful about the faith of others. We are not an island (Romans 14:7). Coffman makes this statement "Whatever is done to the church, even in the person of its weakest and most insignificant members (as men count insignificance), is done to Christ." We therefore must have the proper perspective of others.

Coffman quotes DeHoff and then makes his own comments;

"On the other had, there is such a thing as a brother who is not nearly who weak as he thinks, but who has been in the kingdom for years and is a crank and a fanatic. He has a tender conscience, he claims; and he tries to use it to control everybody else. His favorite passage is what Paul said about meats, which he applies to anything he wants to keep other people from doing. Of course, we all just have to get along with this fellow as best we can!' This whole chapter exposed the shallowness and conceit of that "knowledge" which had no loving concern for weak and immature Christians, and bound upon all true Christians

their responsibility for setting the correct example, regarding the scruples of others and for the establishing a pattern of behavior which will buildup others in the holy faith of Jesus Christ."9

Thus a proper perspective of others is to remember the "weak brother" but we should not let one who is strong say he is weak!

We must have the proper perspective of knowledge, God, idols and each other to be pleasing to God. Without which we cannot go to heaven!

END NOTES

- Coffman, James; First & Second Corinthians Vol. VII ACU Press Copyright 1974. p. 119
- 2 Ibid
- Studies in First Corinthians; edited by Dub McClish; James Meadows; Copyright 1982 p. 349-350
- 4 Ibid
- ⁵ Thompson Chain Reference Bible 2021, 2022, 2023. There is much to be gained by studying these references.
- What Does it Mean to Be a Christian like Paul; 24th Annual Florida School of Preaching Lectureship, Bob McAnally, Editor. David B. Watson lecturer p. 369-370; copyright 1999. This is a good lecture on Romans 14 and one would do well to study this chapter along with 1 Corinthians 8
- Word Pictures in the New Testament, A.T. Robertson, vol. 4, The Epistles of Paul, p. 140; Broadman Press, Copyright 1931
- 8 Coffman p. 127
- 9 Coffman p. 128

1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-18 THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL

By Stacey Grant

Fellowshipping with the great brethren of the Richmond Hill congregation is indeed a great delight! There are not enough words in the English language to express adequately and sufficiently the love this author has for each member who has greeted him with a kind word or expressed a hearty word of encouragement during the times he has visited. What an unmatched blessing it is to spend quality time with those of like precious faith. May the Lord continue to shower His manifold blessings upon my dear yokefellow, Riley Nelson, the editor and capable director of these superb series of lectures.

INTRODUCTION

A great number of Americans—as in so many of other cultures—**literally** worship pleasure and entertainment, doing so with zeal sometimes unrivaled. It is obvious to the acute, spiritual mind that their value system is in **reverse**, appreciating that which evidently does **not** improve their quality of life as only the Holy Book is capable of doing. In reality, their behavior is nearly as old as the human race. If we Christians did not know the truth about the matter, we would be inclined to believe the fallacy known as "sin nature," which inherently leads men to sin. Sinning has always been a personal choice (Jam. 1:13-15). Should we blame Adam for passing on the "genetic defect," which impedes the thinking of so many of our fellow humans? Why are athletes, granted contracts worth multiple millions of dollars, while schoolteachers are underpaid and unappreciated? By the way, the top athletes frequently receive the best medical care available, another added perk of physical excellence. Which of the two occupations really

benefits humanity? Similarly, police officers, firefighters, and military personnel honorably serve and enhance our lives, yet are not recognized for the many sacrifices they contribute on a daily basis. In so many ways—but of far greater worth--the life of a faithful preacher mirrors the aforementioned vocations. His primary duty is teaching, protecting and serving his fellowman with honor, using solely God's Word, enhancing all areas of his life in the process.

Why should a person, be lauded as a hero whose "job" it is to throw a piece of pigskin or shoot a piece of cowhide into a basket? Most notably, the majority of the professional athletes and entertainers love parading their wealth and **immorality**, influencing many impressionable minds. Tragically, their adoring fans (fanatics) oftentimes imitate their lewd behavior. Acts 2:38 and Romans 12:1-2 are the antidote to such misplaced energy.

As noted in other lectures, Corinth was laden with numerous problems. The root cause of Corinth's problem is obvious—selfishness, the stimulus behind many congregations being torn asunder. Attached to their selfish spirit was the lack of spiritual growth, a recipe for certain disaster (1 Cor.3:1-4). Some Corinthians also desired, and admired very much, worldly wisdom-enamored with, and being influenced by, the noted philosophers and wise men of their day (chs.1-2). They became dull of hearing and needed reminding concerning godly wisdom--that which **saves** in the end (chs.3-4).

Contextually, Paul is right in the midst of arguing Christian liberties. His premise is both logical and Christ-like: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend (stumble), I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8:13). In other words, "I do not want to be the cause of my brother's stumbling." He then uses himself as an illustration or object lesson, following the Christ, the ultimate example of selflessness (Luke 22:24-30; John 13:1-17; 1Cor.11:1; 2 Cor. 8:9). Furthermore, these verses reveal the obligation the church has of

supporting the local preacher. Many preachers do not teach these verses for fear of being perceived as "money hungry." Nevertheless, the Bible commands the evangelist to teach all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27). This lesson will address the issue very forthrightly.

With war between America and Cuba (assisted by Russia) seeming imminent, then president John F. Kennedy challenged all capable Americans on a fall day in October 1962, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." The "Cuban Missile Crisis" would test the patriotism of all American citizens. It takes a selfless, sacrificial spirit to keep this country free from threats and potential harm from its enemies. Likewise, spiritually speaking, the oft ignored Golden Rule is applicable to this lesson: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt.7:12). Many in Corinth were guilty of seeking their way without concern for their brethren who were struggling with the everyday influence of paganism. They lacked the type of love—agape--needed to build up a local congregation, and fittingly, the body of Christ. Agape love always puts the interest of others ahead of itself. Though familiar with the doctrine of agape, many of the Corinthian brethren had not applied it personally.

The lesson is divided into two parts: (1) the contextual setting, (2) the practical application.

THE CONTEXTUAL SETTING

Paul's Affirmation Is Authentic. For an argument to be true, it must be substantiated by incontrovertible evidence. The authenticity of Paul's apostleship is found in the rhetorical questions he poses. "Am I not an apostle (v.1)?" is two-fold in meaning, the first of which relates to the qualification question. "Have I not seen the Lord?" was the first installment of irrefutable proof he presented concerning his apostleship. Apostles had to be eyewitnesses of

Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:22). Paul saw the resurrected Christ while on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6, 27). He, like all apostles before him, Jesus personally selected (Acts 9:15).

"Are not you my work in the Lord?" (v.1) is the second line of proof presented. None other than Paul established the Corinthian congregation, working among the brethren for 18 months, performing numerous miracles in the process (Acts 18:1-11). "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2 Cor.12:11). They knew full well how dedicated Paul was to the work of the Lord. RELEVANT REMINDER REVEALED: "If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you" is truly revealing how far off course were these brethren. Their conduct is equal to a patient questioning the credentials of the doctor that just recently performed surgery on him, and in the process saved his life. POWERFUL PROOF PRESENTED: "Ye are the seal of mine apostleship" (v.2) is the third installment of facts presented. "Seal" literally means "that by which anything is confirmed, proved, and authenticated, as by a seal, (a token of proof)." "Your conversion to Christ, Corinth, is ample testimony of my apostleship," he averred. In Acts 18 and 2 Corinthians 11 it is revealed how Paul conducted himself among these brethren. Concerning this crucial matter, Corinth was undoubtedly influenced by false teachers (2 Cor.11:3-4).

The truest manifestation of one who lacks saving faith (for there is no other kind) is his "doubled-mindedness." "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jam.1:8). Many of the Corinthian brethren shamefully fell into this ungodly category. Fickleness is a detriment to any professing Christian. How many faithful Gospel preachers have had their good name tarnished or work severely impeded by vacillating brethren who give an ear to rumors and innuendos? A lying tongue, a heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that swiftly run to mischief, a false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among the brethren are five of

the seven abominations the Lord hates (Prov.6:16-19); incidentally, these evils were contributing to the demise of the Corinthian congregation. Consider prudently the succeeding comments regarding the terms "double-minded" and "unstable."

"Double-minded" in the original text is *dipsuchos*, a man with two minds or souls. The word occurs in no other New Testament book, and in James only here and 4:8....He is therefore, "unstable," (*akatastatos*, unsteady, wavering, in dispositions and attitude). Such a person is restless, confused in his actions and in all his ways. A double-minded man is in conflict with himself; this situation makes him *unstable*, a word used to describe a drunk man unable to walk a straight course, swaying now this way, now that, without definite direction in his course, and thus unable to get anywhere.²

Some today believe that having access to miracles would cause one to be more faithful. Did not the first generation of Israelites freed from Egyptian bondage witness plenty of miracles? Was their faith strengthened by what they beheld? Likewise, the Corinthians, most of whom Paul could have endowed with miraculous gifts, were blessed to witness and perform miracles. How did the miracles enhance their life, spiritually speaking (chs.12-14)? It should be unmistakably evident that a strong faith is the result of **believing** and **obeying** God's Word. As is always the case, according to Acts 20:32, the Lord knows what is best for our spiritual development.

Paul was experiencing the same treatment his Lord experienced, namely, being castigated by those whom he helped. Such maltreatment should never occur among brethren, but reality is reality. Countless thousands, if not millions, of faithful Gospel preachers have been mistreated, misrepresented, misquoted, etc., by congregations or brethren through the years. This trend of devilish behavior, tragically, will never abate.

Paul's Position Afforded Him God-Ordained Power. "If any speaks, let him speak as the oracles (utterances) of God" (1Pet.4:11a). Paul, speaking in the name of Jesus, re-establishes his Heavenly-endowed, delegated authority in the mind of the Corinthians. The term "apostle"

means "one sent under commission." Paul was one of the hand-selected ambassadors of the Christ. "Am I not an apostle?" implies that the audience already knew the answer. They witnessed Paul on many occasions faithfully executing his duties as an apostle. NOTE: Gospel preachers preach with authority that is intrinsic to the office. "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee....Do the work of an evangelist" (Tit.2:15; 2 Tim.4:5). Of course, this fact is established by his declaring, "If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you" (v.2a). Corinth had willfully forgotten Paul's credentials. NOTE: We Christians today sometimes tend to suffer from "acute" or "convenient" Alzheimer's, "forgetting" the commands of God. We can easily adopt the "Corinthian" mindset and very well may "forget" that every assembly is vital to our spiritual growth, to give as we have prospered, the route to the church building when football or hunting season begins, or is in progress, etc. We might forget that "roasting" the preacher after every sermon could lead us into the eternal oven; and, if we talk more about sports, entertainment, social issues or politics more than we do the Christ, we need a refresher course concerning the church's key reason for existing. For this deadly deficiency Jesus commands the evangelist, "Of these things put them in remembrance" (2 Tim.2:14a).

Incidentally, Titus 2:15 orders the preacher to preach "with all authority," not as the authority. There are some preachers who utilize time allotted for Gospel preaching to spew their personal opinions, attacks on brethren, etc. Such actions are illicit. On many occasions Matthew 18:15-18 is circumvented.

Furthermore, how sad it is that the denominational concept of church organization has infiltrated the bride of Christ. Some preachers actually are the leadership of their respective congregation, with other brothers acting as mere puppets. This author once heard an arrogant

false teacher proclaim words to the effect, "You mean to tell me that I must submit myself to the very elders whom I taught and ordained?" Tragically, the "elders" were in the audience; neither of them gave a rebuttal. Preachers, like all members, must heed Hebrews 13:7, 17, else they will lose their precious souls.

Paul's Position Afforded Him Varied Privileges. "Am I not free?" is an allusion to the exclusive liberty we Christians enjoy in Christ (Eph.1:3; Gal.5:1). "Have we not the power to eat and drink?" is referring to his right to be supported by the brethren. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife?" reveals Paul's authorized option to be married and have children. "Have we not power to forbear working?", deals with his right not to work secularly. His unfeigned love for the church led him not to "burden" the church with a salary. It is noted of Paul's character:

Paul had the right to refrain from secular work so as to give himself fully to his work as an apostle. But if he did that, the brethren would need to support him. Since he was unmarried, and thus had only minimal needs, he was able to ply his trade as a tentmaker in order to provide for his own essentials. And as he told the Thessalonians, he declined to take support from the church so that he could be an example to them (2 Thess. 3:8-12).³

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things" (v.11)? In comparison, there is no equality. When a preacher honors the Lord by rightly dividing the Word, he is a vessel of honor fit for the Master's use (2 Tim.2:15-21). The Scriptures teach, "The laborer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim.5:18). The very words he is teaching benefits every facet of the hearer's life, if his heart is right with the Lord. What is his motivation? "Take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save thyself, and them that hear" (1 Tim. 4:16). Dear reader, ponder deeply and prayerfully what this verse is teaching.

Paul's Argument Is Powerfully Illustrated (v.7). War is costly. The soldier does not pay for the cost of the war, he first argues. Second, farmers should not be prohibited from partaking of the crops at the harvest. Third, the very herd he protects and feeds usually supports a herdsman or shepherd.

Paul's Argument Is Supported By Scripture (vv.8-14). How often has it been the case that members of the body of Christ will argue or debate an issue merely from an assumption and not Scripture? Here, the apostle uses the Word of God correctly concerning this critically important matter (v.8). He did not "make these things up." Quoting Deuteronomy 25:4, Paul reveals the principle with reference to work animals. We are not to abuse a work animal put into our care (Prov.12:10). From whose work we reap benefits, whether it be a human or an animal, there should continuously be compensation. The Law of Exchange is duly noted in verse 11. Spiritual feeding in exchange for physical necessities is God's law. Verse 13 is yet another biblically provided proof of Paul's argument. The Lord ensured that those who served as priests under the Old Economy had their needs met (Lev.6:15-16, 26; 7:6, 31-32; Num.18:8-13, 24-32; Deu.18:1).

Paul's Argument Is Authoritative (v.14). Everything related the church God has already revealed in His Word (2 Pet.1:3). "Ordained" is translated elsewhere in the KJV, "command." That the church is required to support financially the faithful preacher is a command (Gal.6:6). Faithful brethren should never support apostate preachers (2 John9-11). God, through His benevolent spirit, has always been concerned about the well being of His preachers.

Paul's Did Not Utilize His God-Given Liberty (v.15). Paul's sincerity is expressed in this verse more so than any other. He still chose not to exercise his God-given right. After hearing this portion of Paul's letter, those guilty should have repented for their evil deeds.

Paul Lived What He Preached (vv.16-17). Unlike some many sectarian evangelists today, and even some of our "brethren," money was never the chief reason behind Paul's preaching. This "burden" of supporting the preacher he laid not on the shoulders of Corinth (2 Cor.11:7-9). His heart was pure when it came to preaching the Truth. He was known for his great work ethic (Acts 18:1-3). All this he did for the furtherance of the Gospel. Paul's motivation is revealed in the Sacred Text (1 Tim.1:12-16). Many times we hear athletes who are holding out for more pay hypocritically proclaim, "I will play this game for no money." The love of money has ruined many good preachers. The apostle's view of worldly gain and possessions is beautifully expressed in Philippians 3:7-8.

Paul's conclusion is undeniably selfless and sound (v.18). Not receiving support from Corinth was not an act of self-promotion on Paul's behalf. He was willing to do that which was necessary to support the congregation. He denied himself for their benefit. Sometimes we must be willing to sacrifice for the benefit of our brethren. "We be brethren" must be the motto of every member of the Lord's precious body (Gen.13:7-9). Putting the needs of others ahead of our personal interests is what our Savior did in the Garden of Gethsemane when He declared, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt.26:39). Self-promotion has its reward (Matt.23:12). In contrast, those who are faithful unto death (Rev.3:10) will be handsomely rewarded: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Paul kept the faith by teaching from a pure heart all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27). His precious soul is now resting in paradise (Luke 23:43).

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS RELATIVE TO 1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-18

The sacrifices made by faithful Gospel preachers are usually unknown or unnoticed by many brethren. Their wives and family are also asked to sacrifice. Paul chose the hardest road possible concerning establishing a new congregation--working a secular job in the process. Establishing a congregation is very demanding. Add to it the stress of a secular job and the task can sometimes seem unachievable. It truly takes men of spiritual fortitude to accomplish such a feat. Working with an already established congregation is likewise enormously demanding. Faithful preachers are genuinely men of honor, worthy of much support.

This author is reminded of a story brother Curtis Cates, the capable director of the Memphis School of Preaching, shared with his class on one occasion. While the located preacher at a particular congregation, Brother Cates and his family helped the congregation to triple its membership and offering. During the course of time the Cates family grew, requiring more funds to sustain the family. Sadly, brother Cates had not received a pay raise the entire time he worked with the congregation. He relayed to the leadership the need of more financial support for his family. The brethren declined to assist them and as a result they had to move and begin working with another congregation that was willing to see that their needs as a family were met. Dishonorably, Brother Cates' experience is not an isolated case. Many congregations do not make sure their preacher, and his family, is provided for as the Bible commands. This is resoundingly a Heaven and Hell issue. Leaderships, through negligence, or even malicious forethought, who do not see fit to provide adequately for the local evangelist, will be held accountable for their sinful behavior. On the other hand, those leaderships who are sensitive to needs of the preacher are jewels of great price!

Concerning the Gospel preacher, do you, dear reader, know how many hours a faithful Gospel preacher puts into preparing just one sermon or lesson? He does so because he wants you and your family to know the Truth and make Heaven your eternal home. Notice 1 Timothy 4:16. Do you honor his hard work by taking copious notes when he is preaching? Do you honor him by coming to Bible class prepared? Do you make mention of him in your private prayers? Do you understand that he must teach the whole counsel of God without partiality? Do you see him as your brother or enemy or the church's "employee"? Do you treat him as you do all other members of the congregation? Do you ever exhort him for doing a good job? Do you ever discuss him in a positive fashion with other members? Is he truly your brother in Christ, one with whom you frequently fellowship? When he is being attacked for doing good, do you come to his defense?

Truly, does not the faithful Gospel preacher deserve to be treated with dignity and thoughtfulness when it comes to his pay? In view of Heaven, has not the Lord spoken concerning this matter? How, then, should every member respond to Matthew 7:12, Galatians 6:6, and 1Corinthians 9:14? Supporting the preacher is a sacrifice God joyfully accepts (Phil.4:10-18). Philippians 4:19-20, my dear brethren.

END NOTES

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1 CORINTHIANS 9: 18-27, A SERVANT UNTO ALL

By Andrew Nelson

Introduction

Today the idea of being a servant is not one that is held in high esteem. In fact many fight for equal rights and what is "theirs." But, Jesus, who left an example for man to follow, did not live his live with this mindset (1 Pet. 2:21). Jesus came to this world as a servant, of those to whom he was under no subjection. In like manner Paul became a servant to all when he began the Christian race, even though he was a free man.

A Free Man

Paul began this chapter with a series of questions including one that stated, "Am I not free?" (1 Cor. 9:1). In answer to this he set forth arguments showing that he was a free man and that he had the same rights as any other Christian or servant of God. Paul argued that he had "a right to expect them to support him in his labors," and further stated that if he had a family that they deserved to be supported as well. Then in support of these arguments, Paul referred to several examples of those who were compensated for their services. Paul mentioned the soldier who goes to war and is paid by those whom he protects. He then mentions the farmer who plants and cares for his crop and eats of the fruits of his labors. Finally, the shepherd who drinks of the milk of the flock which he protects (1 Cor. 9:7). Each of these individuals were free men and were therefore, rightly deserving of compensation for their labors. Paul then turned his attention to the Old Testament where Moses recorded "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out

the corn" (Deut. 25:4), showing that even a "dumb beast" is worthy of the fruits of his labor. Therefore, it was Paul's right, having worked with the Corinthians, sowing unto them spiritual things that he reap their carnal things (1 Cor. 9:11). The Corinthians recognized this right for others and supported them, but who was more deserving of their support other than the one who had brought the gospel to their city, the very one who had begotten them through the gospel (1 Cor. 9:12; 4:15).

Paul continued reminding them from the Law of Moses that "they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple," and "they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar" (1 Cor. 9:13). Under the Law of Moses the priests were supported for their work. Here the word "partakers" has the idea of being divided or shared. "When the priests and workers worked at the altar, they divided the offerings between themselves and the altar. The altar consumed the offering, just as the workers consumed the offering." The application of this example follows, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). Therefore as a preacher of the gospel Paul had the right to be supported by those to whom he preached.

Even though he possessed the freedom to exercise this right, Paul chose to forgo this right in order that the gospel would not be hindered. Paul gloried in the fact that he was able to preach the gospel without charging those to whom he preached (1 Cor. 9:18), and had he received support this would have done away with his reward (1 Cor. 9:15). Paul had not simply chosen to preach the gospel; rather he had been called to do so. Acts 9 records that Paul was to be the Lord's "chosen vessel" to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Once he became a Christian, the King James Version says that Paul had a "dispensation of the

gospel" committed unto him (1 Cor. 9:17). The American Standard translates this verse: "For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward: but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me." Having been called to preach the gospel Paul became a steward or slave who was seeking to "fulfill the desires of his Master." Consequently, had he failed in carrying out this charge he would have lost his soul (1 Cor. 9:16). What then, was Paul's reward? Paul's reward was that he could preach the gospel without charging those to whom he preached in order that the gospel would not be hindered and no one could accuse him of abusing his right to be paid (1 Cor. 9:18).

In answer to the question "am I not free?" the conclusion is reached that yes Paul was a free man who had the right to be supported for the work that he did if he desired it. But, because he was not supported by the Corinthians he had no financial obligation to them, and was able to be "free from all men" (1 Cor. 9:19). Paul was not dependant upon anyone for his financial subsistence and no one could therefore control him." Although this was the case Paul had a desire to serve God and to save souls (1 Cor. 9:22), and because of this Paul writes that he became a "servant unto all" (1 Cor. 9:19).

A SERVANT UNTO ALL

Even though Paul was a free man and not under the power of those whom he taught, he lived his life as if he had been made subject to their desires, making himself subject to those unto whom he was "under no subjection." This is not to say that Paul compromised the truth, but rather, that he adapted himself to the practices of others in as much as they did not contradict the scriptures (1Cor. 9:21). Paul had not specifically been told to "become a servant to all men." However, Paul put into practice the words of

the Master. As He spoke to His disciples Jesus reminded them that the kings and rulers of lands during their days who were considered to be "great," "exercised authority" over their subordinates. Then Jesus told them, "But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45). According to Jesus true greatness is achieved, not when one becomes a ruler and gains authority, but when he lowers himself to serve others just as Christ did in coming to die on the cross to redeem mankind. Jesus owed man nothing, yet He made Himself a servant to mankind and gave His life on the cross so that man could live.

Paul wrote to the church at Philippi that they should have the mind of Christ, the one who made Himself a servant, in them (Phil. 2:5-8). Paul was not a hypocrite by writing this to them because he was also a follower of Christ: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Just as Christ had made himself a servant, the apostle Paul made himself a servant to all men. Because of his realization of the value of a soul and the price of sin, Paul did what he could to win others to Christ.

Today, American Christians find themselves in a similar situation to the apostle Paul. Christians in America enjoy many freedoms members of the church have never had. In this country Christians are able to assemble peacefully without worrying about governmental oppression. God's word is readily available for all who would read it. And, just as Paul, Christians in this country are not bound as slaves to any other individual. Yet Christians voluntarily bind themselves to others through their obedience to the gospel. Just as the apostle Paul made himself a servant to all others of his day, the

modern Christian <u>must</u> yield himself a servant to all others today in order to bring them to Christ. The story is told of the missionary, Hudson Taylor who went to China to preach the gospel. Soon after he arrived, he

...decided, as a matter of expediency in reaching the Chinese, to abandon his western style of dress. He thus cut his hair in their style, darkened it, put on satin shoes, and adopted the loose garments of their choosing as his wardrobe. His son and daughters-in-law, in writing his biography says, 'Everything opened up after that in a new way.' He had become all things to them that he might win the more.¹⁰

to the Jews, those under the law

When Paul became a Christian he had to renounce "the Jews' religion for Christianity." Acts 9, 22, 26 records that Paul was on the road to Damascus and he was told by Jesus to go to the city to be told what he must do to be saved. When he came to Ananias he was taught the gospel and was baptized. His repentance and renunciation of the Jewish religion was seen by the new message that he preached. Concerning his conversion Paul wrote:

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: (Gal. 1:13-16).

In his conversion, Paul had given up the Jews' religion, but when he was trying to bring those of the Jewish religion to Christ, Paul conformed himself to their customs in as much as he could without violating God's law. When Paul was with those who were offended by the eating of meats that were mentioned in the Law of Moses as unclean he said, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world

standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8:13). In other situations there were things that Paul could do in keeping the social customs such as washing hands before eating (Matt. 15:2-9). Dealing with circumcision is a great example of how Paul became "all things to all men" without compromising the truth. When Paul determined to take Timothy with him, Paul circumcised Timothy:

Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1-3).

In circumcising Timothy, Paul was not trying to keep the Law of Moses, nor was he trying to bind upon Timothy this law. Paul recognized and taught the Corinthians that "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Cor. 7:19). Under the old law circumcision was commanded of the Jews by God (Gen. 17:9-14; Lev. 12:3). However, "The dispensation of which circumcision was the seal was contrary to the people of Israel, 'and he [Christ] hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:13-15). 12 Under the Christian age one should be striving to bring his heart into obedience "to the will of God through Jesus Christ." "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." (Gal. 5:6). Faith working by love and "keeping the commandments of God" are equivalent statements, which "express the idea of devotion of hear and life under different aspects." Therefore, when Paul circumcised Timothy it was not in order to keep the Law of Moses, rather it was to

accommodate the Jewish mindset that circumcision was necessary¹⁴ in order to prevent opposition from the Jews so that they would more readily accept the gospel.¹⁵

In contrast to this Paul refused to allow Titus to be circumcised.

Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you (Gal. 2:1-5).

Titus was a Greek or Gentile and Paul contended that it was not necessary for Titus to be circumcised in order to be a Christian. ¹⁶ Even though there were Jews pressuring Titus to be circumcised, Paul refused to allow this event to occur. Why was his attitude so different in this case than when he had Timothy circumcised? These were completely different circumstances:

(1) With Titus it was a doctrinal case; with Timothy it was an expedient thing to help him have easier access to the Jews. (2) Timothy was half Jew; Titus was wholly Gentile. (3) Timothy's Christianity was not suspect; Titus' case was suspect. (4) Had the cases been precisely similar in all essential details and salvation had weighed on the matter of Timothy's circumcision, Paul would have been as adamant in keeping Timothy away from the rite as he was with Titus.¹⁷

Paul's actions in both of these situations show "the principle which governed him." ¹⁸ When dealing with the "opinions and practices of others" one should only concede in matters of "indifference." When yielding to the desires of others Paul did not give in to things that were in themselves wrong.

Paul's conduct shows a direct contrast to those who "accommodate themselves to the sins of men or to the religious errors of others." There are many who seek for "all to

get along," and for this reason they pervert this passage of scripture by compromising the truth of God's Word. In most cities there are several places with a sign that says "church" that are not the church that Christ built (Matt. 16:18). These individuals are in great need of hearing the gospel, and it is the responsibility of Christians, those who have been entrusted with this message to take it to these individuals before it is too late. The mindset of every faithful Christian should be "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). As this message is taken to the lost Christians should follow in the footsteps of Paul and become unto the Jews a Jew. When teaching people of different religions Christians should familiarize themselves with the customs and social practices of these people and adapt to them as long as these practices do not conflict with God's Word, in order to win them to Christ.

In America this most likely will mean being friendly and learning the mannerisms of a particular region of the country. Another part of becoming all things to all men is not allowing the religious beliefs of others to become the punch line of a joke. One never knows who may be listening. It may be the case that an individual who could do great things for the Lord is listening, and because that joke made fun of him or one of his family members the door might be shut for future attempts to bring that individual to Christ. This is not following in the footsteps of Paul and certainly not in the footsteps of Jesus. When preaching to the Jews Paul never poked fun at the Jews believing in the Law of Moses. He did however, take them from where they were and taught them about Christ

to them that are without law

"To them that are without law," refers to the Gentiles who were without the Law of Moses. As a servant unto all Paul became a servant to the Gentiles. This was the commission that had been given to him by God (Acts 26:17, 18). As he went to the Gentiles Paul used the same strategy that he used with the Jews. He conformed to their customs and manners in as much as he could without compromising the truth. Paul was a Jew by birth, but he had been born in a Gentile city, therefore, he could relate with both the Jews and the Gentiles.²⁰ "When Paul was mingling with those who were not Jews, he did not try to press the Jewish customs upon them, but he did advocate the law of Christ which was and is binding upon all mankind."21 One way Paul did this was by making use of their idols in his teachings: "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:23). It was on this occasion that Paul delivered the great sermon on Mars hill. In that sermon Paul referred to the poets of the Gentiles. "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28). As Paul taught the Gentiles, he with them as well, and he rebuked Peter for ceasing to do so when the Jews arrived (Gal. 2:11-16).

There is also a need in America to become like Paul as he dealt with the Gentiles. These were individuals who were known for their idol worship. In today's world there are still those individuals who worship idols like those in Paul's day. In order that they might be converted it would be wise to learn of their customs and beliefs and use these things as tools to win these individuals to Christ. On the other hand, in America there is

also a great problem with idols. How many idols are seen being washed in the driveway every Sunday morning? How many sacrificial worms are offered to the lake during the times of worship on the Lord's Day?

Would it not be a good for Christians to get involved in the interests of these individuals and use them as Paul did in bringing them to Christ? However, some Christians believe that if an individual does not believe the Bible he is lost and that is his problem. Paul did not work this way. That day on Mars Hill Paul used one of their idols to teach them about God. This may be what is needed in bringing an individual to Christ. The Psalmist wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1). Paul told the Romans that the power of God can be clearly seen by the "creation of the world" (Rom. 1:20). What better place to show that there is a designer of this world than in nature, and after proving there is a designer one can show what that designer has said through His inspired word. By becoming all things to all men Christians will be able to save some.

to the weak

Next, Paul addresses his strategy in converting the weak. These are not individuals who lack physical strength; nor are these individuals who have not grown in Christ (2 Pet. 3:18); these are individuals who like those referred to in chapter eight cannot do certain things because they are violations of the conscience.²² Chapter eight discusses the meats that were offered to idols. Concerning these meats Paul declared:

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we

by him. Howbeit *there is* not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat *it* as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend. (1 Cor. 8:4-13).

In Paul's day there were some Christians who even though they believed in the one true God and had obeyed the gospel, could not remove from their conscience the idea that eating of the meats offered to idols was showing reverence to these idols. Therefore, they could not eat of this meat because it would violate their conscious. Because of this these individuals were considered weak, and in order to offend them not, Paul became as they were, giving up his personal rights or liberties in order that they might be gained for the gospel's sake.

Another group of people who must be emulated are those who are weak. Christians need to realize that there are still meats offered to idols today. When individuals leave denominationalism many times they bring with them "baggage" that comes from having been in that denomination for so long. As long as these practices do not contradict with God's law these individuals should be left alone and just as Paul did not eat of the meat to prevent these brethren from stumbling (1 Cor. 8:13).

why?

There was a specific reason that Paul became as a Jew, as a Gentile, and as one who was weak. Paul concludes verse twenty-two by saying: "I am made all things to all

men, that I might by all means save some." Paul realized that most people were headed down the "broad way." Jesus taught that few would be saved because of traveling on this way: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14). However, by accommodating himself to those he was teaching, Paul could help many without the hindrance of offending those who he was teaching. Paul did this because he had was commissioned by God to "go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mk. 16:15). This commission made Paul a herald of the truth, and he was to give a voice to the gospel call entreating all who would come to enter into this race in which he was a runner.

A RUNNER IN THE SPIRITUAL RACE

Paul stated that he became all things to all men so that he could be a partaker of the gospel with the Corinthians, fellow runners in the spiritual race. He then proceeded to describe that race and the way in which one must run it (1 Cor. 9:23ff). Races were common sporting events held during that day, especially in Corinth, the site of the Isthmian games.²³ Paul reminded the Corinthians that those running in a physical race are running in competition for one prize, and "although everyone gave it his best shot, only one could win."²⁴ The winner of the Isthmian games received a crown of pine leaves which "symbolized the great honor bestowed upon him by his nation, city, and family."²⁵ Paul challenged the Corinthians to run the spiritual race as those who run in the physical race to obtain the crown that is offered to the winner. The spiritual crown in contrast to

the physical crown is incorruptible and offered to all who finish the race (1 Pet. 1:4; 2 Tim. 4:8).

If the Corinthians were to finish the race, they like the athletes of the physical race would have to be "temperate in all things" (1 Cor. 9:25). Those running the physical race endured ten months of training by a competent trainer and a restricted diet. Then, thirty days before the contest the athletes would have to "attend exercises at the gymnasium." To complete the race the athletes had to submit not only to the rules of the race, but also to their trainer and the diet lest their competitors gain strength as they lost it. All of this was done to receive that corruptible crown, but the spiritual race is run for the incorruptible crown.

Today this same great race continues to be run. The entrance requirements or rules of this race are set just as those of the ancient games. Today only Christians, those who are obedient to the gospel, can run in this race. The prize is still there for all who will enter and complete the course (2 Tim. 4:8). Just as those ancient runners trained and exercised self control over their bodies to win the crown of pine leaves, Christians must train and exercise self control today in view of the goal that lies ahead. Just as the victory was the stimulus for the Grecian youths to strive for physical excellence, the prize laid before Christians serves as "an incentive which, when fully apprehended, is sufficient to carry him to great spiritual attainments. To have righteousness and life imperfection is his true glory, and this is the very crown of his being. And such a crown cannot fade away."²⁸

After describing the race and the crown Paul described his race (1 Cor. 9:26, 27). As he ran the Christian race, Paul did not run aimlessly the race that had been set before him. He ran with a goal in mind, and that was obtaining the crown that had been

promised to him (2 Tim. 4:8). Because of his desire to complete his course, he gave no thought of defeat or failure, but he focused on his goal and "pressed toward the mark" (Phil. 3:14). Because he was focused on his goal he fought "not as one that beateth the air:" Paul did not fight as one who was unskilled swinging his arms in such a way that they are easily avoided.²⁹ Paul fought "the good fight" with direction, and he knew the rule, the goal, and had developed his skills to the point that it was possible to fight and run effectively.³⁰

Rather than being the runner running uncertainly or the boxer beating at the air, Paul stated that he mastered his body, literally beating it into submission. Paul realized the danger of Christians falling short of the final goal; therefore, he did what he could to prevent himself from being lost. So that after he had served as "the herald of eternal salvation to others, he himself would [not] be rejected."³¹

Just like Paul Christians must not run with uncertainty nor beat at the air. Christians must run the race with the goal in mind, giving no thought to failure or defeat. Christians must press forward through the difficulties of the course because the crown of life is waiting for those who like Paul complete the race (2 Tim. 4:8).

Conclusion

Paul told the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). As a follower of Christ, Paul went about preaching the gospel to all who would listen. In order that he could bring more lost souls to Christ, Paul became more Christ like and put aside his personal rights and allowing the practices of others to take the forefront in his life, as long as these practices did not conflict with the will of God. He did this so that he could be a partaker of the gospel with those who he had taught. As a

herald of the truth Paul reminded the Corinthians of the race they had been called to run, and challenged them to run in order to win. Paul did not neglect himself in this challenge, but disciplined himself so that he too could enjoy the incorruptible crown awaiting all who finish the race. May each Christian strive as Paul did in his race to complete the race and to bring as many souls as possible by becoming a servant unto all.

END NOTES

- ¹ THE HOLY BIBLE, King James Version (Cambridge: England, Cambridge University Press, 1991) All scripture references are to this version unless otherwise stated.
- ² R. F. Knox, Jr, <u>First Corinthians: A Commentary</u> (Winder, GA:) p. 99.
- ³ Ibid. p. 101.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid. p. 103.
- ⁶ Ibid. p. 106.
- ⁷ Howard Winters, <u>COMMENTARY ON FIRST CORINTHIANS: Practical and Explanatory</u> (Greenville, SC, Carolina Christian, 1987) p. 120.
- ⁸ John Calvin, <u>COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS</u>, trans. John Pringle(Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Book House, 1979), p. 304.
- ⁹ Winters, COMMENTARY ON FIRST CORINTHIANS, p. 120.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- ¹² David Lipscomb, "First Corinthians," in <u>A COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENTS EPISTLES</u>, vol. 7, (Nashville, TN.: GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY, 1987) p. 105.
- 13 Ibid.
- ¹⁴ H. Leo Boles, "Acts," in <u>A Commentary ON Acts of the Apostles</u>, vol. 5, (Nashville, TN.: GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY, 1989) p. 252
- ¹⁵ Leon D. Stancliff, "Acts," in <u>GOD'S MESSAGES BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES</u>, vol. 3, (Murfreesboro, TN.: Sain Publications, 2000) p. 304.
- ¹⁶ Robert R. Taylor, Jr., Studies in Galatians and Philippians (Ripley, TN.: Taylor Publications, 1986) p. 32.
- 17 Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Lipscomb, "First Corinthians," p. 134.
- 19 Ibid
- ²⁰ Knox, First Corinthians: A Commentary, p. 107.
- ²¹ E. M. Zerr, "First Corinthians," in BIBLE COMMENTARY, (Bowling Green, KY.: Guardian of Truth Foundation) p. 20.
- ²² Knox, First Corinthians: A Commentary, p. 108.
- ²³ Winters, COMMENTARY ON FIRST CORINTHIANS p. 123
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Lipscomb, "First Corinthians," p. 38.
- ²⁷ Ibid. p. 139.
- ²⁸ Ibid. p. 140.
- ²⁹ Knox, First Corinthians: A Commentary, p. 110
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Winters, <u>COMMENTARY ON FIRST CORINTHIANS</u> p 124, [not] added by me.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:3-16 WOMAN'S ROLE IN THE WORSHIP

ву Alan Wright

Introduction

Few passages in the Scripture have produced such a wide variety of interpretations as the one before us. Some use these verses to teach that a woman must wear a hat or veil when in the worship assembly. Others have found here authority for women to preach or take other leading roles in the worship. Many have used this text to teach that God requires men and women to wear a particular style of hair. Some believe that Paul here asserts that human judgment is the final arbiter in matters of worship. And countless numbers of commentators and expositors have concluded that the passage in so unclear that we cannot be certain of its meaning, but whatever it means, it is rooted in ancient customs that are no longer relevant to us today.

WHAT THE PASSAGE DOES NOT TEACH

1. This passage does not require women to wear a hat or other covering when assembled in worship. There are those who would require women to wear some form of headdress in worship, believing that Paul here insists the woman must cover her head as a symbol of her subjection to the man.

Curiously, there is no word in the text to define what head covering is being referred to.

Many think that Paul is referring to a woman's veil. There are at least seven different words used in the Old Testament that are translated as veil. Of these, four may be eliminated as irrelevant to the current discussion. (1) **Poreketh** is a large veil used as a screen. It is regularly

used to refer to the veils in the tabernacle and temple, and is never used of an article of clothing.

(2) Maccekah actually means molten, and is most often used in reference to molten images or idols. However the word apparently, can refer to a bed covering (Isa. 25:7; 28:20; 30:1). (3) Mitpachath is a large cloak or mantle. Ruth used such a cloak to carry six measures of barley (Ruth 3:15). (The King James Version translates this word in Isaiah 3:22 as wimple, a pleated cloth worn over the head and framing the face, as sometimes worn by nuns. However, most translations have used the word cloak. Clearly in view of the passage in Ruth, this would have been much larger than a mere head covering.) (4) Macveh simply means covering. It is the word used to describe the veil Moses put over his face to hide its brightness (Exo. 34:33, 34, 35). The Septuagint and the New Testament both use the Greek word kalumma to translate it (rf. 2 Cor. 3:13-16). This word is also used in the Apocrypha to refer to various coverings used in the tabernacle and to the armor of a soldier.

This leaves us with three words. (1) **Radiyd** is a wrap or spread covering the upper body that may be easily thrown over the head. It was such a wrap that was removed from the Shulamite maiden (Song 5:7), and it was listed among the fashionable apparel of the daughters of Zion (Isa. 3:23). (2) **Tsa'iyph** is a large veil used as a stylish adornment. Rebekah wore such a veil when meeting Isaac (Gen. 24:65) and Tamar wore this veil when seducing Judah (Gen. 38:14,19) (Some have suggested that Rebekah's actions show that the veil was worn for modesty, but such certainly could not have been the case with Tamar. It is more likely that this is a case of a bride adorning herself for her husband). (3) **Tsammah** apparently refers to a scarflike veil that bound back the hair. The King James Version translates it **locks**, and some scholars believe that it refers to hair that is braided. Most believe however that it is in fact a headdress. The Shulamite wore such a veil (Song 4:1, 3; 6:7) and the women of Babylon were

called to remove this veil (Isa. 47:2).

Several observations may be made about these veils. **First**, while all of them may be drawn about the head in various manners, none are specifically designed to hide the face as is generally done in the Middle East today. **Second**, each of these veils is primarily used as a fashion accessory, and secondarily as a protection against the elements. None are symbols of submission. **Third**, it was not the usual custom for Jewish women to appear veiled in public. For instance, the Egyptians could easily see the beauty of Sarah (Gen. 12:14). Abraham's servant could see that Rebekah was fair to look upon (Gen. 24:16). As Hannah prayed in the tabernacle, Eli noticed the movement of her mouth (1 Sam. 1:12). It was with the influence of the Koran and the Moslem religion that certain Middle Eastern societies began to require the public veiling of women.

But some have argued that since the word radiyd, veil, is derived from radad, to subdue, then the veil must be a symbol of submission. It is true that radad is sometimes translated to subdue or conquer (Psa. 144:2; Isa. 45:1). However the basic meaning is merely to cover. (As when the cherubim upon the doors of the temple were covered with gold) (1 Kin. 6:32). It means to subdue only in a metaphorical sense, that is, as one kingdom spreads itself out upon another. Furthermore there is a great difference between submission and defeat. The radiyd is then merely a covering.

There are instances when the covering of the head (or the face) indicates humiliation. When David fled Jerusalem at the revolt of Absalom, he covered his head (2 Sam. 15:30). When Haman was forced to exalt his enemy Mordecai, he covered his head (Esth. 6:12). When Judah was punished with drought, they would cover their heads (Jer. 14:3, 4). But Paul in our text is not speaking of the humiliating defeat of women, but rather of their orderly submission.

Here then we have an interesting problem. Throughout our text Paul refers the reader back to principles concerning the relationship of men and women established from the time of creation. Yet nowhere do we find God ordaining the veiling of women as a symbol of submission throughout the Old Testament. Clearly then Paul was not requiring women to be veiled in order to maintain the ancient principle of submission.

Others have concluded that Paul is referring to the **tallith**, or prayer shawl, of the Jews. This is a four–cornered shawl having fringes consisting of eight threads, each knotted five times, and worn over the head in prayer. Certain rabbis argued that since the seraphim cover their faces in the presence of God, it is certain that men should do so (rf. Isa. 6:2). It is required by Jewish tradition that all married men must wear the tallith at the time of prayer. (There is some debate about whether this practice dates back to the time of Paul, or whether it was a later innovation.) It is worth noting that at least some Romans wore such a covering. Virgil in the Aeneid writes, "And our heads are shrouded before the altar with a Phrygian vestment." The Grecian culture worshipped bareheaded. At any rate, these customs require men to cover themselves, while Paul argues that men should remain uncovered. This would make the passage a chastisement of the men rather than the women, which does not fit the passage at all.

In fact, our text does not address a woman's apparel in the assembly at all unless that woman is "praying or prophesying." It says nothing whatsoever about a woman who is not taking a leading role. The only admonition given by the New Testament in this regard is that women should dress modestly, avoiding ostentation (1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Pet. 2:1-4). This leads us then to our next issue.

2. This passage does not give authorization for a woman to lead in worship. It has been argued that since Paul gives direction for the attire of women who were praying or

prophesying, it must be acceptable for them to do so. Else, we are told, the directions would be senseless.

Clearly some women were endowed with the spiritual gift of prophecy. The Bible lists a number of women who were prophetesses in both the Old and New Testaments: Miriam (Exo. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kin. 22:14), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), Anna (Luke 2:36), and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8, 9). Also there is the prediction concerning women involved in prophecy (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). (The term prophetess in Isaiah 8:3 seems to mean simply the prophet's wife.) Were women then to take a leading role in worship?

Remember that in close proximity to our text Paul requires, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. 14:34, 35). Notice that both passages deal with the matter of prophesying in the public assembly, both refer to the submission of the woman to the man, both refer back to what was taught in the law and both maintain that a woman who does not follow the instructions is in a shameful state. Clearly the two passages are dealing with the same subject in the same context, and therefore we would expect them to be saying the same thing. What is the significance then of this second passage?

The verb **sigao**, **keep silence**, simply means to refrain from speaking. It is used three times in the chapter. The one who speaks in tongues must keep silent if there is no interpreter. (1 Cor. 14:28) One who receives a prophecy must keep silent until others have finished speaking. (1 Cor. 14:30) And finally the women must keep silent in the churches (1 Cor. 14:34). This requires us to hold our tongues, not interrupting or distracting from the message of the speaker.

The verb laleo, speak, is the normal word for public address. Paul uses it throughout this

chapter (twenty-four times) to refer to those who either publicly prophesy or speak in tongues. It is "not permitted" (from epitrepo) for the women to publicly speak. This is the same word used later when Paul says to Timothy, "I suffer not a woman to teach" (1 Tim. 2:12). Furthermore it is a "shame" (from aischron) for them to speak publicly. The passage seems remarkably clear and unequivocal. What the women should do is "keep silence." What they should not do is "speak."

Now if Paul in chapter 11 says that the women could take a leading role in worship, then we face an apparent contradiction that requires a solution. It is sometimes suggested that in chapter 14 Paul merely deals with abuses of spiritual gifts. For instance, perhaps the women were disrupting the worship by interrupting those who were speaking. Therefore we are told that as long as a woman is not disruptive the prohibition does not apply. But this does not deal fairly with the text. Whatever abuse there may have been of the spiritual gifts, Paul gives the remedy. Women were to keep silence and not to publicly speak in the churches.

The problem lies in a failure to closely read what chapter 11 actually says. Nowhere in the text does Paul say that women may take a leading role by prophesying or praying before the assembly. What he does say is that if a woman were to do so "uncovered" it would be dishonorable and uncomely. But should we therefore assume that it would be honorable and comely for her to prophesy and pray as long as she was covered?

Such an assumption fails on several levels. First, it creates the contradiction to which we have already referred. In fact, it has Paul using the same set of arguments – the submission of the woman and the teaching of the law – to reach polar opposite conclusions. Second, it supposes that the problem of dishonor is merely a matter of the woman's apparel. As we have already seen, there is no historical evidence that a woman's headdress was ever used as a symbol

of her submission to man amongst the very people who had the oracles of God. Throughout the passage Paul is speaking instead of the relationships between woman, man and God. Third, and perhaps most importantly, this assumption fails to recognize the nature of the language of the text. Paul makes a play on words that is clearly designed to emphasize one key fact – "… the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is Go." (1 Cor. 11:3).

Paul says that his instruction was no different than that which the law gave (1 Cor. 14:34). In the Old Testament we do not see women taking a public role in tabernacle or temple worship. When women give their advice and judgment (even inspired judgment), it is always with the men consulting the women in a more private setting (rf. Judg. 4:4, 5; 2 Kin. 22:14). In fact, women could not have publicly taught in the tabernacle or temple, for they assembled at the door of the tabernacle (Exo. 38:8; 1 Sam. 2:22), and later in a separate court of women in the temple (as described by Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book II, section 8).

What then were those women who were endowed with spiritual gifts supposed to do with them? Women are exhorted to be "teachers of good things" (Titus 2:3). In this role, we see a number of women of the New Testament actively teaching others. (e.g. John 4:28, 29; Acts 18:24-26; Titus 2:4) In this, as in other areas of service, women participated in the service of the Lord, but not in publicly proclaiming the gospel or in presiding in the worship of the church.

3. This passage does not require men or women to wear a particular style of hair. This application was especially popular in denouncing "long-haired hippies" of the '60's and '70's.

Paul says that nature (from the Greek **phusis**) teaches that "long hair" is a shame to men, but is a glory to women (1 Cor. 11:14, 15). Now what is nature, and what does it teach us about

hairstyles? The word is derived from **phuo**, meaning **to swell** or **to spring up**. (A form of this word is used repeatedly in First Corinthians to speak of the brethren who were "puffed up," 1 Cor. 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4). Much like the English word **nature** (taken from the Latin **natus**, **having been born**), this word means that which has sprung up, the material world and the forces and conditions which characterize it. Figuratively, it may refer to that which is fundamentally normal and ordinary about a thing.

Now do the physical laws of nature demonstrate that men should not wear long hair? If so, we would not need barbers. The facts are quite the opposite. A man's hair, if not regularly cut, will grow to great lengths, just as the woman's. Even men who have significant amounts of baldness must cut the hair they have.

Nor can we argue that the conventions of society support the idea that men must wear shorter hair. While it is true that many cultures, including our own throughout most of our history, have favored shorter hair on men and longer hair on women, this is far from being universal. There are a number of societies that have taken long hair as a sign of great masculinity. Aristotle writes concerning the long flowing hair of the Lacedemonian men. Homer tells us about the "long-haired Achaians." The ancient Vikings and many tribes of the American Indians believed in men wearing long hair.

Even among the Jews, whose men normally wore short hair, we see examples. Jewish men taking the Nazarite vow were forbidden to cut their hair, and there was no shame or dishonor associated with them. (rf. Num. 6:6) And Absalom was praised for his beauty, including his long locks of hair that were cut only once a year (2 Sam. 14:25,26).

But what of the priests of Ezekiel's vision? Of them it is said, "Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads" (Ezek.

44:20). This was not intended to be a divine decree binding upon all men. We may note, as an example, that they were forbidden to marry a widow (rf. Ezek. 44:22), a restriction not placed on anyone else in Israel.

Thus neither physical laws nor societal views demand that men wear shorter hair. Yet Paul says that nature teaches something here. What is it? Simply that nature (both physical and cultural) puts a distinction between male and female, which is demonstrated in matters of appearance, as for instance the style of the hair. There is such a thing as the "hair of women" distinct from the man (rf. Rev. 9:8). So while this passage does not dictate a particular hairstyle for either men or women, it makes it clear that for a man to intentionally take on a feminine appearance would be shameful, while a woman with the same look would be tasteful. A similar admonition regarding clothing was given in the Law of Moses (Deut. 22:5).

4. This passage does not make human opinion or custom the final authority in matters of worship. This is of course a generalization held by many throughout the religious world, and has become popular even amongst some of our brethren.

Two phrases are of concern here. First, Paul tells the brethren to "judge in yourselves" concerning the matter at hand (1 Cor. 11:13). Then he says that we have "no such custom" among the churches (1 Cor. 11:16). A simple look at the words involved should dispense with any misunderstanding.

The word judge is from the Greek **krino**. It means to weigh the evidence and make a determination. That is the nature of any judgment. Far from being a matter of opinion, it is a well-considered deliberation. Peter said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19). No one would dare think that Peter meant it was a mere matter of personal opinion whether or not we obey God! Paul is here telling the

Corinthian brethren to consider carefully what is being said, and make the right decision based on the evidence.

The word custom is from the Greek sunetheia. It is a compound form from the prepositional prefix sun, with or together, and the noun ethos, habit or regular usage. The thought here is simply that what Paul expected from the Corinthians was no different from what he would require of any other congregation. Notice similar statements. The same instructions of Paul were taught "every where in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). "So ordain I in all churches." (1 Cor. 7:17) God is the author of peace "as in all churches of the saints." (1 Cor. 14:33) "... as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye" (1 Cor. 16:1).

The point is that in matters where God has given his revealed will, including matters of church life and worship, we must all practice the same things, and that practice should be based on a deliberate consideration of God's word.

WHAT THE PASSAGE DOES TEACH

A basic rule of Bible study states that the reader needs to research the background of a particular passage in order to understand it properly. This particular text is an excellent example of the value of such research. In particular, it is especially enlightening to look at the religious background of the Corinthians before becoming Christians.

Although Paul's preaching at Corinth had begun in the Jewish synagogue, he found far greater receptivity among the Greeks (Acts 18:1-17). Greek religion, philosophy and culture had spread throughout much of the world during the days of Alexander's conquests. In return, the Greeks had absorbed much of the cultures of the peoples they conquered. The resulting blend of Greek and barbarian thought is evident in the "mystery religions" of the first century, which were

prevalent throughout the Roman Empire.

The name is taken from the Greek **musterion**, which is derived from the verb **muo**, meaning **to shut**, especially **to shut the mouth**. The mystes was an initiate sworn to secrecy regarding the doctrines and practices of the particular cult he was enrolled in. The word mystery referred both to the secret knowledge of the initiated, and to the rites and ceremonies by which such knowledge was attained. The cults were dedicated to some particular god or goddess, which may be either one of the ancient Greek pantheon or one of the imported gods of others countries. The most widespread of the cults was dedicated to Dionysus (whom the Romans called Bacchus), the god of wine. Other popular mystery cults included those to Demeter and Persephone, goddesses of the harvest and the fields, Apollo, god of the sun, Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, Osiris, Egyptian god of the dead, Isis, Egyptian goddess of fertility, and from Asia Minor, the Great Mother.

It was to just such peoples that Paul taught the gospel in Corinth, and from them the Corinthian congregation was formed. As they came into the Lord's church, they brought with them many of their former beliefs and practices, just as the Jews had done, and as many do today. Paul found it necessary to guide these Christians out of their pagan ways and into the path of discipleship in Jesus Christ. This is the task of the Corinthian letters. The chart appended to this lesson demonstrates how thoroughly the pagan background saturated the Corinthian congregation.

Now it is important to note that Paul does not derive his doctrines and ordinances from these mystery religions, as some modernists have claimed. Rather, using the terminology that his readers could understand, he exposes the fallacies of these pagan religions and shows the superiority of the gospel.

These cults demanded that their rituals be kept secret, although in most cases anyone willing to go through the elaborate initiation process might become a member. The core of these cults was their ritual, which emphasized emotionalism, sometimes even to the point of frenzy. The rituals were filled with drama and symbol. In many instances the truth to be learned was never expressed in any doctrinal statements, but only through the ritual. In going through these rituals, the participant was thought to form a mystical union with the divinity whom he was honoring, and thus to partake of his nature. A common theme was death and regeneration.

The role of the priestesses is particularly significant in understanding the passage in chapter 11. In many of the pagan temples, and especially at the temple of Aphrodite, women were devoted to the service of the temple, and directed the worshippers in their rituals. These rituals included orgies of sexual gratification and elaborate feasts in honor of the god or goddess. It was such feasts that Paul had in mind when he warned those who would "sit at meat in an idol's temple" (1 Cor. 8:10). He reminds them that in ancient times, God had punished those who were guilty of idolatry and fornication in their worship (1 Cor. 10:7, 8). He admonishes, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14).

He then introduces the conflict between pagan feasts and the Lord's Supper.

"I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" (1 Cor. 10:15-22)

Having introduced the Lord's supper, he goes on to show exactly how this ceremony should be observed, both in act and in attitude (rf. 1 Cor. 11:17-34). But first he delivers what appears to be a peripheral discussion on the role of women. This is our text.

Can there be a connection between these thoughts? What would the role of women have to do with idolatrous feasts and the Lord's Supper? Remember that the Corinthian Christians had been converted out of paganism (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Some of them still had unbelieving spouses (1 Cor. 7:14, 15). Unbelievers were present in their assemblies (1 Cor. 14:23). They even brought matters of disagreement and division before unbelievers to be resolved (1 Cor. 6:6). Clearly paganism was a strong influence among these brethren. And it seems from Paul's concern in chapter 11 that the women were taking a leading role in promoting it.

Now this is not an unprecedented situation. It was the Midianite women under the leadership of Balaam who had led Israel into Baal worship at Peor, engaging in fornication and in idolatrous feasts (Num. 25:1-3; 31:15,16). In Solomon's day, we are told that "even him did outlandish women cause to sin" (Neh. 13:26; rf. 1 Kings 11:4). Jezebel led Ahab and the nation of Israel back into Baal worship, an idolatrous religion of frenzied ritual and immorality (1 Kings 16:31, 32; 18:28; 2 Kings 9:22).

We even see the matter of headdress brought into this false worship. The prophet Ezekiel warned against the prophetesses of his day, whose transgressions included magic rituals and sorcery (Ezek 13:17-23). He says, "Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls!" The prophetesses claimed to be oracles possessed by the spirit of the gods and foretelling future events. These pillows and kerchiefs were armbands and head coverings used as magic charms and amulets. They served to ward off evil and to allow contact with the spirit world.

Did any of this type of pagan religion exist in the days of the apostles? And could it infect the Lord's church? We have a clear example in the letters to the seven churches of Asia. To the church at Pergamos, Jesus says, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14). And to the congregation of Thyatira, he writes, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Rev. 2:20). Notice the elements that plagued these churches. As in the days of Balaam and of Jezebel, God's people were being led into fornication and idolatrous feasting by someone calling herself a prophetess.

Thus to a congregation fighting the influence of pagan idolatry, where undoubtedly much of the problem lay with the role of women, Paul addresses this text. Let us note the main lines of reasoning.

First, he makes it clear that there is a chain of authority that must be honored. "The head of every man is Christ." The word head is the Greek word kephale, which is literally the head. It is frequently used metaphorically to speak of leadership and direction. The Septuagint uses this word to translate the Hebrew ro'sh, where it is regularly used to refer to the leader or ruler of a people. For instance, Saul was made "head of the tribes of Israel" and "anointed ... king of Israel" (1 Sam. 15:17). The terms are synonymous.

Just as the head of every man is Christ, so "the head of the woman is the man." (rf. Eph. 5:23). This is the designated order of authority. And as in so many other passages, the reason springs from the creation itself. Man is made as "the image and glory of God"

(rf. Gen. 1:26,27). The woman was created for the man, that is, as his helper (rf. Gen. 2:18). Now this does not make the same superior to the woman, or even independent of her, for "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."

In matters of worship, the woman must do that which would honor her head, that is, her husband, just as the man must do that which honors his head, Christ. Just as a woman might adorn her physical head to bring it more glory, so she should deport herself in worship in a way that properly honors the men whom God has ordained to lead that worship. Just as men and women are different in dress and fashion, yet each is proper in his own way, so they have different roles in worship, but each is appropriate.

The Mystery Religions in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Notice the comparisons and contrasts between the mystery religions of the Gentiles and the truth of the gospel of Christ.

IDOLATRY: Archaeologists continue to unearth images from the period.

- "I wrote ... not to company ... with idolaters" (5:9-11)
- "Idolaters ... shall not inherit the kingdom" (6:9,10)
- "An idol is nothing," but "some with conscience of the idol ... sit at meat in the idol's temple" (8:1,4,7,10)
- "Neither be ye idolaters ... flee from idolatry" (10:7,14)
- If idol meat is offered, "eat not" (10:19,28)
- You were "carried away unto these dumb idols" (12:2)

TEMPLES: Corinth had temples for Poseidon, Apollo, and Aphrodite.

- "Ye are the temple of God" (3:16,17)
- "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost" (6:19).
- They must not "sit at meat in the idol's temple" (8:10)
- Those who serve "live of the things of the temple" (9:13)

PRIESTS: Temple services were conducted by priests and priestesses.

- "They which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple?" (9:13)
- In contrast, Paul says, "I made myself servant unto all." (9:19)

FEASTS: After offering to their god, worshippers celebrate with a feast.

- Paul rebukes those who "sit at meat" in the temples. (8:10)
- "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." (10:16-22)
- The Lord's supper should not be a festive banquet. (11:20-34)

RESURRECTION: Plays reenacted the death and rebirth of the gods.

- "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power." (6:14)
- Paul takes an entire chapter to prove conclusively, "The dead shall be raised incorruptible" (15:52)

SPEAKING IN TONGUES: Priests claimed to be inhabited by the gods.

- In their idolatry, they were ignorant of spiritual gifts (12:1,2)
- They were "zealous of spiritual gifts," but he tells them to "seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church" (14:12)
- "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence" (14:28)
- "The spirits ... are subject to the prophets" (14:32)
- "Let all things be done decently and in order" (14:40)

SEX: Worshippers engaged in sex with the "virgins" of Aphrodite's temple.

- "There is fornication among you" (5:1)
- They were "not to company with fornicators" (5:9-11)
- "Fornicators ... such were some of you" (6:9,10)
- "The body is not for fornication" (6:13)
- Flee fornication, for it is a "sin against the body" (6:18)
- Marriage is given "to avoid fornication" (7:2)
- "Neither let us commit fornication" (10:8)

MYSTERIES: Participants were introduced to a higher wisdom.

- "Greeks seek after wisdom," which is foolishness (1:19-25)
- "Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men" (2:5)
- "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery," and this mystery that was hidden is now revealed by the Holy Spirit (2:7-13)
- Evangelists are "stewards of the mysteries of God" (4:1)
- Some say they "understand all mysteries" (13:2)
- Without understanding you are "speaking mysteries." (14:2)
- In the resurrection, Paul says "I shew you a mystery." (15:51)

MATERIALISM: The temple business was extremely lucrative.

- The Corinthians were "enriched by him" (1:9).
- In Christ, "now ye are rich" (4:8)

1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34, DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT THE LORD'S TABLE

By Rod Rutherford

Introduction

Human beings are endowed by their Creator with a wonderful gift -the gift of memory. Because of this gift, we are able to relive the happy occasions of our past and enjoy them again in the present. Because we have the ability to remember, we can also recall the mistakes made in the past and avoid making them in the future. Memory is a wonderful blessing! When it is taken from us by the infirmities of age or the ravages of disease, we are robbed of much of our personality and the joy of living is taken from us.

In order to help succeeding generations remember persons and events deemed important to the present generation, it has been the practice of mankind from the earliest days of history to build monuments or otherwise set up memorials. We see this very early in the Bible. When Jacob had a dream at Luz in which he saw a ladder from earth to Heaven with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, he said, "Surely this is the house of God." He set up the stone which he had used as a pillow and changed the name of the place to Bethel (house of God) to commemorate the occasion (Genesis 28).

When the firstborn of Israel were saved from death by the application of the blood of the Passover lamb to their lintels and door posts, God commanded future generations to keep the Passover feast in memory of the deliverance of their forefathers (Exodus 12:17- 27). When Israel crossed the flooded Jordan River to enter the Promised Land, God caused the waters to stand in a heap that they might cross over on dry land. He then commanded that twelve stones,

one for each of the twelve tribes, be taken out of the midst of the river and set up as a monument to remind future generations of this marvelous event (Joshua 4).

Through the ages men have set up monuments of various kinds in order that heroes and their deeds would be remembered in the years to come. God has also given Christians a memorial to the greatest of all events in human history, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sins of the world. God did not command pictures to be painted, for pictures fade with the passing of time. Neither did He command that statues be carved out of stone or precious metals. Even though they may endure for millennia, such statues eventually are worn away by the ravages of nature and crumble into dust.

Instead, God chose two simple elements which are available wherever man lives upon the earth - unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine - to commemorate the crucified body of our Lord and His blood shed for the remission of our sins. God commanded that these simple elements be eaten every first day of every week by the disciples of Jesus. By this simple act of worship, the price paid to redeem man from the bondage of sin would ever be kept in his memory.

The church of Christ in ancient Corinth, along with all other congregations in the New Testament era, participated in this weekly memorial. This sacred meal, eaten by all the members of the body of Christ in the Lord's Day assembly, should have reminded them of their oneness in Christ, and thereby provide the greatest possible incentive to unity. However, for the contentious Corinthians, it instead became a focal point of their shameful and bitter division.

Commentary

Verse 17: The church at Corinth was badly fractured although still functioning as a single congregation (1:10-13). Apparently, the idea had not yet occurred to them to split apart and form separate groups. Had not the division been dealt with promptly by Paul, it would have only been a matter of time until such occurred. The saints at Corinth were so blatantly violating the whole spirit and purpose of the assembly that they were actually harmed spiritually, rather than strengthened, by their coming together to worship. Paul had praised the brethren in verse two of this chapter because they remembered him "in all things, and kept the ordinances, as he had delivered them to them." However, he could not praise them for their disorderly conduct at the Lord's Table. Instead, their shameful and sinful action merited a stern apostolic reprimand.

Verse 18: They came "together in the church." The word in Greek for "church" is "ekklesia" (assembly, congregation, a called out group of people). There is an assembly of His people which is required by the Lord (Acts 20:7; James 2:2). To forsake this assembly is a sin (Hebrews 10:25). The assembly of the saints on the Lord's Day to eat the Lord's Supper should be a living demonstration to the world of the marvelous unity that believers have in Christ. However, the very opposite situation prevailed at Corinth. Paul had learned of the division in the Corinthian church from the household of Chloe (1:11). He may also have heard about it from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus who had recently come from Corinth to visit him (16:17). While Paul knew there was some truth in what he heard of the division at Corinth, he appeared reluctant to accept everything at face value.

Verse 19: Heresies are factions or sects which are brought about by false teaching and contentious attitudes. When such occurs in the church, it results in a separation from the sincere and faithful saints who refuse to tolerate such ungodly behavior. The truth of the old saying, "The one who drives the wedge splits the log" is seen in such cases. Those who are responsible for division in the church are not those who adhere faithfully to the doctrine, but those who deviate from it and attempt to draw away disciples after them.

Verse 20: The members of the church came "together in one place." There is a Lord's Day assembly that involves all the saints. It is the assembly in which the Lord's Supper is eaten (Acts 20:7). Classes divided according to age for the purpose of teaching the Bible do not violate this prescribed assembly unless they replace the assembly, or, are held at the same time, thereby competing with it. Such an arrangement is simply an expedient way to carry out the command to teach (Matthew 28:18, 19). It may, or may not be used, according to the judgment of the leaders of the local church. However, the so-called "children's church" (junior worship) does violate this assembly for it divides the assembly. When this happens, all have not come together in one place. Because of the divided state of the church at Corinth, it was not possible for the church to eat the Lord's Supper in the right manner and with the right spirit. Where bitterness and contention prevail, worship in spirit and truth cannot take place!

Verse 21: The early church met together often for a common meal. This has been the universal practice of the church from its earliest days. The term "breaking of bread" is often used of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7), but it is also used in regard to an ordinary meal (Acts 2:46; 20:11). One will have to note carefully the context of a passage to know which is

intended. It is obvious that the church at Corinth had confused the meaning of the two meals and had combined them into one, thereby corrupting the Lord's Supper. Not only had the Lord's Supper been combined with the fellowship meal (or "love feast," Jude 11), but the fellowship meal itself had itself been perverted. It appears that each individual or each family unit brought and ate its own food without sharing it with other Christians, or even waiting for others to come so that all might eat together. The result was that while some were filled to excess, others did not have enough to satisfy their hunger. The terms "hungry" and "drunken" should not be taken literally. Paul is using them as hyperboles (exaggerations for the sake of emphasis) to show the shameful disparity between the "haves" and the "have nots."

Verse 22: If each family unit brought its own food, but ate it alone, the whole purpose for a fellowship meal was defeated. If they were going to do this, they should simply eat at home. That is why they had houses. Paul is not here forbidding genuine fellowship meals such as had been the practice of the church since its beginning, nor is he forbidding Christians to eat in the church building as some have erroneously contended. The church at this early age did not have its own buildings, but rather met in homes or in public places for their periods of worship and fellowship (Acts 5:12; 12:12; 18:7;19:9,10; 20:8; Romans 16:3-5; Philemon 2). By their selfish conduct, the saints were showing their contempt for the assembly and its purpose, which was to build fellowship, not destroy it. The poor among the saints were no doubt embarrassed by their meager rations in comparison to their more affluent brethren who fared sumptuously. In no way could Paul commend or even condone such despicable behavior and utter selfishness!

This verse has been wrested out of context by some modern day brethren in an attempt to prove that it is unscriptural for Christians to enjoy a fellowship meal together within the confines

of the church building. They argue that since the building was erected by funds from the church treasury, it cannot be used for any other purpose than worship and Bible study. The best refutation of this position I have ever heard was given by the late Frank M. Young, my esteemed teacher of First Corinthians at the Memphis School of Preaching thirty years ago. Following is a quotation from my notes of brother Young's comments on this verse: "We must remember the meaning of the word 'church' is 'congregation.' 'Church' here is speaking of the assembly, not a church building! The word 'church' is never used of a building in the Bible. Those who oppose eating in the church building on the basis of this verse do not know the meaning of 'church' as used here. There is not the first word in the Bible spoken of a church having a building. It is purely a matter of expediency. Therefore, there can be no regulation governing the use of a church building! Those who make laws as to what can or cannot be used or done in a church building are guilty of making laws where God has made none. The argument that would not allow a kitchen in the building would not allow drinking fountains or restrooms, if one is consistent. Paul is not condemning the Christians for eating together, but for the selfish manner in which they conducted themselves. Because of this, they were in such a state or condition that they could not worship God acceptably in partaking of the Lord's supper. In Acts 20:7, 11, Paul partook of the Supper in the same place he ate a common meal" (Bold mine-RR).

Verse 23: Beginning at this point, Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians of the meaning of the Lord's Supper. This passage is the fullest discussion of the Lord's Supper in the entire New Testament. Paul had imparted to the Corinthian church that which he had received by inspiration from the Lord Himself (Galatians 1:11, 12). Therefore, Paul's teaching was not his own (did not

originate with him), but was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Paul points the minds of the saints back to the fateful night of our Lord's betrayal when He ate the Passover meal with His apostles for the very last time on this earth (Matthew 26:2-30; Mark 14:22-26; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19,20).

Verse 24: The unleavened (without yeast, thus unfermented) bread of the Passover (Exodus 12:15-20) was used by our Lord to symbolize His body which had never been used to commit sin. Jesus gave thanks to the Father for the loaf. Then he broke it and divided it among His apostles. He commanded them to "Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me." He did not mean the bread was literally His flesh for He was still living in His body with His blood coursing through His veins. He most certainly was not suggesting cannibalism as the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation implies. Our Lord was using a figure of speech called a metaphor to say," This bread represents My body." The same is true in regard to the cup. The Lord's Supper is to be a constant reminder to Christians of the awesome price the Son of God paid to redeem us from our sins. The Corinthians, by their bitter, divisive spirit, had completely missed the whole point of the Lord's Supper!

Verse 25: Paul closely follows Matthew's brief account of the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29). Jesus took the cup saying: "This cup is the New Testament in My blood." Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, "For this is the blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Some erroneously contend that Jesus used only one container; therefore it is an essential matter of faith that we use only one container today. What they do not understand is that "the cup" here is a figure of speech called a "metonymy." The

container is mentioned but that which is contained is meant. For example, John 3:16 says: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The "world" here is the container, but that which is contained is meant. God did not send His Son to die for the planet earth, but for the people who live upon the earth. In same way, the container is mentioned, but the fruit of the vine contained in the cup is meant. The method of distributing the fruit of the vine, whether by one cup or many, is irrelevant.

Covenants were customarily sealed with blood. The writer of Hebrews stated: "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you" (Hebrews 9:18,19). The fruit of the vine aptly symbolizes the blood of Jesus with which He sealed His new covenant. This is the same blood which washes away our sins when we are baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:26, 27; Revelation 1:5).

Verse 26: When we eat the Lord's Supper with our fellow Christians in the assembly on the Lord's Day, we are reminded of the body of Jesus which was crucified for us, and His blood which was shed for our sins. This is not just a ritual to be observed, but a memorial which draws us nearer to the Lord as we contemplate the great price paid for our freedom. Unless we remember the Savior's suffering as we partake, we are not really eating the Lord's Supper. We are making a mockery of the greatest and most sacred event of all time! The Lord's Supper is a chain made up of many links. Each link represents a Lord's Day going all the way back to the first Pentecost when the church began, and stretching forward to that last Lord's Day before

Jesus comes again. Thus, the first and second comings of our Lord are united by the weekly observance of this memorial feast.

Verse 27: The Lord's Supper is a sacred memorial designed to keep us ever mindful of the suffering of the Lord on behalf of our sins. If we fail to partake of it in an humble and reverent manner, recalling in our mind its significance for our salvation, we make a mockery of it. Paul says that we become "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord!" "Unworthily" is an adverb describing the manner of our partaking. It is sometimes confused with unworthy, an adjective. No one is worthy of partaking of the Lord's Supper in the ultimate sense. None of us deserved to have Christ lay down His life for us. But we can all participate in reverence remembering the significance of what the bread and fruit of the vine symbolize.

Verse 28: We must examine ourselves when we partake to be sure we "see" the crucified Lord. Our job is not to examine those on the pew next to us, but to look into our own hearts. We must think about what we are doing. Otherwise, our participation is in vain.

Verse 29: If one participates in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner as some at Corinth were doing, his very act profanes the sacred meaning of the memorial and condemns him because he does not discern (see, contemplate) the body and blood of the Lord in the elements of the sacred feast.

Verse 30: Many of the Christians at Corinth were spiritually weak, and some had already spiritually died because of their careless, thoughtless, and indifferent manner of eating the Lord's

supper. They would have received strength if they had discerned the body. Instead, they had made the Lord's Supper into a mere meal to feed the physical body. Thus, they derived no spiritual nourishment from it. Sometimes today in an effort to "make the Lord's Supper more meaningful," Christians add various things to the observance of the Supper such as singing during actual participation, or, in an attempt to "prepare their minds," they put on dramatic performances. Such innovations cater to the fleshly nature of man and his love for entertainment and make impossible the introspection acceptable participation requires.

Verse 31: The King James Version translates two different Greek words in this verse as "judge." The American Standard Version (1901) better translates the verse for it makes the distinction between the words. Let's note the ASV rendering: "But if we <u>discerned</u> ourselves, we should not be <u>judged</u>." If Christians will make the effort to examine themselves properly in order to be sure their minds are focused upon the death of Christ for their sins when they are partaking of the Lord's Supper, they will not be judged for eating the sacred supper in vain.

Verse 32: When Christians do not obey the Lord, He will chasten (correct or discipline) them just as a loving parent chastens his children (Hebrews 12:5-11). God disciplines His children through His Word. He also proves and corrects them providentially by the trials and troubles, persecutions and problems of life on this earth. By this means, God is molding and making a special people who can serve Him effectively in this world and in His eternal kingdom (2 Timothy 2:19-21; Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 3:9).

Verse 33: When brethren come together, whether to eat the Lord's Supper, or to enjoy a fellowship meal together, they must wait until all are present and eat together. The Lord's Supper is called "the communion" (1 Corinthians 10:16). "Communion" is translated from the same Greek word as "fellowship" and means "mutual participation, a sharing in common." Such mutual participation and sharing in common does not, indeed, cannot, take place when all the saints are not together. Therefore, Paul tells the Corinthian Christians to "tarry one for another." One commentator on this passage quipped, "Their love feast lacked love!"

Verse 34: If anyone was too hungry to wait until all the church had gathered, then he should go ahead and eat at home rather than have the shameful spectacle exhibited by the church at Corinth. Other matters along these lines would be handled by Paul in person when he came to visit the Corinthians.

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is a solemn monument whose purpose is to serve the saints in Christ Jesus as a weekly reminder that the sinless Son of Almighty God willingly suffered on the cruel cross of Calvary for their sins. This memorial meal must not be taken lightly or frivolously, or spiritual sickness, possibly resulting in spiritual death, will be the outcome. The sincere child of God, serious about going to Heaven, will never neglect the assembly of the saints on the Lord's Day that he may have the precious privilege of partaking of this memorial meal. Neither will the faithful child of God thoughtlessly or flippantly participate, but will "discern the body and blood of the Lord" that he may be strengthened rather than condemned.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes, He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:6-9).

"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15)!

1CORINTHIANS 12-14, CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

By Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

There are at least thirteen subjects of response Paul discusses in the process of First Corinthians. Chapters 12-14 break into yet another one of Paul's sections of thought, which can be outlined thusly:

- 1) Chapter 12 the **Distribution** of the spiritual gifts.
- 2) Chapter 13 the **Duration** of the spiritual gifts.
- 3) Chapter 14 the **Degrading** of the spiritual gifts.

The Holy Spirit gave these gifts to fulfill the predictions of prophecy (Joel 2:28ff; Acts 2:17-21), and the promise of the Lord (Mark 16:17-18; Acts 8:1), beginning on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit of God endowed the early church, while in its state of infancy, with miraculous gifts.

The phrase "spiritual gifts" does not contain the word gifts in the original. Literally, Paul is saying, "concerning the spiritual" or "concerning the spiritual (things)." Nevertheless, it is obvious as he continues that he is speaking about those miraculous gifts that were given by the Holy Spirit to early Christians. Other passages mentioning the gifts are (Acts 2:38; 10:45; 11:17) (Ephesians 4:8, 11).

Once again in this letter Paul tells the Corinthians to come out of ignorance. He had already given this admonition in 10:1 speaking about examples of the Jewish Exodus in the Old

Testament and their unbelief while under Moses. Clearly, the Corinthian Christians were in some way ignorant or misunderstanding some aspect of these spiritual gifts.

The book of 1Corinthians can be summarized into two basic problems the Corinthian church had. 1) Their primary problem was division. As early as 1:10 Paul admonishes them not to be divided. The cause of division was their carnality and immaturity (3:1-3). Several of the topics of discussion Paul deals with in this epistle were dealing with the symptoms of their divisive spirit.

2) A second major problem the church had was idolatry. Though not commonly thought of as a major problem in 1Corinthians, some form of the word "idolatry" is actually used more in this epistle than in any other New Testament book. Paul actually discusses several issues about pagan idols. He places great emphasis on the evils of idolatry starting in **chapter 8** discussing the eating of things offered in sacrifice to an idol. **Chapter 10** continues by addressing the problem of communing with an idol in its temple. To sacrifice to idols is to sacrifice to demons. Idolatry was certainly a problem for the Gentile Christians in those early years of Christianity. And the city of Corinth would have especially been a hotbed of it. It was a chief city for seafaring, trade and commerce in the ancient world. This certainly made it a city of worldly influence.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES AND IDOLATRY

It is interesting that Paul should bring up the subject of idols while talking about spiritual gifts. Why would he do this? What connection did the gift of tongues have with idolatry? Often these chapters are used to address modern day misunderstandings about tongue-speaking and spiritual gifts. However, a background into the idolatry and customs of ancient Greece would be useful to show why the Corinthian's were confused, and also explain much of Paul's reasoning

in this treatise. This approach can give better insights than simply using this passage to answer the quibbles of the charismatics and Pentecostals of our modern times.

The Gentile world was polytheistic; often believing that there was a different god or goddess for every virtue, every vice or every feature of nature, which their imaginations could conjure. They had a god of war, a goddess of wisdom and one of love, a goddess of the moon and a god of the sun, an agricultural god, *ad nauseum infinitum*. The church at Corinth received nine spiritual gifts, which Paul mentions in **12:8-10**. Based upon what he says, it is apparent that they were letting their idolatrous backgrounds confuse them about the nature of these gifts. Perhaps they thought that the diversity of gifts meant there were different divine sources at work. These gifts did not come from many different gods or spirits (i.e. from a god for healing, from another god of tongues, or another goddess of prophecies, etc.). There is only one God who gave these gifts to them **(12:4-7)**, the only true God.

The gift of tongues would have been especially confusing to the Corinthian Christians because of a unique history of idolatry in their particular area. Not far from Corinth was the famous site of the Delphic Oracle where a temple of Apollo was located. Here a priestess of Python would supposedly pronounce prophetic utterances in a trance-like state. Luke mentions one such priestess as literally being demon possessed in Acts 16:16. The word "divination" is actually the word, "πύθων" (Python). Apparently this young girl was one of those priestesses, or else she worked for them. Delphi had already been a popular cult among the Greeks for several centuries. This temple was built in 1263 B.C., but was burnt in 548 B.C. and rebuilt again.² In A.D. 67 the Emperor Nero robbed this temple of 300 costly statues. It was not until A.D. 379 that the Emperor Theodosius finally silenced the last prophetic oracle of Delphi.³

The fame of this great oracle in the first century cannot be overly emphasized. One source says,

In the ancient world, a man's life was thought to be determined by fate or destiny.... As people believed that the future could be revealed, they frequently consulted oracles of every kind for personal and political purposes. The most famous was the Delphic Oracle where Apollo, the seer-god, spoke through a priestess.⁴

It is also interesting to see how the Delphic priestess made her divine prognostications. Her trance-like state of mind sounds very similar to one of our modern-day charismatic meetings or even a drug-induced rock concert.

The Delphic Oracle, ancient and fabled seat of prophecy at Delphi, was described as the "navel of the earth." The oracle itself was a cleft in the ground which emitted cold vapours, inducing ecstasy. Over the chasm the seer sat on a gilded tripod inhaling the vapours and uttering enigmatic words which were recorded by a priest and interpreted as the revelations of Apollo.⁵

There were also other cult practices in the ancient world that might have closely resembled the gift of tongue speaking or even books of scripture in the mind of the Corinthians. There were the Sibyls or elderly prophetesses. This was the name ancient Romans gave to any aged woman who could supposedly foretell the future. There were said to be as many as ten Sibyls. The best known was the Cumaean Sibyl. According to mythology, the god Apollo promised that she would live one year for each grain of sand she could hold in her hands. But Apollo did not give her eternal youth, and she continued to age. Sibyl supposedly guided Aeneas, the Trojan warrior, to the lower world to learn the future of Rome. Later, she offered to sell nine books of prophecy, called the Sibylline Books, for a high price to a king of Rome. When he refused, Sibyl burned six of the books. He finally paid the original price for only three. The Romans consulted these books in times of danger. The Sibylline Books were destroyed by fire in 83 B.C.6

Paul says that the Corinthians were led away by these "dumb idols" (literally, "voiceless idols"). Dumb idols were often made to speak by priests concealed in or behind them, who made use of speaking tubes, which led to the parted lips of the idol. We find an illustration of the epithet in the statue of Isis at Pompeii, where the ruined temple shows the secret stair by which the priest mounted to the back of the statue; and the head of the statue (preserved in the Museo Borbonico) shows the tube which went from the back of the head to the parted lips. Through this tube the priest concealed behind the statue spoke the answers of Isis.8

No spiritual truth came from the oracles of idols. In **verse 3** Paul gives a clear and obvious test about the truthfulness of those oracles. If the supposed oracle curses Christ, it cannot be true nor from God. Also, one cannot speak through inspiration without calling Christ, the Lord. It is only through revelation that we know anything about God. The specific things of God can only be known by what God has revealed through the Holy Spirit. Anything beyond the divine revelation is speculation.

THE NINE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

There were different kinds of spiritual gifts. Not every early Christian had a gift, and those who had a gift did not necessarily have the same kind as another person. But all gifts came from the same source, God. These gifts were only imparted to baptized believers, and then only by the laying on of the hands of one of Christ's apostles (Acts 8:16-18). These gifts were needful in those early days of the church for several reasons:

- 1) To aid those early missionaries and evangelists with greater speed in preaching the gospel.
- 2) To convince new and weak converts that God was indeed in that church.
- 3) To edify the early church and eventually to give that body of perfectly revealed truth made permanent in the New Testament.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was first promised by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11).

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: **he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost**, and with fire: (Emphasis: RV)

This promise was meant for Jesus' apostles, some of who were present when John spoke the promise. A few years later Jesus quoted John's statement and made the application to His twelve (Acts 1:4-8).

And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

However, the "pouring out" of the Holy Spirit was promised to "all flesh" in Joel 2:28-29. This began to have its fulfillment upon the apostles in Acts 2:16-21 as Peter explained to Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. It was completely fulfilled by Acts 10 when the household of Cornelius received this outpouring (Acts 10:44-45).

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that **on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost**. (*Emphasis: RV*)

When the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit, then the phrase, "all flesh" finally found its fulfillment. "All flesh" meaning all the races of mankind, that is to say, all those races the Bible distinguishes, viz. the Jews and the Gentiles.

But receiving the Holy Spirit and being baptized with the Holy Spirit were not necessarily the same thing. Many early Christians received the gifts of the Spirit, Cornelius and his household received the outpouring of the Spirit. But the baptism of the Spirit was to the apostles. The baptism gave the apostles a full immersion, or overwhelming of the Holy Spirit. There was most certainly a difference between an apostle and other Christians. Notice some of these differences.

- 1) The apostles were given authority to present the gospel to the world (Matthew 16:19; 18:18) along with this came the authority to forgive sins through their doctrine (John 20:23) (Acts 2:42). They were called the key of knowledge (Luke 11:49, 52). Jesus' prayer at the garden was for the apostle's teaching to be received by the rest of the world. Follow carefully the exact people for whom Jesus is praying in these verses: John 17:6, 9, 12, 20. Their authority came by divine inspiration. No other Christian can assume their authority today because it is contained in the New Testament, and their teaching does not need a successor.
- 2) A second distinction of the apostles from other Christians was that only they could impart the spiritual gifts to others. They did this by laying their hands upon a baptized recipient (Acts 8:18; 19:6) (Romans 1:11) (2 Timothy 1:6). Those who received the gifts from the apostles could not in turn give those gifts to anyone else. Therefore, these gifts would fade away in a short time after the death of the apostles.
- 3) A third distinction found in our text (12:7-11), seems to be that the apostles could do all of the spiritual gifts while other Christians could only do one per person. In 2 Corinthians 12:12 Paul told the church at Corinth,

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

The apostles were not limited in these spiritual gifts. However, at Corinth some could speak in tongues, but not prophesy. Others could prophesy but not speak in tongues. Note Paul's rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30:

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

The question is asked with an obvious answer. No! not everyone speaks in tongues, works miracles or does healing. Nevertheless, Paul would say to the Corinthians in 14:18, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:"

Paul gives us a list of the nine gifts, which is very interesting for our study. The following chart gives a brief description of those gifts and what they did.

- 1) Wisdom
- 2) Knowledge

Wisdom and Knowledge do not always have the same meaning.

God's wisdom is the Gospel (1 Corinthians 2:7) (Ephesians 1:17; 3:10). A Man can have knowledge of a thing but not have the wisdom to apply it. Wisdom must be an insight into something. This wisdom / knowledge was God's revealed wisdom of the Gospel. Before there were Bibles, God directly revealed His will to the early churches.

- 3) **Faith** This is miraculous faith (c.f. 13:2) not the common faith or the faith common to everyone (Titus 1:4). (Hebrews 11:6) is not the same faith of (Titus 1:4). The common faith is the body or system of faith that must be believed. In (Ephesians 2:8) "saved through faith...it is the gift of God" is misrepresented sometimes to say God has to give a saving faith. (Matthew 17:19-20) must be a reference to miraculous faith. There is no miraculous faith today.
- 4) **Gifts of Healing** This is miraculous divine healing only. This is to be distinguished from natural healing. Doctors apply a common natural healing, but this healing is miraculous. One of the signs of the commission was laying hands on the sick (Mark 16:17-18) c.f. also (James 5:13).
- 5) **Miracles** (Ephesians 4:8-10) It is to be assumed that this is a greater degree of miracle. It is interesting to note that Paul puts the various miracles into categories (vss 28-29).
- 6) **Prophecy** Under the Old Testament era the work of the prophet was exactly opposite to the priest. The priest was sent to God on behalf of man. But the prophet was sent to man on behalf of God. God revealed His secrets to the prophet (Numbers 12:2) (Amos 3:7-8). The word "*prophet*" is literally, "*foreteller*" (Acts 11:27-30) His primary purpose was to be a spokesman for God (Acts 21:8-9; 13:1). That prophets might sometimes give predictions was only coincidental to their main function. Their main work was to deliver God's messages to the people. In the New Testament the admonition is given to try the prophets (1 John 4:1).
- 7) **Discerning of Spirits** The "spirit" in (1 John 4:1) "believe not every spirit." is a reference to a prophet. Not every Christian had a miraculous gift, so how could a church fulfill this passage? How could they know whether one was a true prophet or false? Paul told the Corinthians to use their prophets and inspired men to acknowledge his teaching as truth (c.f. 1 Corinthians 14:37). That is why there were discerners of spirits. The Bible gives several examples of inspired men discerning the hearts of others. Elisha knew Gehazi's heart (2 Kings 5:25-26). Peter knew Ananias and Sapphira's hearts. (1 Corinthians 14:29).
- 7) Speaking in Tongues
- 9) Interpretations of Tongues

In the Bible tongues were languages (Acts 2:4-8). If man speaks the Latin language he speaks in the Latin tongue. (Mark 16:17) tongues were for a sign not to those that believe but those that believed not. There were times when a man needed an interpreter

THE PROBLEM AT CORINTH

As these different gifts were bestowed on different people in the congregation, some became jealous. Those who had the more showy gifts boasted themselves as superior to others. Those who had the seemingly less-dazzling gifts envied those more richly endowed. Thus the church was divided by their own boasting over who received the best gifts. These gifts were not given as rewards for their own personal merits, but as tools to further the outreach of the Gospel. They had forgotten that God is the author of these gifts. Every good gift cometh from Him (James 1:17), and He is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11). The one Spirit who put them into the one body gave these several gifts, not so they could be divided over their differences but that they should be united, acting as one just like a physical body has many members yet acts as one person.

In verse 13 Paul emphasizes baptism into the one body. This is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The phrase, "by one Spirit" is referring to the Holy Spirit, but not to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If Paul was referring to Holy Spirit baptism, then based on verse 13 everyone in the church must have that baptism. The baptism of the Great Commission is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit because the apostles were commanded to do the baptizing (Matthew 28:19; Acts10:48). Jesus Christ is the only one who can baptize with the Holy Spirit (John 1:30-34). Notice this chart:

WHAT IS THE BAPTISM OF – 1Corinthians 12:13?

"By ONE Spirit" = by the direction or leadership of the Spirit.

- * ONLY ONE BAPTISM TODAY If everyone is to be baptized with the Holy Spirit today, then there is no water baptism today (Ephesians 4:5).
- * <u>Baptism Is To Put One Into The Church</u> Holy Spirit baptism DOES NOT put anyone into Christ because the apostles and others were already His disciples (John 17:10-11) before the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred on Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5).

Water baptism DOES put people into the body / church (c.f. Acts 18:8 c.p. 1Corinthains 1:13-14) (Galatians 3:27).

* <u>Baptism Is To Save</u> – Holy Spirit baptism was not given to save anyone. That was not its purpose.

Water baptism DOES SAVE (1Peter 3:21).

* THEREFORE – By (the teaching of the) one Spirit we are all baptized (by water) into one body.

We "have been all made to drink into one Spirit" – i.e. of the blessings of the Gospel, the living water (John 4:10-11) (Acts 3:19). That is the end purpose of these spiritual gifts, to magnify the Gospel.

Paul gives a hierarchal order of offices in the church to show that the gifts were for revealing the divine message and not for show. Note his list in verse 28, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." This arrangement certainly puts emphasis on the gifts used for revealing and teaching. Apostles, prophets and teachers are first on the list. It is interesting that he places the gift of tongues last on the list of importance. Not because the gift of tongues was unimportant, but if it could not be used for revelation and teaching, it became less important to God's overall scheme of things. And if it was used only for show, it most definitely degraded its preciousness.

Comparison Of Paul's Three Lists In (12:8-10) – (12:28) – (12:29-30)

12:8-10	12:28	12:29-30
To One Is given	God hath set some	Are All? / Do All?
The word of Wisdom	First, Apostles	Apostles
The word of Knowledge	Secondly, Prophets	Vs 29. Prophets
Vs 9. Faith	Thirdly, Teachers	Teachers
Gifts of Healing	After that, Miracles	Workers of Miracles
Vs 10. Working of Miracles	The Gifts of Healings	Vs 30. Have Gifts of Healing
Prophecy	Helps	
Discerning of Spirits	Governments	
Divers kinds of Tongues	Divers kinds of Tongues	Speak with Tongues
Interpretation of Tongues		Interpret

Here are some observations based on the above chart about Paul's categories:

- 1. The gift of wisdom may have been peculiar to the apostles.
- 2. The gift of knowledge peculiar to the prophets.
- 3. The gift of Faith was perhaps to the teachers.
- 4. The working of miracles included the gifts of healing since they seem to be interchangeable.
- 5. The gift of prophesy, signified preaching, where it frequently does in other places.
- 6. The discernment of spirits is coordinate with governments, perhaps used as a means of leading and guiding the early church.
- 7. As to the gift of tongues, there is no variation in any of the three places.

There is much that we just do not know about the early practices and uses made of the spiritual gifts. But one thing is obvious and that is that Corinth had fallen into an incorrect thinking about them.

It is interesting to note that the Corinthians were commanded to "covet earnestly the best gifts", 1 Cor. 12:31, 14:39, "to desire spiritual gifts" 14:1, "to seek to excel in them", 14:14; and "to pray for them" 14:13. Yet Paul explained in verse 11 that the Spirit gives these gifts to

each man "severally as He wills." And in Hebrews 2:4, God also bore witness, "both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

Why did Paul tell the Corinthians to seek the best gifts, if God distributed the gifts as He saw fit? Was there any way for them to seek certain gifts? Some commentators have suggested that "covet earnestly the best gifts" should be rendered in the indicative mood rather than as a command, (e.g. "you do covet the best gifts") for it seems to be a contradiction that after the apostle had shown that these gifts were not at their own option, and they ought not to imitate the gifts of another, or aspire to be better than another. For Paul to undo all of that again, and give them such contrary advice does not make sense. But this still does not seem to answer all of Paul's admonitions to prefer the better gifts. Considering God's sovereignty and man's quest for spiritual things, prayer and humble contrition have always gone a long way in God's sight toward His granting a petition. This should also be true of the spiritual gifts. There is much to study on this wonderful topic of spiritual gifts.

SOMETHING BETTER THAN A MIRACLE

Would not more people obey God if preachers could only work miracles just like Peter and Paul did? This is the common thinking of many: "If we could raise the dead, if we could heal the sick, if we could walk on water, if we could speak with tongues—then multitudes would flock to us, eager to learn of God. And the church would grow by leaps and bounds." But God has taken away man's ability to do miracles (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Today the word of God is in written form, found only in the Bible.

All of us have probably thought at one time or another, "Why should Christians be without the spectacular attention-grabbing miracles? Why are we left with just an old holy Book? Does God really expect the Bible to be able to convict the sinner, strengthen the church, destroy false doctrine, and enable the Christian to live a godly life?" Perhaps we should re-evaluate the purpose God had in using miracles.

Miracles were used in Bible days to prove God's message (Hebrews 2:3, 4). God used those signs to get people to heed his messengers. We see this same principle every day: One thing is used to point out and vouch for something else. For example, a road sign, a birth certificate, a signal flare, and a parade all point to something more important than themselves.

Which is more important to a sick man—the hospital sign, or the hospital? Which is more valuable to a new parent—the birth certificate, or the baby? Which is more important to a rescuer—the signal flare, or a stranded victim? Which is more significant—the Veteran's Day parade, or the men who served? Which is greater—the miracles, or the Bible which they confirmed? We must understand that miracles are inferior to the Bible. They were given only to vouch for the message spoken from holy men of God. While many today emphasize the spectacular working of miracles, they ignore the hidden pearl of God's truth.

Early Christians did not have the written Bible. Yet God had to communicate to them in some way. The spiritual gifts were designed to accomplish this. They were never intended for, nor were they ever given to, the masses of humanity. However they were a thorough and a convenient, way to TEMPORARILY dispense spiritual knowledge to humanity through those who were miraculously endowed. In 1 Corinthians 12:31 Paul said that he would show the Corinthians a more excellent way. God would one day set aside those spiritual gifts for a more perfect means of revelation. These gifts were only temporary. The Holy Spirit foretold the

superior method God would use—and now does use—to teach man his will. Notice the parallels Paul uses to show the Corinthians that system of teaching which was coming:

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away(1 Cor. 13:8—10).

Many quibbles and attempts have been made to explain the phrase in verse 10, "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Some insist the word "PERFECT" in this text refers to Jesus. They say Jesus was the only perfect person to ever live. Hence, miracles would continue until he comes again. Others say it refers to the time when we all reach heaven, saying that when we reach heaven there will be no need for miracles. Thus, miracles will be around as long as this old earth is standing. But these ideas are not what this passage is saying. They are not at all in the ball park! There is no way this passage could be referring to Jesus, heaven, nor some utopian state of love which the church has not yet reached.

Paul was talking about how Christians received spiritual knowledge. In his days it was directly through men who were endowed with spiritual gifts. The purpose of I Corinthians 13 is to explain that another means of obtaining spiritual knowledge was coming.

Even a brief reading of this passage shows that the purpose of the spiritual gifts was to give spiritual knowledge. Five times in this passage the word "know" or "knowledge" is used—(verses 8, 9, 12). Other related words are: "understood," "thought," and "see." Three particular gifts mentioned in verse 8: prophecies, tongues and knowledge. Each was a method God used to give early Christians spiritual understanding. (1) "Prophecy" was the gift to preach inspired sermons or speak divine messages without having to learn or study them. (2) The ability to speak with "tongues" was the gift to preach divine sermons or messages in other languages. (The only

difference between "tongues" and "prophecy" was that prophecy was in a language common to the speaker and the hearers). (3) "Knowledge" was the gift, which endowed a Christian with divine and spiritual insights not available to the average person.

Because of the quibbles about what "PERFECT" means, some refrain from using this text. But there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the word "PERFECT." This passage uses a figure of speech called an ANTITHESIS. That simply means that Paul was using a series of ANTONYMS or opposites to hammer down a point. Notice the contrasts:

PAUL'S PRESENT	THE FUTURE	
WHEN THE PERFECT COMES,	THE PART SHALL BE DONE AWAY.	
When I was a child, I spake, understood, and thought as a child,	When I became a man, I put away childish things.	
Now we see through a mirror darkly,	But then face to face.	
Now I know in part,	But then I shall know even as I am known.	

The amazingly simple thing about opposite words or phrases is that if you know one, you automatically know the other. For example: What is the opposite of white? What is the opposite of day? What is the opposite of pretty? It doesn't take a genius to answer these questions, because these words have opposites. Similarly, the word "PERFECT" has an opposite—the word "PART" (verse 9).

Now, just for the sake of argument, let us say that we do not know what "PERFECT" means in this text. We can easily find out by comparing its opposite word, "PART." Paul tells us what the word "PART" means in verse 9. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." What is the "PART"? It is partial knowledge and partial prophecy, that is, the partial or incomplete means of revelation in Paul's day. Now, what is the opposite of partial, or

incomplete, revelation? It would not make sense to say the opposite of partial knowledge is a "PERFECT JESUS" or a "PERFECT HEAVEN." Whatever "PERFECT" means, it is the opposite of "PART." If "that which is in part" is partial revelation, then "that which is perfect" could mean only perfect (complete) revelation! Paul's point is obvious: When the COMPLETE method of revelation would come, then the PARTIAL method of revelation (which was the spiritual gifts and miracles) would cease!

James 1:25, II Timothy 3:16, 17 and II Peter 1:3, 19 are good verses to show that the written word, the scriptures, the writings of the apostles and prophets, are the completed means of revelation. God intended all along to replace the temporary spiritual gifts with the "MORE EXCELENT WAY" through which truth-seekers would obtain spiritual knowledge. When understood, 1st Corinthians 13 makes a beautiful diagram showing the difference between the written Bible versus the spiritual gifts. The miracles were for the infant church; the Bible for the mature church. The spiritual gifts were foggy and unclear; the Bible has face-to-face clarity. In the miraculous apostolic days, early Christians knew "in part." Today we know "as we are known."

To know the mind of God today, all one has to do is study his Bible. To know how to be saved, how to worship, how to fellowship, how to stop false teaching, etc., all one has to do is study his Bible. The greatest responsibility of a Christian to himself is to study his Bible. The greatest work of a Christian upon others is to teach the Bible. The greatest accomplishment you will ever accomplish in your life, is to know and obey your Bible. God wants us to understand that the Bible, that grand old Book, is superior to any MIRACULOUS, spectacular events in bygone days. We have something greater than miracles. So please do not think the church needs to go back to the days of her childhood when miracles were used.

The next time someone tells you that miracles are still being performed today, just ask them: "If that is true, then why do we need the Bible?" Remember the words of Abraham to the rich man: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

END NOTES

- ¹ According to an outline by J.W. McGarvey in his <u>Commentary on Thess., Cor., Gal., Rom.</u>, McGarvey lists thirteen responses contained in 1Corinthians.
- ² The Time Chart History of the World, Third Millennium Trust, Chippenham, England, 1997.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Arthur Cotterell & Rachel Storm, <u>The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology</u>, Hermes House, 1999, pg. 42.
- ⁵ Ibid., pg. 43
- ⁶ World Book Millennium 2000 (Deluxe), Electronic Edition.
- ⁷ McGarvey, p. 120
- ⁸ 1Corinthians 12:2, The Pulpit Commentary, Ages Software, Rio, WI, Version 1.0 © 2001
- ⁹ 1Corinthians 12:31, <u>Barnes' Notes</u>, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft

The following charts are given as additional material for your study on the subject of spiritual gifts. These charts were used in a study group night class in Hinesville, Georgia on Denominational Doctrines. Alan Wright taught this particular night on the work of the Holy Spirit and the cessation of miracles.

Passages on Spiritual Gifts

The word "gift" or "gifts" is used 112 times in the KJV. Although God has given man many gifts (e.g. Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8; Jam. 1:17), the word is used several times to refer specifically to the supernatural endowments provided to early Christians by the Holy Spirit.

Verses That Explicitly Refer to Spiritual Gifts

Psalm 68:18 – A prophecy concerning spiritual gifts (see Eph. 4:8).

Romans 1:11 – Paul's desire to impart spiritual gifts at Rome.

Romans 12:6 – Spiritual gifts should promote unity and love.

1 Corinthians 1:7 – Gratitude for spiritual gifts in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 12:1,4,9,28,30,31; 13:2; 14:1,12 — Guidelines for using spiritual gifts.

Ephesians 4:7,8 – The function of spiritual gifts in the church.

Hebrews 2:4 – Spiritual gifts as part of the confirmation of God's word.

Other Verses Thought by Some to Refer to Spiritual Gifts

Matthew 7:11; Luke 11:13 – God gives good gifts, including the Holy Spirit.

John 4:10 – Jesus promises to give living water.

Acts 2:38; 10:45; 11:17 – The "gift of the Holy Ghost" given at Pentecost and to Cornelius.

Acts 8:20 – Simon the sorcerer attempted to purchase the ability to impart miraculous powers.

Ephesians 3:7 – Paul was enabled to preach by a "gift of the grace of God."

1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6 – Timothy encouraged to stir up the gift received by laying on of hands.

Hebrews 6:4 – These Christians had tasted "the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost."

1 Peter 4:10 – Every man should minister according to the gifts received from God.

The Function of Spiritual Gifts

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:11,12)

Note: Spiritual gifts were not given to impress the multitudes or exalt the Christian. Of course, as with all miraculous activity, they served to confirm the word. (rf. Heb. 2:4) However, spiritual gifts had the specific purpose of empowering Christians to carry on God's work until the completion of the New Testament.

The Perfecting of the Saints

Task – Perfecting (Greek, *katartismos*): Putting everything in its proper place.

Object – Saints (Greek, hagios): Set apart, sanctified.

The Work of the Ministry

Task - Work (Greek, ergon): Labor, effort, toil.

Object - Ministry (Greek, diakonia): Service, stewardship, administration

The Edifying of the Body of Christ

Task – Edifying (Greek, oikodome): Building up, construction.

Object – Body (Greek, soma): Physical self; used figuratively of the church (Eph. 1:22,23)

The Spiritual Gifts and Mark 16:14-20

"Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." (Mark 16:14-20)

- 1. <u>WHAT IS PROMISED?</u> Casting out demons, speaking in tongues, being impervious to snakes and poisons, healing the sick. (Although these actions are miraculous in nature, and two are listed as spiritual gifts elsewhere, no explicit reference to spiritual gifts or to the Holy Spirit is given here.)
- 2. TO WHOM IS IT PROMISED? "Them that believe"
 - The eleven apostles had been chastised for their unbelief, vs. 14. (rf. vs. 11,13)
 - Salvation was to be proclaimed for "he that believeth and is baptized," vs. 16.
 - Notice the shift from singular to plural. This is not a promise to individual believers, but to the believing community, the church.
- 3. <u>WHY IS IT PROMISED?</u> These miracles are to be signs, vs. 17. These signs were used to confirm the word, vs. 20. The signs would "follow" (literally, "accompany"), vs. 17,20, the preaching of the gospel and the spread of the kingdom.
- 4. <u>FOR HOW LONG IS IT PROMISED</u>? Till the gospel was preached to "every creature," vs. 16, and the word had been confirmed, vs. 20. See 1 Cor. 13:8-12.

Observations From 1 Corinthians 12-14

- It is possible to be "carried away" in ecstatic experience, and be wrong. 12:2
- There is one Spirit, one Lord, one God which grant these gifts, 12:4-6. How can so many people claim to have divine guidance through spiritual gifts, and yet teach different doctrines, worship in different manners, and promote different churches? (Notice the emphasis on unity throughout this chapter. "There should be no schism in the body," vs. 25)
- Spiritual gifts without love are meaningless and even hypocritical, 13:1-3.
- It is specifically stated that "prophecies ... shall fail; ... tongues ... shall cease," vs. 8. When?
 - When "that which is perfect is come," vs. 10. With the spiritual gifts, they had a partial knowledge in each individual revelation. But when all had been revealed, the partial gifts would be removed.
 - Spiritual gifts belonged the childhood of the church, vs. 11. The time was coming when they must "put away childish things."
 - Spiritual gifts provided only a dim picture of God's will, but when the revelation was finished, all would be clear, vs. 12.
- Everything that is done in the way of spiritual gifts should serve the explicit purpose of edifying the church, 14:12.

Observations From 1 Corinthians 12-14

(continued)

- Rules for using spiritual gifts in the services, 14:26-40. How well do modern charismatic groups follow these rules?
 - "Let all things be done unto edifying," vs. 26.
 - "Let it [speaking in tongues] be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course," vs. 27.
 - "Let one interpret," vs. 27.
 - "Let him [who speaks in tongues] keep silence in the church [if there is no interpreter]," vs. 28.
 - "Let him [who speaks in tongues] speak to himself, and to God," vs. 28.
 - "Let the prophets speak two or three," vs. 29.
 - "Let the other [prophet] judge," vs. 29.
 - "Let the first [prophet] hold his peace [before another begins]," vs. 30.
 - "Let your women keep silence in the churches," vs. 34.
 - "Let them [the women] ask their husbands at home," vs. 35.
 - "Let him [the prophet] acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord," vs. 37.
 - "Let him [that is ignorant] be ignorant," vs. 38.
 - "Let all things be done decently and in order," vs. 40.

The Sufficiency of the Bible

Are the recorded Scriptures of the apostles really "that which is perfect," a full a complete revelation? Can they really take the place of the spiritual gifts and fulfill their function? YES!

The Bible is Sufficient for the Perfecting of the Saints

"...to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may <u>present every man perfect</u> in Christ Jesus..." (Colossians 1:27,28)

The Bible is Sufficient for the Work of the Ministry

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine... But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Timothy 4:2,5)

The Bible is Sufficient for the Edifying of the Body of Christ

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is <u>able to build you up</u>, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)

1 CORINTHIANS 16 – CLOSING EXHORTATIONS

By Riley Nelson

Introduction

Paul's letter to the brethren at Corinth shows us the inner workings of a congregation of God's people. While we have the history of the Jews recorded in the Old Testament, this letter helps us to understand the many facets of a working congregation. It shows us that in a congregation there can and will be problems of various kinds. Paul had to address such things as "preacheritis", selfishness, fornication, marriage, spiritual gifts, the Lord's Supper, the resurrection, etc. While some might believe that studying about a congregation with so many problems would be detrimental to becoming a congregation pleasing to God, surely it can be seen that the church today can learn from the mistakes of the church at Corinth. Even though the Israelites made many mistakes the apostle Paul wrote (as directed by the Holy Spirit), "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).\(^1\) It may be that by studying about the church at Corinth, the church today may be able to avoid some of the same problems, and see how to deal with problems that arise in the congregations.

As Paul begins to close out this letter he gives them several exhortations. It is good to notice that while this congregation had so many problems, the apostle still counts them to be worthy of serving in the Kingdom of God. He did not overlook their faults as some would today, rather he pointed out the problems and concerns, giving solutions based upon the word of God. Paul showed a Christ like spirit in that he was willing to have patience with his brethren to repent. This is a lesson that needs to be learned by congregations in this age.

The Collection for the Saints

"Now concerning the collection for the saints..." here the apostle reminds the congregation of the collection that was being gathered for the church in Judea. The congregations in Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia were also involved in this collection.² One lesson seen in this activity is the Christ like spirit of compassion held by those in the early church. Few if any of the congregations were wealthy, yet they sought to help supply the need of fellow saints. Just as to why the need existed the exact reason is not known, however some have suggested it was because of famines, political troubles and persecutions in that region (cf. Acts 11:28-30; Acts 8:1-4). Whatever the reason the need was real, and needed to be met.³

While some have tried to use this passage to teach the false doctrine of "saints only" (concerning helping those in need), it must be pointed out that this in no way bolsters that heinous doctrine. Paul later wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:13, "Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;" Those within and without the church are mentioned. In the letter to the church at Galatia Paul told them, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). The Christ like compassion of the saints is to be extended to all.

Paul instructs the church at Corinth to follow the admonition given to the churches in Galatia. It is helpful in understanding how the church is to raise funds by looking at the words used by the inspired apostle. Of this Deaver writes;

"Gave order" is the translation of the Greek word diatasso. It is interesting (and helpful) to note this word in other passages. The Lord commanded (or charged) his disciples (Matt.11:1). Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome (Acts 18:2). The rest Paul would set in order (1 Cor. 11:34). Paul left Titus in Crete that he might do the things which had been charged to do (Titus1:5). Thus, two basic notions stand out in this word: (1) command, and (2) arrangement. In issuing this apostolic order Paul is clearly commanding an arrangement – a definite plan for financing God's work. According to the lexicons the word means: command, charge, ordain, prescribe, arrange, and make a precise arrangement.

The gathering of this collection was to occur on the first day of the week. This day was and is special to the children of God. Notice the prominence of the first day of the week in scripture: Jesus arose on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9), Jesus met with His disciples after he arose on the first day of the week (John 20:19), and then met with them again on the first day of the week (John 20:19). We come to Acts 2 and the Holy Spirit comes upon the Apostles on the first day of the week. Later Luke records that the disciples met on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). Now Paul instructs that this collection be taken up on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2).

The amount that was to be given was to be determined by the giver. Paul simply said, "...let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him ..." (1 Cor. 16:2). This point is reemphasized in 2 Corinthians 9: 7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver". Under the old law the system of tithes was the rule. "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither

shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed" (Lev. 27:30-33). Many mistakenly believe that only a tenth of the total worth was given, but as is seen from this passage it was much more. Under the Law of Christ, God desires that man give according to how he has prospered and how much he desires to give. This was the admonition given to the Corinthian brethren.

The giving upon the first day of the week, would expedite matters when Paul arrived. There would not be a need to go from house to house trying to raise the funds to send with Paul. With it being done every first day of the week, more funds could be raised, rather than relying on what each household had on one day. This way of giving is how God desires His children to give, yet today some will wait until a moment before the offering is taken up to decided how much they have prospered and how much they will give to the Lord.

Somehow this offering had to be taken to the saints in Jerusalem. Paul defers from taking the gift personally, rather he wanted them to choose men from among them, and letters of introduction would be sent with them to Jerusalem. If it were needed Paul would accompany the men on their journey. McGarvey and Pendleton in their commentary on Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans make a very interesting point.

"He directs the church to appoint its own messengers to carry it, thus raising himself above all suspicion of misappropriation, and giving the church a new incentive to make a liberal offering, for it would afford the church a new joy and profit to have in its membership those who had been to Jerusalem and seen the apostles".

This idea of giving the congregation a feeling of actively being a part of a great benevolent work for the Lord shows God's knowledge of His creation. By sending members of their own congregation they would be more hands on and more involved than simply sending funds. Those who went would see first hand the need and would be able to report back to those who were not able to go. This is yet another lesson to be learned from this great chapter.

Coming For a Visit

Paul had planned a trip to Corinth to visit once again with the church. His original plans had him making two trips, but he had determined to go there after visiting Macedonia (2 Cor. 1:16). Perhaps because of all the problems reported to him he believed a longer visit was needed. He determined to stay in Ephesus until after Pentecost. Pentecost (corresponding to our late May and early June), is an annual feast day of the Jews which comes on the 50th day after Passover. He would spend the summer in Macedonia and then winter with them in Corinth. ⁷ It seems that Paul was giving this congregation time to repent of the things they had been doing.

The confidence Paul has in these brethren is seen by his statement that they would "... bring me on my journey whithersoever I go" (1 Cor. 16:6). Of this statement there comes two possible meanings (1) they might travel some distance with him giving him their approval, or (2) they would supply the needs he had for his journey.8

Paul was as always engaged in spreading the gospel to the world. He saw a great opportunity by staying there, even though there were many "adversaries". This is a common occurrence when a work is going well. Paul gives us an example of steadfastness and determination in doing the work of the Lord.

Fellow Laborers

Paul's son in the faith, Timothy was one of Paul's fellow laborers. At this time Paul is not sure that or even if, Timothy will get to Corinth. It seems that Paul expected this letter to reach them before Timothy would arrive. Timothy had been sent to Macedonia (Acts 19:22), and most likely had planned to return by way of Corinth. By Timothy being with Paul as he penned 2 Cor. 2:1 there must have been a change in his plans, perhaps Timothy met Titus along his route (cf. 2 Cor. 7:6-13) and was told the trip was not necessary.9_

The point Paul is making here is that Timothy is to be taken care of in a Christian fashion. His needs are to be met and he is to be able to be among them without fear. There may be many reasons for Paul's admonitions concerning Timothy. Most believe it is because of his youth. Young people many times feel fear and anxiety when around older Christians. Paul once again teaches a great lesson on how to conduct ourselves as Christians. God's servants need to be treated with respect and dignity no matter what their age. In this case it should be noticed that Paul put Timothy's work on an equal plain with his. "For he worketh the work of the Lord as I also do" (1Cor. 16:10). Paul's expectations of the congregation were that they would care for the young man in the same way they would have cared for him. Another fellow worker that Paul mentions is Apollos. Luke recorded how Apollos was a man mighty in the scriptures:

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ (Acts 18:24-28).

Apollos had been at Corinth while Paul was at Ephesus. To some at the congregation he had such an influence that they chose him as their leader. There is no indication that Apollos wanted this to happen. Paul had addressed the idea already that the preacher was not important only Christ (1 Cor. 3:3-7). Apollos was not able to go to Corinth as Paul desired, but would come at his convenience. Paul's words indicate there were no problems between the two preachers and in no way did he give support to the factions within the congregation.¹⁰

EXHORTATIONS

The apostles exhortations found in verses 13, 14 seem to summarize his letter to this congregation embroiled in trouble. These same words should serve as an exhortation to congregations today. They should have been watching, alert to problems arising within the congregation. Many congregations down through time have been destroyed for a lack of being alert to problems arising within and without. Paul exhorts them to watch.

The exhortation to stand fast in the faith may have awakened the faithful brethren at Corinth to call for repentance from those causing the problems in the congregation. If any congregation will not stand fast in the faith it is headed for destruction. They were to act like men, and to be strong. They would need this attitude if things were to change.

While following the apostle's exhortation would call for strength and determination, all the things were to be done in love. The word here is "agape" a love which includes service. How fitting that the apostle tells them to serve each other, when some had thought themselves better than others.

For an example for the Corinthians to follow, Paul points to those of the house of Stephanas. Here are some of the first converts (1:16) and they had dedicated themselves to carrying out the Lord's work. They epitomize Paul's exhortation to the brethren, watchful, strong, and serious about the work, working in love.

Stephanas and two others, Fortunatus and Achaicus were messengers who came to Paul.

As to what they supplied some believe it to be of a physical nature while some hold that Paul was refreshed because of their faithfulness.¹¹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Paul ends his letter by telling these brethren that others are thinking of them. How great it is to know that there are other Christians who care for you. The grand couple Aquila and Pricilla, who had worked in Corinth with Paul, sent their greetings to this people with whom they had served the Lord. This couple was known for their courage and determination as Christians (Rom. 16:4). The church which was meeting in their home also sent greetings.¹²

The "Holy Kiss" has been a point of pondering on the minds of some down through the ages. This was a customary way of greeting among the early church (Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26). Of this practice McGarvey and Pendleton wrote;

In the East, a kiss was and still is a common salutation among kindred and near friends. Paul did not, by this command, create a church ordinance or ceremony; nor did he even create a new custom. He merely injected a spiritual virtue into, and oldestablished, time-honored custom. This custom never prevailed among the nations of the West, and we feel that we obey Paul when we shake hands with holiness; *i. e.*, with cordial sincerity and honest good-will.¹³

Paul finishes his letter by giving the salutation in his own hand, thus doing away with any cries of the spurious authorship of this letter. It would seem that most of Paul's letters were written by an amanuensis.¹⁴

The apostle's strength, dedication, and love for the Lord are seen in his parting remarks. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (1 Cor. 16:22). The word love used in this verse is *Phileo*. Only on one other occasion did Paul use this form of the word love (1 Tim. 3:15). The idea is that our emotions must be involved in our love for the Lord, but not emotions only. We are to love Him with our very being. If one is not willing to do this Paul says, "Let him be Anathema", meaning accursed, without any benefit of redemption. ¹⁵ He follows this by using the term Maranatha – the Lord is coming. This should serve as a warning that those who fail to love the Lord. ¹⁶

Even though the congregation had its problems the apostle desires that the grace of the Lord be with them, and tells of his love for them as brethren. This might seem strange as the letter was filled with rebuke of their sins. Once again a lesson taught by Christ and exemplified by His servant Paul – love for all, and especially those in sin.

End Notes

- ¹ All scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible King James version unless otherwise noted.
- Roy Deaver, "Studies in 1 Corinthians" Edited by Dub McClish, The First Annual Denton Lectures, November 14-18 1982, Valid Publications, Inc., p. 264
- ³ Howard Winters, Commentary of First Corinthians, Carolina Christian, Greenville South Carolina, 1987, p 229
- ⁴ Deaver, "Studies in 1 Corinthians, p. 266
- ⁵ Gussie Lambert, Christ At Corinth, Lambert Book House, 1972, pp 89,90
- J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans, Gospel Light Publishing Co. Delight, ARK. Pp 161,162
- Winters, Commentary of First Corinthians, p 232
- ⁸ Ibid. p 232
- ⁹ Ibid p 232
- ¹⁰ McGarvey and Pendleton, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans, Gospel Light Publishing Co. p 164
- ¹¹ Winters, Commentary of First Corinthians, p 235
- ¹² McGarvey and Pendleton, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans, Gospel Light Publishing Co. p 165
- ¹³ Ibid. p 27
- ¹⁴ Winters, Commentary of First Corinthians, p 237
- ¹⁵ Winters, Commentary of First Corinthians, p 237
- ¹⁶ McGarvey and Pendleton, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans, Gospel Light Publishing Co. p 165

"LESSONS

ON THE

HOME"





THE TENTH ANNUAL
SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
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Editor: Riley Nelson

PREFACE

Home is pictures of memories on the wall. Home is sleeping in my own bed. Home is waking up to the smell of mom's cooking. Home is sharing the holidays with family. Home is playing the piano in the living room. Home is a warm place to be. Home is sweet. Home is the place for me. Home is filled with love. Home is blessed from heaven above. Home is where my heart is. Home has a strong foundation. It can weather any storm. Home is where I belong. When I go away, I know I can come back to stay.

-Jennifer Burns

The words of the preceding poem tell of how every home should be remembered. It should be a place of comfort, peace, and safety. God's design for the home is a place of love between family and love for Him.

Home is a beautiful place.

The institution called the home lacks five days being as old as the world. It was in the Garden of Eden, on day six that God formed man from the dust of the ground, and then took a rib from man and formed woman. This "home" in the beginning had some advantages that homes today do not have. This original home was started in a place where sin did not exist, a place without many of the problems that face the home today. Yet in this seemingly perfect setting

problems arose. Woman gave into lust and sinned; man followed her example and suddenly the

once perfect home was faced with hardships. Many homes today are started "in perfection" soon

to realize that problems face each and every home. As in the first home, turning to God is the

answer to solve problems that arise in the home.

In the modern home it is easy to allow things to become the focus. What all need to realize is

that God needs to be the center of the home and to keep our focus on Him. If this is done we can

have marvelously happy loving homes.

One area of the study of the home that is sometimes overlooked is the "single" home. There

are those who have never married, those who have had to go through the pain of divorce, or the

loss of their spouse. These "single" homes are as important as homes that are made up of

"couples." Those who find themselves single face some things that couples do not, such as

loneliness, not being a "couple" in a group of couples, financial insecurities, sexual issues and

other such things.

The home is important to the Church, for from the home come workers for the vineyard of

the Lord. Without soldiers an army cannot wage a battle, and the army of the Lord must have

volunteers ready to go into battle. The home serves to be the best training ground for the Lord's

army.

As wonderful as the earthly home can be, it cannot compare to the heavenly home that waits

all who obey God and remain faithful to Him. The earthly home should be such that it helps

prepare us to go to our heavenly home.

Riley Nelson

Richmond Hill Church of Christ

October 29, 2005

П

DEDICATION

The home in which I live was established on May 12, 1979. It was on that day that Susie Ann Montgomery became my wife. When we married I worked as a house painter while she worked in the office of a department store. We lived in a small (less than 800 square feet) cinder block house that was located behind my Daddy's house, heated by a wood stove, and carpeted with "used" carpet I had removed from an apartment my boss owned. Upon Susie's request I had installed both hot water and a bathroom in this house, which proved to be a wise thing. Some might think that such a meager house could never be a home, but Susie set about to make this small house a home and she was successful. Later she gave me two sons of whom we are both very proud. She urged me to become a preacher as she knew this was something I greatly desired. She was willing to sacrifice as we attended the Memphis School of Preaching. Many things taken for granted by many were simply luxuries that she did without. In every place we have worked, Susie has made our house a home.

Over the past 26 years she has stood by my side encouraging me, helping me as we work for the Lord. She has been by me when I was at the top of the mountains and when it seemed the world was crashing around me. In my office I keep a copy of a poem entitled "The Preachers Wife." Susie exemplifies that poem. She is my greatest supporter and best friend. It is with great love and affection I dedicate this work to Susie Ann Nelson the "Queen" of our home.

Riley Nelson

Tenth Annual Southeast Georgia Lectureship

Held at the Church of Christ Richmond Hill Georgia Highway 144 East P.O. Box 786 Richmond Hill GA 31324

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THE HOME

By Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

Several words describe the subject of this year's lectureship, which instantly paint pictures in our minds. Words like *family*, *home*, *father*, *mother*, *brother* or *sister* are ingrained in our memories from our earliest recollections. How joyous are the memories of those kind yesteryears of tenderness and love, if we were privileged to grow up in a loving home. How scarred and bitter can be the person who was not so privileged with their early home life.

One of the most popular songs of the 19th century, and well known by the time of the American Civil War was the song, "Home, Sweet Home." Though it is rarely sung today, its words are still very popular on walls, calendars and mementos everywhere. Few in this country have not at least heard the tune to this haunting melody. When it is sung, hardly a dry eye can be found among lonely and weary wanderers as it stirs the heartstrings of their past. Here are the words to this song given for your reminiscence.

'Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home;
A charm from the sky seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek through the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere.

REFRAIN:

Home! Home! Sweet, sweet home! There's no place like home! There's no place like home!

An exile from home, splendor dazzles in vain; O, give me my lowly thatched cottage again! The birds singing gaily, that came at my call – Give me them – and the peace of mind, dearer than all!

I gaze on the moon as I tread the drear wild,
And feel that my mother now thinks of her child,
As she looks on that moon from our own cottage door
Thro' the woodbine, whose fragrance shall cheer me no more.

How sweet 'tis to sit 'neath a fond father's smile, And the caress of a mother to soothe and beguile! Let others delight mid new pleasures to roam, But give me, oh, give me, the pleasures of home.

To thee I'll return, overburdened with care;
The heart's dearest solace will smile on me there;
No more from that cottage again will I roam;
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.

The home is certainly a most needed topic of study. All would do well to take heed to what God says about it that our lives and that of our loved ones might be filled with precious memories. God does have a lot to say about the home. The home is foremost the fundamental way society began and still functions to this day. It was God who ordained that a man and woman marry and make a home for their children. In the beginning the marriage was not to be polygamous, but every man was to have his own wife. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). It is interesting to note how often the phrase "a man and his wife" occurs in the Bible. At least twenty-eight times and probably more, this phrase emphasizes God's intention for a monogamous family life (cp. Gen. 4:23). Three of the Ten Commandments deal with regulations for the family. The promise of Abraham's seed to bless was first said to benefit "all the families of the earth" (Genesis 12:3). Later God also said the seed would "bless all nations" (Genesis 22:18). From its earliest roots, the family has been one of God's great concerns.

THE FAMILY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

The Old Testament family represented a larger body than the English word suggests. Several words were used in the Hebrew Old Testament to describe the family. Two of the more common words were:

- 1. **M**ISHPACHAH (clan or tribe) describing the larger patriarchal clan, which included those persons related by blood, marriage, slaveship, and even animals (as found in the fourth commandment, Exodus 20:10). Occasionally even strangers or sojourners could be included in the larger household.
- 2. **B**AYITH (house) was used to suggest the place of residence or household. It had multiple meanings. It represented a clan of descendants (Genesis 18:19), or property and persons of a particular place or residence on which and on whom one depended (Job 8:15). ²

The Old Testament family was close-knit; family loyalty was very strong. Family honor and respect were high. The covenant was central to understanding family relationships as well as relationships to God, taught in the family.³

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons;" (Deuteronomy 4:9). "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7; cf. Deuteronomy 32:45-47).

The Exalted Position of the Father

The social structure described in the Old Testament is known as a "patriarchal" society.

The word patriarchy means "the rule of the father." The father commanded a high position in the family of Old Testament times; his word was law. In addition, the word translated into English as husband actually means "lord," "master," "owner," or "possessor" (Genesis 18:12; Hosea 2:16). Because of his position, shared to some degree with his wife, a man expected to be treated as royalty by the rest of his family. All who belonged to him and claimed their allegiance to him were considered part of the household and were similar in beliefs and values. In Genesis 7:1 Noah and his household were directed to enter the ark. Beyond the household were the larger clan, the tribe and the nation, which were descendants of Abraham, the origin of the people of Israel. Jacob's family numbered sixty-six persons in all, not including his sons' wives (Genesis 46:26).

The father's responsibilities included begetting, instructing, disciplining and nurturing. Abraham had the power to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22). The father could even destroy family members if they enticed him from his loyalty to God (Deuteronomy 13:6-10). However, the father was also to love, and the divine mercy of the New Testament was based on the compassionate Old Testament father. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." (Psalm 103:13-14).

The Clan

Each extended family was part of a larger group that was called a "clan." Often the male members of these clans numbered into the hundreds (Ezra 8:1-14). The members of the clan

considered themselves to be relatives of the other members of the clan, because the members traced their lineage back to a common ancestor.

Each male member within the clan had one person designated as his *go'el*, or kinsman-redeemer. There were four specific tasks that the redeemer was to perform, as his help was needed:

- (1) If his kinsman sold his property to pay his debts, the kinsman redeemed or **bought back the property** (Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 4:1-6; Jeremiah 32:6-15).
- (2) The person who was *captured and enslaved* or who sold himself into slavery had every right to expect his kinsman to redeem him and set him free (Leviticus 25:47-49).
- (3) If a person died childless, the redeemer married the dead man's widow and raised up a son to carry on the family line and to honor the deceased person, in a custom known as *levirate marriage* (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).
- (4) If the person was murdered, his redeemer tracked down the killer and evened the score. In these passages that describe this custom, *go'el* is translated as *"avenger of blood"* (Deuteronomy 19:12).

God is called the *kinsman-redeemer* to express His intimate relationship with His people (Isaiah 41:14; 43:14; 44:24). He is their "*next of kin*" who ransoms them from bondage (Isaiah 43:1-3). He pays the price to set them free. Paul reminded the Corinthians that God had bought them at a price; therefore, they were to glorify God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The Family of God

The idea of family commitment was so important in the mind of God that many analogies of the family are drawn from the Bible to describe God's family. To be in God's family one must be "born again" (John 3:3,5). Since God is our Father, then it follows that others in the church are also related to us; e.g. "fathers," "mothers," "brothers," and "sisters" (1 Timothy 5:1-2). The church is called the "household of God" (Ephesians 2:19) and the "household of faith"

(Galatians 6:10). In addition, the ideas of "adoption" and "inheritance" are used to describe our connection in God's family (Galatians 4:5; 1 Peter 1:4).

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

The family makes the home. Without our family the home would just be a house. Home is one of the sweetest words formed on human lips. It is not just a part of our lives; our home is our life. A London magazine asked the question, "What is home?" Seven of the answers which the editor called "gems" were selected and published, and are as follows:

Home – a world of strife shut out, a world of love shut in.

Home – the place where the small are great, and the great are small.

Home – the place where we grumble the most and are treated the best.

Home – the father's kingdom, the mother's world, and the child's paradise.

Home – the center of our affection, round which our heart's best wish twines.

Home – the place where our stomachs get three square meals a day and our heart a thousand.

Home – the only place on earth where the faults and failings of humanity are hidden under the sweet mantle of charity.⁴

Truly, the home is a blessing from God. "Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psalm 127:3). He is a provider for the homeless. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in families" (Psalm 68:5-6). Notice, the "solitary" is the lonely person. God creates families for the lonely (cp. Exodus 1:21).

Though the home is originally a blessing from God, our home is also what we make it. From childhood to adulthood as we grow our home extends and grows. Ideally there can be up to three homes a person might have in his / her life. Consider these.

THE HOME WE GROW UP IN AS CHILDREN

Death, divorce and desertion are terrible tragedies in any home, especially for the children. Fatherless and orphaned children grow up with a severe handicap when they are deprived of a home. Growing up in a bad home can scar a person for the rest of their life. For any who had the blessing of a good home, the years spent there have become our fondest memories.

<u>During this time is a period of instruction and learning</u>. Many of the ills of our society are due to a lack of training in the home. The first training we ever receive is in the home. "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15).

- 1) The family is the first "church." The Bible teaches, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Proverbs 1:8). Moses told the fathers of Israel, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Paul said to "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Parents should not think that Sunday school alone is supposed to teach a child all they need to know about God or about right and wrong.
- 2) The family is the first "school." Parents cannot turn educational responsibilities over to the public schools. Besides, by then it is too late! Kids do not go to public school until they are six years old. The pre-school training has already formulated them. From birth a child is taught by the family good or bad! The Bible without apology, talks to fathers concerning their children. Parents must become what they ought to be.

- 3) The family is the first "government." The game of life must be played by the rules. Only in the home can one learn authority, obedience and cooperation. Only in the home can one learn the real worth of tradition. One who cannot obey his parents will certainly not obey teachers, elders, police or even God.
- **4)** The family is the first "hospital." Hurt children want "Mommy to kiss their hurt toe." A place for refuge, for healing and helping belongs in the home. Relationships are learned in the home. This is where we learn the meaning of brotherhood. We are brothers and sisters.

During this time of our childhood home, the most intimate life-long relationships are made. A close bond is formed between a child, his parents and the siblings growing up together. The prophet Isaiah compares a mother's love to God's love. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isaiah 49:15). The New Testament compares the natural affection we should have toward our blood relations to that which every Christian should have to each other in the body. Romans 12:10 says, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Families come together in times of adversity to support each other. "And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him" (Genesis 37:35).

Early childhood years should be filled with memories of the talks and encouragements we have with our father and mother. These are a few of the things that make a house a home. Ideally this home prepares us for greater things yet to come.

THE HOME WE MAKE FOR OURSELVES IN ADULTHOOD

Here we see the cycle of life in full circle. We were children, now we are the parents and we have children of our own. Fortunate indeed is the man who makes for himself a happy home. As our parents helped us, we should now prepare our children for the future.

During this time as adults of the home we learn the true meaning of responsibility. We become the authority figures; others are now dependent on us. The home is a training ground not just for our children but for us too. God uses the home for proving elders and deacons in the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12; Titus 1:6).

During this time as the adults, we really learn to care. Even our own parents may need us in their old age. We truly learn what it means to be pious starting in the home. "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God" (1 Timothy 5:4).

Twice the New Testament in a catalogue of vices mentions those "without natural affection" (Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3). This is the person who does not have any family loyalties, love or sentiment of any kind for their own blood relatives. Infanticide and euthanasia were crimes practiced among the heathen in Paul's day. The lack of family affection today has also stained the United States with bloody hands. What parent in their right mind would want to abort their child? How can a caring progeny shove their parents into a confinement home because they do not want the burden? (We are not speaking of an elderly person who needs healthcare and must go somewhere to receive medical services). If a person can do this to their own family, how will they treat their neighbors or strangers?

The natural love of family should follow us all the days of our lives. Jesus while dying on the cross made arrangements for his mother with the disciple John (John 19:26-27). An anonymous poet has written about a little girl carrying her crippled brother who was about as large as she.

I met a little maid
A rosy burden bearing;
"Is he not heavy?" I said
As past me she was hurrying.

She looked at me with grave, sweet eyes,
This fragile little mother,
And answered in swift surprise:
"Oh, no sir. He's my brother." ⁵

If we have not learned to have a family affection, how can we show a proper love to our fellow man? Ideally this home prepares us for greater things yet to come.

OUR ETERNAL HOME WITH GOD IN THE HEAVENS

Finally, if a man has prepared himself in this life by walking in the light of God's Word, then a splendid home in eternity will be his. This is the wonderful home we've been living for our entire life. All else has been preparation for this.

1) Heaven's home will not be interrupted by death. How wonderful shall be the reunion of our cherished loved ones who have traversed this world of woe. They have left an empty spot in our earthly homes. But in Heaven family ties will be forever. "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). Lost loved ones will "rise again in the resurrection of the last day" to be united again with us (John 11:24). Paul explains this great reunion. "We which are alive and

remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).

- 2) Heaven's home will have the best family members. God is our Father (Matthew 6:9). Jesus is our elder Brother (Hebrews 2:17). All the faithful children will be brought together in this extended family even with the holy angels (Matthew 22:30; Luke 20:36). "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:15). Of all the creatures in God's creation, mankind has been privileged to partake of the divine nature. Peter said, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). Through their primary obedience to the gospel of Christ, Christians are added to Christ's spiritual body, inducted "into Christ," and "in him" sharing his perfection, his righteousness, his death, and all the glorious benefits of being in him.
- 3) Heaven's home will be our long desired haven of refuge. The tempter will no longer seduce us (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). No decay, defilement or dimness will spoil our happy home. 1 Peter 1:4 says it is, "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." No crime, trouble or sin will threaten this eternal home. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27). Heaven is better than any bank for putting our trusts. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matthew 6:20). He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

We say, "There's no place like home, sweet home" while speaking of the homes we have on this earth. How much sweeter will be our heavenly home? We shall reap if we faint not.

END NOTES

- ¹ William Cullen Bryant, <u>Library of Poetry and Song</u>, ed., New York, 1874, p. 133.
- ² John W. Dale, "Family Strengths: Making Our Family Stronger", <u>Settled In Heaven Applying the Bible To Life: Annual Freed-Hardeman University Lectureship</u>, Henderson, TN, Freed-Hardeman University, 1996, pp. 78-79
- ³ Ibid., p. 79
- ⁴ Johnny Ramsey, "Honor Thy Father and Mother", <u>The Book of Exodus: 21st Annual Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship</u>, Memphis, TN, Firm Foundation Publishing House, Inc., 1987, p. 112
- ⁵ Benny L. Stephens, "His Face Said Yes," Article from a church Bulletin.
- ⁶ R. H. Strachan, Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. V (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 126.
- ⁷ Jim Elliot, Bible Illustrator for Windows, Parsons Technology, Inc., 1700 Progress Drive, P.O. Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa 52233-0100 USA.

THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND AND THE WIFE IN THE HOME

By Stacey W. Grant

The great Richmond Hill church of Christ is truly one of my favorite congregations to visit. Verily, preparing for and hosting a lectureship is never an easy task. With due diligence, you fine brethren **always** do a superb job ensuring that everything required for success is accomplished. Keep up the great work, brethren! Only Heaven rightly knows the amount of good your previous lectureships (I am persuaded that this present one will follow the same path) and your importunate support of Gospel preaching have done for the cause of our dear Master.

INTRODUCTION

Webster defines "role" as "a function or office assumed by someone." More and more, many in our beloved country seem incapable of identifying distinguishable roles in a plethora of areas. Concerning the judicial system, juries, lawyers, and judges sometimes render more sympathy to the guilty party than they do the victim. The cities' of New Orleans, Milwaukee, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, etc., reputations were tarnished by police officers and other city officials participating in illegal activity, even murder and drug trafficking while on duty. Recently, a police officer of a town in north Georgia, who was on duty, could not be reached by the station. He was later caught having sexual relations with an under aged girl at her parents' house. Yes, he was arrested! Clothing designers would have us believe that there is such thing as unisex clothing—capable of being worn by both genders. Consider the rash of schoolteachers recently arrested for engaging in forbidden liaisons with their students. Truly, the list of examples is nearly inexhaustible. Without question, the greatest attempted role reversal concerns

man and his Creator (Rom.1:18-25). Mankind, predominantly and historically speaking, is **not** content with being the worshipper and God's being the object of his worship.

The role of the husband and wife is clearly precise, commencing at the inception of the institution of marriage. Our nation has been in a steady moral decline for many years for numerous reasons--one of which is the lack of respect many today have for marriage. A genuinely successful marriage is one in which the divinely ordained roles in the home are respected and observed. The Creator designed the distinct roles in marriage and the home (Gen.2). The intent of this lesson is to remind us saints to respect the role of the husband and the wife in the home.

THE ROLE OF RECIPROCAL, AGAPE LOVE IN MARRIAGE

The key ingredient to a successful marriage is agape love, the highest degree or type of love. Agape love seeks the best for others (1 Cor.13:4-8); it is sacrificial in nature; it is never unreasonably demanding; it never demeans others; it never seeks the destruction of others; it brings out the best in those who embrace it; it removes the egregious element of selfishness from one's character; it sincerely seeks the best for others or its neighbors (Luke 10:25-37). This is the exact type of love Christ possesses for the church. The universality of God's love is eloquently expressed: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16a).¹ The exclusivity of Christ's love for His bride is likewise incisively disclosed: "Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph.5:25).

Agape love is not something that just "happens," according to Titus 2:4. Agape love is based upon one's familiarity with Holy Writ, or the lack thereof. Agape love is eternally connected to godly knowledge (John 14:15). Acquiring and accurately employing the greatest

form of love enables the saint to carry out his godly mission (Ecc.12:13; 2 Pet.3:18). Undoubtedly, agape love is man's most powerful and resourceful emotion. As evidenced by our Lord's stringent struggle at the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-44), sometimes, agape love is not the easiest route to travel. His sincere love for the Father, the Truth, our souls, and the church enabled Him to endure the shame and pain of the crucifixion because of His love for man. J. G. Dailey penned these words in his song entitled "Why Did My Savior Come to Earth,"

Why did my Savior come to earth and to the humble go? Why did He choose a lowly birth? Why on the cross be lifted up? Because He loved (agape) me so! Why did he drink the bitter cup of sorrow pain and woe? Why on the cross be lifted up? Till Jesus comes I'll sing His praise, and then to glory go, and live with him thru endless days, because he loved me so! Because He loved me so! He loved me so, He loved me so; He gave His precious life for me, for me, because He loved me so.²

When the parties considering marriage--or are already married--possess agape love for one another, the foundation is laid and secure for a successful marriage (Mat.7:24-25).

THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND IN MARRIAGE AND THE HOME

The husband chiefly prioritizes matters in the home (Jos. 24:15).

Joshua's well known declaration was not merely a statement of fact, but an example of a godly man accepting his God-ordained role as spiritual leader of his family. God, through His immeasurable wisdom, created the role of the husband for multiple reasons. First, "husband" identifies the male in the marriage (Mat.19:4-5); there are no "alternatives" or substitutes allowed in the family structure. Second, family and spiritual leader is inherent in the term "husband." The position of family leader is not a matter of debate; the Lord settled the issue in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3). "But I would have you to know, that the head of every man is

Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor.11:3). Likewise, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph.5:23). In reality, 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 13 and Titus 1:6 speak to every husband/father in the church. Both passages are eternally connected to Matthew 6:33. Concerning this matter, a faithful Gospel preacher penned these words:

This relationship does not indicate superiority versus inferiority, but a difference in role and in areas of **responsibility**. Christ is not inferior to God; both the husband and the wife are equal before God; they are one in Christ. **The husband must realize, though, that his responsibility involves financial, moral, ethical, and spiritual responsibilities.** If he humbles himself before his head, Christ, the woman will not be reticent to submit to his headship, knowing that he will do what is best for her welfare, protection, and growth as well as for the children.³ (Emp. mine, SWG)

This is by no stretch of the imagination a license for the husband "to rule the home with an 'iron fist." "Husband" never is translated or is to be interpreted "dictator" or "potentate." Abraham serves as an excellent example worthy of our imitating; for it was said of him: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen.19: 18 a). Abraham prioritized his entire life around the word of God. This decision and its consequences have been preserved for us in sacred history (Gen.22). The text reveals: (1) He loved his Lord more than he loved himself (Luke 14:25-33). (2) He loved his Lord more than his own son; he was willing to sacrifice his child to please his Master; in many cases, it is just the opposite. Far too many fathers suffer from the "Ahaz and Manasseh Complex" (2 Kin.16:1-3; 21:1-7; 2 Chr.33:1-7; Psa.106:34-39; Jer. 7:30-31), sacrificing their children's spiritual development by letting a ball game or fishing or hunting or camping trip, etc., take priority. NOTE: The Scriptures teach that Manasseh repented (2 Chr.33:11-20). However, what do you suppose he regretted the most concerning his unlawful

past? (3) Abraham made sure his son was familiar with his godly ways; Isaac was well acquainted with his father's priorities; Abraham practiced what he preached.

QUESTION: What would be the spiritual and emotional climate of the world today, if all husbands/fathers joyfully and reverently accepted their God-given role?

He is the primary teacher in the home.

In every dispensation revealed in Holy Writ the husband is the designated spiritual leader (Job 1:5; Josh.24:15; Eph.6:4). Why do you suppose Josiah singled out his forefathers as the cause of Israel's spiritual collapse (2 Kin. 22:13)? Ephesians 6:4 is explicitly clear regarding who is the primary teacher in the home. The book of Proverbs is primarily a compilation of inspired instructions designed for imparting wisdom from one generation to the next. Consider some of what a loving, concerned father passed on to his children:

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee (Pro.4:1-6).

Let us ponder just some of these precious impartations. (1) He wanted the best for his children; he was convinced that the best involved knowing the Lord and His Word intimately. (2) He knew how to address his children properly; he used terms of endearment. (3) He reveals unto his children how his father showed him love; he relates how much he appreciated the genuine attention his father paid to him; he uses these fond memories as an illustration. (4) He is balanced in his approach; he warns them of the danger and destruction associated with not walking after God's will; he also reiterates how a successful life is directly related to a genuine relationship

with the Almighty. Fathers, the greatest gift your child can receive from you is a daily dose of lessons from God's Word (Deu.6:1-9).

He must passionately and persistently honor his wife.

"Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Pet.3:7). This one verse says a great deal about the role of the husband in the home. (1) The husband is commanded to utilize godly knowledge when it comes to his relationship with his wife. (2) He must respect the noted differences between the genders. "Weaker vessel" does not denote inferiority in intellect. The woman is not designed for strenuous, physical labor. (3) His wife must be precious in his eyes. "Honor" is the term translated "precious" in 1 Peter 1:19. (4) "Heirs together" truly expresses that equality and harmony must be key components of the marriage. Notably, helping his beloved wife make it to Heaven is the husband's greatest expression of love. Consider:

In the New Testament, Peter placed upon the shoulders of men the responsibility to "dwell with them according to knowledge" (1 Pet.3:7). Through inspiration Peter penned a command as binding as any other within the pages of the scriptures. As the leader of the home, husbands were told to take the time and effort to learn all about their wives. We should understand both our physical and emotional differences because we are different!⁴

He is the primary provider of the home.

God gave Adam a home and an occupation **before** He gave him a bride (Gen. 2). This is Heaven's recipe for preparation of those considering marriage. The old adage, "Love doesn't pay the bills," is true to a certain degree. Someone must provide the means for paying the bills. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the

faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim.5:8). Woe unto the man who depends on the government for providing for himself and/or his family! A man who violates 2 Thessalonians 3:10 is truly not a man in God's eyes.

He is the protector of the home.

Children and mother and/or wife should know for certain that father and/or husband is there, if and when they need him. A real man never abandons his God-ordained post (Josh.24:15). This preacher is sincerely appreciative of those fathers and/or husbands who protect our great country by serving in the military or law enforcement or other worthy occupations that may require as much sacrifice. Such bravery is truly commendable. His heart goes out to the many families that have lost their father and/or husband due to sacrificial, selfless service to his country.

THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER/WIFE IN THE HOME

The wife is her husband's God-given companion (Gen. 2:18).

The verb form of the term "help" is a word frequently used in reference to the Lord in the psalms (Psa.10:14; 22:11; 28:7; et al.). It basically means, "to aid or supply that which an individual cannot supply for himself." The Septuagint--the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek—translates "help," *boethos*. The term as used in New Testament means, "to run to the aid of those who cry for help; to advance to the assistance of anyone, help, aid, succor" (Mat.15:25; Mark 9:22, 24, et al). "Meet" comes from the Hebrew phrase meaning "opposite." Though different in gender, the woman is equal to and fully adequate for man.

She is a complement to her husband (Prov. 31:10-31).

Webster defines "complement" as "that which completes or brings to perfection; making up what is lacking in one another." Sara was a complement to Abraham (1 Pet.3:1-6); she accepted her God-given role in the marriage. Submission is not inferiority. Sara, through her faithfully submitting to God's plan, helped Abraham to remain faithful. The faithful wife knows that God instructs her to be submissive to her husband (Eph.5:22-32). The Lord uses Sara as a **pattern** for others to follow. The same can be said of Moses' mother (Exd.2:1-8; Heb.11:23). Hannah, the faithful mother of Samuel, complemented Elkannah (1 Sam.1-2). Peter's wife helped him qualify for the eldership (1 Pet.5:1). The term "sister" is a term of endearment; it signifies a genuine relationship with the Almighty (1Cor.9:5). She was undoubtedly solidly behind his ministry and mission efforts. In fact, her shining example is praised by other apostles, and, of course, **the Lord Himself.** Priscilla aided much in Aquilla's success as a missionary (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom.16:3-5; 1 Cor.16:19; 2 Tim.4:19). The worth of a faithful wife is inestimable!

She is the primary caretaker of the home (Tit. 2:3-5).

"Keepers at home" is not a punishment the Lord placed upon the wife. It reveals how important the home is in the Lord's eyes. It also reveals the unique contribution the wife makes to the home, church and society. The primary concern for a Christian wife is ensuring that her home is in an orderly fashion. Unreservedly, every institution created by Jehovah is inherently organized (1 Cor.14:40). An orderly home reflects on the family as a whole. More so, it reflects a most beneficial light into the community (Mat.5:14-16). **NOTE**: This does **not** mean that wife

and/or mother is the family's "Hazel or Alice or Florence" or maid. Although she worked outside the home, Priscilla's accepting her intended role as primary keeper of the home allowed for multiple opportunities to spread the Gospel (Rom.16:3-5). Everything we Christians do should be connected to Mark 16:15-16, the ultimate reason for the home's existence.

Additionally, she predominantly is the "glue" that keeps things together in the home. Likewise, she is looked upon to be the "lubricant," aiding enormously in having things run smoothly in the home; friction is minimized when wife and/or mother is carrying out her designed responsibilities. She often rarely finds little time for herself; truthfully, mother is the one who generally sacrifices the most in the home. She usually is the one who gets up in the middle of the night when baby is crying. Her instincts are generally keener to such things. God created her with the emotional temperament needed to endure the consistent crying of a sick baby or child. When hurting, the children often seek her first as a refuge. Is it any wonder why Mother's Day is so revered by so many? Where would most of us be were it not for our dear mothers?

Although father is the primary teacher in the home, mother plays a significant part in the development of the children's education. Truthfully, most children spend more time in their early years with their mothers. Hence, most children in a Christian home learn Gospel songs, Bible stories, and even how to pray from their mothers--even if mother works outside the home. The bond between a mother and her children is unique.

THE AQUILLA AND PRISCILLA MODEL: WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHRIST

As evidenced by Aquila and Priscilla, a Christian husband and wife are co-laborers in the Gospel. Working together involves spending quality, **godly** time together as a family. Children

must learn from father **and** mother that God is first in everything we do. One of the ways in which children can learn about the Lord is through family devotions. "The family that prays together stays together" is more than a mere slogan. It must be a way of life. Strong families are the result of careful, prayerful planning, not chance.

Strong churches and nations are the result of strong families.

Tragically, Ahab and Jezebel's children were the products of their family unit (1 Kin.16-22). Who among this family was righteous? Ahab and Jezebel's evil lifestyle was adopted by their children (1 Kin.22:51-53-2 Kin.1). Note that both parents were mentioned as having influenced Ahaziah. Their second son, Jehoram, also known as Joram, became king after his brother (2 Kin.2:17; 3:1-3). He was not as evil as his other family members (2 Kin.3:13); nevertheless, the Lord pronounced judgment upon the house of Ahab, his wicked wife Jezebel included (2 Kin.9-10).

Athaliah, their daughter, was likewise full of wickedness (2 Kin.8:25-26). Satan used her as a tool to attack the seed line of the Messiah (2 Kin.11). Her ungodly ambitions led to her usurping the throne of the king of Judah for six years. She met the same fate as the rest of her family. The family's tragic legacy should serve as a warning and a wakeup call for all Christian parents.

WHAT IF MY SPOUSE IS AN UNBELIEVER?

Deciding to follow Christ will affect **every** relationship in one's life. If serving God causes stress in a marriage, Luke 14:25-33 must take precedence. Marriage, though rewarding, is not always easy. The benefit of having a faithful, supportive Christian spouse is a blessing that not all saints enjoy. The Corinthian saints were seeking answers to this difficult circumstance of

life (1 Cor.7). Incontrovertibly, God regulates **all** aspects pertaining to marriage. A Christian must be an example for his unbelieving spouse. This demonstration of faithfulness may encourage the unbeliever to become saved (1 Pet.3:1-4). He must **not** browbeat his spouse, but through patience reveal how rewarding is the Christian life. He must never compromise Bible principles for anyone at any time. This means that he should attend all of the services, Bible classes, Gospel Meetings, etc., health permitting. He must be consistent in his actions. Concerning the children, Timothy's mother, though married to an unbeliever, helped him learn of and establish a relationship with the Almighty (Acts 16:1-2; 2 Tim.1:5). One faithful parent's influence can indeed help mold his child's character.

If his unbelieving spouse leaves him because of his faithfulness to the Christ, he is not under bondage (1 Cor.7:15), not a slave to the person making the unjust ultimatum. He must make Heaven his ultimate goal. However, desertion by the unbeliever does not negate Matthew 19:9. Only two reasons exist for re-marriage. **IMPORTANT**: May we who are spouses and parents ever respect and accept our God-designated roles in our families. Literally, the survival of the church, home, and society hinges on our doing so.

END NOTES

- ¹ All references are from the King James Version unless otherwise stated.
 ² Alton H. Howard, ed. **Songs of the Church**, (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishers, 1977), p. 720._
 ³ Curtis A. Cates, God's Pattern For The Home-Husbands, Bellview Lectures, ed. Bobby Liddell (Pensacola, FL: Austin & McGary, 1993), 73.
- ⁴ Don and Jane McWhorter, **Living Together In Knowledge**, (Huntsville, AL: Publishing Designs, Inc., 1988), 25.

THE JOY OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME

By Bill Ward

I appreciate the opportunity to have a part in this lecture program on the home. In our lesson we will include the following topics: the joy of a Christian marriage, the joy of serving God with a Christian spouse, the joy of having children, the peace and comfort of the Christian home, and the blessing of having a Christian home during times of distress.

INTRODUCTION

I know of no one who says "I want a miserable home" before they get married. However, I know of few individuals willing to pay the price necessary to have the joy which can be found in a Christian home. Abundant evidence exists that almost any two reasonably normal persons can make a success of marriage if they know what to do and they do it! Dr. Kinsey, who approached this subject from a very different point of view, concluded unequivocally that the main factor in a successful marriage is the determination to succeed.¹

Hundreds of dollars, sometimes thousands, are spent on photography at weddings. Everyone is well dressed and groomed with smiles on their faces. Happiness abounds! But, good photography and precious pictures are not things that will add joy to one's married life. Let's note some essential elements that contribute to joy in the Christian home.

God Makes For Joy in a Christian Marriage

The only negative thing about creation was stated by God in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." Eve was created as

a result of God's desire to provide everything needed for man's happiness thus marriage and the home, originated in the mind of God.

Richard Dobbins said, "The closer a man and his wife get to Christ, the clearer they see how important it is for them to stay close to each other." It is from such a lifestyle and attitude of heart that a truly joyful home can be established and maintained.

Our lives will not always, if ever, be easy as we work and serve God in the Kingdom, but we can be happy and filled with abundant joy if we have developed a character filled with good attitudes.

My favorite marriage ceremony, found on pages 95-97 of Jim Henry's book *The Pastor's Wedding Manual* includes the following words. "All who come to the marriage altar desire to have a happy marriage." ³ The nearest place to heaven in this world is a God-centered home. The opposite is also true. The nearest place to hell on earth is a house where hatred, bitterness, and strife are prominent. More scars are put upon a person's character and heart in an unhappy home than in any other place.

Someone said that a home ruled by God's Word is a place where angels may be asked to stay with us, and they would not find themselves out of place! Three ingredients are needed in every marriage in order to put heaven in the home.

The first ingredient is a present, a gift. Some of our greatest gifts are nonmaterial. The giving of yourself, your personhood, your time, your words like "I love you," and "I'm sorry." The gift of total commitment. The gift of praying for each other, the gift of unselfishness, the gift of desiring that the other mate becomes all he or she is capable of becoming in Christ.

The second ingredient is purpose. The greatest purpose of two people in a marriage is found in Matthew 6:33 where Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

The third ingredient is power. The power is Jesus Christ. A successful home cannot exist if money, prestige, activity, or even people are more important than Jesus Christ.

Material pursuits, though adding to our comfort levels, do not contribute to the amount of Christian joy in the home. Solomon went down this well-worn pathway. In his pursuit for happiness, Ecclesiastes 2:4-10 tells us Solomon tried material pursuits, physical ease, entertainment, money, and sexual pleasures. Ecclesiastes 2:10 declares, "And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour." Yet, all these things Solomon declared as vanity and vexation.

The Joy of Serving God with a Christian Spouse

Statistics show that those homes which are religiously divided are more prone to failure. I am thankful for my Christian wife and enjoy working side by side with her at every opportunity we have. Both of us were actively involved in the work of the church before we were married. The first Lord's day after we were married we took pot-luck for a meal afterwards and then spent over two hours that afternoon making visits in the community.

Both of us have taught Bible classes regularly for many years. In 1983 I began serving as a deacon at Adamsville, Alabama. Glenda was interviewed by the elders before my appointment to see if she supported this action. Her ability to handle our household enabled me to go on three foreign campaigns in the mid 1980s and in 1985 I began preaching part-time near Cordova, Al.

Then, in 1988, we moved to South Georgia and spent the next seventeen and a half years establishing the church at Lakeland and Pearson and moving to Adel to help revive the work there.

Mission work in South Georgia is rewarding and demanding. The church at Lakeland was meeting in a rented restaurant when we arrived. It has, on occasion, had to meet in our own home. The first year in Lakeland, besides caring for three small children, Glenda fed some five hundred meals to guests and out-of-town workers for the congregation. This event was a great opportunity few people enjoy. Teaching, raising funds, building buildings, hosting youth meetings, preparing food for the sick, needy and bereaved, Vacation Bible Schools, visits to the hospitals and nursing home, opening our home to visiting preachers, helping with Campaigns and Gospel meetings were all a part of our day to day lives. Our children were actively involved in everything we did at church. For several years, our son accompanied me on the church van helping pick up five to fifteen riders for each service.

Neither one of us could have accomplished what we have been able to do had we not been married and worked cooperatively together with the help of God. The fact that we both want to go to heaven settles many potential problem areas before they ever surface. Our steadfast determination in this regard surely helped ground our children and, we hope, will cause all three of them to want to work in the vineyard and one day go to heaven.

Proverbs 31:10-31 contains a beautiful description of the exemplary wife. I am thankful that my wife displays so many of these character traits in her own life. Let us note, in particular, verses 10-12 and 28-30:

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

The Joy of Having Children

Just this morning I visited with a young couple and their one day old baby girl. Everyone, grandparents included, were so very happy and proud. Is there anything more precious and lovely in the world as a newborn baby? Let us here note the words of Psalm 127,

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

Our home was blessed with three children. My wife quit teaching school for fourteen years in order to be a full-time stay-at-home mother. Our youngest was in first grade when she resumed her teaching career.

Each of our children is very different. Knowing this, each child was dealt with a little differently. One needed just a talking to in order to get a point across. Another required frequent spankings. The other was somewhere in-between in her disposition. Wise parents will recognize this and deal wisely with it not comparing one child with another. Favoritism displayed to one child is a sin against the whole family. Jacob's gift of the coat of many colors to Joseph caused Joseph's brothers to hate him. (Gen. 37:4)

A Biblical pattern for raising balanced children is found in Luke 2:52 which reads, "And Jesus increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and man." Most child rearing today is not balanced. Many are brought up not knowing how to work because they were not

expected to do anything, or clean up after themselves, while growing up. Many are given an unbalanced approach to life in that the spiritual is neglected or completely void in their training. Some well-intentioned Christian parents will make similar mistakes in that they emphasize the spiritual to such an extent that pursuits that would develop the social skills of their children are discouraged. Sports and athletics can be used to help children grow socially and physically. These pursuits should not be allowed to hamper spiritual development or take priority in our lives. Many well-intentioned families, in my opinion, over extend themselves in the amount of time spent in this area as each of their children practice and play two or three sports a year.

Jesus was normal yet He increased in a balanced manner. This balance included social, spiritual, physical and educational growth. These areas of development should be the goals of every Christian parent as we raise our own children. Those who do so will raise well-adjusted children who will be a joy to be around and an asset to the community and to their local congregation.

It should be the goal of every Christian parent to raise their children in such a way to win their souls for the Lord's cause. Faithful attendance at all services of the church will help develop our children's faith.

Another practical strategy is to have spiritual family projects. Memory verses and Bible bowl competitions can supplement regular Sunday School classes. Why not adopt a missionary family and write them letting them know you are praying for them as a family? Take your children with you as you make some visits, hug widows at church, and pray together. All of these things will give our children a good spiritual base from which to grow and blossom.

All parents are interested in gifts for their children. Three of the best gifts we can give are time, love, and discipline. These are gifts we will never regret. Take time to read, to play with,

and listen to your children. Time spent playing a video game is not productive to producing valuable memories of home. We must demonstrate our love by hugs, smiles, and kisses. Write them an encouraging note. Show them you love them. Consistent discipline is a rare jewel. Wise parents must have discipline themselves, if they hope to be able to teach the same to their children. The Bible does not suggest discipline as if it were an option. Read such passages as Proverbs 10:13; 19:18; 22:15; and 23:13-14. The Lord himself administers discipline to us. Note Hebrews 12:6.

The Peace and Comfort of the Christian Home

I Peter 3:1-12 is an excellent passage that gives some essentials to having peace and comfort in our homes today. It reads,

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adoring of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ve are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensure it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

From this passage we learn that order is found in the home where both husband and wife know their place and responsibilities and perform them. We also learn that the peace and comfort that we need does not come from the pursuit of material things. Rather, it emanates from the heart. The heart described in I Peter 3 demonstrates compassion, love, humility, and kindness. Evil is avoided and peace is pursued as a virtue.

Several principles will safe guard Christian homes. Love is the law of a Christian home. Proverbs 15:17 reads, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred." Purity is the health of a great home. Purity is maintained by virtue, modesty, and high ideals. Unity is the power that under girds the Christian home. The family is its glory. Joy is the atmosphere permeated with kindness, confession, and forgiveness.

Hospitality is the blessing of the home. The family altar is its security and heaven is the hope of the Christian home.

Galatians 5:22,23 states "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." It takes time to bear fruit. In fact, a good fruit tree will be full of healthy leaves. Auburn University did a study many years ago and concluded it took around 125 leaves on a tree to result in just one marketable size peach. Fruit is a timely and costly thing to produce physically as well as spiritually.

The blessed man of Psalm 1 is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water." I once heard Franklin Camp say that meditation is to the soul what digestion is to the body. Thus, for peace and comfort to abound in our Christian homes we will have to immerse ourselves in God's word, meditate thereon, practice and demonstrate it, and then bear the fruit of a peaceable and comfortable home life. Someone has well said, "If Christianity does not work in the home,

where in the world will it work?" This is a sobering challenge in view of the present situation prevailing in so many homes.

The Blessing of Having a Christian Home during Times of Distress

One of the great blessings of having a Christian home is the strength we can receive during times of distress. Most of the information we find in the Bible on families is in the Old Testament. Think of the support Mrs. Noah rendered to Noah before, during, and after the flood and subsequent events recorded in Genesis 6-9. Where would Abraham have been without his faithful help meet Sarah? She left Ur and Haran with him as he followed God's instructions. Perhaps she encouraged him in some unknown way when God, in Genesis 22, asked Abraham to offer Isaac upon an altar on Mt. Moriah. Surely Abraham realized some of the magnitude of his loss when he shed tears at her death in Genesis 23:1-2. The hope of the world rested upon their family with the birth of Isaac and the subsequent generations.

Distress is defined by Webster's as "acute physical or mental suffering; pain, anxiety, or sorrow." Any home, which has been established very long, will see its share of "distress." Some will experience much more than others. How we deal with these issues may indeed determine our eternal destiny. The key to the issues of life is found in the Bible. Can anyone improve upon the advice given in Matthew 6:34 to take one day at a time? In fact, is it not hard to sometimes deal with one hour at the time, much less an entire day?

What about the benefit of having the "shoulders" and "ears" of Christ to lean upon and to listen to our every care. I Peter 5:7 helps to encourage us "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." The example of Christ as he dealt with the last week of His life is powerful.

Note Matthew 21-27. In particular, let us note some lessons we can learn from Christ's experience in Gethsemane which may help us deal with problems in our lives.

- 1. In times of trial we must not practice isolation. Note Matthew 26:36-37 as Jesus took the eleven with him to Gethsemane and, in particular, Peter, James, and John went further with Him.
- 2. We also can learn from Christ that prayer will fortify us for the task and give us courage for the future. Note the fact that Christ prayed at least three times in the garden. Matthew 26:39-44.
- 3. We must not despair when our prayers are not answered affirmatively. Speaking about the events of Gethsemane, in Hebrews 5:7 the writer states that Christ was heard but the answer to the request in those three prayers was that He must die on the cross.
- 4. We can learn the fine art of praying by studying Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. Jesus prayed submissively. (Matthew 26:39, 42) He prayed importunatively. (Three times) Jesus prayed earnestly. (Luke 22:44 and Hebrews 5:7) He prayed specifically, "let this cup pass." He prayed unpretentiously. (He went further alone. Matthew 26:39)
- 5. Surely we have adequate helps found in the examples in the Bible to help us deal with the distresses and problems of everyday life.⁵

Paul's secret, recorded in Philippians 4:11, was to adjust and learn contentedness with every station of life. Whether in jail, in the pulpit, in hunger, in plenty he had learned the secret of a peaceful life. The knowledge and application of the scriptures will bolster our faith to the point where we, too, can face life's challenges much the same way as Christ and Paul were able to do. We can, even in the face of terror, trouble, illness, and discouragement, react in a positive manner

Personally, our family has known much distress and heartache. In just one calendar year (2003) our son, then aged 24, was diagnosed with cancer and underwent sixteen rounds of chemotherapy. My wife had two surgeries, one requiring several weeks of recuperation and I had kidney stones which required one surgery and two lithotripsy treatments followed by weeks and weeks of ill health. During the same year, we were responsible for the care of my aged mother and in May 2003 we helped Glenda's parents move to Lakeland to be closer to us. In all this, our family was greatly blessed by our Christian family, near and far, who helped us and prayed for us and stood by us.

In conclusion, The Joy of a Christian Home is within the reach of everyone. It does not take a certain amount of education, or money, or prestige to have this joy. It does take complete submission by a Christian husband and wife to the principles laid down by God and an insatiable desire to please our Heavenly Father while serving our families, friends, and congregations while on this earth.

END NOTES

- ¹ Robert Kinsey, "The Latest Report", Psychology Today
 ² Richard Dobbins, "The Home", Truth for Today, 10.no.1 (June 1089):45.
 ³ Jim Henry, The Pastor's Wedding Manual, (Nashville:Broadman Press, 1985), 85.
 ⁴ Webster's dictionary, 1992 ed., distress
 ⁵ Wendell Winkler, interview by author, 18 September, 2003.

ATTACKS AGAINST THE HOME

By Melvin Sapp

INTRODUCTION

The home is the cornerstone of society and as the home goes, so goes the society. Both the home and the society are reaping the bitter harvest of the breakdown of the home.

Divorce, domestic violence, physical and mental abuse, abandonment and STD's are at epidemic levels. These terrible cancers on the home are not limited to those in the world, but are also plaguing the church. In order for the society to get better, the home must return to God's plan for the family as revealed in the Word of God.

THE HOME IS UNDER ATTACK

The Origin of the Home Is Under Attack

Atheistic and humanistic Evolutionists are laboring hard to convince the world that the earth's origin is not based on intelligence, but blind chance. The sophisticated design of our universe demands a designer as one would demand that a watch did not come into existence by time and chance. If the home has neither divine plan nor purpose, it would leave man free to live as he pleases without the fear of judgment or eternal condemnation. Such a wish is pleasant to the evolutionist, but is merely wishful thinking.

Jesus taught that the origin of the home is divine and has both purpose and plan. When questioned by the Pharisees concerning divorce and remarriage, Jesus affirmed the divine origin and purpose of the home in Matthew 19:3-6.

"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

God created both man and woman in the Garden of Eden on the sixth day of creation. Notice Genesis 1:26-27;

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

After creating man and woman in His own image, God revealed His plan for the permanence of the home.

"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Gen. 2:21-25)

God gave Adam one wife, Eve and said that he was to cleave to her and be one flesh. It is God's plan that every home has a man and woman joined together in matrimony for life. Children are to be produced in this union as a means of populating and multiplying upon the earth.

Homosexual relationships and marriages are in violation of God's plan and purpose for the home. It is unnatural for men to have sexual relations with other men and is clearly condemned in Scripture. God condemned homosexuality in Abraham's day as Lot was rescued from the sinful men of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude 7 states,

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Sodomy was also condemned by the penalty of death during the Mosaic dispensation. "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. 20:13).

The passions in such an environment are vile, unnatural, unseemly, and sinful. Romans 1:26-27 says;

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."

Practicing homosexuals are included in a list of sins that will keep people out of heaven.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:9-11).

Homosexuality is not an acceptable alternate lifestyle, but a sinful one that will reap the same consequence as received by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Permanence of the Home Is Under Attack

The home was set up by God to be life-long between the man and the woman. In a perfect world every man and woman would only have one marriage in his or her life-time. When

Jesus was questioned about reasons for divorce, He reiterated God's original plan for the home. Consider again Matthew 19:3-8,

"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

There is a law of God that regulates marriage and every person is amenable to that law and will be judged according to it. If any person chooses to marry, God holds him accountable to obey the restrictions of the marriage law. Death is the first option of being released from the marriage law and being freed to marry another.

"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:1-4).

When a marriage occurs, the two people are joined to each other and to God's marriage law. The only way to be released from God's marriage law is through the provisions granted in that law. The laws of the land will allow for divorce on many grounds, including irreconcilable differences, incompatibility, desertion, abuse, mental cruelty, no-fault and many other

unscriptural grounds. Death is the natural termination of a marriage that clearly allows for a remarriage.

Herod's marriage to his brother's wife was denounced as being unlawful by John the Baptist in Matthew 14:1-4.

"At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet."

There are many in the church of our Lord who teach that God recognizes but he does not regulate the marriages of non-Christians in adulterous marriages. They simply baptize those in adultery and tell them that their marriages are now justified and honorable, although the relationships that were sinful were never changed. If such arrangements were acceptable, then John the Baptist should have baptized Herod and Herodias instead of losing his head over demanding of them repentance. John knew that unlawful deeds could not become lawful without terminating those sinful relationships. The message and mission of John was to teach repentance and baptism for the remission of sins. Because Herod refused to repent, John refused to baptize him.

The New Testament applies to every person who is accountable from Pentecost, 30 A. D. until the world comes to an end. Jesus' authority covers the totality of mankind as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." The rejection of the authoritative words of Jesus will bring condemnation at the Day of Judgment. Listen to 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."

The command to repent precedes baptism and applies to all men. Consider Acts 17:30-31,

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Repentance must be experienced before conversion can take place. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;" (Acts 3:19). Baptizing impenitent adulterers is equivalent to baptizing impenitent homosexuals and encouraging them to continue in their sinful lifestyle. Notice again I Corinthians 6:9-11;

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:9-11).

God is no respecter of persons and will judge all sinners by the same standard, the Word of God. In Acts 10:34-35 this truth is made crystal clear to the apostle Peter. "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Whatever repentance requires of the adulterer it requires the same of the homosexual.

Every sin that is cleansed by the blood of Christ in baptism can be cleansed by the blood of Christ through the second law of pardon for the child of God. Can a Christian apostatize, divorce and enter an adulterous marriage, then later be restored with the unscriptural marriage becoming honorable? Does not repentance mean the same thing for the saint as it does for the sinner? Observe First John 1:7-9;

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

If the blood of Christ cleanses Christians from ALL sin, would not that include adultery?

Thus, adultery by Christians ought to be treated the same as non-Christians.

Jesus provided the definitive answer to the Pharisee's question concerning when a divorce and remarriage is lawful. "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Mat. 19:9). When Jesus said 'Whosoever,' He meant 'Whosoever.' Marriage is not church legislation, nor was Matthew chapter nineteen bound on people living under the Old Testament Covenant. If such were the case, then it was annulled by the time it was written and received. The teaching of Jesus concerning divorce and remarriage applies to everyone since Pentecost in 30 A.D.

Worldliness Is Launching an Attack Against The Home

Many families have become obsessed with imitating the world with its lust for pleasure and material possessions. Our society is drifting away from the morals taught in the Scriptures

and the church is being influenced by the 'icons and stars' in the world. We are exhorted by the apostle John to,

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I Jno. 2:15-17).

Our love for God must be stronger than our desire to be accepted by the world.

Television, movies and video games are absorbing massive amounts of time from family talks and gatherings. We are being bombarded with endless scenes of violence, sex and perverted lifestyles. Paul's words of warning to the Philippians ought to be heeded by the Christian today. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

The most common route to worldliness is through the 'love of money.' Jesus said,

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mat. 6:19-21).

We must make every effort to treasure heavenly treasures more than earthly treasures that are temporary and corruptible. Money is not evil and is necessary in our society, but godliness is superior and should be valued above material things. Remember the Holy Spirit's exhortation in I Timothy 6:6-12,

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

Sexual Immorality Among Teens Is Attacking The Home

Approximately 4 million teens become infected with an STD every year. There is one teen becoming pregnant every 8 to 10 seconds in America. By age 18, 25% of sexually active teens will have contracted a sexually transmitted disease and most of them won't even know it. Adolescents and young adults ages 15 to 24 are in the age groups that are at the greatest risk for acquiring STDs. Approx. 2/3 of all people who acquire STDs are under the age of 25. Young people, dare to be different by being an example to your peers. Paul encouraged young Timothy to "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12). Jesus also expects us to influence those around us. Consider, Matthew 6:13-16;

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Sexual promiscuity leads to teen-age pregnancy and its various implications. Health Department statistics indicate that 900,000 girls become pregnant each year. That breaks down to about 2,500 teen age girls getting pregnant each day. Only 30% of girls who become pregnant graduate from high school. It is estimated that 80% of teenage mothers end up on welfare.

Children that are born to teenage mothers have an increased risk of pre-mature deliveries and low birth weight. When the children of teen mothers reach school age 50% of them are likely to repeat a grade. The children of children are less likely to complete high school and they score lower on performance or standardized tests. The sons of teenage mothers are more likely to end up in prison when they are older. Daughters of these young mothers are more likely to become teen mothers themselves.

Most of the abortions that are performed in America are on unmarried females. To avoid these and other consequences of sin, we must "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (II Tim. 2:22). The only safeguard against these vices is abstinence! The Bible says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

The Use of Alcohol and Drugs Are Attacking The Home

The use of mind and mood altering substances add to the crises that afflict the home. With the high cost of housing, energy and other necessities, neither money nor family resources should be wasted on alcohol or recreational drugs. The wise man, Solomon said, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Fermented wine or drink has deceived many into thinking that they can handle their drink, only

to become alcoholics and winebibbers. One is truly wise to avoid all intoxicating beverages in light of the negative connotation it has in the Scriptures and in society at large. In Proverbs 23:29-35, the questions are asked,

"Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."

It takes a strong Christian to resist the allurements of the world and walk in the steps of Jesus in regards to taking a stand on moral issues. We must resist these and other attacks against the home if we are going to contribute to the building up of the community and the kingdom of God. All of Satan's attacks can and should be resisted by those who love the Lord. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7).

The home is the cornerstone of our society and is worthy of our best efforts in trying to strengthen it. We rejoice when programs such as this take on this controversial subject of marriage and the home. May your tribe increase!

WHAT HAVE THEY SEEN IN YOUR HOUSE?

By Ronnie L. Ulrey

INTRODUCTION

When I was assigned the above subject I immediately tried to think back through the years of good Gospel preachers I have heard preaching on this subject and couldn't remember a thing they said that I could use. Of course my memory is not that good.

Many years ago I remember Bro. Chester Honeycut talking about being assigned "The Church Through Eternity" to preach on the Carolina Lectureship, and he couldn't think of what to use or where to find it, so he called Bro. Gus Nichols and told him to send him something on the above subject, and Bro Nichols wrote back and said "I've never heard it preached so you'll have to make up the sermon yourself and after you complete it please send me a copy."

Seeing my Dickson Bible lying on the table in front of me, I picked it up and looked in the concordance and found the word "house", and it was written there forty three times. Although forty three times gives plenty of material to use in my lesson, I ventured to one of my book cases and took out Strong's Analytical Concordance and looked up the word "house" and I couldn't count all of the times it was listed; at least 2500 times, if not more, I decided to use ten of the times it is written in my Bible, which I believe will be sufficient for a good lesson on the subject.

HOUSE OF BONDAGE

The first descriptive phrase I found in my Bible that I want to use is "House of Bondage." In Deu. 8:14 this phrase brings to my mind many a house I have visited that truly

was a house of bondage. Everyone there was held in bondage by the man of the house. Evidently many men think they are the boss of the house rather than the "head." Being the "head" of the house is very different from being the boss. When we read that men are to "love their wives," Eph. 5:28 and teach and be gentle to their children and "not provoke them to wrath" Eph. 6:4, this is a far cry from being a grumbler, hateful, mean tyrant in their house. The implication is that men should be gentle and kind and courteous (1 Pet. 3:7,8). Being the "head" is more like being the leader than being the driver or the pusher. In the Air Force we had what was called KP Pushers who bossed every recruit around in the dining hall. Some of them would turn food over on us and we hated to see them coming. This attitude should never be practiced by anyone, Christian or not, especially your own family.

It seems that the wife should be special in the home, because if she leaves, who is going to do those things that most men hate to do? I have known some men that could take care of the home in some areas, but I have never known a man that could half way do all the house chores as well as the wife does them. Personally, I do not want to have to learn to do all those things on a daily basis. Many wives are expected to work another job during the day and come home and do all the cooking, dishwashing, laundry, and the housecleaning. We know that the Bible says women are to be "keepers at home" Tit. 2:5, but she is not super-human. A good husband will want to help her so she can rest when he does. She is not our slave, but our "help-meet," Gen. 2:18. That means helper.

The wife should be treated as the "weaker vessel," 1 Pet. 3:7. No man has the right to beat his wife around. I heard of a man that would go home drunk and mistreat his wife when she was trying to help him. She got tired of it and the next time he came home intoxicated she let him find his bed and go to sleep. She took her broom and beat him all over the bed. The next day he

was sore all over and he asked her what happened. She told him what she had done and that she was going to do it the next time he came home in that condition, and that she would continue to do it until he quit this kind of living. He quit! A word to the wise is sufficient.

A DISORDERLY HOUSE

The second descriptive verse is "Set thy house in order." This was said to Hezekiah by Isaiah when Hezekiah was very ill and was going to die. The way it reads it seems that Hezekiah's house was not in the order that it should be, (2 Kings 20:1). This may have more of a spiritual application than physical, but I am using it in a physical way.

I have been in homes that were plain filthy and not fit for animals to live in, let alone children. There may be some physical reasons for a mother to keep a dirty house, but it seems that there should be more concern for your family than to refuse to keep a clean home. I heard Bro. G.K. Wallace preach in Chapel at Freed Hardeman College about Jesus' resurrection as recorded by John in chapter 20:6, 7, which tells about how the clothes Jesus was buried in were wrapped and placed neatly in separate places. Everyone thought he would preach on the resurrection, but he preached on how filthy some of the students kept their room as compared to the way Jesus was so neat even in his tomb. Even though it was humorous, the point about being neat and clean was made.

The Bible says that women are to be "keepers of the home," Tit. 2:5, even though some men think they can do just as well as their wives in keeping the house clean because they can cook a hotdog or hamburger on a grill on special occasions. They don't even come close to having the expertise of taking care of the whole house. Women need to love their families enough to keep

their house reasonably clean because this is her domain; this is where she shines and it is where God wants her to take charge.

Many of us older people were not raised in homes as fine as our homes are now and it could be seen that the lady of the house had taken great pains in keeping with the "worthy woman" in Pro. 31:27 "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

A HOUSE FORSAKEN

The next verse that tells of what is seen in some houses is quoted from Neh. 13:11, "A house forsaken." The reference is concerning the house of God being forsaken, but I have been in homes where the whole family is without any spiritual upbringing. The children actually curse at each other in the presence of the parents and very little, if anything, is said to correct the matter. It is a sad picture when the home is without any teachings about God and even the parents join in the cursing and swearing as though they have never heard of there being a God in heaven.

It seems that our generation has everything backwards. The fathers expect the mothers to train the children, but God says, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," (Eph. 6:4). People listen to their doctors more than they do God. Dr. Spock ruined a whole generation of children by telling their parents never to spank them, and finally realized he was wrong and now we have another doctor, Dr. Phil telling the same thing on TV. Dr Phil is even worse than Dr. Spock because he claims to be religious with his teaching. But God teaches opposite both of them in Pro. 13:24. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." Pro. 22:15 tells us

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod and correction shall drive it far from him." And in Pro. 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Telling a child to take a "time out" in the cases I have seen makes the parents look foolish, in view of the action God demands to be taken.

Education has given some men the "smarter than God" complex. If parents abide by their advice we will see another generation of our children ruined by being "left to themselves". No two families are alike and neither are two children, so parents need to "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Pro. 22:6.)

HER HOUSE IS THE WAY TO HELL

"Her house is the way to hell," (Pro. 7:27) these words were spoken of the house of an immoral woman and her ways. Isn't this still the truth? Doesn't immorality lead the young to destruction even in today's world? How many homes have been destroyed by allowing the practice of immorality in the home by the parents or the children? This world is torn apart by those who glorify living together unmarried before children. They even send invitations to their friends to celebrate their moving in together.

Television and many teachers in higher education have tried to destroy marriage in the sight of all men. The Bible says that "Marriage is honorable in all..." (Heb. 13:4) also, the Bible declares that the institution of marriage belongs to God, Mat. 19:3-6, and not to men. If it were up to those who own the television industry they would altogether try to destroy marriage totally, just to show that they can. Personally, I do not think they have the power they think they have, unless we let them.

We need to protect our homes, i.e. marriage; with all our beings and the only way we can do it is to give marriage the honor we owe it.

A HOUSE FILLED WITH SMOKE

In Isa. 6:4 there is the expression of, "a house filled with smoke," and I wondered at first how I would be able to use this expression in a lesson until I visited a few homes of those who smoke cigarettes.

Surely if everyone really knew the effects of smoking on our health they would never entertain the idea of beginning this habit. Doctors at first told us that if we quit smoking for a couple years we would be through with it. But that was many years ago, and now they are treating those with cancer who quit smoking many years ago, and they tell us that if we ever smoked we can still get "smoker"s cancer." This is fearful, because many of us smoked many years, thinking that if we quit somewhere down the road a few years, there wouldn't be a chance of having "smoker's cancer." The truth is that we may still get that dreaded disease. Doctors now know that if there is just a small touch of cancer in our bodies from many years ago we can still die of cancer.

Not only can it kill the smoker, but it can kill their friends and their families who breathe in the second-hand smoke around them. Smoking has the power to kill whole generations of our families.

The "House of smoke" immediately became a much needed point to be made in our lesson, most especially to the younger married generation who are having children. If you smoke, you need to quit **NOW!** It's a matter of life and death to you and your children. Cigarettes ought to be treated like a wild destructive, poisonous animal and our young married couples need to

understand the killer that smoking is. It will not only kill you and your family, but it will kill your extended family and your friends who breathe it in. I'm not interested in just using a scare tactic on people, but if you value your friends and family and other people you work with or are associated with, then you need to **QUIT NOW, NOT TOMORROW BUT NOW!**

A REBELLIOUS HOUSE

Then there is mentioned "a rebellious house" in Eze. 2:5, this is a reference to the rebellion of Israel toward God. In this context Ezekiel was being sent to the children of Israel to deliver His message to them.

Even though some believe we have no right to intervene in what is happening in their homes, there are many references in the Scripture that are directed to the home. "Children, obey your parents" deals directly with the home, Eph. 6:1. Verse 3 implies that the lack of obedience to parents will cut the life short. I have known many young people who failed to obey their parents and died in accidents and mishaps that otherwise would not have happened. One young man I know was warned by his parents concerning his wicked, drunken life, had such an awful accident that his appearance was actually changed to the point that he didn't look like the same person. He was the son of a preacher who was a good friend of mine. There are many stories that could be told about awful things that have happened to young people just because they would not obey their parents. There is a young man in the congregation near me that will never be the same because of the brain damage he received because of an auto accident that happened a few years ago. Even though some scriptures refer to the home, preachers are not exempt from preaching these. This boy's parents and friends warned him that his reckless driving would kill or maim him and others if he didn't stop, but he wouldn't listen and now he will never regain his health.

A HOUSE BUILT ON THE SAND

The last negative house I found listed in the concordance is the "house that was built upon the sand" in Mat. 7:26, in these passages Jesus was teaching about those who heard his word and failed to obey it were the ones who were building their lives on the sand. Everyone knows those who care very little about what the Scripture teaches concerning their lives. The sad part of this is the effect it has upon their children.

Actually, there are four classes of people that God has a special feeling for and they are the elderly, the poor, the widows and children. The Bible has some powerful things to say about children. In Mat. 18:6 Jesus said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, (cause to stumble) it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Those young people who plan to marry and have children need to begin thinking long before the ceremony, what effect their marriage will have upon the children they plan to have. It would be better not to have children if you don't plan to be a faithful Christian, because you will not only be responsible for yourself, but for the children's eternal destiny Eze. 33:8, 9. These children are "a heritage of the Lord" Psalms 127:3 and we need to be very careful how we treat them.

The last three houses I found were spoken of in a positive way. There is "The House of Goodness" Psa. 65:4, "The house of Righteousness" Pro. 12:7, and "A House on a Rock" Mat. 7:24.

We could write a whole book on these great phrases but seeing I have a deadline to meet I will confine my remarks to things that will profit us in the closing of this sermon.

A HOUSE OF GOODNESS

A "House of Goodness" is a home where God and his Son are honored in such a positive way that the good influence controls everyone who happens to live there and anyone who is privileged to visit such a home. Many of us were raised in flimsy houses, but the emphasis is upon goodness. The Bible says in Psalms 23 of those who follow God that "goodness and mercy shall follow them all the days of their lives and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." A house of goodness is just a good house to be from.

A HOUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Even better, "A house of righteousness" is where things are done in the right way and at the right time and those who are privileged to live there are well adjusted participants in society. The problem with today's society is that many haven't been taught when and where things need to be done. Someone has said "the problem with the brotherhood of man is that there are not enough brothers and too many hoods." Learning to do right is best taught by a good father and mother in a home where God, Christ and the church are given first place. They are faithful to all the services of the church. They see their parents reading the word of God. They see them sacrificing for those less fortunate. Good reading material is on the coffee table and on the book shelves. Prayers of thanksgiving are said before each meal. Children are taught to pray. The Bible says "Love God" Mark. 12:30; "Love Christ" John 14:23; love the church, John 13:34, and love thy neighbor Mark. 12:33.

A HOUSE BUILT ON A ROCK

This house is the one that honors the Bible as God's word and practices each of it's teachings in the exact way it is taught and arranged by the God of heaven. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock," (Mat. 7:24-25). We should not only be hearers. We must also be doers in order to have a solid foundation.

Of all of these houses where does your house fit? Is it a house of bondage, a disorderly house, a house forsaken, a house on the way to hell, or a house filled with smoke? I hope not any of those. Let us have a house of goodness, a house of righteousness and a house built on a rock.

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CHALLENGES OF THE SINGLE CHRISTIAN

By Alan Wright

INTRODUCTION

Who are single Christians? They can be men or women, young or old. They include the never married and the formerly married. Some have purposely chosen to remain single, others are desperately seeking to become married, and still others are content to leave it up to chance or providence. In their emotions and personality, they range from the deliriously ecstatic to the wretchedly miserable. They have obligations to meet, responsibilities to discharge, anxieties to grapple with, and aspirations to aim for.

A wealth of statistical studies and surveys have affirmed that single men and women are more likely to experience chronic illness, more likely to have low-paying jobs, more likely to be victimized by crime, more likely to go to jail, more likely to suffer from depression, and more likely to have a short lifespan.¹ Is it any wonder that one of the common conceptions of the single man or woman is that of the dejected and hapless loner?

The Solitary Single

God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone," (Gen. 2:18). To resolve this problem, God created Eve to become a companion to Adam, and we read, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). It is truly marvellous to behold how perfectly man and woman complement each other, and how completely marriage fills our need for companionship. In marriage, we find someone to be our partner, our confidante, our co-worker, our playmate, our cheerleader, our defender and our fellow traveller through the adventure of life.

What about the unmarried person? Here we see one of the difficulties singles face, and indeed for some singles, it is THE overwhelming problem. Even though a person is unmarried, it is still "not good" to be alone. Yet many singles have allowed themselves to become isolated and cut off from their fellow man. They live as if they were a hermit cloistered in a monastery, or a castaway marooned on a remote island. They pay their bills, go to their jobs, and buy their household goods, all with as little interaction with others as possible. And all the while they live in self-pity, bemoaning their solitude and wondering why they cannot find happiness. As the ancient psalmist, they despair, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Psa. 102:6,7).

One problem with this lifestyle is that it becomes a vicious cycle. The more we sequester ourselves, the more we begin to resent those around us. In Job's adversities, he not only fell victim to the loss of his wealth, his family and his health, but he was also plagued with extreme depression. As most people who suddenly face such catastrophe, he couldn't understand why it had befallen him. His friends offered their well-meaning but misguided theories. In the course of his conversations with these friends, we find four times Job pleading, "Let me alone," (Job 7:16,19; 10:20; 13:13). Thinking that he had been abandoned by everyone, including God, Job unwisely believes that his only recourse for any peace of mind is to be by himself.

Nor is the emotional turmoil the only adverse consequence of isolation. It has dire spiritual effects as well. We have in Scripture a case study of what can become of the person who gives in to this temptation. In the account of Elijah's flight into the desert after his victory on Mount Carmel, we see a man overcome with the belief that he was alone. His plaintive cry was, "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD ... I, even I only, am left" (1 Kin. 18:22; 19:10,14). This belief produced self-pity, so that he bemoaned, "I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kin. 19:4). In this pessimistic state of dejection, he abandons his duty, fleeing into

the wilderness (vs. 4). He abandons his courage, pleading, "*Take away my life*" (vs. 4). He abandons his will, not even bothering to eat until he is commanded to (vs. 5-7). He abandons his faith, for it is not Elijah who prays to God, but God who summons Elijah (vs. 9). He abandons his purpose, no longer seeing any point in prophesying to a nation when he believes no one is listening (vs. 10).

If you are single, do not let yourself live in seclusion. Solomon wrote, "Two are better than one" (Eccl. 4:9ff). He goes on to elaborate on how having others in our life gives us someone to lift us when we stumble, to give us warmth in a cold world, and to stand with us when we are under attack. If we are wise, we will seek out strong and lasting relationships and friendships. Of course everyone married or unmarried, needs to have time to themselves, but as the poet John Donne reminds us, "No man is an island." As Jesus finished the feeding of the five thousand, we read the curious statement, "As he was alone ... his disciples were with him" (Luke 9:18). Jesus is a perfect illustration of how we may seek out quiet times alone without forsaking the fellowship of those closest to us.

What sort of friends should we be seeking? Consider the wisdom of the Proverbs. We need friends whom we can share our intimate thoughts with without worry (Prov. 17:9), friends who will not abandon us in difficult times (Prov. 17:17), friends with pure hearts and gracious speech (Prov. 22:11), friends who are not given to anger and strife (Prov. 22:24), friends who will kindly but firmly speak the truth, even when it hurts (Prov. 27:6), friends who can give us the sound advice of wisdom and experience (Prov. 27:9), and friends that will sharpen us mentally, emotionally and spiritually (Prov. 27:17). And how do we get such friends? Again Proverbs gives us the answer. "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly" (Prov. 18:24)².

The Searching Single

Friendships are wonderful, but they are no substitute for a good marriage. Many singles are anxiously looking to find a partner to share their life with. But it often seems to them as if everyone else is hitting the jackpot, while they just keep coming up empty.

Advice columnist Ann Landers once wrote, "The poor wish to be rich, the rich wish to be happy, the single wish to be married, and the married wish to be dead." It does seem many times to all of us as if the grass were greener in other's people's yards. But it is vital that we keep ourselves from falling into desperation, for it is especially dangerous to make a rash decision when it comes to marriage, leaping headfirst into a situation without the least notion of where we will land.

The writer of Proverbs tells us, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD" (Prov. 18:22). But how do you go about finding that wife (or husband)? Is there any advice from the Scripture on the best way to make the search?

There is an interesting parallel with the verse just referenced earlier in the book. There wisdom, speaking in a personification, tells us, "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD" (Prov. 8:35). Now we note that in both the English and the Hebrew the language is virtually identical in the two verses. In other words, there is at least a similarity between the acquisition of wisdom and the pursuit of a mate. Consider what the wise man says in regard to seeking wisdom, and apply it to this most important business.

"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in

right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." (Prov. 4:5-13)

Note five instructions in this passage, and see how well they apply to both the general search for wisdom and the specific search for a companion: 1) "Forsake her not." This is the same phrase God uses in the promise, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5). It means being willing to stay by someone's side, no matter what. You should find someone that you will be willing to pledge your heart and soul to, "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do you part." If you're not ready to make this commitment, you're not ready to seek a marriage partner. 2) "Love her." The Hebrew word here is a broad term encompassing everything from the great love we have for family, friends, and God (cp. Gen. 22:2; Prov. 17:17; Deut. 6:5) to the love we might have for a favorite dish of food. (cp. Gen. 27:4) But the significant thing is that it always carries the thought of a love expressed in action rather than the mere emotion itself. You must be prepared to show your love in your words and deeds. 3) "Exalt her." This verb refers to lifting something up so that it may be plainly seen. It came to be used of embankments built up in time of war, or mounds of earth used to dam up rivers and streams. A related form is used to describe ladders or steps by which someone can ascend higher. The point here is that we should put the one we love up on a pedestal, singing their praises to the world. 4) "Embrace her." The word is from a root meaning to fold, and means to hold close to the bosom. It is not simply that you should physically embrace one another, but that you should take one another into your very souls. You should accept and cherish one another. 5) "Keep her." This term means to protect and preserve. You must be willing to take your partner under your wing, providing for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs and guarding them against all dangers.

The Satisfied Single

While many singles are trying to get married, others are content to remain single. Some have made a deliberate decision to remain single, while others wouldn't mind marrying but are in no particular hurry for it. This fact is upsetting to some. They seem to think that one who chooses the single life is depriving himself. One of the best-known romance novels of all times begins with the simple proposition, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." Thus the single man or woman will almost certainly face the well-intentioned friend who wants to introduce them to someone in the hopes of seeing them marry.

In point of fact, there is Biblical support for the idea of the satisfied single. Paul writes, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). He had himself chose to remain single, believing that it made it easier for him to carry out his difficult and dangerous task of preaching the gospel in a time of persecution. He argued eloquently that others would do well to follow his example. (rf. 1 Cor. 7:7,8,26,27,32-34) Now the "present distress" that was taking place as Paul wrote is not a factor in our lives today. Yet there may be other legitimate reasons why someone would choose the single life.

Two pitfalls are associated with this choice, both dealing with choosing the single life for the wrong reasons. **First**, there are some who withdraw from the idea of marriage, or perhaps from any romantic relationship, out of the fear of failure. They have watched as apparently happy couples descend into pettiness, rancor and spite. They have seen marriages end in bitter divorce. They may have had their hearts broken by a romance that ended badly. The result is a decision never to let these things happen to them. Better to be alone and safe than to risk that kind of misery.

Some people believe they must choose between being a Single Adult Disciple, a SAD loner, and a Married Adult Disciple, a MAD combatant. But just as we have seen that a single Christian need not be dejected and forlorn, so it is that a married Christian need not live his/her life in constant turmoil. "Marriage is honourable in all" (Heb. 13:4). The word honourable in this verse means precious, held in high esteem, greatly to be treasured. Marriages only become arenas of strife and contention when the people in them fail to follow God's plan. As Christians, we must not let fear hold us back in this or any other matter. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

The second unworthy reason to remain single is the stubborn desire to be independent. Some people elect to remain unmarried just so that they don't have to answer to anyone. They get up when they want, go to bed when they want, watch their favorite TV shows without interruption, eat their favorite snacks without criticism, and never have anyone nagging them about chores they don't want to do. They are master and commander of everything about their home. These are the people who are accused of being "set in their ways."

Now there is nothing especially wrong about having your favorite foods and favorite entertainment, nor is it somehow improper to want to have things your way from time to time. But beware of overindulging this tendency. It is a ripe breeding ground for selfishness, vanity and greed. One of the reasons "it is not good for the man to be alone" is that we need others to bring out the best qualities of compassion, humility and generosity in us. Even if you choose to remain single, it is essential that you learn to put others ahead of yourself, to sacrifice your desires for the good of others, and to give yourself in the service of others. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be

your servant" (Matt 20:26-27); "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil 2:4).

The Seduced Single

If you go by the lifestyle portrayed on television, today's single is constantly moving from one sexual tryst to another. Every romantic relationship is supposed to lead into the bedroom. Even teenagers are being told that it is good and normal to be sexually active. After all, we are told, everyone has urges and it would be unhealthy to suppress them.

On the other hand, the single Christian is faced with the unmistakeable voice of Scripture. "Know ye not ... neither fornicators ... shall inherit the kingdom of God ... Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body ... FLEE FORNICATION" (1 Cor. 6:9-18). "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be ONCE named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3). "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1 Thess. 4:3).

How can the single Christian battle the temptation of sexual desire? First, do not buy into the myths that are being promoted about premarital sex. For instance, it is **NOT TRUE** that everybody's doing it. Just as in Elijah's day, there were still the "seven thousand" that had not bowed the knee to the pagan god of pleasure. It is **NOT TRUE** that sexual activity promotes a healthier relationship. Remember the story of Amnon who supposedly loved Tamar, and then forced himself upon her, only to have it said, "Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her" (2 Sam. 13:15) And it most certainly **NOT TRUE** that sexual experimentation before marriage will make you a better partner after marriage. Sexual experimentation is about conquest, not about romance.

Second, take control of your beliefs, your attitudes and your values. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). It is this renewing of the mind that enables the Christian to resist the temptations of the devil. Carefully examine every belief to make sure it is in agreement with the Bible. Adjust your attitudes to reflect the spirit of Jesus Christ. Develop values that are deep-seated reflections of the wisdom of God. We must be "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

Third, practice physical discipline. Paul says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). Notice the two verbs that describe Paul's discipline. The phrase "keep under" is from a word meaning to strike blows, to pommel. Now Paul is not advocating inflicting literal beatings upon our bodies. It is the picture of an athlete, who must push his body beyond all endurance, with gruelling effort, in order to condition it for the games. Similarly, the Christian must exert himself to train his body to respond to his spiritual demands. The phrase "bring it into subjection" literally means to lead a slave, as a taskmaster would do. Through physical discipline, Paul was determined that, even when all things are lawful, "I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12).

Fourth, do not court temptation by wilfully putting yourself in compromising situations. "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). And if you find yourself beset with the enticement of those who do not share your beliefs, then follow the example of Joseph who fled from the seductions of Potiphar's wife. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov. 1:10).

Finally, arm yourself for battle. It is only when we equip ourselves with the character and behavior of our Lord that we can find the strength to defeat temptation.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Eph. 6:11-18)

Do not lose hope. Remember God's promise – "Resist the devil, and he will flee from vou" (Jam. 4:7).

The Suddenly Single

The world of singles includes many who were married, but through death or divorce, are no longer married. While they may face any of the challenges presented above, there are additional unique difficulties in such a situation. We will mention only two.

The first involves dealing with the emotional aftermath of an ended marriage. In the case of the widow or widower, there is almost always a formidable sense of loss. In the early days following this loss, friends and family gather near to provide comfort and support. But as time moves, they soon go away, leaving the surviving spouse to deal with the grief as best they can. The good news for Christians who have lost their Christian mate is that we have the assurance of the resurrection. As so Paul urges, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." (1

Thess 4:13). Yet even though we hope for a joyous reunion, we still face a deep-seated emptiness in our lives now.

Grief comes not only to those who have lost their mates through death, but often to those whose marriages have ended in divorce. Even in cases where someone claims that the divorce was the "best thing that ever happened," still it remains true that they did not set out in the beginning to have a failed marriage, and there must be some sense of disappointment. Often the recently divorced are filled with anger, bitterness, self-doubt, and many other forms of emotional hurt. Some feel they were abandoned and betrayed by someone they trusted. Others believe they have failed because of some personal inadequacy as a husband or wife. Still others are emotionally numb from perhaps years of conflict and abuse (both given and received).

How should someone deal with the emotions of grief and loss brought on by death or divorce? First and foremost, make up your mind that you will deal squarely with your emotions, neither ignoring them so that they linger dormant in our hearts, nor giving them free reign to lash out at any unforeseen moment. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov 4:23); "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov 23:7); "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matt 12:35). These and many other verses remind us that it is only by guarding our thoughts and emotions that we have any control over how we live, what we say and how we treat one another. Do not let the devil use your grief as a lever to manipulate you into temptation.

Secondly, seek out fellowship and counsel from your Christian brothers and sisters, especially those that have shown themselves to be wise in such matters. Of course you need to spend some time alone, finding the quiet peace that will give you a moment's rest from your grief, or let you cry in seclusion, saying the things to yourself that you cannot bring yourself to

say to others. But do not linger in isolation too long or too often. Do not make the mistake of Jacob when he thought his son Joseph was dead. We read, "And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning" (Gen. 37:35).

You should also take the time to properly reflect on your marriage, both the good times and the bad. The consistent instruction of Scripture is, "*Examine yourselves*" (2 Cor. 13:5). The point is to help you heal by thoughtful contemplation. Much of the strength of grief is found in the state of confusion that it brings the unanswered questions and unresolved doubts. Give yourself the opportunity to make sense of things. At first it may seem too painful to remember things past, or on the other hand the memories may become an obsession. You must take control by slowly and deliberately meditating on your life, finding ways to cherish the loves, forgive the hurts, and make yourself a stronger and better person. By doing this, you will find the strength to deal with your grief and to move on with your life.

Finally, do not forget the admonition of Peter, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

The other challenge facing the widowed or divorced Christian has to do with seeking out new relationships. We have spoken already of the single Christian who is searching for someone to share his/her life with. But for those who have already been married, there is an added challenge.⁵ To the person asking themselves if they should begin dating again, or if they should remarry, consider two important mistakes that are often made.

The first mistake is thinking that a new relationship will be just like the one you had before or on the other hand, that everything will be completely different. In the first case, someone who has lost the love of their life may enter into a new relationship expecting their new

partner to be everything their former love was. They constantly compare the new with the old and are inevitably disappointed. Their words and mannerisms quickly reveal their disappointment, and unless this is overcome, disappointment becomes regret. In the second case, someone who has come out of a long and difficult relationship may enter into a new one with the naïve belief that they can finally have a problem-free union. It may have been so long since they have felt loved and appreciated that they become overwhelmed with the slightest attention paid to them and are swept off their feet. And many have fallen victim to their own romantic notions and wind up right back in a problem marriage.

Whether you have had a terrific marriage or a terrible one, remember that you cannot judge what will happen in the future solely by what you have experienced in the past. Take the time to get to know each other. Be sure you talk about everything that really matters. Don't make comparisons between the old and new. And if and when you do decide that you should marry, be prepared to love this person with all your heart for the rest of your life.

The second mistake often made in establishing a new relationship is ignoring the other people involved. If either or both persons considering marriage have been married before, there are most likely children whose feelings need to be considered. This is not to say that two people who want to marry, and have every right to marry, should remain single because a child objects. But you must be prepared to accept all of the new relationships that such a marriage will produce, and do your best to form a unified family.

The Spiritual Single

Of all the challenges that any of us, married or single, will face, the greatest is to serve God faithfully. The single Christian can be a great asset to the kingdom of God. But to do this, it is necessary to keep yourself spiritually strong. And here is the challenge. Some singles will let themselves drown in self-pity, and never lift their eyes to God. Some are apt to put off

spiritual pursuits until they have found the perfect mate. Being single is no excuse for ignoring God. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt 6:33).

END NOTES

- ¹ For examples of this type of research, consult Patrick F. Fagan et al., "The Positive Effects of Marriage: A Book of Charts," The Heritage Foundation, http://www.heritage.org/Research/Features/Marriage/index.cfm (accessed September 29, 2005). As with most attempts at statistical analysis, various studies have produced differing, and even conflicting, results. It is not my intention to endorse or to repudiate the findings of this or any other study.
- ² Many versions have a different view of this expression, as for example the American Standard, which renders it, "He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction."
- ³ Ann Landers, from *Rand Lindsly's Quotations* as found on "The Quotations Page," Michael Moncur, http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/22675.html (accessed September 29, 2005).
- ⁴ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1985).
- ⁵ Everything that is said in this section presumes that, when seeking to remarry, both parties are eligible to do so. Consider Matt. 5:31,32; 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF HOME AND CHURCH

By Timothy R. Presley

INTRODUCTION

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the brethren here for the invitation to speak once again at this fine lectureship. The subject which has been allotted to me is one that is very much needed in the society in which we live today. If we can enrich our lives to become all that God wants us to be, it must first start with the relationship with God. This is where the church is of the utmost importance. Our homes will then reflect a better society for all of us to live in. There is a common denominator between the home and the church. This is that God has formed or created both of these institutions. We will first look at the definition of the word relationship and then we will examine the identity of the home and church.

Relationships

A relationship, as stated by Merriam Webster, is the state of being related or interrelated, that is entering into marriage.¹ It also has other meanings, such as, it can mean to have a connection with something or someone, or have dealings with something or someone. When we have our relationships in the right order then things will seem to make life more abundant.

When the vertical (up and down) relationship with God is in the right order, then our horizontal (side to side) relationship with our fellow man will fall into place. This is the order that the Bible speaks of. To give you an example of this, we find in Luke 2:52,² as Jesus is maturing in age he increases in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and

man. As Christians today, we have to look to this perfect example how our Lord managed His relationships with God and man as He walked upon this earth. In Matthew 22:37-39, we see the two greatest commandments that Jesus Christ gave to us over 2000 years ago in dealing with our relationships. He said in these two commandments hang the law and prophets. This is to say how important our relationships are between God and man. In Exodus 20:1-17, we see how Jesus built upon these commandments. In verses 1-11, we see the relationship between God and man. In verses 12-17, we see the relationship between man and man. In our Christian walk today, we must realize that everything we say and do in relationship between God and man will reflect how we will spend our eternity.

The Home

The home is the first institution known to man that God made. This goes back to the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis, we have the account of the creation of the home. Everything in the world in which we live, God spoke into existence. The earth, heavens, animals and humans came into reality with the purpose that the Father had intended for it to serve. We also have the record of the fall of man when he violated that purpose.

In Genesis 1:26-28, we have the first mention of the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) saying, "let us make man in our own image." This image is not the flesh, but the spirit that our Lord refers to. He also created the flesh, which we see in Genesis 2:7, from the dust of the ground and He breathed that spirit into that flesh to make man a living soul. He then placed the man in the garden which he created east of Eden in order to care for the animals and to tend the garden. In Genesis 2:18, God sees that it is not

good for man to be alone. After bringing all of the animals before Adam, it becomes clear that none are suitable to serve as a companion for Adam. A helpmeet must be created for him. God causes a deep sleep to fall on Adam and He removes one of His ribs. The flesh is now created and the breath of life is put into her and she became a living soul. The new creation was brought to Adam and he called her woman because she was bones of his bones and flesh of his flesh, taken from man (Genesis 2:23). The actual name given to this new creature was Eve being the mother of all living human beings (Matthew 19:4). While in the garden, we see the great temptation of Eve by Satan as she succumbs and eats of the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. She then in turn gives the fruit to her husband and sin enters into the world. By this violation of God's command, punishment is placed upon man and woman as recorded in Genesis 3:16 for the woman and Genesis 3:17-19 for the man. With this punishment, Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden and God placed a cherubim and a flaming sword which turns every way to keep them from returning and to protect the tree of life.

In Genesis 4:1, we see that Adam knew his wife and that the home now comes into existence. This is also examined in Matthew 19:6 with the joining of man and woman. God expects the man to leave his parents and in a public promise before God and witnesses, give himself to woman. The man and woman now take on the responsibility of the care for one another and must love each other above all other relationships except that between them and God. We see that the two flesh now become one in the intimacy of sexual relations only with one another and only in marriage.

God expects the home to put Him first in all things and with this comes certain responsibilities to be followed in the home. This comes from a study of His Word as we

are commanded in II Timothy 2:15. Daily prayer is commanded in I Thessalonians 5:17. Patience, forbearance and love for one another allow us to become more Christ-like in the home.

We will now examine the duties of fathers and mothers. First we see that we must teach God's way in Deuteronomy 11:19 and in Proverbs 2:26. We also find that we are to live a Christian life in order to serve as a light before others in Matthew 5:16.

Children also have a responsibility to God and parents. We can find an example of this in Proverbs 23:22 and Ephesians 6:1-4. The command is given to obey parents in order to prolong our life on earth.

There are numerous other examples of the responsibilities of the family that can be derived through a study of God's Word. The point being that when we follow God's instructions for the home, as dictated in scripture, we insure the survival of the home in the society in which we live today. Both husband and wife must seek and reflect a relationship between the home and church as found in Ephesians 5:22-33 and Colossians 3:18-20.

The Church

The church and Kingdom are used interchangeably in scripture. The Greek word 'Ekklesia' means called out of the world, an assembly or a congregation. It is mentioned 115 times in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul. We also find the word 'Kuriakos' which means belonging to the Lord. This can be found in Matthew 16:18 as well as 18:17. We find that both of these words show the importance of God's intent to redeem mankind back to Him. We find that today in the Christian Dispensation the only way to

be redeemed back to God from sin is to follow the plan of salvation and to become a part of the Lord's church.

We can find this establishment of the church in Acts 2:38-47. However, the process started long before the church actually came into existence. Prophecies in the Old Testament of the coming Messiah that we know as Jesus Christ foretold that His church would come into existence (Daniel 2:44, 4:3, 9:25-26, Isaiah 2:2-3, 7:13-14, Mark 9:1). These prophecies came into reality as our Lord and Savior was born of a virgin over 2000 years ago. He lived a perfect life as He taught, preached, healed diseases, fed the 5000 and 4000, and gave His life for the remission of sins. After His crucifixion, which consisted of this act of shedding of blood for the remission of sins, He was resurrected and seen by many witnesses and now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. His twelve disciples who walked and talked with Him during His earthly ministry for 3 ½ years, continued on with help from God and the receiving of the Holy Spirit to guide them to all truths and the establishment of the church. In the book of Acts, we see that this promise is fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The apostles, indwelled by the Holy Spirit, are preaching Christ's death and resurrection. In turn people believed and obeyed and 3000 souls were redeemed and so began the church that day (Romans 16:16). The church has continued up until now in the 21st Century and will continue until our Lord returns.

In Luke 8:7, we see that the Word that was preached on the day of Pentecost is representative of seed. When planted in good hearts/minds, the Word will bring about Christians. The church is alive and active today with its head and Savior being Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). He is also the Savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23).

Just as God had His physical nation in the Old Testament called Israel, He has His people today and they can be called Spiritual Israelites. This is the church which follows Christ in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). By following after Christ and being added into His church after following the plan of salvation and by living a faithful life (Revelation 2:10b), we can have a home with Him in eternity. This is what God had intended from the beginning with the creation of man and woman. After the fall of man, we see the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption found in the establishment of the church. A great example of finding a place of safety and refuge from the world of sin can be found with Noah rendering obedience to God with the building of the Ark. Just as Noah believed God and built the Ark, he saved himself and his family from destruction of the world by water and all therein. Today, when we are obedient to God and His Word and become a part of the church He established, we will save ourselves from this present world of sin.

Conclusion

We can see how the relationship between God and man on earth serve as the foundation of the institutions of the home and church today. The relationship or similarity between the home and church is that the origin began with God. Through study, we can see how these institutions came into existence by God and are interwoven to become what He intended them to be. From the establishment of the home and the church, we have been instructed to do His will and to keep His commandments. By following His will, we can provide the example of Christian homes and churches in our society. These can serve as lights in a sinful world and will ultimately ensure our place with God in eternity.

END NOTES

¹Webster, Merriam, <u>Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary</u> from Merriam Webster, Inc. 1990 ² All scripture acquired from King James Version.

WILL WE GATHER HOME?

By Ronnie Ulrey

INTRODUCTION

My assignment is in the form of a question, and a question is answered by a yes, no, or maybe. I want to answer my question with a "Yes!" When we answer with a yes, we then have to cover up any doubt with an "if." I have a sermon named "If and Why." The point of that sermon is that every "if" demands a "why." For instance, "if" a person is saved without being baptized, then "why" does the Bible command all believers to be baptized (Mark 16:16)?

Secondly, my subject doesn't say where home is, but this being a Bible lectureship; I assume that home is heaven. So my remarks in my sermon will be based on, will we gather in heaven as a family, after all of us have finished our lives on this earth?

Yes, If

My first answer then is YES, if we all are obedient to Christ who said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21,22). The Hebrew writer says that "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5:8,9).

Though one of these says to obey the Father and the other says to obey the Son, remember that things equaled to the same thing are equaled to one another. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 17:20—23).

Obeying the Father and the Son means that the whole family of whom we speak have heard the truth, Matt. 7:24-27, and have believed the presentation thereof, John 8:24, have repented of their sins, Luke 13:3, 5, have confessed Christ before men Matt. 10:32, 33, and were baptized for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38, and were engaged in living the Christian life when they left this world, Rev. 2:10.

If the above is the case, then I guarantee you, we will all make it to heaven, and meet each other there. But I must stress that we cannot renege on our responsibility to be faithful. "...Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10) is the key to reaching heaven.

Not only must we be obedient, but we must "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10:27). The above things are not easy to do. Some people say they love God, but it hasn't changed their hateful, disagreeable, grumpy attitude toward many in this world and some in the Lord's church. These take strength of character and courage of conviction to carry out, and when someone asks us why we were not present at a service and we become angry and defensive, there is something wrong with all of that love that we are supposed to have. Jesus simply said, "If a man love me, he will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And He certainly has given us a command to be faithful to the services of the church (Heb. 10:25).

YES IF WE DON'T

My second response is still YES if we don't, somewhere down the road, become a prodigal (wasteful) child, and do like the prodigal son did in Luke 15:13, when he took all that he had and went into the far country and wasted his substance on riotous living. He left his good

father and became a vagabond in a country that hated him and would not give him as much as a meal to survive on. There is no great love in this country for us as Christians, or in any other country, but we have many straying members wandering around in this world evidently looking for that which they will never find until they "come to themselves" (Luke 15:17), and turn around and swallow their evil pride and come back to their Father where there is plenty for everyone.

It doesn't take long to see that no one in this world is going to give us a hand out so we can catch the next bus back to our Father's house or take the long walk (Luke 15:20). If you are wandering around looking for something better than God has for you in his house, then you will never find your way back. There are some of us who in our past, found that there does not exist any place like the Lord's church where we can find just what we need, when we need it, along with forgiveness and abundant love for our dessert.

If we are like the prodigal was, what we need to do is just what he did. Turn around (repent), and come back home if you want to receive the heaven that awaits all who are willing to pay the meager little price it will cost us. Then we can all go home together as a family, and talk about and wonder why we were so blind that we could not see what we were leaving, when we left the Church. If we remain away for the rest of our lives, then we will have an eternity to weep over how foolish we were to throw away the best thing we ever had.

The Elder Son

Right here I have to say something about the "elder son" in Luke 15:25, and make it a separate point. In this parable some people think he represents the Christian who was always there helping his good father while the other son sowed his "wild oats". I think this is a misnomer of who he is. He may represent a Christian, but he certainly wasn't a good Christian.

He hated his brother when he returned home, (vs.28). He also made accusations against him that I don't know if we can believe him. He said the brother spent his money on harlots (vs.30). As hateful and vindictive as he was, I don't know if I believe these accusations. He sounds more like a jealous, outrageous sibling that wishes his brother had stayed lost so that he would have everything.

There are some so-called Christians who never forgive anyone, regardless of what they did. This boy seems like one of them. I have seen people respond to the invitation, that have lived away from Christ for many years, and I heard members make fun of them and say "he won't stay long, he will do it again." The attitude of these people is that if he did it once, he will do it again, and they will never forgive him. Sometimes people leave the church and do awful things, but we are not the judge, jury nor the executioner. Jesus said we must learn to forgive our brother and love him, (Luke 17:3; John 15:12). Let him work it out with his father.

Some seem to feel like they have kept every command perfectly, like this boy (vs.29). John said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). If our attitude is like this man's, then we won't be going home with the rest of the family.

YES! IF WE DON'T ALLOW THE "POLLUTIONS" OF THIS WORLD TO PULL US BACK

"Will We Gather Home?" The next answer to the question is the same YES as the others, but it is still based on an "if." If we don't allow the "pollutions" of this world to pull us back into its grasp. Peter said,

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 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," (2Peter 2:20-21).

We are almost always walking on the edge of the "pollutions" of this world. In business we are dealing near the worlds pollutions from which we escaped, but we know they are there and we don't let them "entangle" us. When we see we are becoming "entangled," then we will resist them, so that they will not "overcome" us. Now and then some have become "entangled" therein and "overcome," then we will lose our battle with the forces of Satan. Peter told us to be on guard for the devil because, "... he goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

The best way to escape from becoming "entangled and overcome" is not to get too close to the edge. Don't tempt yourself with your own spiritual strength or you will lose the battle. Sin is powerful. It can have you in its grasp before you know it. When you feel the tug, run for your soul! If you hear it "growl," get away from it. Make yourself familiar with how sin works and when we see the traits, as God told Lot and his daughters, "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (Gen. 19:15). It is an awful, putrid, picture drawn in the scripture of those who were once pure and clean, and were again "... entangled therein and overcome. But it has 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 Peter 2:22). I have had Christians say that we ought not to mention things like that in our services because they sound so awful, but that is really the point isn't it? Be warned brother and sister!

"Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using; after the commandments and doctrines of men" (Colossians 2:21, 22). This warning comes from the apostle Paul. And this is my next point. If we are bent on fooling with false doctrine, then we may as well forget about going to heaven with those who are faithful to God! It seems that some

Christians like to fool with false doctrine and fellowship those who teach some of the worst doctrines on earth. The apostle says do not even "touch it, taste or handle" it or you will perish.

Those who continue to bind men's doctrine upon people will not be going to heaven with the rest of us, no matter what their family name may be.

Jesus said, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). Such are poison to mankind. They teach him wrong, lead him wrong, a try to tell men they are right. Paul said, "they have a shew of wisdom" (Col. 2:23). They are not genuine truth, but only put on a show; and they will not help us overcome the sins of the flesh.

Those who coddle the false teacher and his doctrine don't have any idea what they are bringing upon themselves. It is the practice of those things Jesus warned us about. "They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14). Falling into this ditch is no small matter. It is falling into the lake of fire, which is mentioned in Revelation 21:8.

It has always baffled me why a generation comes along and all of a sudden we haven't been teaching the things that will bring all of the sectarians into the body of Christ. We have been too hard and unkind on those who are teaching every false doctrine they can find. This generation begins to show us how to get everyone to believe exactly alike. But it never comes out that way. If they bring anyone into the church, the ones they bring have all of their false doctrine packed in what they are bringing, and all of a sudden no one knows where some of these things they started teaching came from. How can good people be so blind? The truth we have been preaching caused the church to grow 110 percent from 1950 to 1960 and they feel that is too slow. But the doctrines they bring in cause the growth to cease and the church begins to spin its wheels trying to rid itself of all of this false doctrine these new converts have laid on it. What do we do about

it? Well, when Joshua told God there was sin in the camp, God told him to get it out, (Joshua 7:11, 12). That is exactly what must be done in the church when the accursed thing is found, and the accursed thing today is false doctrine (2 John 9-11).

YES! IF WE STOP HIDING OUR TALENTS

The answer to my last point is still YES, we can all "gather home" together, if we stop hiding our talents and began using them for the Lord's work. In Matthew 25:15-30 Jesus tells us that these servants were given talents that they were to use in his service. One was given five talents, another was given two talents and another was given one talent. All evidently were exhorted to use their talents to gain other talents. I understand that the talents this man gave them was money according to verse 27. The same principle would have been in force if the man who passed them out were giving them physical talents. Whatever the case we understand that each person had at least one talent that could and should be used to enhance the kingdom, farm or home, which ever the case is. In our case it is the church. We have the responsibility to use what God has given us in the work of his kingdom. If we, for some reason, do not use what we have for the growth of His entity, then we will not be acceptable servants in his kingdom. We have many members who have trained for years to teach and it's almost impossible to get them to help in the teaching program of the church. They have excuses just like the one talent man did. One of their excuses is "I teach all the time, on the job, and when I come to worship I don't want to have to teach there also," so consequently we have to get anyone who will to teach our children. Some who are teaching would gladly let these experienced teachers do the teaching, and even continue in the class and help them in any way they can. I guess this is the reason that the denominations use women to lead their singing in their services, which is not

scripturally acceptable to the Lord according to 1Tim. 2:12, which says she is not to serve in any authoritative way over the men. Maybe we need to read what the Lord said about the one who wouldn't use his talent for the one who gave it to him. The first two took their talents seriously and gained other talents and the Lord was pleased, vs. 16, 17. The one talent man must have thought nothing would be said about his little ole' talent because being able to do only one thing is not the same as the others who had more, but that was and is not the case. The Lord is not pleased with those who won't use what they have in his service, regardless of how little it is. At first the servant tried to blame his lack of activity on his Lord. He said, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth," (Matt. 25:24, 25). The truth is that it takes more ingenuity and wisdom to use one talent profitably than to use many. Evidently this is what the Lord thought; listen to what he said,

"Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury" (Matt. 25:26, 27). What the Lord is saying is, "If you can't do any better than to hide my talent in the ground and just dig it up and give it to me, you could at least deposit it in some financial institution and give it back to me with interest."

We need to really look at our family and see who is thinking about seeing the whole family in heaven. I have to admit that I looked at my family and most of them are faithful and I feel certain they are planning to meet the whole family after we all finish up here. We have one who left early and is waiting for the rest of us. But we have one that I don't think is thinking about meeting the rest of us. When I finish this sermon I am going to send a copy of it to her and talk to

her about it and see if she cares whether or not she meets us in our next home. Maybe this will wake her up and cause her to think about her future and the rest of the family.

THOUGHTS FROM SINGLES

By Riley Nelson

The topic of this lecture was chosen because of the lack of information readily available on the matter. Brother Wright and I discussed this topic and I had other singles write some of their thoughts on the matter. It was interesting to find that of those who were asked to turn in information, all had many of the same concerns. Those who are married should consider these thoughts so as to help, encourage, and understand those who are single.

Pros

- ➤ Singles have more time to devote to spiritual matters; your time is not divided between God, spouse, and children (1 Cor. 7:32 34).
- ➤ Able to meet other singles; more understanding of their feelings
- ➤ Working on their own goals and desires
- ➤ Becoming comfortable with being single and being your own best friend.

Cons

- > Financially you may not be as secure
- For women, men trying to take advantage of you
- Lack of companionship; not being a couple around others
- Sexual temptations (These can be overcome: 1 Cor. 10:13, 1 Cor. 7:1, 2, Matt. 19:12, and Phil. 4:13)



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL
SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 28, 29 2006
HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA HWY.144 EAST

Editor: Riley Nelson



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PREFACE

In the word of God many great treasures are to be found. Such is the sermon under consideration in this study. It is no wonder that when our Lord finished His message, the people were astonished at His doctrine. He taught as one "having authority" and not as the scribes. His message took them beyond the letter of the Law, showing them in order to truly keep the Law the heart of the individual had to be involved.

This sermon brought the focus back from pious religious leaders, to the individual and his relationship with God. Foreign to the thoughts of the world as to success, the Beatitudes explain the character of the person God deems blessed. His discoursed moves then to show how important each individual is in God's kingdom and that they are to reflect God in their lives.

Jesus talked about the importance of the Law of Moses, and His relationship to that Law. His purpose was not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it completely. Understanding that helps us see why He talked about so many different aspects of the Law and how the individual was to put their heart into following it, not just because the religious leaders told them to do so.

While many of the religious leaders made much show about religion, Jesus explained how that in a right relationship with God, it is not done for show, but from the heart to God. He touched on giving, prayer, fasting and materialism. In each of these topics, God is to be the focal point and not the individual.

Jesus also explained how proper judgments are to be made, and not with prejudice toward another. He again pointed the individual to look within to be assured that they are doing what is right, before assessing another's faults.

In concluding His sermon Jesus continued to point out the individuals responsibility in living right with God and man. If a person wants to please God, he must follow God's will. If the individual wishes to get along with his fellow man, he must learn to treat others as he would desire to be treated.

It is this editor's desire that each person who joins in our study together will seek to follow the Lord's admonitions.

Riley Nelson

Richmond Hill Church of Christ

October 28, 2006

DEDICATION

It is with great pleasure that this volume of the Southeast Georgia Lectures is dedicated to Sister Cindy Graney. Cindy is an outstanding Bible teacher, spending many hours preparing lessons and visual aids so that her students learn God's word. She has volunteered countless hours to help with Vacation Bible School, gathering materials and making visuals to be used by other teachers. Cindy has volunteered for many years to help with Bible Camp serving as the "Craft Lady". Working behind the scenes many times, Cindy shows forth a humble and meek spirit as she works diligently in the Lord's kingdom.

Riley Nelson

Eleventh Annual Southeast Georgia Lectures

Held at the Church of Christ Richmond Hill Georgia Highway 144 East P. O. Box 786 Richmond Hill GA 31324

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THE BEATITUDES

Andrew Nelson

INTRODUCTION

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:1-12).

Man has a natural desire for happiness and seeks to fulfill this desire in many different ways. Some seek happiness in the things of the world, but happiness that is the product of the world is short lived. True happiness comes from God and lasts eternally. Jesus was sent into the world to provide happiness to mankind: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (Jno. 10:10). Jesus came to enrich the lives of men by establishing the church in which man is brought to God. Jesus introduced the principles of Christianity in the Sermon on the Mount, specifically stating that those who exhibit certain characteristics, known as the "beatitudes" are blessed.

BLESSED

The word translated blessed, in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, is defined as "fortunate" or "well off," and can also be translated as "happy." (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries). However, because there is a possibility of misunderstanding and thereby

weakening the meaning of Jesus' words, one must understand the difference between the happiness derived by outside influences and the happiness about which Jesus was speaking.

Anyone can see that God has provided many great things that bring enjoyment to all men. Some receive great pleasure from recreational activities or achieving some great feat. Others delight in time spent with family or just enjoying the simple things in life such as a piece of blueberry or chocolate cake. As great as these things may be, the "happiness" they create is short lived and can be taken away at a moments notice. In fact all of these sources of happiness are limited by time or other outside influences such as injuries or death. Even the simple pleasure of a piece of cake can be quickly brought to a halt by dropping it on the ground. While God has made these and other enjoyments possible, if the happiness caused by them can be removed by any outside source, the happiness enjoyed is not the happiness or blessedness Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount.

The happiness Jesus is speaking about is "spiritual prosperity." In other words something that cannot be taken away and is "independent of the ups and downs of one's material lot in life"² Therefore, because there is such a tendency to picture happiness existing only as long as something is possessed or being experienced, blessed is a better translation of the word *makarios*, because Jesus is not speaking about something "at which men grasp, and miss." ³ This is the kind of happiness Peter described: "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;" (1 Pet. 3:14). Unfortunately this state of being (once possessed by mankind) was lost because of sin.

THE NEED TO BE BLESSED

God's precious book begins by giving an account of the six days in which the world was created (Gen. 1, 2). Toward the close of the creation week, God created "man in his own image,

in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). God created man and enjoyed a beautiful relationship with him. God provided everything required to ensure the happiness of man in Eden. Adam was given food, as well as work to do (Gen. 1:29; 2:15), and he was provided with law and companionship (Gen. 2:16, 17; 2:18-25), "without these, there would be no happiness." The beauty of this relationship comes to a climax when man is confronted with his sin by God. In his account of this terrible event, Moses describes God, "walking in the garden in the cool of the day," (Gen. 3:8) painting a picture of familiarity and friendship. Truly Adam and Eve's relationship with God in His garden "was one unsurpassed in beauty, peace, provision, and blessing."

However, the bond of this relationship was broken when sin entered into the world. God had commanded Adam not to eat of the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17). When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of this tree, they committed sin, and thus transgressing of God's law (1 Jno. 3:4). For this reason sin separated man from God and he was no longer in the blessed state in which he had been created. "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1, 2). For the next four thousand years man continued to be separated from God because of sin. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom. 3:23).

Though separated from man because of sin, God did not turn His back on His creation. When confronting Adam with his sin in the Garden, God gave a glimpse of the coming Savior of mankind, in His promise: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). To

carry out this plan God separated Abraham from his family (Gen. 12:1-3), and from Abraham and his family God created a great nation through which the Savior would come. God gave this nation the Law of Moses to prepare and to guide them until the Savior came and that law was taken away (Gal. 3:19). "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5).

Jesus was sent into the world to die on the cross as the sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Under the Law of Moses, thousands of animals were sacrificed for the sins of the Israelites and gallons upon gallons of blood were shed to forgive the Israelites of their sins. Yet all of the blood that was shed in these sacrifices could not pay the debt of sin in full:

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:1-4).

These sacrifices were offered and sins were forgiven in prospect of the sacrifice of Jesus, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jno. 1:29). When Jesus died on the cross His soul cleansing blood flowed backward through time forgiving all those who were faithful under the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. The soul saving blood of Jesus also flowed into the future making salvation possible to all who obey the Gospel (Heb. 9:15).

The obedience required today includes: faith (Acts 8:37); repentance (Acts 2:38); confession (Acts 8:37); and baptism (Acts 2:38). Then and only then is one added to the church (Acts 2:47), no longer separated from God by sin, but reconciled unto Him by the blood of His Son (Rom. 5:8-10). These individuals, Christians, are the children of God. They have been

brought back into the relationship that was once shared by God and man. Just as He did for Adam, God makes special provision for His children's physical needs (Matt. 6:25-33) and companionship (1 Jno. 1:7-9). He has given them work to do (Matt. 5:16) and law by which to live (Jas. 1:25). Jesus came into the world to make people blessed by shedding His blood on the cross and establishing His church, thereby reconciling man to God by obedience to the Gospel. Men are truly blessed when they willingly "submit to Heaven's will by developing and maintaining" the seven character traits with which Jesus introduced the Sermon on the Mount.

THE WAY TO BE BLESSED

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus took "the fundamental principles underlying the whole of the New Testament" and taught those who were present, as well as those who have read the recorded text of the sermon, the source of true happiness or blessedness. Jesus declared:

Blessed are the poor in spirit:

The word translated as poor in this verse is one of two words that are translated this way.

The first is *penes* which denotes one who has to work for a living, because he has no property. He has a job and labors to provide food for his family. If he does not work one day, then he and his family do not eat that day. It is poverty, but it is tolerable by his own efforts.

The other Greek word is *ptochos*. This word means the complete destitution of an individual. He has no job to provide for himself, much less for his family, if necessary. He must seek help by begging. If others do not show mercy, then he ceases to exist. His condition is not tolerable, and he must depend on the efforts of others. Brother Hugo McCord makes these comments: "The man Jesus described is not in tolerably bad circumstances. He is a beggar...A beggar is desperate...If there is no mercy he knows he must die."

Therefore, Jesus is speaking of one who is spiritually destitute, to the extent that His "position is intolerable," and if "someone does not step up and help, then there is no hope for spiritual survival." However, all men who are in spiritual poverty and dead in sin are not under consideration, because this is the condition of all men without the Gospel (Eph. 2:1, 2). Jesus is

speaking of one who recognizes his spiritual situation and desires a better spiritual existence, realizing that his only hope of survival is the mercy of God. With this in mind, he does not simply hope for mercy, but diligently seeks it out because without it he realizes that he has no hope.

One who is poor in spirit recognizes his need for spiritual guidance. In essence he echoes words of Jeremiah: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Because of the recognition of his need for spiritual guidance, one who is poor in spirit not only seeks to hear and know God's Word, but obeys the words of the master, seeking to please Him. Jesus described one who would hear and obey His words as a "wise man." (Matt. 7:24). He further stated that only those who do the will of His Father "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 7:21). The kingdom belongs to those who are poor in spirit, because they are the one's who will "seek it, and who, when once admitted, abide in it." 12

Unfortunately there are many who are in spiritual poverty, but do not realize the gravity of their situation. Many consider themselves to be good people who fulfill their roles in life to the best of their ability. They care for others and give generously to those who are in need, yet they have not come to realize the great need they have for God and the salvation that only He can offer (Matt. 7:21-23). Many have followed the multitudes down the broad way "that leadeth to destruction" (Matt. 7:13). They have built their houses upon the sands of false doctrine and false security and unless they are warned of "their spiritual condition, they will never possess the kingdom."

Blessed are they that mourn

Sorrow and mourning are common pains felt by all men who travel the road of life; but, all mourning is not under consideration by Jesus at this time: "the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). Those who are blessed and promised comfort because they mourn, are those who recognize their great need for God and in seeking Him (Matt. 5:3), "mourn after God, lamenting the iniquity that separated them from the fountain of blessedness." There is a natural connection between the first beatitude and this one. "In fact, you will see one growing out of the other. When you see one who is truly poor in spirit, you will see one that will soon mourn."

The ability to feel pain is indeed a great blessing. Pain connected with an injury serves as a warning to prevent further injury. A child who places his hand upon the eye of a stove is burned and receives a minor injury, but he removes his hand because of the pain preventing any further injury. Likewise, the feeling of pain when sin is in one's life is a great blessing because that pain (like the pain felt by the hand of the child who burned his hand on the stove) serves as a warning of greater danger. The sorrow caused by the pain of sin leads one to repentance: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). Through repentance the alien sinner is lead to obedience to the Gospel and the erring child of God is directed back home to his Father (Lk. 15:11-32).

There is great comfort for those who mourn their sins as there is now "ample provision made for pardon." Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses (Matt. 5:7, 18) establishing the Kingdom of Heaven in which men enjoy the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:47). He prepared a way of entrance into that Kingdom allowing those who do the will of the Father eternal life (Matt. 7:21-23). Those who recognize and mourn their sins are comforted in that they will seek an end to their pain through repentance and forgiveness of sins through obedience to God's plan (Acts 2:38;

Acts 8:37). Those who mourn are then blessed because they are now "justified and accepted" as children of God (Rom. 8:28-30)¹⁷ and have a crown of life awaiting them (Rev. 2:10).

Blessed are the meek

The idea of meekness has developed the connotation of weakness. Nonetheless, the idea of meekness is not weakness, but power under control. ¹⁸ God created man as a free moral agent, with the ability to choose his direction in life. In the Garden of Eden, Eve chose to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). God did not force Adam and Eve into obedience, nor did He force them into disobedience, they chose their course of action. Those who are meek still maintain the ability to choose their direction in life, but willingly yield their power to do the will of God. Again, note the closeness of these first three beatitudes: those who recognize their spiritual destitution mourn their sins which separate them from God. In order to be comforted, they yield their power to God through obedience to the Gospel and become the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18).

A great picture of meekness is found in Jesus, who lived His life as the pattern of living for all Christians to follow (1 Pet. 2:20-22). Jesus came to earth in submission to the will of God, humbling Himself to serve as the sacrifice man needed to obtain the forgiveness of sins (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus was a servant; therefore, all Christians must be servants. Jesus clearly explained this principle: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (Jno. 12:26). As servants of Christ, Christians have yielded their power to Christ, and are therefore obedient only to Him, no matter the cost (2 Tim. 3:12; Rev. 2:10). 19

One who is meek "is in control of his life through his humble obedience to the Father and the Son."²⁰ One who is meek teaches and preaches the Gospel as God has commanded (Matt.

28:19-20), but he does not force his opinions or even Gospel obedience upon those who hear him speak. Jesus did not do this nor did He command it. When His message was rejected, Jesus found others who would listen. He commanded His disciples: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet" (Matt. 10:14). One who is meek does not participate in things which are sinful. Having submitted to God's will, one who is meek seeks to be virtuous (2 Pet. 1:5) by relying upon the Word of God as Jesus did in the face of temptations (Matt. 4:1-11) and looking for the way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). One who is meek not only avoids the presence of evil but does not over indulge in the "good" things of life. Contrary to current ideas and songs, there is such thing as "too much of a good thing." When one focuses on things of this world, centering his life on them, these things have become idols and his heart is bound to them rather than to God. Jesus explained that these gods can only bring disappointment:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:19-24).

One who is meek recognizes the weaknesses of the things of this earth, whether good or evil, and places his trust in God, seeking to do His will. The meek are blessed in that they "inherit the real blessings of this earth and of the spiritual kingdom." The meek enjoy the temporal blessings of life and realize they are just temporal. Thus, they do not overly exert time and energy in these pursuits, while looking forward to the eternal blessings of the "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet. 3:13).

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness

Here Jesus describes those who not only seek after righteousness, but those whose desire for it is so strong that it must be filled. Hungering and thirsting describe the insatiable, yearning appetite one has for both food and water. One who is starving and dehydrated will seek out any manner of food and liquid to quench his appetite for both. Yet, when he is fills his appetite, he will again be hungry and thirsty. "As the powerful and relentless physical drives of hunger and thirst compel one to seek food and water, the compelling desire to please God by conforming to His Standard of righteousness drives those who know and are properly grateful for God's love." 22

One's appetite for righteousness could not be filled "under a heathen religion, and even under Judaism," "but under the rich provisions of the kingdom of Christ it may be; and the promise is that it shall be." Righteousness is only available through seeking "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" (Matt. 6:33). One who truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness does not follow the example of the Pharisees, who were unsuccessful in achieving righteousness through the Law of Moses, "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law" (Matt. 5:20; Rom. 9:32). One who hungers and thirsts after righteousness lives by the moral laws and religious acts of piety commanded of God's Word, with a desire to be pleasing to God rather than to be seen of man (Matt. 5:21-48). In order to obtain righteousness, he removes any obstacles that get in his way (Matt. 5:29, 30).

With this in mind, one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is aware of his need for righteousness. Unlike the appetite associated with physical hunger and thirst "the beatitude suggests God's willingness to provide satisfaction for the desire; God could not give man the requirement for food and drink without providing the means for satisfying that need; He would not allow man the desire for righteousness without providing the proper means for gratifying that

desire."²⁴ "The promise is that 'they shall be filled'; not partly filled, not modified in form, but completely satisfied or filled. Life is a series of desires and their disappointments or fulfillments;" but those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are blessed because their desires will be fulfilled through obedience and faithfulness to God.²⁵

Blessed are the merciful

Mercy is not simply the act of pitying another, but requires one who is actively compassionate. Jesus illustrated mercy in the parable of the unmerciful servant. In this parable, the king was not just compassionate toward the servant who owed him money, but he was "moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt" (Matt. 18:27). Jesus continued to illustrate the absence of mercy. The forgiven servant then found his fellow servant who owed him a minor debt, and "he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest." Unable to pay the debt, the fellow servant begged for mercy, in the form of time to pay the debt. The servant should have been touched with compassion, for the plight of his fellow servant, and been merciful to the one who owed him because of the mercy that had been shown to him. Instead he reacted with cruelty casting his fellow servant into prison until the debt was paid (Matt. 18:28-30).

The merciful acknowledge the mercy God has shown in their own lives by forgiving them of their sins and providing for their spiritual needs, by demonstrating mercy in their own judgments with the realization that they will be judged as they have judged (Matt. 7:1-6). In demonstrating mercy to others, the merciful not only show mercy to those who are guilty of wrong, but also to those who are in need. ²⁶ Jesus commanded: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the

prophets" (Matt. 7:12). Those who are merciful naturally seek to do good works that benefit those around them which brings glory to God (Matt. 5:16).

The merciful are blessed in that they shall obtain mercy. This showing of mercy comes from God in the form of the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 6:14) and also in daily provisions (Matt. 6:25-34). Mercy is also exhibited by one's fellow man (Prov. 18:24; 11:25). The merciful are blessed by the "joy and blessings in this life," and God has promised them His mercy at judgment (Matt. 7:1, 2).²⁷

Blessed are the pure in heart

The pure in heart are contrasted with the "external or bodily purification, about which the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, were very scrupulous." One's heart is purified by obeying the truth, God's Word, which commands baptism (1 Pet. 1:22). In baptism, one meets the Lord in His death, contacting the blood He shed, and one's sins are washed away (Rom. 6:3, 4; Acts 22:16). The heart must be purified for one to serve God because it is the heart that determines the course in life a man will take. Paul wrote to the Romans: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17, 18).

A pure heart characterizes one who has given himself wholly to God and is striving to serve with every fiber of his being. One who is pure in heart, is hungry and thirsty for righteousness (Matt. 5:6), seeking those things which are pleasing to God. He is on guard against unrighteous and impure thoughts because he realizes that thoughts are the seeds of actions (Matt. 15:18-20). He also realizes unrighteous thoughts will produce sin in his life which will take him away from His God. For this reason, he delights in the law of the Lord, and having hid It in his heart this man meditates upon It day and night, seeking to do good works that will bring glory to

God (Matt. 5:16). The one who is pure in heart is blessed because (through the eye of faith) he is able to see God in this life and will be blessed to see Him face to face in the life to come (1 Jno. 3:1, 2).

Blessed are the peacemakers

There is a recognized need for peacemakers in the world today. In the United States, police forces continue to grow because of a lack of peace. The world is full of conflict and the threat of terrorism is very real. For this cause, much effort is put into bringing nations together in peace. Those who excel in the effort to create and sustain peace are sometimes awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.²⁹ While the need for world and domestic peace is real and can be achieved through obedience to God's Word, the peace Jesus describes in this beatitude is much deeper than peace that can exist between two nations or individuals, although this can and should be included. Jesus is describing the peace that once existed between God and man which is now possible through the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:8-10).

Peacemakers have obtained and sustain peace with God by faithfully living out the preceding beatitudes in their lives. While they enjoy and work to preserve their peace with God, peacemakers work zealously to enable others to enjoy the great blessing of peace with God (1 Tim. 4:16). An effect of their work is that the peacemaker becomes the child of God, not only through obedience to the Gospel, but by their resemblance to their Father "whose supreme purpose it is to secure 'peace on earth and good-will among men" (Lk. 2:14). Paul announced, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace," (Rom. 10:15).

The peace of the Gospel, comes "through justification: *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Rom. 5:1).³⁰ The peacemaker is blessed by becoming a child of God:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 Jno. 3:1, 2).

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake

The final beatitudes "pronounce spiritual prosperity for those who have adopted and practice the preceding seven character traits." They are blessed with inward joy that cannot be taken away because it is based upon one's trust in God and His promises to provide spiritually and physically for those who are faithful to Him. Though this is the case, Satan still attempts to remove the joy of the people of God by persecution.

Persecution came upon those who were members of the first century church: "And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem;" (Acts 8:1). About thirty years after the church was established the persecution had greatly increased. Peter wrote, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased form sin;" (1 Pet. 4:1). Paul warned of the coming persecution, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim.3:12).

Persecutions are not the result of wrong doing. Peter wrote, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4:15, 16). Criminals suffer punishment not persecution, and a Christian who is guilty of a crime suffers punishment just like any other criminal. This is the role of governments, given by God (Rom. 13:1-4).³² Nevertheless, Christians do suffer persecutions because their righteous acts are offensive to those who persecute them.³³ Those who have meekly devoted themselves to

God "are different from the worldly-minded person. The world sees the distinction between itself and the faithful." A sinner knows a saint is "holier than he" is; but instead of changing, he accuses. Heter wrote, "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:" (1 Pet. 4:4). Peter further explained that when one suffers wrong for doing good, he should walk in the steps of Christ who: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:" (1 Pet. 2:22, 23). This is not to say one should allow others to "walk all over him" without seeking any defense of his rights, but that one should not seek vengeance in the face of persecution. Though difficult, one who has adopted the first seven beatitudes to his life will be able to endure the persecutions he faces by trusting in God and His promises.

Although persecutions are not pleasant, there are some benefits associated with being persecuted. Satan uses persecutions in his attempts to disrupt one's loyalty to God. These attempts serve tests of one's loyalty to God. 35 Just as the strength of a house is unknown before it faces a storm, the strength of one's faith is unknown until faced with the persecutions and temptations of Satan. James wrote, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jas. 1:2-4). When one endures the persecutions for righteousness' sake, he passes the test and great spiritual strength is his reward. Paul's faith was strengthened by the trials he endured, and near the close of his life on earth he wrote: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous

judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:6-8).³⁷

God's reward for those who have endured trials is far beyond one's concept of God's love. The kingdom of heaven rightly belongs to those who have endured the trials of persecution, for they are the ones who have been "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," and their labor has not been in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). They were able to see that "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" (2 Cor. 4:17), and for this they are able to rejoice in the reward that awaits them in Heaven, having been numbered with numbered with Old Testament prophets, like Elijah, who were persecuted because they righteously stood for God.³⁸

CONCLUSION

God's will for man is that he be truly happy or blessed. He prepared a beautiful garden for man's home, but man was not satisfied with God's happiness. In seizing Satan's "opportunity" of happiness and enlightenment, man received his first taste of the joy of the world, which lasts but for a moment (1 Jno. 2:15-16). Yet God's love for man did not wane. He prepared a way by which man could again enjoy true happiness (Rom. 8:28-30). God sent His Son into the world to revealing His plan of righteousness to man (Jno. 1:14), and when man recognizes his need for God and submits to His will, the relationship once enjoyed by God and man is re-established. Though man may be persecuted for the righteous acts he commits in daily living, he can endure the persecutions he faces because of his trust in God and His promises. Indeed "Blessed!" is the one who lives by the beatitudes given by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.

END NOTES

- ¹ All Bible references are from the King James Version.
- ² Bob Berard, "THE GREAT SERMON ON THE MOUNT PART 1," in *STUDIES IN MATTHEW*, ed Dub McClish (Denton, TX.: VALID PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1995), p. 76.
- ³ Keith Mosher, "BEATITUDES," in *Beatitudes*, ed Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL.: Bellview Church of Christ, 2002), p. 2
- ⁴ Bob Winton, *Outlined Commentary on GENESIS* (Gallipolis, OH: 199) p. 23.
- ⁵ Eddie Whitten, "BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS: MATTHEW 5:9," in *Beatitudes*, ed Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL.: Bellview Church of Christ, 2002), p. 219.
- ⁶ Ibid. p. 220.
- ⁷ Mosher, "BEATITUDES," p. 2.
- ⁸ Berard, "THE GREAT SERMON ON THE MOUNT PART 1," p. 76.
- ⁹ Don Walker, "BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT MATTHEW 5:3," in *Beatitudes*, ed Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL.: Bellview Church of Christ, 2002), p. 151.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. p. 152.
- ¹¹J.W. McGarvey, *A COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW AND MARK* (Delight, AR.: Gospel Light Publishing Company, 1875) p.49.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³Don Walker, "BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT MATTHEW 5:3). p. 152.
- ¹⁴ Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*, abridged by Ralph Earle (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House 1967) Matt. 5:4
- ¹⁵ Jason Roberts, "BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN MATTHEW 5:4," in *Beatitudes*, ed Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL.: Bellview Church of Christ, 2002), p. 160.
- ¹⁶McGarvey, *A COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW AND MARK*, p. 49.
- ¹⁷Winton, *Outlined Commentary on Matthew*, p. 28.
- 18 Ibid
- ¹⁹Lee Davis, "BLESSED ARE THE MEEK 5:5," in *Beatitudes*, ed Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL.: Bellview Church of Christ, 2002), p. 169.
- 20 Ibid
- ²¹H. Leo Boles, "Matthew," in *A Commentary ON The Gospel According to Matthew*, vol. 1, (Nashville, TN.: GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY, 1989) p. 122.
- ²²Berard, p. 77.
- ²³McGarvey, p. 49.
- ²⁴Bob Winton, *Outlined Commentary on MATTHEW* (Gallipolis, OH: 199) p.29.
- ²⁵H. Leo Boles, "Matthew," p. 123.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷Danny L. Box, "BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL 5:7," in *Beatitudes*, ed Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL.: Bellview Church of Christ, 2002), p. 202.
- ²⁸H. Leo Boles, p. 124
- ²⁹Eddie Whitten, "BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS 5:9," in *Beatitudes*, ed Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL.: Bellview Church of Christ, 2002), p. 219.
- 30 Winton, "MATTHEW," p. 33.
- ³¹Berard, p. 78.
- ³²Joel Wheeler, "BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED for RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE MATTHEW 5:10-12," in *Beatitudes*, ed Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL.: Bellview Church of Christ, 2002), p. 230.
- ³³McGarvey, p. 50.
- ³⁴Winton, "MATTHEW,"p. 34.
- ³⁵Berard, p. 78.

END NOTES

³⁶Ibid

 $^{^{\}rm 37} Joel$ Wheeler, "BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED for RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE, p. 232.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 235.

THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS MATTHEW 5:13-16

By Ryan Tuten

INTRODUCTION

¹³Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. ¹⁴Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven¹.

What a wonderful privilege it is to be a part of this great lectureship again. The congregation at Richmond Hill is to be commended for the work put into this lectureship program. Their love for the Lord and His Word is more evident with each passing year.

My objective in writing this chapter is to discuss the influence the Christian must have on society. Two metaphors make it clear that the Christian has a purpose or function in the world. "Ye are the salt of the earth ..." (Mat. 5:13). "Ye are the light of the world ..." (Mat. 5:14). When it comes to the idea of influence and attitude the Christian should have toward the world, three thoughts come to mind. First, there is conformity, but this is forbidden throughout the Scriptures. "Be not conformed to this world ..." (Romans 12:2). Second, there is the idea of isolation, but the statement, "Ye are the light of the world" does not allow the Christian to live in isolation. The only other alternative is to change the world.

This should be our goal in life. Notice the verses under consideration state that we are the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" and not the "salt and light of the church". We need to be out in the world allowing our saving influence to be used. Someone once said, What

good is the salt if all it does is stay in the shaker? One of the greatest problems in the church today is that Christians are waiting for the world to walk in the front doors of the church and learn the truth. We all must remember that the mission field begins as we exit the church building. Jesus teaches that we are to be out in the world allowing our influence and Christian character to have an influence on those around us. A Christian must live in the world, though not of it. A child of God is definitely not of the world. He does not love the world (John 17:16). He is not conformed to the world (Romans 12:1-2). He has separated himself from the world, refusing to touch the unclean thing (2 Corinthians 6:17). He has crucified the world (Galatians 6:17). Yet he must live in the world. Jesus said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 15:16-17).

This lesson will focus on the Christian and his purpose or mission from God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus provides a mission statement for those who would be His disciples. Let us examine how a Christian is called to *React*, *Radiate*, and *Reflect* God in this world.

REACT

In his book *Led by the Carpenter*, D James Kennedy writes,

A man walked into a little mom-and-pop grocery store and asked, Do you sell salt? Ha! said Pop the proprietor. Do we sell salt! Just look! And Pop showed the customer one entire wall of shelves stocked with nothing but salt Morton salt, iodized salt, kosher salt, sea salt, rock salt, garlic salt, seasoning salt, Epsom salts every kind of salt imaginable. Wow! said the customer. You think thats something? said Pop with a wave of his hand. Thats nothing! Come look. And Pop led the customer to a back room filled with shelves and bins and cartons and barrels and boxes of salt. Do we sell salt! he said. Unbelievable! said the customer. You think thats something? said Pop. Come! I'll show you salt! And Pop led the customer down some steps into a huge basement, five times as large as the previous room, filled wall, floor, to ceiling, with every imaginable form and

size and shape of salt even huge ten-pound salt licks for cow pasture. Incredible! said the customer. You really do sell salt! No!said Pop. Thats just the problem! We never sell salt! But that salt salesman Hoo-boy! Does he sell salt!²

Salt that stays on the shelf does not do any good at all. The same with a child of God, he must get out in the world and become an influence to others. We have all had the experience of sipping a soft drink that has gone flat. It is not a pleasant experience! Why? Because the active ingredient, the carbonation that tickles the tongue and pleases the palate, is no longer present.

This is similar to what Jesus means when He calls His disciples the salt of the earth. Salt reacts with the food on which it is placed, preserving and enhancing the flavor. Someone once said, Salt is that which makes food taste yummy! As we take the gospel into the world, the gospel acts like salt and has the capability of giving the world flavor and preserving its good. It is through these efforts that God changes the world. Salt that does not react to its environment is useless. Jesus repeats this principle throughout His ministry. In His parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), two of the three servants in the parable invest the money given to them by the master and are rewarded. The third servant, in contrast, buries the money given to him and is condemned. Immediately following that parable (vv. 31-46), Jesus said that He would separate His true followers (sheep) from the false followers (goats). The basis for that separation would be how those people interacted with "the least of all these" by caring for their needs (vs. 40). It is clear that those that follow Christ are called to interact with the world, bringing change and growth. Those who choose not to influence the world by using their influence, fail in the primary mission of changing the world.

When Jesus preached this sermon and made the statement under consideration, He provided us with an expression which has become the greatest compliment that can be paid to

anyone. When we wish to stress someones solid worth and usefulness, we say: "People like that are the salt of the earth."

In the ancient world, salt was highly valued. The Greeks called salt divine. The Romans said "There is nothing more useful than sun and salt." In the time of Jesus, salt was connected in peoples minds with three special qualities: purity, as a prescriptive, and for flavor.

Salt was connected with purity

No doubt its glistening whiteness made the connection easy. The Romans said that salt was the purest of all things, because it came from the purest of all things, the sun and the sea.³ Salt was indeed the most primitive of all offerings to the gods, and to the end of the day the Jewish sacrifices were offered with salt⁴. So, if the Christians are to be the salt of the earth, they must be examples of purity. The Christian must be the person who holds up the standard of absolute purity in speech, in conduct and even in thought. Paul as he wrote to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12), made five powerful suggestions concerning how one might be the salt of the earth.

- 1. "In word" (Colossians 4:6; Psalm 19:14; Matthew 12:34-37, Galatians 4:19)
- 2. "In manner of life" (Philippians 1:27; 2 Corinthians 5:15, 17)
- 3. "In love" (John 13:35; 1:23; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Corinthians 16:14)
- 4. "In faith" (1 Corinthians 16:13, 15:58; Ephesians 4:14, 15; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- 5. "In purity" (Matthew 5:8; 1 Corinthians 13:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)

Salt was used as a preservative

It was used to keep things from going bad, and to hold putrefaction at bay⁵. So, salt preserves from corruption. If Christians are to be the salt of the earth, they must have a certain antiseptic influence on life. Christians must be the cleansing antiseptic in any society in which they happen to be; they must be the ones who by their presence defeat corruption and make it easier for others to be good.

Salt lends flavor

Food without salt is a sadly insipid and even a sickening thing. Christianity is to life what salt is to food. Christianity lends flavor to life. The tragedy is that, so often, people have connected Christianity with precisely the opposite. They have connected Christianity with that which takes the flavor out of life. We need to discover the lost radiance of the Christian faith. In a worried world, Christians should be the only people who remain serene. In a depressed world, Christians should be the only people who remain full of the joy of life. There should be a sheer sparkle about Christians, but too often they dress like mourners at a funeral, and talk like specters at a feast. Wherever they are, if they are to be the salt of the earth, Christians must be diffusers of joy⁶.

Jesus went on to say that, if the salt had lost its flavor, it was fit only to be thrown out and trodden on. This is difficult, because salt does not lose its flavor and its saltiness. E. F. Bishop in his book, *Jesus of Palestine*, cites a very likely explanation given by F. E. Newton. In Palestine, the ordinary oven is out of doors and is built of stone on a base of tiles. In such ovens, "in order to retain the heat, a thick bed of salt is laid under the tiled floor. After a certain length of time the salt perishes. The tiles are taken up, the salt removed and thrown on the road outside the door of the oven? It has lost its power to heat the tiles and it is thrown out." That may well be the picture here.

But the essential point remains whatever the picture, and it is a point which the New Testament makes again and again B uselessness invites disaster. If Christians are not fulfilling their purpose as Christians, then they are on the way to disaster. We are meant to be the salt of the earth, and if we do not bring to life the purity, the antiseptic power, the radiance that we ought, then we invite disaster. It is sad that today the Lords church has many that are on a salt-

free diet. One must remember that Jesus did not say, scatter salt, but you are the salt of the earth.

We must be in contact with those who need the salt.

There are many ways Christians can loose their saltiness. One of those ways is being spotted by the world, contaminated (James 1:25; Jude 22-23). Another way is becoming lukewarm, watered-down. This Christian may not even be involving himself with sinful things, yet, he may not be zealous for the Lord either. Luke warmness can rob one of his saltiness.

It has often been the case that throughout history, well-meaning Christians have experimented with separating themselves into isolated communities, hoping that the isolation will keep them undefiled from the sin that surrounds them. Ironically, in seeking isolation they not only fail to preserve others, but also fail to preserve themselves. The mission of the Christian is to "react" with culture, allowing God to save.

RADIATE

Imagine being lost in the woods on a moonless, starless night. You and your friends are lost in the black of night. You begin to look around; everyone looks the same in the darkness. What would happen if you were to turn on the smallest of flashlights? The beam of light would immediately cut through the darkness and you would become visible. Not only that, but others that were in the darkness would gather around you, and they too would become recognizable as they stepped into the glow of the light.

We teach our children the familiar song, "This little light of mine," yet as adults we seem to forget the words or at least forget to teach the song in action. The song states, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine, let it shine all the time, let it shine. Hide it under a bushel . . . NO . . . I'm going to let it shine. Don't let Satan puff it out . . . I'm going to let it shine. Shine it until Jesus comes . . . I'm going to let it shine."

It is fitting that Jesus calls us the light of the world. It is Jesus who is the Light (John 8:12). When we radiate His light, we become visible and draw others to that light.

Using an alternative imagine, Jesus further describes His followers as a "city set upon a hill," a landmark that guides the lost back to civilization. The points made by using these images are identical. Christians are not called to hide in the darkness, virtually identical to everyone else in the world. We must be able to illuminate the love of God. Our influence lives are walking sermons.

It was said that even before his outstanding years as Harding's quarterback, Tom Ed Gooden was noted by the *Arkansas Gazette* as being the best high school quarterback in his district. The paper ran a picture of Tom Ed with the caption, "Not on Wednesday." It seemed that another school had tried to schedule a game with his team, Carlisle, AR, on Wednesday evening. But his coach replied that they could not do it. The coach said, "My quarterback is a church member and he goes to church on Wednesday nights. He won't miss for any reason, and I can't win without him."

Whether we like it or not, all of us are walking sermons. The good deeds and faithfulness to the Lord must be obeyed by all. It may well be said that this is the greatest compliment that was ever paid to the individual Christian, for in it Jesus commands the Christian to be what He Himself claimed to be. Jesus said: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). When Jesus commanded His followers to be the lights of the world, He demanded nothing less than that they should be like Him.

When Jesus spoke these words, He was using an expression which was quite familiar to the Jews who heard it for the first time. They themselves spoke of Jerusalem as "a light to the Gentiles." But the way in which the Jews used this expression will give us a key to the way in which Jesus also used it.

It is not the demand of Jesus that we should, as it were, produce our own light. We must

shine with the reflection of His light. The radiance which shines from the Christian comes from the presence of Christ within the Christian=s heart. Paul stated, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: (Emp. RT) and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20).

When Jesus said that Christians must be the light of the world, what did he mean?

(1) A light is first and foremost something which is meant to be **seen**. The houses in Palestine were very dark, with only one little circular window perhaps not more than eighteen inches across. The lamp was like a sauce-boat filled with oil with the wick floating in it. It was not so easy to rekindle a lamp in the days before matches existed. Normally the lamp stood on the lamp stand, which would be no more than a roughly shaped branch of wood. When people went out, for safety's sake, they took the lamp from its stand and put it under an earthen bushel measure, so that it might burn without risk until they came back. The primary duty of the light of the lamp was to be seen.¹⁰

So, Christianity is something which is meant to be seen. As someone has well said, "There can be no such thing as secret discipleship, for either the secrecy destroys the discipleship, or the discipleship destroys the secrecy." Our Christianity should be perfectly visible to everyone.

Further, this Christianity should be visible not only within the church; any Christian whose effects stop at the door of the church building is not much use to anyone.

As Christians, we should be just as much a Christian in the factory, the workshop, the shipyard, the mine, the schoolroom, the surgery, the kitchen, the golf course and the playing field as we are as we gather to worship God. Again, remember Jesus did not say: "You are the light of

the church"; he said: "You are the light of the world" and our Christian light in the world should be evident to all.

(2) A light is a **guide**. We know how difficult even the city streets are when there are no lights. A light is something to make clear the way.

So, Christians must make the way clear to others. That is to say, Christians must of necessity be examples. One of the things that the world needs more than anything else is people who are prepared to be channels for goodness. There are many people in this world, who do not have the moral strength and courage to take a stand by alone, but if someone gives them a lead, they will follow; if they have someone strong enough to lean on, they will do the right thing. It is the Christian's duty to take the stand which the weaker brother or sister will support; to give the lead which those with less courage will follow. The world needs its guiding lights; there are people waiting and longing for a leader to take the stand and to do the thing, which they do not dare by themselves.

(3) A light can often be a **warning light**. A light is often the warning, which tells us to halt when there is danger ahead.

It is sometimes the duty of Christians to bring others the necessary warning. That is often difficult, and it is often hard to do it in a way that will not do more harm than good. One of the most aching tragedies in life is for someone, especially a young person, is to say: "I would never have been in the situation in which I now find myself, if you had only spoken in time."

The light which can be seen, then light which warns, the light which guides B these are the lights which Christians must be. Are we allowing our light to shine in the darkness of this world? Or have we hid our light and allowed Satan to puff it out?

REFLECT

It is only natural in most organizations for people to want to rise to the top. As we display our skills, we desire to draw attention to ourselves. The Christian has a different mission. The light we display should draw attention to the glory of God and not to the individual.

Once there arose an argument between the disciples over who was the greatest of the twelve. Jesus quickly corrects them, warning that the one that wants to be the greatest must be the servant of all.

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:25-28)

Even though the apostle Paul was known throughout the world, he humbly considered himself to be the "least of all saints" (Ephesians 3:8) and also the "least of the apostles" (1Corinthians 15:9).

There are two important things to consider here:

(1) People are to see our good deeds. In the Greek language, there are two words for good. There is the word *agathos*, which simply defines a thing as good in quality; and there is *kalos*, which means that a thing is not only good but that it is also captivating and beautiful and attractive¹¹. The word which is used here is *kalos*.

The good deeds of the Christian must not only be good; they must also be attractive.

There must be a certain charm in Christian goodness. There is a charm in true Christian goodness, which makes it a lovely thing.

(2) It is further to be noted that our good deeds ought to draw attention not to ourselves but to God. How sad it is when man does goodness and righteous acts, but for the wrong reasons. Jesus Himself condemned the religious Pharisee's over and over for this very thing. It was always about "me" and "what I have done." Jesus said they were "hypocrites." May it be our goal as we strive to please God and allow our light so shine in this world that we bring glory to God and not to ourselves.

CONCLUSION

Jesus calls us to be what we are, the salt of the earth and the light of the world. If we are being the salt of the earth and light of the world, allowing our influence to encourage people to know Christ and become Christians, people will notice. But even as we do that, we should remain humble and realize that anything we have comes from Christ.

What great comfort it is to know that Christians are promised the full backing of God as we engage the world. Let us never forget, Jesus said, "...and lo I will be with thee alway..." (Mt. 28:20). It is time we get busy and get the salt out of the shaker and turn on the light. Souls are depending on us to do what God said do. What if that soul was you?

END NOTES

- ¹ All scripture references are from the **King James Version** unless otherwise noted.
- ² Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes*", ed. Robert J. Morgan (Thomas Nelson, Inc.), 286.
- ³ Ibid
- ⁴ Ibid
- ⁵ Ibid
- ⁶ Ibid, 138
- ⁷ James Williams, *Sermon on the Mount*, ed James Williams, (National Press 1998), Vol. II, 659.
- ⁸ Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes*", ed. Robert J. Morgan (Thomas Nelson, Inc.), 799.
- ⁹ William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible*, (The Gospel of Matthew), ed. John Knox Press, Vol. I, 140
- 10 Ibid, 141
- ¹¹ Ibid, 141

NOT TO DESTROY, BUT TO FULFILL

Matthew 5:17-20

By Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven¹.

We have the blessing today of looking into the Word of God and reading the great sermons that highlighted the history of God's work with man. Certainly many great sermons were taught in the former ages and in the early beginnings of the Christian age of which only the written record survives. There is a touch of sadness as we realize that these records only represent a small part of what was actually said on those historical occasions. Consider Stephen's appeal to the Sanhedrin Council (Acts 7), or Paul's address to the Athenian philosophers (Acts 17), or Peter's first Gospel sermon on the notable Pentecost birthday of the church (Acts 2). We understand that the holy record does not give us everything that was spoken. The Bible only gives the highlights and summaries of these great sermons. Nevertheless, we are confident that what precious portions are preserved were divinely selected through infinite wisdom and make up the precise parts that generations of believers would need for their life and godliness (2Peter 1:3).

This is equally true of the great Sermon on the Mount spoken by our Lord. Though this is the most extensively recorded biblical sermon, covering three entire chapters, it still only represents the highlights of all that Jesus taught in His 3-6 years ministry on this earth. The Sermon on the Mount stands out as the greatest set of teachings for moral conduct ever recorded. How wonderful it would have been to sit at the Master's feet and hear him declare the great principles of His kingdom.

There are several aspects of this sermon that are interesting to consider even before concerning with its content. For example, we do not even know exactly when in His public ministry he preached this sermon. R. C. Foster in his book, *Studies in the Life of Christ*, states:

Efforts to arrange the records of this section of Jesus' ministry in chronological order are found to be conjectural. None of the writers offers a strict chronological narrative. Matthew places the Sermon on the Mount earlier in his Gospel but he evidently uses a topical arrangement, grouping together examples of the teaching and of the healing ministry of Jesus. He places the Sermon on the Mount to the forefront as the keynote sermon of His early ministry and a superb example of His preaching. Mark does not record this sermon and hence offers no assistance in determining the time of its delivery. Luke furnishes the data upon which is based the usual placing of the sermon at this juncture in the ministry of Jesus. All three Synoptics agree in affirming a retirement of Jesus after this Sabbath controversy. All declare that tremendous crowds followed Him and that He continued His ministry in the open country. Mark and Luke place the selection of the twelve apostles at this time and Luke places at the same time the so-called "Sermon on the Plain" which is so similar to the Sermon on the Mount that they are usually identified. Luke really locates the sermon on a mountain, for he describes how Jesus spent a night in prayer on an isolated mountain peak and then came down "to a level place" (presumably some natural amphitheater on the plateau) and delivered this message.²

This writer tends to believe that Matthew and Luke agree in assigning the delivery of the sermon to the first half of Christ's Galilean ministry.

Another note of interest is that we do not know, for sure, exactly where this sermon was preached. Consider the topography needed for this sermon. How did the thousands of people

attending hear Jesus? There must have been a way to accommodate the sound of the speaker. It is not likely that Jesus' voice alone could be so sonorous as to be heard over the multitudes and especially outdoors. And remember too that He was sitting down (Matthew 5:1). Appealing to the idea that miraculous power was used to carry His voice is not reasonable or necessary. Again Foster comments:

Open-air amphitheaters often supply marvelous acoustics. The narrow valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim where Joshua read the law to the whole nation is a good illustration. Jesus seems to have selected carefully the amphitheater in which the Sermon on the Mount was delivered.³

Noticing then the topography of the land, surely gives some insight as to where the sermon could have been preached. The traditional site is seven miles southwest of Capernaum; the place is known as The Horns of Hattin.⁴

Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. states that certain preliminaries had to be accomplished to prepare the people for the precepts taught in this sermon. 1) The announcement of the harbinger of Christ in John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." 2) The announcement of both John and Jesus in Matthew 3:1-2 and Mark 1:14-15 concerning the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. 3) The announcement of a new dispensation and inauguration of a new covenant as recorded in Luke 16:16: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." 4) The pronouncement of the permanent precepts of the gospel. ⁵ With this in mind, the Sermon on the Mount was prospective of the New Testament that was soon coming.

There are four predominant headings this paper will discuss to cover this passage. The **regard** for the Law as taught by Christ, the **reliability** of the Word of God, the **relaxing** of the Law and the **righteousness** limited in the Law.

REGARD FOR THE LAW

Jesus immediately disarmed his biased Jewish audience concerning His relationship to the Law of Moses, especially because of the things he was about to say next in the sermon. He would show a moral conduct in the next two chapters that would explain what the Law was really about. He would go deeper and fuller than the Law showing the true intent and heart of God's purpose in the Law.

The law and the prophets

The phrase, "the Law and the Prophets" or some variation of it is used thirteen times in the New Testament. Jesus even uses the phrase again later in this same sermon, "...For this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). For the sake of His Jewish audience He is detailing the divisions of the Old Testament books. In Luke 24:44 He mentions another division, "the Psalms."

All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the <u>law</u> of Moses, and in the <u>prophets</u>, and in the <u>psalms</u>, concerning me (Emphasis RV).

Coffman gives a description of these three divisions.

The threefold division of the Old Testament is also indicated here by Jesus, these being the **Torah**, the **Nebhi'im**, and the **Kethubhim**, corresponding to the three divisions Jesus here mentioned, the same being the ones recognized by the Jews. This gives a clue to the inspired reckoning of the divisions of the Bible.... **The divisions of the Old Testament** are: the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, as here; and in **the New Testament**, four divisions, the Gospels (which are central to the whole Bible), the Acts, the Epistles and the Revelation, **thus making seven divisions in the entire Bible** ⁶ (Emphasis RV).

Among the Jews, the breakdown of the Old Testament books was as follows:

The Law of Moses — The five books of Moses, viz. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. This is the first division of the Old Testament.

The Prophets — This was the second and largest part of the Old Testament, viz. Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings (called the former prophets); and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve smaller books from Daniel to Malachi (called the latter prophets).

The Psalms — this word probably had reference to the Hagiographa, or holy writings. These consisted of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the two books of Chronicles. ⁷

This division was in use by the Jews long before the time of Christ, and this is most certainly what Jesus is referring to here.

It is possible that Jesus was trying to stem a controversy among the Jewish sects of His day about their idea of the canon of scripture. Some historians think that the Sadducees believed "the Prophets" were only commentary to "the Law" and that the books of the prophets were not as authoritative as the five books of Law. They put them on the same par as the oral traditions of the fathers. Victor Matthews in his book, *Manners and Customs in the Bible*, says:

Some pious Jews advocated the free use of the interpretive material as the equal of the canonical (Pharisees). Another (Sadducees) argued for the strict and exclusive use of the biblical text to answer religious questions.⁸

Also, when speaking of the Sadducees, Howard Kee states:

In comparison with the Pharisees and the Essenes, their religious outlook was probably conservative. **Their exclusive guide in religious matters was the Law of Moses**, the first five books of the Old Testament. ⁹ (Emphasis RV)

Another author also states, "Many Jews esteemed the prophets less than the law." However, there has been other consensus in recent times about the doctrines of the Sadducees.

The leading difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees was that the latter maintained in opposition to the Pharisees, **that the written law alone was obligatory** on the nation, as of divine authority. They denied that the oral law upon which the Pharisees laid such stress was a revelation from God, though they agreed with them that many of its provisions were advisable.¹¹

Some of the early Christian writers attribute to the Sadducees the rejection of all the sacred scriptures except the Pentateuch; a statement, however, that is now generally admitted to have been found on a misconception of the truth, and it seems to have arisen from the confusion of the Sadducees with the Samaritans.¹²

Whatever the thinking of the sects of the day, it is obvious Jesus entertained no such doubts. He combines the Law and the Prophets with equal authority. His attitude toward the scriptures is clearly seen in His teaching (cp. John 10:35; Matthew 26:53-54; John 5:39, etc.).

Not to destroy

Jesus' high regard for the written Word of God is seen in His statement, "I came not to destroy the law."

It is disappointing that so many modern versions of the Bible have gained such favor and popularity among our brethren. The rendering in Matthew 5:17 by so many of these new Bibles has Jesus and Paul now contradicting each other. The ESV, NET, NASB, NIV, NLT, RSV and other versions have Jesus specifically saying that He did not come to "abolish" the law. They changed the word "destroy" in the KJV to the word "abolish." The Greek word is καταλόω. These two English words are not identical in meaning. "Destroy" does not mean, "abolish." The law was not destroyed, but it was abolished. In consequence these versions now have Paul saying in Ephesians 2:15 that Christ did "abolish" (καταργέω) the law of commandments, thus flatly contradicting Jesus in Matthew 5:17. They ignore the fact that the Greek words are different in Matthew 5 and Ephesians 2. Reliable Bibles like the KJV, NKJV and ASV have rendered these verses with different non-contradicting English words. Note, if Christ had come to destroy the law, then He could not have fulfilled it. But by fulfilling it He did abolish it. But modern versions in their attempt to simplify have actually convoluted God's words into a messy quagmire.

Jesus assured His Jewish audience that He did not come to bring insurrection or to uproot their tender sentiment in the law. He came to complete the law. So, Jesus did have a very high regard for the value of the Old Testament. Christians today should remember this when they neglect the study of the Old Testament. We are often too casual with the Old Testament sweeping away its value with statements like, "That's just the Old Testament we don't have to follow it anymore." All of God's word should be priceless to us. Contextually it was the Old

Testament that Paul referred to when he said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16). And it was about the Old Testament that he said, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Jesus did not throw away the Old Testament but treated it like it was the Word of God. He talked of it, He walked in it and He carefully lived so as to fulfill it. Notice an interesting point in John 19:30. The writer, John, indicates that Jesus spoke the words, "I thirst" in order to fulfill scripture. There was an Old Testament passage (Psalm 69:21) that had yet to be fulfilled and so Jesus while on the cross speaks these words to fulfill that passage. He left no prophecy untouched. Just how much did Jesus respect the Old Testament Law? Consider this list of His own statements.

JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE OLD TESTAMENT	
Its Divine Inspiration	Its Indestructibility
(Matthew 22:43)	(Matthew 5:17-18)
Its Infallibility	Its Final Authority
(John 10:35)	(Matthew 4:4,7,10)
Its Historicity	Its Faith and Life Sufficiency
(Matthew 12:40; 24:37)	(Luke 16:31)
Its Factual Inerrancy	Its Christ-Centered Unity
(John 17:17) (Matthew 22:29)	(Luke 24:27) (John 5:39)
Its Spiritual Clarity	
(Luke 24:25)	

Yes Jesus was very careful about the Old Testament and so we should be too. It is true that the law has been abolished, but it is still of immense and necessary value to us today.

RELIABILITY OF THE LAW

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:18)

Jesus assured His listeners that the Old Testament law would not be altered until its fulfillment. Even in the minutest detail nothing would change. A "jot" corresponded to the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet (•). A "tittle" was a pen stroke used to qualify one Hebrew letter from another. J.W. McGarvey explained:

The tittle was a little stroke of the pen, by which alone some of the Hebrew letters were distinguished from others like them. To put it in English, we distinguish the letter c from the letter e by the tittle inside of the latter.¹³

As a language the Hebrew alphabet only used consonants. The earliest Hebrew scrolls did not have vowels or vowel markings. In English the letters *sl* might be read *sell*, *sale*, *sill*, *sly*, *sole* or *soul*. When a language only uses consonants it is easy to see the need for developing vowel markings. But, Jesus could not have been referring to the vowel points of the Masoretic Text because these vowel points were not used in Hebrew writing until about the 10th century A. D.

Jesus' statement about these small markings emphasizes the precision by which God has given His Word. And although He was speaking of the Old, the New Testament is just an extension of the Old Testament. The reliability and accuracy of the Bible is an amazing demonstration of divine providence. "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). No book of antiquity has as much corroborating evidence as the Bible.

Some have supposed that the phrase, "till heaven and earth pass" means that the Old Law would be binding till the end of time. To observe that phrase and yet ignore the phrase, "till all be fulfilled" is to miss what Christ is saying about the Old Testament. Those who advocate the

law is still binding ignore this latter phrase and also what the Bible says in Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; John 1:17 and Acts 13:38-39. The Gospel of Luke helps explain Matthew's statement: And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail (Luke 16:17). It would have been easier for the cosmos to come to an end than for the Old Testament to have been changed. It had to be completed first. Paul said, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4). "End" in this case means purpose. Christ is the purpose behind the law.

In contrast to the old law, notice that later Jesus would say, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Concerning His own covenant Jesus said it would stand until the end of the world. The Old Testament would not pass until its completion. But the New Testament (the law of Christ) will be binding until the passing of the heaven and the earth.

RELAXING THE LAW

The Revised translation in Matthew 5:19 says that anyone who "relaxes one of the least of these commandments shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." The Greek word in this verse for "break" is $\lambda \acute{o}\omega$ — to loosen, untie, set free or release. "Relax" is actually a good rendition of what Jesus was saying. This is a solemn warning indeed. There have always been those who sought the path of least resistance. This is similar to the tennis player who exclaimed to his opponent: "I would do all right if someone would just remove the net!" The first time God had a law Satan attempted to "relax it." Tragically, the Devil was successful because man is exceedingly weak. The first murder was committed by a man who would not yield to Heaven's desires. Sodom was destroyed because its vast population enjoyed living on Easy Street. Even Abraham could not find ten men of genuine conviction there.

The Libertines of Jeremiah's day are epitomized in the now famous language: "The prophets prophecy falsely and the priests follow their example... and the people love to have it so!" A century earlier Isaiah was heartsick when his fellows cried: "Speak to us smooth things." Eight centuries later Paul was confronted by those who looked for compromising preachers who would tickle their itching ears with fables instead of challenging their hearts with the pure Gospel.

Today, in and out of the church, one can find fervent appeals for the soft, easy, pretty sermon. Satan is shrewd and devastating in his devious doctrines. He is the master craftsman of sham and pretense. Under the guise of humility some are influenced by the Devil to say: "Preacher, don't expose error so strongly; go easy with our loved ones. They might get the impression that you think they haven't obeyed the truth." The Bible, however, tells us that we are not man's enemy when we tell the truth (Galatians 4:16), but that we become God's enemy when we compromise (Galatians 1:10). Satan influences some men, under the banner of "love" to say: "Preacher, don't stress the plan of salvation so often because after all just being a good moral man is all that is essential." But the Bible declares that Christ only saves those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). We dare not relax the law of Christ!

This principle of absolute integrity and supreme loyalty toward the Lord also forbids us to be silent in dealing with weakness in the church. Whether it be "forsaking the assembly," impurity in life, or indifference toward duty, Christians must be constantly reminded of James 4:17; Matthew 5:8; and Hebrews 10:25. Sin is wrong regardless of who commits it. In Christianity it is not who you are but whose you are that counts! Instead of relaxing God's commandments let us bolster the truth by unstinting conviction and deep, abiding faith.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LAW

What is "the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees"? The Pharisees were a sect of the Jews that prided themselves on being strict keepers of both the oral codes and the Law of Moses (Matthew 9:14; 23:15; Luke 11:39; 18:12). In fact, they were so strict that they made rules on how to keep the rules. The word "Pharisee" probably derives from the Hebrew word *perashin*, "to separate" hence they were separatists. ¹⁴ The four Gospels depict them as being strict (Mark 7:3-4), hypocritical (Luke 12:1), judgmental (Luke 18:11; Matthew 23:2), binding their opinions on others (Matthew 23:4) and generally resisting Christ and the gospel (Matthew 23:13).

Even the Jewish Talmud had some humorous things to say about them, which confirm the description of the Gospel records.

There were said to be seven classes of Pharisees: (1) the "shoulder" Pharisee, who wears his good deeds on his shoulders and obeys the precept of the Law, not from principle, but from expediency; (2) the "wait-a-little" Pharisee, who begs for time in order to perform a meritorious action; (3) the "bleeding" Pharisee, who in his eagerness to avoid looking on a woman shuts his eyes and so bruises himself to bleeding by stumbling against a wall; (4) the "painted" Pharisee, who advertises his holiness lest any one should touch him so that he should be defiled; (5) the "reckoning" Pharisee, who is always saying "What duty must I do to balance any unpalatable duty which I have neglected?"; (6) the "fearing" Pharisee, whose relation to God is one merely of trembling awe; (7) the Pharisee from "love." In all but the last there was an element of "acting," of hypocrisy. It is to be noted that the Talmud denounces ostentation; but unconsciously that root of the error lies in the externality of their righteousness. 15

Some of the rules and regulations the Pharisees contrived were for example: 1) if an egg was laid by a chicken on the day of a festival according to the school of Hillel it may not be eaten in lieu of Exodus 16:5, "on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in." Thus, one must not prepare for the Sabbath on a feast day or for a feast day on the Sabbath. An egg laid on a feast following the Sabbath was "prepared" the day before, and so involves a breach of the

Sabbath(!); and though all feasts do not immediately follow the Sabbath yet "as a fence to the law" an egg laid on any feast must not be eaten. 16 2) The Pharisees also defined the time before which in the evening a Jew must repeat the Shema, i.e. "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord," etc. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). So they define the kind of wick and oil to be used for lighting the lamps, which every Jew must burn on the Sabbath eve. 3) Jesus mentioned in Matthew 23:23 that the Pharisees would even tithe their spices, "ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin." They based this on the Mishna, "he who undertakes to be trustworthy (a pharisaic phrase) tithes whatever he eats, sells, buys, and does not eat and drink with the people of the land." The produce (tithes) reserved for the Levites and priests was "holy," and for anyone else to eat it was deadly sin. So the Pharisee took all pains to know that his purchases had been duly tithed, and therefore shrank from "eating with" (Matthew 9:11) those whose food might not be so.17

The Pharisees were as careful as anyone could be not to break the Law. They went overboard. Jesus said it well, "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24). Condemnation was placed upon them because of their unloving and often prejudiced inconsistencies. A very important principle is established for us today from their example. Whenever strict observance is concentrated so much in one area, it is inevitable that focus will be lost in another. When we concentrate so hard on doing things in the right way, we have to be careful not to lose our focus in compassion and mercy to our neighbor. Wherever there is legalism without mercy the end result will always be a "holier than thou," condescending attitude just like the Pharisees of Jesus' day (Luke 18:9; Isaiah 65:5).

Sadly, the Pharisee kept the Law as good as any human could by his own understanding, yet he let mercy go lacking in his heart. They dedicated their lives and all their studies into keeping the Law letter-perfect. And it certainly cannot be the case that there were no sincere Pharisees. Remember, the Apostle Paul was one (Acts 23:1, 6).

But notice, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says that the righteousness of any citizen of the kingdom of heaven must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Ironically, people who were more morally deficient than a Pharisee could enter the kingdom, but not until their righteousness exceeded the Pharisees'. This is most certainly a peculiar idea. How could anyone exceed that kind of stringent right-doing? The Pharisees stand as the highest example of righteousness to which any human can attain. Humanly speaking, one might be able to equal their righteousness, but it is impossible to exceed it. How does Jesus expect us to exceed that kind of righteousness?

The righteousness Jesus is talking about is not a righteousness based upon our conduct. The citizenship of that new kingdom is not precipitated upon the amount of good work or the quality of the deeds that we do. In fact, it is not about performance at all. The new righteousness is the system of justification, which differed totally from the self-justification of the Pharisees. Righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) means justification — and that means the system of divine forgiveness, without which no man can become just, or justified in the sight of God. In Romans 1:16-17, the apostle declares himself unashamed of "the gospel of Christ... for therein is the righteousness of God revealed." This righteousness is not talking about an attribute or characteristic of God, but rather the righteousness (state of forgiveness) that God imparts to men. Not the righteousness about God, but the righteousness from God. The Jews were, "ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness" (Romans 10:3). The Jews (viz. the scribes and Pharisees) had their own system of righteousness or merits. But the Gospel of Christ exceeds it. Not in the sense of degree (i.e. more of the same kind). The

righteousness of the gospel excels it because it is a different kind altogether. Jesus' righteousness is the righteousness of God imparted to sinners in obedience to the gospel. This allows a man to stand before God, forgiven, washed and clean as if he had never sinned as far as God is concerned. Neither the Pharisees nor anyone else could ever attain to such a state of sinless perfection. This is seen in the words of Paul:

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷ Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. (Romans 4:6-8) (Emphasis RV)

The usual idea that most people have concerning Matthew 5:20 is that we have to do better or do more than the scribes and Pharisees or we will not become citizens of that heavenly clime. This is certainly a shallow conclusion to draw from the masterful new gospel system that Jesus was painting. Any citizen of the kingdom (member of the church) has already exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees when he/she obeyed the gospel.

Conclusion

The Sermon on the Mount centralizes one basic theme, the gospel of Christ. The precepts, beatitudes, similitudes, prayer-examples and explanations point to one idea, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). To the Jews of that day, there was a new divine law-system coming that would excel and complete anything that had previously been revealed by God. The Gospel was right around the corner. This sermon is a beautiful portrait of their expectation; "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20).

If one does not come to understand this central theme, then this sermon is reduced to nothing but platitudes and witty sayings for calendars and refrigerator magnets. Jesus' words deserve far more respect than that. The words of Christ in this sermon are far deeper in meaning and more valuable to the understanding of the church than most have really contemplated.

END NOTES

- ¹ All Bible references are from the **King James Version** unless otherwise noted.
- ² R. C. Foster, *Studies In The Life Of Christ*, College Press Publishing, Joplin, Missouri, 1995 Electronic Edition STEP Files © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ James Burton Coffman Commentaries, Electronic ed. Copyright © 1995-2006, reproduced by permission of Abilene Christian University Press see explorer "http://www.acu.edu/campusoffices/acupress/", Abilene, Texas, USA. All other rights reserved.
- ⁵ Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State*, Foy E. Wallace Jr. Publications, Richard E. Black, Publisher, 1997, 10-11
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- ⁹ Howard Clarke Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 4th ed., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983, 51
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- ¹¹ F. N. Peloubet, *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*, Universal, 576
- 12 Ibid.
- ¹³ J. W. McGarvey, *The Fourfold Gospel*, Cogdill Foundation Publications, 236
- ¹⁴M. G. Easton, "Pharisees", *Revised Easton's Bible Dictionary*, Electronic ed. of the Online Bible, Copyright © 2002, Timnathserah Inc., Winterbourne, Ontario, Canada.
- ¹⁵ J. E. H. Thomson, "Pharisees", *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 4:2364-2365
- ¹⁶ A. R. Fausset, "Pharisees", *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*, Electronic ed. of the Online Bible, Copyright © 2002, Timnathserah Inc., Winterbourne, Ontario, Canada.
- 17 Ibid.

YOU HAVE HEARD IT SAID Matthew 5:21-48

Stacey W. Grant

INTRODUCTION

²¹Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; ²⁴Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. 25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. ²⁶Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. ²⁷Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. 29And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 31It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. ³³Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. 37But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. 38Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. 43Ye have heard that it hath

been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Once again this author is honored to participate in the annual Richmond Hill lectures. We always look forward to this superb time of fellowship with the brethren of the splendid Richmond Hill church with joy and great anticipation. As usual, the theme and topics are timely and needful. The congregation is to be commended for their work in hosting this event. May this great effort continue to flourish for many years to come!

The targeted audience of the Gospel account that bears Matthew's name was the Jews. In Matthew's account of the Gospel, Christ is pictured as King of kings. Chapter one presents the King's lineage, name, and purpose; He is a descendant of David and rightful heir of David's promised throne (2 Sam. 7:12-14; Acts 2:29-36); conclusively, His name describes His purpose for coming to earth. Chapter two reveals the King being worshipped by Gentiles, feared and threaten by an evil king, and His taking flight into Egypt as a place of refuge should not be glanced over. Initially, Egypt was a place of refuge for Israel and the twelve patriarchs (Gen.39-47). Ironically, Egypt later became a place of oppression and torture regarding Israel (Exd.1-3). Chapter three discloses the King's coronation. Satan's tempting the King is covered in chapter four. The Lord teaches us the power and purpose of God's word in this chapter as well. The theme of the book is echoed at the beginning of the Lord's earthly ministry: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt.4:17). This author refers to chapters five through seven as

the *King's Code of Conduct*. Those who would become citizens of the kingdom must submit to these values.

Matthew 5:21-48 introduces a contrast between some things and/or practices the Jews previously believed or taught. As the reader enters this course of study, he must keep in mind some pertinent principles.

Jesus came into the world and left the world while the Mosaical law was yet in force. He lived in perfect harmony with the law of Moses; He taught the law and clarified the law. However, he also presented legislation, which was not included in the law as shown in this section of the "Sermon on the Mount." Lest one think that the Lord's teaching beyond the law contradicts His submission to the law, it should be remembered that Moses himself in the law foretold this new and greater Lawgiver than himself, and foretold that the new Lawgiver would speak the words of Jehovah (Deu.18:15-20).³

Another commentator correctly stated these sentiments:

Jesus took six important Old Testament laws and interpreted themfor His people in light of the new life He came to give. He made a fundamental change without altering God's standards: He dealt with attitudes and intents of the heart and not simply with the external action. The Pharisees said that righteousness consisted of performing certain actions, but Jesus said it centered in the attitudes of the heart.⁴

THE KING'S VIEW ON ANGER

Of all emotions man possesses, the emotion of anger is likely the most misused. Anger is a **God-given** emotion. Yes, anger has a legitimate **purpose**. Our heavenly Father possesses the emotion of anger and always uses it in its proper setting (Exd.4:14; Jer.7:16-20). Therefore, anger used in its proper context is compatible with God's will. Righteous indignation is needful and commendable (Num.16:8-15; **25:1-8**; Psa. 119:104). The Bible reveals the **purpose**, **prohibition**, and **phases** of anger. Additionally, the Lord gives the **cause**, **clarity**, and **cure** for unjust anger. Exodus 20:13 states a lucid **prohibition**, "**Thou shalt not kill"**. All killing is not murder; for this cause the cities of refuge were established (Josh.20). **Anger typically is the impetus of murder**. Murder is a premeditated, selfish, and malicious act (Gen.4). In the New

Testament, murderers are, of course, opposed by God (Gal.5:20-21). To punish murderers, God has placed capital punishment into the hands of the government (Rom.13:4).

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words would never hurt me" is a popular, howbeit untrue, cliché,' according to Proverbs 15:1. The Lord additionally reveals the **phases** of causeless anger.

The word Jesus used in Matthew 5:22 means "a settled anger, malice that is nursed inwardly." Jesus described a sinful experience that involved several stages. First, there was *causeless anger*. This anger then exploded into words: "Raca—empty-headed person!" These words added fuel to the fire so that the person said, "You fool-rebel!" 5

The cause

Mostly, anger is the foundation and fuel of ungodly hatred (Pro.4:23; Acts 5:17-18; 1 John 3:10-15). Jesus broadens the prohibition: "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (v.22). The "cause" to which Jesus is referring must be one that is approved in the eyes of God (Matt.18:15); Cain's "cause" for his anger against Abel was unjust (Gen.4).

The clarity (see matt.15:16-20)

The Jews had perverted the plain teachings of the Law concerning this matter; conversely, Christ provides a transparent analysis regarding the issue:

Jesus sets over against the interpretation of the Jews the true meaning of the law; he gives a deep spiritual meaning to the commandment that the Jews had not seen. Murder is the overt act of a murderous spirit, which accompanies anger; Jesus goes back to the very roots of murder and shows that the true teaching of the law as set forth now by the principles of his kingdom forbids even the thoughts of murder.⁶

The condemnations

Those who refuse to control their anger and would resort to these forbidden actions are not only under condemnation from man, but likewise and ultimately, the Almighty.

To be "in danger of the judgment" was to be in danger of a sentence from the lower courts, but to be in "in danger of the council" was to be in danger of a sentence by the Sanhedrin.... "Fool" is a term which expresses more than want of wisdom; it means stupid fool, vile apostate... This word embodies a bitter judgment of one's spiritual state and decrees him to certain destruction. The one who sustains this attitude toward his fellow is "in danger of the hell of fire."

The cure

This matter, if left unsettled, affects one's worship, according to the Lord. **Reconciliation** from a contrite heart is ordered when a trespass has been committed. This matter should take place in a speedy fashion; Ephesians 4:26-27 teaches the ill effects of unresolved anger--a door is opened for the devil. Our Lord is not advocating a compromise of doctrine. Concerning verses 25-26:

In this brief allegory one is supposed to have an adversary at law who has a just cause against him, and who will certainly gain a verdict when the case comes into court. He is advised to agree with this adversary; that is, to make reparation to him in advance of the trial and prevent the trial....There is an allusion here to imprisonment for debt. In such a case the debtor was held until the debt was paid, either by himself or some friend. If it were not paid at all, he remained in prison until he died. In the case which this represent, the offender will have let pass all opportunity to make reparation, and no friend can make it for him; therefore, the last farthing never will be paid, and he must remain a prisoner forever ⁸

THE KING'S VIEW CONCERNING ADULTERY

The Firm Foundation

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Pro.14:34). On the contrary, adultery is rebellion against God's universal laws that govern marriage (Matt.19:3-9). The seventh of the Ten Commandments forbade the overt act of adultery, punishable unto death by stoning (Lev.20:10; Deu.22:22-27); nonetheless, Jesus again "raises the bar." "For as he thinketh in his heart so is he" (Pro.23:7) is appropriate regarding this matter.

The preventable problem

Adultery starts in the heart: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (Jms.1:13-14). Lust is more than a casual glance or mere admiration; it is an unhealthy longing for that which is forbidden (Jms.4:2-3). King David's ungodly liaison with Bathsheba illustrates this point for us (2 Sam.11-12). For fear of failing God, Christ, spouse, family, the church, and self, the Christian should/must flee all forms of fornication (1 Cor.6:18).

The preserving precept

Is the Lord advocating self-mutilation? No. Our body parts are controlled by our minds or biblical heart. **Self-control is commanded (1 Cor.9:27).** Self-control is the result of pure thoughts (Php.4:8). Concerning the care of our bodies the Scriptures teach, "For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (Eph.5:29). That we must work diligently to keep our thoughts in synch with God's will is the point that the Lord is making (1 Tim.4:15-16).

The Disputing Doctrines

In verses 31-32 the Lord is referring to a law recorded in Deuteronomy 24:1-2. At the time the Lord revealed His principles regarding marriage two predominant schools of thought were in vogue.

Jewish rabbis disagreed as to the grounds this passage allowed for divorce. Completely opposite views were held by the schools of Hillel and Shammai. One championed the liberal and popular view that "uncleanness" meant anything displeasing to the husband, while the other insisted that it referred only to unchastity or adultery.⁹

The Old Testament practice is further explained:

The writing of divorcement provided for re-marriage of both partners (Deu.24:1ff). However, this law, like the whole of Mosaic legislation, was temporary (Gal.3:23-25). Its looseness beyond God's ideal was permitted only

because of the hardness of the Jews' heart (Mat.19:8). Jesus set out beside it His New Testament's higher standard for marriage which eliminates acceptable divorce and consequent eligibility for remarriage for all but the innocent party who has put away his or her spouse for fornication.⁹

The divine decree

As it stands today, those who have never been married, those whose spouses have died (Rom.7:1-4), and those who put away their spouses for fornication (Matt.19:9) have the right to marry. The Lord's law is final and far reaching; all men are subject to this law.

THE KING'S VIEW CONCERNING OATHS

The prohibition

"Forswear" means "to swear falsely or perjure oneself." Exodus 20:7, Leviticus 19:12, and Deuteronomy 23:21 are under consideration.

The perversions

Sin occurs when one violates a law of God (Rom.4:15; 1 John 3:4). One sins by disregarding what God explicitly or implicitly commands (Gen.3; Matt.15:8-9) or when he adds to or subtracts from what God commands (Pro.30:5-6). One could honestly be ignorant of his sins, as in the case of Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). Concerning this matter, the Jews deliberately added to Jehovah's instructions in an attempt at lessening the force of the command, "Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deu.5:32). The Jews, mainly the scribes and Pharisees, had perverted this system. Their system of attempted sidestepping, involved swearing without using God's name, thus removing personal responsibility, so they assumed.

The previous prerequisite

In contrast, Deuteronomy 6:13 instructed the Israelites to use God's name when making an oath. Christ's command is patently unambiguous, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths" (v.33). A prophet of old stated,

These are the things that ye shall do; speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord (Zech.8:16-17). (emp.added: SWG)

The present principle

Under the New Testament the King commands his subjects, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (v.37). Likewise, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor" (Eph.4:24a).

THE KING'S VIEW CONCERNING RETALIATION

The righteous reprisal?

Retaliation or revenge is under consideration. The Lord addresses the abuses of what the Law of Moses allowed in such cases. Justice—not retaliation--was ordered through the judicial process Jehovah had established (Exd.21:22-24; Lev.24:19-22; Deu.19:15-21). Yes indeed, God has always held each man personally responsible for his actions (Ecc.12:13-14). Once again the law had been distorted or "circumvented" for personal reasons. The attitude of the one offended determines whether or not he complies with the Lord's command.

The required response

It is probably the single most difficult thing to do—keeping one's cool when he have been wronged. This author does not believe that these verses or scenarios presented teach that a Christian must accept all forms of abuse at all times. For instance, 1 Timothy 5:8 encompasses

protection against an intruder into one's home. One has the biblical right to protect his family against such an invasion. Some brethren even teach that it is not permissible for Christians to own a gun. If a Christian witnesses a horrible crime being committed, and he has the wherewithal to stop it, should he not intervene? Can a Christian serve in the military or as a police officer? Yes, according to the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10-11).

Matthew 5:10-12 has instructions for the child of God regarding persecution for righteousness' sake. Christ resisted retaliating when He experienced maltreatment at the hands of His enemies (John 18:22-23). Three illustrations are cited for our benefit.

The victim in view has not been confronted with life-threatening harm for which he would have other rightful recourse (Rom.13:1ff); the proper response to insults is non-resistance. This response with its supporting motive of love is productive of a message far more powerful than physical aggression; the non-violent reaction tells the offender that he deals with a power which overrules and controls both pride and temper (Pro.16:32). If there is any possibility of reaching the heart of such a one with the Gospel, it would be enhanced by such a controlled response.¹⁰

The second specification (verse 40) supposes a man sued at the law, and his coat (the inner garment of the Jew) unjustly taken from him. He is told to let the oppressor have also his mantle, which was the outer garment, and more valuable. Under the law it was forbidden to keep a poor man's garment from him through the night, even when it is taken in a pledge (Ex.xxii. 26,27); therefore the case here supposed is one of extreme oppression. The lesson taught can not be less than this: that even the most unjust and extreme exactions by forms of law are to be endured without seeking revenge.¹¹

The third example concerns "governmental oppression." Roman soldiers on occasion required a Jew to aid them in travel or bearing burdens. For instance, Simon, the Cyrenian, was compelled to bear the Lord's cross (Luke 23:26). The Lord commanded one not only to accept certain grievances without protest, but also to voluntarily endure more than was imposed. ¹²

The revealed remedy

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal.6:9-10). The Lord's statement recorded in verse 42 is better understood in light of other known verses.

Give to him that asketh thee.--This has its limitations and is still on the teaching against retaliation....if one has injured us, but is in need and should ask, we should not refuse to give that which is needed because the one asking has done us an injury; to withhold from one who asks in need would be to retaliate; this is forbidden. The teaching of Jesus on this was expressed in the law of Moses. (Deu.15:8-10)¹³

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengence is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord (Rom.12:17-19).

THE KING'S VIEW CONCERNING LOVE

The prophets' pronouncements

The Israelites were instructed **not** to hate their enemies (Exd.23:4-5; Lev.19:17-18). On occasions God used the Jews as a tool to punish wicked nations (Deu.7; Josh.23:12-13). This could have led to the Israelites' hatred of other nations (See Jonah). God hates the sin (Gen.6), but loves the sinner (John 3:16). More than one prophet echoed this sentiment (Pro.25:21-22). Tragically, men throughout the annals of time have misused the name of God to promote their hatred against others. The Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, Ku Klux Klan, etc., have claimed God as their guide while carrying out their campaigns of hatred. Similarly, the Hebrews twisted the command for personal gain or advantage.

The provoking parable

Samaritans came about due to the Hebrews' intermarrying with Gentiles while in exile. Their hatred for one another is well documented (John 4). However, when asked to elaborate further on the issue of love for one's neighbor, Jesus revealed probably His most thought-provoking parable (Luke 10:25-37). Christ reveals two Jews' ignoring the needs of an injured

fellow countryman; in contrast, the hated Samaritan overlooked the man's nationality and concentrated on the needs of his neighbor. Certainly Jesus made no new friends among the diehard Jews after revealing this thought-stirring lesson.

The preeminent pattern

Love is more than just an emotion; it is also based upon intellect. The Scriptures educate us concerning the love God possesses for mankind (John 3:16). Citizens of the kingdom must manifest an unparalleled level of love for their enemies—probably the most difficult part of their sojourn. Regarding this matter, **our Lord serves as the supreme example** (Luke 23:34; Php.2:5-11). What He endured, motivated solely by selfless, sacrificial love, is worthy of our adoration and appreciation. Additionally, the Father provides for those who may never acknowledge and/or follow Him. God's benevolence towards man is unfathomable.

The powerful provision

Living for the Christ is not a "walk in the park" (1 Pet.4:12-19). As much as possible, we are to live peaceably with those who live in darkness (Rom.12:18). On the other hand, our lifestyle is an antithesis to what most of the gurus teach about the "good" life. Likewise, we must honor the instructions provided: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom.12:20-21). Agape love is the key to our success. Notably, we are more than conquerors through the guidelines God provides.

CONCLUSION

The above tenets, if heeded from a **pure heart**, are a source of strength and victory for the child of God. Our calling cannot be overlooked: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt.5:14). The principles Christ has provided us have elevated our

status (Eph.2:6). We are ordained role models (1 Pet.2:9-10). When we respond appropriately to the difficulties of life, God receives the glory (Matt.5:16; Php.1:12-18; Jms.1:1-8). As we progress in Christ, the devil will increase his levels of attacks. Fortified with the Word of God (Eph.6:10-18; Col.3:16), we can/will/must extinguish all that Satan throws at us.

END NOTES

- ¹ All Bible references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.
- ² Bob Berard, *The Great Sermon on the Mount Part I. The Fourteenth Annual Denton Lectures*, ed Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publicatons, 1995) p. 83.
- ³ Warren W. Wisersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Volume 1, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989) p. 23.
- ⁴ Ibid.. 23
- ⁵ H. Leo Boles, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1987) p. 135.
- ⁶ Ibid. pp. 135 136.
- ⁷ J. W. McGarvey, *The New Testament Commentary, Volume I, Matthew and Mark*, (Delight, AD: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1875), p. 55.
- ⁸ Garland Elkins, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, The Fourteenth Annual Denton Lectures*, ed. Dub McClish, (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1995) p.387.
- ⁹ Berard, pp. 85,86.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. p.87
- ¹¹ McGarvey, p.59.
- ¹² Beraard, p. 88.
- ¹³ Boles, p. 149.

WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS

Matthew 6:19 - 24

By Wayne Rodgers

INTRODUCTION

¹⁹Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. ²²The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. ²³But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:19-24)¹

A great theme has been given to us this year by the Richmond Hill congregation. We are grateful for her stance on truth, her good members and her preacher. Year after year, this congregation of the Lord's church takes a great opportunity to publish by way of this lectureship, written and oral, to teach on great topics of the Bible. This year's lessons from the Sermon on the Mount provides great topics as our Lord preached to a crowd gathered attentive to His words.

The story is told of a man who had become very wealthy and attributed all his wealth to the blessings from God. He said that there was a time when all he had in this life was about a hundred dollars. He gave all of it to the church to help further the cause of Christ. He said, "I believe this is why I am very wealthy today. God has blessed me because I gave all that I had to Him." An elderly lady sitting in the same pew leaned over toward him and said, "I dare you to do it again." While the story serves as just an illustration for us to consider, there is a great truth to be gained from it.

The heart's treasure will be our topic of discussion in this lesson. We will also discuss several logical questions that may arise as we continue our study. It seems that the focus of our heart, the effectual effort put forth and the gained outcome all relate in the sense that our heart's focus is the driving force behind it all. Our motive, our intention and our object are all driven by the heart. The treasure is that which we all seek. As we seek the intended treasure, we must make a choice. Many believe that riches and possession will secure happiness, peace and stability in life. While this can have its truth, it will spark some to ask the question, "What does the Bible say about being rich and having great possessions? Is this a sin?" As we scan the context of the Sermon on the Mount and look at our text in Matthew 6:19-24, we will be able to answer this question with great assurance that if we will focus our heart's attention on things above, our Lord will bless us bountifully. The apostle Paul taught this same principle to the Colossian church: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2). Also consider what he wrote to the church at Corinth:

"Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:" (2 Corinthians 9:5-8)

In the Beatitudes, Jesus says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). This verse as well as the rest of the Sermon on the Mount teaches us about what is truly important in this life. A life of happiness is available to the child of God, who will take note of the Master's teaching. Happiness is a desire

that is natural in every human being. None wish to be unhappy, mean-spirited, and hard-hearted. It is often the case that we as humans will spend our time, money and effort so that we might be happy or at least have the very appearance of being happy. However, true happiness comes from serving the Lord. The Psalmist declares, "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Psalm 144:15). Our Lord teaches us through this great sermon that we can have true happiness in our lives if we live to serve the God of Heaven and do His will, which includes serving others.

MATTHEW 6:19 -- 24

As Jesus has taught about values in the Kingdom of God, we come to our text of study and notice several key phrases which will serve as an outline for the rest of the study. Notice the comparisons made between treasures on earth and treasures in heaven. Also note that "your concept of values will be shown by the place in which you seek to accumulate your treasures." ² Lay not up

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:" (Matthew 6:19). Treasures on earth come in many forms and fashions. It might be money, land, homes, cars, cattle, recreational toys, clothing, etc. which have become treasures to all. We should notice that the prohibition is not against having these things, but rather that these material possessions become our soul purpose and intent for living. They have been given the utmost importance in our lives, and we have become consumed with it. Coffman writes:

"Christians must curb the acquisitive and hoarding instincts. Earthly possessions cannot satisfy. This can be illustrated in nearly any community, indeed in almost every life. Say that one is a collector of souvenir spoons, plates, salt shakers, stamps, coins, or anything, and that after many years one's collection numbers hundreds or thousands of items, is the thirst for another item thereby assuaged? No! If one has any number, however extensive, he desires always

another, and another, and another. The pursuit of earthly treasures is a disease that feeds and increases upon itself. This hungry pursuit of wealth, or any earthly achievement, pierces the pursuer through with many sorrows, temptations, and snares, as well as thrusting him into many foolish and hurtful lusts..." ³

Coffman references 1 Timothy 6:9-10, which says, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

William Barclay in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew reminds his readers that it is a very common thing to seek the best value for our purchases. Whether we are buying a house, stocks, a car, clothing, a meal, etc., we search for the greater value and make our choices based on the best value of that item. We will often examine the solidity and permanence and craftsmanship of the item. ⁴ Jesus is teaching us that treasure on earth have no permanence; therefore, are lesser in value than treasure in heaven. The fallacy in hoarding up of earthly possessions is seen in the destruction and theft of them. If it is a product like clothing and fine linens that can be eaten up by moths, how does that possibly measure up in comparison to the Kingdom of Heaven? If it is a product that can be eaten away by rust, where is the permanence in such an item? If it can be stolen by thieves who would break in, is it safe and is all of our time and effort wasted in trying to protect it? Having these possessions does not mean one is in sin, but according to previous verses shown, it is presenting a temptation that the majority will not be able to overcome. Also, Matthew records a conversation between a rich young man and Jesus:

"And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou

shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:16-24) (underlined for emphasis, WR)

Jesus does not say here that it is impossible, but speaks of how it is difficult and then illustrates such with a camel going through the eye of a needle. The Proverb writer speaks of this also, "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings: they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Proverbs 23:4-5). Consider God's servant Job. Job had great wealth and possessions which were gone in the blink of an eye. Oh how quick we can be without these treasures we hold so dear in our lives!

Lay up

"But lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:" (Matthew 6:20). The Jews were very familiar with the phrase treasure in heaven. They identified such treasure with two things in particular. One is that the deeds of kindness which a man did upon the earth became his treasure in heaven. Barclay tells a famous Jewish story about a certain King Monobaz of Abiabene who became a convert to Judaism.

"Monobaz distributed all his treasures to the poor in the year of famine. His brothers sent to him and said, 'Thy fathers gathered treasures, and added to those of their fathers, but thou hast dispersed yours and theirs.' He said to them, 'My fathers gathered treasures for below, I have gathered treasures for above; they stored treasures in a place over which the hand of man cannot rule; but I have stored treasure in a place over which the hand of man cannot rule; my fathers collected treasures which bear no interest, I have fathered treasures which bear

interest; my fathers gathered treasures of money, I have gathered treasures in souls; my fathers gathered treasure for others, I have gathered treasures for myself; my fathers gathered treasure in this world, I have gathered treasures for the world to come." ⁵

Jesus and the Jewish Rabbis were sure that what is selfishly hoarded is lost, but that which is generously given away brings treasure in heaven. Monobaz made the point in his defense that he had "gathered treasure for himself." This is the enticement for such activity which today in our society is becoming rare. We can look forward to reaping rewards from benevolent and charitable giving for an eternity. We should remember this principle as we consider what we may do with what possessions or wealth we have.

Where thy treasure is

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). A treasure is defined as:

- 1. Wealth, especially in the form of jewels and precious objects, often accumulated or hoarded
 - 2. Something of great value or worth
 - 3. Somebody who is highly valued or loved

Something that we treasure has our affections, our heart and our being. Everything about us seeks to please the desire to possess it, keep it, etc. It is what means the most to us. We must search our hearts diligently to know where our true affection lies. In Galatians 6:7-8, the apostle Paul warned: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

McGarvey says,

"Here is the chief reason for laying up treasures in heaven and not on earth. Where the heart is, there is our source of happiness. If it is on the earth, our happiness must partake of all the uncertainty of earthly things, and it must be lost forever when we leave the world. But, if it is in heaven, when we leave this world we go away to the real sources of our happiness, and we find them as durable as eternity." ⁶

We can easily ask, "Where is thy heart?" This is the concern of Jesus. There is to be a preference of the spiritual rather than the worldly or material. We must remember that possessions must be possessed; they must not possess their owners. Hobbs says that your concept of values will be shown by the place in which you seek to accumulate your treasures. It is just as true to say, "For where your heart is, there will your treasure be also." ⁷

We should have the attitude and ability to look at the future with its reward as did a poet named George Herbert. It is said of him that he and several friends would meet to play their musical instruments together like a little orchestra. Once he was on his way to a meeting of this group, when he passed a carter (a delivery person) whose cart was stuck in the mud of the ditch. George Herbert laid aside his instrument and went to help the man. It was a long job to get the cart out, and he finished covered in mud. When he finally arrived at the house of his friends, it was too late for music. He told them what had detained him on the way. One said, "You have missed all the music." George smiled. "Yes," he said "but I will have songs at midnight." He had the satisfaction of having done this act of service, which revealed a Christ-like spirit. 8

Whenever we put our money and efforts into something we develop vested interests in that thing. Ideally, it would seem our treasures will go where our heart is. If our treasure is in house and lands and cars and boats and electronic equipment, where will our heart be? If we examine our credit card statements and bank records, we will see where our hearts are! Our heart is wherever we put our treasures. We should seek to work it in reverse order. That is to say, let us get our hearts in the right place, our treasures will then follow.

The eye

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22, 23). The eye is spoken of as the "light of the body." There are two types of eyes: the single eye and the evil eye. The English Standard Version translates single as "healthy" and evil as "bad." The illustration is given by Jesus in these verses to show that our vision can be distorted, and therefore, we must be careful to keep our eyes healthy. Often it is the view that we have on others causing us to be prejudice, jealous or rather full of self-conceit. This will cause us to have a distorted view and will in effect not allow the proper amount of light in for the body.

This will take away that opportunity to lay treasure in heaven. It will cause me to not use my treasure to help others and spread the cause of Christ. This type of generous giving to others will help us to see more clearly the vision and work of Christ. It is this that we must stay focused on.

Exclusive service

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else, he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Barclay gives background to verse 24:

To one brought up in the ancient world this is an even more vivid saying than it is to us. The RSV translates it: No one can serve two masters. But that is not nearly strong enough. The world which the RSV translates "serve" is *douleuein*; *doulos* is a slave; and *douleuein* means *to be a slave to*. The word that the RSV translates *master* is *kurios* is the word which denotes *absolute ownership*. We get the meaning far better, if we translate it: No man can be a slave to two owners. 9

No one can equally serve two masters. Mammon is a Chaldee term for riches or money. In this case, it seems to be used for the entire system of materialism which is a system in which the devil, the god of this world (John 12:31) uses to snatch us away from our Owner and *Master*. God as our Master wants all, not bits and pieces. He is looking for and expecting our very best services and offering. One expecting to be recognized as God's child having one foot camped in the world and the other in the Kingdom of God is deceiving himself. He is our A*bsolute Owner*. It is time that we as the children of God realize this great truth.

CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul and James, the half-brother of our Lord both declare themselves to be "servants" of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1; James 1:1). Joshua pleads with the children of Israel:

"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day who ye will serve; whether the gods on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;" (Joshua 24:14-16).

We should know that all things belong to God (Psalm 24:1; 50:10, 12) and that people are more important than possessions. Knowing this can help us put in proper order our priorities and responsibilities in serving God and our fellow man. In Jesus' teaching it is the master who gives his servants the talents (Matthew 25:15), and the owner who gives the husbandmen the vineyard (Matthew 21:33). This principle has far-reaching consequences. Men can buy and sell things; men can to some extent alter and rearrange things; but man cannot create things. The ultimate ownership of all things belongs to God. There is nothing in this world of which a man can say,

"This is mine." Of all things he can only say, "This belongs to God, and God has given me the use of it." 10

END NOTES

- ¹ All Bible references are from the **King James Version** unless otherwise noted.
- ² Herschel H. Hobbs, *An Exposition Of The Gospel Of Matthew*, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Baker Book House Company. 1965, p. 73.
- ³ James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, Austin, Texas. Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1968, pp. 83-84.
- ⁴ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew Vol. 1, The Daily Study Bible Revised Edition, Philadelphia*, Pennsylvania. The Westminster Press, 1975, pp. 238-239.
- ⁵ Ibid, p. 241.
- ⁶ J. W. McGarvey, *Matthew and Mark Vol. 1*, *The New Testament Commentary*, Delight, Arkansas. Gospel Light Publishing Company, p. 66.
- ⁷ Herschel H. Hobbs, *An Exposition Of The Gospel Of Matthew*, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Baker Book House Company. 1965, p. 74.
- ⁸ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew Vol. 1, The Daily Study Bible Revised*_Edition, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Westminster Press, 1975, p. 183.
- ⁹ Ibid, p. 248.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. p. 250.

JUDGE NOT, THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED Matthew 7:1 - 5

By Alan Wright

¹Judge not, that ye be not judged. ²For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. ³And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? ⁴Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? ⁵Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. (Matt. 7:1-5).¹

"Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting" (Dan. 5:27). Such was God's judgment against Belshazzar, and such is the judgment against all whose lives do not measure up to the divine standard. When sin entered the world, God pronounced judgment against those who were found guilty, and barred them from paradise (Gen. 3:14-24). All mankind is traveling ever onward to a great day of reckoning, when "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14). The world was born into judgment, faces judgment on a daily basis, and is racing inevitably to a grand and final judgment.

But judgment is not the sole prerogative of God. Indeed, exercising sound judgment is both good and necessary. Paul prays that Christians may "... abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:9,10). How could anyone approve things that are excellent except he were able to make judgments and discern between good and evil. Indeed, the ability to "discern both good and evil" is a sign of maturity in a Christian (rf. Heb. 5:12-14).

While this judgment is discharged largely in evaluating our own behavior, we must not suppose it never to be used in evaluating the behavior of others. How could we be sure to "enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men," unless we were able to judge who the evil man was? (Prov. 4:14). How would we "beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves," if we could not make the judgment on who was a false prophet? (Matt. 7:15).

Nevertheless, because we are often flawed in both our understanding and our conduct, the judgments we pass on others are often flawed as well. And so the Scripture warns us not to carry out judgment in a way that is frivolous, malicious, sanctimonious, or inequitable. We read in the Law of Moses, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour" (Lev. 19:15). And Jesus commands, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

So we see that while we can and must pass judgment on others in order to avoid the evil influences they might bring upon us, we must at all costs avoid making judgments that do not issue from the proper spirit. One type of judgment that would be ungodly is self-righteous judgment, which condemns in others what we justify in ourselves. This is the concern of the text before us.

The role of the judge

In order to better understand the concepts of good and bad judgments, it would be helpful to look at the role of the judge in an official capacity in the Bible. In every age and dispensation, judges have been appointed to assist God's people in settling disputes and determining rights. The instructions to these judges compelled them to be fair and impartial, to resist bribes and

other forms of corruption, and to base their decisions on a proper understanding of God's revealed will.

In the patriarchal age, the head of the house generally served as arbiter. However, when the dispute was with the head of the house, others might be called on to pass judgment in the matter. For instance, when Jacob was accused of theft by his father-in-law, he asks for an impartial judgment from the family. "And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both" (Gen. 31:36,37).

In the early days of Israel's deliverance, judgment was the sole responsibility of Moses. "And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws" (Exo. 18:15,16). On the advice of Jethro (and after consultation with God), lesser judgments were delegated to others. "And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee" (Exo. 18:22).

An entire section of the Law of Moses was designated "the judgments" and gave divine guidance in settling disputes. Consider a small sampling of these instructions.

"Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them ... Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever ... If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall

pay as the judges determine ... If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods ... For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour" (Exo. 21:1, 6, 22; 22:8,9).

In this passage, we see judges directed to hear testimony, weigh evidence, evaluate witnesses, issue verdicts, and levy fines.

When the people were about to be settled in the land of Palestine, God directed them to appoint judges throughout the nation. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment" (Deut. 16:18). In certain grave circumstances, an entire assembled body of people might have the responsibility of judgment, as for instance in a case of manslaughter. "Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments" (Num. 35:24). These judges were required to hear and evaluate testimony. "... at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established ... and the judges shall make diligent inquisition ..." (Deut. 19:15,18).

After the death of Joshua, Israel's history is defined by a series of judges who, though best remembered for their military exploits, nevertheless served first and foremost as arbiters for the people. In some cases, the people came to the judge. "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Judg. 4:4, 5). In other cases, the judge went to the people. "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal,

and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places" (1 Sam. 7:15, 16). There was no higher civil authority during this period, which is rightly described as "the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1).

During the reign of the kings, the responsibility of judgment was placed on the throne. In a misguided desire to create more pomp and circumstance in their leadership, the people requested of Samuel, the last of the theocratic judges, "And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). When Solomon took the throne, his request of God shows how clearly he recognized the immense responsibility he would hold as judge/king. "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:9). As Moses had done, the kings appointed subordinates to handle much of the day-to-day adjudication. As David prepared to turn over rule to his son Solomon, we read of the many court appointees he made, "Of which ... six thousand were officers and judges" (1 Chron. 23:4). During Jehoshaphat's reign:

"... he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city. And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chron. 19:5-7).

The use of judges continued in the time of the restoration. "And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not" (Ezra 7:25). Consistently throughout Israel's history it had been required of judges to know God's law and apply it without prejudice.

Before leaving this aspect of our study, we might note that no specific office of "judge" has been established in the Lord's church. However, Paul describes the proper way of settling disputes among brethren. "If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" (1 Cor. 6:4, 5). This was the procedure Jesus alluded to when he required those who could not settle matters among themselves to "tell it unto the church" (Matt. 18:17).

Jesus and the Pharisees

In the days of Jesus, the responsibility of judgment had primarily fallen into the hands of the group known as the Pharisees. Jesus makes reference to this when he says, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat" (Matt. 23:2). (The seat of Moses refers to his role as judge, rf. Exo. 18:3). As such, Jesus tells the people, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do" (Matt. 23:3). It was not Jesus' intention to overthrow the work of the judge.

Yet he clearly did not approve of the way in which the Pharisees conducted themselves. The remainder of Matthew 23 is a diatribe against the many sins of the Pharisees, in which he declares eight times "Woe unto you!" On another occasion he warns his disciples, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees," that is, their corrupting influence (Luke 12:1). In this very discourse, he had proclaimed, "... except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). In many ways, the entire content of the sermon is a challenge to the teaching and practice of the Pharisees. Why did Jesus express such strong disapproval of these men?

To understand this, we need to know a bit about the origins and foundational beliefs of the sect. The Pharisees are unknown in the Old Testament writings (though there are attempts, perhaps somewhat justifiable, to see the earliest beginnings of the movement in the days of Ezra). But in the times before the Maccabean wars, a strong movement had begun among many Jews to resist the influences of Greek culture that were pervading society all around them. Those of this movement came to be called the Hassideans, meaning "the pure" or "the pious." Eventually warfare broke out when the tyrant Antiochus Ephiphanes, a pseudo-successor of one of Alexander's generals, attempted to violently force paganism on the Jewish people. It was in the period following the wars that the Pharisees as such arose from a division among the Hassideans over the validity of the high priestly lineage. The name is likely taken from the Aramaic word meaning "to separate," and the Pharisees thus are "The Separated Ones."

By the time of Jesus, the temple was primarily controlled by the Sadducees, but the synagogues were largely under the sway of the Pharisees. Thus the Sadducees directed the worship and ritual of the people, but the Pharisees were their teachers. The Jewish Historian Josephus remarked that the Pharisees were "... the most persuasive among the citizens. And all the sacrifice and prayer offered to God happens to be according to their interpretation" (Antiquities, 18.12-15).

The Pharisees were vehement supporters of the Mishnah, a group of sixty-three dissertations on the meaning of the law as applied to various areas of Jewish life and culture. The purported authority of the Mishnah is described in one of these essays. "Moses received the Torah [the law] from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders and the elders to the prophets; and the prophets committed it to the men of the Great Congregation. These said three things: "Be deliberate in judgment"; "Raise up many disciples"; and "Make"

a hedge for the Torah" (Mishnah, Aboth Aboth 1.1). It was this final directive to "make a hedge" that led to so many of the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees.

Since judgment was to be based exclusively on the law given to Moses, it necessarily involved, according to their theory, the work of interpreting that law. This interpretation was often the source of great deliberation and debate. It was not enough to merely let the law speak for itself, but they must "make a hedge" so that no one might unintentionally or casually transgress. To do this, they began to define in great detail exactly what was and was not meant by every command and prohibition in the law. These legal commentaries, both written and oral, were the "traditions of the elders" (rf. Matt. 15:2).

It is here that we meet the great irony of the Pharisees. The system designed to help people keep the law became the source of their condemnation. For the voluminous minutiae of legalistic detail contained in these traditions were far beyond the grasp of the average citizen. Only those professionally trained in the law (i.e., the traditions) could possibly hope to understand. (We might compare this to the modern situation in which seemingly simple everyday matters of business require the employment of professional attorneys to decipher the legal jargon involved.)

Thus it came to be that the simple command, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work ..." (Exo. 20:10), came to be so complicated. A person must make sure that he has no needle held in the fabric of his cloak, for that would be carrying a burden on the Sabbath. A man must not sit in a chair causing it to slide across the floor, for it would disturb the dust and he would be guilty of plowing on the Sabbath. A woman must not look into a mirror, for she would certainly see a gray hair and be compelled to pluck it out, and thereby be condemned for reaping on the Sabbath. Yet if a man strategically placed

certain articles of food at specific locations, the location could be declared to be a part of his home, and thus he would be allowed to travel far beyond the normal Sabbath day's journey of 2,000 paces. Such legalistic trivialities are the very essence of these traditions.

The Pharisees thus sat themselves up as the interpreters of the law. It is in this capacity that Jesus refers to them as hypocrites. This word is a transliteration of the Greek, and is often explained as referring to the actor on a stage that plays a part. Thus it is said a hypocrite is one who pretends to be something he is not. This is one particular application of the word in certain secular Greek writings, and fits well with the modern usage of the term. But it is unlikely that this is what the New Testament has in mind when it speaks of a hypocrite.

The word is used in various forms twenty-six times in the New Testament. (The King James Version in the Old Testament also uses this word, but it is from a Hebrew word meaning "corrupt, wicked, and ungodly" and is not related to the New Testament term.) It is a composite of two words, *hupo*-, meaning "*under*," and *krites*, meaning "*judge*." Thus the hypocrite is literally the "*under-judge*," or one who judges the deeper meanings of a thing. It refers to one who analyzes and studies a text in order to determine its deepest meanings, and then gives a studied interpretation of its meaning. It basically means an expositor. (We can readily see how this might come to be applied to an actor who studied a script and gave an interpretation of it in his performance.)

Now of the twenty-six times this term is used in the New Testament, twenty-three times it is used by Jesus, and in all but one of those instances, the context shows he is speaking about or to the Pharisees. In Matthew 6:2, 5, 16 and 7:5, he is describing the religion of the Pharisees (rf. Matt. 5:20) in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 15:7, 16:3, and 22:18, he answers challenges brought by the Pharisees. In Matthew 23:13, 14,15,23,25,27,28,29, he expounds on

the sins of the Pharisees. (Parallels to these passages are found in Mark 7:6; 12:15; Luke 6:42; 11:44; 12:1, 56). Finally in Luke 13:15, he addresses the ruler of the synagogue, which was in most cases a Pharisee. Only in Matthew 24:51 is there no explicit or implicit reference in the context to Pharisees, and even here it might be argued that since this follows so closely on the diatribe of chapter 23, it is the Pharisees that he has in mind here.

Why is it that the Pharisees are so closely connected with this term? And why has the word come to mean someone who pretentiously puts on an air of righteousness without any real substance to it? The answer lies in the Pharisees' own teachings and actions.

They claimed to be the only true expositors of the law, and looked down on others as "this people who knoweth not the law" (John 7:49). They attempted to bind their views on others. Jesus said, "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matt. 23:4). While meticulously parsing every command to its finest possible detail, they "have omitted the weightier matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23). In short, they were legalistic nitpickers who attempted to make issues of every item of interpretation, but were utterly ignorant of the divine truths of God's word and utterly unwilling and unable to perform the duties they required of others. It is the actions of these Pharisees that give the term hypocrite its meaning today. This then is the background of our text.

OUR TEXT CONSISTS OF A COMMAND, A PRINCIPLE, AND AN ILLUSTRATION.

The command (vs. 1)

This straightforward directive is not difficult to understand. Only those wishing to justify some particular sin of their own, and willing to utterly ignore the context, could find here an absolute prohibition on any and all forms of judgment. Such a sweeping declaration would prevent teachers from assigning grades to their students, doctors from restricting the unhealthy behavior of their patients, and magistrates from incarcerating dangerous criminals. And all of this just to hold on to some sinful practice!

The command to "judge not" occurs three other times in the New Testament. The first is a parallel to our passage. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). This verse clearly demonstrates the principle of the Golden Rule, that is, we should treat others as we wish to be treated. In the second passage, Jesus states, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Here the same verse that condemns superficial judgment requires righteous judgment. Finally, Paul writes, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). This verse prohibits premature judgment, and reminds us that there is a final judgment that God reserves for himself. In none of these verses is there an absolute prohibition, yet each restricts the kind of judgment that can be given.

So it is in our text. As the succeeding verses clearly show, Jesus is saying that our judgment of others will stand against us when we are judged.

The principle (vs. 2)

The law you cite against another is the very law you must abide in, and the standard you use to criticize another is the very standard applied to you.

This reasoning is applied in other Scriptures to teach similar ideas. Jesus' applies it to our reception of the truth. "And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given" (Mark 4:24). He also uses it to teach generosity. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). Just as those who hear eagerly will be taught freely, and those who give liberally will be blessed abundantly, so in our passage we learn that those who judge tenderly will themselves be judged tenderly.

Therefore we must be ever on guard against harsh and merciless judgment of others. "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment ... Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" (James 2:13; 5:9).

The illustration (vs. 3-5)

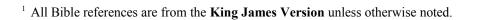
Jesus gives an exaggeratedly ludicrous picture of the man who would bring judgment against another for that which he himself has done. He describes a man trying to remove the mote, or speck, from another's eye, while he himself has a beam lodged in his own eye. Never let it be said that Jesus lacked a sense of humor. The sarcasm of this illustration is nothing less than a stinging ridicule of the hypocritical Pharisee.

Could someone ever be guilty of such incongruous behavior? Consider the case of David, who when informed by Nathan of the vile actions of a rich man who had slaughtered his neighbor's pet sheep, then heard the ringing condemnation, "*Thou art the man*" (rf. 2 Sam. 12:1-9). How easily we see the faults of others, and how blind we are to our own.

CONCLUSION

Judgment is a necessary part of wisdom and maturity. But be cautious in your judgment of others. Show mercy and love. In the words of the fictional Atticus Finch, "A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up." (Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird, 1960) Let us determine to judge righteously.

END NOTES



ADMONITIONS FROM THE LORD Matthew 7:6-20

By Richard Mansel

INTRODUCTION

⁶Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ve your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? ¹²Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. 13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. 15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 1

Participating in this lectureship again is an honor. It is an excellent endeavor and a blessing to those who have attended and participated through the years. Special thanks are given to those who have labored to make this successful.

The Sermon on the Mount is a compelling section of Scripture filled with teachings that are as fresh as ever. Their universal principles transcend time and place. Jesus' teachings are just what we need today as we seek to better understand discipleship.

Thoughts on the sermon

Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount are the equivalent of a bolt of lightning. Nothing is recorded of the reaction to the Sermon, but I expect it was monumental. He occasionally sets His teachings against those of the day by prefacing them with, "Ye have heard that it was said...but I say." He was a force that the status quo of the day would have to reckon with.

The sermon is one of the greatest passages in all of Scripture. "Simple and straightforward in its pronouncements, the Sermon on the Mount has long been recognized as the loftiest ideal for human conduct ever conceived." ² Augustine said that it was the "perfect pattern of the Christian life." ³ Even Mahatma Gandhi called it the "world's finest collection of ethical teaching." ⁴

MATTHEW 7:6

Matthew 7:1-5 is a challenging passage detailing the prohibition of improper judging on the part of man. Jesus says, "*Judge not, that ye be not judged*" (Matthew 7:1-5). He then provides an example of the kind of judging He condemns and closes with an admonition against hypocrisy.

Jesus, in 7:7-12, expands on the idea of prayer and unselfish sharing. The question then arises as to how 7:6 fits into the chapter. Is it a random thought? Or, does it fit into one or the other lines of thinking?

Righteous judging means that we do not judge others in ways we would not wish to be judged by God at the final judgment. "The judging that is forbidden is when we put the worst possible interpretation on the actions of another. We make everyone guilty until proven innocent through hasty, unfounded and slanderous judgment." ⁵

In 7:1, Jesus says not to judge. Then in 7:5, He warns us not to be hypocritical; someone play acting being a faithful Christian. Finally, He closes the thought with another application of His previous point.

Jesus' comments in 7:6 are said to be "an inevitable corollary" of what is written in 7:1-5. 6

If Our Lord had finished His teaching with those first five verses, it would undoubtedly have led to a false position. Men and women would be so careful to avoid the terrible danger of judging in that wrong sense that they would exercise no discrimination, no judgment whatsoever. There would be no such thing as church discipline in the church, and the whole of the Christian life would be chaotic. ⁷

While somewhat exaggerated, he makes a valid point. We must utilize wisdom when we speak to others about their souls. We have sufficient examples from the life of Christ.

In Luke 23:8-11, Jesus refused to dignify Herod's mocking questions with answers. Yet, on many other occasions, He was willing to talk and help in any way to accommodate the person's search for truth (John 4). Paul and Barnabas preached to the Jews and were treated with contempt. Paul said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it away from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

Later, in Acts 18:6, Paul said, "And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." They had wasted their opportunities at salvation. Jesus said that holy things should not be given to dogs, nor pearls to swine (Matthew 7:6).

"Dogs" were not the domesticated variety that we have today. They were wild, filthy (Proverbs 26:11) and threatening (Psalm 22:16-20). To be eaten by a dog was a terrible curse (1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24).

"The picture is that of a priest throwing a piece of flesh from the altar of burnt offering to one of the numerous dogs which infest the streets of Eastern cities." 8

Casting pearls before swine presents an image of tossing something valuable to something unworthy (1 Timothy 2:9; Revelations 17:4; 18:12,16).

Small pearls, called by jewelers' seed-pearls, would resemble the maize on which the swine feed. They would rush upon them when scattered, and, discovering the cheat, would trample upon them and turn their tusks upon the man who scattered them. ⁹

The rapid turn of the swine shows how quickly the Gentiles turned on Paul and Barnabas, and subsequently on all who proclaim the gospel (2 Timothy 3:12). The word "rend" means to "tear in pieces" ¹⁰ and inflict a "long tear or rip," underlying the seriousness of the Lord's warning. ¹¹

The gospel is the pearl of greatest price. It is a treasure wrapped in gold. To dispense such a bounty to despisers of truth and God is to waste our efforts. This does not mean that we stop teaching the lost. We instead use wisdom in looking for those who will be good candidates for salvation.

What is precious is not to be forced upon those who have no appreciation for it. The situation is too urgent, the harvest is too plentiful, and the laborers are too few to waste time and resources on those who cannot appreciate the precious gospel of Christ. ¹²

Sometimes, the time comes when we must move on and leave someone to deal with his or her refusal to come to the Lord. Matthew 10:14, "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet." But, this doesn't make it any easier.

MATTHEW 7:7-12

Prayer is a personal connection to God that Christians enjoy like no one else. God's love spreads to all men, but sin separates man from God, so "that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). Therefore, the unrepentant man can pray and God will not hear his prayer.

"In a movie years ago, the heroine had spells where she was unable to be seen or heard by the public. During these moments murderers, who were able to see her, would chase her. Being invisible to those who could offer assistance, she was unable to plead for help." ¹³

Satan is "seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8), so we must turn to God and live (Ezekiel 18:32). It is incumbent if we wish to open the avenue of prayer to God, that we are faithful. In the prayer of the righteous, we will find extraordinary comfort. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

Jesus says that if we will ask, seek and knock, the peace of God that comes from prayer will be ours. Ask, seek and knock are in the present tense, which means we should continually be turning to God in prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17). God blesses persistence in prayer (Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8) because it indicates our helplessness and reliance on God (Matthew 6:31-34). "Prayer is the highest use to which speech can be put."

Asking, seeking and knocking are interesting for two reasons. First, while it may be of minor importance, the first letters of each word is "a-s-k," which may indicate a further entreaty to petition God in prayer for His assistance in our lives. Second, it seems to indicate a "rising scale of intensity." ¹⁴

Asking God for help implies humility and a realization of our helplessness. In Genesis 22:14, Abraham calls God, "*Jehovah-jireh*" or, "God will provide" (Genesis 22:14). God will

provide all that we need but we must believe that He can do so (Matthew 21:22). A failure to ask means that we do not believe God can answer (James 4:2).

Seeking means that we actively look for something. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Victor Frankl was a psychotherapist who spent three terrifying years at Auschwitz. He writes that after the liberation he came to a beautiful, flowered field and sank to his knees and prayed repeatedly to God.

"At that moment there was very little I knew of myself or of the world-I had but one sentence in mind-always the same: "I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and He answered me in the freedom of space." How long I knelt there and repeated this sentence memory can no longer recall. But I know that on that day, in that hour, my new life started. Step for step I progressed, until I again became a human being." ¹⁵

Jesus promises that righteous prayers will be answered (7:8). That is, we will ask, seek and knock and find satisfaction. He then illustrates this with a contrast between human and heavenly fathers. He notes that even sinful fathers give good things to their children. Likewise, God will most certainly bless His children. However, the heavenly Father is unlike the earthly Father in that He is perfect and knows all that we need before we ask (Romans 8:26-28).

Jesus is making a promise to enrich our peace of mind. "If what he gives us in response to our asking is not the best for us, then God is not as good as an earthly parent." ¹⁶ And we know that God is always good (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 52:1; 1 John 1:5; et al).

In 7:12, we have the so-called "Golden Rule" enumerated. Jesus asks that we always treat others the way we would want to be treated. It is often separated from the flow of 7:7-11. Yet, it fits well

God provides that for which we ask, seek and knock because of His goodness and love. Moreover, the "Golden Rule" means that God will treat man as He would like to be treated, if He were man. He promises something and it happens. We should expect no less of God.

Man, in his weakness, must try to emulate God in exhibiting the "Golden Rule." It is in Him that we accomplish these good deeds toward others (Ephesians 1:3). "The proper love and care for others must be regulated by God's revealed will." ¹⁷ In all things, Scripture is our guide and pattern.

To treat others as we wish to be treated is very difficult. The depth of this command is imposing. We love and forgive ourselves to an extent we would never consider of others. We are patient, forgiving and accepting of our faults, generally. Yet, with others we may be suspicious, short-tempered and distrusting. To be fair to them, as we are of ourselves, will take trust in God and courage to be open before men.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones discusses this passage and says that we should make a list of all the things that we like or dislike in reference to ourselves.

Having drawn up this list of all our likes and dislikes, when we come to deal with other people we have nothing to do but to say quite simply: 'That other person is exactly as I am in these matters'. We must put ourselves constantly in their position. In our conduct and behavior with respect to them we must be careful to do, and not to do, all the things which we have found to be pleasing or displeasing to ourselves. ¹⁸

Matthew 7:13-14

This passage is completely antithetical to today's postmodern mindset. These two verses deny any middle ground. One is either lost or saved. No other options exist.

"The ark is a powerful illustration for understanding the church. God had Noah build an ark and placed the righteous in it and sealed the door (Genesis 7:1-16). The rain began and everyone else on earth, the unrighteous, died. Only those

who were in God's ark survived (1 Peter 3:20,21). God had added them and they lived because of their faithful life." ¹⁹

Men may designate three groups; the lost, the saved and the good people. But, Jesus lists the lost and the saved that constitute all of mankind (Matthew 25:46).

Cornelius was "a devout man" who was extraordinary in all ways. He would be called a very good man in most societies in all of history. Yet, he was lost spiritually (Acts 10).

"The narrowness consists of the restrictions, disciplines, and requirements throughout the whole area of Christian living." ²⁰ The New Testament is clear about the desire for the unity among believers (Ephesians 4:1-16; John 17:20-23; et al). Yet, it is also clear in stressing obedience to Christ and His Word (Acts 5:29; John 14:15; 15:10; 1 John 5:1-5, et al). It is also unabashed in the consequences of disobedience (Luke 13:3,5; 2 Thessalonians 1:8, et al).

McGarvey explains Jesus' word picture vividly. He says eternal life and eternal destruction are pictured as two walled cities.

The one having a wide gate and a broad road leading to it; and the other, a strait gate approached by a narrow path. It is implied that care and precision are necessary in order to enter the latter; hence the few that find it: but that none is needed in order to enter the former; hence the many who go in thereat. ²¹

This passage obliterates universalism, which says that all men will be saved. This is absolutely false. Scripture is filled with conditional statements. If man does something, then God will do something. Or, if we do this, judgment will come. Moreover, Matthew 7:21 says, "Not everyone one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." And 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 tells us that when Jesus returns with his angels, he will come in "flaming fire taking vengeance on them who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

MATTHEW 7:15-20

In this study we have examined Jesus' wish that we will utilize the wisdom He has given us to make godly decisions. That we will choose righteous judging over unrighteous labeling in our interpersonal relationships, profitable soil over hard hearts in evangelism, unselfishness over selfishness in human relations and God's way over Satan's lies.

Finally, we come to the last section of our study and the theme continues. Jesus warns His hearers to properly discern the words of those who would stand and present truth.

We are told to "beware," which means to "turn our mind to" something. ²² We must focus a discerning eye on those who preach and teach God's Word.

Paul warns, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Paul, speaking of the Bereans said, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). We are commanded to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

The New Testament often warns Christians to avoid false teachers and prophets (2 Timothy 4:1-5; Ezekiel 13:1-6). False teachers are those who speak deceitfully in order to lead people away from truth. They offer peace where there is no peace and salvation where it does not exist. They do whatever can be done to make men happy, even at the expense of God's truth. Isaiah 30:10 says, "and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."

False teachers replace doctrine with a faux form of love and acceptance. They will rarely address scripture and when they do, will claim special understanding and wrench it from its context. Their doctrine will be fluid enough to incorporate all those whom they wish to call brethren. It will contain enough truth to make it palatable, but enough poison to kill one's soul.

False teachers claim superior love, compassion and knowledge. They eschew all standards and patterns in Scripture. They prefer flexibility in doctrine and fellowship so as to accommodate the ears of men.

Note the following insight on false teachers:

[He] very rarely tells you anything about the holiness, the righteousness, the justice, and the wrath of God. He always preaches about the love of God, but those other things he does not mention. He does not say that he does not believe these truths. No; that is not the difficulty. The difficulty with him is that he says nothing about them. He does not mention them at all. ²³

Satan, we are told, will appear righteous as well as his followers (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). He is the father of lies and a deceiver (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9). And he knows that an unabashed lie will never prevail. Instead, his message (and that of his angels) contains just enough truth in order to get men to accept it. But when men consume it, it brings death.

CONCLUSION

This fascinating passage of Scripture yields many teachings for men to absorb into their lives. Christ presents a standard of conduct in this sermon that we must try to incorporate. "The standard by which we are confronted is that found in the Sermon on the Mount, and by it we are all crashed to the ground and made to realize our utter hopelessness and our desperate need of grace." ²⁴

END NOTES

- ¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture will be from the *King James Version*
- ² R.H. Mounce, "The Sermon on the Mount," in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*_edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:411.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Richard Mansel, "How Dare You Judge Me!" http://tinyurl.com/pkkfv September 26, 2006.
- ⁶ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 183.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Marvin R. Vincent, Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament (Peabody: Hendrickson, n.d.), 1:49.
- ⁹ Ibid., 1:49-50.
- ¹⁰Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977), 562.
- ¹¹Vincent, 1:50
- ¹²Brian Kenyon, *The Sermon on the Mount* (n.p.: Florida School of Preaching, 2002), 41.
- ¹³Richard Mansel, "Can God Hear You? (Part One)" http://tinyurl.com/cax2e
- ¹⁴ Kenyon, 41.
- ¹⁵ Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), 142.
- ¹⁶H. Leo Boles, A Commentary on The Gospel According to Matthew (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1964), 177.
- ¹⁷ Kenyon, 43.
- ¹⁸Lloyd-Jones, 207-208.
- ¹⁹Richard Mansel, "Must We Be Members of the Church Jesus Built?" http://tinyurl.com/hfpvr September 29, 2006.
- ²⁰James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1974), 97.
- ²¹J.W. McGarvey, *The New Testament Commentary Volume 1—Matthew and Mark* (Delight, Arkansas: Gospel Light Publishing, 1875), 72.
- ²²Kenyon, 45-46.
- ²³Lloyd-Jones, 245.
- ²⁴Ibid., 199.

HE THAT DOETH THE WILL Matthew 7:21 – 29

By Riley Nelson

INTRODUCTION

²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. ²⁴Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ²⁵And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. ²⁶And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: ²⁷And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. ²⁸And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: ²⁹For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.¹

The passage written above perhaps is one of the best know of all passages in the Bible. It stands to tell all mankind that God's will must be obeyed. If man will obey God's will he can stand the greatest storm that life might send his way. The content of this great message surely tells us why the people were astonished. Jesus knew who He was when He spoke those words. He was and is the Son of the Living God.

NOT EVERY ONE

Perhaps one of the most tragic lies that Satan has perpetrated on the world is the idea that everyone will be saved as long as they have some belief in God. When a great celebrate dies the world automatically assumes they are bound for heaven. Jesus did not teach this pseudo doctrine. This is a doctrine that men have come up with in order to appease the minds of those left behind, and to give a false feeling of comfort about the departed. Of following the doctrines of men,

Jesus said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

Jesus teaching was that not even those who think themselves to be "Christians" will be saved unless they are doing "the will of the Father". In the world today there are over two thousand religious organizations. If even a surface study of all that is taught by these groups was to be compared to the Bible (God's will), many discrepancies would surface.

There are those who teach that salvation comes by only believing in God:

"Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort" - *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, 1972 Edition, p. 55.

"Baptism is not essential to salvation...; but it is essential to obedience, since Christ has commanded it. It is also essential to a public confession of Christ before the world, and to membership in the church..." - *Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* by Hiscox, p. 21 (via *Handbook of Religious Quotations*).

"...faith is the sole condition to experiencing the new birth ... Water baptism is ... administered only to those who have already been saved. ...faith alone, without the added step of baptism, assures the forgiveness of sin, the promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the gift of everlasting life ... [B]aptism ... has nothing to do with washing away sin or with a person's justification" - Sermon by an advocate of "faith only." ²

While this doctrine surely gives comfort to those who believe it, the Bible does not teach such. Of being justified by faith only James wrote,

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? ¹⁷Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ¹⁸Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. ¹⁹Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. ²⁰But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered

Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:14-26).

Then as to whether or not Baptism is essential to salvation we again turn to the scriptures to find the answer. When Peter spoke to the crowd on the day of Pentecost he convinced them that Jesus was the Son of God, and that they had crucified the very same. When they came to this realization they stopped Peter and said, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) The response given by the Apostle shows that faith alone would not save those people. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). They were to be baptized "for" the remission of their sins. Some try and circumvent this teaching by saying that the word "for" means "because of". In other words be baptized because your sins are already forgiven. This is an incorrect rendering of this passage. Brother Guy N. Woods wrote the following concerning this teaching:

"To the foregoing, objection is made that baptism in "because of' remission of sins, and that such is the significance of the preposition "for" in the passage under consideration. The view thus taken with reference to baptism makes the passage read ... be baptized every one of you... "because of" the remission of sins. This is precisely what is contended by those who deny the essentiality of baptism. But a portion of the sentence is lacking. Inserting it, what follows? "Repent and be baptized.... 'because of' the remission of sins." This is a singular situation, truly.

The bitterest opponents of baptism would scarcely be heard to say that repentance is because of remission of sin. Logically and grammatically, however, this conclusion must follow. The verbs "repent," and "be baptized," are joined by the copulative conjunction "and." They are thus equally related to their object, which in this sentence bears to its object, baptism also bears, seeing that it has the same

object and that its relation is expressed by the same proposition. There is an inflexible rule of language touching on this very point. "The sense of a word cannot be diverse or multiform at the same time and in the same place." Again, "In no language can a word have more than one literal meaning in the same place" (Ernesti, pp. 9,11). In the sentence before us, the relation of the verbs "repent," and "be baptized," to their object "remission," is expression by the preposition "for." It must therefore follow that "for" cannot meant "because of," as to baptism, and "in order to" as to repentance, seeing that a word cannot have two meanings at the same time and in the same place. But since repentance is clearly "in order to" the remission of sins in the passage, so also is baptism. Dr. Hackett, a distinguished translator and author, and a member of the Baptist church, was led by these considerations to write: Eis aphesin hamartioon, in order to the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28; Luke 3:3); we cannot, naturally, with both preceding verbs. This clause states the motive or object which should induce them tot repent and be baptized. It enforces the entire exhortation, not one part of it to the exclusion of the other: (Hackett's Commentary on Acts)."³

Many denominational groups also teach salvation through prayer, leaving out the importance of obedience to God's will. The very words of the text in verse 21 tell that simply praying to God will not save. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." The sect known as the Pharisees were greatly devoted to prayer, yet failed to keep God's commands. Mohammedans and Romanists have fallen under the same delusion. They are seen to be strict observers of prayer yet fail to follow direct command of God. Prayer without obedience will not save anyone.⁴

Obedience to the will of God is a theme that runs through the entire Bible. In both the Old and New testaments God has revealed to man what to do in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. Under the Old Law the blood of animals was sacrifice a foreshadowing the supreme sacrifice of the blood of Christ; and by obedience to God's commands mans sins are forgiven. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (Heb. 5:8,9). God has never left man to find his own way, He has provided the way.

Many will say to me

The horridness of Satan's lie is seen in verse twenty-two. Many. Many does not give a number but an idea; an idea that millions will lose their soul by believing Satan. This verse points to honest and sincere people who believe them selves to be religious, and religiously correct. They are like the Apostle Paul who said, "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). The attitude that is needed by these individuals is that of the Bereans's of whom it is recorded, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

There are many millions of people who are "good" people. They help others, using their time, talents, and money. They are honest in their dealings with their fellow man. Yet they have failed to come to a proper understanding of God's will. Cornelius was just such a man. Luke recorded of him, "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:1,2). Even with such a sterling resume, Cornelius still needed to obey the gospel. The account tells of how he was told to send for Simon Peter, and how when Peter arrived, Cornelius had gathered in his kinsmen and near friends. When the message was presented Cornelius listened and obeyed.

These "good" people need to have the attitude shown by the Ethiopian nobleman who when asked if he understood what he was reading, welcomed the preacher Phillip to come up in the chariot and teach him (Acts 8).

I never knew you, depart from me

Verse twenty-three serves to underscore the lesson Jesus is presenting in this section. While they believed themselves to be working so hard for the Lord, it was according to their ideas and misconceptions and those of others.

The word *knew* according to [Hebraistic] usage has the sense of knowledge or approval favorable to the person addressed.⁵ These had labored in the manner they thought was right and in the way they felt God would accept them. Again the atrocity of Satan's lie is plainly seen. Isaiah guided by inspiration wrote, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8). God has given us His will and it is not to be altered (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18, 19).

Perhaps the most unnerving words in the entire text are, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Those, to whom these words will be spoken, know about the wrath of God. They will have read of the place called, "hell" where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. A place called outer darkness, yet flames of torment rise continually. The words of the Hebrew writer are known to them, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

It is clearly seen how important it is to be a student of God's word, and to have an open mind and heart to the teachings found within. Paul's admonition to Timothy was and is very important to those seeking to please God. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). David's penned, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

The wise and the foolish

Jesus uses the wise builder and the foolish builder to drive home the point of His lesson on obedience. In the words of the text nothing is found as to how much effort was put into the task by the builders. They both built houses, however their foundations were different.

Those who seek to please God must make sure their foundation is sure. They must build on the Rock, Christ Jesus. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

Jesus also point out the character of a true seeker. He listens to God's word, and he does what is required. It is not enough just to hear. James wrote:

'But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world' (James 1: 22 – 27).

This great sermon presented by Jesus showed the people that there was more to religion that simply seeming to be religious. The true follower of God obeys God and lives each day to serve His master, knowing he can be secure in Jesus.

The concluding remarks by Matthew proclaims to all that when Jesus taught it was with authority. McGarvey makes the comment that, "Well might this astonish a people who, thought they had learned to respect his goodness of character, were not yet believers in his divinity". It stands to astonish many in the world today. May all come to know and obey this one called Jesus.

END NOTES

¹ All scripture references are from the King James Version.

² David E. Pratts, 1986, 2000. *Salvation by Faith Only or Alone VS Believing plus Obedience, Words, and Baptism*. Round Lake Beach, IL: Church of Christ. On-line. Available from Internet, http://www.gospelway.com, accessed 5 October 2006.

³ Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers Volume II*. (Nashville TN: Gospel Advocate Co. 1986) pp. 317,318

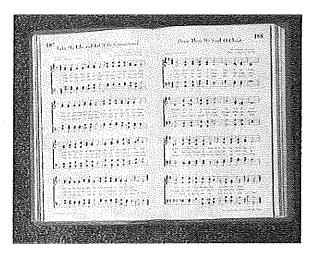
⁴ J.W. McGarvey, *The New Testament Commentary, Vol. I. Matthew and Mark.* (Delight, ARK. Gospel Light Publishing Company 1875) pp.72, 73.

⁵ Ibid, p. 73

⁶ Ibid, p. 74.

Lessons

From Songs



THE TWELFTH ANNUAL
SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 27, 28 2006
HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA HWY.144 EAST

PREFACE

Singing praise to God is one of the great privileges afforded to those who love God. It is a way that we can reach into our being and proclaim to all the love God has for us and the love we have for Him. David spoke of the joy of singing praise to God in the Psalms; "Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant" (Psalm 135:3), While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being" (Psalm 146:2), Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord Selah" (Psalm 68:32).

Songs are a way of teaching, just as God has intended; "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). This teaching tool must not go unnoticed by a congregation of God's people, it should be used to it fullest extent. Congregations should spend time working together (singing together) to make this part of their worship to God the best that it can be. Most make sure that the preaching is scriptural and presented well and this must be done. However the same emphasis ought to be placed on singing as well. Just as error can be taught from the pulpit, it can be sung from the pew. For this reason the words of our songs should be examined and compared to God's word. If a song is determined to teach error, it should not be used. However it must be said that one should not be dogmatic in examining songs as poetic license has a part is song writing. Several times I have been told that I was wrong for not singing certain songs which I view to be unscriptural. Yet I know I could not preach the same lesson which the song in question teaches. There are more than enough

scriptural songs that this ought not to be a problem in any congregation seeking to be pleasing to

God.

I am thankful for the Richmond Hill Church as they have always deemed singing to be

important. Each month the last Sunday night of the month is used to practice and learn new

songs. We have been blessed through the years to have several excellent song leaders. On two

occasions we have had Brother James Rodgers to come and direct singing schools for the

congregation. In fact the topic for this year's lecture series was suggested by one of our song

leaders, Jeff Cowart. This emphasis on song shows forth as we praise God in song during our

worship services.

Thanks needs to be given for the men who have studied and worked to present this

volume concerning songs. Many hours of study and thought went into these lessons. As you read

this work, it is my hope that you come to a better understanding of the importance of singing,

and may we all take advantage of the opportunities we have to praise God in song.

Riley Nelson

Richmond Hill Church of Christ

October 27, 2007

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DEDICATION

As one who led singing for many years, I can attest that many times it is a thankless job. Some never stop to think of the time and effort it takes to choose songs appropriate for worship, and to be able to stand before a crowd of people and direct singing.

Over the years we have been blessed to have several men who could and would lead our singing. Among former leaders (they still lead on occasion) are Rod Miller, Louis Cowart, and Andrew Nelson. Currently our leaders are Jeff Cowart, Patrick Quinlan, Mark Nelson, and Rob Mitchell. It is my pleasure to dedicate this volume to our song leaders at the Richmond Hill Church of Christ. These men spend time practicing and working to make our singing what it needs to be.

Riley Nelson

Twelfth Annual Southeast Georgia Lectures

Held at the Church of Christ Richmond Hill Georgia Highway 144 East P.O. Box 786 Richmond Hill GA 31324

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THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL

By Ronnie Ulrey

INTRODUCTION

What a tremendous song this is, one that covers the whole history of humanity, from Adam, the first person on earth, to the last who reaches the age of accountability.

It was written by Brother J.M. McCaleb, and was arranged by R.M. McIntosh, which leads me to think that Brother McCaleb was a writer of poems, and without knowing for sure, may have written other poems or songs.

When one reads of the unselfishness of this pioneer preacher in foreign fields, one is further impressed by the words of the song. Brother McCaleb labored for three decades in Japan. He went in 1892. This field of labor was not one that was popular with many of his brethren, especially as hostilities that began to build, which led to war. I wonder how many times McCaleb may have heard discouraging words about preaching the Gospel in that particular field. He probably heard it, at least implied, that some were not worthy of the Gospel. Nevertheless, the words of his song clearly teach that all, regardless of where they may be found on the earth, are worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have the right to seek salvation or to hear the Gospel. Notice what James says about discrimination in these verses:

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to

the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my foot stool: are ye not then partial in yourselves and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called? If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors James 2:1-9.

Surely it bothers us when brethren talk as though there is a class of people, determined by race, social standing or whatever, that are not worthy of the Gospel. We need to beware that we do not become so aloof and smug that we forget that Jesus was the great physician who came to heal those who were sick and did not predetermine whether they were worthy by some invented standard of worthiness. Note what Jesus did:

And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them, but their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They

that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance Luke 5:27-32."

This reminds us of the segregation of the 1940's -60's. There were black and white restrooms, water fountains, restaurants, motels, etc. Shame on us! I am old enough to remember this, but many of you are not.

We are told that the "Grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men," Titus 2:11. We are also told how God's people are to live and how this is made possible by the death of Jesus Christ.

"Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; look for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works Titus 2:12-14."

Paul, in speaking to an idolatrous Gentile audience, did not retreat from them, but actually complimented these idolatrous people, calling them "very religious," Acts 17:22. They worshipped everything, the sun, moon and stars. He understood that the Gospel was for all men everywhere (Acts 17:22-31). Jesus came to save all of the lost. "For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He went to a centurion and praised his worthiness (Luke 7:9). He sat and taught publicans and sinners at a time when it was popular for religious leaders to avoid them, Matt. 9:10. Jesus received a woman of Canaan, a gentile, and after calling her a dog, blessed her by healing her daughter, Matt. 15: 21-28. He spent time with a

Leper (Luke 5:12-14). You get the idea. Jesus excluded no one! Surely we cannot do differently and still claim to follow his example.

How do you feel about teaching someone with AIDS or some other infectious disease? I suppose we should be very careful, but the fact remains that they have the right to accept or reject the Gospel no matter what disease they have.

Is there a better lesson from Peter than learning the Gospel is for all? Consider what else Peter had to learn. He learned that foods were no longer "common or unclean" (Acts 10:15), and neither were Gentiles viewed in this way anymore. He was the person Cornelius sent for, to teach him the truth.

While Peter thought on the vision, the spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get the down and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek; what is the cause wherefor ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto

them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" Acts 10:19-28.

He finally learned the intent of all of these events, and that is that "in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:34.35). Later Peter would explain what happened, basically saying; that all must be taught the Gospel (Acts 11:18). And even later when the council would meet in Jerusalem, Peter once again explained that there was now no difference between the Jews and Gentiles saying:

Men and brethren, Ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe. And God which knowth the hearts bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" Acts 15:7-9.

Paul said that Jew and Gentile were no longer two, but one (Eph. 2:14-18). Is there a difference today? Does a sheet need to be let down today to teach us that the Gospel is for all?

In the 1960's we started a new congregation in Mooresville, N.C. During our door knocking campaign, it didn't even occur to us to cover the black section which was just behind the church building. How sad. Now let me present a person to you and see if he is worthy of the Gospel. This is a person that is very zealous in his opposition to Jesus and the church. He is described as a "blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious 1 Tim. 1:13." Is this person worthy of the Gospel? Would we go unto him? Would I? This person so described is Saul of Tarsus (1

Tim. 1:12-16), or, as we better know him, the apostle Paul. In the Timothy passages, Paul thanked the Lord Jesus for his salvation. And yet, there is another to consider also. Whereas all glory goes to Christ, someone had to take the Gospel to Saul and teach him (Acts 9:6). The Lord selected Annias to go to Saul and tell him what he needed to do. Annias had doubts and was afraid to go to Saul. I would have been afraid too. He had to be told that Saul was chosen by the Lord. What Annias thought didn't matter, but he went anyway. Read what the Bible said about him.

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake' Acts 9:10-16.

How frightening it must have been for Ananias to go to a man like Saul of Tarsus, knowing that he had killed many Christians, including Steven.

Remember Jeffery Dahmer? He committed cannibalism, sex crimes and murder against many boys and men. Would you have written him in prison and sent him tracts about Christ and salvation? Someone did, and he obeyed the Gospel before he was killed by a fellow inmate.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? Jews, Gentiles the lost, Publicans, sinners, Canaanites, lepers, blasphemers, persecutors, the injurious, murderers, and all men everywhere are worthy of the Gospel. Do we sometimes arbitrarily decide to set standards of being "worthy" of the Gospel, and set them so high that, in the final analysis, no one is worthy? If so, it is to our shame, for when we have done so we have outdone the Lord, who turned away from no one!

The Gospel is to be taken into the entire world "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). It is not a "Here it is, come and get it" Where would any of us be if someone hadn't come to get us? What if we had not met some arbitrary standard of worthiness, where would we be? Where would I be, if someone had not invited my wife and I to a church service? People are lost without the Gospel. They will remain so if we do not go. "The Gospel is for all!"

Fortunately, there was a brother named John McCaleb who had the spirit of a missionary and spent, some say 50 years, in the mission field of Japan and caused 33 more Christians to go to Japan and converted 1,000 Japanese to Christ, which caused the church of Christ to become the seventh largest protestant body in that country.

This song, "The Gospel Is for All" is a testimony of the dedication of one man to mission work that finally converted many from false religions, to the truth that is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Following are the words of this great song:

The Gospel Is For All

Of one the Lord has made the race Thru one has come the fall, Where sin has gone, must go his grace, The Gospel is for all.

Say not the heathen are at home
Beyond we have no call,
For why should we be blessed alone
The Gospel is for all.
Received ye freely, freely give
From every land they call,
Unless they hear, they cannot live:
The Gospel is for all.

(Chorus) The blessed Gospel is for all, The Gospel is for all; Where sin has gone, must go his grace, The Gospel is for all.

HOW GREAT THOU ART

Stacey W. Grant

INTRODUCTION

The blessings of the Almighty are too numerous to count! One of the greatest gifts afforded us Christians is singing praises to God (James. 5:13). Enjoying a personal devotional or one with others is likewise a most wonderful treat. Psalms are a powerful and effective force! This author is greatly appreciative of his relationship with the superb Richmond Hill congregation. Too, he is thankful yet again to be a part of the annual Richmond Hill Lectures.

Certainly, spiritual songs are a most valuable part of the Christian life. Far too often it is the case that we Christians underestimate the **pertinence**, **purpose**, and **power** of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sadly, many congregations put very little effort into enhancing congregational singing. Without diminishing the importance of the other acts of worship, this preacher is convinced that both strong preaching and powerful heart-felt singing are needed in the Lord's church. What would be the effect upon one who has been taught all his life that mechanical instruments are part of Christian worship, if he visits a congregation that takes singing seriously? Could great acappella singing assist him in becoming a Christian?

While a member of the former Plant Street congregation, Macon, Georgia, the author remembers very vividly his returning from a preaching engagement one Sunday summer afternoon. Because the meetinghouse's air conditioner would frequently "go on strike," the windows would be lifted and fans would be placed in the openings in an attempt to cool off the auditorium during the worship and other assemblies. As he turned onto Plant Street, he could hear the congregational singing almost two blocks away! The sound was very distinct; it was the sound of the brethren singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord. Furthermore, so great was the singing at Plant Street that individuals from the community would visit the congregation to "hear us sing." Likewise, brethren from other congregations

would visit to join in Plant Street's great congregational singing. The Lord knew perfectly well what He was doing when He commanded acappella singing exclusively for the church (Eph.5:19).

According to Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, spiritual songs are those that (A) exalt the person and power of Jehovah, (B) edify the brethren, and (C) educate the assembly in a reciprocal fashion,

Every member of the church has his favorite hymn. This writer's favorite is *Trust and Obey*. The hymn, *How Great Thou Art*, should likewise be a favorite of every faithful child of God. Its message is indeed soul stirring and insightful. Dear reader, have you ever been caught in a mighty windstorm or rainstorm? Such an event surely does remind us of how awesome our God is. The man credited for writing the poem that later became this mighty song recognized God as the origin of all things that exist. As with man, so it is with all things in existence—a cause is responsible for the effect. Nature testifies that there is a Supreme Creator. This lesson is designed to explore the thoughts set forth in this inspiring hymn.

THE MEANINGFUL AND MAGNIFICENT LYRICS OF THE SONG

Only those songs that are **completely** biblical in nature qualify as psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs. These songs are distinct in nature; they are never thought of as secular songs. At all times we must sing with the spirit and with the understanding, when it comes to singing praises to God (1 Cor.14:15). As a means of keeping congregational singing pure, all brethren must be taught that there are songs in many of the songbooks they use that are unscriptural in nature. For instance, the songs *Have A Little Talk With Jesus* and *I Love My Savior*, *Too* teach that we should pray to Jesus--an act that is foreign to the Scriptures. Truthfully, we can sing false doctrine as well as teach false doctrine.

In this age of "contemporary" worship and the like, some would have us believe that there are "different categories" of "Gospel music." Some of these purported Gospel songs have even used the instrumental portion of a secular song as a part of their supposed Gospel hymn. For this reason, these so-called Gospel songs receive heavy airplay on secular radio stations. Then there is the "new kid on the

block"—"Christian rap." In complete rebellion to the Master, some of our brethren have now utilized these two utterly offensive and unauthorized genres of "Gospel" music. What is most disheartening is that our youth are the ones targeted with these blasphemous practices. As it was in the days of the judges (Jdg.2:10) and the righteous king Josiah (2 Kngs.22:13), so it is now with many parents who negligently refuse to train children according to God's laws.

The song under discussion is one that congregations, families, and individuals can and should use in praise of God, for it unquestionably qualifies as a spiritual hymn. With these thoughts in mind, let us observe the lyrics of this most magnificent psalm.

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds (works) thy hands have made; I see the stars, I hear the rolling (mighty) thunder, thy power throughout the universe displayed.

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander, and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees. When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur, and see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing; sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in; that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin.

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation, and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart. Then I shall bow in humble adoration, and then proclaim: "My God, how great thou art!"

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee, how great thou art, how great thou art. Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee, how great thou art, how great thou art!

THE MEN BEHIND THE SONG

The history of this beloved song is seemingly providential and is worthy of our consideration.

The history of the hymn How Great Thou Art begins with Mr. Carl Gustaf Boberg (1859-1940). He was a Swedish pastor, editor, and member of the Swedish parliament. Mr. Boberg was enjoying a nice walk when a thunderstorm suddenly appeared out of nowhere. A severe wind began to blow. After the storm was over, Mr. Boberg looked out over the clear bay. He then heard a church bell in the distance. And the words to How Great Thou Art begin to form in his heart—O Lord, my God, When I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds Thy hands hath made...This poem, titled O Store Gud (O Great God) was published in 1891 in Witness of the Truth, the weekly newspaper that Boberg edited. It was later translated in German. In 1927, it was published in a Russian version of the German text. How Great

Thou Art was translated by Stuart K. Hine, the English missionary to Ukraine. He found some version of the Russian text and sang it at an evangelistic meeting with his wife. He then translated the first three stanzas into English, which was sung at an evangelistic meeting in England during World War One. He published the first three verses (in both English and Russian) in 1949 in Grace and Peace, a Russian evangelistic paper which he edited. He later wrote the fourth verse as a triumphant message of life eternal. Of the hymn's importance he said: "When we reach that heavenly home, we will fully understand the greatness of God, and will bow in humble adoration, saying to Him, O Lord my God, how great thou art"...Dr. J. Edwin Orr of Fuller Theological Seminary, is said to have brought the hymn to America. After hearing it sung in India, he introduced it to various Christian groups in America. In 1954, Dr. Cyrus Nelson of Gospel Light Publications copyrighted and published the song. How Great Thou Art was sung by George Beverly Shea at the London Crusade of Billy Graham evangelistic team in 1954. He later sang this song over 100 times during a revival in New York at a Billy Graham Crusade. This caused the hymn to receive new attention in Sweden and America and be published in several songbooks. Today millions across the world continue to sing this beautiful song. Giving God all the praise, glory, and honor for who He is-the Creator of this universe.2

One familiar with Holy Writ has probably studied the providence of God on numerous occasions. Trying to explain all the nuances of God's providence is far too great a task for us humans. Throughout the ages, the Lord has used the unsaved to accomplish His tasks and to benefit the saved. For example, God identified future Medo-Persian king Cyrus by name well over a century before he was born (Isaiah 44-45). As predicted, the Persian king Cyrus showed great kindness to the Jews who were returning from the captivity (Ezra 1-3). When Satan's henchmen were successful in having the work halted (Ezra 4), the Lord working through Persian king Darius provided the Jews the protection and provisions they needed to finish rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem (Ezra 5-6).

The well-respected King James Version of the Bible has done more for English speaking people than any other English version. When one studies how this version came into existence, he will see the "hand of God" involved. In a similar fashion, many of the psalms we sing today could be the result of God's providence.

THE MISSED OPPORTUNITIES REGARDING THE SONG

All of the individuals mentioned above represent mankind's ability to comprehend all Bible doctrines alike. Yes, this song is an illustration of how men of various nationalities and languages can agree on the matchless attributes of God. Therefore, they all could have found the Truth, were they seeking salvation (Heb.11:6). In fact, Mr. Boberg, as a "pastor," had to be well acquainted with the Scriptures prior to writing his ode to God. Nevertheless, it is not enough that one acknowledges God as Master; he must submit to the Lord on the Lord's terms. The young rich ruler wanted to serve God as long as it did not "interfere" with his life of luxury (Matt.19:16-22). Christ challenged him at his weakest point—his wallet. His joy, if he possessed any, turned instantly into sorrow when Jesus challenged him. He forfeited the greatest opportunity ever afforded a man; hopefully he later repented.

As the author was writing this lesson, Billy Graham was in the news because of his failing health. Think of countless millions of souls he has encouraged to remain on the "broad way" (Matt.7). Earlier this year, his wife passed away. She, like Sapphira (Acts 5), decided to "stand by her man" until her last breath. As the reader may be aware, two well-known denominational preachers, James Kennedy and Jerry Falwell, also passed away this year. Tragically, on the Judgment Day each of these individuals will hear the dreadful declaration: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt.7:23). Their reward for living a life of self-deception should remind the faithful to make their calling and election sure (2 Pet.1:10). Dear saint, in view of the individuals mentioned above, and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, live to make Paradise your serene prelude to Heaven--if the Lord does not return before your death (Luke 16:19-31; 23:43).

THE MESSAGE OF THE SONG

First, the song instructs us to respect God's person. The phrase, "O Lord my God," reveals the perfectly pure Person we affectionately call "Father;" therefore, we must obey His command: "Be ye

holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet.1:15). God and sin do not have communion (2 Cor.6:14-18). This expression as well reveals the proper phraseology when referring to Jehovah. Our God is Master or Ruler of all, not the so-called "big fellow upstairs." We must approach Him with reverence at all times, according to our Lord's directions (Matt.6:9). Regarding the supremacy of the Creator, the Scriptures teach:

For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth...I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images (Psa.96:4-9; Isa.42:8)

Secondly, the song teaches us about the **power** of the Almighty. The statement, "When I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds Thy hands have made; I see the stars; I hear the rolling thunder; Thy power through out the universe displayed," speaks of the creative powers of God. Notably, the Bible does not try to "prove" who created the universe; it reveals the Creator's existence as a matter of fact. Multiple verses provide proof for us to ponder how great is our Creator, which should increase our praise of Him.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork....O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth forever. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth forever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth forever. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth forever. To him that made the great lights: for his mercy endureth forever: The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth forever: The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth forever...O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but Io, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it....For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well (Gen.1:1; Psa.19:1; 136:3-9; 139: 1-6, 13-14).

Through nature or "general revelation" one can conclude that there is a creator. Those who claim to be atheists are fools (Psa.14:1). The design of the universe proves unequivocally that God exists. How could a lifeless, mindless entity have produced the myriad of colors that exist in our beautiful world? Too, when the leaves change colors during the seasons, displaying even more evidence of a Creator, how can an unproven theory possess such superior intelligence? Indubitably, the complexity of the human eye alone provides enough evidence to dispel the **theory** of evolution.

The human eye is enormously complicated-a perfect and interrelated system of about 40 individual systems, including the retina, pupil, iris, cornea, lens, and optic nerve. For instance, the retina has approximately 137 billion special cells that respond to light and send messages to the brain. About 130 million of these cells look like rods and handle the black and white vision. The other seven million are cone shaped and allow us to see in color. The retina cells receive light impressions, which are translated to electric pulses and sent to the brain via the optic nerve. A special section of the brain called the visual cortex interprets the pulses to color, contrast, depth, etc., which allows us to see "pictures" of our world. Incredibly, the eye, optic nerve and visual cortex are totally separate and distinct systems. Yet, together, they capture, deliver and interpret up to 1.5 million pulse messages a millisecond! It would take dozens of Cray supercomputers programmed perfectly and operating together flawlessly to even get close to performing this task.³

Thirdly, the hymn encourages us to take the time to ponder how great our God is. Are we not the products of our thoughts? The majority of those living in Noah's day were destroyed because, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen.6:5). Contrast their thoughts and actions with the formula for victory recorded in Philippians 4:4-8. The wise man was accurate when he declared, "For as he thinkest in his heart, so is he" (Pro.23:7). Is not the Lord's Supper designed to call our thoughts to the matchless sacrifice of the Christ? With complete authority, the Lord commands us: "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

The author has heard it said: "Christianity is a thinking man's religion." How true is the affirmation. Not only are we what we eat; we are what we think. The man who ponders deeply the goodness of God is prone to live according to God's Word.

Fourthly, the song reminds us of the **price** that was paid for our redemption and to secure our salvation. This hymn makes a progression from admiring God through "general" revelation or nature to thanking Him for His dear Son's selfless sacrifice for the sins of the world. One may conclude that there is a creator, after examining the complexity and grandeur of the universe. Still, he must come in contact with the Gospel, if he is going to have a relationship with the Father and the Son (Rom.1:16).

Possessing perfect knowledge of all things, the man Jesus agonized over going to the cross. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He begged:

Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:42-44)

It was none other than the Son of God "who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim.2:6) to secure our salvation. When you sing this third stanza, dear reader, please consider the price that was paid for your sins. Keep at the forefront of your mind that Jesus shed His perfect, precious, pure, and powerful blood for a debt you and I were unable to pay (Rom.6:23; 1 Pet.1:18-19). Literally, we were "over our heads in debt." We lacked the necessary resources and ability to eradicate our debt (Eph.2:8-9; Rom.5:6-11). Dear saint, as you are preparing for worship, take some time to read the latter chapters of one of the Gospels. Additionally, read and ponder Romans 6 often.

Lastly, this song educates us to be **prepared** for the Lord's second coming. The foolish virgins are representative of those who are unconcerned and unprepared for the Bridegroom's return (Matt. 25:1-13). Throughout the history of mankind, how many have enjoyed their "heaven here on earth?" When the rich man finally "came to his senses," it was too late (Luke 16:19-31). Everyday we are reminded how few take seriously death and the Lord's judgment that follows it.

Even in the church there are quite a few who are as most of the members of the church at Sardis were—dead on the vine (Rev.3:1-5). Most of the brethren at Sardis were self-deceived and self-defiled; and, if they did not repent, they were self-defeated, resulting in their eternal spiritual death. With all the warnings and illustrations provided us, some brethren still live as though the Judgment Day is a fanciful

myth. Beloved, prepare yourself to meet the Lord. If you do, you will hear the sweetest words ever spoken: "Well done, good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord...Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt.25:21, 34).

CONCLUSION

Spiritual hymns are appropriate for every occasion—births, whether physical or spiritual, weddings, graduations, retirement ceremonies, achievements or milestones, temptations, triumphs, and even death. One of the best ways to combat evil thoughts is through praise. Paul and Silas were no doubt tempted to complain about the unjust treatment they had received at the hands of the government officials of Philippi (Acts 16). Yet, through their pain they found time to praise God via hymns and prayer, which led to the jailer's hearing and obeying the Gospel.

When we are feeling "blue" or joyful or mad, etc., sing an appropriate spiritual song; and, we should sing the song with all our heart to the Lord. As well, we must never ever underestimate the power of a psalm, hymn, or spiritual song. Even greater, acapella singing is an excellent tool of evangelism—the church's chief reason for existing. Utilizing this spiritual gift every day in our life will produce the matchless blessings God has attached to it.

END NOTES

¹ All references are taken from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

² How Great Thou Art—Old Time Favorite: http://www.allaboutgod.com/how-great-thoutart.htm.

³ You Are Here: The Journey>>Human Eye: http://www.allaboutthejourney.org/humaneye.htm.

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YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE THE LORD

By Linnie L. Darden, III

INTRODUCTION

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea. Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and light are both alike to thee (Psa. 139:7-12).

The opening lines are indeed two rhetorical questions in which David showcases his thoughts on the omnipresence of God. He states that he cannot move beyond the presence of God and neither can he move beyond God's personal concern for him.² The hymn Take the Lord With You Wherever You Go sets forth a beautiful theme embraced by all that love the Lord. The song as printed lists no author but is labeled simply as traditional. These types of songs are also labeled as standard. A call and response was the method of hymn singing used in the absence of notes or songbooks. The song leader would sing out the first line and the congregation would respond with the chorus melody. Sometimes the congregation repeated what the caller sang, Most standard or traditional songs came from the rural church setting and were often times sung in the absence of musical instruments or even hymn books. In the songbook entitled Songs of the Church,³ David Sexton is credited as the arranger. The scripture cited as the inspiration for the song is "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." (Psa. 27:14) The hymn reflects the necessity for carrying the Lord with us in every venue of life. God is a spirit and there is no where we can go which will remove us from his presence. The psalmist specifies the most remote and distant of places, and fully

expects to meet God there. "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Not that David desired to get away from God's presence, but he poses the hypothetical to help the reader to understand, that the Lord God sees us and is present wherever we are. The lyrics include: "Take the Lord...preach the word...make disciples daily...love the church deeply...on the street, in the home, on the job, or all alone" All four verses call for a demonstration of faith "everywhere you go". We will take the theme of the song and examine it through the eyes of scripture.

TAKE THE LORD

Jesus said, "Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:20). Paul states, "for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38, 39). He believes emphatically that there is no place you can go that will separate you from the love of God. There is no where we can go that He is not already there. Paul gently reminded the Athenians that he is very near to all. "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). Isaiah warns us that the only thing that separates us from Him are our sins. "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear you" (Isa. 59:1, 2). We therefore can assure his presence through our obedience to his commandments. Once asked about the fact that each side in the Civil War believed that God was with them and on their side, Abraham Lincoln commented, "Sir my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right".⁵

We have great and varied examples of biblical characters who took the Lord with them through storm, captivity, imprisonment and betrayal. Under the presumably stressful conditions of captivity, the little maidservant in Naaman's home spread the good news of her day: that there was a messenger of God in Israel able to cure leprosy. "And she said unto her mistress, would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy" (2 Kin. 5:3).

Joseph took the Lord with him in slavery, servitude and incarceration. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 49:20). We should also note that he carried the Lord with him at the pinnacle of his career. "And Pharoah took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt" (Gen. 41:42-43.) In fact Joseph credited God with all of his success. We must remember to carry the Lord with us throughout every circumstance because, as Jesus said: "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37.)

Paul and Silas took the Lord into the jail at Philippi. So remarkable was their reaction to imprisonment that at midnight they sang spiritual songs and hymns while in lockdown. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25). On one occasion Paul was shipwrecked and the Lord provided him with instructions insuring safety for everyone remaining on board the ship. "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, fear not Paul thou must be brought before Caesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Paul said to

the centurion and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 27:23, 24, 31).

The scriptures indicate that under certain circumstances the Lord will follow you wherever you go. "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that Spiritual rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4).

It is comforting to know that by virtue of your status as his child, God follows you wherever you go. David said, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psa. 23:6). God remains with his children everywhere they go. Whether we are in the home, on the street, or all alone, we remain a part of the house of God in this lifetime, as well as in the world to come.

Military units are organized as brigades and divisions. Each unit has its own "colors" meaning a flag or banner. When a new commander arrives and the old is leaving an exchange of salutes is given. The new commander receives the "unit colors" from the outgoing commander. Those colors are a banner to be present wherever the unit deploys. "And Moses built an altar and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi" (Ex. 17:15). God is referred to as our banner Jehovah Nissi. We carry Him as our banner wherever we go. Even in death Jesus said, "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46). Our banner is present with us even in death!

In the churches of Christ we emphasize that faith, repentance, confession and baptism as the touchstones of entry into the kingdom of God. Often new converts will take this emphasis and then leave the first principles at the baptism pool. But we should teach that the first principles are needed throughout the Christian walk.

Keep in mind that these principles while forming the foundation for each succeeding principle, also becomes a permanent part of the person, or it loses its power. Faith is not a plateau I reach. Rather it is a growing challenge and constant companion of one who would be well- pleasing to God. Godly sorrow may lead to repentance, but repentance is not a one-time act. Instead, it is a constant attitude of life, a permanent characteristic of acceptable sons in his kingdom. I must lose myself in something greater than self or be lost, but the confession of my lips only commits me to a constant life of confession and a constant involvement in him who is greater than all." As Brother Osborne points out, even the first principles of kingdom entry, should be with us constantly. Faith, repentance, and confession, are attitudes that we carry with us wherever we go. Our companionship with these principles provide for an enduring relationship with Christ.

HAVE HIM WITH YOU FROM ALPHA TO OMEGA

"The world judges you by what you have done, not by what you have started out to do; by what you have completed, not what you have begun". --- Baltasar Gracian

Often we take the Lord with us at the beginning of a great work or project but somehow the quitter's spirit replaces the Holy Spirit in us. Taking the Lord with you wherever you are will mean you will finish what you have started. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jam. 1:8). God is the prime example of finishing what one starts. "Thus the heavens and earth were finished and all the host of them" (Gen. 2:1). The LORD GOD left no loose ends, nor did he stop in the middle of his work. Once Joshua became leader in Israel, we read that: "As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua, he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses" (Jos. 11:15). Boaz did no half-hearted job when it came to the redemption of Ruth and securing her as his bride. "The

man will not rest, until he have finished the thing" (Ruth 3:18). Jesus not only told his disciples to finish what they started, he set the example in his own life. He finished the work that the Father sent him to do. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). On the cross he said, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, it is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30). We must carry the Lord with us from beginning to end. Paul writes, "nothing can separate us from the love of Christ" (Rom. 8:39). "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:20). His presence in our life is both his promise, and our guarantee of a triumphant life.

HIS PRESENCE AND OUR FREE MORAL AGENCY

Some might interpret the presence of God to be a coercive force in our life. However, it is clear that a primary attribute of his omnipresence is his willingness to grant humanity free will and free moral agency. Ananias and Saphira were told that the money received from property sold by them, "While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou has not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:4). His presence therefore, is not a coercive force. His love toward us may compel us to respond to him in love. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5:14). But an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God allows humanity to obey or disobey as it pleases them. Paul said, "be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). His presence and our consciousness of his presence in our lives, provides us with the example of how to talk, think, act and pray. Instead of comparing ourselves to ourselves, it is his presence that allows us to look to

the full measure of the stature of Jesus. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Although we do not have Christ in the flesh with us; Abraham told the rich man: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). We have the scriptures which provide us with his will. He grants to us the ability to decide whether we are willing to conform to his standards.

PRESENT IN OUR TROUBLES

Jonah was a preacher who came to realize God's presence was constant. In the earlier part of his story he sought to get away from God's presence. Later, when in trouble, he sought the presence of God. Listen carefully to the plea of Jonah while residing in the digestive system of the great fish. Jonah, fully conscious, talks about God's presence in dire circumstances, he even speaks of turning his face toward God. With ocean seaweed wrapped about him as a companion, Jonah repents and rededicates himself while in the midst of terror. "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly. And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about; all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight: yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains: the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. When my soul fainted within

me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple" (Jon. 2:1-7).

Jonah could certainly feel the presence of God. Jonah knew that He was a very present help in times of distress and despair. In fact Ezekiel refers to God as Jehovah Shamah the present God. "It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there" (Eze. 48:35). He is with us no matter what the circumstances may be. He will not necessarily be there to assist us in avoiding trouble. However, whatever trouble we face, we do not face it alone. Our God is a constant presence and comfort to us. Take the Lord with you wherever you go.

ENDNOTES

¹ All scripture references are form the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

² Charles F. Pfeiffer, <u>The Wycliffe Bible Commentary</u>, Chicago, Moody Bible Institute 1990 pp. 547

Alton H. Howard, Songs of the Church, West Monroe, LA, Howard Publishing, 1990—1994 p.721

⁴ Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible New Modern Edition Complete and Unabridged in Six Volumes, V.3, Job to Song of Solomon, p 620

⁵ Abraham Lincoln, quoted by Susan D. Cutaia: http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0.9171.1198891-4.00.html h

⁶ Roy Osborne, Great Preachers of Today, Abilene, TX, Biblical Research Press, 1964, pp. 19-20

BREAK THOU THE BREAD OF LIFE

Andrew Nelson

INTRODUCTION

The altars and temples of mankind stand as witnesses to the fact, that man is a worshipful being. Every society that the world has known has worshipped someone or something, and every society that will tread the earth's clay will worship someone or something. Paul explained to the church at Rome, that God's existence is conspicuous "clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:" (Rom. 1:20). Because of this evidence, mankind was initially aware of God's existence, and by revelation knew and followed God's commands (Rom. 1:18, 19). The pages of the Old Testament tell of the beautiful relationship which existed between the Creator and His creation. However, as man began to populate the earth he began to ignore the evidences which surrounded him. Man's ingratitude led him to become "vain" in his "imagination" and his "foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:19). As he became greater in his own mind, man became a spiritual fool and began to worship the creatures, which God had created (Rom. 1:22, 23). Having been rejected by mankind, God allowed his beloved creation to serve their gods with all manner of wickedness, which Paul describes in detail as he concluded Romans 1.

While many have traveled the road of idolatry, man has always had the opportunity to worship God in an acceptable manner. The first detailed account of worship recorded in Scripture, is that of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4). The Hebrews writer proclaims: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4). Abel's sacrifice is said to have been offered by faith. As "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing

by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), God had apparently revealed the requirements of acceptable worship to Abel and to Cain. In choosing to offer that which God had commanded, Abel's sacrifice was acceptable to God. Similar to the account of Cain and Abel is the account of Nadab and Abihu who "offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not" (Lev. 10:1). Because of their disobedience in relation to the worship which they offered to God, Nadab and Abihu were executed by "fire from the Lord," which "devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:2).

God has always demanded obedience to all of His laws: including the laws which govern worship. Modern man is not exempt from this expectation. While speaking to the woman at the well, Jesus explained God's desires and laws concerning worship: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jno. 4:23, 24). In this passage Jesus sets forth "the three simple, but vitally important, aspects of true worship...(1) We must worship God; (2) we must worship God in spirit, i.e., rationally, and sincerely; (3) we must worship God in truth, as his word directs." Therefore, one can only worship God when one is physically and mentally present and participating in the acts of worship authorized in the manner in which they are authorized by the New Testament writers.

When one examines the writings of the New Testament, such as Luke's book, Acts, which is a historical record of the New Testament church's beginning, as well as the letters Paul wrote, instructing the infant congregations of the Lord's church concerning God's Laws, he finds among other things a blueprint for New Testament worship. Included in the prescribed acts of worship are the Lord's Supper and the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 20:6, 7); praying (Acts

2:42); giving (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2); and singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). While each act of worship is essential and equal in importance, singing provides an opportunity and responsibility for all who are present to teach and to admonish "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," as they sing with grace in their hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16). These musical works of praise whether Psalms (written by the inspiration of God) or hymns (written based upon the "personal feelings and emotional responses to the facts and doctrines of the Bible,")³ were at one point penned by the frail hand of a human being. To all those who have worked throughout the years to provide songs, by which man may praise God and teach and encourage his brother in Christ, a great debt of gratitude is owed. Imagine what the world would be like had these individuals not faithfully carried out their work, but through the years, both men and women have labored to write sacred songs such as "Break Thou the Bread of Life."

THE HISTORY

As with any literary work, the history of a song can enable one to better understand the writer's words. Furthermore, studying the biographical information concerning the composer of the music and author of the words is a great way to learn more about a hymn's history. The music to "Break Thou the Bread of Life" was written by Mr. William Fiske Sherwin. Mr. Sherwin was born on March, 14th, 1826 in Buckland, Massachusetts. After moving to Boston as a teenager, Mr. Sherwin studied music under Lowell Mason, a well known musician, and composer of the 1800's. Later, Mr. Sherwin worked at the New England Conservatory of Music and taught singing in Massachusetts and New York. During his career, Mr. Sherwin served as the first music director at the Chautauqua Movement near Chautauqua, New York, and was musical editor at Biglow and Main publishers. Mr. Sherwin died, April 14, 1888, and was buried in Ashefield, Massachusetts.⁵

On the other side of the page, one finds the name Mary A. Lathbury. Mary Artemesia Lathbury was born August 10, 1841, in Manchester, New York. Her artistic abilities glistened at an early age. After graduating high school, Ms. Lathbury shared an art studio with her sister. She spent her time sketching magazine illustrations and other illustrations for the poetry books that she wrote. Although she enjoyed her work, Ms. Lathbury desired to serve the Lord in a more complete way; which is why she gladly accepted the invitation to become secretary to Dr. John Vincent, a Methodist minister and founder of the Chautauqua Movement. Dr. Vincent founded a summer school by the beautiful blue waters of Lake Chautauqua to instruct Sunday school teachers, and from time to time he found himself in need of a song to go along with a particular lesson. Ms. Lathbury's presence proved to be valuable at such times because Dr. Vincent would call upon her to furnish him with the needed song. When seeking inspiration for her work, Ms. Lathbury would sometimes sit beside the lake in a quiet, peaceful place. One day as she was sitting there beside the lake, Ms. Lathbury began to think about Jesus feeding the five thousand men beside the Sea of Galilee.

All four men who wrote accounts of Jesus' life recorded the feeding the five thousand men. It is the only miracle recorded by all four writers (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15). John's account of this great event picks up during Christ's life after several amazing events had taken place: the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee where Jesus turned the water into unfermented wine (John 2:1-11), Jesus' driving the money changers out of the temple (John 2:13-17), the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus (John 31-21), Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well (John 4:1-30), Jesus healing the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54), and, Jesus' healing the impotent man on the Sabbath, and then giving a defense of His work (John 5).

It is "After these things" that as "Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias...a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased" (John 6:1, 2). Even though Jesus and His disciples were taking time to rest, Jesus did not miss an opportunity to teach those who had come. He "went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples" (John 6:3). As the day continued and night drew near, Jesus proposed a problem to one of His disciples: "When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" (John 6:5).

Jesus, the master teacher, knowing that His disciples' faith needed some growing (as well as some room to grow) did not immediately solve the problem at hand. Rather, He presented the problem "to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:6). He was standing by to solve the problem in the event that Philip's solution proved inadequate. By forcing Philip to present a solution, Jesus gave Philip an opportunity to solve the problem himself and an opportunity to evaluate his personal faith. Parents, preachers, elders, and all who are charged with the duty to teach others would do well to employ this teaching technique, which uplifts and challenges the pupil, rather than solving the problem for him.

As Philip beheld the crowd, he saw an overwhelming sight and answered: "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little" (John 6:7). Philip's reply was simply a restating of the problem in proportionate terms. He had no solution, but realized that even if they had the day's wages of two hundred men, they would only be able to give everybody a few crumbs to eat, which meant that feeding them was just impossible. About this time, Andrew announced: "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" (John 6:8, 9). This time,

Andrew restated the problem giving what he must have thought to be another ridiculous solution. These loaves were likely no more than soda crackers made from barley, the "cheapest of breads," and the fishes were likely the size of sardines.⁸ Although the problem seemed to have no solution Jesus "himself knew what he would do."

Jesus already knew about the boy and his meager lunch. He also knew the power He possessed.

Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciple, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten (John 6:10-14).

Many lessons are taught by Jesus' actions in this passage. First, by performing this miracle, Jesus showed His compassion for those who were in need. He could have stopped His teaching and told the multitudes to "Go away, and come back tomorrow!" Instead, His compassion led Him to show mercy and provide for the needs of the hungry. Second, by His actions, Jesus showed His ability to provide the needs of life for those who follow Him. Although miracles do not occur today (1 Cor. 13, 14), God still provides in a special way for those who follow Him: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Finally, by His actions, Jesus proved His deity to those who were present as well as to all who read the account of this great miracle of the Lord. Jesus declared: "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (John 5:36). Toward the end of this book John proclaimed: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of

his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30, 31). By reading this miracle, as well as the other miracles which Jesus did while on the earth, faith is produced in the heart of good soil. It is by that faith one will be lead to obedience and faithfulness to the Lord obtaining eternal life.

THE HYMN

While thinking about this miracle of Jesus, Ms. Lathbury penned the following words which describe a great life giving meal prepared by God for all mankind:

Break Thou the bread of life, Dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves Beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!

"Break Thou the bread of life..." begins the first verse, by which Ms. Lathbury takes the singers of her song, back to John 6:26, 27. Here the multitudes, having been fed by Jesus the previous day, searched diligently until they found Him. These people had a great desire to be with Jesus, yet, their motives were unknown until Jesus warned:

Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which persisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed (John 6:26, 27).

Jesus explained to these people that there were two types of bread which He had offered to them. The first bread was that which perisheth that bread that they had eaten, digested, and now of which they were in want. The second type of bread far surpassed the perishing bread in quality and nourishment, for it "endureth unto everlasting life." This bread could not be eaten by the mouth for it was not, nor is it physical, but spiritual food. When asked, in essence, how they

could partake of this bread, Jesus explained to the multitudes: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). Jesus provided this spiritual food for them by teaching and performing miracles which signified God's seal or stamp of approval of Jesus' work. The miracles which they had seen should have been food for their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, but the only benefit the people received was a belly that was full one day and empty the next day.

As they conversed with Jesus, recognizing the relationship to God that Jesus was claiming to have, the people reminded Jesus of another man who had "provided" God's people with bread: "They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat" (John 6:30, 31). The people recalled Moses feeding millions of people bread from Heaven for forty years and Jesus had only fed five thousand men plus the women and children accompanying them only once. Nonetheless, Jesus corrected them in their error. Jesus made it clear that it was not Moses, but God who had provided them with "that bread from heaven" but now God had given them "true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:32, 33). Thus, Jesus begins to show them that as the bread their father's had eaten in the wilderness had nourished their bodies, enabling them to continue during their lifetimes in the wilderness wanderings, He had come from Heaven that the world through Him might live.

"I am the bread of life," He declared. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead" (John 6:48, 49). The manna God had given the Israelites simply maintained their existence upon the earth. Even after they had eaten it, like all men, they eventually died. Likewise, when those of Jesus' day partook of the bread he miraculously provided, they would

be filled, but would hunger again and eventually die. But, by partaking of the bread of life (the life that exists by believing and obeying the Gospel) one may live forever (John 6:50, 51; cf. 47). Therefore, as one sings the words, "Break Thou the bread of life," one is actually asking to be presented with the Gospel or the Word of God, for it is only by hearing God's Word that faith is produced (Rom. 10:17).

Ms. Lathbury continues in the first verse reflecting upon the diligent effort expended by the multitudes seeking Jesus the day after they had been fed. The next morning the people went looking for Him. They saw the boat His disciples had used as well as other boats from Tiberias, near where they had been fed, but they could not find Jesus. Finally, they went to Capernaum. It may have been because they knew that this was His home, or perhaps they simply knew that He frequently taught there. 9 Whatever, their reason, they supposed Him to be there. As a result, that is where they went (John 6:23, 24). Today if one desires to find Jesus, one must look to where Jesus can be found. Ms. Lathbury wrote: "Beyond the sacred page I seek thee Lord;" Yet Jesus told those of His day: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). Some claim to find Jesus or to be closer to Him in the natural world. Unfortunately, they have not paid attention to the Psalmist, for indeed "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork" (Psa. 19:1), but it is His law that converts the soul, it is His testimony which makes the simple wise, it is His revealed will by which man knows His character (Psa. 19:7-9; Rom. 1:16-20). For this reason, one must seek the Lord "Within the sacred page..." rather than "Beyond the sacred page..." Jesus stated specifically that each part of the Old Testament told of His life: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the

psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). The first four books of the New Testament tell of Jesus' life on earth, and the last twenty three books of the New Testament tell how to follow Jesus in that in the next life one may live with Jesus. Truly, if one desires to find Jesus today, one <u>must</u> go to the only authorized book about Him, the Bible.

Ms. Lathbury concludes the first verse: "My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!" Those who sought to be fed by the Lord sought Him out because of physical hunger. Hunger is a natural drive of the body, which causes one to seek out food to fulfill this desire. Hungry men have gone to great lengths to acquire food to satiate their desires, just as these men who did a good bit of traveling in their search for the food Jesus could provide. While means have been provided to quench this God given desire, hunger will continue to return until one passes from this life. However, Jesus explained that spiritual food will truly quench one's spiritual appetite (John 6:27). In light of this, one should work to maintain a constant desire to partake of the Gospel – the bread of life. By partaking of this great spiritual food, one's appetite for righteousness will be filled (Matt. 5:6).

As she contemplates this great miracle performed by Jesus, Ms. Lathbury describes a great spiritual meal in the first verse of her song. She then concludes her song, describing in the final verse, the meat which is supplied for this great feast. She begins the second verse, going back to Jesus' miracle, emphasizing the prayer He offered for the food: "Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord,"

The word "bless" sometimes causes people difficulties. There seems to be a sense of mysticism associated with it as if there is some supernatural process taking place in that which is being blessed. Notice the wording of Luke's description of this miracle, paying special attention to what Jesus does to the bread: "Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking

up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude" (Luke 9:16). Luke says that Jesus blessed it, but what did John say in his account? "And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would" (John 6:11). Luke states that Jesus blessed the bread, and John explains in his account that Jesus gave thanks for the bread. Therefore, to bless something simply means to give thanks for it.

True gratitude leads one to use that which has been provided to accomplish the wishes of the one who has made the provision. Hence, when one prays "...bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies and our bodies to Thy service..." he is praying that the food which has been provided will be used for the purpose for which it has been given, to accomplish the work of the Lord. Therefore, when praying that the truth be blessed (as one sings this great song,) one is thanking God for providing the truth to mankind, while at the same time, praying that the truth be used for that purpose for which it was given. The purpose is to nourish the partaker spiritually, building and strengthening his faith in the Lord, enabling him to continue in Lord's service.

Again, this is done through spiritual, not physical meat. The Jews did not understand this and therefore questioned: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John 6:52). Some, like the Jews of Jesus' day think that He was teaching that one must literally eat His flesh and blood, turning "their people into cannibals and partakers of blood'— totally repugnant and without a scintilla of Scriptural proof." Others have taken this passage and applied it to the Lord's Supper. To do this, the chapter must be taken out of context. The general theme of this passage is that only through "receiving Jesus as the Messiah is salvation possible and this theme is pursued through a variety of figures in which he is represented as food and drink which forevermore

satisfy and his flesh and blood that which one appropriates and lives for ever." Not only is this idea contrary to the theme of the chapter, Jesus had not yet instituted the Lord's Supper, and would not for some time. In his commentary on John, Guy N. Woods states: "the fact that the verbs of the Greek text (cf. verse 56), indicates a continuous eating and drinking it is apparent, as Luther says, that 'This chapter does not speak of the bread and wine, but of spiritual eating, i.e. of the belief that Christ, both God and man, hath shed his blood for us." This life is available because of Jesus' sacrifice of His life (His flesh) on the cross and is appropriated when one accepts Jesus as God's Son and the world's Savior. Physical bread is eaten "because of its ability to sustain physical life;" one must "accept Jesus because...only through him is there salvation. He is the bread of life of whom" one must eat, in order to live. 13 Jesus further differentiated between physical and spiritual nourishment: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Therefore, if one desires to live spiritually, he must hear, believe, and obey the Word of God. When Jesus had finished this discourse about the bread of life "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66), but He turned to the twelve and asked: "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67). "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68, 69).

By partaking of spiritual meat, one is truly made alive, having been loosed from the shackles of physical life and the shackles of sin. Jesus reminded the Jews that like their ancestors who had eaten manna in the wilderness and died, they too would die, even after they had eaten physical food. However, by partaking of the bread of life they could live eternally (John 6:56-58). All life is from God who sent Jesus into this world to live and to die for the sins of mankind.

As Jesus lived on earth by the will of God, those who partake of the life that comes by Jesus' flesh offered for the sins of mankind, live by the bread of life giving substance of the sacrifice offered by Jesus on the cross for the world. Though they may die physically, those who partake of this life will not die spiritually (Heb. 9:27; 1 Cor. 15:57).

Thinking of the freedom found in Christ, Ms. Lathbury continued to write: "Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall; And I shall find my peace, My all in all." As Jesus turned to the twelve, no doubt they were perplexed at the reaction of those who had turned away. Yet they remained, and when Jesus asked if they would also go, Peter boldly replied: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68, 69). These men recognized that by hearing and obeying this man they could survive this life and its hardships, looking forward to the life awaiting them in Heaven. They had this assurance because of the miracles He did, which confirmed Him to be the Son of God, and by this assurance, they found peace even amongst the trials they would endure. The same peace is offered to all who will partake of the bread of life, by hearing, believing, and obeying the Gospel.

CONCLUSION

What beautiful words, penned by Ms. Mary Artemesia Lathbury, and as one sings the words "Break Thou the bread of life, Dear Lord, to me..." his mind should travel back with the mind of Ms. Lathbury to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where this remarkable miracle of the Lord was performed. This miracle, which along with the manna provided by the Father to the Israelites in the wilderness, typified the "living bread which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die" (John 6:50). Truly, this spiritual bread, the Gospel, is a great blessing, which builds and strengthens the faith of all who partake. It is truly sad that many

today, like those of the first century, turn away from great spiritual feasts provided by God, choosing bread that will nourish their physical bodies rather than their souls. How wonderful it would be if more men and women seek as newborn babes the sincere milk of the word that they might grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2).

Rejoining Ms. Lathbury there by the lake in New York, one wonders if she realizes the great work which she has accomplished with her song. Mary Artemesia Lathbury passed from this life October 20, 1913 and was buried in the Rosedale Cemetery in Orange, New Jersey. Hough no records were found prior to or during the writing of this manuscript of either Ms. Lathbury or Mr. Sherwin becoming a member of the New Testament church, they are owed a debt of great gratitude for providing the world with a hymn that captures the beauty of God's truth.

ENDNOTES

¹ THE HOLY BIBLE, King James Version (Cambridge: England, Cambridge University Press, 1991) All scripture references are to this version unless otherwise stated.

² Guy N. Woods, "John," in <u>A Commentary ON The Gospel According to John</u>, vol. 4, (Nashville, TN.: GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY, 1989) p. 83.

³ Pamela J. Kennedy, "Break Thou the Bread of Life," in <u>HYMNS OF FAITH & INSPIRATION</u>, (Nashville, TN.: IDEALS PUBLICATIONS, A DIVISION OF GUIDEPOSTS, 1990) p. 77.

^{4 &}quot;Lowell Mason," in Virtual Biographies, http://famousamericans.net/lowellmason/

⁵ "Break Thou the Bread of Life," in <u>The Cyber Hymnal</u>, http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/b/t/bttblife.htm.

⁶ More information about the Chautauqua Movement can be found at http://www.campussschoo.dsu.edu/myweb/history.htm

^{7 &}quot;Break Thou the Bread of Life," in Online Hymnal, 2007, www.sermonaudio.com/hymn_details.asp?

⁸ Woods, p. 117.

⁹ Ibid. p. 123.

¹⁰ Robert Taylor, Studies in the Gospel of John, (Abilene, TX: 1998) p. 95.

¹¹ Woods p. 134.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ "Break Thou the Bread of Life," in Online Hymnal, 2007, www.sermonaudio.com/hymn details.asp?

"GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS"

Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

Sacred song has been enjoined upon God's people since the first days of the church. Yet it is not simply a commandment to be fulfilled, it is a privilege to be enjoyed. Music can inspire the soul to greater endowments. It stirs our heartstrings to greater love and admiration, giving us a sense of purpose and belonging. From early childhood the memories of those precious melodies give us a conviction not easily forgotten as we weather the storms of life. Those sacred songs of yore carry us. They support us.

Music has always been a vital part of the lives of God's people. Using sacred melody King David takes us from the valley of despair and carries us to the heights of glory. Even our Lord, when facing grim Gethsemane began that solemnity with song (Matthew 26:30). The beloved Paul used song when maltreated in an inner prison (Acts 16:25). The prisoners heard, God answered and Christians were added. The redeemed of John's Revelation sing a new song of salvation coupled with the song of Moses (Revelation 5:9-13). It is a song that only the redeemed can sing, for no creature can appreciate the grace of God except those who need redemption (14:3).

The Bible gives purpose to our songs as a part of Christian worship. We sing to God and on behalf of one another. <u>Speaking to yourselves</u> in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (Ephesians 5:19, emphasis RV) ¹Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Colossians 3:16, emphasis RV).

But this brings up the question, what are we to sing? Paul answers this question dividing our music into three types: "Psalms" (those of David and others contained in the five books of Psalms and the other books of poetry), "hymns" (songs that particularly utter praise to God) and "spiritual songs" (poems such as were of various matter, doctrinal, prophetical or historical).

There are some who teach that only inspired psalms from the Bible should be used in worship. Donald McLaren of the Reformed Presbyterian Church said, "The Psalms contained in the Holy Scriptures are the only songs of praise, which the Church is warranted by the express appointment of God to sing in his worship." ² It is argued that only God knows what is appropriate in song. When Paul said, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1Corinthians 14:15), they argue that only songs written by inspired writers are acceptable.

The fact that Paul gives three different types of godly music and knowing that the Psalms only constitute one-third of this list, then it should be safe to conclude that any song which uses scriptural thoughts and instruction may be used in Christian worship. Some very beautiful songs have been written by uninspired men and women and have been sung in Christian assemblies for many years.

Every song we sing in our Christian hymnals is, to put it mildly, a sermon. Often preachers will turn songs into sermons. Songwriters have also turned sermons into songs. Songs are a

teaching tool not just an inspirational outlet or a "take it or leave it" activity to be thought of as unnecessary.

My assignment is the song, "God Shall Wipe Away All Tears."

HISTORY OF THE SONG

There was no background history available except that given in our songbooks. It was written by J. R. Baxter, Jr. and Wesley H. Daniel. The theme seems to be taken from the passage in Revelation 21:3-4.

In 1926 Jesse Randall Baxter "Paps" (1887-1960) formed a partnership business with Virgil O. Stamps called, the Stamps-Baxter Music & Printing Company Incorporated. He wrote 1,333 hymns and convention songs which were printed by many different publishers. He penned more than 500 published hymns, published over a million hymnals a year, and more than 50 radio quartets filled the air with his songs.³

The Stamps-Baxter Music Company was an influential southern music publishing company in the shape note gospel field. It published a lot of seven-shape books with songs that would not strike the modern American church-goer as unusual, and included many songs that would be known, especially to a Southern churchgoer.

And so it is that the song, <u>God Shall Wipe Away All Tears</u> was one of many songs produced by this company. But since there is no available background history, more effort will be spent analyzing the theme and words of the song.

AN ANALYSIS OF TEARS

Of all the creatures in God's terrestrial panorama only man has the ability to shed tears to vent the strong emotions welled up inside him. Crying, grieving, lamenting, languishing, pining, sorrowing, wailing and weeping are but a few of the synonyms in English that show the various expressions we manifest in the shedding of tears.

Why do we cry? Although sometimes tears are shed as expressions of joy or relief, more often we cry because of pain or sorrow. Sorrow comes from the experience of misery (James 5:1). Only in sorrow can we appreciate joy. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (Psalm 30:5). They that sow in tears shall reap in joy (Psalm 126:5).

Sorrow can have a cleansing effect upon the soul. There is...a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; (Ecclesiastes 3:4). The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth (Ecclesiastes 7:4). Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4).

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. ⁹ Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (James 4:8-10).

Sorrow is actually very important in our lives. But it is not good to stay in sorrow. Proverbs 17:22 says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."

God knows and remembers our sorrows. He collects and records them, "...Put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" (Psalm 56:8). He will also heal our sorrow. He turns the Valley of Baca (weeping) into a well where the rain fills pools (Psalm 84:6). Sin is the reason that misery, pain and sorrow exist in our world. But God ever sympathizes with our

wayward miseries. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...and ye shall find rest to your souls" (Matthew 11:28, 29). However, the Bible distinguishes two types of sorrow: godly sorrow and worldly sorrow (2Corinthians 7:10). The selfish, pitiable sorrow is not that which produces any good effect. God wants our sorrow to be of a godly sort. Just as He feels sorrow over the sinful condition of man, so we too should feel sorrow, and especially because we are contributors to that condition. David expressed this feeling well in Psalm 51:4: Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.

The Bible has given promises to God's people that there would be a time when God will wipe away our tears from our eyes:

He will swallow up death in victory; and <u>THE LORD GOD WILL WIPE AWAY TEARS FROM OFF ALL FACES</u>; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it (Isaiah 25:8; emphasis RV).

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES (Revelation 7:17; emphasis RV).

And GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away (Revelation 21:4; emphasis RV).

This is a beautiful description of how God cares for our hurts. As a mother tenderly nurses a child's scrapes; as a father holds dearly onto his child, so God is affectionate to us.

However, an important distinction needs to be made here. Is this Old Testament promise of God wiping our tears away ALREADY FULFILLED, or is it yet in the future? In what sense did Isaiah mean God would wipe away the tears of Judah? And if the Old Testament uses the expression in the past tense, does the New Testament necessarily speak of a future time? Could it

not also refer to a time in our past when God has already wiped away our tears in the church? In what sense did John use this phrase in Revelation?

Isaiah was not referring to a distant promise of heavenly bliss, but rather he was looking toward the Gospel Age: to the restitution of captive Israel, and to the coming of the Messiah and His church. That is when God would wipe away the tears of the Jewish people. For them it was the tears of sorrow for the degradation of their fallen nation. Isaiah's wiping away of tears does not refer to heaven or the afterlife.

John too, was not necessarily saying that we have to wait until we are in heaven before our tears are wiped away. God has already removed the strength, bondage and wages of sin, and the sting of death by the Gospel so that we do not have to suffer from their consequences. Here are some examples showing that God has already wiped away our tears in this world of sin:

- Jeremiah predicting the Gospel Age said it would be a time when God's people, "shall not sorrow any more at all" (Jeremiah 31:12).
- * "The redeemed of the LORD shall return... they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Isaiah 51:11 cp. Isaiah 35:10). This is Isaiah's prediction of the Gospel Age.
- ❖ Those who "labor and are heavy laden" (i.e. because of sin), can now come to Jesus and find rest for their souls (Matthew 11:28-29).
- * "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). We ask the question, when are the mourners to be comforted? Their comfort came with the arrival of the Gospel. (cp. John 16:20-22). So when Revelation 7:17 says, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes", there is a sense in which the Gospel HAS ALREADY done this. If Matthew's Beatitudes were fulfilled in the Gospel, then it stands to reason that John's Revelation could also be referring to the Gospel, and not necessarily to some future state of heavenly bliss.
- * "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Revelation 7:16 says, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." It should be apparent then that Revelation 7:16-17 with the Beatitudes at least in some sense finds its fulfillment in the Gospel.

* "...Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2Timothy 1:10). Notice that death has been abolished, i.e. the sting of death has been removed (c.f. 1Corinthians 15:56) through the Gospel.

If we misunderstand this beautiful blessing we do ourselves a great injustice. There is a sense in which God has already wiped away the tears of Christians. This is why we rejoice in the Lord NOW. An unfortunate misunderstanding of this phrase (God shall wipe away all our tears) has lead many to think that God is somehow going to enforce happiness on everyone in heaven. We do not wait for some futuristic, indescribable infusion of joy. The Bible has never promised this, even in heaven. But our joy must come from inside us. It is not some magical mystical thing. Learn to be happy now so you can be happy in heaven. Learn to appreciate divine blessings now so that you can appreciate heavenly blessings later. Romans 12:12 says that right now we are to be, "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." Philippians 4:4 commands us now to, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SONG

Although in one sense God has already wiped away our tears. He has removed our heavy burdens and our wages of sin, and He blesses us with all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). Nevertheless, there is still a future hope to which we aspire. Christians still hold onto the hope of attaining a heavenly inheritance (1Peter 1:4). Death and sickness are still very much happening to everyone who lives upon this terrestrial sphere.

This phrase, "God shall wipe away all our tears," has both a present spiritual application to our relief from sin, but also has a future application beyond our mortal existence. There is still yet a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2Corinthians 4:17). We have a future hope

that anchors our soul (Hebrews 6:19). We are still groaning in this body waiting to be clothed with that heavenly body (2Corinthians 5:1-4). And it is with this thought in mind that we understand the beauty of that song, "God shall wipe away all tears." ⁴

To analyze this song, we observe that there is a method in which God will wipe away our tears. We first notice that this song has a key word used over and over. Every clause begins with the word, "WHEN." When shall God wipe away our tears? "WHEN" is an adverb looking to a time where several things will occur. And when they occur, sorrow will be forgotten. God will extend an eternal comfort that will put all of our negativities away from us as a minor annoyance compared to the joys of His presence.

1st Stanza:

When we reach that home and lay our burdens down, When we join the saints and wear a robe and crown, God shall wipe away all tears.

In this first stanza Baxter describes a change as if one is changing clothes. We take off our burdens and put on a robe and crown. Revelation 21:4 speaks of God removing our tears, death, sorrow, crying and pain. This language easily allows our imaginations to soar into the glorious realm of divine presence that we might but savor a hint of its wonderful appeal.

The word "PAIN" in verse 4 comes from the Greek word, $\pi \acute{o}vo\varsigma$. Fundamentally this word means, "work that involves much exertion or trouble, (hard) labor, toil." It was translated as "pain" by the KJV translators because they knew there is a hard labor, a grueling work, a back-breaking toil and a stomach-wrenching exertion that inevitably breaks and wears out the laborer. Sin does this to us. It wears us out. Proverbs 13:15 says, "The way of transgressors is

hard." David wrote in Psalm 38:4, "mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." But now God promises to take away that heavy burden from His children. Jesus invited those who "labor and are heavy laden" to come to him (Matthew 11:28).

The idea of a robe and crown is also often expressed in the Bible. The New Testament says that the faithful will receive a crown (1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10; 3:11; 4:4). The crown mentioned in these verses is the Greek word, "στέφανος." This was a wreath made of foliage or designed to resemble foliage and worn by one of high status or held in high regard, a wreath. The heavenly crown will be incorruptible (1 Corinthians 9:25) and is pictured as golden in Revelation 4:4. The book of Revelation also pictures God's people as wearing robes which are white (Revelation 3:4-5; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14). This is a figure of being pure, innocent and guiltless from sin that has been washed away.

2nd Stanza:

When the pearly gates unfold for you and me,
When we see the Christ who set the captive free,
God shall wipe away all tears.

Baxter next describes the heavenly welcome and the One who has liberated us. Ancient kingdoms when returning from a victorious battle would parade their military, the spoils of war and their captors in a triumphal procession of the capitol city (cp. Colossians 2:15). Heaven is depicted as having a triumphal procession on resurrection day. 1Thessalonians 4:17 says, "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to MEET the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (emphasis RV). The word, "meet"

comes from the Greek word, "ἀπαντήσις." Although this word is neither a verb nor an infinitive, unfortunately it is translated that way in most English versions. It is a noun in the accusative case. Literally it should be rendered, "caught up in the clouds unto a meeting of the Lord" rather than caught up "to meet the Lord." The former rendering emphasizes a special meeting to be held by Christ. He is coming again to have a meeting with us. Kings and dignitaries would often come outside the gates of a city to meet with VIPs and enter together into the gates as a grand gesture. Imagine such a homecoming for Christians when they reach heaven and those gates are opened for them and Christ is there to meet us at the entrance. Oh, what a Savior and what a blessed thought.

3rd Stanza:

When we sweetly sing with all that ransomed throng, No more partings come to mar that happy song, God shall wipe away all tears.

There will be such a rejoicing held in that heavenly land, that all the redeemed will shout and sing. The song of Moses and the Lamb are pictured in Revelation as a song of the redeemed. The redeemed of humanity will have great cause to celebrate that eternal day. The angels might rejoice, the cherubim might shout hallelujahs, but only those who were redeemed, bought back from the curse of sin can fully appreciate their Savior and have cause to sing with a great vigor to the grace of God given to them.

It will be a homecoming like no other. We will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matthew 8:11). We will commune with all the righteous that have fallen asleep in the centuries before us. And there will be no more partings of God's entire family.

Chorus:

God shall wipe away all the tears from every eye, When we meet Him in that home beyond the sky, God shall wipe away all tears.

Truly heaven is our eternal home. We should spend all of our energies to try to reach that Promised Land. But until we do reach it, we sing such songs as this one to keep our hopes alive, and our aspirations looking up, upward to our home on high.

ENDNOTES:

¹ All scripture references are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible unless specifically noted otherwise.

McLaren, Donald C., "The Psalms of the Holy Scripture, The Only Songs of Zion, An Appeal to the Churches in Behalf of this Ordinance of God" (Geneva, N.Y., Ira Merrell, Printer, Seneca-Street, 1840), http://www.covenanter.org/Worship/psalmsofholyscripture.htm

A letter by Representative Greeson commending Mr. J. R. Baxter, Jr., and Mrs. Clarice Howard Baxter for their work in gospel music., http://www.legislature.state.al.us/searchableinstruments/2005RS/Resolutions/HR93.htm

⁴ Howard, Alton H., Ed., <u>Songs of the Church</u>, 21st Century Edition (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Co., Inc.,1999), 515.

⁵ All references to the Greek New Testament are taken from the Majority Text or the Textus Receptus.

⁶ Bauer, Walter, and William Danker. <u>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</u>. Electronic ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁷ Ibid.

THE OLD RUGGED CROSS

Alan Wright

INTRODUCTION

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

On June 7, 1913, a series of assemblies was held in the town of Pokagon, Michigan. The worshippers who were gathered there learned a new song recently written by a popular traveling evangelist. It began "On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross..." Not long afterwards, the song was introduced to a large convention assembled at the Chicago Evangelistic Institute, and in 1915 the song was published and made available to the general public. Within a short space of time, it had become one of the most popular songs in the entire country. To this day, it is considered to be a favorite of many, and has become one of the most requested songs in the English language.

The author of this great hymn was a 40-year-old Methodist evangelist named George Bennard. Born in 1873 in Youngstown, Ohio, Bennard lost his father while only a teenager. He began work to care for his mother and four sisters. But he had from his youth yearned to pursue a life in ministry. He joined the Salvation Army, and became an officer in that organization. Anxious to share the gospel with as many as possible, he left the Salvation Army and became a traveling evangelist with the Methodists.

Bennard had been contemplating the familiar passage of John 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus' death on the cross was the very heart of the gospel

message. But he was convinced that too many Christians did not fully appreciate what the cross was. Modern religion had reduced the cross to a mere symbol, an ornament of gold. He decided to compose a song that would express the real meaning of the cross. Though struggling at first to find the right words, Bennard believed that when the lyrics finally came to him, they were given him by the Spirit of God:

The inspiration came to me one day in 1913, when I was staying in Albion, Michigan. I began to write "The Old Rugged Cross." I composed the melody first. The words that I first wrote were imperfect. The words of the finished hymn were put into my heart in answer to my own need ... I saw the Christ of the Cross as if I were seeing John 3:16 leave the printed page, take form and act out the meaning of redemption ... I sat down and immediately was able to rewrite the stanzas of the song without so much as one word failing to fall into place. I called in my wife, took out my guitar, and sang the completed song to her. She was thrilled!

Bennard died in 1913 in Reed City, Michigan, and was buried in Inglewood Park Cemetery, Inglewood, California. The local Chamber of Commerce in Reed City erected a cross near his home, which was later converted into The Old Rugged Cross Historical Museum. ¹

Bennard wrote this song because he was concerned that Christians had lost sight of the real meaning of the cross. He believed they had traded in the old rugged cross for their shiny gilded crosses. Indeed, there is a tendency among worshippers to put emphasis on the tangible emblems of religion, and neglect the invisible spiritual truths those emblems reveal. Consider a few of the ways in which the cross has been misused and misunderstood by believers.

THE CROSS DISTORTED BY SUPERSTITION

Jesus compared his uplifting on the cross to the raising of the brazen serpent in the days of Moses. (John 3:14) The book of Numbers tells the story of God's great deliverance from the plague of poisonous vipers sent among the children of Israel as punishment for their murmuring.

God said, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (rf. Num. 21:4-9). In the same way, those whose sinful choices and actions have doomed their soul can find deliverance in the cross of Christ. But sometime in the generations that followed Moses that brazen serpent had come to be treated as an object of worship itself. In the great reformation led by King Hezekiah, we learn that among the many foreign idols that Israel had begun to worship, they were also burning incense to the brazen serpent. (2 Kings 18:4) The people had chosen to venerate the instrument rather than the Deliverer. Similarly today there are a number of ways in which Christians can turn the cross into a holy relic, and fail to appreciate the real meaning of it.

The cross as ornament

The cross has become the definitive symbol of Christianity. It adorns the greatest cathedrals and the quaintest chapels. It is worn as jewelry on lapel pins and cufflinks and on chains about the neck. It is beautifully carved into monuments and tombstones. Wherever it is displayed, it is the announcement to the world: "Here there be Christians."

On one level we must certainly marvel at this phenomenon. The cross was a Roman instrument of torture for killing criminals and enemies of the state. No pilgrim traveling down a Roman road could fail to experience the sense of shock and revulsion created by the sight of crucifixion. To see the dead and dying bodies hanging there would turn the stomach and plague the mind for days. Anyone who has seen the nauseating pictures of the brutal lynchings of bygone days can perhaps get a small indication of this sickening feeling. Someone in the Roman Empire of Jesus' day would no more have considered using a decorative cross than we would think of using a decorative noose. Yet while the Roman Empire was still holding sway over the

world, the cross began to show up everywhere as the emblem of the Christians. Truly something marvelous happened in the world when Jesus died on an old rugged cross.

Unfortunately the emblem has become a meaningless trinket in far too many cases. Can a congregation truly be called Christian when they fail to honor the Lord in their faith and fellowship, even if they do assemble in the shadow of a towering cross set atop their steeple? Does the wearing of a golden cross around the neck make a person a faithful child of God when their lives are filled with selfishness and sin? When Jesus comes again to gather His people, will he search the tombstones and collect to himself all those resting beneath a cross of granite? The display of the emblem to announce our Christianity is an insult to God if we fail to live a life of submission to the one who died on that cross. "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

The cross as icon

Some religious bodies have gone beyond the use of the cross as mere ornamentation and have brought the image of the cross into their worship. Consider for instance the following description of a ceremony known as "The Adoration of the Cross" commonly performed on Good Friday.

A veiled image of the Crucifix is gradually exposed to view, while the celebrant, accompanied by his assistants, sings three times the "Ecce lignum Crucis", etc. (Behold the wood of the Cross on which hung the salvation of the world), to which the choir answers, each time, "Venite adoremus" (Come let us adore). During the singing of this response the whole assembly (except the celebrant) kneel in adoration. When the Cross is completely unveiled the celebrant carries it to the foot of the altar, and places it in a cushion prepared for it. He then takes off his shoes and approaches the Cross (genuflecting three times on the way) and kisses it. The deacon and subdeacon also divest themselves of their shoes (the deacon and subdeacon may take off their shoes, if that be the custom of the place, S.C.R., n. 2769, ad X, q. 5), and act in like manner ... The clergy two and two follow, while one or two priests

vested in surplice and black stole take crosses and present them to the faithful present to be kissed. ²

Thus we see the cross "adored" by chanting, bowing and kissing. This ritual is by no means unique. There are numerous feast days and celebrations dedicated to the veneration of the cross. ³ The Feast of the Invention of the Cross, celebrated on May 3, commemorates the supposed discovery of the true cross by Saint Helena, mother of Roman Emperor Constantine I.⁴ The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, celebrated September 14, and commemorates the alleged recovery of the true cross from the Persians who were said to have stolen it. In many chapels and church buildings there are set up the "Stations of the Cross" with their accompanying images, in which worshippers retrace a series of fourteen events from the passion of Christ (both Biblical and traditional), pausing at each station to meditate and pray before a cross. And on and on we could go.

What is the justification for this worship of the cross? Two primary arguments are generally put forth.⁵ First it is alleged that this worship constitutes veneration rather than deification. Those who adore the cross in these rituals are not treating the cross itself as divine, but are rather showing proper respect and reverence toward that which the image represents. The Council of Trent stated it thus:

Images are not to be worshipped because it is believed that some divinity or power resides in them and that they must be worshipped on that account, or because we ought to ask anything of them, or because we should put our trust in them, as was done by the gentiles of old who placed their hope in idols but because the honour which is shown to them is referred to the prototypes which they represent; so that through the images which we kiss, and before which we kneel, we may adore Christ, and venerate the saints, whose resemblances they bear."

There is supposedly support for this theory in the distinction between the Greek words latreia and proskynosis. Latreia, it is said, refers to the worship of God, whereas proskynosis is honor or tribute that might be paid to anyone or anything worthy. Thus it is claimed that while

we may only worship God in the divine sense (latreia), we can and should worship those emblems which are associated with God (proskynosis), including the cross. The problem is that this distinction is entirely a man-made view. In responding to the temptations of Satan, Jesus used both words (in their verb forms). "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). The word translated worship is proskuneo, while the word translated serve is latreuo. And Jesus says that both are to be reserved for God alone.

The second argument put forth is from the Bible. Throughout the New Testament we read about the cross as the central element in God's plan of salvation. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18). "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:" (Eph. 2:16). Surely then, we are told, it is right and proper for Christians to pay respect to the instrument of our salvation.

While it may be fitting that we acknowledge the cross, or more specifically, the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross, as the focal point in God's scheme of redemption, we must nevertheless act in accordance with the revealed will of God. Christians do not have the right to add to the worship whatever they like. Is there any prescribed act of worship that memorializes what Jesus suffered on that cross? Of course there is. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you"(Luke 22:19, 20). It is a simple yet beautiful

commemoration – no crosses or crucifixes, no chanting, no bowing and kissing – just the divinely sanctioned meal shared by fellow disciples.

The cross as Talisman

Superstition reigns supreme in the way the cross is used by some devotees. We have all seen the vampire movies in which someone holds up a cross to ward off the bloodthirsty creature. When no cross is available, the imperiled quarry may grasp two sticks and hold them up in the simulated form of a cross, as if the mere perpendicular intersection of timber had mystical power to repel evil. We easily dismiss these scenes as part of the fanciful mythology of the genre. But for many sincere adherents, this power of the cross is firmly believed to be real.

In ancient India there was a good luck charm known by the Sanskrit word *swastika*, taking the familiar shape of a cross sitting at an oblique angle with extensions at right angles to each arm. It was associated with fire, lightning and the Sun, and represented life and power. This symbol is found in artifacts from civilizations throughout the Orient. The ancients Egyptians had a similar symbol called an *ankh*, meaning *life*, which is shaped like a cross with a circle atop it. It was sometimes called "the key of the Nile," and is regularly seen in the hands of the Egyptian gods and goddesses as symbols of their power. Both the swastika and the ankh were adopted by various groups of Christians in the post-apostolic years as representations of the cross. In fact, some scholars believe that the religious symbol of the cross is directly derived from such ancient talismans as these.

While I would deny that the cross is in any way associated with these pagan beliefs, it is nevertheless true that some treat it in the same way. When a woman ends her prayers by kissing the small cross on the chain about her neck, she is engaging in superstition. When a priest smudges ashes in the form of a cross on a worshipper's forehead, he is engaging in superstition.

When a man witnesses some terrible tragedy and waves his hand across his chest in the invisible shape of a cross, he is engaging in superstition. Much like the ancient Israelites who thought that having the ark of the covenant in their presence assured them God's protection, so many today seem to think that the cross is a magical charm to invoke the blessing of God.

This belief in physical objects possessing mystical powers is known as fetishism. It is at the heart of many primitive religions. The basic problem with this theology is that it is designed to put divine power under the command and control of men, rather than teaching men to submit to the will of God. It is nothing more than pagan idolatry. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." (1 Cor. 10:14) "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (1 John 5:21).

THE CROSS DEPRECIATED BY DENOMINATIONALISM

The denominational world of Christianity is filled with man-made doctrines and traditions. Many of the most widely held beliefs stand in opposition to the basic truths of the message of the cross. Two in particular should be mentioned.

Premillennialism

According to the dispensational theory, Jesus came into the world to fulfill in the most literal sense the prophecies of a glorious world empire for the nation of Israel. The plan, by this model, was for Jesus to establish a great kingdom from which he would rule the world in peace and prosperity sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem. When Jesus came into the world, however, the Jews rejected him and it became necessary for God to implement the "church age," a sort of "Plan B" alternative which would postpone the prophesied kingdom and await a future date when the world would be more receptive to God's plan.

This particular approach to the Scriptures has numerous flaws. It misunderstands the figurative nature of Old Testament prophecy. The millennialist insists that every prophecy, especially "kingdom prophecies," must be taken absolutely literally, despite plain New Testament teaching on the spiritual nature of the kingdom. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). It misunderstands the centrality of the church in God's plan. Far from being a second-rate substitute for the kingdom, the Bible tells us that the church was in God's plan "from the beginning of the world" and that it is "the eternal purpose" of God (Eph. 3:9-11). It misunderstands the finality of Jesus' second coming. Instead of returning to issue in a thousand-year world empire, Jesus will return to bring an end to this world and usher all men into judgment. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10).

One of the most disturbing aspects of this theory is that it dismisses the value of the cross. If Jesus had come into the world to set up an earthly kingdom, and if the Jews had been willing for him to do so, then Jesus would have avoided the cross altogether; but Jesus was not seeking an earthly kingdom. Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world, and he refused. (Matt. 4:8-10) The Jews were most anxious to see their nation exalted as a seat of world power and once attempted to forcibly enthrone Jesus, but he escaped from them. (John 6:14,15) Jesus scorned a crown of gold in favor of a crown of thorns, and thanks be to God, for now we look forward to a crown of life.

After his resurrection, Jesus met with his disciples and explained to them that everything that had happened – including his suffering on the cross – unfolded exactly as God had planned

and as the prophets had foretold. There was no "Plan B" and no failure of the divine scheme for mankind.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:44-47).

Calvinism

The Calvinistic view of sin and salvation tells us that man is hopelessly depraved and can do nothing to reach out toward God. It is entirely by God's action that salvation is obtained, without so much as a whisper on man's part. But since God alone is responsible for salvation, there must be some explanation why all people are not saved. To explain this, Calvinists have put forth the doctrine of "limited atonement." This theory says that Jesus did not die for all mankind, but only for the elect, a specially chosen and predestined group who would be spared the wrath of God.

Now what does the Bible say? "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have <u>ALL MEN</u> to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3, 4). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to <u>ALL MEN</u>" (Titus 2:11). "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for <u>EVERY MAN</u>" (Heb. 2:9). "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that <u>ANY</u> should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for

ours only, but also for the sins of <u>THE WHOLE WORLD</u>"(1 John 2:2). It couldn't be any plainer. Jesus died, not for merely a select few, but for all mankind.

What then of God's election and predestination? Peter reminds us that we are "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ..." (1 Pet. 1:2). Our election is here attributed to four causes: God's foreknowledge (a divine plan), the Spirit's sanctification (a divine purpose), our obedience (a divine prerequisite), and Jesus' blood (a divine power). In other words, God in the beginning foreordained a plan by which salvation could be brought to the world. This plan was executed by Jesus in his death on the cross. According to the plan, all who will come in trusting obedience are sanctified, set apart as God's chosen people.

Paul writes of this magnificent plan of God, calling it his pleasure, his purpose, his will, and his counsel. Its object was to bring all men into one body in Jesus Christ, thereby granting them the spiritual blessings of his love and forgiveness. He does not say that God chose who would be saved, but rather that God chose where we would be saved – in Jesus Christ, in the one body, paid for by the blood of Calvary.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the

counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ (Eph. 1:3-12).

Frances Havergal wrote, "Is it for me, dear Savior, Thy glory and thy rest? For me so weak and sinful! O shall I be so blest?" Have no doubt. God's answer is a resounding, "Yes!" Jesus died for me, for you, and for the whole world.

THE CROSS DIVERTED BY LIBERALISM

Over the years, the cross has been appropriated by all sorts of people proclaiming all sorts of doctrines and practicing all sorts of behavior, all in the name of Jesus Christ. From the waving flags of the Red Cross as they undertake their missions of mercy to the fiery crosses burned by the Ku Klux Klan as they conduct their campaigns of hatred, men have used the cross to sanction their choices from the noblest ambitions to the basest transgressions. The fact that someone displays the emblem of the cross does not necessarily mean that he follows the teachings of the One who died there. A particularly disturbing example is found is the use of the cross to promote the permissive religion of the liberal. A perusal of the sermons being delivered in pulpits today will find frequent references to "the meaning of the cross," "the spirit of the cross," "the essence of the cross," etc. Yet far too often what is meant is the display of a noncritical attitude toward beliefs and practices that are clearly unbiblical.

Liberalism among the protestants

Far too often there is an emphasis in modern churches on self-improvement at the expense of consecration and discipleship. Men and women should stand at the foot of the cross in humility and reverence, in awe of the love and sacrifice shown there, asking, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" Instead too many seem to be saying, "That's fine, Lord, but what

have you done for me lately?" One writer describes what he has seen throughout the denominational world.

Helping people to feel loved and worthwhile has become the central mission of the church. We are learning not to worship God in self-denial and costly service, but to embrace our inner-child, heal our memories, overcome addictions, lift our depressions, improve self-images, establish self-preservation boundaries, substitute self-love for self-hatred and replace shame with an affirming acceptance of who we are. ⁸

This does not mean that it is wrong to speak about the blessings that may be found in Christ. And certainly among those blessings are the emotional and social benefits gained. When properly understood and implemented, Christianity yields the greatest quality of life of any philosophy or religion in existence. Preachers and evangelists seeking to lead the lost to Jesus would be foolish to ignore the great persuasive power of this fact. However when this approach is used as the primary means of motivation, two serious flaws emerge.

First, there is a tendency to shortcut the process, to offer blessing without submission. In order to come to Jesus, we must repent. "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Repentance is all about change – internally changing our beliefs, attitudes and values, and externally changing our temperament and behavior. But the message today seems too often to be, "You don't need to change. God loves you just as you are. Just come to him and acknowledge his love for you, and your life will be blessed."

How far can this attitude go? Consider one extreme example. One religious group calling itself "Spirit of the Cross" promotes this concept on their web site. ⁹ On the home page, they promise a worship which will be "exciting, meaningful, relevant, and life-giving," with "Christ-centered messages that are both practical and uplifting." What are these "Christ-centered" messages? On the events page, we read, "Pastor Richard is teaching 'The Bible and Homosexuality'. This class will discuss the six 'clobber' passages that are often used to oppress

GLBT people. The class will also cover the positive Scriptures for GLBT Christians. Come join us Wednesday's at 6:45 p.m." (GLBT is a common acronym in the homosexual community, standing for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender.) Scriptures that speak out against homosexuality are called "clobber passages," and are said to "oppress GLBT people." Is this really the spirit of the cross?

What is at the root of such a huge perversion of the Scripture? Here is what they say on the page entitled "Our Beliefs": "Every person is justified by grace to God through faith in Jesus Christ. We are saved from loneliness, despair, and degradation through God's gift of grace, as was declared by our Savior. Such grace is not earned, but is a pure gift from a God of pure love." Notice there is nothing about being saved from sin, just from "loneliness, despair, and degradation." This is the same philosophy being taught in pulpits across the land. The only difference is that most have not carried the notion this far – yet.

The second problem with this self-improvement theology concerns sources. Self-improvement is big business today. Bookshelves are filled with the works of popular authors like Tony Robbins, Barbara De Angelis, Dr. Phil McGraw, and Steven Covey. They appear regularly on the radio and television. In some circles, these names are as well known as any movie star or famous athlete. And for every one that gains such renown there are literally thousands of others promoting their latest philosophy on how to improve the human condition. The result is a hodgepodge of ideas and theories, many of them contradicting one another, contradicting common sense, and contradicting the Bible. Not everything that these self-help gurus promote is bad. Some of it is actually quite useful. Occasionally you will even find some advice that is biblically based. But you will have to weed through a lot of advice that ranges from the absurdly silly to the dangerously ignorant.

Too many preachers today reason like this; they say the cross shows us that God loves us and wants us to have a happy life. Now let's see what Dr. Phil says about how to get that life. Why not simply preach the unadorned New Testament gospel? Paul said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). This doesn't mean that every sermon is a repetition of the story of the crucifixion. It means that we do not derive our message from the so-called wisdom of the world, but from the pure truth of God's wisdom. (rf. 1 Cor. 2:4-8) The best of human philosophy can offer no improvement on the world of God, and the worst of it can condemn someone's soul.

Liberalism among churches of Christ

Oh how I wish I could say that liberalism was only a problem among the denominations. Alas, the Lord's church has been deeply infected. Consider a few examples of how the cross has been used in churches of Christ to promote unbiblical ideas and practices.

First, consider a news report referred to by one writer who sought to illustrate just how far some have deviated from New Testament practices in their worship. It describes a gathering of people from various Christian colleges.

First, they erected a cross and at its base was built a blazing campfire. Each student was given a stick of wood on which he was to mentally write the name of some sin which he was 'going to give to Jesus,' and as he committed a part of himself to Christ, he flung the faggot into the fire to watch it consumed entirely as Christ himself takes away sins. ¹⁰

I hesitate to pass judgment on an event at which I was not present and for which I have so little information. But as I read this, I could not help but shudder. If this was intended as an act of worship, it is patently unauthorized, and borders on being pagan in nature. But perhaps this was simply intended as an object lesson. What could be wrong with that? After all, many of the prophets and preachers of both testaments, including Jesus himself, used object lessons to teach

truths. Unfortunately I have often seen just this sort of object lesson used to promote the idea of forgiveness without repentance. If I have committed adultery, or stolen from my employer, or verbally assaulted my neighbor, I will just "give my sin to Jesus" as I might throw a log on the fire, and all will be forgiven. Truly the cross is where the grace of God shines in its fullness to bring forgiveness to the sinner. But, oh, the terrible price that was paid! When we mentally stand before the cross, we should recoil in horror at the thought of our sins, and determine to renounce them forevermore. "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. 6:15).

Consider a second example. A minister for a congregation in Pennsylvania writes about whether it is better to display a cross with the image of the body of Christ still on it (which is technically called a crucifix), or one on which there is no body. ¹¹ In the discussion his language betrays a congregation which has surrendered New Testament worship in favor of modern denominational showmanship. "In our sanctuary, there is a cross that is 15 feet tall by 8 feet wide ... Each year our congregation reenacts the passion of Christ with Jesus hanging from that hewed cross ... Recently one of our drama directors [later identified as female – AW] gave a marvelous Communion meditation ... I love my Protestant heritage..." Have we reduced the story of the cross to a pageant for entertainment?

Look at one more case in point. A congregation in Michigan posted this statement in the "Beliefs" section of their web site: "We believe that our salvation is by God's free grace through faith in Jesus Christ ... water baptism is our confession of the sufficiency of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus to save us from sin." ¹² Now this is a classic statement of the denominationalist to declare that, since Jesus' death on the cross fully and completely paid the price for sin, there is nothing we need do, or even can do, to contribute to our salvation, and

baptism is nothing more than an outward demonstration utterly without merit. Is this what this congregation intended to say? Further search of the web site reveals an article explaining their position on baptism. ¹³After a lengthy discussion of the nature of baptism, the article propounds this conclusion: "Is it possible for an unbaptized believer to be saved? Yes, definitely. Should every believer be baptized? Yes, definitely." In other words, baptism is a good thing to do, but it is not necessary for salvation.

But it is in baptism that we join with Jesus in his death on the cross:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin (Rom. 6:3-7).

Surely we can see that it is folly to proclaim the cross and practice man-made religion!

THE OLD RUGGED CROSS

The cross of Jesus Christ must not be trivialized in any way – not by ignorance and superstition, not by man-made beliefs and practices, not by sentimentalism and showmanship, and most certainly not by the indulgence of sin. It was our sin that put Jesus on the cross. When we imagine the agonies of the cross, we must remorsefully and fearfully say, "I did this. I let selfishness and insolence rule my life. I filled my heart with greed, and lust, and hatred, and pride, and envy, and a host of other affections unworthy of one created by God. And each vile thought brought forth vile words and vile deeds. I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And what is the result? Suffering! But the pitiful suffering I have brought to my own life

is nothing more than what I deserve. Even the sufferings I have brought to my friends, family and neighbors, fellow sinners all, are but the just desserts of our mutual transgressions; but, oh, the suffering at the cross. To see the pure and sinless Son of God willingly leave his home in heaven and come suffer on that cross is a price too dear."

Consider the pain of the cross

Flogged by the lash, beaten and bruised by the soldier's hands, skewered with a crown of thorns, Jesus came to the cross of Calvary. Great spikes were nailed into his hands and feet. He was lifted up and the weight of his body pulled against the nails that pinned him there. And then the hours began to pass. The blood flowed from his body, leaving him cold and shivering. The thirst overtook him. Every breath was sheer agony. He did not deserve to suffer so.

Consider the shame of the cross

Our Lord endured what Paul calls "the offense of the cross" (Gal. 5:11), and the Hebrew writer says they "put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:6), Listen to the taunts and jeers. "He saved others; himself he cannot save ... He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him" (Matt. 27:42, 43). Stripped of his garments, the soldiers gambled for his robe. His hung between two thieves, treated as a common criminal, though even his accusers and his judge knew that he was innocent. His enemies mocked him. His friends forsook him. And when the story was told, the world called it "foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18). He did not deserve to be humiliated in this way.

Consider the death of the cross

The suffering and the shame were great, but then came the final tragedy. "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46.) The giver of life has given his own life.

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). He did not deserve to die.

This is the tragedy of the cross. But why? "Why did He drink the bitter cup Of sorrow, pain and woe? Why on the cross be lifted up? Because He loved me so!" The cross is not only the story of the horrors of sin, but it is the story of the overcoming and overwhelming love of God. And it is a story that ends in victory. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

The Old Rugged Cross

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, The emblem of suff'ring and shame, And I love that old cross where the dearest and best For a world of lost sinners was slain.

Oh, that old rugged cross, so despised by the world, Has wondrous attraction for me, For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above, To bear it to dark Calvary.

In the old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine, A wondrous beauty I see;
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died,
To pardon and sanctify me.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true, Its shame and reproach gladly bear; Then He'll call me some day to my home far away, Where His glory forever I'll share.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down; I will cling to the old rugged cross, And exchange it some day for a crown.

George Bennard

End Notes

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- Charles W. Hughes, American Hymns Old and New (New York City, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) p. 192, 312.
- Robert Anderson and Gail North, Gospel Music Encyclopedia (New York City, New York: Sterling Publishing Company, Inc., 1979) p. 200.
- ² The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1909 edition, s.v. "Good Friday"; available from http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06643a.htm; Internet; accessed 12 Sep 2007.
- ³ The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1909 edition, s.v. "The True Cross"; available from http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04529a.htm; Internet; accessed 12 Sep 2007.
- ⁴ According to legend, Helena made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem where three crosses had been found, presumed to be that of Jesus and the two thieves. Helena had the body of a dead man exhumed and brought to these crosses. As the body was brought to the first two crosses, there was no effect, but when brought to the third cross, the man came to life. The site was declared holy, and Helena and her son Constantine had a basilica erected there. For more information, see The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1909 edition, s.v. "Archaeology of the Cross and Crucifix"; available from http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04517a.htm; Internet; accessed 12 Sep 2007.
- ⁵ A third argument based on alleged miracles associated with crosses and other images is not dealt with here. It is sufficient to respond that only a minuscule fragment of the crosses and crucifixes in existence have any claims of miraculous power, and those few claims to do exist are entirely legendary in nature.
- ⁶ The Council of Trent, Section 25: De invocatione Sanctorum
- ⁷ There is a distinction between these words, though not the one alleged by this theory. Proskynosis refers to the attitude of submissive reverence given toward God, while latreia refers to acts of religious observance carried out for the purpose of worshipping God. Notice one refers to the attitude and the other to the act of worship. The object is the same in either case. For instance, one lexicon defines proskuneo as "to express in attitude or gesture one's complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure," and latreuo as "serve, in our lit. only of the carrying out of religious duties," Frederick William Danker, Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago, Illinois; University of Chicago Press, 2000)
- ⁸ Larry Crabb, *Moving Through Your Problems Toward Finding God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1993), p. 17. 9 Available at http://www.spiritofthecross.org/home.html, accessed 12 Sep 2007.
- 10 Roy J. Hearn, "Christ and Worship," from Jesus Christ, The Son of God, Freed-Hardeman College Lectureship 1973 (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Company, 1973), William Woodson, ed., p. 289.
- 11 Russel Moldovan, Cleaning Up the Cross?, available from http:// www.christianstandard.com/pdfs/60.pdf, accessed on 12 Sep 2007.
- ¹² Ann Arbor Church of Christ web site, available at http://www.annarborchurchofchrist.com, accessed 12 Sep 2007.
- ¹³ Baptism: The Demonstration of Devotion, available at http://www.annarborchurchofchrist.com/baptism.pdf, accessed 12 Sep 2007. The text of this article is taken almost verbatim from Max Lucado, Baptism: A Demonstration of Devotion, available at http://www.maxlucado.com/pdf/baptism.upwords.pdf, accessed 12 Sep 2007.

George Bennard, compiler, The Old Rugged Cross: A Wonderful Song Story (Albion, Michigan: The Bennard Music Company, 1930) This book consists of an account of the origins of the song, various sermons based on the theme, and testimonials from numerous people whose lives were touched by the song. Supplemental material for this section may be found in the following sources:

WONDERFUL CITY OF GOD

Riley Nelson

INTRODUCTION

The song that was selected for my topic is one that should be dear to each Christian's heart. The "City of God" represents the focal point of all our lives. We became Christians when we realized the condition of our souls, knowing we were headed to a place God prepared for the Devil and his angels that place called Hell. Realizing the love of God and the reward of heaven that awaits all who will obey God and live for Him we obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Author

J. W. Ferrill (1879 – 1973) wrote both the words and music to "Wonderful City of God". Mr. Ferrill was born in Limestone County, Texas near Groesbeck. He received a Literary Teacher's Degree from North Texas Normal College at Denton Texas. Ferrill studied music under Professors J. E. Thomas and F. L. Eiland. He also took courses at the Analytical School of Music. His love for music was seen throughout his life time. He wrote some forty songs, many of which are included in most church hymnals. Such tunes as "A Soul Winner For Jesus", "Someday", and the topic of our lesson, "Wonderful City of God" are among his most popular songs.²

It was not this writers good fortune to find out the actual idea that bro. Ferrill had in writing "Wonderful City of God", however his reputation of being an active member in the Church of Christ, leads one to think that just as the apostle Paul, he yearned to go and be with God. Living out his last years in the Park Plaza Nursing Home in Mart, Texas, he was said to be well liked by all because of his Christ like spirit.³

BIBLE VERSES ABOUT HEAVEN

The word of God is a one of the great blessings mankind has been given. God explains to man how he came to be, how to live, and how to prepare for eternity. In the pages of holy writ we are told of just how "wonderful" heaven will be. The passages serve to give us comfort when we have lost loved ones, and hope for ourselves when we are over burdened by the troubles of this world. Paul wrote, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; (2 Cor. 4:17).

When one thinks of heaven many different Bible verses come to mind. For instance; "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-4); 4 "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2); "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). Perhaps one of the most comforting passages concerning heaven is "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:2 - 4). Truly what a "wonderful city" heaven will be. Knowing such a place is waiting should help persuade lost

souls to seek for this place, causing them to desire to leave the things of the world behind. Every Christian should have heaven in their mind's eye as they go about their daily tasks.

Lyrics

"There is a wonderful place we call home". What a great blessing it is to know that heaven will be ours for eternity. The use of the word "home" gives a sense of peace and comfort to the idea of heaven. A home is the place where no matter what befalls us during the day we know it is our safe haven, for there the ones who care about us and who love us reside, this being coupled with the idea of a garden of rest, make one long even more for heaven. Brother E. L. Whitaker, who preached for the Knight Arnold Road congregation in Memphis Tennessee, once explained going to heaven in this manner. He said, "Have you ever been out working all day, tired and hot? Now think of how you felt when you went home, cleaned up and sat down in your favorite chair, propped your feet up and closed your eyes to enjoy a few moments of sweet rest." What a wonderful description of the rest that awaits the faithful. Yet it should also be understood that the rest of heaven will not mean the ending of activity for there will be worship of God around His throne (Rev. 5: 1ff). Some would say this is a contradiction but think back to the Sabbath day. This was a day of rest, but also a day of activity as they served God. 6

Brother Ferrill expressed the hope and desire of all the faithful when he penned, "And that beautiful home shall be mine". This is reminiscent of the writings of the apostle Paul who said, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim 4:6-8). Paul by the eye of faith

knew that heaven awaited him and all the faithful of all time. It had been his desire to make the journey to heaven before, but he knew he had work to do for the Lord.

"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again" (Phil. 1:20 – 26).

"Where Jesus the Master has gone to prepare us this glorious home" reminds one of John 14:1-6, as the Lord spoke to His disciples.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

While some have seen this as speaking of the church itself, most including this author hold the view that this speaks of heaven itself. Of this belief brother Guy N. Woods wrote,

Strange indeed, in the light of the obvious import of this is the church, a view for which there is not the slightest support in the passage and is obviously erroneous for the following reasons: (1) the Father's house then existed; Jesus speaks of it in the present tense; the church had not been established when these words were uttered. (2) Jesus left the earth to go to the Father's house; one does not have to leave the earth to become a member of the church today since the church is here—not in heaven—and thus available to all who obey the gospel. (3) The place the Lord went to prepare is where he went when he left the earth; he left the earth to go to the Father's house; but he went to heaven; therefore, his Father's house is in heaven. The church is on

earth; The Father's house is in heaven; therefore the Father's house is not the church."

Jesus assured His disciples as well as all who read this passage that in heaven there are abiding-places prepared and He "bids us a welcome to come". Matthew recorded, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28 - 30). It is God's desire that all be saved and enter in to the rest of this glorious city (1 Tim. 2:4). This idea shows the mission of Jesus, He came to save mankind (Matt. 1:21, Luke 19:10, John 14:6).

Brother Ferrill spoke of the beauty, splendor, and safety of this "wonderful city", "O how sweet it will be there to dwell, with the Saviour and Father of all, in a palace of diamond and gold, where no evil can be-fall". When thinking of this splendid abode of the saved, it must be kept in mind that heaven is not a material place. The saved themselves will not have their physical being, for Paul wrote,

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:48-57).

As human beings are limited in understanding the realm of spiritual beings God used accommodative language to help us have an idea of the splendor of heaven. We know of the beauty of gold, pearl, and rare jewels, therefore we can have an idea of this wonderful place.⁸

The Revelation letter is man's portal to glimpse the home of the faithful for all eternity.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:10-27).

Surely this chapter must have played a part in the title of our song, for heaven truly is a "Wonderful City". A place where there will be no sorrow, no pain or anguish such as we must endure here upon the earth. Where there will be no fear of those who would seek to hurt us, for they cannot come to this great city. It is a place where there will be not graves, no emptiness of heart as we lay a loved one in the tomb. If no other words were spoken about heaven but these it would be enough.

This city has no temple for it is all temple, it has no need of the sun, moon or stars for the Lamb is the light of this city. A place where the gate is never closed, always open. Knowing all of this it is of little wonder John wrote, "Even so, come Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). 9

"What a beautiful, beautiful thought that I shall be there with that throng ... to behold such a glorious sight". In this stanza the singer is able to realize that it is possible to go to this "wonderful city". Today people pay large sums of money to see celebrities perform, to visit other lands. Millions are spent each year as people visit the "Disney" parks. Many will never see big stars or visit other lands or theme parks, simply because they cannot afford such. Yet all rich or poor can go to the "Wonderful City of God". All it takes is diligence to obey God and live the life of a Christian, and they can "enter into the gates of the city" (Rev. 22:14).

CONSLUSION

This is a wonderful hymn to trigger our minds to long for the "Wonderful City of God". It serves as an example of how the mind and heart of a faithful Christian thinks about eternity, and even longs for the time when heaven can be enjoyed. This longing needs to be in the hearts of all Christians as we travel through this life.

Wonderful City of God

There's a wonderful place we call home, Tis a city of glory divine, It is built in the garden of rest, And that beautiful home shall be mine, O that wonderful Eden so blest, Where Jesus the Master has gone To prepare us this glorious home, There He bids us a welcome to come.

O how sweet it will be there to dwell, With the Savior and father of all,
In a palace of diamond and gold, Where no evil to us can befall,
There no sorrow that home shall invade, And our loved one no more there shall die
One celestial unbroken sweet day, While eternities' ages roll by.

When the jewels of Jesus are brought, There to shine in that land of sweet son, What a beautiful, beautiful thought, That I shall be there in that throng; Sweetest peace to my soul it will be, To behold such a glorious sight, Where the sun and the moon neither shine, But the glory of God is the light:

(Chorus)

O wonderful city of God, Just across in that beautiful clime,
Where the angels sweet echo of song, in musical cadencies chime,
O wonderful city of God by faith in the distance I see,
There's a mansion prepared over there, Yes a place in that city for me.

ENDNOTES

 $^{^{1}}$ Gene C. Finley, <u>Our Garden of Song</u> , West Monroe, La. Howard Publishing Company, p. 190 2 Ibid 193

³ Ibid 193

⁴ All Bible references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

⁵ All quotes of the lyrics of "Wonderful City of God" are taken from Songs of the Church, compiled and editd by Alton H. Howard, Howard Pub. Co. 1977, West Monroe, La. Pp.650, 651.

⁶ Terry M. Hightower, Whatever Happened to Heaven and Hell? The Eighth Annual Shenandoah Lectures, Editor, 1993 Shenandoah Church of Christ, San Antonio, TX, Austin McGary and Company, Pensacola, FL, p. 235.

⁷ Guy N. Woods, A Commentary on the Gospel According to John Gospel Advocate Company 1984, Nashville Tenn. P. 303.

⁸ Hightower p. 285

⁹ Hightower p. 289

WE HAVE AN ANCHOR

Richard Mansel

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

Priscilla J. Owens wrote the lyrics for "We Have an Anchor" in 1882. ¹ William James Kirkpatrick composed the music. ²

Owens was a schoolteacher in Baltimore, Maryland for almost fifty years. ³ She wrote hymns for her Bible classes at the Union Square Methodist Episcopal Church before they appeared in the Methodist Protestant and the Christian Standard. ⁴

Kirkpatrick, the son of an educator and musician, worked as a carpenter before he committed himself to writing music. ⁵ He published approximately fifty hymn collections. ⁶

First stanza

"Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?"

Christians are "strangers and pilgrims" in a foreign land (Heb. 11:13). ⁸ While we desire a "better country," we remain on earth to work diligently in the fields of the Lord (Heb. 11:16).

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath

given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:1-6).

Despite our desire for heaven, Satan resists us every day. God warns, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

God tells His children to don spiritual armor because physical armor will be worthless (Eph. 6:11-17). "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the high places" (Eph. 6:12). Clothing ourselves in truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and Scripture, we constantly renew our strength in prayer, perseverance and supplications (Eph. 6:13-18). Despite these resources, the daily ravages of battle weigh heavily on our mind, and body.

Roman armor was designed to protect the soldier's body from the enemy's weapons. Christian armor was designed to protect the soul. God does not throw us unprotected into the battle against Satan's empire. God has provided all that we need for complete protection of mind, heart, soul, spirit, conscience and will. ⁹

In Ephesians 6:10, we find that we are "to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." The phrase, "be strong" is passive, meaning that God strengthens us by His power (Eph. 3:16). ¹⁰ In Ephesians 1:19, Paul had explained that God's power was great and available to them through faith. Paul urges them to use this power. "The passive imperative [in "be strong"] indicates that the believer receives the action of being strengthened and the present tense argues for a customary or habitual action." ¹¹ Only through His power, strength and materials can we hope to survive.

Realization of our helplessness and complete submission to Him is the separating line between heaven and hell for many people. They cannot imagine yielding their will totally to God. However, it is indispensable. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6). "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (Jam. 4:10).

Owens' lyrics remind us how a ship on the stormy sea closely resembles the struggles of life. The stresses of temptations, career, parenting, relationships, finances and health pound on us relentlessly like the wind and waves.

The following account of the steamer, H.M. Hanna Jr. on Lake Huron in 1913 describes the wicked storm.

From that time, she wallowed heavily, with the seas breaking continuously over her, demolishing the crew's quarters aft and pouring tons of water into the engine room. Pumps and siphons were kept going to free her, and when the captain saw the Port Austin light close aboard, he threw out the port anchor to bring her head to the wind, but she continued to drift until she slammed upon the reef, where she pounded so badly that she broke in two. All her hatches were torn from her and her rivets sheared off the top sides as if they had been cut with chisel and hammer. The crew remained aboard the ship all day Monday, but as the seas were moderating on Tuesday morning, they were able to lower the port lifeboat and reach the shore. ¹²

The travails of the Hanna are indicative of our struggles in this life. The storms come suddenly and powerfully. Even if we are experienced, death and destruction still result (Mark 6:45-50). At the least, they consume all of our attention, thus pulling our focus from God. We must find a way to handle them better.

Owens' lyrics ask if our "anchor [will] hold in the storms of life." This timeless question goes to the heart of the issue. Will our anchor "firm remain?"

Everyone seeks an anchor to moor them so they can survive the storms of life. They search in the hearts of lovers, in bottles, vials, needles, wealth and fun. While they seek deeper levels of pleasure and debauchery, their goal perennially eludes them. They fail to secure the anchor because it is of human construction and temporary. "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Men are incapable of finding answers to salvation and surviving the war with Satan, within themselves.

Since we all sin, we have no hope of saving ourselves. Nothing within man can solve the problem of sin. We are utterly without hope. When we sin, we become enemies of God and lost spiritually (Romans 5:10). Paul later lamented, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). Man needed someone to save him from the flood of death engulfing him. Paul provides an answer when he writes, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). Paul teaches that "For so in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). God sent Jesus to die for our sins so that his blood could solve man's sin problem (Romans 5:6-9). ¹³

We are helpless fighting a spiritual enemy with human wealth, wisdom or weaponry. Without spiritual armor and an anchor, we drift far away from our intended destination and have no means to do battle (Heb. 2:1).

Second stanza

"It is safely moored, 'twill the storm withstand, For 'tis well secured by the Savior's hand; And the cables, passed from his heart to mine, Can defy the blast, through strength divine." ¹⁴

When God is our anchor, we are firm against the crashing waves. John Steinbeck tells of anchoring his boat off the coast of Maine against a hurricane. Helplessly, he watched his boat being beaten and battered. However, when the storm ceased, his boat was the only one that remained. His anchor and moorings remained secure, while others failed.

Securing ourselves to the Rock will allow us to persevere. In Psalm 61, David flees from his son Absalom who plans an overthrow of the throne. David pleads with God for his safety.

Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings (Psa. 61:1-4).

David is screaming out for deliverance from his enemies.

Our Father is not hardened against the cries of his children. What a consoling thought it is that the Lord at all times hears his people's cries, and is never forgetful of their prayers; whatever else fails to move him, praying breath is never spent in vain! 15

We seek refuge in the rock that is higher than we are. When we are "well-secured by the Savior's hand," we are in the enviable position that almost no one seeks. They flail around pursuing other anchors, only to persevere in failure.

The job of fighting Satan is too arduous for man. The rock is insurmountable for our strength and wisdom. We require the arms and grace of God to lay anchor in the churning waters. And when the cables hold, we must remember that God also protects us from our enemies. We must "boldly say, *The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me?" (Heb. 13:6)*.

Third stanza

"It will firmly hold in the straits of fear,
When the breakers have told the reef is near;
Tho' the tempests rage and the wild winds blow,
Not an angry wave shall our bark o'erflow." 16

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). We have faith in Him as an anchor that can withstand any force. Complete faith in Christ will keep us safe in His arms (2 Tim. 1:12). "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

God promises He will always be with us, no matter what faces us (Heb. 13:5-6). "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18). "Serenity is not freedom from the storm, but peace amid the storm." ¹⁷

This does not mean that we cannot be apprehensive about death. The unknown nature of death brings a natural fear. We are nervous about meeting something so momentous and final when we know so little of what will happen.

The fear is that there are no answers, that God will not hear our cries nor be at our side. Christians have no need of these doubts. Scripture assures us that God will deliver on his promises. God who "cannot lie" assured us that Jesus would be returning to retrieve His children (Tit. 1:2; John 14:1-6).

Courage is being in the arms of God. Nowhere else can we be so resolute. Even though our "bark o'erflow," we will not lose our confidence in Him. The word "bark" refers to "A sailing ship with from three to five masts, all of them square-rigged except the after mast, which is fore-and-aft rigged." ¹⁸

The apostles were experienced seaman and yet found themselves in a storm that threatened to end their lives. "And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were

breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up" (Mark 4:37). ¹⁹ Jesus slept through this upheaval and when awakened, spoke and stilled the winds and waves saying, "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39).

When the storms assault us daily, the waves are lapping into the boat and all seems lost, Christ is unaffected by the chaos. His mind is clear and He is able to handle the situation, if we will absolutely trust Him.

Jesus is our peace. Jesus begins, "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1). Literally, it is "stop letting your heart be troubled." Hugo McCord translates it, "stop letting your heart be disturbed." We have power to decide whether we will be crushed by the storms of life or endure them. While storms batter us, we have more control than we imagine when they come our way. The Apostle Paul said that nothing can "separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:39). The Psalmist wrote, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety. (Psalm 4:8).

Fourth stanza

"When our eyes behold through the gathering night

The city of gold, our harbor bright,

We shall anchor fast by the heavenly shore,

With the storms all past forevermore." 21

In Acts 27:39-44, Paul and his fellow travelers, beaten and battered by the storms, saw land as the daylight fell upon them. While they still had to get to the land through the vicious waves, God said that all would arrive safely if they did as God commanded.

While we are in the kingdom of God, we nonetheless reside in a world filled with Satan's influence (John 15:18-19). We have a duty here to serve and glorify Christ to the best of our abilities in the time allotted to us (Eph. 3:20-21). While we do so, Christ provides for our basic needs so we can remain focused on His mission (Matt. 6:25-34).

Our hope is in heaven as well as our hearts and dreams. We anchor in the throne of God and the splendor awaiting our entrance into heaven. We remain tethered to Him as the waves crash around us. Faith is able to sustain us through the spiritual wars. Christ is our strength and shield (Eph. 6:10-20). We should embrace Him and be appreciative of His comfort and strength.

Unlike physical wars, there will come a time when every soldier in this spiritual war will die (Heb. 9:27). We will then face the consequences of our works (Rev. 20:11-15). We will enter either heaven or hell for all eternity (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 21:8).

Heaven will be a place of exhilarating beauty where we will never again encounter death, tears, pain or misery because all these things will have passed away (Rev. 21:1-7). All of the storms will cease and unimaginable peace will reign for longer than the human mind can conceive.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion to the hymn reads:

"We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love." 22

God never lets man down. He is perfectly faithful, true, steadfast and sure (Psa. 52:1). God's faithfulness "endures to all generations" (Psa. 119:90) and will never fail (Psa. 89:33), because it is great (Lam. 3:23) and encompassing (Psa. 89:8). His goodness is universal (Psa. 145:9) and completely satisfying (Psa. 65:4).

God is an unmovable rock, firm until the end (Isa. 32:2; Isa. 4:6). We can settle our anchor in Christ and withstand all that man and Satan can offer.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

We fasten ourselves to the Rock and remain anchored to the only unmovable object in the universe. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow" (Heb. 13:8). He never changes His will, His ways or His goal for mankind. We can anchor to Him and relax, because we remain connected to a cable that cannot be broken.

Christ will never leave His children (Heb. 13:5). However, we can walk away from Him. We can unmoor our ship and set sail into the hungry storm. The fleeting exhilaration of freedom turns to stark terror as we realize the calamity we have manufactured. However, as the waves consume us, it will be too late to return to port.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).

We must remain firm against all opposition. No matter what storms come our way, we hold onto God. Vincent Van Gogh said, "The fishermen know that the sea is dangerous and the storm terrible, but they have never found these dangers sufficient reason for remaining ashore."

23 We know the battles will come. We know they will be arduous and stretch the limits of our

faith. Yet, that is not a sufficient reason to refuse to make the journey. "No one would ever have crossed the ocean if he could have gotten off the ship in a storm." ²⁴

A preacher had been on a long flight from one place to another. The first warning of the approaching problems came when the sign on the airplane flashed on: Fasten your seat belts. After awhile, a calm voice said, "We are expecting turbulence. Please be sure your seat belt is fastened." Then the storm broke. One moment the airplane was lifted on terrific currents of air; the next, it dropped as if it were about to crash. He said, 'As I looked around the plane, nearly all the passengers were upset. Then, I saw a little girl. Apparently, the storm meant nothing to her. Everything within her small world was calm and orderly. After landing, the preacher lingered to speak to the girl. Having commented about the storm, he asked why she had not been afraid. The child replied, 'Because my Father's the pilot, and he's taking me home. 25

We must decide where we are steering our lives. Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote, "Tis the set of the sail that decides the goal, and not the storm of life" ²⁶ When we allow the storm to derail our trip to heaven, we have decided the journey is not worth the struggle. But there is nothing more valuable than heaven. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matt. 13:45-46). A righteous soul spending an eternity in heaven is worth any price and any struggle. "Heaven will surely be worth it all. Worth all the sorrows that here befall. After this life, with all its strife; Heaven will surely be worth it all" ²⁷

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"WE ARE GOING DOWN THE VALLEY"

Ronnie L. Ulrey

INTRODUCTION

My interest in this song came from my mother when I was a young boy watching her hang up the clothes on the clothesline in our back yard. As she hung them on the line she always sang some spiritual song like "Rock of Ages" or "In The Sweet By and By," but most of the time she would sing "We Are Going Down The Valley." She sang it so much that my brother and I learned the words and we sang it with her. We were not that religious, but we would sing with Mother because she seemed to like for us to sing along.

I never did learn all of the words to the song until I became a member of the Church. Later I began leading the singing in Gospel meetings when I was at Freed Hardeman College (University). It seemed that I led most of the singing in Bro. Olan Hicks' Gospel meetings in and around Henderson, Tennessee. (This was the Bro. Hicks who taught Greek at FHC, who is now deceased, not the other one that's messed up on the marriage, divorce question.)

I remember the first time I led this song at his meeting at Finger, Tennessee. I thought surely that everyone would know that old song I sang most of my life with mother at the clothesline. As it turned out, I was about the only one in the congregation that seemed to know it. Well, Bro. Hicks had that disgusted look on his face and quietly said, "Don't you know another song to use?" and because he didn't wait for me to make the change, I quietly told him "You pick out and study your sermon and I'll pick the songs I lead." After that we never had another problem with what I led in a Gospel meeting.

The above is one of the reasons that I asked to preach on this old song and the other reason is because I wanted to learn about its origin.

The song was written by Jessie Brown Pounds from Hiram, Ohio who lived from 1861 to 1921. Along with her family, she was deeply involved in the Restoration Movement. She began writing poetry at an early age and wrote many other familiar songs such as "The Way Of The Cross Leads Home," "Anywhere With Jesus," "The Touch of His Hand On Mine" and "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere." She wrote this last hymn when she was home sick and couldn't attend worship on the Lord's Day. She also wrote "Anywhere with Jesus" (1887), "Soul, a Saviour Thou Art Needing" (1887), "Will You Not Tell it Today" (1887), "Are You Coming To JesusTonight?" (1889), "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" (1893), and "Am I Nearer To Heaven Today?" (1916).

The original copyright of "We Are Going Down The Valley" was in 1890. It is in most of our song books and is widely loved and used in our assemblies. Originally the song had only three stanzas, and it is not known when the fourth was added or who added it. In the songbook at the left top margin it just says (Vs. 4 added), so the person who added it remains unknown.

Most of the lyrics in this song are derived from the Bible, which Sis. Pounds probably read often.

The word "Valley" which is used throughout the song definitely comes from Psa. 23:4. "The setting of the sun" comes from two passages, Amos 8:9 and Luke 23:44-46. The word "Cypress" is found in Isa. 44:14, but the word doesn't appear to be associated with death; however in olden times "Cypress" was a symbol of mourning, just as cedar is a symbol of Christmas and Oak symbolizes great strength. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language says that "Cypress branches were used as a symbol of mourning". And The

International Bible Dictionary says that in Palestine Cypress is often found flourishing near sacred tombs, itself not infrequently the object of superstitious veneration. Harpers Bible Dictionary records that because of their beauty, cypresses were used as ornamentals in gardens and cemeteries. And Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia tells of cypress wood being used for coffins. Likening death to a stream in verse 4 probably symbolically refers to the River Jordan. Just as Israel had to cross Jordan to reach the Promised Land even so we have to cross our Jordan ("The Stream Of Death") to reach Heaven.

Sister Pounds' mention in her second stanza of "when the labors of the weary day are done," could refer to one or more of several passages of scripture. For instance in Matthew 11:28,29. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

In John 9:4, Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: for the night cometh when no man can work."

And of course, the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews have something to say about entering into Jesus' "rest" i.e. we must labor to enter into that rest.

Just as Israel stood upon "Jordan's Stormy Banks" before crossing into Canaan, that crossing still was necessary for them to enter into the land that God had promised them. Even so sister Pounds likens our standing upon "the river brink" at last: but, we still must cross the river (death) to reach the land that God has promised us.

LESSONS CAN BE LEARNED FROM THIS SONG

We should not fear death; we should set our faces "toward the setting of the sun." We know that those who are "faithful unto death" shall receive "a crown of life" (Rev.2:10).

Even though our human family cannot share the pangs of death with us, we have to go down the valley "one by one." There is another song that says "I won't have to cross Jordan alone," thus Christ will meet us on our way out just as he did Stephen when he was passing over to death's other side he said "Lord Jesus receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59).

We have many problems and "cares on this earth," but when we leave here and crossover we will leave them all, and they will be gone forever that we may "rest from our labors."

There is so much sorrow on this earth at the passing of those we love. When we leave here, we will leave all of that hurt behind and "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1Thess.4:13).

Instead of being afraid of death we need to be looking forward to seeing all those who have gone before us and have a happy reunion in the sky. I told my daughter to "look for my sister when she gets there." When she died she was smiling.

I also believe that just as the angels came for Lazarus to carry him to "Abraham's bosom," that they will come for us, and that was another thing that I told our daughter; to look for the angels coming for her.

The forth stanza

The fourth stanza, which we mentioned above, certainly has a part in the imagery of this song, even though no on knows who wrote it. The word "rapture" is not found anywhere in the Bible. The rest of the stanza seems to be based on Mat.25:13. But God has not told us when he

will be revealed; whether it be dawn, noon, evening or midnight. The stanza still contains some beautiful thoughts, but the word rapture could give some impetus to some of the false doctrines taught by some.

The phrase "the shadowed vale" is similar to "the valley of the shadow of death" Psalms 23:4. It is also proper to say that "we shall gather in the sky," seeing there is no other place that will accommodate all of the people of the earth together. Notice 1Thessalonians 4:13-18:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

I Cor. 15 was sister Pounds primary inspiration for this song about death. She cited this passage just under the title of the song and she could not have used any other source that would have been more appropriate anywhere in all of the Divine Scripture and most especially if she is the author of the fourth stanza. This is the chapter that excites us the most, when it tells of the large number that witnessed the Christ alive after his resurrection, i.e. 528 people and some of them saw him more than once. The living Christ is the strength of the resurrection, thus we know that he will return to redeem all of us who have obeyed him.

CONCLUSION

When we sing this song we need to remember all of the great servants of God who served Him in the Patriarchal, the Mosaic and the Christian ages we have read about in the

Scripture and all of the great people we have known who served God faithfully all of their lives and have gone on and are waiting for us on the other side of life. What a great day it will be when all of us get to see our family who were faithful and have long been gone and our children who got there before we did.

When we think about it, I get so excited to think that all we have ever known in the Lord's church are waiting for us and are watching for us to be there. It should so fill us with joy that if we haven't been faithful in the past, we need to get back to our Lord and live so that when the end does come, we will be standing with all of God's people in the Judgment with all of our family listening for our name to be called.

ENDNOTES

¹ Ira Y. Rice, Jr. "We Are Going Down The Valley", in *Lessons in Lyrics*, ed. Curtis A. Cates, Pulaski TN. Sain Publications, p. 652

² All Bible references are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

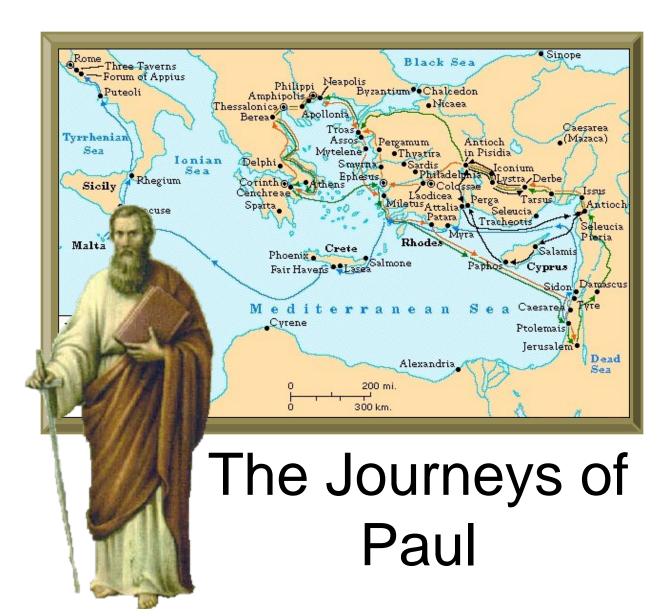


The Journeys of Paul

The Thirteenth

SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 25, 26 2008
HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA

Editor: Riley Nelson



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PREFACE

As one studies the New Testament, it is readily seen that one of the greatest preachers of all time is the Apostle Paul. His love for Christ and for the brethren is seen in all his endeavors.

The wisdom of God is manifested as He chose this man to be His messenger to the Gentiles. Who would have ever imagined getting perhaps the greatest oppressor of the Church to become its greatest proclaimer; a man who was feared by the Church, one who was known for being a persecutor of Christians? "Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name" (Acts 9:13, 14). All the outward evidence led the saints to feel this way, but God knows the heart of a man. "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). The heart of Saul was one that truly desired to serve God, and he was willing to do all in his power to fulfill his mission for God.

After his conversion, he became as focused on promoting Christianity as he had been in destroying it. It was this determination that enabled him to make the journeys to carry out the "great commission." This same determination that he would obey God no matter what the consequences helps one understand how he could suffer so much punishment yet continue on in his task. Notice his words as he tells of the things he endured. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and

thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands" (2 Corinthians 11:24 – 33).

As this volume is studied, hopefully it will serve to strengthen the hearts of all Christians and strengthen our determination to carry the gospel message to the world, despite what might stand in our way.

Riley Nelson

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October 25, 2008

DEDICATION

Being a missionary is a task that not everyone is able to do; in fact, few even try this work. Most are used to being comfortable in where they are with what they enjoy. A missionary faces many things that other Christians take for granted; creature comforts and luxuries that most think nothing of having or getting, the missionary many times simply does without.

A missionary may find themselves alone save for their family when their work begins, and this is true whether it is a domestic or foreign mission field. They feel the anxiety that Paul felt when he went alone into the city of Corinth, yet their love for God and their dedication to the work keeps them motivated to go forward.

The congregation in Richmond Hill, though small in comparison to some other congregations, is a mission-minded group. It may stem from the starting of the congregation itself, beginning in a place where no congregation had existed, Christians working together to build up the congregation, ever striving to increase the borders of the kingdom.

As this volume has to do with one of the most outstanding missionaries ever known, it only seems right to dedicate this book to those who are themselves missionaries. Over the years we have been blessed to help missionaries in various places, men such as Rod Rutherford, Barry Hatcher, Tim Wilkes Sr., Phillip Gray, Satyam Babu Tangirala, Ronnie Ulrey, Willy Smith, and Marty Broome. It is to these men and their families that we dedicate this book.

Riley Nelson

Thirteenth South-East Georgia Lectures

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THE MAKING OF A MISSIONARY

An Examination of the Life and Work of the Apostle Paul

By Alan Wright

INTRODUCTION

There is power in the gospel. It has the power to melt hard hearts, to enlighten closed minds, to conquer stubborn wills, and thus to transform sinners into saints. It is a marvelous thing to see the changes wrought in a person's life through the influence of the gospel. And how is this change brought about? It is certainly not by mystical and magical forces working in the spiritual ether around us, but simply by a "*professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ*" (2 Cor. 9:13). Beginning with the moment a person decides to believe and obey the gospel, the work of regeneration begins, and, so long as he is faithful, it will continue throughout his lifetime.

(1) The gospel works by education, as we learn from the Master Teacher (Matt. 11:29; John 6:45). (2) The gospel works by emulation, as we allow Jesus to become the pattern for our lives (1 Pet. 2:21; Phil. 2:5). (3) The gospel works by exaltation, lifting us to higher thoughts, higher ambitions, and higher affections (Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:2).

In the New Testament, we see Peter, whose fear led him to deny Jesus, changed into a courageous defender of truth who preached even under threat of death. We see John, who, along with his brother James, was ready to summon consuming fire from heaven upon inhospitable villagers, transformed into the apostle of love known worldwide for his gentleness. Each of the disciples in turn experienced this metamorphosis of mind and heart. Thomas the doubter, Simon the militant, and Matthew the despised all stood there on the great day of Pentecost to boldly

proclaim the gospel, and went on to become great leaders of the church known and admired for their faith and love.

But of all the marvelous changes wrought by the gospel, none so overawes us as that which happened to the man named Paul. More space in the New Testament is devoted to the story of his life than to that of any other person, except for Jesus himself. ¹ In fact, if a student learns thoroughly the accounts of Jesus and of Paul, he will have a reasonably complete view of New Testament history. Surely then, the Holy Spirit intended the story of Paul to be a key in unlocking our understanding and appreciation of the gospel.

Paul the Chief of Sinners

Why Paul? Of all the people living on earth in the first century, why would the Lord select Paul to lead the great mission of carrying the gospel to the whole world? After all, there were already twelve men divinely appointed with the great commission. They had been personally trained by Jesus himself and endowed with the miraculous inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They had been tested in the fire of persecution and proven to be both faithful and brave. Why then should God seek someone else to serve the purpose these men had been chosen to fulfill?

And certainly if the early Christians had been searching for a new apostle, Paul would have been the least likely candidate on the face of the earth! When Ananias was given the task of preaching to Paul, he expressed dismay, saying, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name" (Acts 9:13, 14). Years later, Paul himself would echo the same sentiments, writing, "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9).

To understand this time in Paul's life, we need to know a little of his background. Paul was a Jew born in Tarsus, a prominent city in what is now the Mersin province of Turkey. It was important geographically, being located near the famous Cilician Gates, the mountain pass connecting the coastal area with Anatolia. It was important culturally, being a great center of education and philosophy. ² It was important politically, having been made the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia under Pompey, and in 66 B.C. many of its chief inhabitants were given Roman citizenship.

Though born into this great Gentile city, Paul was thoroughly Jewish in his thinking. At some point in Paul's youth, he went to Jerusalem where he was taught "according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" (Acts 22:3). He sat at the feet of the great teacher Gamaliel, grandson of the famous scholar Hillel. Concerning this teacher, we read

His learning was so eminent, and his character so revered, that he is one of seven who alone among Jewish doctors have been honoured with the title of 'Rabban.' ... Gamaliel was called the 'Beauty of the Law;' and it is a saying of the Talmud, that 'since Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the Law has ceased.' He was a Pharisee... Candour and wisdom seem to have been features of his character; and this agrees with what we read of him in the Acts of the Apostles, that he was 'had in reputation of all the people,' ³

Following in the footsteps of his father and his esteemed teacher, Paul became a devoted Pharisee, which was, in his own words; "the most straitest sect of our religion" (Acts 26:5). Of course, we are familiar with Jesus' many reprimands of the Pharisees, especially for their fastidiousness in keeping their traditions while failing to embrace the true virtues expected of Jehovah's people. But how did the Pharisees view themselves? What was the psychology behind their behavior?

Though scholars debate the specific details, it is generally agreed that the Pharisees originated in the days of the Hasmonean rule, a brief period of national independence for Israel

following the Maccabean revolt, during which the nation was governed by a series of priest-kings. A large faction of the people opposed this consolidation of power, and the result was often civil war, which ended only when the Romans came.

The Pharisees believed priests and kings should not have absolute rule, but rather the voice of the people should be heard in governmental affairs. They referred to the "great assembly" in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, which was composed of elders of the Jews who served to advise governors, issue decrees, and even challenge the actions of rulers (e.g. Neh. 5:7). They began to obtain a strong influence in governmental affairs and in the days of Herod became a powerful force in the Sanhedrin council. ⁴

Ironically, this desire to promote democracy helped lead to the burdensome ethical code placed upon the Jewish people. An argument was made that, since Israel was a "kingdom of priests," (Exo. 19:6; rf. Isa. 61:6), all the children of Israel shared in the priesthood. This meant, among other things, all were called to the ceremonial standards of purity required of the priesthood. Every Jew should have completely removed anything that might defile them. In fact, the name Pharisee basically means, "one who separates himself."

In order to promote this high standard, the Pharisees tried to enforce not only the written laws of the Torah, but also the "oral law" ⁵ which was believed to have existed since the days of Moses, and to have been handed down from generation to generation.

Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to Joshua. Joshua gave it over to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it over to the Men of the Great Assembly. They [the Men of the Great Assembly] would always say these three things: Be cautious in judgement. Establish many pupils. And make a safety fence around the Torah. ⁶

Thus, this oral law, which the New Testament called the "tradition of the elders," (rf. Matt. 15:2), was believed to have been as divinely inspired as the written law. It largely

consisted of a series of legal details that explained exactly how each of the written laws was to be kept. Thus, for instance, when the written law forbade work to be performed on the Sabbath, the oral law intricately detailed exactly what was and was not considered work.

It was on this ground that the Pharisees so often challenged Jesus. He permitted his followers to disregard the oral law without reprimand, and he openly transgressed these laws. When Jesus responded to their criticisms by saying, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition," (Mark 7:9). He was in effect denying that the oral law was from God at all. The Pharisees were infuriated.

Among the inhabitants of Jerusalem were many Jews who, like Paul, had been born in other countries but had migrated to the holy city (Acts 2:5). ⁷ These so-called "Grecian Jews" generally spoke the languages of the places where they were born (as well as the local Aramaic) and were often more familiar with, and sometimes more tolerant of, the philosophies and cultures of those places. Still, they were passionately loyal to their Jewish heritage and regularly attended the synagogues.

It was to such a group that the gospel was first preached on the day of Pentecost, and as the gospel spread throughout the city, many of these Grecian Jews were converted. A number of them were given positions of leadership and responsibility in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1-6). And they were no less enthusiastic in spreading the message of the gospel than their native-born brethren. Therefore it is no surprise that one of the foreign-born Jews, Stephen, found himself disputing in a local synagogue with certain of his fellow Grecians about the gospel. Among the men involved in this discussion were certain men of Cilicia. And when the debate led to the violent murder of this noble Christian, we are introduced for the first time to Paul, the young

Cilician Jew taught the way of the Pharisee from childhood, who kept the cloaks of those who stoned Stephen.

The stoning of Stephen set Paul on a course of cruelty and severity, seeking out Christians wherever he might find them for the sole purpose of punishing them and destroying their faith. He threatened Christians (Acts 9:1). He arrested them as heretics (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4). He compelled them to blaspheme (Acts 26:11), which no doubt required nothing more than confessing Jesus as the Son of God. He consented to their deaths (Acts 8:1; 26:10).

What was going through Paul's mind as he ravaged the church?

- 1) He was "zealous toward God" (Acts 22:3). It was his earnest desire to faithfully follow God's will.
- 2) He was "exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers" (Gal. 1:14). As a Pharisee, he believed that God's will was contained in the oral traditions as well as the written law.
- 3) He was "exceedingly mad against them" (Acts 26:11). Paul was enraged at the nerve of these Christians. Not only did they speak against the law and the temple (rf. Acts 6:13,14), but also they exalted as Messiah and Son of God such a traitor.
- 4) He thought he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). It was only logical and right, in his thinking, that pious Jews loyal to the law of God would do everything in their power to put an end to this obscenity.

Following this train of thought, he was firmly convinced that what he was doing was the will of God. In fact, he would later say that he had a clear conscience through it all (Acts 23:1). But he would soon discover just how wrong he was. Thinking back on his deplorable actions, he

would later write, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15).

Paul the Chosen Vessel

When Ananias and Sapphira lied about their earnings, they were struck dead (Acts 5:1-11). When King Herod accepted the worship of his subjects, he was eaten with worms (Acts 12:20-23). As God dealt so swiftly and severely with these transgressions, surely then we would expect him to strike a mighty blow to defeat a man like Paul. Why did God not strike him dead? Let us continue Paul's story and see.

The persecution led by Paul had resulted in the dispersion of the Jerusalem Christians. But rather than go into hiding, "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). As the gospel spread, Paul determined to hunt down these evangelizing disciples and bring them to justice. And so he obtained authority from the chief priests to go to Damascus.

The narrative of Paul's encounter on the Damascus road is one of the best-known stories of the New Testament. The persecutor is suddenly overwhelmed by the glory of Jesus Christ, and is seized with fear. He falls to the ground, and when he learns who is speaking to him, "he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:9). When told to go into Damascus and await instructions, he arises and discovers that he is blind. His companions lead him into the city, and after three days spent in prayer and penitence, Ananias arrives to give him the promised directions. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). The same plan of salvation that had been

followed by the believers on Pentecost, the citizens of Samaria, and the Ethiopian eunuch was once again used to save Paul.

Notice the irony of these events. One who struck fear into the hearts of others finds himself overcome by fear. One who rejected the claims of Jesus is constrained to yield in faith. One who seemed certain of God's will is made to wait and learn. One who compelled others to admit their "blasphemy" must now repent of his own. One who thought himself holier than others must have his sins washed away.

When Ananias was summoned by the Lord to go to Paul, he was told, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me" (Acts 9:15). A vessel (from the Greek skeuos) is a container, especially one that holds precious treasure. Paul would later write that "we have this treasure [i.e., the knowledge of the glory of God] in earthen vessels," (2 Cor. 4:7), and he told Timothy that a man must purge his life of dishonor in order to be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use" (2 Tim. 2:21). Thus Jesus had determined to entrust Paul with the treasure of the gospel.

Now it is significant that Paul was a "chosen vessel," even before his baptism. In fact, he had been chosen before his experience on the Damascus road, before his bitter persecution of Christians, before his participation in the stoning of Stephen, before his education at the feet of Gamaliel, before his migration from Tarsus. He says, "it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace," (Gal. 1:15).

This is in keeping with the choices God had made all along. God chose to save the world in Jesus Christ before the world was made (Eph. 1:4). God chose Abraham while still in Ur (Neh. 9:7, LXX); God chose Jacob over Esau, before the boys were even born (Rom. 9:11). God chose the nation of Israel to carry forth His plan, while still in Egypt (Acts 13:17). The apostles

were chosen for their role before they knew enough to choose Jesus themselves (John 15:16). God chose Peter to go to Cornelius while he still had his prejudices against the Gentiles (Acts 15:7). And then God chose Paul.

While the Bible clearly teaches that all men have free will and may choose either to trust and obey the Lord or to follow their own hearts, (rf. Josh. 24:15), yet God has a purpose and chooses men to serve that purpose. God makes the choices according to His divine wisdom and will, often before the one chosen is aware of God's plan. So it was that Paul was chosen because it suited God's purpose (Acts 26:16).

But we ask again, why Paul? The answer is found in Paul's own writings. In recollecting his former years of violence against the church he writes, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief ... Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1:13,16). In other words, if God could show mercy to one such as Paul, then you and I can be assured that He is willing to show that same mercy to us.

Paul the Champion of the Gospel

And so it is that Paul the persecutor became Paul the preacher. The New Testament tells us that Paul traveled throughout the world, preaching and teaching at every opportunity.

He was motivated by a sense of debt (Rom. 1:14, 15). Note that he does not say that he is a debtor to Christ, although certainly true, but rather he is a debtor to mankind. The word is used both for financial indebtedness and moral obligation (translated "ought"). We might translate then, "I am under obligation to all men." For example, parents "ought" to love children, (2 Cor. 12:14), husbands "ought" to love their wives (Eph. 5:28). So Paul felt that he ought to take the gospel to the world.

Paul speaks several times of the "dispensation of the gospel" laid upon him (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25). Preaching was a stewardship, a great treasure entrusted to his management. The gospel is not a fragile keepsake to be safeguarded, but a powerful force for good to be disseminated.

Just as the gospel was committed to his trust, so he committed it to others, and now it rests with us to carry the gospel of God's grace to the world (rf. 1 Tim. 1:11; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14; 2:2).

END NOTES

- 1 The life of Jesus is covered in the four gospels, covering approximately 45% of the New Testament. Paul's story is found from Acts 9 through the end of Hebrews, accounting for approximately 39%. The remaining 16% is devoted primarily to Peter, John and James. These figures are determined by page count.
- 2 Strabo, Geographica, Book 14, Chapter 5, Section 13, Online. Available from The Perseus Project http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0198; Internet, accessed 30 September 2008.
- 3 Conybeare, William John and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978) p. 47,48. Originally published 1851.
- 4 Kohler, Kaufmann, "Pharisees," in Jewish Encyclopedia, Online. Available from Internet http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=252&letter=P, accessed 30 September 2008.
- 5 Although this oral law was eventually written down in the Mishnah, it is nevertheless still known by the term "oral," because of the belief that God originally gave these instructions orally to Moses. rf. Lauterbach, Jacob Zallel, "Oral Law," in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Online. Available from Internet http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view_friendly.jsp?artid=113&letter=O, accessed 30 September 2008.
- 6 Pirkei Avot 1:1 ("The Ethics of the Fathers"), in Chabad Lubavitch, Online. Available from Internet http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5708/jewish/Ethics-of-the-Fathers-Translated-Text.htm, accessed 30 September 2008.
- 7 The word "dwell" in this verse is from the Greek *katoikeo*, which implies not merely those visiting Jerusalem for the feast, as has often been supposed, but those who had made Jerusalem their home. rf. Thayer, Joseph Henry, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Abridged and Revised*, BibleWorks, Version 6.0.012z [CD-ROM], Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, 2003.

PAUL'S FIRST JOURNEY

By Kevin M. Skelton

INTRODUCTION

"Mission work," just to mention the phrase will cause some to go pale, start shuffling their feet, and looking for any excuse to change the subject. Some may respond with only a blank stare. For others, the concept sparks a burning flame of excitement and possibility, for the fields "are white already unto harvest" (John 4:35).

No history of the apostle Paul would be complete without a discussion of his missionary work. Indeed, without that foundation there would be precious little to tell. The record of Paul's first journey could be described as a "human interest" story of the best kind. It involves courage, adventure, treachery, deceit, dedication, perseverance, drama, despair, and hope.

THE COMPANIONS

During the course of his missionary efforts, the Apostle Paul labored with many individuals that are well known to the student of the Bible, such as Silas, Timothy, Aquila, Priscilla, and Luke. In addition to these, there are many of Paul's fellow laborers whom the Scriptures mention only briefly. However, on this first journey, Paul's companions numbered only two: Barnabas and John Mark.

Barnabas

The first of Paul's companions specifically named is Barnabas (Acts 13:2). We first read of Barnabas in Acts 4:36-37. Here we find that "Barnabas" was the name given by the apostles to Joseph, a Jewish convert of the tribe of Levi and of the nation of Cyprus. The Scripture says that the meaning of the name "Barnabas" is "Son of exhortation" (Acts 4:36). This is a

"designation he obviously had earned" and, as "the bestowal of a special name was a token of respect," we can readily see that Barnabas had already made a favorable impression on the early church through his generosity and compassion.²

The earliest mention of Paul's association with Barnabas can be found not long after the conversion of the man known as Saul of Tarsus.

"And when he was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus" (Acts 9:26-27).

It is unclear whether this was Paul's first contact with Barnabas, but nevertheless we see Barnabas once again lived up to his name.³ Barnabas showed himself willing to encourage, and stand up for, a man who was having difficulty overcoming his past. At the very least, Barnabas, through his willingness to vouch for the true conversion of Saul, was able to solidify an important and lasting relationship with the man who would become one of the greatest influences for the cause of Christ the world has ever known.

John Mark

The second of Paul's associates on this first journey is mentioned only twice in our selected text. First in Acts 13:5, "And when they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant" and later in Acts 13:13, "Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem." The Scriptures offer the following clues to his identity: He was known as John Mark (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37); he was the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10); he was likely a native of Jerusalem, where his mother, Mary, also lived (Acts 12:12, 25); and he made the journey from Jerusalem to Antioch with Saul and

Barnabas (Acts 12:25). John Mark may have been a convert of Peter, who refers to him as "my son" (1 Pet. 5:13).⁴ Their relationship was likely analogous to that of Paul and Timothy (1 Tim. 1:1, 2).⁵ Also, as Guthrie notes, along with the strong external evidence, "all we know of Mark from the New Testament would predispose us to consider him to be a likely candidate as author of the gospel" that bears his name.⁶

John Mark was not singled out for this work by the Holy Spirit as Saul and Barnabas were (Acts 13:2), but apparently had volunteered to accompany them in the capacity of an attendant.⁷ As a translation of the Greek term *huperetes*, an *attendant*, or *minister* (KJV), is a somewhat nonspecific term that could be applied in many situations to one who serves a master or superior.⁸

THE CALL

Acts 13 opens at the city of Antioch (capital of Syria), where Saul and Barnabas had lately returned from Jerusalem accompanied by John Mark (Acts 12:25). This was not Saul's first association with the church in Antioch, as he and Barnabas had previously labored there for about a year (Acts 11:25-26). The church in Antioch at this time boasted a strong contingent of leaders from a variety of backgrounds (Acts 13:1). Barnabas and Saul are both included in this list of prophets and teachers, and interestingly, Barnabas is mentioned first and Saul is last. McGarvey writes that the order in which these names are given "is probably that of the relative reputation of the men." If that is the case, it is a situation that would soon change (Acts 13:13).

The Scriptures tell us that these men "ministered to the Lord, and fasted" (Acts 13:2). Boles indicates that this "ministering" involved both preaching the gospel to the unsaved and edifying the saints. ¹⁰ Bruce simply states that they were "carrying out their appointed ministry to the church," ¹¹ and McGarvey describes this as their "habitual, daily work." ¹² In conjunction

with their regular activities, on this occasion they were also fasting (abstaining from food or drink for a spiritual reason), a practice frequently associated with the contemplation or undertaking of significant tasks (cf. Exo. 34:28; Mat. 4:2; Acts 14:23). ¹³

It was at this time that the divine will concerning Barnabas and Saul was revealed by the Holy Spirit. "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). This revelation was probably made known to one of the others present (Symeon, Lucius, or Manaen). ¹⁴ This was not the first time the Holy Spirit had provided specific guidance for a course of action, and would not be the last (cf. Acts 8:29, 39; 10:19-20; 16:16). The term separate (from the Greek aphorizo) indicates the marking off of boundaries and is used by Paul to describe his calling (cf. Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15). ¹⁵ Note that Boles states, "Barnabas and Saul had both been called for this work sometime ago, but now they are to be set apart in a special way to do in a larger sense the work for which they were now prepared and to which they had been called." ¹⁶

With delay sufficient only to the purposes of fasting and prayer,

"Barnabas and Saul were released and commissioned for their new service. Their colleagues laid their hands on them and sent them away with their blessing and good will. It [is] evident that the laying on of hands in this instance imparted no qualification to Barnabas and Saul which they did not already possess. But by this means the church of Antioch, through its leaders, expressed its fellowship with Barnabas and Saul and recognized them as its delegates...." ¹⁷

The church at Antioch would be an important part of Paul's efforts.

"The first missionary trip began and ended in Antioch (Acts 14:26-28). The second journey with Paul and Silas began and ended there (Acts 15:40-41; 18:22); the third missionary trip also began in Antioch. As a result of their efforts, thousands had the opportunity to hear and obey the Gospel. Churches were planted, souls were saved, and God was glorified!" 18

One would wish that more of our congregations today were similarly minded in sacrificial evangelistic zeal. Though the Scriptures reveal little about the work and leadership of this congregation, "[i]t is perhaps worth noting that the two men who were to be released for what we should nowadays call missionary service overseas were the two most eminent and gifted leaders in the church."¹⁹

THE CIRCUIT

Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul made their way to the island of Cyprus (Acts 13:4). McGarvey credits the choice of this location to three factors: (1) Barnabas' personal connection to the island (Acts 4:36); (2) the significant Jewish population, evidenced by the plurality of synagogues (Acts 13:5); and (3) the gospel had already been preached there, apparently with some success (Acts 11:19-20).²⁰ Their first evangelistic efforts took place in the Jewish synagogues in the city of Salamis. Nothing is mentioned in Scripture regarding the reception the gospel received here, but here we find the first practice of "the invariable rule of Paul to preach to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles" (Rom. 1:16).²¹

Paphos

Traveling westward through the island of Cyprus, Barnabas and Saul eventually came to the city of Paphos where they encountered a Jew by the name of Bar-Jesus, or Elymas. This man is described as a "sorcerer, false prophet" (Acts 13:6), in this context, a practitioner of any sort of magic or quackery, or one who makes the false claim of being a medium of divine revelations.²² He was an associate of (and seemingly had great influence with) Sergius Paulus, the proconsul (a Roman provincial governor with essentially unlimited powers in military and civil matters).²³ The proconsul is called "a man of understanding" and had a great interest in

hearing "the word of God" from Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:7). Elymas adamantly opposed Barnabas and Saul, "seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith" (Acts 13:9), no doubt fearing the loss of his own influence with the leader.

"Here Saul (henceforth to be known as Paul) obviously [came] to the forefront as the leader of the missionary team." In a face-to-face confrontation, Paul denounced Elymas without equivocation:

"O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand" (Acts 13:10-11).

As Jackson notes, "this was a punitive miracle, but it had the same effect as a benevolent sign."²⁵ McGarvey suggests that "as [Elymas] groped about, calling on one and another of the frightened bystanders to lead him by the hand, the falsity and iniquity of his pretensions stood practically confessed, and the divine mission of the apostles was demonstrated."²⁶ While the miracle was no doubt impressive, it is important to note that the proconsul was "astonished at the preaching of the Lord" (Acts 13:12), and became a believer, a New Testament Christian.²⁷ The power to change lives, whether in the first century or the twenty-first century, has always rested with the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16).

Transition

Two points should be addressed from Acts 13:13, "Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem." First, up to this point, the Scriptures have consistently referred to "Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 12:25; 13:2, 7), but now, with Paul having taken the reigns in the matter at Paphos, the transition is made to "Paul and his company." Second, it is here that John Mark took leave of

Paul and Barnabas and returned home. While Mark's motives are unknown, his actions led to a heated conflict between Paul and Barnabas later (Acts 15:36-40).²⁸

Antioch of Pisidia

Traveling northward, Paul and Barnabas made their way through the province of Pamphylia and finally to the city of Antioch, in the northern part of the province of Pisidia. As per Paul's custom, they sought out the Sabbath gathering at the synagogue seeking an audience among their Jewish brethren (Acts 13:14). After the customary reading from the Old Testament, Paul and Barnabas were invited to speak "a word of exhortation" (Acts 13:15). Paul, now the recognized leader of the pair, took this opportunity to present his first sermon to be recorded in the New Testament. Jackson observes that Paul's presentation was consistent with earlier discourses to those with a respect for Mosaic Law, namely that "the mission and message of Jesus Christ is but a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy."

The initial response to Paul's sermon seems to be mixed: while there is no mention of immediate acceptance, there was a definite interest and desire to hear more, so much so that Paul and Barnabas were invited back to speak the next Sabbath (Acts 13:42). Many who heard Paul's sermon had a strong desire to hear more and followed after Paul and Barnabas, who may have spent the week further instructing those with a desire to learn.³²

A large part of the city assembled the next Sabbath to hear "the word of God" (Acts 13:44). The Jews, unaccustomed to such large crowds, "were filled with jealousy" (Acts 13:45), and attempted to dissuade the people from hearing Paul and Barnabas, apparently interrupting the sermon and voicing their opposition to the inspired message.³³ Paul and Barnabas were not intimidated, and in response "spoke out boldly" (Acts 13:46). Their rebuke was twofold: (1) that God had always intended that the Gentiles be included in His plan of salvation, (as Paul

emphasized by quoting from Isa. 49:6); and (2) that by rejecting this message, they were in fact pushing away God's offer of eternal life (Acts 13:46-47). Many of the Gentiles rejoiced at this proclamation and obeyed the gospel (Acts 13:48), "and the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region" (Acts 13:49).

The Jews, however, were not content to let the matter be and used their influence with the city leaders to instigate persecution against Paul and Barnabas and to have them thrown out of the city (Acts 13:50). Having received such unjust treatment, the Scripture says that Paul and Barnabas "shook off the dust of their feet against them" (Acts 13:51). As McGarvey writes,

"The act of the departing disciples, witnessed no doubt by those for whom it was intended, was not an idle or childish mark of resentment, as it would be in an uninspired teacher; but it was designed as a solemn 'testimony against them'—a prophecy of the righteous judgment of God, whom they had rejected in rejecting his chosen messengers (Mark 4:11; Luke 10:16)."³⁴

Far from being discouraged (as one might well presume), they continued on to their next destination, "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52; cf. Acts 5:41).

Iconium

Making their way eastward, Paul and Barnabas entered the city of Iconium and promptly made their way to the synagogue. Many of the Jews and Gentiles who heard, believed (that is, obeyed and were baptized), Acts 14:1.³⁵ Unfortunately, those Jews who were not obedient "were not content to ignore the apostolic preaching; rather, they sought assistance in their persecution of the Christian message." They "took active steps to expel the two missionaries, and did their best to prejudice the minds of the civic authorities and the citizen body against them."

Paul and Barnabas remained in Iconium for some time "speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:3).³⁸ The inhabitants of the city were divided (actually split, from the Greek

schizo);³⁹ some followed the Jews and some followed the apostles (Acts 14:4). Opposition to the missionaries grew in intensity (apparently fueled by the Jewish rulers, Acts 14:5), to the point that a "city mob was incited to assault and stone the apostles." "Somehow, in the providence of God, these gospel companions became aware of the plot, and so fled the city" as the Lord had earlier instructed His disciples to do (Mat. 10:23). ⁴¹

Lystra

Traveling a brief eighteen miles southwest, Paul and Barnabas entered the city of Lystra. There they encountered "a certain man, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked" (Acts 14:8). The Scriptures leave no doubt as to the severity of this man's condition. As Paul spoke, his gaze was fixed upon the lame man, and he saw "some expression or action which revealed the gentleman's faith, i.e., his confidence in the speaker's divine power." Paul instructed him, "Stand upright on thy feet" (Acts 14:10), and his faith is manifest "by his ready obedience to Paul's command to stand up..." But not only did he stand, "he leaped up and walked" (Acts 14:10). The term leaped is a translation of the Greek term hallomai meaning leap, or spring up. 44

Those who witnessed this event were undoubtedly aware of its truly miraculous nature and attributed it to the gods with which they were familiar. "They lifted up their voice, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:11-12).⁴⁵ If the gods had deigned to visit the people of Lystra, they surely should be honored, something the people seemed intent on doing (Acts 14:13).⁴⁶ However, when Paul and Barnabas learned of the intentions of the multitude, they demonstrated their opposition by rending their

garments (Acts 14:14).⁴⁷ Paul was adamantly opposed to being worshipped and insisted that only the "*living God*" was worthy of such (Acts 14:15).

Paul took this opportunity to declare to the people their need to "turn from these vain things [their false gods, ks] unto a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is" (Acts 14:15). Paul adroitly shifted the emphasis of his message here away from Old Testament prophecy (which would mean nothing to the pagan Gentiles of Lystra), to God's own testimony of Himself, with which they were familiar. "And yet He left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17), (cf. Acts 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-23). In spite of Paul's protests, he and Barnabas were barely able to keep the people from going ahead with their sacrificial offerings (Acts 14:18).

In the meantime, it would seem that the Jews from Antioch and Iconium had not been idle. In keeping with their earlier jealousy and outrage, they had pursued Paul and Barnabas to Lystra and there persuaded the people to violence (Acts 14:19). Boles compares the change of the Lystran's attitude to that "which transformed the 'Hosannas' of the multitude at Jerusalem into the cry of 'Crucify [H]im' (Mat. 21:9; 27:22)." Supposing their vengeful task to be complete, the mob dragged Paul outside the city and left him for dead (Acts 14:19).

Paul's labors in Lystra had borne fruit, as evidence by the disciples who came to his side after this appalling event (Acts 14:20). McGarvey vividly describes the setting and suggests that a young Timothy might have been among those assembled around Paul's motionless form. ⁴⁹ The disciples soon learned that Paul was not dead (though a miraculous healing may have been "effected upon the heroic apostle") ⁵⁰ when he "rose up, and entered into the city" (Acts 14:20).

Without delay, and possibly to prevent a second attempt on his life, Paul and Barnabas left the next day (Acts 14:20).

Derbe and The Return

The Scriptures summarize Paul's work in Derbe succinctly. We are told only that "they preached the gospel to that city" and that they "made many disciples" (Acts 14:21). It is great testimony to the dedication and faith of Paul and Barnabas that no persecution, not even the threat of death, could prevent them from proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 1:14-15; 1 Cor. 9:16).

Upon the completion of their work in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas began to retrace their steps, visiting the disciples in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 14:21). "In these cities they strengthened the young churches which they had so recently planted..." Paul's purpose here is made clear: these spiritual newborns needed to be confirmed (i.e., strengthened, or propped up). They needed exhortation to remain faithful because they were going to face many difficulties (Acts 14:22). Additionally, Paul and Barnabas "appointed for them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23). "Most likely, following the principle pursued in Acts 6, the Christians selected their own elders, and Paul and Barnabas formalized the procedure by an official 'appointment." Here again we see the practice of fasting and prayer in conjunction with the beginning of an important work (Acts 14:23). Before leaving their brethren, Luke tells us that Paul and Barnabas "commended them to the Lord" (Acts 14:23). Vine notes that the term commend literally means "to give or deliver over," so Paul and Barnabas, quite appropriately, "gave over" the keeping of these saints to the Lord. The Lord of the Lord.

Little is said of the remainder of their journey back to Antioch of Syria, except that they passed through the provinces of Pisidia and Pamphylia to return to Perga where they preached

the word (Acts 14:24-25). Apparently bypassing the island of Cyprus, they sailed from Attalia on to Antioch of Syria, where they had begun (Acts 14:25-26).

CONCLUSION

Upon the return of Paul and Barnabas, the church assembled together to hear of their labors (Acts 14:27). Bruce suggests that

"[t]he church of Antioch had more than a natural interest in the wonderful story which Paul and Barnabas had to tell; they had shared in the responsibility and the glory of their missionary service, for it was with the blessing and fellowship of the whole church of Antioch that the two apostles had set forth upon their campaign of Gentile service." ⁵⁵

It is interesting to note that the Scriptures record that "they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:29). Paul never sought glory or recognition for himself, for his only desire was to bring glory and honor to God through the preaching of Jesus Christ. He would later write (perhaps during his stay in Antioch), "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

Though Paul may not have realized it at the time, his labors on this first journey would serve to prepare him for longer and more arduous mission works in the years ahead. This relatively brief journey of about a year allowed Paul to gain valuable experience.⁵⁷ The churches and the relationships established on this circuit would prove to be a benefit to Paul and the church in general later, when he would revisit some of these same congregations and acquire laborers from them (Acts 16:1-2). Paul was given a taste of the difficulties and the rewards of preaching the gospel, and he did not waver. Also, the work of Paul and Barnabas on this first journey represented the first concentrated effort to evangelize the Gentile world, a fact which

Paul emphasized in his report to the church in Antioch (Acts 14:29), and also in his sermons (Acts 13:46-48). Paul's message was consistent, as it should be for us today: "The gospel is for all." God help us to have the zeal, dedication, and conviction of Paul in our labors for Him.

"Mission work," how do you respond?

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture quotations are taken from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

² Wayne Jackson, *Acts from Jerusalem to Rome* (Stockton, CA: Courier, 2000), 51.

³ J. W. McGarvey in his *New Commentary on Acts of the Apostles Vol. 1* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light, n.d.), suggests that Barnabas became convinced of Saul's conversion after a personal interview (188). F. F. Bruce's *Commentary on the Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) deems it likely that they were previously acquainted (205).

⁴ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 229.

⁵Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John and Jude* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1973), 135.

⁶ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* Rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1990) 81-82.

⁷ J. W. McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts of the Apostles Vol. 2*, (Delight, AR: Gospel Light, n.d.) 6.

⁸ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, trans., 2nd ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1979), 842.

⁹ McGarvey, *New Commentary Vol. 2,* 2.

¹⁰ H. Leo Boles, *A Commentary on Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1980), 200.

¹¹ Bruce, 261.

¹² McGarvey, New Commentary Vol. 2, 3.

¹³Jackson, 156.

¹⁴ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, CD-ROM, Power BibleCD Version 3.6 (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, 2002), s.v. "Acts 13:2".

¹⁵ A. T. Robertson, *Robertson's New Testament Word Pictures*, CD-ROM, Power BibleCD Version 3.6 (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, 2002) s.v. "Acts 13:2".

¹⁶ Boles, 200.

¹⁷ Bruce, 261. For a fuller discussion of the practice of laying on of hands in Scripture, see Earl D. Edwards, "The Purpose of 'the Laying on of Hands." *Alternative* 8, no. 4 (1982): 13-15.

¹⁸ Wayne Cox. "The Church at Antioch," in *The Lord's Church: Past, Present, Future,* ed. B. J. Clarke (Southaven, MS: POWER, 1999), 124.

¹⁹ Bruce, 261.

²⁰ McGarvey, New Commentary Vol. 2, 6.

²¹ Boles, 201.

²² Bruce. 264.

²³ Merrill C. Tenney, ed. *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, 1967 ed., s.v. "Proconsul."

²⁴Jackson, 158.

²⁵ Ibid., 159.

²⁶ McGarvey, New Commentary Vol. 2, 9.

²⁷ Sources are divided as to the response of the proconsul based on the term *believed*. Some suggest that he did not obey the gospel, or that he was not baptized (see Bruce, 265 and McGarvey, *New Commentary Vol. 2*, 9-10), some argue that he was baptized (see Jackson, 159, 463-466, and *People's New Testament Commentary*, CD-ROM, Power BibleCD Version 3.6 (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, 2002), s.v. "Acts 13:12"), while some are seem unsure (see Robertson, s.v. "Acts 13:12").

²⁸ In spite of the sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas concerning John Mark that caused them to part ways for a time, the matter seems to have been resolved, as Paul later refers to Mark in a very positive light (Col. 4:10-11; Phm. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11).

²⁹ There is some disagreement as to Antioch's precise location, whether in Pisidia or in Phrygia. Barnes (s.v. "Acts 13:14") states: "Antioch was not in Pisidia, but within the limits of Phrygia; but it belonged to Pisidia, and was called Antioch of Pisidia to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria." So, perhaps the ASV rendering "of Pisidia" would be more accurate.

³⁰ Boles, 205.

³¹ Jackson, 161. For a thorough analysis of Paul's sermon on this occasion, see Boles, 206-215; McGarvey, *New Commentary Vol. 2*, 13-26; and Jackson, 161-166.

³² Ibid., 166-167. Jackson sees strong evidence of obedience to the gospel in the admonition "continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43).

³³Boles, 216.

³⁴ McGarvey, New Commentary Vol. 2, 35.

³⁵ That is to say, they obeyed the gospel and were baptized. The term "believe" is often used in the book of Acts as a metonym for the full response to the gospel, i.e. belief, repentance, confession, and baptism. See Jackson, 171 and 463-466.

³⁶ Jackson, 171-172.

³⁷ Bruce, 287.

38 See Mark 16:17-20 and Heb. 2:3-4 for the purpose of signs and wonders.
³⁹ Jackson, 172.
⁴⁰ Bruce, 287.
⁴¹ Jackson, 172.
⁴² Ibid., 173.
⁴³ Ibid.
⁴⁴ Bauer, 39. The language here indicates the rapidity and completeness of his healing.
⁴⁵ The Greek names (Zeus instead of Jupiter, Hermes instead of Mercury) are to be preferred here. See Bruce, 291, footnote 21.
⁴⁶ Bruce, 292.
⁴⁷ Barnabas is mentioned first here, likely because of the perspective of the people of Lystra. He is also referred to here as an apostle, though not in the sense of "one of the twelve." However, he was "sent out" by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:3; cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-7). See Boles, 224.
⁴⁸ Boles, 227.
McGarvey, New Commentary Vol. 2, 46-47.
⁵⁰ Jackson, 176.
⁵¹ Bruce, 296.
⁵² Jackson, 177.
⁵³ Ibid.
⁵⁴ W. E. Vine, <i>A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers</i> (McLean, VA: MacDonald, n.d.), s.v. "Commend."
⁵⁵ Bruce, 297.
⁵⁶ Jackson, 178.
⁵⁷ Bruce, 297.

PAUL'S SECOND JOURNEY

By Stacey W. Grant

INTRODUCTION

This author is thankful to be a part of the great Thirteenth Annual Southeast Georgia Lectures. Richmond Hill is a congregation every faithful Christian would look forward to visiting. The brethren at Richmond Hill exemplify Christian fidelity. May this great congregation continue its superb work for generations to come! Too, the great Gospel preachera dear friend indeed--Riley Nelson is to be commended for selecting yet again such a timely theme.

This writer knows firsthand the highs and lows of starting a congregation from "scratch." The rewards far exceed the frustrations, challenges, and disappointments associated with taking on such a noble task. The term "missionary" is not found in the Holy Scriptures; however, the concept is certainly located in Holy Writ. While a student at the Memphis School of Preaching, this penman was taught that the book of Acts serves as the Divine "blueprint" for planting churches. Many brethren with good intentions have established congregations. Sadly, quite a few of these congregations have "shut their doors" because the blueprint was either ignored or they were ignorant of its instructions. The "indigenous" method of planting churches is the only method the Bible reveals. Paul's travels recorded in Acts teach us how to establish and grow congregations. The concentration of this lesson is his second mission journey.

THE DECISION TO LEAVE THEIR COMFORT ZONE

Mission work is not for the faint of heart. There is much heartache and disappointment involved in this most noble task (2 Tim.4:9-18). Furthermore, there is a great deal of sorrow associated with mission work. Like some of the men of Gideon's day, fear prevents some Christians from ever participating in mission work (Jud.7:3). Paul and his traveling companions weighed their options and found the mission of the Christ far outweighed any of their concerns or fears. In order to continue moving forward, Paul needed the prayers of the righteous for strength to keep going (Eph.6:18-20). The faithful recognize that the church—and the fellowship attached thereto--is the sole God-given support system for us Christians. They do not run from nor distance themselves from the fellowship of the brethren (Acts 2:42ff).

Most brethren will never venture out far onto the mission field because they are living too comfortably on their "beds of ease." After finishing their first mission journey, Paul and Barnabas got their "batteries recharged" while at Antioch (Acts 15:35). Notice that they were working while resting. These two superb saints epitomized the "good ground" (Matt.13:23). While among faithful brethren, Paul and Barnabas had rest from the constant onslaught of attacks brought on by the devil and his cohorts. Paul and Barnabas were enjoying the sweet fellowship of the fine brethren at Antioch. Yes indeed, it is a difficult thing to leave a faithful congregation. Thanks to God for those pious brethren who have denied themselves of the luxuries of life for the greatest cause that has ever existed!

DISAGREEMENT THAT LED TO A SEPARATION OF THE TEAM

After strengthening the church at Antioch of Syria through Gospel preaching and teaching (Acts 15:35), Paul and Barnabas decided to visit the congregations they had established

on their first journey (Acts 15:36). Before they could leave the "launching pad," their journey was faced with some "turbulence."

Recommendation

Barnabas, the son of consolation (Acts 4:36), insisted they take John Mark who was also his relative (Col.4:10). Was Barnabas' stance a case of nepotism? Was Barnabas guilty of putting his family ties before the work (Luke 14:25-27)? Or, was this yet again a demonstration of his true character? It was he who stood boldly by Saul's side when Saul needed a shoulder of support (Acts 9:26-27). Barnabas more than likely possessed a greater amount of patience than Paul, which provided him the tools to help develop John Mark's character.

Resistance

Paul's refusal was based upon John Mark's leaving the first tour apparently abruptly and without just cause (Acts 13:13). Since the Bible is silent as to why Mark departed, one can only speculate as to the cause of his departure. One thing is certain; Paul did not want to take the risk.

Result

Both men refused to "give an inch;" therefore, a sharp contention arose between the two comrades, leading to a parting of the ways. The term "contention" means "to incite, provoke; sharp contention, dispute;" it is used in the positive and negative sense in Holy Writ. It is found only twice in the New Testament. In the positive sense it is the verb "provoke" in Hebrews 10:24.

Reward

Paul and Barnabas' dispute was over an opinion, not doctrine; their disagreement, though heated, did not cause the church's mission to falter. A seemingly bad situation had a resulting

blessing—two mission teams instead of one. Both men fully understood and observed the Christ's anthem: "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

Rational Conclusion

Brethren are going to disagree over a variety of personal opinions; it is inevitable. On the other hand, doctrinal differences are not allowed (1 Cor.1:10; 4:6, 17). Sadly, many have split local congregations using Diotrephes, self-seeking tactics (3 John 9-11). Corinth was splintered partly over personal likes and dislikes (1 Cor.1:10-13). Paul attributed their actions to a lack of spiritual growth (1 Cor.3:1-4).

Barnabas' standing up for Mark should remind us never to give up on our brethren. Mark needed personalized spiritual strengthening; Barnabas saw a "diamond in the rough;" how fitting, and somewhat ironic, that the same brother who stood up for then Saul when he needed a "shoulder upon which to lean" (Acts 9:26-27) is now contending with him for not taking a "second chance" on one who needs personalized support. It should not be overlooked that God is showing us how important it is for the church to make sure that one brother gets the personal care and attention he needs for his spiritual growth. Paul would later acknowledge John Mark's spiritual growth and benefit from Barnabas' personalized care of John Mark (Col.4:10-11; 2 Tim.4:11).

THE DEDICATED DISCIPLES CHOSEN AS NEW COMPANIONS

Paul's first new traveling companion was Silas, a man who was "chief" or a "leader" among the brethren—meaning that his spiritual reputation was impeccable (Acts 15:22); he was a proven worker (Acts 15:27); he was a faithful prophet (Acts 15:32); he had experience going on mission trips (Acts 15:33). Paul's choosing Silas was "recommended" or "commended" by the brethren. Silas was an excellent complement to Paul.

Timothy later became a traveling companion of Paul and Silas. He, like Silas, had a good reputation for being a hard worker in the kingdom or "well reported of by the brethren" (Acts 16:1-2). Paul saw in Timothy great potential; so, he invested the time necessary to help Timothy develop into a great evangelist (2 Tim.2:2; 4:1-5). Paul then circumcised Timothy, not as a Christian ritual, but to gain a strategic advantage over the Jews in that region (Acts 16:3). He had already opposed circumcision as mandatory or one of the steps unto salvation (Acts 15). Young Timothy would prove to be Paul's most trusted and beloved traveling companion (Rom.16:21; 1 Cor.4:17; 1 The.3:2-6; Phi.1:1; 2:19; Col.1:1; Phm.1).

THE GENTILE DISCIPLES RECEIVE ENCOURAGING NEWS

Paul and Silas left Antioch passing through parts of Syria, and later onto Paul's native Cilicia (Acts 15:41). From Cilicia, they traveled to the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. Phrygia was located in central Asia Minor, which included the cities Colossae, Laodicea, and Hieropolis. Galatia was located just east of Phrygia and included of the cities of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Derbe and Lystra, cities in Lycanoia, were first visited (16:1-5). Derbe was the last point Paul and Barnabas visited on their first missionary tour. Lystra was the place where the natives, influenced by the unrepentant Jews of Antioch and Iconium, stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead (Acts 14:19-20).

As they traveled through these regions, they delivered the Divine decrees to the Gentile congregations drafted by the elders and apostles of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:23), resulting in their being "confirmed" or "established" or "strengthened" in the faith (Jude 3; Acts 6:7). Only through the power the Gospel provides are we strengthened in the "inner man" (Eph. 3:16).

THE DISTINCTIVE MESSAGE GOES TO EUROPE

After having traveled through central Asia, the Spirit forbade their going to the southern province of Asia or the northern province of Bithynia. They came to the west coast of Asia Minor at Troas (16:7-8). While at Troas, Paul has what is obviously a miraculous vision. The vision contained a person—a man of Macedonia (Europe) (v.9). The vision contained a plea —"Come over into Macedonia, and help us." In response, Paul and his companions at once enacted a plan — "Immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia." The missionaries then recognized that God's directions always have a beneficial purpose—"assuredly (concluding) that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them" (v.10). Also, starting at verse 10, the author, Luke, is included among the missionary team.

The missionary team arrived at Neapolis, a seaport in Macedonia. They went from Neapolis to Philippi, which was about ten to twelve miles away inland from Neapolis. Philippi was a prominent city in the eastern part of Macedonia. Philippi was a military outpost of the Roman government. On the Sabbath day, Paul and his companions went seeking worshippers of God. They found some women meeting for prayer by the Gangities River, which was located about one mile west of the city. Since there was not a synagogue in the town, there had to be a small population of Jews residing in Philippi.

Lydia is mentioned by name. "Lydia" was a common name among the Romans and Greeks. It is possible that she was a Jewess or a proselyte. Luke refers to her as one "which worshipped God" (Acts 16:14). By occupation she was a seller of purple. Purple was in great demand throughout the Roman Empire. Lydia closed her profitable business on the Sabbath because her faith was most important to her. Even though there was not a synagogue present, she did not make any excuses for skipping worship.

As Paul taught from the Word, the Lord "opened her heart." If one were of the Pentecostal or Calvinistic persuasion, he would insist that this is an irrefutable case of a "direct operation of the Holy Spirit" upon the heart of this prospect. On the contrary, the Bible is its own best commentary. Luke 24:25, 45 provides further insight concerning this matter. Jesus did not do anything directly to these individuals outside of teaching them the Truth or correcting some misconceptions they held.

Illogically, some have even tried to argue that Acts 16:15 supports the doctrine of demons, "infant baptism." Of course, Mark 16:15-16 applies only to those who possess the wherewithal to comprehend and obey the Gospel. Therefore, babies are excluded from those mentioned in Acts 16:15.

Unlike the hard-hearted masters of the once demon-possessed damsel, after the Philippian jailer witnessed the greatness of the Almighty's incomparable power, he decided to turn his back on sin (Acts 16:26-34). Such an awesome demonstration of God's power literally caused the jailer "to shake in his boots" or tremble with fear. He almost did what many today who cannot deal with what they perceive as failures too difficult to overcome— suicide. The jailer would have been punished with death if any of his prisoners escaped. Thankfully, Paul's passionate plea, "Do thyself no harm" was heeded. Shortly after regaining his composure, he posed to Paul and Silas the single most important question a man can ask: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" In teaching the jailer Jesus, baptism and its purpose were included in the teaching process. This man and his family, once blinded by the darkness of error, were now hearing the undiluted Gospel. Because their hearts were receptive, he and his family were obedient to the Gospel. What could have been a victory for Satan, a sad and tragic death, resulted in an occasion for which to rejoice.

Notice how the jailer transformed his opinion of and actions toward Paul and Silas. He showed them mercy and kindness when he "washed their stripes." He took them out of the prison and brought them to his house—quite likely an occupational risk. Amazingly, he had only known them for a short period of time. With great joy in his heart, he made them his honored guests. This he did before they were "exonerated" of their "crimes against the state," as it were. Here is an excellent illustration of Matthew 3:8 and 7:12. The jailer's "foes" had become his family. Only the Gospel is capable of accomplishing such a feat (Eph.2:11-22).

The church of Christ at Philippi started with two families. In the space of about a decade, the congregation grew to the point that it was fully mature, having appointed elders and deacons; too, this great congregation was very involved in mission work.

THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE THAT WAS SUPPLIED

As they make their way to Europe, God's providence is beautifully illustrated. Unlike the plenteous modern day modes of travel we enjoy in the twenty-first century, those living in the first century could not travel great distances without many delays involved. Their experiencing such a short travel time between Troas and Samothracia and Neaopolis reveals God's "fingerprints" on this matter. Samothracia was an island in the Aegean Sea; it was about sixty miles from Troas. Because there were no motorized sea vessels at that time, those traveling upon sailboats had to wait for when the wind was favorable for sailing. McGarvey comments:

It was not every day that a ship could be found in the harbor of Troas, and still less frequently one bound for the unimportant seaport of Neapolis, and ready to set sail. When, therefore, the apostolic company found one to suit their purpose, and just ready to weigh anchor, they must have realized that God was at last favoring their journey....The remark, "we made a straight course to Samothrace, implies a favorable wind; for only with such a wind can a sailing vessel make a straight course. We have evidence, too, that this favorable wind was blowing a stiff breeze, which bore the ship along rapidly; for on a subsequent journey (xx.6) five days were occupied in the same

voyage. Here was another indication of a favoring providence which the voyagers, after their strange experience just past, could not fail to observe.²

The earthquake in the jail was yet another demonstration of God's unmatched power. Miracles served one chief function: to confirm and accompany the spoken word of the Lord (Mark 16:20). A secondary function of miracles was to catch the attention of men for the sake of preaching the Gospel. Paul and Silas were afforded the opportunity to preach the Gospel because of the earthquake (1 Cor.16:9).

Paul's vision regarding Macedonia provided him insight for harvesting souls in Europe. Later, while preaching in Corinth, God communicated again via a vision. This vision included the encouragement Paul needed to overcome the difficulties involved with the work (18:9-10). The aforementioned evidence is just a portion of God's providential care in Paul's behalf.

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLES ATTEMPT TO DERAIL THE EFFORT

Whenever and wherever the Gospel is being preached, the devil is at hand in an attempt to discredit or disrupt or dilute or destroy the good works of God. Between teaching Lydia and the jailer the Gospel, Paul and his company encountered a young lady who was "possessed with the spirit of divination" or "fortune telling," who repeatedly followed Paul's party many days serving as a distraction. Does not Satan want as many diversions as possible so as to interrupt the Master's message? Her testimony was like that of the demoniacs recorded elsewhere in Holy Writ (Mark 1:24; 3:11; Luke 8:28). Paul's rebuking and calling out the evil spirit caused the damsel's masters "to go out of business" immediately. As a result, he and Silas were unjustly accused and arrested. Both were dragged to the marketplace, somewhat similar to our courthouse square, before the magistrates. Satan's henchmen made prejudicial statements; they accused Paul and Silas as being "pesky" Jews who violated Roman customs and laws. Such statements served

to inflame the emotions of those present. Omitting due process, they started beating Paul and Silas with "many stripes." This was a painful and humiliating experience.

Paul and Silas received no medical care. They were put into the "inner prison" or "dungeon." Likewise, their feet were put in stocks. The stocks were strategically placed, causing the legs to be stretched apart for the express purpose of causing even more pain.

THE DETERMINED DEVOTEES ARE NOT DETERRED

As noted earlier, Paul and Silas suffered unjustly at the hands of the Philippian magistrates. Unequivocally, all men are subject to Matthew 7:12. Because they did see Paul and Silas as equals, the town's leaders were grossly negligent in their treatment of their fellowman and fellow Roman citizens. Conversely, racial bigotry and religious intolerance led the magistrates to punish Paul and Silas without just cause.

The next day, the real perpetrators of a crime summoned Paul and Silas "to leave town quietly." Paul then dropped a "bombshell" by revealing his Roman citizenship. Paul was not seeking revenge; he knew to leave such actions in the Lord's hands (Rom.12:17-19); he was seeking respect as a Roman citizen. Paul made it known that their civil rights were violated. As such, they should have been afforded a trial through the court system. Indeed, this was a very serious charge levied against the pretentious rulers. Surprise! These "pesky" Jews were Roman citizens! Jews who were not Roman citizens were denied civil rights. If they so desired, Paul and Silas had the right as Romans to have them punished, humiliated, removed from office, and imprisoned.

Can Christians use the secular government to further the Gospel? The fact that all governments are subject to the Almighty is indisputable (Dan.4:17; Rom.13:1-4). Governments are made up of people who will give an account of their words and deeds (2 Cor.5:10).

Christians are commanded to submit to the government so long as the Word of God is not being compromised (Rom.13:5-7). God has used secular governments to punish and bless His people (Jer.25:9-11; Isa.44:6-45:7; Ezra 1:1-4).

In contrast, the devil has influenced varied governments for his diabolical schemes. The Jews whom Satan used, when he attacked the Christ, falsely accused Jesus of breaking Roman law (Luke 23:1-2); this is why he is referred to as the ruler or prince or god of this world, which includes those governments he uses to carry out his evil works (Luke 22:53; John 14:30; 2 Cor.4:4; Eph.6:10-12).

At the heart of Paul's actions were the new babes in Christ. They needed to see the strength the Gospel provides Christians to withstand anything the devil through his agents could hurl at them. The Gospel, not Paul and Silas, was under attack. Remember, the devil's henchmen argued that Paul and Silas were introducing an unauthorized custom or belief, thus violating Roman law. For this reason, Paul utilized his Roman citizenship as a means of defeating the devil through the very same medium Satan used in an attempt to hinder the Gospel's progress.

Paul and Silas could have ceased their mission efforts in pursuit of their seeking personal justice for the egregious crimes committed against them. However, they knew that preaching the Gospel outweighed their personal pain, pursuits, etc. As a result, the magistrates accompanied Paul and Silas out of the Philippian jail in broad daylight, before all, as a clear indication of the missionaries' innocence. Paul and Silas then comforted—a clear indication that they were gravely concerned—the brethren before moving onto their next challenge or city. Also, it appears that Timothy and Luke may have stayed behind in Philippi preaching and strengthening the newly-formed congregation to the chagrin of Satan.

THE THESSALONIAN DISBELIEVERS DEBASED TACTICS

After leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia before arriving at **Thessalonica**. For three Sabbath days Paul taught from the Old Testament the Christ. Paul's approach to teaching must be followed by everyone every time he teaches the Gospel.

Four key words in Acts 17:2-3 describe Paul's approach to the synagogue congregation. First, he *reasoned*, which means he dialogued with them through questions and answers. He *explained* ("opening") the Scriptures to them and *proved* ("alleging") that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. The word translated "alleging" means "to lay down alongside, to prove by presenting the evidence." The apostle set before them one Old Testament proof after another that Jesus of Nazareth is Messiah God. Paul was careful to *announce* ("preach") the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the message of the Gospel (1 Cor.15:1ff).³

Some of the Jews and a great number of the Greek proselytes obeyed the Gospel. As Hebrews 4:11-12 so lucidly teaches, the Gospel exposed the true hearts of the Jews who rejected the overwhelming "mountain of evidence" revealed—they hated the Truth and their actions proved it. The true character of these so-called followers of God manifested itself. Knowing that they were incapable of denying the facts and success of the Gospel, they, moved by envy or jealousy, responded with the complete approval of their father (John 8:44). In an attempt to rid themselves of Paul and Silas' successful preaching, the envious Jews employed "certain lewd fellows" or "wicked men" of the "baser sort" or "market-place" to stir the emotions of the weak-minded, prejudiced, and gullible parties in town. The market-place was where the idle or those seeking employment would assemble (Matt.20:3). The ones chosen were devoid of morals—perfect for the work of the devil.

The mob attacked the home of Jason after they did not find their primary targets Paul and Silas. They "drew" or "dragged" Jason and several other disciples before the city's rulers with an accusation similarly made in Philippi; the charge was that of treason and anarchy. They

"And when they had taken security of Jason," is a legal term; Jason pledged or maybe paid a customary peace bond affirming Paul and Silas' good behavior. It is not clear if part of the agreement included Paul and Silas' leaving town. Still, a great number of believers were added to the body of Christ and a new congregation was established. Yet again the devil's antics failed in halting the Gospel's progress!

THE DUTIFUL BEREANS SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES DAILY

Paul and Silas traveled some forty-five miles westward before arriving at Berea. They immediately approached the members of the local synagogue with the facts of the Gospel. Incidentally, God compared the character of the two synagogues. The Holy Spirit made the pronounced proclamation and then provided the proof: "These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Apart from the weekly Sabbath assembly, the Bereans were daily investigating Paul's claims of Jesus' being the Messiah. As a result, a great number of them turned to the Lord.

In the Bereans' approach to learning, there was single-mindedness, sincerity, and seriousness. The four-fold, accepted approach to learning God's Word is noted: (A) They were "more noble;" this term originally referred to the those who were noble by birth or those who had descended from renowned ancestors; in this context the term refers to the Bereans' state of mind or good-natured character. Only the "good soil" receives the Good Seed (Luke 8:11,15).

(B) They received the Word, not fanciful stories or fables. They then had the capability of differentiating the truth from error; in other words, they were well acquainted with the Book. They wanted to hear exclusively, "What thus saith the Lord." (C) "With all readiness of mind"

is how they received the Word. "Readiness of mind" comes from a single Greek phrase that denotes eagerness or willingness; in other words, they came with the enthusiastic intent of learning more, about God's Word. Churches that are growing contain many souls who possess the "Bereans attitude." (D) They searched the Scriptures daily. The verb translated "search" is found 14 times in the New Testament. It is translated "examine" (Luke 23:14), "discern" (1 Cor.2:15), "judged" (1 Cor.4:3), "asking" and "question" (1 Cor.10:25). It means "to scrutinize" or "interrogate" or "search" or "investigate." The Bereans were not mere "sponges," nor were they passive in this matter; they actively engaged Paul with questions relative to his teaching. They took note of what he taught and and went home and studied further. Are we not commanded to search the Scriptures (John 5:39)?

Like faithful missionaries, Satan's followers too will travel far distances to promote their error (Matt.23:15). The blood-thirsty Jews of Thessalonica hurried over to Berea upon receiving the news that Paul was preaching the Faith once delivered for all times (Jude 3). They "stirred up" or "agitated, excited" the people of the town of Berea in an attempt to deflect attention away from the Truth. In response, Paul was sent away while Silas and Timothy remained behind for a while for the purpose of strengthening the brethren.

THE DEBATE THAT TAKES PLACE OVER "UNKNOWN" GOD

After being whisked away from the angry mob at Berea, Paul proceeded on to Athens. While waiting for the arrival of Timothy and Silas, Paul observed the spiritual condition of the city and was appalled over its abhorrent absence of genuine godliness. "Stirred" is the verb form of the word "contention" (Acts 15:39). First, Paul "disputed," the word translated "reasoned" (Acts 17:2), from which we get our English word "dialogue," with those familiar with Holy Writ--the Jews of the synagogue and the "devout persons," or probably proselytes. It appears

that the majority in the synagogue did receive the Gospel. In reply, Paul went to the "market" or "forum" and engaged in discussions daily "with them that met him." Paul, in essence, took his message "to the streets."

While in the market, he encountered the "wise men" of Athens whose views of life were about as compatible as the Republican and the Democrat views of how America should be governed. Some of the philosophers were "independents," while others belonged to the Epicurean and Stoic class.

The economic and political importance of Athens had waned, yet it remained an intellectual center throughout the New Testament era. The leading schools of thought were the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies. Epicurus (c.300 B.C.) had taught that though gods exist they are not interested in human affairs. Denying any future life, he regarded freedom from fear and pain, that is mental tranquility, as the highest goal in life. Not merely pleasure, but mental pleasure is to be the goal of life. Do that which brings tranquility. Zeno at about the same time taught in the Porch (Gr. Stoa)—thus his followers became known as Stoics. He was a pantheist and so had taught that men need to live in harmony with nature, practicing self-discipline and virtue. The Stoics would strive to deny the flesh, whereas the Epicureans would ignore it, seeking not to become its slave.⁴

The elitists among the crowd referred to Paul as a "babbler" or "seed picker," a derogatory term; the term referred to a bird that had picked seed for food. Paul was in their eyes as a bird that had picked "a few seeds of knowledge" that fell to the ground. "His thoughts are not his own," they were arguing. Concerning this idiom, Barnes notes:

The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means *one* who collects seeds, and was applied by the Greeks to the poor persons who collected the scattered grain in the fields after the harvest, or to gleaners; and also to the poor who obtained a precarious subsistence around the markets and in the streets. It was also applied to birds that picked up scattered seeds of grain in the filled or in the markets.⁵

Paul preached his famed "Mar's Hill" sermon on this occasion. Since these individuals were ignorant of the Almighty, Paul used their own words, "TO THE UNKOWN GOD," as his starting point. He preached primarily on the person and power of God. Paul referred to them as "too superstitious;" the American Standard Version translates the term "very religious." As evident by the two opposing schools of thought, those spoken of in verse 21 were not seeking the truth about life per se, but were giving what they perceived as the true meaning of life. His sermon contained a respectful commendation (v.22), an attention-grabbing introduction (v.23), a clearly stated, logically arranged explanation (vv.24-29), a relative quotation or illustration (v.28), a solid conclusion (v.29), and the challenge for the audience to make personal application and adequate preparation for the afterlife (vv.30-31). The apostle's lesson exposed the folly and futility of paganism, pleasure seeking, and pantheism. Paul argued: (1) that God is the sole Creator and Master of the Universe; (2) God is perfectly sufficient; He lacks nothing; He possesses no weaknesses. (3) All men have the same ancestry or lineage:

The Greeks, like the Jews, thought themselves of finer nature, a superior race in origin, character, and destiny. Paul instructs them of the brotherhood of man; this was indeed strange to Greek ears; they had an idea of different origins, different gods, different religions for different nations. Paul thus starts to reason with them about one God, Creator of all, and deduces from it one religion, one origin for all, one brotherhood, one salvation for the race.⁶

(4) God determined when and where all nations that have ever existed should dwell. "Hath determined" is described as, "having marked out or appointed or bound;" each nation's boundaries God ordained; nations exist by Divine decree (Dan.4:17), not mere chance nor man's surmising. (5) Unlike the Epicureans' creed, the Bible reveals that God is a compassionate Provider Who is near or can be reached (Matt.28:20; Heb.13:5). His conclusion: God expects us to seek after Him and establish a meaningful relationship with Him (Ecc.12:1, 13). Romans 1:18-

32 reveals the moral depravity of the Gentiles who lived under the Mosaic dispensation. Although they did not have written revelation, they had enough physical proof of Jehovah's existence, and from a pure heart could have found Him (Heb.11:6). Yes, Psalm 19:1 is absolutely accurate: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

(6) The pagans in the crowd as well were probably shocked somewhat when Paul argued from Stoic poets concerning man's nature.

Paul here quotes one of their poets; his quotation is from Aratus of Soli in Cilicia; he lived about 270 B.C., and was a Stoic philosopher. Cleanthes, Stoic philosopher, who lived 300 to 220 B.C., has the same words in his "Hymn to Zeus." Possibly Cleanthes used the words first. The passage reads: "For we all greatly need Jupiter, for we are his offspring—full of grace, he grants men tokens of favor."

(7) Paul concludes his thought with an irrefutable conclusion: "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (v.29). This new news sent shockwaves through the audience, especially the Stoics, also known as the "Let's be one with nature" crowd. Regarding this salient deduction. Wiersbe makes these comments:

This led to Paul's logical conclusion: God made us in His image, so it is foolish for us to make gods in our own image! Greek religion was nothing but the manufacture and worship of gods who were patterned after men and who acted like men. Paul not only showed the folly of temples and temple rituals, but also the folly of all idolatry.⁸

(9) Paul then revealed to the audience the need for change in their life. Ignorance of God's nature and will are now unacceptable; such ignorance dooms the soul, he argued. Judgment is certain and the day ordained, Paul disclosed. In addition, he unveiled the long-suffering or patience of God relative to this issue when he declared that God "winked at" or "overlooked" (Acts 14:16); this, of course, does not mean that God did not hold them accountable for their sins, according to Romans 4:15.

(10) His conclusion: (A) All men are subject to the same Law. (B) All men are guilty of sin. (C) All men will stand before the throne of Christ in judgment. (D) All men will be judged at Christ's second coming. (E) All men have been given the same assurance or certainty of the Judgment, the Christ's resurrection.

As is the case with all sermons preached, there were varied responses to Paul's masterful message. Maybe the Epicureans were the ones who mocked the doctrine of the resurrection as "foolishness." Remember, their creed was, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor.15:32). Those of the Stoic party could have been the ones who wanted to hear more on the resurrection; the Stoics did not deny a future state for mankind. Thankfully, there were honest hearts in the audience who were undoubtedly seeking a meaningful relationship with their Creator. The conversion of Dionysius should be noted. An Areopagite was a member of the Athenian high council. His obeying the Gospel would have put him at odds with the rest of the members on the council. His fellow council members, and even the city, probably later shunned him. Of course, this is what the Gospel commands of those contemplating a relationship with the King of kings (Luke 14:25ff).

THE DELIVERANCE MANY OF THE CORINTHIANS EXPERIENCE

Paul left Athens heading south about fifty miles arriving at Corinth, the capital of Achaia with an estimated population between 200,000 and 500,000. At that time, Corinth was known as a very busy commercial center and every two years the very popular Isthmian Games were held just outside the city. Some believe that Paul's reference to "running" in his first epistle to the church at Corinth was based on their familiarity with the Isthmian Games (1 Cor.9:24-27). However, Corinth's "greatest claim to fame" was its notorious reputation of rampant immorality; it, too, was a city whose paganism was near the level of Athens. Located on the

city's summit, also known as the Acrocorinth, a 1,880-foot tall mountain, was the temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty. One thousand temple slaves or prostitutes were "dedicated" by followers of Aphrodite to the temple. In fact, the city was so sexually immoral that the term "Corinthianize" was coined and used to describe anyone who was sexually immoral. Without hesitation Paul once again went into the "devil's den."

Through God's providence, Paul met one of the most notable couples in all of Holy Writ, Aquila and Priscilla. Every comment about this couple in Scripture is positive. They are always mentioned together (2 Tim.4:19); they are always mentioned as contributing to the work of the church (Acts 18:18-19, 24-26); their level of conviction is duly noted (Rom.3:3-5); their use of their personal resources for the furthering of the Gospel should be often imitated (1 Cor.16:19).

Paul's immense love for his fellow Hebrews has been preserved in the Good Book (Rom.9:1-3; 10:1-2). This is why he was "pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ" (v.5). Paul felt a deep sense of obligation to preach Christ to all men (Rom.1:14-16). After reasoning with them in the synagogue at Corinth, he announced his innocence of their blood (Ezk.3:18), after they "opposed themselves and blasphemed" (v.6).

In contrast, once again a man of high standing obeys the Gospel. Crispus and many of the Corinthians turned to the Lord. Paul was then encouraged by a vision from the Lord to keep preaching the Gospel. Some may try to insert a tenet of Calvinism, "unconditional election," in this conversion story. God's foreknowledge in this matter is indisputable. Nevertheless, He does not intervene in man's freedom of choice (Mark 16:15-16; 1 Tim.2:4). It should be observed that the many Corinthians who obeyed the Gospel followed the divine pattern of belief and baptism leading unto salvation. As a result of multiple conversions in Corinth, Paul's ministry was extended there a year and six months.

One should not be shocked that Satan's henchmen attempted to cut off the Gospel's influence and success. Gallio quickly dismissed the baseless charge against Paul. He rebuked the "hard-headed" Jews for trying to tie up the civil courts with a religious issue of which he was ignorant. The Greeks then beat Sosthenes, ruler of the synagogue and probable leader of the unlawful group. Justice prevailed! Sosthenes reaped what he had sowed! Victoriously, Paul "tarried there yet a good while," boldly teaching the Truth in front of his accusers.

Paul started towards Syria stopping first at Cenchrea, a seaport of Corinth. The *King James Version* states that Paul "sailed thence into Syria" (v.18), or sailed to Syria first. The New King James Version states Paul's travels more accurately by revealing that he "sailed for Syria." While at Cenchrea, Paul shaved his head after taking a vow. Boles comments:

We do not know what vow Paul had taken nor why he had made a vow; hence, we do not know why this reference to the vow. Paul, as a Jew, kept up his observance of the ceremonial law for some instances, but refused to impose it upon the Gentiles.⁸

Paul then traveled to Ephesus. Ephesus was east of Cenchrea across the Aegean Sea. Ephesus was the capital of the province of Asia. Located in Ephesus was the temple of Diana, referenced to as one of the "seven wonders" of the world, though a beautiful in its architecture, the temple was an absolute ugly offense to the Almighty. While at Ephesus, Paul taught in the synagogue for a while. Members of this synagogue seemed to be on par with those of the Bereans synagogue; they "desired him to tarry longer with them." (v.20). "Desired" is also translated "besought" (Luke 8:37). Paul consented not their request and went onto Jerusalem, and then onto Antioch of Syria, where he ended his second missionary journey.

CONCLUSION

Very much so there will be disagreements between brethren from time to time. These disagreements over opinions or matters of expediency should never negatively impact the church. The Lord's work is too important for personal agendas to impede its progress.

The church must do all that it can to encourage young men to preach the Gospel and become leaders in the church. Elderships, seasoned preachers, and mature brothers must take these young men "under their wings." Leadership training must start as early as possible regarding this gravely important matter.

Notice that Paul surrounded himself with faithful men as his traveling companions. This was very needful; mission work can become very discouraging. When feeling "blue" or discouraged, we all should have a source of encouragement nearby, or a shoulder upon which to lean. Having enough faithful brethren involved in a work is an immeasurable benefit to all parties involved.

All of us must see the vision and answer the call of those who are lost. Many congregations fail miserably at evangelism for a lack of purposeful planning. We must always be proactive in this matter. Procrastination must be avoided at all costs.

As noted on several occasions, the devil is unrelenting in his pursuit of attacking the church. He will use every dirty trick—for he is the author of such tactics—to harm the precious bride of Christ. We must never forget our mission. God is counting on us to make known the Christ to this world of darkness. We must ever endeavor to take the whole Gospel to the whole world.

At times, we Christians can benefit from utilizing our citizens' rights granted by some forms of government as aids in furthering the cause of Christ. We must always be cognizant of

God's ability to open doors of opportunity, even through forms of governments; truthfully, His blessed providence comes in many "shapes" and "sizes." Therefore, let us not only study this second missionary journey of Paul; let us seek to imitate his unswerving desire to reach all men with the Good News (1 Cor.15:57-58; Gal6:9).

END NOTES

- ¹ All quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise stated.
- ² J.W. McGarvey, **New Commentary on Acts of Apostles**, (Delight, AK: Gospel Light Publishing Co.,1875). p.86
- ³ Warren W. Wiersbe, **The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 1**, (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1989). p.470.
- ⁴ Albert Barnes, Barnes' **Notes on the New Testament, Acts and Romans**, ed. Robert Frew (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1847, 2005). p.258.
- ⁵ H. Leo Boles, A Commentary of the Acts of the Apostles, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1941, 1987). p.281
- ⁶ Ibid.p.282.
- ⁷ Wiersbe, p.472.
- ⁸ Boles, 293.

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

By Larry Acuff

INTRODUCTION

Jesus gave the Great Commission when he said,

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

That Great Commission began to be carried out by the Apostle Paul and Barnabas. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3). Later in Acts we read, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9). Finally after a few years and while in prison in Rome Paul writes, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Colossians 1:23).

Wow! The gospel preached to every creature. A part of that was done during the third missionary journey of Paul.

This lesson will consist of three parts. Part one will be A MAN ON A MISSION, a brief review of the cities Paul visits on this journey. Part two will be A MAN WITH A MESSAGE focusing on his stay at Ephesus and his eventual closing meeting with the elders of that city. Part three will be A MAN MOVED WITH EMOTION, The heart wrenching effect these churches had on Paul.

A MAN ON A MISSION

Not only did Paul have a mission to preach the gospel but he also was interested in "strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23). Thus Paul visits 21 places. A review of these such as Galatia and Phyrgia (Acts 18:23), Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-20), Macedonia (Acts 20:1), Greece (Acts 20:2-3), Philippi (Acts 20:6), Troas (Acts 20:5-13), Assos (Acts 20:13,14), Mitylene (Acts 20:4), Chios (Acts 20:15), Samos (Acts 20:15), Trogyllium (Acts 20:15), Miletus (Acts 20:15-38), Cos (Acts 21:1), Rhodes (Acts 21:1), Patara (Acts 21:1), Island of Cyprus (Acts 21:3), Tyre in Syria (Acts 21:3-6), Ptolemais (Acts 21:7), Caesarea (Acts 21:8-14), Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-40; Acts 23:1-31).

The Apostle faced many things as he endeavored to preach the gospel on this journey. Paul had visited Ephesus on his second journey but for only a short time, however, he will spend almost three years in this city encountering several challenges.

Apollos an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures began to speak boldly (Acts 18:24-26). When Aquilla and Priscilla heard him they found it necessary to take him aside to instruct him more perfectly in the way of the Lord.

Paul goes to the synagogue and speaks boldly for the three months but when they refused to believe he took the disciples and disputed daily in the school of Tyrannus.

It was on this third journey we find:

Paul performs special miracles...

Those keeping the baptism of John...

Lays hands on them...

Sons of Sceva...

Those who used curious arts burned their books...

Demetrius stirs up his fellow craftsmen...

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians..."

Paul writes a letter to the Corinthians...

Meets with the elders of Ephesus...

On the first day of the week the disciples come together...

Eutychus goes to sleep...

Remember the words of Paul in the Roman letter when he wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). That is exactly what he did on this third journey. He strengthens the brethren.

A MAN WITH A MESSAGE

Paul spends much time at Ephesus. What about this city of Ephesus? He comes into contact with those who had been baptized unto John's baptism. They are baptized in the name of Christ, Paul lays hands on them and they receive the Holy Ghost, speak in tongues and prophesy.

The commentary on Acts gives us a good description of what takes place,

"And this continued for the space of two years;-Paul had been in Ephesus more than three months when he was forced to go to the lecture room of Tyrannus. He continued to preach the gospel here "for the space of two years." He continued edifying the saints and preaching to all who would come. He may have continued longer in Ephesus and sojourning in the house of Aquila and Priscilla for some months. He remained here long enough for all who dwelt in that province to have opportunity to hear the gospel. Paul seems to have remained in Ephesus, but the gospel spread all over the province. Paul heard of the trouble that existed in the church at Corinth and wrote a letter to the church while at Ephesus; this letter seems to have been lost. (1 Cor. 5:9). He wrote the first Corinthian letter while at Ephesus.²

The church at Ephesus is well known to Bible students. As Paul spent almost three years there and Timothy eventually became their, what we call, local preacher a picture begins to unfold about the church and the city. In addition to Luke's record in the book of Acts of the Ephesians church we also have the letter written by Paul and then the words of the Holy Spirit given through John in the book of Revelation.

Ephesus was a city of the greatest commercial importance being at a location where roads crossed and rivers merged. One writer said, "In commerce and in wealth there were few cities to surpass Ephesus. It was a city of the greatest political importance. It enjoyed the title of "Supreme Metropolis of Asia." The Romans had granted it the right of self-government within it own limits, and it never had the indignity of having Roman troops compulsorily quartered upon it. This also was a city of the greatest religious importance; its greatest glory being the Temple of Diana. It was 425 feet long, 220 feet wide and 60 feet high. The Temple consisted of 127 long pillared colonnades, each of them the gift of a king.

There Paul dealt with those who had been baptized unto John's baptism, confronted the exorcist, the seven sons of Sceva and went to the school of Tyrannus to teach daily because of the unbelieving Jews.

After going into Macedonia and on his way back to Jerusalem Paul called the elders of Ephesus together at Miletus. It is in the 20th chapter of Acts that we see the great love and devotion that Paul had for the Ephesian church and its elders. In this discourse we see the heart of a man devoted to the proclamation of the truth of the gospel.

Paul reviews with them his <u>manner of life</u>. Luke records in verse 19 the following: "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews" (Acts 20:19).

Notice Paul's "Humility." We call him the great Apostle Paul but he saw himself as a humble servant. Humility is servant hood. Paul said, "I am debtor both the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise" (Romans 1:14). Paul's view was "I owe you." His servant hood can be seen in the following, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Corinthians 12:15).

Notice Paul's "Heartache." He said, "With many tears" he had served the Lord. Don't you imagine his heart was broken when he made known the fact that "Demas hath forsaken me" (2 Timothy 4:10) and that "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil" (2 Timothy 4:14).

Notice Paul's "Hardships." He uses the word "temptations." Paul suffered man hardships and trials. They stoned him. He had a thorn in the flesh.

Paul reviews with them the *message of his life*. Paul had a message that he delivered, not only on this journey, but on all his journeys.

Notice the "Content of his message." "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to

house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:20-21).

Notice the "Conviction of his message." "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:22-24). Paul said to those good elders I will not be moved away from the gospel by the things that shall come upon me. He had a conviction!

Notice the "Confidence of his message." "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27).; "Pure from the blood of all men." Do we realize what that means? Read Ezekiel 33:1-10. Paul the watchman had warned them.

Notice the "Challenge of his message." "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). He told those elders to be alert to themselves and to feed the church.

Paul reviews with them the <u>motto of his life</u>. What would that be? "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). He made this statement because of the poor saints at Jerusalem. He wrote to the Corinthians, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath

prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). If Paul had a motto it would be giving. He gave himself; therefore he had no problem encouraging others to give.

This brings us to the final point of Paul's third journey.

A MAN MOVED WITH EMOTION

As Paul gets ready to depart from the elders of Ephesus the tears flowed, for the Holy Bible says, "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship" (Acts 20:36-38).

No doubt this is not the first time tears had flowed from the eyes of Paul. There are two passages in the New Testament that will give insight into this thought and the emotions of Paul. Some seem to have the idea that Christianity is emotionless. Just quote the scripture brother. Hebrews 11:7 says that "Noah moved with fear." That's emotion. Here are the two passages: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15).

Paul gave spiritual birth to them. He taught them and brought them out of darkness and into the kingdom of the Son of God (Colossians 1:13-14). Yet now what does he have to confront? When he writes back to these churches what does he see?

For one thing he must defend his apostleship. "Am I not an Apostle?" he asked (1 Corinthians 9:1)? In his second Corinthian letter he wrote, "For we preach not ourselves, but

Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). Paul ask, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves" (2 Corinthians 3:1)?

It would seem that one the things that would have caused Paul deep sorrow was what happened at Galatia. Here is what he wrote to them:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

Don't you know it broke his heart to have to defend himself and his Apostleship to them? Don't you know it broke his heart to realize they had not remained faithful to the word which he had taught?

One of the saddest verses in the Bible describes the emotion of Paul concerning these churches which he established and nourished during his three journeys. Paul wrote to Timothy and you can see his heart break as he pens these words, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes" (2 Timothy 1:15).

CONCLUSION

Paul makes his way toward Jerusalem even though many warn him of the consequences of so doing.

"And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21:10-11).

END NOTES

¹ All scripture references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted. ² Gospel Advocate Commentaries, *The Acts*, H. Leo Boles, pg. 301

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME

By Ronnie Ulrey

INTRODUCTION

Having been on a ship for an extended length of time while in the Military, I remember how powerful the ocean was. The captain guides the ship, but the ocean takes the ship where it wants in a storm and that is scary. I remember huge waves coming over the deck and everyone running for cover. When I read of Paul's experiences long ago in his work for Christ, I think of how frightening it must have been on this small ship with 276 people aboard who could have all been drowned in the storm they encountered. Their trip was more exciting than the one I was on. All of the things they ran into make for one of the most interesting studies in all of my years of studying the Bible. It is so exciting that it is almost like a story of fiction.

A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF PAUL'S MINISTRY

The account of Paul's conversion is recorded in Acts chapter nine. He started preaching at every opportunity and declared the truth that "Jesus is the Son of God," (Acts 9:20)¹. The Jews turned against him immediately because he preached that Jesus was the Christ, (Acts 9:22). They began plotting on how they could get rid of Paul because he was such a traitor in their eyes. "And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him", (Acts 9:23). The truth was that they could not handle him like they seemed to handle others, and began to look at ways they might get rid of him, (Acts 9:23). In (Acts 9:24) they began to lay and wait for him at the Gates for an opportunity to kill him. The other disciples became aware of it and let him down the wall of Jerusalem in a basket to escape, (Acts 9:25).

When Paul came to Jerusalem some of the disciples were afraid of him, not believing that he was a follower of Christ, (Acts 9:26), but good old Barnabas, (Acts 11:22-24), took him to the apostles and declared unto them how that he had seen the Lord in the way and he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus, (Acts 9:27). After this, he was accepted by the apostles and went in and out among them. But the Jews continued their plan to kill him, (Acts 9:29). Knowing this, his brethren secretly sent him home to Tarsus, (Acts 9:30). Paul was such a powerful preacher many turned against him immediately. He had to be sent elsewhere to keep him alive. Barnabas, knowing Paul was at Tarsus, went after him, (Acts 11:25), and brought him to Antioch and worked with him for a year, (Acts 11:26). It was here that the disciples were first called "Christians".

Paul and Barnabas' work was so intense that it wasn't long before they got into trouble in Antioch and the Jews took Paul out of town and stoned him and left him for dead, (Acts 14:19). Verse 20 says, "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city, And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derby". ²

Paul and Barnabas worked well together and were called by the Holy Spirit to do special work in other places, (Acts 13:2-4). Their boldness and determination for spreading the gospel was known throughout the region. They were sent to Cyprus thru Seleucia and then came to Salamis.

"They preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews and and they had also John as their minister. And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus; which was with the deputy of the country, Serjius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil. Thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And

now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand" (Acts 13:5-11).

This incident shows that Paul able to perform miracles just as the other apostles. After this miracle John Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13) and the Scripture do not say a thing about why he left them. Paul, Barnabus and John Mark had worked together as smooth as possible until they intended to go and see how their brethren were doing and Paul didn't want to take John Mark, (Acts 15:37, 38). They split up and parted company, (Acts 15:40, 41). Sometimes this happens to preachers who are both strong willed and equal partners in what they are doing and a third party shows up and breaks the momentum between them. We don't know what the problem was. The Holy Spirit did not tell us why the two broke up and refused to go together because of John Mark. Barnabas took John Mark and Paul took Silas, (Acts 15:39-16:3), and both pairs did twice the work for Christ that Paul and Barnabas would have done, and the break-up didn't hurt either one of them in their work for Christ.

Paul and Barnabas left Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia and met in the synagogue with the Jews where they read the Law and were asked to speak by the rulers of the synagogue. Paul stood up and preached a sermon covering the last forty years and God's bringing them out of Egypt, destroying seven nations and giving the Jews the land of Canaan, which was called the land flowing with milk and honey. He told them about the Jews rejecting Jesus and having Pilate put him to death. One Sabbath day later the Jews saw the multitudes come to hear about Jesus and they were filled with envy and spoke against the things preached by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming him. After the Jews rejected the Gospel Paul told them they were turning to the Gentiles. After that, the Jews stirred up the women of the city and they began persecuting Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from their city. This is probably the best way to get rid of a

preacher, just turn the women against him. They went back to Antioch where they were very successful and stayed for a long time preaching to the disciples.

During this period some men came down from Judea and began to teach that the brethren there needed to be circumcised. Paul and Barnabas had to go to Jerusalem to ask the apostles about this problem. (Acts 15:1-4). The elders sent them back to Antioch with a number of other Christians, who took letters from the apostles and elders back with them to read to the disciples, and upon the reception of the letters from that meeting the problem was solved (Acts 15:25-29). No Gentile would be taught that they must be circumcised because only men under the Law of Moses were to be circumcised.

All through the book of Acts, Paul was such a powerful preacher he was persecuted almost everywhere he preached. Men tried to set traps so that they could kill him. They evidently held the position if we kill the preacher it will kill the message, which is a false position. Now people just get rid of the preacher and assume they will not have to listen to him again, but this does not solve the problem of being lost; if you don't listen to one preacher, you will have to listen to another, if you want to know the truth.

THE TRIP TO ROME

Paul, Barnabas, John Mark, Silas and probably others preached everywhere they could find an audience and were mistreated, stoned, driven out of cities by plots and traps of every kind, until finally Paul had to decide whether he wanted to be tried in Jerusalem or to be tried in Rome by Caesar. He chose Caesar, (Acts 25:11, 12). Thus begins the anticipation of the trip to Rome which probably neither Paul, his fellow preachers or anyone else on earth could know the perils that would befall him before he reached his destination to stand in Caesar's court. You wonder if Paul had in mind that possibly he could convert this most awesome ruler on the earth.

He definitely had the nerve, and the knowledge of the truth, to try it, as he had on many other powerful men of his day. Like Felix, who "was terrified" when Paul preached to him (Acts 24:25), and King Agrippa who was "almost persuaded" to become a Christian when he preached to him (Acts 26:27, 28).

Thus begins some of the most fearful, exciting and dangerous happenings that occurred on the voyage to Rome, to be tried before Caesar.

"Now when much time was spent and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also." (Acts 27:9-12).

This meant that there were no motels to stay in, so most of the passengers were more concerned with their comfort than they were for their lives. These were rugged people living in rough times, but our thinking hasn't changed much even to this day, has it? The master and the owner of the ship caused those in charge to make a disastrous mistake that could have cost them their lives if Paul and the Lord had not been aboard that day. They were also deceived when "the South wind blew softly" (Acts 27: 13), not knowing that a weather monster called "Euroclydon" was about to destroy both them and the ship, (Acts 27:14), rendering them powerless to control it and caused them to lose total control, (Acts 27:14,15). Reading this in the Scripture is like reading a wild, scary story someone is writing and is making it up as they go. The damage to the ship was so great they all had to stop the ship, work on it because of the damage done by the storm, and then throw the freight overboard, and to add to this they thought that the ship was going into quicksand and had to set sail and let the vessel go wherever it would to escape falling into the quicksand, (Acts 27:16-18). On their third day out Paul and all the passengers had to help cast out, with their own hands, the tackling of the ship, (Acts 27:19). "And when neither

sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (Acts 27:20). What an unbelievable situation for this great man to be in, with the other 276 souls. It's almost like a revelation of an unbelievable story being told who's fate lay in one man; the apostle Paul.

"And as the shipman were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off" (Acts 27:30-32).

Paul now reveals the best news these seafaring men had heard in fourteen days, and that news was that God had revealed to him that not a one of them would be killed or hurt in the sinking of this ship. What a great revelation to these 276 men who hadn't eaten in two weeks, (Acts 27:33). They probably had talked among themselves about their upcoming deaths and the fate of all of their families, but this great preacher of God gave them this message. Without a doubt their shouting and rejoicing could have been heard a long distance away, if there was anyone to hear them. The certainty of this promise was based upon Paul being brought before Caesar, (Acts 27:24). The greatness of this promise reaches through the whole book, because we read later that many of Caesars' house were converted to Christ, (Phil.4:22). Also, there was a command given to kill all of the prisoners if they tried to escape (Acts 27:42), which was nullified by this revelation given to Paul.

There were some who could swim and some who couldn't. The ones who could swim were commanded to cast themselves into the sea first and get to land as best they could. The rest had to float to shore on boards and broken pieces of the ship. They all escaped the sinking ship alive and safe. Bro. James Burton Coffman, in his commentary on Acts says that it seems that Luke was with Paul:

"The intriguing story of this voyage and shipwreck is that of an eyewitness, its vividness, wealth of detail, and vocabulary making this certain. It may be demonstrated that the narrative is produced by one in possession of a medical vocabulary, unfamiliar with nautical terms, describing every maneuver of the whole voyage in such a manner as to require the conclusion that the narrator saw what he related. This is almost universally recognized."

When they had all escaped the sea they recognized the land they were on was Melita, and the people there were "barbarous" and unkind to them. Even though they seemed to be rough people they kindled a fire and received everyone because of the rain, and because of the cold, (Acts 28:1, 2). When Paul gathered a bundle of sticks for the fire a snake, (viper), came out of the wood because of the fire and fastened on Paul's hand. When the inhabitants saw the snake stayed on his hand they thought he was a murderer, who had escaped the treacherous sea. They thought that he must be a murderer, whom, though he had escaped the sea, yet justice suffered him not to live. Yet after he shook the snake off of his hand and back into the fire they changed their minds and began to think he must be a god, (Acts 28:3-6). So Paul instantaneously went from being a murderer to a god. What a quick change of mind by these people. I think that Paul surely was pleased with this quick decision. The Scripture says that the chief man on the island was named "Publius", who lodged all of them courteously, (Acts 28:7). In the next verses Paul healed his father who had dysentery to whom Paul entered in and prayed, and laid his hands on him and healed him, (Acts 28:8). Of course after this healing many more came and were healed of diseases, (Acts 28: 9). So in return these people turned out to be very gracious and provided all from the ship necessary provisions. At this time it had been three months since they started this trip, (Acts 28:11). They spent a week in a town named Puteoli with some brethren there and then sailed toward Rome.

When they got to Rome all of their prisoners were delivered to the captain of the guard, but Paul was allowed to dwell with a soldier that kept him. In Rome Paul called the chief of the Jews and told them the story of his problems with the law and that he was not guilty of any of the charges that had been made against him. These Romans called the church a "sect" and wanted to hear what Paul had to say about it, because it was everywhere spoken against, (Acts 28:17-22).

Many others were converted while Paul was a prisoner in Rome. Several were from the court of the emperor, (Phi. 1:12-14). Also Onesimus, a run-away slave, was sent back to his master, Philemon of Colosse, after he was converted by Paul. It is impossible to know all of the good work that he did during his imprisonment in Rome. After Paul preached to them, some of them believed him and some of them did not. From that time until now it is still the same...some people believe the Gospel and some people don't, and I believe that is the way it will always be. We can go from Rome to the uttermost parts of the earth and the reception will hardly change one iota. Paul preached there in Rome for two years every day and some obeyed and some didn't. During the two years Paul was a captive in Rome he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and the Philippians and probably helped Luke with the book of Acts, according to Hervey. ⁴ Barnes says that he also wrote II Timothy and Hebrews while there. ⁵

CONCLUSION

This great apostle started out being so vicious against the truth, dragging men and women from their homes and putting them in prison and voting for them to be put to death, Acts 26:9,10, that no one could convert him but Jesus. He ended up doing more work than all the other apostles together. He wrote more books in the Bible and did more mission work than anyone else. Yet he called himself the "chief of sinners," (ITim.1:15).

Let us try to follow the example of Paul and imitate his good work. And may

God bless us all in our work for Christ.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture references are from the King James Version of the Bible.

² It is the belief of this author that the stoning killed Paul and the Lord raised him from the dead in the presence of the disciples, even though there is nothing said in the Scripture about his living after being stoned was a miracle. The reason I believe this to be a miracle is that when the Jews stoned a person they made sure they were dead before they left that location, according to all I have read about their stoning people. Usually after they had stoned someone, like Stephen in Acts 7, for instance, he didn't just get up and walk away, (Acts 7:59. RU).

³ James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on Acts* Austin Texas, Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1968 pp.490

⁴ James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on Acts* Austin Texas, Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1968 pp. 520-521

⁵ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Acts& Romans* Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, pp.375

PAUL BEFORE FELIX AND AGRIPPA

By Willie L. Smith

I am grateful to Brother Riley Nelson and the great congregation of brethren at the Richmond Hill church of Christ for giving me this opportunity to speak on this lectureship meeting. The topic I have been assigned is a very informative and inspiring topic. I only hope I am worthy of the assignment. I hope I am able to offer some insight into this powerful topic.

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has had the opportunity to do a study on the life of Paul should be convinced that he is truly one of the great men of the Bible. He is first introduced to the Bible student in the latter part of Acts seven. There he is making havoc of the church. When we last see him in second Timothy four he is preparing to die for the cause of the very church he once persecuted. Much of the New Testament writing is centered on the work of this great apostle. He truly was a great gospel preacher.

After Paul and his company departed the island of Miletus, in Acts¹ chapter 20, they sailed for Jerusalem. Paul had a farewell meeting with the elders of Ephesus on the small island of Miletus before his departure. In chapter 21:4; Paul is warned of the danger awaiting him in Jerusalem. In verse 10-11; Paul is told of the impending imprisonment. Paul said that he was not only ready to suffer bonds, but to die at Jerusalem for the cause of the Lord. Despite these warnings Paul arrived in Jerusalem ready to preach the gospel of our Lord. At his arrival he was received by the brethren. Following his arrival Paul was physically attacked and arrested for preaching the gospel of Christ. He was well known among Jewish leaders at Jerusalem. They viewed him as a radical, who promoted a doctrine contrary to the Law of Moses. Acts: 21:28.

Paul was attacked and beaten by the Jews who were still zealous for the Law of Moses. The Roman police came to his rescue, and placed him under arrested.

PAUL BEFORE FELIX

It is said Felix was, "born Antonius Claudius, a Greek citizen, he was a slave, and was given his freedom by Claudius the emperor, who served Rome from A.D. 41-54; he was given the surname Felix, (happy). He and his brother Pallas were favorites of Claudius and later Nero who served from A. D. 54-68. Felix evidently thought that he could do as he pleased. Tacitus said of him, "He reveled in cruelty and lust, and wielded the power of a king with the mind of a slave."

His title "procurator" describes his fiscal duties of procuring funds for Rome, which he seemed to have accomplished through a variety of means. He began his career as procurator of Judea. He seduced and married Drusilla sister of Agrippa II. She was a woman of remarkable beauty, but the lawful wife of Azizus, the king of Emesa, (modern Homs). This meant she was living in an adulterous relationship with Felix. Because she was Jewish (at least on one side) he learned much of the Jewish way of life and custom.³

Felix appears in the biblical account only in Acts: 23:24-25:14. He was susceptible to flattery, as the speech of Tertullus shows, and also to conviction of sin, as is shown by the terror when Paul reasoned before him of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." His conviction faded; he procrastinated; and then held Paul for about two years (c.58-60), hoping that Paul would buy his freedom. He was then replaced by Festus, a far better man.

While Paul was under arrest in the castle in the care of the chief captain of the guard, a plot was made by the Jews to kill him, the high Priest being party to the plot. Paul's nephew knew of the plot and informed Paul. Paul requested that he make this information known to the

chief captain. The captain decided to send Paul to Caesarea to be placed under the care of the governor. Felix received Paul, and agreed to hear the case when Paul's accusers came and filed formal charges against him.

The first hearing before Felix was held five days after Paul's arrival in Caesarea. Ananias the high priest, along with the elders, and a prosecuting attorney name Tertullus arrived and filed charges against Paul.

"And when Paul was called before Felix, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy much peace, and that by the providence evils are corrected for this nation, we accept it in all ways and in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. But, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I entreat thee to hear us of thy clemency a few words. For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: who moreover assayed to profane the temple: on whom also we laid hold: and we would have judged him according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come before thee. from whom thou wilt be able, by examining him thyself, to take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him. And the Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that these things were so." (Acts 24:2-9).

Paul acting as his own defense lawyer presented his defense to Felix.

"And when the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, Paul answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I cheerfully make my defense: seeing that thou canst take knowledge that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem: and neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city. Neither can they prove to thee the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust. Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always. Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings: amidst which they found me purified in the temple, with no crowd, nor yet with tumult: but there were certain Jews from Asia who ought to have been here before thee, and to make accusation, if they had aught against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrong-doing they found when I stood before the council, except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question before you this day. But Felix, having more exact knowledge concerning the Way, deferred them, saying, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will determine your matter" (Acts 24:10-22).

At the conclusion of Paul's defense Felix set aside judgment, that he might gather additional information from Lysias the chief captain of the guard at Jerusalem. "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts24:24-25). During the second hearing Paul took advantage of the occasion and preached the gospel of our Lord to Felix and his wife Drusilla.

We have in scripture Paul's sermon outline not the actual sermon. The text states that Paul reasoned with Felix and Drusilla on three points, righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come. The Analytical Lexicon says, to reason, (dialogizomai; verb), is to make a settlement of accounts, to reason; deliberate; ponder; consider. Vines says, to bring together different reasons and reckon them up, to reason; thoughts and considerations which are more or less objectionable. 5

First he reasoned with him on righteousness. Vines Dictionary says, (dikaiosune) is "the character or quality of being right, or just". Righteousness was formerly spelled "rightwiseness" which expresses clearly it's meaning.⁶ It is a state of conduct that is acceptable to God as doing that which is right.

Dr. Smith defines it this way; "Righteousness is an attribute of God only.⁷ In a biblical sense it is a condition of rightness a standard by which God will accept, which is estimated according to a divine standard, and shows itself in behavior conformable to God. It has to do with, above all things the relationship to God, and with the walk before God. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Therefore the sermon Paul preached that day caused them to think on these grave matters. Righteousness is a condition of life which is acceptable unto God. Paul was not trying to get

Felix to submit to his righteousness, but to God's righteousness. God declares all who obey the gospel to be righteous. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. The just shall live by faith" (Romans1:16-17).

The King James Version says, "Felix trembled." The American Standard says, "he was terrified." There is no question he was moved by the sermon. This reaction does not mean he changed his life style. We read of the effect God's message had one Belshazzar. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" (Daniel 5:5-6). There is no record of a change of heart and life of this man.

We read of the emotional reactions of the Jews who were involved in the death of Jesus, Acts 2:37, the reaction of Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9:6, and even the actions of the jailor, Acts 16:29. All were deeply touched and concerned by their experiences. We also read there was a change of heart; that lead to a change of lifestyle. This is not the case with Felix. It appears that Felix was like many people today. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"(Romans 10:3).

Paul's second point was temperance, which means self control. Vines says, temperance (enkrateia, noun) is strength. Temperance must come by means of one's own self will. It begins with the desire to obey God, based on ones knowledge of God's word. God requires those who trust in Him, to be moderate in things that are right. Exercising self control helps one to abstain

from things that are evil. "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1Thessalonians 5:22). Temperance is a requirement of all men who trust in God, with eternal life in view. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 9:25).

Obedience to the gospel would require that Felix get control of his life, and mortify the inner man. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13). Temperance can be seen in the changed man. His actions and direction are the result of temperance. Temperance equals self control which leads to a changed life. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossian: 3:5). Because one thing is certain there will be a day of retribution.

When this life is over, all that will remains is the judgment. All men will stand before the God, either in sin, or cleansed. As Paul spoke to this entourage of dignitaries he could have said the same thing he said to those Athenians, on Mars Hill. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). The certainty of the judgment is presented in this text. God has given every man two appointments that must be kept. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

I am sure Paul pointed out to Felix and Drusilla the importance for them, and all humans to live and conduct their lives in accordance with God's standards. Obey God do as He instructs and receive credit for righteousness. Obedience to God begins with getting control of self and mortifies ones physical actions. In doing so, the heart or spirit of the individual is revealed.

These are God's requirements for all who desire to live pleasing to Him. The alternative decision will result in damnation, or eternal separation from Him. If one chooses not to submit obedience to God in this life, his decision will affect his eternal destiny.

There is no record that Felix ever obeyed the gospel of our Lord. He made an excuse for not doing so when the opportunity was presented to him. Saying the time was not right. The point is, he excused himself, and Paul did not excuse him. God nor did the Holy Spirit excuse him. Felix failed to obey in-spite of having one of the great teacher's of the gospel impart the truth of God's word unto him. He failed to obey in-spite of the emotional effect the message made on him. In-spite of the excuse he gave he remained amenable to God's word, and will have to face those very words again at the judgment. God help us not to follow in the steps of Felix.

PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA

The Agrippa to whom Paul preached, in Acts 26, was, Agrippa II, the great grandson of Herod the Great, who slew all the children in Bethlehem, Matthew 2:16. He was the son of Agrippa I, who killed James with the sword, and would have killed Peter if the angel of the Lord had not intervened to save his life, Acts 12:1-3. Agrippa I, died after an oration in which he was acclaimed divine, and he was smitten of God, Acts 12:20-23. Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptizer, Matthew 14:3-12, was the great uncle of Agrippa II. He also sought after Jesus on the pretense of wanting to speak with him on like spiritual matters, but Jesus refused to meet with him, referring to him as a Fox, Luke 13:32.

Herod Agrippa II had two sisters. Drusilla was married to Felix, (an adulterous relationship) Acts 24:24-25. Festus was now in the office of Felix after he had been dismissed. Agrippa's other sister Bernice who was his personal house guest. Her beauty was renowned; her desire for wealth was well known. Her vices were that of wickedness, she was incapable of being

satisfied. These were the kind of people Paul preached to, Acts 25:13-27. This clan of men and women were mostly a corrupt group of people, like the mob in Hollywood, and Las Vegas today. Many of them had little or no morals. Festus asked Agrippa, to come and hear this man Paul. Probably because Agrippa was a half Jew, Festus presumed he would know more about the Jewish situation than did he.

The Jews had been pressuring Festus to declare judgment against Paul who had been left in Jail by Felix. He had hoped that Paul would eventually give him money for his release. Festus told the Jews Roman law forbade condemning a man to death before the accused had opportunity to face his accusers, in defense of the charges, Acts 25:13-16. When Festus convened his court to hear Paul's case, the charges the Jews brought against Paul were not what Festus anticipated.

"Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar" (Acts 25:17-21).

Festus claimed to have been doubtful as to how to proceed with the case, and asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried. The governor's real aim was to please the Jews.

It appears there was no legal basis for Paul even having to appear before the court of Agrippa since he had already made his appeal to Caesar. Perhaps Festus and Agrippa both were somewhat curious about the affairs surrounding Paul's imprisonment. The occasion gave Paul the opportunity to present the gospel to those who were gathered there. We would be the poorer if the details of this sermon was absent from the scriptures. Agrippa gave Paul the liberty to speak for himself, in defense of the charges brought against him, (Acts26:1-8).

Paul thanked the king for allowing him the opportunity to answer the various charges brought against him by the Jewish leaders. Paul knew that Agrippa was acquainted with the Jewish customs, and questions that were leveled against him. He would know about the differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Paul laid out his religious background, before Agrippa, stating that his past life was known to the Jews. He had spent a good many years in the city of Jerusalem studying Jewish law. He said the Jews who were present knew him from his early years, and they could testify that he lived as a Pharisee, the strictest sect of Judaism.

The Pharisees were the least of all Jewish sects to be unfaithful to the Jewish institution. It was, therefore, much in Paul's favor that he could call witnesses to testify to this fact. From his youth he had lived in the strict discipline of that sect. Now that he was a Christian, he could see the error, motivated by his zeal for God. He could find nothing about his Jewish faith to exalt his actions. As a Pharisee he persecuted the church that belonged to Christ, but he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. His unbelief was not in God, but in the plan God used to restore the sinner. His knowledge of Christ now, allowed him to accept the fact that Christ came to earth to save sinners. Because he had previously fought against God, he viewed himself as the chief of sinners. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1Timothy 1:13-15).

Paul affirmed that it was because of his belief in the hope of the promise God made to the fathers that he was now standing before the king and his court, defending that very hope. It is for his faith in that hope he was now being accused. Why should it be thought an incredible thing for God to raise the dead? "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a

great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis12:1-3). The hope of this promise is in the resurrection of the dead, Acts26:8. The ultimate aim of the promise when it is fully realized is the resurrection, which ushers the redeemed into heaven. He raised this rhetorical question because the Sadducees hated Paul because he preached the resurrection of the dead. He perceived this to be the central reason for his present dilemma. The resurrection of the dead is a reasonable expectation of those who follow the teaching of Christ.

Paul admits to his past, of persecuting Christians, Acts 26:9-11. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (v; 9). Before Paul was converted to Christ, while he was yet a Pharisee, his zeal for God led him in opposition to the name of Jesus, and his teachings. He was not hypocritical in his actions; he fully believed he was doing the right thing. This is evident that people today can be consciously right and yet be in sin. A clear conscience is desirable, but that condition does not prove one's worship is acceptable to God.

Paul received authority from the chief priests to exercise his opposition against the church of Christ. Acting on the authority given him, he caused many of the saints of our Lord to be put in prison. In some cases he voted in favor of their execution. Paul openly stated these facts. "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (v, 11). He found Christians in various synagogues and forced them to blaspheme their Lord. In many cases he succeeded. His intense hatred for the church led him to persecute the saints in foreign cities. (He may have gone to more cities outside of Palestine than Damascus, but there is no record of that).

Having explained his personal background, and past acts of persecution against the church, his audience would naturally be interested to know what had brought about such a change, and his conversion to Jesus. It must have been extraordinary forces at work to change such an avowed enemy into a converted servant and Christian.

Paul now begins to relate some details of what lead him to change his position, Acts: 26:12-18. "Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (v:12-14). He reports he was going to Damascus in search of members of the church of Christ with authority from the chief priests to arrest and return to Jerusalem any he found. At midday as he was near Damascus a great light shone from above, brighter than the sun. The light shined around him and his company, and they fell to the ground. Saul heard a voice speaking to him in the Hebrew language. The voice posed a question to him, "Why persecute thou me?" The Lord said Paul's fight against the church was against Him. Here is where Paul came to realize he was fighting a lost cause, a fight he could not win.

In fear and not understanding what such an experience meant, he asked a question. "And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (v: 15). He learned that the speaker was Jesus; this experience would change his entire life. In this one experience he came to realize that his violent acts against the church were in reality against God. His actions were contrary to the will of heaven, and Jesus was truly the long expected Messiah. Because of his zeal and love for God, Paul was quick to accept this truth, and make the change this new knowledge demanded.

Paul asked what was he to do, and the Lord stated what his great task would be in the future. He was told to go into the city an wait, a gospel preacher would come and tell what he must do. Ananias came and told him what he must do to be saved, Acts 22:16. This was the reason Paul was determined to preach the gospel of Christ. After relating this miraculous demonstration he experienced on the road to Damascus, Paul stated flatly that he had not been disobedient to the heavenly vision, Acts 26:19-23.

After his experience on the Damascus road, he has persisted in testifying to all men preaching only those things which the prophets and Moses predicted. The fact that Paul was still alive could not be taken lightly, considering what he taught. Despite the efforts of the Jewish leaders, and mobs in Jerusalem, and elsewhere were trying to kill him. It was evident he had to be working under the protective force of God.

As Paul brings his sermon to conclusion, he shows that he had only preached what the prophets had predicted. He was able to do so because he received help from God. At that point, Festus with a loud voice, rudely interrupted Paul's presentation, Acts 26:24-32). "And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad" (v; 24). He accused the apostle of becoming mad because of too much learning. Because he could not or would not accept Paul's presentation he thought he could discredit it as meaningless to everyone else. It appears Festus decided to reject the preaching of Paul as Felix had done. The Greek word for "Mad" is "mainei," the equivalent of our English word, "maniac." it carries the idea of raving madness. Festus thought as did others in his day, too much education would drive a person mad. Today when we carefully present truth, and gleam from scripture our meaning and faith, people think we are mad.

Paul denied the charge of madness, stating that he had spoken truth and soberness. Even in the face of this accusation Paul maintained his composure even tendering to the governor an

expression of polite regard. "But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but I speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner" (v; 25-26). He said that king Arippa knew the things he was discussing were true. Paul established his case by calling attention to the facts of history and prophecy. Addressing Agrippa directly Paul asked him, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest, Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (v; 27-28).

Here was a man who had lived in sin for much of his life. The presentation of the facts of the gospel by Paul drove the truth home to him. He was a wealthy and influential ruler who was obviously touched by what Paul taught, yet there is no recorded record of him taking advantage of this great opportunity the gospel offers to him, and to all men. Almost is not enough with the word of God.

Some commentaries and translations are at odds with this statement "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." They allege that his reply was sarcastic. By taking under consideration Agrippa's training in the law and his knowledge of the events and facts of history, he was convinced that Paul's presentation was the truth. Though Agrippa heard God's requirements for man to be forgiven of sins, because of his status and his associates, he made the decision to reject God's plan.

How many people today have heard the same gospel preached, believed what they heard, yet were not willing to turn from their present way of life, and confess Jesus as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of their sins, and live the remainder of life in accordance with the teaching of Jesus? Would it not be grand if all men would obey the gospel, and be a member of the one church of the Bible?

END NOTES

¹ All scripture references are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

² Dr. William Smith, "Felix," Smith's Bible Dictionary (Nashville, TN. Holman Bible Publishers, 1997), p.103.

³ J. W. McGarvey, *A Commentary on the Acts of Apostles* (Nashville, TN. Gospel Advocate Co.), p. 273.

⁴ William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p.139.

⁵ W. E. Vine, **Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words** (Nashville Tennessee. Thomas Nelson Publishers.1997), p. 924.

⁶ Ibid. 970

⁷ Smith, 261

PAUL, THE PRISONER

By Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

The history of prisons goes back to the dawn of time. As early as the book of Job the term, "*prisoner*" was an established fact (Job 3:18). The idea to incarcerate the wicked actually precedes human history. It began with God.

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and <u>delivered them into chains of darkness</u>, to be reserved unto judgment; (2 Peter 2:4).¹

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath <u>reserved in everlasting chains</u> under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (Jude 1:6).

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; (1 Peter 3:19) [Emphasis RV].

God imprisoned wicked angels in the ethereal regions of Erebus. The "spirits in prison" are those antediluvians in the days of Noah who are now kept in a hadean prison. It was mandated that the blasphemer in the days of Moses be put in ward until his execution (Leviticus 24:10-16).

Because the idea of prisons is originally of God, then it naturally follows that it is right and just for the wicked to be separated and kept until or as a means of punishment. Eventually God will make right all wrongs. But when justice is left in the hands of imperfect man, it is only as faultless as men can make it. Thus in man's flawed system of justice there are times when the innocent will be convicted wrongfully.

When the ruling authority is wicked, then there is certainly the potential for the wrongful suffering of the innocent. Bible history is filled with examples of the innocent suffering injustice. Consider a few: Joseph (Genesis 39:20), Samson (Judges 16:21), Micaiah (1 Kings 22:27),

Jeremiah (Jeremiah 38:6), John the Baptist (Matthew 14:3-4), the Apostles (Acts 5:18), Peter and James (Acts 12:1-5), many early Christians (Acts 8:3) and Paul.

PRISON CONDITIONS IN BIBLICAL TIMES

Definitions of Words:

There are various Hebrew words which are rendered "**prison**" in the Old Testament of the KJV, among them:

- (1) אסהד, sohar "round house," "fortress" (8 times in Genesis).
- (2) **872**, *kele'* "**restraint**," "**confinement**" (12 times: in the historic books, Isaiah and Jeremiah, with "**house**").
- (3) אמרה, mattarah "guard," "sentry" (13 times in Jeremiah and Nehemiah).
- (4) מהפכת, mahaphekheth "distorting," i.e. stocks or pillory (4 times).
- (5) אסאר "fetters" (Ecclesiastes 4:14; Jeremiah 37:15); "ward" in the KJV is usually the rendering for משמר, mishmar).²

In the New Testament "prison" is generally rendered from the Greek word φυλακή, phulaké, which corresponds to the Hebrew word, πishmar (See #5 above). In Revelation 18:2 the KJV renders this word by two words: "hold" and "cage." Elsewhere it is rendered, "prison," "ward," "watch" and "imprisonment." ³ From these different words we only get vague hints of what it was like to be an ancient prisoner. The Bible does not give a lot of detail. But the information we have shows the hardship that righteous people faced.

Treatment of Prisoners

The earliest record we have is in the narrative of Joseph in Genesis 39-40. Joseph when speaking to the chief butler said that he had, "done nothing that they should put me into the

dungeon" (i.e. the pit or cistern). He begged to be released "from this house" (Genesis 40:14-15).

Treatment varied according to the character of the offense or the consideration of danger for the prisoner being held. Samson while held by the Philistines was forced to do hard labor (Judges 16:21). Grinding was the occupation of women (cp. Isaiah 47:1-2; Matthew 24:41) and showed the depth of his humiliation. He was deprived of his sight. Mutilation was also common practice by many nations (2Kings 25:7; Judges 1:6).

Jeremiah sheds some light on the prison system of Jerusalem in the days of the kings. Jeremiah was put "in the stocks" at the upper gate of Benjamin in the temple (Jeremiah 20:2). It was not enough to confine him for his prophetic predictions of Judah's doom. The Jews felt they had to put him to the pillory. On another occasion even worse than that, we have this account:

Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire. Now when Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin; Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city (Jeremiah 38:6-9).

Herod Antipas, because of paranoia, kept John the Baptist in the prison of Machaerus⁴ for a whole year or more⁵ with no definite charge or plan of what to do with him until the incident of his birthday when Antipas sent for John to be beheaded. And he presented the grisly reward on a silver platter.

In summary, just to put it mildly, life in prison in Bible times was hard!

PAUL IN PRISON

No bible character suffered more imprisonments for righteousness' sake than the Apostle Paul; both in the number of prisons and the amount of time he spent in them. It is not known exactly how much suffering is entailed in his prison experiences. He wrote to the Corinthians that he had been in "prisons more frequent" than his pestering competitors (2Corinthians 11:23; 6:5). However, the only record of his being in prison before the writing of Second Corinthians is at Philippi (Acts 16:23-24). And so, he himself indicates that there were other imprisonments not recorded by Luke in the book of Acts. Also Clement, an early Apostolic Father says that Paul was imprisoned seven times:

⁵ διὰ ζῆλον καὶ ἔριν Παῦλος ὑπομονῆς βραβεῖον ὑπέδειξεν ⁶ ἐπτάκις δεσμά φορέσας φυγαδευθείς λιθασθείς κήρυξ γενόμενος ἔν τε τῆ ἀνατολῆ καὶ ἐν τῆ δύσει τὸ γενναῖον τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ κλέος ἔλαβεν ⁶

Because of jealousy and strife Paul showed a reward of endurance, <u>after seven</u> times bearing imprisonments, being a fugitive, being stoned. After becoming a preacher both in the east and in the west he received the glorious fame for his faith [translation and emphasis by RV].

The Bible only details five of Paul's imprisonments: at Philippi, Jerusalem, Caesarea and two in Rome. Some have conjectured that he might have been incarcerated while at Ephesus, though the evidence is not conclusive.

Philippi

At Philippi we have the first record of Paul being imprisoned. This took place during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:23-40). Oddly, this was not by the hands of the Jews. This was done by the arrogance and avariciousness of the pagans. Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12). In the time of Caesar Augustus there was a military settlement of Roman soldiers placed there to control the district recently conquered. It was under the municipal law of Rome and

governed by military officers called duumviri,⁷ who eventually would take on the title of Praetors. There was not even a Jewish synagogue in this city. Paul found a group of Jewish women meeting by the Angites River on the Sabbath day. This became the kernel of the new church at Philippi.

Opposition arose when a little slave girl with the power of oracular utterance (the spirit of python) took to following Paul's company around. Paul cast out the spirit returning the girl to a sane and normal mind. When her greedy masters saw that their hope of gain through her was gone they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the magistrates (16:22). Their accusation was unwarranted, "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans" (Acts 16:20-21, emphasis RV). Acting rashly the magistrates did not even bother to inquire as to their citizenship. Which they should have done for Paul was a Roman citizen, free born.

There is a brief description of the prison condition into which Paul and Silas were placed:

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks (Acts 16:23-24).

Verse 22 shows the rage of the magistrates. They could not contain, but ripped off or rather commanded to be ripped off the clothes of Paul and Silas, and then ordered them to be scourged. It is fortunate that few countries today know the severity of a Roman scourging. The original word carried with it the idea of beating with rods. And they were beaten with "many stripes." Unlike the Jews' forty lashes, the Romans had no such limitations, but continued until the satisfaction of the lictor was satiated. This was a memory not soon forgotten for Paul would later write to the Thessalonian church how he was shamefully treated at Philippi (2Thessalonians 2:2).

Then they "thrust them into the inner prison" and forced their lacerated limbs into a constrained posture in the stocks. We do not know exactly the location of the inner prison and its connection with the jailer's house. But, there is a good idea of the miseries endured in Roman captivity. The inner prison in the ancient world was like the dungeon in the court of the prison where Jeremiah was let down into by cords (Jeremiah 38:6). They were pestilent cells, damp and cold from which very little light was allowed, and where chains rusted on the limbs of the prisoners. In addition there was the torture of the stocks in which the arms, legs and even the neck were confined and stretched.

Such was the condition of Paul and Silas. And yet, after the violent activity settled down, when all was quiet in the night, they were heard singing praises to God. Knowing the rapacious violence conducted on these men, and then seeing their piety, this had to make a deep impression on the other prisoners and on the jailer too. And then the earthquake tore open the prison. This clenched the emotions of those pagan minds. They knew these to be men of the true God. God took a bad situation and used it for the furtherance of the Gospel. More were added to the church at Philippi.

<u>Jerusalem</u>

It was during Paul's third missionary journey that he had a great desire to go back to Jerusalem (Acts 18:21; 19:21; 20:16). A very plaguing question has bothered Bible students through the years. After Paul determined to go to Jerusalem, the Bible gives several accounts where God and the brethren speaking through the Spirit warned him not to go (Acts 20:23; 21:5, 11-14, 20-23). Was God only advising Paul, or was He commanding Paul not to go? If the latter were true, then Paul would be guilty of disobedience. If the former were true then Paul was not listening to God's advice. Either way, perhaps Paul could have made better choices about going

up personally to Jerusalem. Yet it was through this action that Caesar's household and the Praetorium at Rome heard the gospel which might not have happened that way otherwise.

Coming into Syria Paul and his company spent a week with the disciples from Tyre (Acts 21:4). They said that he should not go to Jerusalem. Leaving them by ship they came to Ptolemais and met with the brethren there for one day (21:7). Then they came to Caesarea and abode several days with Philip, the evangelist and one of the original seven. A prophet from Judea named Agabus graphically warned Paul about going to Jerusalem testifying that he would be captured and given to the Gentiles. This was the same Agabus who sixteen years earlier correctly prophesied of the worldwide famine (11:28). At that point everyone was begging Paul not to go but to no avail. Why was he so adamant? For one thing, he wanted to personally deliver the famine relief money from the Gentile Christians for the churches in Judea. He wrote to the Romans:

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; <u>That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea</u>; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed (Romans 15:30-32, emphasis RV).

To the Ephesian bishops he stated that he had a good idea what lay in store for him in Judea:

And now, behold, <u>I</u> go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: <u>Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me</u>. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:22-24, emphasis RV).

Needless to say, Paul went on to Jerusalem and was arrested. This action almost cost him his life and started a set of four to five years in confinement which he would endure before seeing

his freedom again. Once they spotted him in the temple, the Jews did not hesitate in their hostility to create trouble for Paul

And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut (Acts 21:27-30, emphasis RV).

He was rescued/arrested by the Romans in Jerusalem (probably in the Tower of Antonia) until circumstances changed. A very significant theophany occurred while Paul was held at Jerusalem. "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11).

Caesarea

Because a Jewish plot was discovered to try to kill him, Paul was soon taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea by night under the protection of 470 Roman soldiers. He was then confined to Herod's palace where he would spend the next two years in prison awaiting a decision for his trial. During this time his case was heard by three dignitaries: two Roman procurators and a royal member of the Herodian family: Felix (Acts 24), Festus (25:1-12) and King Agrippa (25:23-26:32) respectively. Festus wanting to please the Jews recommended Paul return to Jerusalem for trial. Knowing the Jew's murderous intent, Paul took advantage of his Roman citizenship and appealed his case to Caesar, and so to Rome he would go!

Our Christian champion was not quiet for those two years he sat in that prison. He wielded an influence both among the Romans who watched him and before the dignitaries who tried him. Felix "trembled" at his preaching (Acts 24:25) and spoke with him often (24:26). Festus was confused as to what charge to make against him before the emperor (25:27). Agrippa made that famous declaration, "...Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (26:28). To say that this was only spoken in irony is to give little credit to the ability of Paul and to the understanding of Agrippa about the Old Testament prophets. If one understood what the prophets said about the Messiah, then the truth of Christianity becomes readily apparent. And Agrippa did believe the prophets.

It was Felix who retained Paul in the Caesarean prison for two years (Acts 24:27). He was an unscrupulous character motivated by greed. He wanted to mulct money from Paul. The difference in character between Felix and Festus can be seen in how quickly Festus reviewed Paul's case when he replaced Felix as Procurator.

Now when Festus was come into the province, <u>after three days</u> he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul.... But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea.... And when he had tarried among them more than <u>ten days</u>, <u>he went down unto Caesarea</u>; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought (Acts 25:1-6, emphasis RV).

Festus arranged for a ship, as soon as one became conveniently available, to transport Paul to Rome (Acts 27:1).

Rome

Paul had written to the Romans more than three years earlier how he had prayed to God that he might come to them with joy.

Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey.... Now I beseech you, brethren... that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God... That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed (Romans 15:24, 30-32, emphasis RV).

But he did not enter the imperial city in the way that he had hoped. Instead of coming as a free man to preach the gospel in the synagogues, market places and forums, he was marched in between ranks of soldiers, presented to the authorities as a prisoner for trial, and kept under military guard day and night.⁹

How depressed must Paul have been at the prospect of preaching the gospel in Rome now that he came in chains? Years earlier he wrote to the Corinthians reminding them that he had preached to them in Greece, "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" (1Corinthians 2:3). He most certainly would have even stronger feelings when first entering into Rome.

An interesting note is recorded by Luke in Acts 28:11-14. Before arriving in Rome, the ship harbored at Puteoli and they "found brethren and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome." Apparently they occupied for a week to assemble together and take the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day. The attending centurion allowed this to happen. It is possible that by this time the centurion and the other prisoners from the ship had become Christians and wanted to stay together with Paul as long as possible. Luke also records that brethren from Rome came as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns to meet Paul and his fellow travelers. This became a great encouragement to him (Acts 28:15).

Upon arriving at Rome "the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard" (Acts 28:16). The Majority Text calls this official the στρατοπεδάρχης (Stratopedarch, or Praetorian prefect, commander of the praetorian cohorts). If this were true he would have been the captain of the Roman emperor's elite bodyguard. Through Paul's imprisonment he was becoming acquainted with some very important people. More and more he was endearing himself to the Roman officials. He would soon write to the Philippians, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household" (Philippians 4:22).

While in prison a constant attendance of Roman soldiers were needed to guard Paul. The guard was changed according to uniform custom every three hours. It became the privilege of not less than five or six different soldiers to be present and hear his preaching and teaching every day. On this point McGarvey states:

The Praetorian Guard was a body of soldiers kept at Rome, in a camp outside the city, for the purpose of guarding the emperor, and keeping prisoners awaiting trial in the imperial court. As each soldier returned to the camp from guarding Paul, he had a strange story to pour into the ears of his companions, and so it spread from lip to lip. 12

After settling in his hired house, Paul contacts the chief of the Jews (Acts 28:17-29). In spite of the fact that he came to Rome to preach to the Gentiles, he wants to give the Jews first opportunity to hear the gospel. In Romans 1:16 he said he was debtor to preach, "to the Jews first."

The Book of Acts closes with two short verses:

And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him (Acts 28:30-31).

What happened to Paul and Luke in those two years? Paul's death is not stated by Luke; in fact nothing more is said by the hand of Luke. But a few details may be gleaned from his last few epistles. By studying these one is able to conclude that the apostle was released from that first Roman confinement to further evangelize the outer fringes of the empire. There are four letters thought to have been written by Paul while in this first Roman confinement. These prison epistles are: Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians. From these he refers to himself as "the prisoner of Christ" (Ephesians 3:1), "the prisoner of the Lord" (4:1), or an "ambassador"

in chains" (6:20). There are many references to his "*bonds*" or to his state as a "*prisoner*" in Philippians 1:7, 13, 14, 17; Colossians 4:18 and Philemon 1, 9, 23.

One reason to conclude that there were two imprisonments is that three of these letters Colossians, Philippians and Philemon are addressed as follows:

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints... (Philippians 1:1).

Paul an arrest of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Christ by the will of Code and Timotheus of Jesus Christ by the will be code and the will be code an

<u>Paul</u>, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, <u>and Timotheus</u> our brother... (Colossians 1:1).

<u>Paul</u>, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, <u>and Timothy</u> our brother, unto Philemon... (Philemon 1:1). [emphasis by RV]

It is obvious that Timothy was with Paul when Paul wrote these prison letters. However, Timothy was <u>NOT</u> with Paul in Rome near the last days of Paul's sojourn on this earth. He wrote to Timothy:

Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me... (2Timothy 4:9). Do thy diligence to come before winter... (4:21). Only Luke is with me... (4:11).

We do not know if Timothy ever made it in time before Paul's execution. Thus the Pastoral Epistles would have been written during the second imprisonment. Two whole years would certainly have been enough time for Timothy to arrive at Paul's side during the first imprisonment. And in the first imprisonment there were more disciples with Paul than just Luke. But in the second imprisonment Paul was not treated as amicably as in the first imprisonment. It was his last days when Paul wrote his final recorded words to Timothy (showing that Timothy was not yet present with him):

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me (2Timothy 4:6-9).

We do know that at some point in time during the first imprisonment Timothy seems to have been at Paul's side because Paul instructed him to go to Philippi (Philippians 2:19-20). There was also a time when Timothy too was imprisoned but shortly set free (Hebrews 13:23). Nevertheless, there is a lot of conjecture about whether Paul was imprisoned at Rome once or twice. This author believes the evidence points to two separate imprisonments.

CONCLUSION

The climax of Paul's life was his teaching and preaching the gospel in Rome, the capital city of the Gentile world. When God was ready for Rome to be evangelized, He sent one man and that one man was a prisoner held in bonds. His imprisonment brought many to Christ and caused the Christians there to be "much more bold in speaking the word without fear" (Philippians 1:14). Though a prisoner he said, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound" (2Timothy 2:8-9).

ENDNOTES

¹ All biblical quotations are taken from the King James Versions unless specifically stated otherwise.

² T. Lewis, "Prison; Prisoner", *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 4:2456.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Josephus, Flavius. "The Antiquities of the Jews." *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. Trans. William Whiston. Electronic ed. (Norfolk, VA.: Bibleworks, LLC, 2003), 18:119.

⁵ Archibald Thomas Robertson, "The Gospel According To Matthew." *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 1, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1930), 34, Matthew 4:12.

⁶ J. B. Lightfoot, "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians", <u>Apostolic Fathers Greek Database</u>, (BibleWorks, LLC, 2006).

⁷ M. G. Easton, M.A., D.D., "Philippi," *Easton Bible Dictionary*, Third Edition, 1897 ASCII edition, (Ellis Enterprises, Inc. Public Domain, 1988).

⁸ W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, <u>The Life and Epistles of St. Paul</u>, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 234-235.

⁹ J. W. McGarvey, A. M., <u>New Commentary on Acts of Apostles</u>, (Lexington, KY: Scanned by Faith & Facts Publications, Inc., 1892), 282

Joseph H. Thayer, "στρατοπεδάρχης," <u>Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</u>, 7th ed., (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, March, 2005).

¹¹ McGarvey, Ibid., 287

¹² Ibid.

READY TO BE OFFERED

By Richard Mansel

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul scarred from the daily spiritual wars, sought release through the rest Christ promised (Heb. 4:8-11). His arduous battle was at an end. Few would face the struggles he had endured. His body was tired and ached for relief. Spiritually, his soul hungered for God and the glory he knew awaited. He had worked the entire day and soon the night would fall about them.

Paul's fervor, fellowship and faith gave him the impetus to be confident in his eternal destiny. It explains his self-motivation as he endured his life of sacrifice.

A MAN OF FERVOR

Paul was a man who vigorously fulfilled his mission, no matter the orders. Whether it required the gore of persecution or the glory of God, he stood ready for duty. Isaiah said, "Here am I; send me" (Isa. 6:8). Paul exemplified these words throughout his life.

"He embodies the words of Solomon, 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might' (Ecclesiastes 9:10, NKJV). God saw his unyielding resolve and employed him for the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 2 Timothy 1:11). The early church stood tall because of his tireless labors."

Paul's overwhelming desire for work and finality brought fulfillment to his life. His self-motivation and untiring zeal for truth were indispensible in the work of God. They would steel his resolve through the persecutions he would face. He would need them.

Paul is first seen in Scripture as Saul, the persecutor (Acts 7:58).

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:1, 3).

He "was like a war horse who sniffed the smell of battle" in his persecutions of the saints." He signified the damage a wild boar would do in a helpless vineyard. In Acts 9:21, the people had "destroyed" those who were Christians. Barclay says of the word destroyed: "It is the word for an army sacking a city. Just as an invading army might tear a city stone from stone and murder and slaughter right and left with almost sadistic brutality, so Paul attacked the Church."

As a Pharisee, Paul was just as dedicated and quickly rose to prominence. The son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), he advanced in his studies under the esteemed Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

During the school experience, "Learned men met and discussed scriptures, gave various interpretations, suggested illustrations, and quoted precedents. The students were encouraged to question, doubt and even contradict."

"Saul was a man of such vehemence and power that he was head in whatever circle he moved, whether as Saul the persecuting Pharisee, or Paul the laboring missionary."

A MAN OF FELLOWSHIP

Paul's deep and abiding love for his brethren led him to long for the grand renewal in heaven. It helped empower his confidence in death.

When his brethren were confused about the end of time, he told them to see heaven as a "gathering together" of the saints and a reason for comfort and hope (2 Thess. 2:1, 17).

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:3-6).

He loved Timothy like a child (1 Tim. 1:2; Phil. 2:19-20). He included greetings to a variety of people in his epistles (Rom. 16). They were his spiritual family.

Paul wrote the consummate chapter on the beauty of Christian love (1 Cor. 13). His love for the church and for souls met in the unity of the brethren. Paul's sole desire was to see everyone find salvation.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). He loved the Jews and desperately wanted them to be saved (Rom. 9:2-3). "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. 11:15).

Romans is a book where he largely writes to the Jewish and Gentile Christians to stop fighting one another and become one flesh. When accomplished, they would find transformation through the gospel (Rom. 12:1-5).

Heaven will therefore be the ultimate fulfillment of unity. We will all be one as we enjoy eternity in the arms of our Lord. Unity on earth leads to an eternity together in the perfection of heaven (Eph. 4).

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:16-17).

A MAN OF FAITH

Paul's fervor also fuels his faith. His faith is a powerful force that leads him to survive an extraordinary amount of hardship.

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. 11:23-27).

Paul had been a persecutor but discovered he was in error. When Paul realizes what he had done and been forgiven of, he becomes a fierce defender of the faith. God had said, "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16).

Paul knew exactly what he was getting into. He "was under no misapprehension of what was before him. He knew what he was to receive in lieu of what he had given up." 8

When he writes about faith, it is far more than a mental acknowledgement. It is the core of a life committed to a cause.

Faith justifies us and leads us to live actively for the Lord (Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8-10). Faith transforms our lives as we walk in Christ (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:1). We are also protected from the schemes of the devil by the shield of faith (Eph. 6:10-16).

Faith in Christ was enough of a motivation to Paul to do anything Christ asked. His love for God was so palpable that he never hesitated to be active in the fields of the Lord.

A MAN OF FINAL SACRIFICE

Paul was ready to offer the ultimate sacrifice by giving up his life (Acts 9:29; 25:11). He had lived life to the fullest. He was ready to be with his Savior for all eternity. "For I reckon

that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

He was "ready to be offered." The phrase is "figuratively used of one whose blood is poured out in a violent death for the cause of God." "The possibility of his execution is vividly present to his own mind." "The passive voice hints that the apostle is the victim, being offered."

He was giving his life as the ultimate sacrifice. He had taught the Ephesians that our lives and mission were to be about bringing glory to Christ (Eph. 3:20-21). To insert himself and his needs at the forefront of his mind would obviate what he had instructed. In all things, Paul wished to be consistent.

Drink offerings served a purpose during the Old Law. In Genesis 35:14, we find Jacob offering a drink offering to God after His blessing.

"And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land" (Gen. 35:11-12).

Jacob wanted to express his reverence and joy at such a blessing.

Drink offerings were a part of the Mosaical Law (Exo. 29:40; Lev. 23:13). They were commanded in Numbers 15 as commemorating the entrance into the promised land. "When you have come into the land which you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you" (Num. 15:2). They were to do so as a "sweet aroma to the Lord" (Num. 15:7).

Paul was ready for his departure. The word refers to "a metaphor drawn from loosing from moorings preparatory to setting sail" and "breaking up an encampment." "At last he is released from the harness like the faithful horse at the end of the day's journey. It will be sweet to rest from the toil and strife, but he is glad that he has had his share of the work." ¹³

The imagery of the drink offering signifying the entering into the promised land and the onset of the departure on a journey signifies the differences between Israel's physical homeland and the spiritual homeland of heaven.

The Promised Land given to Israel was temporal and had to be conquered. Our promised land in heaven will be sinless and is being built personally by the Lord (John 14:1-6). Israel's land may have been a "land that floweth with milk and honey" (Deut. 6:3) but our promised land is resplendent beyond all the imaginations of men (Rev 21; 2 Cor. 12:4).

Paul knew the weariness of sin (cf. Ps. 32:3-7). He wished to enjoy release from its bonds.

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7:15-20).

Ovid said, "I see and approve the better; I follow the worse." Paul suffered through the same temptations we all face and he was sick of them. He understood that AThe inner man must be educated, trained, and brought under the elevating and purifying of the word of God to such an extent as to control and keep down all excessive demands of the flesh.@14

Paul knew his crown awaited his arrival in heaven. It is a "garland of green leaves for the victor," given to those who persevere against the ravages of the spiritual wars. ¹⁵

While Paul was ready for the end of his journey, he still had his thoughts on the mission and his brethren. He wanted nothing more than to know that his brethren would be safe after his journey ended (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:10-14; 4:14-15).

"Paul still has interest in earthly affairs, but his heart is in the hills on high. He looks away to the mountains. His feet are growing restless and the sun is setting in the west. Jesus is beckoning to him and he will go." ¹⁶

CONCLUSION

Paul gave his life for the cause of Christ. Scripture says nothing of his death, so history will have to suffice.

"According to the historical records available, God's apostle to the Gentiles was beheaded at Aquae Salviae about three miles outside the city of Rome on the Ostian Way. The murder of Paul was most probably a result of Nero's general persecution against Christians, which began during (or shortly after) A.D. 64."

Paul's extraordinary life is replete with personal applications we can add to our lives. We pray we will learn from them.

END NOTES

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references will be from the <u>King James Version</u>.

² Richard Mansel, "Zealous for God" http://www.forthright.net/square one/zealous for god.html August 23, 2008.

³ A.T. Robertson, <u>Epochs in the Life of Paul</u> (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 105.

⁴ William Barclay, Ambassador for Christ (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1973), 39.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Warren Doud, "The Apostle Paul" http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/paul.html August 23, 2008

⁷ Robertson, 1.

⁸ Robertson, 57.

⁹ Joseph H. Thayer, Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977), 583.

¹⁰ Ralph P. Martin, <u>Philippians</u>, vol. 11 of <u>Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series</u> ed. Leon Morris (Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), 123.

¹¹ Wayne Jackson, <u>Before I Die</u> (Stockton: Christian Courier Publications, 2007), 281.

¹² Thayer, 39.

¹³ Robertson, 314.

¹⁴ David Lipscomb, <u>A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles</u>, vol. 1 (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1965), 137.

¹⁵ Jackson, 282.

¹⁶ Robertson, 314.

¹⁷ Jackson, 302; cf. Robertson, 316-317



"Lessons From Paul"

The Fourteenth
SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 24, 25 2009
HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA

Editor: Riley Nelson

PREFACE

The greatest teacher of all time was Christ. His messages have touched the hearts of man for thousands of years. His message of love and obedience to the Father's will have changed men from being opponents to religion to becoming great heralds of God's love for mankind. Such was the Apostle Paul.

Paul lived his life dedicated to pleasing God. His tyranny against "Christ followers" made him a man to be feared. "Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name" (Acts 9:13 – 14). While some may have persecuted Christians out of envy Paul dealt with them while having a clear conscience. "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1).

After obeying the gospel he soon became just as dedicated and determined to teach others about the Christ. He sought to get the "good news" to as many as possible. He boldly proclaimed his conversion account, even in the face of danger (Acts 22).

It is from the teaching of this dedicated, determined deliverer of the word that this year's lectures turn for learning. This book "Lessons from Paul" should benefit all who will read and study its contents, for it was Paul who said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

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October 24, 2009

DEDICATION

A preacher of the gospel must endure many things as he strives to do the work of the Lord; working to present lessons that will help bring lost souls to Christ, to bring back lost sheep, and to encourage the faithful. To do this effectively the preacher must spend many hours in study and prayer.

Often his work keeps him from his family, as he ministers to others. This means that his wife must be understanding and supportive of his work. Her help and dedication makes it easier on the preacher to perform his tasks, knowing that when they are finished he has a safe haven waiting for his return.

The couple to whom this volume is dedicated has served the Lord well for many years even in the last few years working in a mission point reviving a congregation that once had shut its doors. The good that they have done may not totally be known this side of heaven, but in the minds and hearts of many they stand as shining examples of a faithful preacher and his wife. It is with great pleasure this book is dedicated to Ronnie and Sue Ulrey.

Riley Nelson

Fourteenth South-East Georgia Lectures

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THE CONVERSION OF PAUL

By Alan Wright

INTRODUCTION

As Paul was concluding his third missionary journey, he came to the city of Jerusalem to bring the funds collected from various congregations to the needy Christians of the city. While there he was accosted by a mob, falsely accusing him of bringing a Gentile into the forbidden area of the temple. He was rescued by a Roman officer, and as he was being carried away, he was given the opportunity to address the crowd that had been clamoring for his death. What would he say? What might the apostle say to these people who were so adamantly seeking his life, believing with all their hearts that he had betrayed the most cherished beliefs of his heritage and blasphemed the honor of God?

Paul knew what was in their hearts, for he had held those same thoughts in his heart once. He therefore set about to tell them the story of how he had come to realize that Jesus was not a false prophet defying the ancient laws and traditions, but he was rather the very one that all of those laws and traditions, all of their cherished beliefs, all of their hopes and ambitions had been directed toward. He was the anointed Messiah and the very Son of God. To this end, Paul told the story of his own conversion.

It was a bit over two years later when Paul, still confined by the Romans, had the opportunity to again present a defense of himself, this time before King Agrippa and the Roman governor Festus. He had appealed to Caesar, and Festus was making preparations to send him to Rome, but wished Agrippa's advice on how best to state the legal case. How should Paul argue his defense? What might he say to these two men who seemed to think his claims absurd and his beliefs preposterous? What could convince them that Jesus was no mere mortal, but the divine

Son of God and the Savior and Judge of the world? Again Paul turned to the story of his conversion, for it was the critical moment in his life when he had become absolutely convinced of the truth of Christianity.

When Luke recorded his history of the early years of the church, he not only gave the account of Paul's conversion in its chronological context, but also included both of these accounts given by Paul of the events. There is a remarkable congruity between the three records, with each providing additional details to the story. Clearly this is a vital incident and worthy of every Bible student's diligent attention. Let us take a brief examination of this pivotal event, drawing upon each of three accounts.

Paul's life before his conversion

In both his speech before the Jewish citizens and his defense before Agrippa and Festus, Paul begins by speaking briefly of his earlier life, emphasizing particularly his spiritual upbringing in the Jewish law.

I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day (Acts 22:3).

My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? (Acts 26:4-8)

It is true that Paul was foreign-born, but from his youth he had been immersed in the laws and traditions of his people. He was educated in the very heart of Judaism, the great city of Jerusalem, having been taught by one of its most revered scholars, the Rabbi Gamaliel. He became a devotee of the most stringent and demanding form of Judaism, the Pharisees. Indeed he could well relate to the fervor and ardor of those very Jews who were denouncing him and

demanding his execution, for his own righteous zeal had led him to the same outcries against the Christians. He was "as ye all are this day."

But at the core of this intense passion for all things Jewish there was a promise, and it was the Jews' unwavering confidence in that promise that informed and motivated all their zeal and devotion. God had spoken this promise to the ancient patriarchs, and echoed and enlarged upon that promise for generations through priests and prophets. Many wonderful blessings had already been poured upon the nation as result of this promise, and now Israel waited and hoped for the discharge of the promise in full. They waited for the Messiah; God's chosen and anointed Deliverer who would bring his people into the golden age of God's blessings.

It is in the context of this great promise that Paul makes his defense, not only of himself but indeed of the entire Christian system. He urges that the very thing that Israel had been hoping for, the thing that he had been hoping for, was to be found in that gospel message which he proclaimed and which they declared to be heresy. Jesus Christ is the hope of Israel. To persuade his listeners of this truth, he proceeds to remind them of how strongly he had fought against Christianity and how completely he had been changed by the revelation of the gospel truth.

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem (Acts 9:1,2).

And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished (Acts 22:4,5).

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every

synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities (Acts 26:9-11).

To those who live in a society that promotes religious freedom, it seems unimaginable that someone would torture and kill another human being merely because of a difference in belief. While we pride ourselves on standing firm on doctrine and faithfully defending the truth against man-made philosophies, nevertheless we see this as a battle to be fought in the arena of debate and persuasion, rather than with the point of a sword. Yet the history of the world has clearly demonstrated, and continues to demonstrate, that such fanatical zeal does not merely exist, but actually thrives. What motivates the persecutor? Paul gives some important insight into his state of mind at the time.

He says, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." The language of this sentence is quite revealing. First the verb for thought is from the Greek word dokeo. Now there are no less than eighteen different verbs that might be translated as think, and of course each carries its own particular connotation. For instance, hegeomai refers to making a judgment or ruling, noeo speaks of perceiving a new idea or concept, logizomai means to reckon or assign a particular category or trait to a thing and phroneo generally indicates giving consideration or thought to something. But the word dokeo chosen here by Paul means to suppose. In other words, it says, "Based on all that I know and have come to believe, this conclusion seems correct." It is the perfect word to use for a judgment based not on a fresh examination of data, but on pre-existing concepts.

Paul's language is extremely personal. The form of Greek verbs already includes the grammatical person who is performing the action (first person "*I*," second person "*you*," etc.) It is not necessary to add a pronoun to indicate a subject. When a pronoun is added therefore, as Paul does in this case, it serves to doubly emphasize the fact. What is more Paul adds a reflexive

pronoun after the verb, so that he is literally saying, "I myself thought with myself ..." Why lay such stress on a relatively obvious fact? It was Paul's way of relating his own experience to that of his accusers. He says in effect, "I know what these people are thinking, for it is the very thing that I thought." But the language also accentuates the self-delusion involved in such thinking. It is not what God revealed, or what Moses taught, or even what his old mentor Gamaliel had trained him to believe. It is what "I" thought.

What then was the subject of Paul's inward and subjective supposition? He says that he *ought* to do things contrary to Jesus. The word *ought* is often used today somewhat inconsequentially. One says they ought to do a thing when they mean merely that it would be nice to do it, or that it would be advisable to do it, but the word Paul uses leaves no such ambiguity. It speaks of a positive obligation, a thing that must of necessity be done, without hesitation or evasion. Paul believed with absolute conviction that his campaign against Christianity was a moral duty that he must not shirk. Indeed the word translated do from the Greek verb *prasso*, means to practice, to do repeatedly as a matter of habit or routine. Paul had reached the determination that it should be his purpose in life to attack and persecute those who followed Jesus.

But why? What crime were Christians guilty of that required such a ferocious response from Paul and others? In a word, they were accused of blasphemy. Blasphemy is simply speaking against something or someone holy. Early in the history of God's people, the principle was established that blasphemy was a serious crime. A certain man got into a fight, and in the course of the fight he "blasphemed the name of the LORD" (Lev. 24:11). When the Israelites consulted God for how to deal with the matter, God told Moses, "And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him:

as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death" (Lev. 24:15, 16). Such a decree may seem barbaric to those accustomed to championing freedom of speech, but it was the law of Israel for over two millennia. Anyone who failed in his speech to give God the honor and reverence due to Him, or who reviled and defamed that which He had declared holy, was not fit to live.

But in what way could Jesus or His followers be considered guilty of blasphemy? Notice the specific occasions when this charge was made; When a man afflicted with palsy came to Jesus for healing, Jesus forgave the man of his sins. Some of the scribes responded, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark 2:7) When Jesus declared "I and my Father are one," the crowd attempted to stone him, saying, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:30-33). As Jesus stood on trial and declared that the Son of Man would sit at God's right hand and come forth in the cloud of God's glory, "Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy" (Matt. 26:65.) When Stephen challenged the worshippers in the Grecian synagogue, where Paul himself was in attendance, the accusation again came forth. "Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God" (Acts 6:11) In short, Christianity was considered blasphemous because it claimed that Jesus was the Son of God sent from heaven, and that the old laws and customs were no longer needed. Such claims were intolerable and must be stopped at all costs.

The Damascus road encounter

We come now to the event that changed Paul's outlook and started him on the new course for his life.

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink (Acts 9:3-9).

And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus (Acts 22:6-11).

Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:12-18).

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

Paul knew that the execution of Stephen had not silenced the Christians. Even as they fled for safety, they continued to preach, and people continued to listen. It would not be enough to rid Jerusalem and the surrounding towns of this vile enemy of God. The assault must go further. These Christians must know that there is no safe place for them to spread their blasphemy. So it is that Paul obtained letters from the chief priests to the leaders of the synagogues in the Syrian

capital of Damascus, instructing them to turn over any Christians or Christian sympathizers to his custody, to be returned to Jerusalem to face God's justice.

As Paul and a few companions are traveling, there is without warning a brilliantly blazing light that surrounds them. Paul hears a voice address him by name, and ask him the one question that he most needed to consider. "Why persecutest thou me?" Now if some Christian had asked Paul this very question fifteen minutes earlier, he would have answered with great conviction, "I am not persecuting you. I am exacting the legal penalty upon you for your blasphemy." But now he is confronted with the magnificent glory of heaven itself. The light that surrounded Paul is said to be a great light, brighter than the midday sun. God's glory is not merely the innocent beauty seen in a pretty flower or a scenic mountain lake. It is dazzlingly radiant, and overwhelms all who are in its presence. When God's glory filled the tabernacle or the temple, no man could enter. (Exo. 40:35)(1 Kings 8:10, 11) It is "the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16). Where God's glory shines, there is no need of the sun or the moon (Isa. 60:19) (Rev. 21:23; 22:5). Indeed it is sufficient to lighten the whole earth (Rev. 18:1). And now Paul, champion of God and defender of the law, is struck down by the blinding light of God's glory.

He cannot answer the question put to him. Clearly this is a question that comes from the throne of heaven itself, but he had been so undoubtingly sure that he was doing heaven's will. All he can think of by way of response is to ask the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" The heavenly voice answers with an identity, an indictment, and an insight.

First, the speaker identifies himself as Jesus of Nazareth. It is significant that he does not call himself God or Lord or Christ, all of which he might have rightfully claimed. Rather he uses the personal name, Jesus, the appellation he had worn as his earthly name, for Paul indeed believed in God, in the Lord, and in his Christ or Messiah, but he had totally rejected the one

called Jesus. Now it is Jesus' glory that blinds his eyes and Jesus' voice that demands his answer.

Secondly, Jesus makes an indictment. Paul stood guilty of persecuting him, and Jesus would have him utter the reason. Paul was not so foolish as to argue that he was not persecuting Jesus, but merely his disciples. He knew better than that. Throughout history God has always taken the oppression of his people personally. Why should it be any different with the Son of God? With this one simple statement, Paul is told that he is not doing heaven's will, and in fact he stands condemned before the throne.

Finally, Paul is given an insight into his situation. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." This expression is found several times in classical Greek writings,² and is used to describe someone who obstinately rebels against a greater force that he is powerless to defeat, and the more he fights, the worse he is injured. Jesus knew Paul to be a proud and determined man, but he had taken on a war that he could not win – one that would be his undoing should he persist. Paul's teacher Gamaliel had once deduced that if Christianity were of man it would soon fall of its own accord, but if it were of God it could not be stopped by all the efforts of the council. (Acts 5:34-39) Now Paul is compelled to know that it is indeed of God, and that he has all this time been on the wrong side of the battle.

There is no answer Paul can give to Jesus' question. Paul had said "I thought ... that I ought" to punish the Christians, but now his understanding is opened even as his eyes are blinded. All that he had supposed, all that he had been so certain of, was wrong. Thus he is left with no recourse but to yield to the new certainty, and submit, asking, "What wilt thou have me to do?" For the moment, he is told only to go into Damascus and await further instruction. And

even as he sends him on his way, Jesus informs him that he has been chosen for the great task of preaching the gospel so that he might "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light..."

The Lord calls Ananias

As Paul waited, a man named Ananias receives a heavenly vision.

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake (Acts 9:10-16).

We know nothing of Ananias beyond this encounter with Paul. Yet his reaction to the command to visit Paul is something we can sympathize with. Paul's reputation as a persecutor created fear in the disciples. From a human standpoint it may well have seemed as if Paul and his companions were the more powerful force, and might very well wipe out Christianity. Here was an opportunity for the Lord to demonstrate to Ananias and all those who trembled in fear that even the most ardent and vicious of their enemies must yield before him.

He tells Ananias that Paul is chosen, not only to preach, but also to suffer. In other words, the persecutor will become the persecuted, enduring what Ananias and his companions had endured.

Paul's baptism

Ananias comes to Paul, and the final step in Paul's conversion is completed.

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized (Acts 9:17, 18).

And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:12-16).

For three days Paul had waited, unable to see, unwilling to eat, praying to God. No doubt these prayers included repeated petitions for forgiveness. After all, he has been attacking and murdering the disciples, and we know that even many years later the sense of guilt still weighed heavily on his heart. (1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:12-15) But it is likely that he was also praying for understanding. For years Paul had been trained in the law and had followed the strict path of the Pharisees. Now his most cherished beliefs were cast aside, and he was left in his uncertainty and confusion. This problem of incomprehension would take a while to overcome, but the problem of his sin could be dealt with at once.

Ananias comes to Paul and tells him that God has chosen him to "know his will" (obviously a very different will than that which Paul had been taught) and to share that will with all mankind. In other words, it was time for Paul to enter into his education and training for the work ahead. To that end, Ananias urges him to act swiftly. There is much to be done and no time to waste. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

It is most distressing that the commonly given account of Paul's conversion says that he was saved on the Damascus road as soon as the light from heaven surrounded him. There is of course nothing in any of the three Biblical accounts that says such, and the tone of the encounter is much more adversarial than conciliatory. In fact, if the story of Paul were to end on the Damascus road, we would probably conclude that Jesus had appeared solely to strike down an enemy and deliver his saints.

The purpose of the glorious light and the voice from heaven was to convict Paul in his own mind, to derail all of his assurance and open his thoughts to the truth. For three days now Paul had wrestled with this new truth, waiting to be told what he must do. Jesus had said that he would be sent to the Gentiles, and now Ananias again says that he will be a witness to all men.

But how could one who had persecuted his Lord and murdered the disciples ever be worthy of doing the will of God again? What suffering must he endure to atone for such wickedness? Paul had seen the majesty and glory of Jesus. Now he must learn of his grace and mercy. His sins can be washed away. He can be forgiven. Ananias instructs Paul to be baptized, just as countless others had done since the day of Pentecost. And in that simple act of submission and obedience a full pardon was to be found. Paul would later describe the significance of baptism. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3, 4). And so he arose and was baptized.

The hope of Israel

The remainder of the narrative tells of Paul's immediate efforts to preach the gospel starting in the very city to which he had come looking for disciples to arrest. From there, of course, the text of Acts describes the travels of Paul throughout the empire over the next several decades, preaching to all who would hear him.

When we come to the last few chapters of Acts, and look again at those public addresses given by Paul in defense of himself and the gospel, we see a recurring theme. Paul repeatedly speaks of Israel's expectations, the very same expectations that had so motivated Paul in his

earlier life to persecute the church. He refers to these expectations as Israel's hope. Consider the following texts:

"But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the <u>hope</u> and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts 23:6).

"But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have <u>hope</u> toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:14, 15).

"And now I stand and am judged for the <u>hope</u> of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which <u>hope's</u> sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews" (Acts 26:6, 7).

"For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the <u>hope</u> of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20).

What is this hope, and why does Paul mention it so often? It is the divine promise made throughout the Old Testament – that through the seed of Abraham all the world would be blessed (Gen. 22:18), that the heir of David would reign for ever (Psa. 89:3,4), that a child would be born that would bring peace and justice (Isa. 9:6,7), and that a servant of God would suffer that we might be healed (Isa. 53:5). This hope was instilled in the heart of every Jew from his childhood.

Paul, like his accusers, had believed that Jesus and his followers were a threat to this hope. He ate with sinners, he cast aside traditions, and he quarreled with scribes and priests. Perhaps worst of all he had dared to tell the multitudes that his own doctrines were superior to their education in the temple and the synagogues. "Ye have heard," he would say concerning some matter of Jewish law, and then follow with, "but I say unto you…" (rf. Matt. 5:21-48) And now these Christians are spreading the word everywhere that this Jesus is the Son of God, raised from the dead and seated in heaven at God's right hand.

But they were right. Now Paul knew that Jesus was not a threat to his cherished hopes, but the realization of them. Jesus had said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). Every promise that God had made, every dream that Paul had dreamed, was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Paul was not asking the Jews to give up their faith and their hope. He was asking them to claim it. The Messiah has come, and he brings salvation to the world.

End Notes

¹ There is one alleged discrepancy in the story that is often cited by critics. One account speaks of the men traveling with Paul as "hearing a voice, but seeing no man" (Acts 9:7), while another says "they heard not the voice of him that spake to me" (Acts 22:9). Did these men hear the voice or not? But this presents no difficulty. The word hear can mean either to perceive a sound or to comprehend a message. Many passages establish the fact that God's voice is thunderous, and strikes fear and awe into those that hear it. (Job 37:5; 40:9; Rev. 14:2) When God speaks from heaven, he does not necessarily make his words intelligible to all bystanders, but often only to the one for whom the message is intended. Thus someone might hear the voice, in that they would perceive a great sound, and yet not hear the voice, in that they could not comprehend the words. A strikingly similar occurrence is found in God's word of encouragement to Jesus. (John 12:28,29)

² For instance, Aeschylus in *Prometheus Bound* has Ocean speak to Prometheus, saying, "But you're not humbled yet. You won't give in. You're looking for more trouble. Just learn one thing from me: Don't kick against the pricks." And in Agamemnon Aegisthus says, "Why kick against the pricks? Your hurt alone – no more." (rf. Three Greek Plays: Prometheus Bound, Agamemnon, The Trojan Women translated by Edith Hamilton, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, p. 109, 235.) In The Bacchae by Euripides, Dionysus says, "Better to yield him prayer and sacrifice than kick against the pricks, since Dionyse is God, and thou but mortal." (rf. The Bacchae, translated by Gilbert Murray, Digireads.com Publishing, Stilwell, KS, p. 48).

PAUL'S WALK TO ASSOS

By Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

The life of the apostle Paul stirs our hearts with admiration. There is so much we have inherited from the sacrifices of this lowly, yet great, apostle to the Gentiles. His epistles and Luke's record give us more detail than perhaps any other apostle, including Peter. However, there is still much we do not know about his life. A study of his personal letters and Acts does not always provide us with his fears, frustrations, aspirations and sorrows.

Imagine how Paul's heart must have yearned as he preached the gospel of Christ from village to village in the ancient Roman world. He would certainly have great tenderness for those he risked so much to rescue. It would affect any Christian teacher to see the honest and good hearts of his students respond to the sacred story of God's love and then see their lives changed from wickedness to righteousness. Surely, Paul's children in the faith were endeared to their mentor in bonds of affection far deeper than a mere reading of historical facts could reveal to us today.

There is an obscure event in particular where the text does not give us motive for the action, and we have to read between the lines to feel what must have been going through Paul's mind. Perhaps with some deliberation we can appreciate the passion this man of God must have had as he served the Master unfailingly. Luke records:

And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene (Acts 20:13-14).¹

AN EVENT AT TROAS

Previously, chapter twenty tells of an incident that occurred at Troas. This was at the close of Paul's third missionary tour. He was re-visiting the places where he had established several churches. Troas had been the launching point of Paul's preaching in Europe (e.g. Greece). This was also where he received the Macedonian call years before that led him into Europe (16:9). Troas was also where Luke was first enlisted to travel with them in their second tour (16:11ff).

Paul had set his mind to go to Jerusalem to personally deliver the funds raised by the Greek churches to help the famished Jewish Christians in Palestine (19:21; Romans 15:26-28). After years in the field of labor he now wanted to return to the Jerusalem church and show to the Jews the great value of their Gentile brethren. Troas marked the first stop by ship on their return trip to Palestine. While there they waited seven days to meet with the local Christians on the Lord's Day (Acts 20:6-7). Paul was bidding farewell to dear friends. Every stop along the way would be a touching moment for him. He believed this to be the last time he would see these disciples in this life (20:25). It had already been revealed that he would meet trouble in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he was determined to go.

He was preaching to the disciples on the Lord's Day evening when a young man, Eutychus went into a deep sleep during Paul's discourses and fell from a third story window. Luke, the physician records, "he was taken up dead." Paul rushing downstairs embraces the young man and tells the people, "his life is in him." Then Paul raises him from the dead. Luke says, "they were not a little comforted."

A WALK TO ASSOS

Having said his farewells to the disciples at Troas, Paul now does something very strange. He withdraws from the company of the men traveling with him (about ten), and sends them ahead by boat to Assos, their next stop. He goes on alone by foot. This meant that Paul would be alone for about a full day's journey. The question is – Why? Why did Paul want to go alone on foot for this twenty mile walk? Why not go with his companions by boat and enjoy their company and fellowship? Perhaps we can never be certain why, but there are some ideas that could explain his action. One commentary says,

This is a sail of nearly forty miles; whereas by land cutting right across, in a southeasterly direction, from sea to sea, by that excellent Roman road which then existed, the distance was scarcely more than half. The one way Paul wished his companions to take, while he himself, **longing perhaps to enjoy a period of solitude**, took the other, joining the ship, appointment, at Assos.² [Emphasis RV]

Matthew Henry gives three possible reasons for Paul's journey of solitude:

- 1. That he might call on his friends by the way, and do good among them, either converting sinners or edifying saints.... Or,
- 2. **That he might be alone**, and might have the greater freedom of converse with God and his own heart in solitude....
- 3. **That he might inure himself to hardship**, and not seem to indulge his ease. Thus he would by voluntary instances of mortification and self-denial keep under the body, and bring it into subjection, that he might make his sufferings for Christ, when he was called out to them, the more easy, 2Timothy 2:3 [Emphasis RV].³

It is the opinion of this author that Mr. Henry's second reason is most likely. He needed some time alone. He was chased out of most villages where he had preached. Also, his recent determination to go to Jerusalem was divinely predicted to bring forth trouble, and his friends and companions were urging him not to go there. Later he said, "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the

Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me" (Acts 20:22-

23). He had a lot on his mind. He was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem before the feast. Paul's heart was certainly heavy with thoughts of what lay ahead, wondering whether or not he would ever see these brethren again. Brother McGarvey comments,

His motive in choosing to walk this distance, and to go alone, has been a subject of various conjectures. But the deep gloom which shrouded his feelings, caused by prophetic warnings of great dangers ahead; by the critical state of the Churches everywhere; and by the final farewell which he was giving to Churches which he had planted and nourished, naturally prompted him to seek solitude for a time. On shipboard solitude was impossible, and while in port there was always a group of disciples or a whole congregation claiming his attention. His only opportunity, therefore, during the whole voyage, for solitary reflection, such as the soul longs for amid trials like his, was to seize this occasion for a lonely journey on foot. Amid the more stirring scenes of the apostle's life, while announcing, with oracular authority the will of God, and confirming his words by miraculous demonstrations, we are apt to lose our human sympathy for the man, in our admiration for the apostle. But when we contemplate him under circumstances like the present, worn down by the sleepless labors of the whole night; burdened in spirit too heavily for even the society of sympathizing friends; and yet, with all his weariness, choosing a long day's journey on foot, that he might indulge to satiety the gloom which oppressed him, we are so much reminded of our own seasons of affliction, as to feel, with great distinctness, the human tie which binds our hearts to his. No ardent laborer in the vineyard of the Lord but feels his soul at times ready to sink beneath its load of anxiety and disappointment, and finds no comfort except in allowing the very excess of sorrow to waste itself away amid silence and solitude. In such hours it will do us good to walk with Paul through this lonely journey, and remember how much suffering has been endured by greater and better men than we.4

SOME TIME ALONE

Everyone needs time alone every now and then. Even Jesus took downtime when wearied with the labors of teaching and healing:

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed (Mark 1:35) [Emphasis RV].

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into **a desert place**, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as

to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship **privately**. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him (6:31-33) [Emphasis RV].

Isaac took some quiet time at the end of day. Genesis 24:63 says, "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide...." David desired it for he said in Psalm 55:6, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." Wise men seek for quiet time:

The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. (Ecclesiastes 9:17)

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; (1 Thessalonians 4:11)

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. (1 Peter 3:4)

We too should find quiet time to periodically walk with God in the garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). **Notice:** Paul took out this time to be alone with God even though he had been up all night teaching. Paul took out this time to be alone with God although he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts 20:16). Paul took out time to be alone with God because he had a heavy heart not knowing the future (20:22-23). And, Paul took out time to be alone with God because the Jews were plotting so many things against him (20:19).

TIMES TO BE ALONE WITH GOD

Sadly, many do not take the time for meditating with the Divine presence. Today lives are filled with occasions when one should get away, meditate and talk with God. Consider some of these:

When facing difficult temptations

What sins could be avoided if one would but take the necessary precaution of timely solitude? John 6:15 records, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." Jesus did not succumb to the temptation of power or popularity. Also, David wrote in Psalm 77:2-6

In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.

When making major life-decisions

To contemplate things such as marriage, a career, raising children, etc. should be unthinkable without first consulting with God. The one time the Bible says Jesus spent an entire night alone in prayer was just before He chose the twelve that would be His apostles. Luke records, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." A major life-changing decision should be weighed carefully, and God should most certainly be in the equation.

When we are guilty of sin

John 8:9 says, "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst" [Emphasis RV]. In the end, it was God and the adulterous woman standing alone. Instead of condemning her, Jesus corrected her sin by saying, "Go and sin no more." Sin must be confessed. The soul should be hurting because of its failure to do right. John writes, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to

cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). When one sins, the first one to go to correct sin is God. David cried to God, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Psa 51:4). Yes, sin demands that we take some time and spend it alone with God.

When facing death

Hezekiah was told by Isaiah, "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die" (Isaiah 38:1). If one knows the time of death is near, then certainly there are things to do to prepare for it. But most do not know the time. All should prepare for the uncertainty of death. Only God can bring us through the valley of shadow to cross safely on the other side. Surely, God should be sought out before the reaper comes to take our life. When death comes, He will not wait for man to make ready. One should always be ready.

CONCLUSION

It is likely that none get enough time alone with God. The fuel that keeps the Christians spirit going through the deserts of life is prayer, meditation and Bible study. Instead of letting these be put off and interrupted, perhaps one should adjust schedules and put off the other things to allow for them. Paul did. He even told his traveling companions to allow him some time alone. Time alone with God is very important. Let all take out more time and, like Paul, take a walk to Assos.

End Notes

- 1 All scripture quotations will be from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise stipulated.
- 2 Robert Jamieson, A. R. Faussett and David Brown, <u>A Commentary Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments.</u>, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, Acts 20:13.
- 3 Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Electronic Database, BibleWorks, v.8., Acts 20:13-16.
- 4 J. W. McGarvey, Original Commentary on Acts, Gospel Advocate Co., 1978, Acts 20:13.

HOW TO CARRY THE GOSPEL

By Stacey W. Grant

INTRODUCTION

One of the highlights of this author's year is attending and participating in the South-East Georgia Lectures. May this superb effort continue for many years to come! The author is convinced that the past and present lessons have helped brethren grow in their knowledge and appreciation of the Almighty God. Only Heaven knows what good has resulted from this wonderful event.

Most men, even if they own a copy of the Good Book, are incapable of reading, comprehending, and teaching themselves out of error. The Ethiopian eunuch illustrates this point quite sufficiently (Acts 8:26-39). Philip "put together the pieces of the 'puzzle" for the honest-hearted Bible student who lacked the ability to comprehend what he was reading and to make the necessary application to his life. The church exists for this very reason. The Scriptures manifest the need for qualified Bible teachers to spread the Gospel. The mandate of spreading the Good News falls on the shoulders of every Christian (Matt. 28:19). "Teach all nations" can be translated "disciple all nations" or "make disciples of" (Matt. 28:19). God has placed Gospel preaching/teaching as the church's highest priority – with no exceptions.

From generation to generation, the church must pass on the holy traditions of the Faith through the means of teaching (2 Thes. 3:6). "Traditions" is the Greek *paradosis* (para-doe-sis). In the New Testament, the term is used negatively and positively. Negatively, it refers to the unauthorized religious traditions of men (Matt. 15:2-3, 6). Positively, it refers to teaching that the church received orally or in written form (2 Thes. 2:15). The Thessalonian brethren were

instructed to "stand fast" or "remain stationary" or "not be removed from" and "hold" or "retain" the holy traditions. The Church today must follow the same instructions as they did.

Studying the life of Paul should provide each disciple of Christ encouragement and an education regarding world evangelism. Brethren often complain about lacking the necessary tools or training relative to personal work. Yes, God's mandate requires local leaderships to make certain an environment exists that is conducive to spiritual growth for all members (Matt. 28:20). There are numerous examples in the New Testament – especially Paul's experiences-from which each child of God can glean insight into the "how" of carrying out the Great Commission.

If a Christian is going to enjoy the fulfilling experience of bringing souls to Christ, this author believes that there are five key elements related to carrying the Gospel to the lost; they are (1) a Bible-based **education** (Acts 2:42); (2) approved biblical **examples** (Acts 17:1-2); (3) unrelenting **eagerness** and **energy** (Acts 16:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:58); (4) constant **edification** (Heb. 10:24-25); and (5) **endurance** (Gal. 6:9).

The Gospel is an absolute necessity

Romans 1:16 is very lucid:. It speaks to, and provides the remedy for, those who are outside of Christ. Christ came to Earth for the express purpose of seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). According to Holy Writ, being lost – separated from God through sin and incapable of finding God on one's own terms – is the most dreadful and tragic spiritual state, as illustrated in Ephesians 2. Only the Gospel possesses the power to change positively and permanently a man's life and eternal destiny. Barnabas vouched for the change the Gospel made in Saul's life (Acts 9). Unquestionably, the message of the cross possesses the innate ability to

transform a sinner to a saint, a murderer to a minister, an evildoer to an evangelist, a drug dealer to a deacon, and a crook to a Christian.

Romans 5 presents man's woeful condition without the Gospel; he is ungodly (v. 6), a sinner (v. 8), an enemy of God (v. 10), and spiritually dead (v. 12). Therefore, one who is outside of Christ is unfit for the Master's use, as opposed to being new (2 Cor. 5:17). Romans 6 pictures aliens of Christ as slaves to sin and Satan. Certainly, Satan, as in the case of Judas, aids those bent on self-destruction.

Too, like the prodigal son, because the message of the cross has lost its power and purpose in their hearts and lives, there are formerly faithful members of the body who are now involved in ungodliness (Luke 15); they have willfully distanced themselves from the Father, the source of perfect protection and provisions; they have even squandered the resources God has provided them in pursuit of earthly, devilish pleasure; they have not considered or adequately planned for the future "famine" associated with ungodly living; they will eventually find themselves hopeless, hapless, helpless in a "foreign country." Thankfully, if death does not occur first, they can **recover**, **return** home, and be **restored** – yet another unmatched aspect of the Gospel (Gal. 6:1-2). Therefore, without the Gospel fallen man cannot receive **remission** of sins, be **rescued** from certain self-destruction, be **redeemed**, and be **reconciled** to God – another aspect of the Gospel's unmatched power.

This lesson is dedicated to revealing some of the many ways in which one can share his faith with a lost soul. With the advent of modern technology, brethren are now able to preach the Gospel literally all around the world without ever having to leave the comfort of their homes. Yes, indeed, there is a plethora of Bible-approved methods of carrying the Gospel. This lesson outlines the "who," "what," "when," and "where" of carrying out the Great Commission.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE MUST BE OBTAINED AND MAINTAINED

When it comes to this matter, one must acquire the "Macedonian Mindset" (2Cor. 8:5). An excellent example of this fact is Paul's experience as a Roman prisoner. While incarcerated, he took the opportunity to teach the truth to those in Caesar's household or "in the entire palace" (Php. 1:13). As a result of his steadfastness, other brethren were strengthened in their faith and subsequently preached the Gospel with greater boldness (Php. 1:12-14). The resulting reward was more souls were blessed to hear the Gospel.

As was the case with Adam, so has been the mindset of nearly all mankind throughout the course of human history – sin is not viewed as **dangerous**, **deadly**, **deceptive**, and **destructive** (Gen. 3). The majority in Noah's day did not seek a relationship with the Almighty (Gen. 6). Of the great crowd on Pentecost, only three thousand of the estimated tens of – or even hundreds--thousands obeyed the Gospel. In America (a self-proclaimed "Christian" nation), most citizens spurn acknowledging and adhering to God's laws; Why is this the case? The reality of the Judgment Day, Heaven, and Hell is absent from the minds of the majority of Earth's population.

Although the contextual setting is addressing the Gentiles who lived prior to the Gospel Age, Romans 1:18-32 depicts the level of depravity and/or degradation associated with individuals whose life is devoid of God's guidance; this depiction is ageless in its application. Romans 2 condemns the Jews who had in their possession the Law of Moses, but were unfaithful in their service to God. The Jew actually argued a version of "once-saved-always-saved" by insisting that God's covenant with them via circumcision could not be broken, thus "guaranteeing" the permanency of their relationship with Jehovah. Romans 3 concludes the

thought by condemning both Jew and Gentiles for not seeking and sustaining a relationship with the Almighty (v. 23).

Evangelism starts in the heart of the concerned child of God. He responds correctly whenever he reads or hears the message, mission, and might of the cross. His heart is "tender" to the Good News of salvation. He recognizes that he has been spared the wrath of God through his obeying the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 5:5-9). He offers multiple prayers of thanksgiving as a part of his daily routine (1 Thes. 5:16-18); too, he prays for the evangelistic efforts of the faithful. He makes every effort to obtain the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22ff). He, like David, looks forward to attending the various services of his home congregation and supports the activities of sister congregations (Psa. 122:1). He reverences God and respects His Oracles. He plans for meeting some lost soul and sharing Christ with him as a part of his daily routine. He sincerely wants all men to hear the Faith delivered once and for all times (Jude 3). He possesses the "Pauline spirit" for his fellow man. Paul's strong desire was to see Israel saved (Rom. 9:3; 10:1-2). At the heart of evangelism is the heart of the saint.

Proper aptitude must be obtained and increased

As a prerequisite to global evangelism, personal growth on the individual Christian's behalf is essential (Heb. 5:12-14; 2 Pet. 3:18). Certainly, personal growth enables the Christian to build the confidence needed to approach the lost with the life-changing message of salvation. The Lord placed personal spiritual growth as a quintessential tool so far as evangelism is concerned. Therefore, every Christian must equip himself for teaching the Good News as per Matthew 28:20. In the parable of the Sower, the "good ground" possesses a "good" or "noble" heart (Luke 8:15); he always retains in his memory the word of God; he "brings forth" or "produces" abundantly; he gains "patience" or is "steadfast." "Fruit" in the parable of the Sower is not an explicit reference to the Christian graces, per

Galatians 5:22-26 and 2 Peter 1:5-11. Although it is implied that those to whom Christ is referring possess the "fruit of the Spirit," the primary reference is to soul-winning (Rom. 1:13).

After revealing how wonderfully and richly blessed Christians are, the Spirit then teaches the brethren the need for spiritual growth (2 Pet. 1:1-11). "And beside this," which means, "But also for this very reason," "giving all diligence" or "to bear alongside with eagerness or speed," "add to" or "fully supply, nourish" your faith (v. 5). Spiritual growth is guaranteed the Christian when he acquires the Christian graces through prayer and persistence (vv. 5-11).

Proper areas must be covered

One-on-one evangelism is still the most effective form of carrying the Gospel to the lost. This was the chief method employed by Paul and his traveling companions as recorded in Acts. Paul and his team journeyed far distances in carrying the Gospel to those who were still in darkness and sin. Paul's missionary journeys are **NOT** recorded in Scripture for the sake of a "history lesson," they present the blueprint for conquering the world with the Gospel! The "Macedonian Call" is still being echoed in places like Mainland China, Iran, and other countries where freedom of religion is not allowed.

A faithful preacher who has departed to his reward spoke these words:

I recently returned from a 50,000-mile trip which took me through our forty-ninth state of Alaska, and across the mighty Pacific, through most of the Oriental countries, and then through the two countries "down under, " Australia and New Zealand, then back by way of the Fiji Islands and Hawaii. Two years ago I made a trip through many of the European countries, including the major cities of Russia. It has been my good fortune to have been on four continents, and to have seen thirty countries of the world.²

Was he simply on a sightseeing tour? No; and now, the rest of the story:

In Russia, our guide was a 20-year old Jewish girl who had never read the Bible in all her life, until we gave her a copy, which she then read one night until three o'clock in the morning. Questions began to come from a hungry, unlearned soul. She became interested. We saw overcrowded church buildings filled with people, whose faces reflected hunger and deep thirst for the God their government repudiates. "Send us a Bible when you go home," they said to us over and over

again. I saw in Russia people greedily and grabbing and snatching the tracts we had to give away, so eager to read anything about religion on which they could get their hands....I was shocked to learn that in Japan less than one-half of one percent of the people have any belief at all in Christ. In Korea, the "most Christian nation" in the Orient, less than two percent of the people hold any belief in Christ. I tell you, these things should make us restless. The world needs the gospel so much! ³

Our Lord did not shy away from attending social events (John 2) nor did He decline an invitation to have supper or eat with or visit with numerous individuals in their home, some of whom were viewed as "unfit," with the sole intent of teaching God's Word. Our Lord saw every occasion as an opportunity for teaching the Words of Eternal Life (Luke 5:27-32; 10:38-42; 15:1-2; 19:1-10; John 6:66-69).

The proper distance of evangelism has been outlined in Holy Writ: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). This command encompasses our neighborhood, school, post office, bank, shopping mall, workplace, etc. The harvest is now and there is a desperate need for laborers (Matt. 9:37). The first promoters of the Gospel were instructed to go locally, nationally, and internationally (Acts 1:8). Christians today must be willing and ready to do likewise.

THE PROPER APPROACHES MUST BE EMPLOYED

The command "go" is a generic command (Mark 16:15). Thus, Christians are allowed to use varied methods in carrying out the command.

The use of secular associations is very beneficial, provided the association is not a violation of Scripture. A superb missionary of the generation past comments:

While I had been in the U.S., brother Norvell J. (Brick) Brickell, of Memphis, Tennessee, had enrolled me in his Dale Carnegie Instructor's Course, and I had become a full-fledged D.C. instructor....From my point of view things could not have worked out better. By teaching as a D.C. instructor, I should have immediate contact with approximately 40 local people, whom I also could invite to study the Bible with me at our home in Kuala Lumpur. Not only should I be in

contact with these 40 people, but also with 40 or more every 14 weeks as new D.C. classes came and went. Moving to Singapore to Kuala Lumpur in April 1961, we rented a nice, comfortable house at No. 8 Jalan Terap, Sentul, west of the central part of the city just off Ipoh Road. Easy to find, it was most accessible. During the week before our first Lord's Day there, I sent letters to every one of my Dale Carnergie students inviting them to come study the Bible with us in our home at this location. When Sunday came, to my delight 35 of my 40 D.C. students turned up...As the weeks wore on, and our Bible studies continued, gradually different ones began asking about establishing the church of Christ in Kuala Lumpur—the same church they had been reading about in the Bible 4

Notice how the brother used his home and secular associations to bring men to the knowledge of the truth. He recognized and seized the opportunity; he saw these individuals not necessarily as business associates but lost souls.

Another way of reaching the lost is running an ad in the local newspaper offering a free Bible correspondence course.

One thing about brother Pierce though, he really came ready to evangelize. When he found that I had written a correspondence Bible course (I called it the *Basic Bible Course*), he asked to see it. I had been advertising this course in the local newspaper; and I was more than happy for him to help grade it. Before Frank came, all I could do was wait until someone finished the course before doing any personal follow-up teaching. Frank felt this was waiting too long – that follow-up teaching should begin much sooner....When I started at Lesson 2, everything stopped. Back to Lesson 3. Everything fine. Back to Lesson 2. Nothing. Back to Lesson 3. Everything fine once more. I was baptizing folks left and right. Puzzled, it occurred to me one day what was happening. As "fishers of men," one had to know when to "set the hook"! When sending in their Lessons 1 and 2, those taking the course were only "nibbling." It was not until they sent in Lesson 3, that they really swallowed the bait. It was then, not before or later, that we should "set the hook." ⁵

These two brethren were not in competition with each other. Both parties were working **together** for the same result. In fact, the one who wrote the Bible lessons was thankful and amenable to the suggestions of the other brother. As a result, multiple souls heard and obeyed the Gospel.

Besides the one-on-one method, brethren for a long time have utilized Gospel Meetings as a means of reaching the lost. Some years past, protracted meetings were held lasting anywhere from two through four weeks, even longer at times. The intent of Gospel Meetings was/is not necessarily to preach to the saved, but a culminating act of reaching the invited lost via the teachings of a guest speaker. If conducted properly – provided the host congregation has correctly promoted the meeting and prepared itself in all phases related to the event – the meeting would be a tremendous success. Preparation is the key! Consider the following preparations made by some brethren regarding an upcoming Gospel campaign.

On our way into town from Paya Lebar International Airport, Tan Keng Koon filled me in on the various preparations they had made for the *R.N. Hogan Gospel Meeting and Evangelisite Campaign*. Even before our arrival, 20 precious souls already had been baptized just during the "build-up" which got underway two weeks earlier....Having gone all-out to have everything in readiness for a harvest of souls, Koon described how he and the members of Upper Serangoon congregation had gone from door to door, covering every single dwelling in a 94-square-block area (some with apartment buildings up to 20 stories high). Of the more than 7,000 doors knocked in their section of the city, they had found some 600 families they considered interested enough to be likely "prospects" for conversion. On the Lord's Day afternoon before the campaign, Koon and his wife Baby Tan organized the workers from their congregation and personally visited every one of those 600 families, telling them once again of the gospel effort about to begin and handing them printed brochures concerning the buses they chartered to transport visitors to and from the meetings each night. 6

Another means of reaching the lost is through the medium of sound brotherhood publications. One of the most faithful and noted Gospel preachers of this present time accurately states:

In every age and generation the religious writer has been a major source of spiritual power. The Protestant Reformation, which came shortly after the invention of the printing press, loosed the Bible from the hands of the priests and broke the chains which bound the Bible to the pulpit. The broad distribution of written material marked the beginning of the end of both spiritual and political dictatorship. Through the books, the people know, and when the people know, their oppressors will be recognized and overthrown. In the nineteenth century the pen again proved mightier than the spoken word. The sustaining power of the

Restoration Movement and the restoration plea was powerfully assisted by the written word, articles, pamphlets, papers, books, tracts, and most of all by the book of books, the Bible! ⁷

As a babe in Christ, this author well remembers reading the then "old reliable" or *Gospel Advocate*, which editor at the time was Guy N. Woods. He grew tremendously because of the superb lessons by such men. He still has in his possession some copies of those monthly editions. For many years the *Gospel Advocate* was a stalwart of Truth in our beloved brotherhood.

Truth for the World is a mission work that incorporates multiple means of reaching the lost.

Truth for the World is a work of the Duluth, Georgia church of Christ. It is an evangelistic effort to help support or supplement the preaching of the Gospel around the world. In cooperation with thousands of other Christians around the United States, we are spreading the Gospel to 218 nations and territories by means of radio, television, tracts, teaching booklets, Bible correspondence courses, campaigns, and the Internet. Our radio broadcasts are reaching all seven continents via shortwave radio. We have six English Bible correspondence courses used in teaching hundreds of thousands of people around the world. Our Internet websites have been accessed by people in 186 nations. Campaigns have been conducted in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America to follow-up teaching done via mass media. More than 14,000 have been baptized as a result of this work; over 200 churches have been established; and countless multitudes have been built up by the preaching of the Gospel through these means.⁸

One of the "founding members" of *Truth for The World*, penned some encouraging words about the effectiveness of Bible tracts.

Our Lord said, "...the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when, he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matt. 13:45-46). **Herbert Chukwu**, an evangelist in Enugu State, Nigeria, who uses the **Truth For the World** tracts in his evangelism, wrote us recently to relate the conversion of a man who exemplifies the merchant in our Lord's parable. **James Oshaba**, a devout Roman Catholic who served as the leader of a congregation near his home, was given some of the Truth for the World tracts by brother Chukwu. Brother Chukwu wrote, "James Oshaba, the St. James Catholic church leader, studied the tracts I sent to him and found the truth. When he realized other members of his congregation did not know the truth, he wasted no time, but called us to convert them to the truth, not minding all they might lose when they left the Catholic Church." Brother Chukwu responded to the

call and spent considerable time pointing the members of this church to the teaching of God's Word. On October 4, 1998, forty-two members of the St. James Catholic Church were baptized into Christ. Following their baptism, they took down the church sign and replaced it with one read "Church of Christ, Olepe Town." ⁹

Yet another technique that has been effectively utilized by multiple brethren with great success has been to run articles in local newspapers or send responses to the editorial board.

The use of newspapers in spreading the gospel; The large metropolitan newspapers, the county newspapers, the shoppers' newspapers, etcetera, are wonderful ways of teaching the truth. While living in Perry County, Tennessee, I utilized the Perry Countian to reach the county and surrounding areas. One of the results was a written debate with a Methodist preacher. In Oak Ridge, Tennessee, I used The Oak Ridge newspaper, and many were given the opportunity to read and learn the truth. In Newport News, Virginia, we sometimes used the newspaper, including writing to the editor and opposing evolution. In Memphis, Tennessee, for years I had articles in the Shoppers News. We heard from these articles from to time and some were baptized and others restored to the Lord and His church.¹⁰

There are brethren who have utilized other forms of media now available. Brethren in local markets have done much good through the means of television. Additionally, there is now an entire broadcasting network dedicated to spreading the Gospel--The Gospel Broadcasting Network. One of the brethren who helped start the network penned these thoughts:

In 2006, many of the television programs produced by our brethren were given an opportunity to expand their coverage at no additional cost, as they became a part of a new and exciting evangelistic effort, the Gospel Broadcasting Network. In November of that year, GBN launched a 24/7 broadcasting network of programs for all ages, with the potential to reach the United States, most of Canada, the Caribbean, and parts of Central America by satellite. The network also reached out to much of the world's population through the worldwide web, as GBN began streaming live over the internet; and for the first time in the history of the church, the truth had the potential to be heard around the world, around the clock. How much of that potential has been realized since that time? Much progress has been made and the Lord has blessed GBN with substantial growth. The network has received support from hundreds of individual Christians and from more than seven hundred congregations. The network's coverage has grown substantially in the first few years. At this time, twenty cable systems carry GBN, reaching about 300,000 homes. Additionally, the GBN daily program, Good News Today, is aired seven days a week on both DirecTV and Dish Network, reaching more than thirty million homes with an hour of truth. An hour-long daily broadcast is unprecedented in the church's history, and we thank God for this open door.¹¹

Maybe the most effective tool after one-on-one teaching has been the Internet. Since its inception, the World Wide Web has opened the proverbial "floodgates" for teaching the Gospel. A plethora of sound brotherhood websites now exists. A Christian literally can teach the Gospel to a prospect with the prospect living on the other side of the world via the Internet. **Online Academy of Biblical Studies**, a work overseen by the Phillips Street church of Christ, Dyersburg, Tennessee, provides students the opportunity to gain a high level of Bible training in a non-traditional manner. The curriculum OABS takes four years to finish. Classes are taught each Saturday for seven hours. Every book of the Bible and related studies are covered. Interested parties can view the program through the website: www.oabs.org.

The lost can be reached as well through e-mail, phone calls, nursing and hospital visits. Mailing lessons to targeted areas using such material as **House-to-House/Heart-to-Heart** is yet another means of reaching the lost. **House-to-House/Heart-to-Heart** is a work of the Jacksonville church of Christ, Jacksonville, Alabama. Allen Webster serves as the editor of this superb form of Gospel teaching.

Using Matthew 28:19-20 and 2 Timothy 2:2 as their impetus, brethren through the years have established schools dedicated to training men to preach, become better Bible teachers, and missionaries have been established. One such work is the Memphis School of Preaching. The MSOP has been training men over forty-years to preach the Gospel and to become academically and spiritually qualified to serve as deacons, elders, and missionaries – their wives are likewise trained. Scores of its students have come from other countries to receive training. It has made a universal contribution throughout the brotherhood. A great number of its alumni have established lasting, valuable works – because of the profitable training they have received – that have

brought many precious souls to Christ. For example, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of its alumni helped start a work in Murmansk, Russia, a city of over 600,000 souls. Others have started works in Africa, Europe, Asia, and in various parts of America. MSOP alumni has helped, or actually, established works such as **Truth for the World**, **House To House/Heart To Heart**, **The Gospel Broadcasting Network**, **Polishing The Pulpit** (a work designed to help encourage preachers and elders have their "batteries recharged"), and other schools of preaching modeled after MSOP. Affirmatively, the contribution the MSOP has made in reaching the lost with the pristine Gospel grows daily.

THE PROPER CONCLUSION

Countless Christians sing every Lord's Day the song entitled, "There Is Much To Do or Lord, Send Me". The first stanza of the song summarizes the intent of this lesson: "There is much to do, there is work on every hand, Hark the cry for help comes ringing through the land; Jesus calls for reapers, I must active be, what wilt Thou, O Master? Here am I, send me".

Dear Reader, what if the person who taught you the Gospel was as concerned then as you are now about the souls of men? Remember the plan God enacted to secure your salvation (Eph. 3:10-11); remember the sacrifice Christ made to obtain your remission of sins; remember the blood He shed at Calvary for your sins (John 19:34); remember His sole purpose for coming to earth (Luke 19:10); remember your primary mission as a child of God. Don't forget! Don't ever forget the mission!

Please pray for the works – and others as well – mentioned in this lesson. If you are not already, become acquainted with them. Financially support these works as well. If you are already supporting one or more of these works, keep up the good work! As a matter of constant

motivation, keep 2 Corinthians 8:9 and 9:6-8 at the forefront of your mind. Remember, in supporting great works such as these you are laying for your self treasures in Heaven (Matt. 6:19-21).

End Notes

¹All references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

² George Bailey, World Vision for Christ, 2009 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Keith A. Mosher, Sr., (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2009) p. 25

³ Ibid. pp. 34 - 35

⁴ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Pressing Toward the Mark, And Autobiography of Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Volume II (Dallas, TX: G.T. Press, 2001) p. p. 297 – 300.

⁵ Ibid. p.p. 302 – 303.

⁶ Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Pressing Toward the Mark, An Autobiography of Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Volume I (Dallas TX: G.T. Press, 1998), p. 515.

⁷ Garland Elkins, Evangelism: Using Publications, 2009 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Keith A. Mosher, Sr., (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2009) p. 104.

⁸ John Grubb, Evangelism and World-Wide Missions, 2009 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Keith A. Mosher, Sr., (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2009) p.p. 213 – 214.

⁹ Rod Rutherford, Rod's Report "A Pearl of Great Price," Truth for the World Updated (April, 1999) p. 6.

¹⁰ Elkins, p. 105.

¹¹ Jim Dearman, Evangelism: Using the Media, 2009 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Keith A. Mosher, Sr., (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2009) pp. 198 – 199.

INSTRUCTIONS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

By David Lemmons

INTRODUCTION

This writer appreciates the church at Richmond Hill for providing opportunities such as the Southeast Georgia Lectureship for edifying the body of Christ in this area of God's creation. There is certainly much to be learned from Paul and an examination of the theme: "Lessons from Paul," would have to be a fruitful field for study.

It is with great humility and some trepidation that this project of teaching on the subject of "Instructions on the Lord's Supper" is done. Many years ago a noted and outstanding preacher in the brotherhood made this statement: "I've got me a sermon; I hope I am big enough to preach it." His subject matter on that occasion was "The Lord's Supper." Another brother made the statement that he did not appreciate the person "heading" the Lord's Table trying to tell him how to observe the Supper. All need to be willing to enter into this study with a focus more similar to the first sentiment than to that second one.

This writer has preached a series of four sermons on the subject: "Nine Wonders of the Lord's Supper." Much of this same material was used in work among three cities in Indonesia in July of this year. A book entitled simply, *The Lord's Supper*, by James M. Tolle is a great work on this subject. If this book is still in print it is recommended that it be purchased. Time and space will not allow for all to be said about this subject in this manuscript, but one should never stop studying this vitally important topic in God's Word.

The point of beginning, in order to draw attention to the gravity of this study, is 1 Corinthians 11:30. Think about it!

Consider the paradox of being blessed today by the fact that the church at Corinth was plagued with so many problems. Because of their carnality and immaturity (1 Cor. 3:1-3), problems arose among them. Then, because of Paul's loving concern for these saints, he sought to correct them through these inspired letters. By studying these letters, we are instructed in the right ways of the Lord. The instructions Paul sent this church regarding the Lord's Supper are important and much needed by the church today. Just as there was spiritual sickness (even spiritual death) among the saints at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:30) because of improper observance of the Lord's Supper, there is likewise the same today among us and from the same cause. Is this not powerful motivation to follow the inspired instructions from Paul? Paul instructs us that

IT IS POSSIBLE TO COME TOGETHER "FOR THE WORSE"

1 Cor 11:17-22, 30

The assembly of the saints is designed and intended to benefit Christians. These assemblies ought to be occasions of provoking or stirring one another up toward love and good works (Heb. 10:24). That certainly is a good purpose and useful in preparing one to live lives that bring glory to the Lord. However, one must hear the instruction of Paul and realize that it is possible that assembling with saints can be so perverted from the pattern of God's Word that one goes away the worse rather than the better.

Many commentators considering these verses (17-22) point only to their divisive behavior during those "love feasts," of the first century. From the text it is seen that some were overeating, and others were going hungry. It seems that those who had food were gathering together in small cliques and thus, some were completely neglected. Their major problem goes back to the problem Paul discusses in chapter one (i.e., a lack of unity). However, it seems that these Corinthians are condemned here by Paul on the basis of an additional inexcusable and dangerous behavior. They were **mixing**

together this common meal with the Lord's Supper, thereby losing the real purpose and significance of the memorial feast. Guy N. Woods points out the three abuses which Paul condemns, "The abuse in Corinthian worship consisted of (1) participating in a common meal in connection with the Lord's Supper; (2) selfishness in eating before others; (3) a failure properly to understand the nature and purpose of the Lord's Supper."

The very strong words of warning Paul gives in this context help us to understand that these saints were truly coming together **for the worse!** Who could imagine that these Christians would do anything except heed these strong warnings sent them by Paul? Some progressives seem to think that this might even be a good practice to take up today, but they are definitely mistaken in that assessment!

THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IS PART OF THE APOSTLE'S DOCTRINE

1 Cor. 11:23-25

The source of the teaching Paul did in Corinth regarding the Lord's Supper, he points out here, is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! Lest anyone should question Paul's authority, he wants it to be known from Whom this teaching came. Just as the Jerusalem church continued in the apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42), so must the Church today. The apostles received that teaching from the Holy Spirit, sent by the Lord Jesus (John 16:13); the Apostle John that Christians are to abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 1:9).

There is a connection between the institution of the Lord's Supper and the proper observance of it else Paul would not have brought it into this discussion at this point. Paul says that he could not praise these brethren; they were not following the teaching he had delivered them regarding the Lord's Supper! There are four accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper (Mat. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-

25; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). If congregations wish to avoid the pitiful mistakes these Christians made in their observance of the Lord's Supper more time should be spent meditating upon these four passages!

THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IS TO REMEMBER

1 Cor. 11:24

How could anyone be following the true purpose of the Lord's Supper in those ungodly assemblies in Corinth? If ones intention and desire is to please the Lord, then attention must be paid to the purpose of His commands concerning this subject. When a purpose is mentioned in connection with a command or practice, we must respect that purpose. Just as baptism is for the purpose of the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), the Lord's Supper is for the purpose of remembering. That is, remembering the great love of God and Christ shown by the shed blood of Jesus at Calvary and all that was involved in that remarkable sacrifice. In a similar way, the Passover Feast of the Old Testament was designed by God to be a memorial (Exo. 12:14; 13:3, 9; Deu. 16:3).

Infinitely more significant than the Passover is the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper commemorates the death of the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Rather than deliverance from Egyptian bondage, His death grants deliverance from the bondage of sin and saves one from eternal death. The death of Christ is the central theme of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:2).

There were no statues or personal relics left by Jesus to bring His sacrifice to remembrance. But there is this simple feast. Without a doubt, the Lord's Supper is the world's greatest monument intended to bring to remembrance the world's greatest event! Knowing His creation, the Lord, would be aware of mans tendency to forget. Indeed, the tendency to forget is the purpose for all of the monuments that ever have been established.

The Bible contains the pattern for the frequency of observance of the Lord's Supper. It is really strange that some religious groups do not follow that pattern. There is no need for ten or twenty verses telling of the frequency of observance. One is sufficient. That passage is Acts 20:7. With the reading of this passage, the answer to how often comes with the answer to the simple question, "How often does the first day of the week come around?"

Christians benefit enormously from a **regular** observance of the Lord's Supper. When one finds themselves struggling with the enormity of the vileness of sin, observance of the Supper gives comfort each week. As this Supper is properly observed, how is it possible that one's love for Christ is anything but enlarged? Weekly considering the sufferings of Christ on the cross helps to give a proper perspective on that light suffering or affliction with which one deals from time to time. If done properly, observing the Lord's Supper will only increase hatred of sin!

THERE IS A COVENANT CONNECTION

As with the institution of the Lord's Supper, so likewise one can turn to four passages for an understanding of the Supper's covenant connection (Mat. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; and 1 Cor. 11:25). The ASV uses the word "covenant," whereas in the KJV it is "testament."

God made a covenant with the children of Israel which lasted about 1600 years. Israel was unfaithful to that covenant over and over again. The Book of Judges is often pictured as a roller-coaster-like existence for the children of Israel. They were up and down in the sense of faithful and unfaithful to the Lord and that covenant. Judgment from God came during their periods of rebellion. The desire God had for fellowship is seen in the promise of a "new" covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). With the coming of that new and better covenant and in contrast to the old would be the actual forgiveness of sins (cf., Jer. 31:34; Heb. 10:3; 8:12).

In partaking of the Lord's Supper worthily, one should hear Jesus connecting His shed blood, symbolized by the fruit of the vine, with the new covenant. Christians today are part of that covenant. When one partakes of the Lord's Supper weekly they are reaffirming that since the promises attached to the new covenant are desired, that they will also accept and obey its commandments. This will lead to living lives pleasing to God which will bring glory to the Lord. When observing the Supper, one recognizes the blood of the covenant is **the only power to save**. When the proper appreciation of the covenant connection is understood one will understand that salvation cannot come from one's own goodness or good behavior, but on the covenant relationship furnished by the blood of Jesus. So many rich benefits accrue as one partakes of the memorial feast!

IT IS A PROCLAMATION

1 Cor. 11:26

That the Lord's Supper is a proclamation feast is seen from 1 Corinthians 11:26—"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come (KJV, ASV uses PROCLAIM). The partaking of the emblems is a proclaiming of the essence of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:2). When the children of Israel partook of the Passover feast it would cause their children to ask its meaning. Parents were then to relate the account of God's delivering them from Egyptian bondage (Exo. 12:24-27; 13:14-15). Christians do a similar thing when they partake of the Lord's Supper. They proclaim the gospel, their own faith in Christ, and proclaim the second coming of Christ. **Till He come** (1 Cor. 11:26) tells that this observance is to continue until the second coming.

IT IS A SERIOUS MISTAKE TO PARTAKE UNWORTHILY

1 Cor. 11:27

Paul's language here is pretty frightening. To be guilty of the **body and blood of the Lord** is a most undesirable position to occupy! GUILTY here is the same word used in Matthew 5:21 and Mark

3:29. The consideration of Paul's warning here surely should cause one to want all the truth available to be able to avoid the described guilt. It is serious business to worship God in a manner that does not conform to His instructions. It seems that many Christians do not appreciate fully the warning stated here by Paul.

Self-examination (1 Cor. 11:27-29)

With many there seems to be some misunderstanding about this word, **unworthily**. Preachers often point out that an understanding of basic English grammar is helpful in the study of God's Word. Unworthily is not an adjective, a word which describes a noun or pronoun. It is not used to describe a person, but rather it is an adverb, used to describe the two verbs: eat and drink. It is possible for one to partake of the Lord's Supper unworthily. Reading further, verse 29 helps one to know what partaking unworthily is. It is to partake of the Supper without discerning the Lord's body. When one does not center ones thoughts on the body of Jesus (His suffering, His love, etc.), one might just as well not partake of the Supper at all; worship activities involve the mind. There are no magical qualities of the unleavened bread or the fruit of the vine to bless spiritually those who partake! To avoid the dire consequence of being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord one must focus the mind sharply on the memorial as the Lord intended. In the observance that which the elements represent must be seen else one is partaking unworthily.

One is to examine their self and partake of the Lord's Supper in a humble way. As such, one will understand that the gift of Christ's shed blood for the remission of sins and is far above what man deserves. A person might be involved in numerous good works, yet Jesus directs, "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 7:10). The Lord's Supper must be taken penitently. Thinking of the suffering of the Lord on the cross will lead to strong feelings of remorse, shame, and sorrow for the

sins the person has committed. It will cause a desire to repent of sins and to confess them to God. The Lord's Supper must be taken with great gratitude for the gracious gift.

THERE IS A COMMUNION OR SHARING ASPECT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 Cor. 10:16

Please notice that this passage is in an entirely different context. This part of chapter ten has to do with the sin of idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14). The word "communion" here is from the familiar Greek term, *koinonia*, meaning fellowship, participation, association. Paul is cautioning Christians to stay away from associating with idolatry. In verses 19-21 a contrast is drawn between the feasts associated with idol worship of the heathens and the feast that honors the Lord Jesus. Paul wants the brethren to understand that when they participate in the feasts attached to idolatrous worship they are having fellowship with idolatry and they are doing the very opposite of what they need to be doing (i.e., flee from idolatry, verse 14). The comparison is made to help them understand this relationship.

Though the lesson in this text is to flee fornication, the point Paul makes about communion should be appreciated by every Christian. There are many ways that a Christian has fellowship with Christ. Keeping all of the teachings of Christ brings one into fellowship with Christ (2 John 1:9-10). The Apostle Paul connected the sacrifices he made for Christ with fellowship in the sufferings of the Lord (Phi. 3:8-10). Similarly, whatever Christians today suffer by way of persecution because of their faithfulness to the Lord it is a communion with the Lord's suffering. But there is no closer fellowship with Christ than that time each first day of the week as Christians surround the Lord's Table. When it is partaken of properly minds center upon the suffering Savior and how mankind is blessed as a result of that suffering. When one thinks about His perfectly selfless suffering it motivates to keep ourselves from sin. This communion on earth is only a foretaste of eternal fellowship in heaven.

Yes, Paul's instructions regarding the Lord's Supper are of tremendous value. If the instructions are used properly, one will avoid the terrible consequences the church at Corinth suffered (1 Cor. 11:30). This means that rather than being spiritually sick or even spiritually dead, Christians can be strong in the Lord. Knowing of the spiritual battle faced on this earth and the need to be strong (Eph. 6:10), surely heed will be given to these valuable instructions.

End Notes

1	Guy N. Woods, <i>A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude</i> (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1973), p. 395.

THE WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP

By Lee Davis

INTRODUCTION

One can hardly imagine a society without rules of any kind. A society that has no structure other than the imposed will of each individual within that society would result in total chaos. This would result in anarchy for any society that implemented this philosophy.

Law and structure must be found within any organization if that organization is to operate correctly. There must be a consequence for not following/breaking the law within a properly functioning society.

Structure is needed within the family unit. It is tragic to observe families with no discipline within it. The children are allowed to run amuck and they never face consequences for their improper actions and attitudes.

As bad as the above scenarios are, one can observe illustrations of both. It should not be a surprise that this attitude and action has affected the Lord's church. The Lord has given rules and requirements that must be met if Christians are to be what God would have them to be and to go to Heaven one day (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When an individual or individuals within the family of God reject the Lord's way of doing things, there must be consequences. How should the church react when the will of God is violated by its members? Tragically, often these violations are ignored by the other members of the congregation. Can this be done and God still be pleased with this inaction? No! The Lord has commanded us to discipline the disciple that walks out of step and, if necessary, withdraw fellowship from that wayward one (Gal. 6:1; 2 The. 3:6). Even though this is the case, many have ignored this vital requirement in preference for a pseudoreason or reasons. This command of God has been relegated, by many, to what is termed the

"forgotten commandment".² It is no surprise, then, that the Lord's body is burdened with the illnesses that it has. The body is kept well through the process of discipline (1 Cor. 5). The local church should make every ethical attempt to regain the fallen child of God. The withdrawal of fellowship is an act of love that is done to salvage the lost soul.

AUTHORITY FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE

No one can successfully argue that there is no biblical authority for a church's implementing church discipline. Yet, many churches act as if this is the case. There is no doubt that one must be patient with brethren that are not doing as they should (Gal. 6:1). Even the Lord allowed Jezebel time in order to repent (Rev. 2:20-23). But, there is patience and then there is the state of being in a coma! Some churches, consciously or unconsciously, have determined that church discipline is permitted, except for the final action in the process, withdrawal. For the sake of a better example, this would be like pulling the teeth out of a tiger and expecting it to hunt successfully in order to live. The disciplined individual must understand the concept of having fellowship withdrawn from them in order to appreciate the impact their sin is having on them and the church! At what point must the church act? The New Testament is the guide in this and all activities dealing with the work of the Lord (1 Pet. 4:11).

Matthew 18:15-17

This often misused and abused section of scripture gives us some insight into this vital question. The Lord instructs the person who has been sinned against in a private setting, to go to the one who offended him and to point out their error. If repentance takes place, this is to "gain" one's brother. When repentance is not forthcoming, two things are to be done before withdrawal takes place. One, the offended party is to take witnesses with him in order to get the offender to repent. Two, when this does not work, the situation is to be made public to the church for the

purpose of having the full body attempting to gain the offender's repentance. Now, if repentance is still not forthcoming, the church as a whole is to treat the offender as a "heathen man and a publican". This phrase is equivalent to the person's having had fellowship withdrawn.

Romans 16:17

By inspiration, Paul charges all Christians to intently look upon, "mark", those that cause division, in order to withdraw fellowship from them. Those that cause division through the preaching of false doctrine are under consideration as well as those that cause division through other un-Christ like behavior.

1 Corinthians 5

A brother was practicing the sin of fornication with his stepmother and the church at Corinth was permitting the situation to exist without their disciplining these people. The church was "puffed up" through pride. Paul commands that the sinning pair should be "taken away" from them (1 Cor. 5:2). The process of withdrawal is referred to as being "delivered unto Satan" (I Cor. 5:5). If one is practicing sin and refuses to repent and the church knows of it, that person must be "put away" (1 Cor. 5:13). These people were delivered "unto Satan" for the purpose of "the destruction of the flesh" "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (a metaphorical expression denoting the attempt to have the offending party cease from their sin and iniquity with the ultimate goal of saving the soul).

2 Thessalonians 3:6

After discussing the Apostolic Tradition that had been given to the church at Thessalonica (2 The. 2:15), Paul commands that those who get out of step with that tradition, are to have fellowship withdrawn from them. Paul states that it is a "command"! It is not an optional matter. The term, "walketh disorderly" is a military term of walking out of step with

marching drill or not conforming to something.⁴ If a soldier in the army of the Lord, "gets out of line", there must be a procedure through which the Church must go in order to attempt the salvaging of the soul of the brother or sister.

1 Timothy 1:19-20

Due to the false doctrine being taught by these men and the resulting shipwrecked faith of those that had believed this false doctrine, Paul had "delivered" them "unto Satan" for the purpose of their learning to not blaspheme. Being delivered unto Satan is the equivalent of having fellowship withdrawn from the offenders.

Titus 3:10

A "heretic" (factious man)⁵ is to be admonished to repent two times before they are "rejected" (withdrawn from).

One inescapable conclusion, having examined these verses, the Lord has in no way been ambiguous (hard to be understood) in this or any other matter. These verses serve as a sampling of what the New Testament teaches on the subject. The Lord intends that his commands are to be obeyed. This matter is not optional but is a matter of obligation.

To summarize, these verses teach that church discipline must be implemented within congregations where there is a need.

Examples

1. A brother who has sinned against another, but refuses to repent of his transgression, could, ultimately, be dis-fellowshipped (Mat. 18:15-17). 2. Those who cause occasions of stumbling, and who initiate division, are proper subjects for church discipline (Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10). 3. Those who are practitioners of such sins as fornication, covetousness, extortion, idolatry, drunkenness, etc. could certainly be candidates for withdrawal (1 Cor. 5:9ff). 4. Advocates of

soul-threatening doctrines must not be allowed to continue in open fellowship with the church (<u>1</u> <u>Tim. 1:19-20</u>). 5. Those that walk disorderly are to be refused association by the faithful (<u>2 The.</u> <u>3:6</u>). Those who are walking disorderly are those who are not faithful.⁶

THE PURPOSE OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP

Disgracefully, some elders have used withdrawal of fellowship as a way to hurt and destroy the reputations of people. The withdrawal of fellowship can never be used as a tool of revenge if it is to be what God intended it to be. The process of church discipline should never be done in a haughty or spiteful manner (Gal. 6:1).

The Scriptures do, however, teach that church discipline is both corrective and protective in its design. The withdrawal of fellowship is designed to save the erring child of God (1 Cor. 5:5). Each of the verses that were studied in the former section all pointed to the fact that church discipline, which includes the withdrawal of fellowship, is the last act of love that is to be used to salvage the soul of the lost child of God.

Another purpose of the withdrawal of fellowship is to protect the church from the spreading evil of sin (1 Cor. 5:6). False doctrine/living is like an infection that, if not treated, can spread to the whole body and eventually kill it (2 Tim. 2:16-18). Out of love the church, must sever, if necessary, the limb that is infected and will not respond to treatment.

One reason that the church must practice church discipline is to preserve the integrity of the church before the eyes of the world. Society is very much biased against the Lord's church and not practicing church discipline only adds to that bias. The Church must never give an occasion for the world in reviling it (1 Tim. 5:14). The church must conduct itself in such a way as to prevent the world from blaspheming the name of God and His teaching (1 Tim. 6:1). If congregations do not practice corrective/nurturing discipline within the church, then "the way of

truth will be evil spoken of (2 Pet.2:2). When the church refuses, either deliberately or by default, to discipline its own, the world only sees hypocrisy within the ranks of the army of the Lord. This disobedience will eventually result in a church made in the image of the world! If the congregation loses the distinctiveness that God requires of His children, then it ceases being His faithful children! Let the church show the world that habitual, unrepentant sin, will not be permitted within the body of Christ indefinitely. There must be a point in time (after the church does everything it can to salvage the soul of the unfaithful child of God) where the withdrawal of fellowship will be implemented for the purpose of obeying the will of the Father Who has purchased us with the blood of His only begotten Son.

HOW SHOULD THE WITHDRAWAL BE ADMINISTERED?

In every congregation where there are qualified men serving as elders, it naturally would be the case that the eldership would lead the church in the withdrawal of fellowship from the unfaithful. At this point, let it be stressed that the withdrawal of fellowship should not be a sole act of the eldership where the decision was made "behind closed doors". An eldership must be open with the congregation on the various situations so that when it comes to the withdrawal, the faithful brethren will embrace the action because they see the scriptural rationale for doing so. Favoritism and partiality will quickly be observed by the congregation if the eldership only applies the biblical standard to some while not applying it to others.

The withdrawal of fellowship is to be enacted by the entire church. The formalization of the procedure must be enacted in the public assembly (1 Cor. 5:4). When an eldership follows the Word in this situation, the members of the congregation must support this decision. Any member that will not do so and persists in extending fellowship to the disciplined one, they are themselves subjects for church discipline.

What about those churches that have no men qualified to serve in the eldership? Can a congregation in this situation implement church discipline/withdrawal of fellowship? Yes, they can! Granted, it will be more difficult to do so, but not impossible. The faithful men of the congregation must act in a similar way as does the eldership. The men must lead the church in the disciplinary action.

The teaching has been done. The exhortation has been done. The praying has been done. The patience has been exhibited. The admonitions have been extended. Now comes the need for action. When the church does act and withdraws its fellowship, two things must be understood. One, the church is only recognizing in a public way what God has already done. Two, the withdrawal, for it to be effective, must be honored by all. The church is not to treat the offender like an enemy (2 The. 3:15). The church is to admonish them as brethren. If there is any contact with the offender, it must be admonishment for their repentance. Tell the brother/sister that fellowship is desired with them but the church has acted. They must be told that they need to repent and then fellowship can be restored. Social contact is not to be practiced (2 The. 3:14). One cannot even eat a meal with the offender (1 Cor. 5:11). The Bible instructs that if a brother persists in a sin that can be observed, and will not repent, the faithful are not to pray for that person (1 John 5:16). His sin is a sin unto death, a sin that is practice until death. God can forgive any sin, except the one of which a man will not repent.

CONCLUSION

Loving discipline was as much a part of the New Testament churches activity in the first century as was correct worship and proper organization. The Restoration Plea is a New Testament plea. Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. Call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways (1 Pet. 4:11).⁷ Question, can a church

that utterly refuses to practice church discipline be a New Testament Church? God's commands must be followed on all subjects.

End Notes

¹ The KJV was used unless otherwise noted.

² Thomas H. Holland, *Christ Is Coming! Sermon Outlines from 1&2 Thessalonians*(Brentwood, TN., Penmann Press, 1979), pp. 91-92.

³ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*(Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1984), p. 579.

⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁵ ASV, 1901

⁶ Tom Moore, Sermon on Church Discipline, www.preacherfiles.com
⁷ Earl Irvin West, The Search For The Ancient Order, A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1906, Vol. 1(Nashville, TN., Gospel Advocate Company, 1974) p. 47

MARRIAGE - FROM SURVIVAL TO SIGNIFICANCE

By Larry Acuff

INTRODUCTION

The Bible says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). God ordained marriage. At the beginning of time God saw that it was not good for the man to be alone and declared, "I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). The remaining verses of Genesis two describes God making woman and bringing her unto the man and then said, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). The scriptures are not silent regarding marriage and the responsibilities of both the man and the woman. Observe the following:

Ephesians 5:25

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

1 Peter 3:7

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

1 Peter 3:1

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."

Unfortunately there has been deterioration in the home, family and marriage due to the influx of worldliness and the influence of a humanistic society.

True Lies

There are some things that are being told as truth when in reality they are lies. I call them "True Lies". The world believes them to be true but they are nothing more than the devils distortion of truth. Here is a list (This list is not original with this writer):

- 1. It is not my fault.
- 2. Always stand up for your rights.
- 3. You know you've done all you can to make your marriage a success.
- 4. Marriage is nothing more than a romantic dream.
- 5. Marriage is getting rather than giving.
- 6. Even though you're married always do your own thing.
- 7. You can spend time away from each other without hurting your marriage.
- 8. Arguing, bickering, complaining and faultfinding are to be expected in every marriage.
- 9. It's my house, my money, your kids.
- 10. Men and women are alike.
- 11. The husband is superior to the wife.
- 12. Sex is not important.
- 13. You don't have to be married. There are a lot of creative options.
- 14. Children are a burden.

TWO TYPES OF MARRIAGES

There are two families related in scripture that seem to identify two types of marriages.

One is a "survival family" the other the "significant family."

The Survival Family (1 Samuel 25)

What makes them a survival family? Just briefly the husband of Abigail was Nabel. He had the wrong priorities (1 Sam. 25:2), he was hard to get along with (1 Sam. 25:3), he was selfish (1 Sam. 25:10-11) and he was the child of Belial (1 Sam. 25:17). It is hard to have much of family with these qualities.

Significant Family

That family is Noah. What made it a significant family? Noah respected the word of God (Heb. 11:7), he taught his children to respect God and do His will (Heb. 11:7), he did not love the world but rather condemned it (Heb. 11:7), and he was righteous (Gen. 7:1).

How do you go from a Nabel (survival) family to a Noah (significant) family? There are seven ways that will help a family go from survival to significance.

THE PURPOSE AND PERMANENCE OF MARRIAGE

What is the purpose of marriage? One of the purposes of marriage is procreation. God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. However, that is not the only purpose. The Bible says, "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). Someone said, "I thought she was supposed to help meet the bills not help make them." That is not what God had in mind. She was to be a companion to man.

Husbands and wives need to spend time together. It is when they are alone that temptation strikes. God saw that it was not good to be alone (Gen. 2). Husbands, when there is a free minute at work do you call your wife? Do you have a date with your wife regularly? The relationship is strengthened when time is spent together.

Not only is there a need to remember the purpose of marriage but also the permanence of marriage. God hates divorce (putting away, Mal. 2:16). Jesus plainly taught that it was not God's

plan for man to put away his wife (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12) therefore we must pay attention to God's plan for the permanence of the home.

It is also imperative that children are taught how to select a mate and how to solve their marital problems without using divorce as the tool to do so. Divorce makes havoc in a family. Everyone is hurt and therefore it must be avoided at all cost.

REFUSE TO LISTEN TO WRONG PEOPLE

A second thing to do to take your marriage from survival to significance is, learn to listen to the right people. To whom are you listening? Several years ago Bro. V.E. Howard, gospel preacher, on his radio programs would stop and say, "Are you listening?" The question here is to whom are you listening? The Bible says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:1-2).

Example after example can be sighted of those who have had marital difficulty and have secured the services of a worldly counselor. The counselor will say, "Well, try it for six more months and if it doesn't work out then get a divorce." No! No! You don't try it for six months. That counselor, if he were a faithful Christian would say, "Go home and do what the Bible teaches you do – learn to love your mate (Titus 2:4)."

A man gets into an argument with his wife before he goes to work. He arrives at work and tells his co-worker about the fuss he has just had. The co-worker says, "Man, I wouldn't put up with that why I would blah blah." That co-worker has been married five times, divorced three and has eight children all by different women. Don't listen to the wrong person.

If your congregation has elders, go to them. These are faithful men who love the Bible and love their wives and family and know how to deal with them. Find a good faithful couple who will be more than happy to help.

Solomon wrote, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

RECOGNIZE WHAT GOD'S LOVE CAN DO

The Bible is not silent about love (John 3:16; 1 Cor. 13). Song of Solomon will teach us something about love if it is studied and heeded. There are several Greek words for love (Agape, Eros, Philia, Storge, Thelema; Wikipedia). Most folks don't know much about these word but they do know the following.

God's love is romantic. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine" (Song 1:2).

God's love is physical. "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me" (Song 2:6).

God's love is complimentary. "I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharoah's chariots (Song 1:9).

God's love is strong. "Set me a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong...Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song 8:6-7).

By following God's plan of love one will truly love their mate.

RESPOND IMMEDIATELY TO YOUR MATES NEEDS

In his book, <u>His Needs Her Needs</u>, Willard Harley list the five basic needs of the male and the five basic needs of the female; He lists five needs of the male and five needs of the female.

Two of the needs of the female are affection and domestic support. The scriptures teach a man, "Likewise, ye husband, dwell with them according to knowledge..." (1 Peter 3:7). Learn how affection affects the wife. Give her that affection. The wife wants her husband to hug her. She also needs domestic support. Men need to financially support the wife. Wives work today to help provide a better lifestyle for the family. Would it be better if we reduced our style of living and had Mom at home?

Two needs of the male are sex and recreational companionship. Remember the words of Paul to the Corinthians when he wrote, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time..." (1 Cor. 7:5). Some women have the idea that once I've got him – I have no more responsibility. Not true.

A second thing the male needs is recreational companionship. Husbands and wives need to spend time playing together.

RESIST THE TEMPTATION FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO SATISFY YOUR NEEDS.

"But everyman is tempted when his drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). Temptation is strong. Television and movies have glorified extra marital affairs. It is so easy to let another, other than your mate, satisfy those most intimate needs. Many times more time is spent with a co-worker than a spouse.

A young, good looking, financially stable, 45 year old has a little problem at home which has not been dealt with. A young attractive, divorced co-worker is there every day and before they know it they have committed fornication. Sin has occurred and a family is destroyed (Col. 3:5-6).

Resist that temptation. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

RENEW YOUR VOWS

Several years ago a gentleman knocked on the door of the church building and asked to speak with me. He said that he and his wife were going to be celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary and wanted to renew their vows. Their children and friends were there and the ceremony was as if they were just getting married for the first time.

The renewal of vows can be done in other ways. For example a husband may say to the wife, "If I had it to do all over again I would marry you." It may be by remembering anniversaries. Make that promise to your mate again.

RELY ON THE BIBLE

Regularly folks will call preachers with the following question: Is there any book you would recommend that would help our marriage? While there are many good books on the subject of marriage the best one is the Holy Bible. David said in the Psalms "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Take a look at the Word of God teaches about marriage and the family:

- 1. Man is to leave father and mother and cleave unto the wife (Gen. 2:24).
- 2. Husbands are taught to love their wives (Eph. 5:25-27).
- 3. Wives are to teach the younger women to love their husbands and children (Titus 2:4).

- 4. Wives are to submit themselves to their own husbands (Eph. 5:22).
- 5. Husbands are to dwell with their wives according to knowledge (1 Peter 3:7).
- 6. Man is taught to provide for his family (1 Tim. 5:8).
- 7. One reason man is to marry is to avoid fornication (1 Cor. 7:1).
- 8. A man or woman are not to put away their mate for every cause (Mt. 19:3-9).
- 9. Fathers are to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).
- 10. Men are not to be bitter against their wives (Col. 3:19).

From the above scriptures we can see how the Bible is the guide book that will help us have great marriages.

CONCLUSION

What kind of marriage do you have? It is just a survival marriage? Someone said that 75% of all marriages are failures. That doesn't mean they end in divorce but those folks in those marriages are miserable.

Why not take your marriage from Survival to Significance?

LOVE FOR FELLOW SERVANTS

Andrew Nelson

INTRODUCTION

The church is one of the greatest blessings that God has afforded to mankind. In the church one has salvation (Acts 2:47)¹, and as a member of the Lord's church one enjoys the blessing of a great support group, receiving needed assistance in the Lord's work (1 Cor. 12:12-27). Sadly there are many Christians who look at the church as nothing more than a social club or a place that must be visited every Sunday and Wednesday. Paul proclaimed to the Corinthians: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Consideration of Paul's love for the church, those who were his fellow servants in the Lord's vineyard will enhance one's view of the church, and should increase one's own love for his fellow servants in the Lord's work.

PAUL'S LOVE FOR THOSE WHO HELPED HIM TO BEGIN SERVING

Great encouragement can be received as one considers the love and energy that was put forth to lead one to serve Christ. Paul spoke of his own conversion from time to time, and he told of the fellow laborers who helped him to begin serving the Lord (Acts 22:3-16; 26:4-19).

Paul's Primary Partner

Standing before Agrippa, Paul told how he had been chosen by God to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18). Paul's call to service is truly amazing as he had "made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women

committed *them* to prison" (Acts 8:3), but when Paul obeyed the Gospel he began to work for the Lord spreading the Gospel throughout the world, as a preacher (1 Tim. 2:7). However, Paul's relationship with the Lord was not only that of a servant. Luke reported that Paul was not only working for the Lord, he was working with the Lord (Acts 14:27). In his own writings Paul attested to this fact: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase....For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building" (1 Cor. 3:6-9). The Lord worked with Paul, opening doors of opportunity and providing Paul with needed comfort and assurance (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Acts 23:11; 27:24).

Presently, God is still the greatest fellow worker to those who are in His service. He has made salvation possible to anyone who will follow Paul's example believing and obeying the Gospel (1 Tim. 1:14-16; Acts 9). His gracious call of obedience and service goes out to the entire world through the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). Those who answer the Lord's call are purified from their sins, and enlisted into the workforce of the Lord, when they obey the Gospel (Tit. 2:14). While in the Lord's field of labor, one is not alone. The Lord continues with His servants hearing their prayers (1 Pet. 3:12), providentially opening doors of opportunity for them (Rom. 8:28; Heb. 13:5, 6), and strengthening them through His Word and His people (Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Paul's Preacher

Another contributor to Paul's conversion was Ananias. Careful consideration of Paul's conversion reveals the fact that God did not save Paul on the road to Damascus, nor did He tell Paul what was necessary for his salvation (Acts 9:4-6). God told Paul to complete his journey to Damascus where he would be told what he must do to be saved.

There, Paul was met by Ananias, a preacher who knew of Paul's past (Acts 9:13, 14), but who at the Lord's insistence, taught Paul the Gospel (Acts 9:17, 18). Other than the two accounts of Paul's conversion, Ananias is never mentioned in the New Testament (Acts 9, 22). Because of this one might think that Ananias was of little importance to the Lord's work. Yet, when Paul told of his conversion, Ananias held the prominent place as the preacher who taught Paul the Gospel.

The Lord does not save man apart from the preaching of the Gospel and the obedience to Its plan of salvation. There is therefore a great need for Christians to teach the Gospel to a lost and dying world. This commission was given by God (Mk. 16:15, 16), and it provides everyone who obeys the Gospel with an "Ananias" in his or her life. These people are quite special, for their absence would condemn the souls of the people that they could have reached, in addition to the loss of the souls that the unconverted might have reached. Imagine the work that would not have taken place, had Ananias not taught Paul the Gospel. Those who teach the Gospel to the lost become very special coworkers in the Lord's service to the Christians they have taught.

Paul's Promoter

A final fellow laborer who contributed to Paul's conversion is Barnabas. Paul fled to Jerusalem because of the danger he was facing in Damascus (Acts 9:23-26; 2 Cor. 11:32, 33). Paul attempted to join himself to the Christians who there in Jerusalem, but they were "afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). In contrast to the rest of the disciples, "Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of

Jesus" (Acts 9:27). Barnabas may have been told these things by someone else, but it seems that he was simply willing to listen to what Paul had to say.² Much good was done by Barnabas and Paul, because Barnabas gave an opportunity that no one else was willing to give to Paul (Acts 9-15).

The Lord's church needs more Christians like Barnabas. Christians, who are willing to reach out to those, who for some reason or another do not seem to deserve an opportunity: giving them the encouragement and guidance needed to help them to become productive workers in the Lord's service. May God bless His workers today with more men like Barnabas!

PAUL'S LOVE FOR THOSE WHO SUPPORTED HIS WORK

As Paul labored in the Lord's vineyard, there was another special group of Paul's fellow laborers, for whom Paul had much affection. These individuals provided Paul with the things that he needed throughout his work. To some this might appear as though Paul was taking advantage of the generosity of the church. Yet as one considers the work that Paul did, the need for support becomes apparent.

The Need For Support

The focus of Paul's work was to take the Gospel to the lost. This work required much time, energy, and money, for Paul traveled great distances and he spent much time in various cities preaching the Gospel. To do the amount of work that he did, Paul could not focus his efforts in secular work, although he did work on occasion as a tentmaker (Acts 18:2, 3), his time and energy was needed elsewhere. For this reason, Paul was dependent upon the providence of God and the generosity of his fellow Christians and

servants, for his daily needs. In addition to his physical needs, Paul also needed emotional support, a need that has been felt by everyone endeavoring to work for the Lord. One way the Lord cared for Paul, and fulfilled his needs, was through Paul's fellow laborers, who supported his work.

Paul defended his right to compensation for his work referring to an Old Testament principle: "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn" (1 Cor. 9:9). Paul argued that if the Lord is concerned with an animal's compensation for physical work, He is certainly concerned with the compensation of a man's spiritual work. Likewise, to the Galatian churches, Paul wrote: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6). These same principles remain today, and they allow men and women to carry the Gospel more efficiently throughout the world, by the support of their fellow servants.

The Needed Support Paul Received

There were many people who supported Paul's work, by providing for his physical needs. Lydia provided Paul and Silas with a place to stay during the beginning of their time in Philippi (Acts 16:14, 15), and the jailor washed Paul and Silas' stripes, "brought them into his house," and "set meat before them" (Acts 16:33, 34). These two and their families were among the first members of the Philippian church, which was noted particularly by Paul as being one of the primary supporters of his work (Phil. 4:15, 16). The generous contributions of the Philippian brethren allowed Paul to preach the Gospel in other cities without charge to the local people with whom he worked (2 Cor. 11:8, 9), and they continued their support even while Paul was in prison in Rome (Phil.

2:25-30; 4:18). These and others supported Paul with the physical blessings God had bestowed upon them. Looking back on the work that Paul was able to do by the invaluable support God provided at the hands of these brethren, Paul had a great reason to thank God for them, and to long to be in their presence as he told the Philippians (Phil. 1:8).

Time has not eliminated the need for Christians who have focused their lives on taking the Gospel to the world, or for Christians like Paul's supporters who are willing to provide for the physical needs of these workers in the Lord's vineyard. Thankfully, there continue to be men and women who dedicate their lives to fulfilling the Great Commission, at great personal sacrifice, taking God's Word to the lost both domestically and internationally. When brethren recognize the importance of sending workers into the field of labor, and provide support to those who are working for the Lord, great love and appreciation develops in the hearts of the evangelists who receive this support.

The Support Needed

Paul faced great adversities while working for the Lord that could have discouraged him from continuing in the Lord's service (2 Cor. 11:23-33). The physical support he received enabled him to do the Lords' work, but the emotional support he received enabled Paul to continue with the Lord's work. This support came in many forms. Those who provided for Paul's physical necessities gave their "stamps of approval" to Paul and to his work (Acts 16:15, 34; Phil. 1:5; 4:15). Some such as Aquilla and Priscilla had risked their own lives to stand for and to stand with Paul (Rom. 16:3, 4); while others comforted Paul during his time in prison in Rome (Phil. 1:7; Col. 4:7-11). The greatest emotional support, however, had to have come from the Lord's continued

"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9, 10). Paul was never alone as he worked for the Lord, and in addition to the Lord's presence there were many faithful brethren who stood with Paul and behind the work that he did. The love that Paul felt for his supporters is evident in the words of greeting, encouragement, and commendation that are scattered throughout his writings. Truly Paul had great love for his fellow workers who supported his efforts in the Lord's Kingdom!

Just as the need for preachers and teachers has not been erased by time, the difficulties that can arise while laboring in the Lord's vineyard remain. There is loneliness, and there are still people who will reject the truth, who will persecute those who teach the truth, and some who become unfaithful. Fortunately God provides emotional support for those who work for Him (Heb. 13:5b), and faithful brethren to assist His workers through difficult times of service.

PAUL'S LOVE FOR THE FELLOW SERVANTS HE HAD BROUGHT TO THE WORK

An examination of Paul's work reveals his interest in bringing the lost to salvation and to the Lord's work. Paul recognized the value of having fellow servants in the Lord's vineyard. He wrote to Timothy: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul knew that each person who obeyed the Gospel opened up new possibilities to accomplish more in the Lord's vineyard. Paul's love for these fellow

laborers is evident by the letters he wrote to them. For in these letters Paul encouraged his fellow servants to continue in faithful living and faithful service to the Lord.

The Foundation of Faithful Living

Paul understood that those who are laboring for the Lord must strive to live according the Lord's will (Eph. 4:1). The foundation of such a life rests upon the "holy scriptures," which were able to make one "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). With these words, Paul sought to encourage Timothy by reminding him of the source of his faith the Gospel. The Old Testament scriptures, pointed toward the coming of Jesus, His death on the cross, and the establishment of the Gospel plan of salvation. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he called to their remembrance their obedience to the Gospel plan, pointing out that their salvation was dependant upon their memory of the Gospel message (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Paul realized that forgetting the fundamental facts of the Gospel would allow Christians to stray from the salvation of the Gospel and the service to the Lord. With this in mind he pointed out to the Roman Christians that Jesus' death was not a license to continue in sin rather it is the source of man's salvation from sin. For this reason, when one has obtained salvation through obedience to the Gospel, the foundation of one's future lifestyle and work must stand upon the Gospel. The realization of this foundation will lead one who is truly appreciative of Christ's sacrifice to strive to mold one's life to the form of faithful living (Rom. 6).

Form of Faithful Living

In writing to those he had helped to enter into the Lord's vineyard, Paul gave instructions concerning the form of faithful living. Again Paul emphasized the

importance of learning God's Word, further stressing the importance of living by God's Word and teaching It to others (1 Tim. 4:16). For his work to be successful, Timothy was admonished to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Other occasions called for more correctional instruction to fix problems that had arisen. For instance some false teachers were spreading doctrines that undermined God's plan of salvation (Gal. 5:3, 4). Also, there were others who were influenced by worldliness and immorality. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning such problems, he pointed out that such sin should be mourned and handled quickly and carefully, for the safety of the church her influence over those in the world (1 Cor. 5).

While working for the Lord, Christians cannot afford to conform to the world. The mission and work of the church is to take the Gospel to the lost world, that those who will hear, believe, and obey the Gospel may be "transformed by the renewing" of their minds (Mk. 16:15, 16; Rom. 12:2). For this mission to be successful every Christian must recognize the form of faithful living, taking "heed to the doctrine" and to themselves, and continuing in them Christians will be able to save themselves and those that hear the Gospel from their lives and from their teaching (1 Tim. 4:16).

Force 'of Faithful Living

Sometimes one might think that Paul was somewhat "hard" on those to whom he wrote. Yet as one remembers that Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to pen these letters, the importance of what Paul wrote becomes evident, and through the importance of these instructions one is able to see Paul's love for these Christians. He was instructing them on how to secure their own salvation while helping others to obtain it. Paul reminded these

individuals of the facts of the Gospel system and their initial obedience to the plan of salvation, the foundation of their faithful living, to encourage them to continue to strive to take on the form of faithful living (Rom. 12:1, 2). Paul knew that through their faithfulness in living for the Lord, these individuals and congregations could accomplish much for the Lord's cause.

Today as preachers and elders stand before congregations of the Lord's people, the message sometimes seems difficult to hear. Instructions are given concerning holy living and one's responsibility to the church and to the lost. If the heart of the one proclaiming the messages is what it ought to be, the message is not the preacher's, it is God's (This becomes evident through continued study of God's Word). Those who make such proclamations recognize the value of the souls to whom they speak, and they recognize the potential that those souls have in reaching the souls that remain in sin. Their objective, like Paul's objective, is to help God's people to maintain their salvation by reminding them of its foundation and the form of living required to receive it (Rev. 2:10). Then to turn these fellow laborers to the lost souls of the world, to show and to teach them the way that God has made for man to go to Heaven.

PAUL'S LOVE FOR FELLOW SERVANTS FACING DIFFICULTIES

Paul loved the Lord's church, and he worked diligently to help it to grow stronger spiritually and numerically (2 Cor. 11:28). While he was involved in this work Paul and his fellow servants faced adversities. The difficulties that these brethren faced varied from disputes between brethren to matters of spiritual corruption. As Paul became aware

of these difficulties, he showed his love to these fellow servants, helping them with the difficulties that they were facing.

Dealing with Disputes

Disputes occur for various reasons, but when Christian attitudes are involved, disputes can be overcome. Paul faced a dispute when Barnabas wanted to take Mark on the second missionary journey, and Paul did not see Mark as a beneficial travel companion (Acts 15:36-41). This dispute increased to the point that Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways. However, this separation did not hinder their work. In fact, Paul's attitude toward his fellow laborers was such that even though he could not continue to work beside Barnabas, Paul still desired Barnabas' and Mark's work for the Lord to prosper.

Paul faced a potential dispute while he was in prison in Rome. During this time Paul met a runaway slave named Onesimus, whom Paul taught the Gospel (Phil. 10). After his conversion, Onesimus became a fellow laborer in the Gospel to Paul, but repentance required Onesimus to make restitution for his sins. As a runaway slave, Onesimus had stolen at least himself from Philemon, his slave owner, and repentance required his return (1 Cor. 7:20-22; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 4:1).³ Paul sought to settle the dispute before it got any worse, therefore, he sent Onesimus back to Colossae with Tychicus and a letter to Philemon (Col. 4:7-10). In sending Onesimus back to Philemon, there was potential danger and aggression awaiting Onesimus, but Paul's letter was of such a nature that it would help Onesimus and Philemon to enter into a new relationship, not as a slave to his master, but as a Christian to his brother in God's family.

When disputes arise in the Lord's church today, those involved would do well to look back at Paul's methods of dealing with disputes. Sometimes certain methods of spreading the Gospel can become the source of a dispute. This should not be the case; methods are just tools to help Christians to carry out the Lord's work. If any scriptural method is proven successful, all Christians should rejoice at its success. On the other hand when disputes arise because one has wronged another, both Christians must remember the identity of their Father and their love for Him and His spiritual family. Remembering these things as well as one's desire to go to Heaven will do much good in helping to resolve disputes that arise today.

Dealing with Delinquents

Another difficulty with which Paul was faced as he worked for the Lord was Christians who had been ensnared by false doctrines and immorality. To help those who were in such situations, Paul instructed Timothy: "servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Many people have been led astray by false doctrines, yet they do not realize the hopelessness that they face. To overcome their ignorance of the situation one must work with them, gently showing them their need to conform to God's will.

Paul's dealing with delinquents became more severe when he encountered those who were teaching false doctrines and leading others astray. Paul instructed Titus: "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that

he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself" (Tit. 3:10, 11). Paul "withstood" Peter "to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision" (Gal. 2:11, 12). Peter's actions were not only dangerous to his own soul's salvation, he was leading others astray. Other Jews, even Barnabas, had stopped eating with the Gentile Christians because of Peter's example (Gal. 2:13). Before things got any worse, Paul pointed out to Peter that his actions were teaching false doctrine and he was leading others astray (Gal. 2:14). Paul did not stand by while false doctrines were being spread by teaching or by example.

Dealing with delinquent children of God is a work in which all Christians must be involved (Gal. 6:1). Whether a false teacher or one who has been led astray by a false teacher, those who have gone astray need help to recognize that they are lost and in need of salvation. The work of restoring the erring is a great display of one's love for one's fellow laborers. James concluded his book by stating: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jam. 5:19, 20).

Dealing with Damaged Congregations

One final group of individuals that Paul assisted in overcoming difficulties consisted of the congregations to whom Paul wrote. A casual reading of the epistles to the Corinthian Christians reveals a congregation that many today would say was hopeless. Yet Paul saw potential instead of hopelessness. He knew that the congregation could be

turned back to God with patience and instruction from God. As he approached the Corinthians, Paul's love for them shined forth. He pleaded with them (1 Cor. 1:10), and he referred to them regularly as "brethren" (thirty six times) and "beloved" (six times). As he pleaded with the Corinthians, Paul patiently presented God's Word to them, and by the time that Paul sent the second epistle to them, the Corinthians had started making the changes, about which Paul had written (2 Cor. 2:7).

Congregations of the Lord's people will never be perfect or sinless. Older preachers often warn: "If you find a perfect congregation, do not go there." Their statement was not derogatorily made about other preachers about any congregation. They just want younger preachers to realize that congregations are made of people who have problems; therefore, congregations will have problems. Thankfully there are preachers who desire to follow in Paul's footsteps, going to such congregations and helping those Christians to learn better how to live for the Lord. They do this realizing that they themselves are not perfect, having to "keep under" their own bodies, bringing them "into subjection: lest that by any means, when" they have "preached to others" they "should be" castaways (1 Cor. 9:27). Preachers like Paul do not go out to congregations for the glory that they might receive from their members; preachers like Paul go out to congregations that the members may see glory. May the Lord bless His people with more preachers like Paul!

CONCLUSION

Paul faced many adverse circumstances throughout his life, but he did not face them by himself. As one considers the love that Paul had for his fellow servants, a craving for such love must be aroused in one's soul. This love can be enjoyed by every person of the world who obeys the Gospel and becomes a fellow servant in the Lord's vineyard of labor, if they show the same love to their fellow laborers in the Lord's vineyard.

End Notes

¹ <u>THE HOLY BIBLE, King James Version</u> (Cambridge: England, Cambridge University Press, 1991) All scripture references are to this version unless otherwise stated.

² McGarvey, ORIGINAL COMMENTARY ON ACTS, p. 126.

³ Bob Winton, <u>Outlined Commentary on ACTS</u> (Manchester, TN: 2001) p. 110. This discussion leads one to the question, "why did Paul not condemn slavery?" It is important to note that forced and cruel slavery is contrary to Christian principles (Matt. 7:12). On page 110 of his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Bob Winton explains: "the Lord did not include in the gospel a divine mandate requiring the immediate, unconditional release of all slaves. Had he done so, the economy of the Roman Empire, which was based on the slave system, would have been destroyed, bringing financial devastation on millions. When the principles of the gospel were gradually accepted by many, and incorporated into the constitutions of nations, slavery dissolved. Undoubtedly, greater hardship would have resulted by the sudden dissolution of slavery by divine fiat than was faced under the current rule of slavery."

ARMING FOR THE BATTLE

By Richard Mansel

INTRODUCTION

We tuck our child into bed and head to our bedroom for much needed sleep. As morning comes, we walk by our child's room, and see that their bed is empty. Their curtains blow in the breeze coming from the open window, sending shock waves through our world.

Our screams pierce the silence of the house. Fueled by adrenaline and fear, we race to the window and see our limp child over the shoulder of a strange man.

We are outside in a flash, grabbing the man and fighting with everything that we have to save our child. Death is no obstacle. The child's safety is the only thing in the world that matters. We are impervious to pain and danger to our body. We become a wild animal for our child's life.

Such horrors happen in a violent world. This nightmare is too horrible to imagine and we take precautions, as best we can. We plead with God for their physical safety and sacrifice for them every day. We do whatever is necessary to keep them from harm.

Despite our fervent concern and protection, we often allow Satan to carry them away spiritually without any opposition. In fact, many times, we invite him in and give him our children willingly by letting them be worldly to the core. Our lack of concern for their spiritual condition stands in stunning contrast to our rigorous protection physically.

Most will die for their children, but the majority will not lead their children to spiritual life in Christ (Matt. 7:13-14). They will monitor their children's health and security, but not their soul.

REALITY OF THE WAR

Knowledge of our enemy will fortify our spirits. However, "God does not throw us unprotected into the battle against Satan's empire." He wants us to be well fortified, but first we must understand the enemy.

If we deny the reality of the spiritual war that rages around us, we will be an easy casualty. Our families will be, as well, without godly leadership and they will run after the world, and all that it entails.

Satan is deadly serious about this war and so few Christians seem to care. Leonard Ravenhill said, "Many of us are hunting mice -- while lions devour the land."²

We must become more serious about the reality of the dangers facing us. Our young people are leaving the church in droves. God's people are becoming increasingly immoral. Our churches are countenancing error in order to draw crowds. Biblical authority is almost an afterthought. Religious leaders of the day hold more credence than the Apostles of Jesus.

We must awaken from our slumber because the world is on fire. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:6).

God and Satan are fierce competitors in the spiritual war for the souls of men. We all stand on the battlefield, regardless of whether we realize it or not. We fight for the Lord or we stand against him. No one can be passive in this struggle. In fact, passivity puts us on Satan's side, as does being immoral. Anyone that does not actively fight for righteousness empowers the devil and his forces.

Satan and his ministers are always involved in seeking to destroy their enemies. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

In the first chapter of Job, Satan fights for the soul of God's disciple. He hunts all of us and employs every lie at his disposal. He is a pathological liar who possesses no positive qualities (John 8:44).

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Jesus is light and perfectly good (John 8:12; Rev. 21:22-24).

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

If we will successfully take the battlefield for God, we must know the enemy. It is not people, although they do wear his uniform. They are under Satan's power.

"Our enemies are not people. We must see beyond people. Satan may use people to persecute us, lie to us, cheat on us, hurt us, or even kill us. But our real enemy lurks in the shadows of the unseen world, moving people as pawns on the chessboard of time. As long as we see people as enemies and wrestle against them, we will spend our strength in vain."

People in sin are victims of Satan's deceptions. They are doing his bidding under false pretenses. Yet, they labor for him, nonetheless. They are responsible for their own actions, but we need to pray for them and reach out to their souls and try to bring them to Christ.

Satan uses them in nefarious ways that utilizes whatever is necessary to pull us from God. He studies us, is skilled at finding our vulnerable spots, and pierces us through with his tricks (Eph. 6:11).

"Mention of the 'schemes' of the devil reminds us of the trickery and subterfuge by which evil and temptation present themselves in our lives. Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable, and perfectly legitimate. It is a baited and camouflaged trap." 5

Satan will fade into the background so he will not be responsible for anything. No one will find his fingerprints at the scene of the crime. Darkness obscures his offenses.

In fact, "few of Satan's tactics are openly Satanic." That makes him especially dangerous because he finds a way to make everything that he wants, appear as our own decision. He speaks in our voice and convinces us we are independent and making our own way. Yet, we cannot hear his macabre laughter as he watches us walk away from God.

Ephesians tells us that we are not fighting against flesh and blood, but the power of the Devil. His tentacles are in everything. "Satan keeps people in a state of darkness, and he has a legion of evil spirits whose supreme task is to fasten false ideologies like iron shackles on the souls of men."

However, "God does not throw us unprotected into the battle against Satan's empire." His grace and mercy clothe us in goodness, which is antithetical to the filthy robes of the evil one.

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE WAR

If God provides all that we need and we do not utilize them, we cannot hold God responsible. We have a spiritual armor that will make us complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). "Wherefore

take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph. 6:13).

We must put on the armor, if it will be of any use to us. We cannot survive without it.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

We must band together against our common foe, so we can be stronger.

"The church, the body of believers, is in this warfare together. As the Roman soldier did not fight alone, so must believers as a body, united under their commander-in-chief, stand against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." 9

We must take a stand as a courageous soldier who is fully committed to staving off these attacks. "Stand" means to "make a stand, hold one's ground in a military context." The term means, "To denote that which lasts and is stable, not subject to change or decay."

We cannot allow Satan to take the hill that the Lord has secured. Souls that are lost to the enemy are doomed to an eternal hell (Matt. 25:46). The stakes are enormous!

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:14-17).

God has blessed us in ways we neither deserve nor can comprehend. They rain down around us. We fight with God's armor and utilize his weapons and power. However, we cannot fight without actively donning the armor and picking up the sword.

For many Christians, it is not because they do not have the armaments to fight Satan. They do not take the initiative to use them. We think we are too smart, strong or wealthy to need help. To do so would be to admit weakness.

Satan is thrilled when our vanity prevents us from being fully armed.

"This piece of armor is basic to all other pieces because truth and trustworthiness are basic to all the other qualities that believers need in order to withstand diabolical attacks. As believers internalize God truth they live and move in it." ¹²

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13).

The breastplate of the soldier of the day, "extended from the base of the neck to the upper part of the thighs, so it covered what we would call the thorax and the abdomen." 13

Shoes are very important to a soldier. They spend a lot of time protecting them. We cannot stand strong and resist Satan without good footing.

"It is the believer's surefootedness in the tranquility of the mind and the sincerity of the heart in the gospel of peace that gives them the readiness to stand against the devil and his angelic hosts."¹⁴

We take up the shield of faith that will protect us and empower us on a daily basis. Faith is security because we know that God is in charge and Christ has defeated every enemy that faced him (1 Cor. 15:26). We know to the core of our being that Christ will never abandon us (Heb. 13:5; Heb. 11:1).

"Before battle the shields were immersed in water, soaking the leather cover and canvas beneath the leather, which also aided in extinguishing the flaming missiles." ¹⁵

The fiery arrows "prepared the way for the mass attack of the troops upon the enemy opposed to them." In fact, "Soldiers used to throw these darts at the enemy in great profusion from all conceivable directions so as to cause confusion."

Satan wants us to be confused and shamed at our stand for righteousness and morality. When the heat of public shame attacks us, he hopes we will surrender and follow the crowd (Eph. 4:17-19).

We come to the final two pieces of the armor; ones that we take up, rather than putting on. "In physical warfare, the helmet and sword are the last two pieces a soldier takes up. The helmet, hot and uncomfortable, would be put on a soldier when he faced impending danger." ¹⁸

The helmet and the sword work together. The helmet represents knowledge, while the sword represents the Word of God. The application is clear. We learn the Word and incorporate it into our minds and lives and we can be ready for all of the attacks that will rise against us. We must possess the knowledge that we will not be defeated, if we remain in Christ. "With his head protected, the soldier feels safe in the midst of the battle."

The sword is an offensive weapon and is, "the breath of God." "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Isa. 11:4). "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations" (Rev. 19:15).

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

Nothing can defeat the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-5). When properly utilized, it is an unstoppable force. We return to the beginning. We are fighting a spiritual enemy whose powers exceed man's abilities. Accordingly, if we will survive, we must use the tools provided by God, the most powerful force in the universe.

THE RESPONSE TO THE WAR

The war is real and unless we prepare for battle, our chances for survival are nonexistent. God has done his part and we must take advantage of his mercy. No one can win this war without his armor and weapons.

We must be vigilant, day and night. We must know the enemy in all of his permutations. Satan will turn to sexual, ethical and technological issues as temptations. If we refuse to discuss sexual challenges with our children, Satan will have a great advantage. We do not have to be too graphic, but our youngsters must be sexually smart and taught how to handle the situations that will arise (Heb. 13:5).

Young people need to be aware of the lies that the opposite sex will throw at them.²¹ Fathers can empower their daughters by teaching them how to handle themselves with men. Likewise, sons need to be prepared to handle sexually aggressive women.

We must examine ethical issues and apologetics in light of Scripture so they will be ready for the attacks of science.²²

Knowledge, a wary eye and worthwhile preparation coupled with God's power, is unassailable. Our efforts will come to victory.

"The whole armor highlights the danger and seriousness of the threat facing the readers and therefore more strongly emphasizing the importance of total dependence on God's strength."²³

CONCLUSION

The seriousness of this conflagration cannot be overstated. Souls lie in the balance. Sincerity will be insufficient. We must be in Christ or we will be with Satan for all eternity. No other option exists.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12).

The world is unaware of the dangers facing them; we must raise the clarion call to the lost and dying around us. The gospel call still speaks loudest, if we will speak the words of the Father.

The time is here for the people of the Book to live as disciples. "The world is waiting to see men and women behaving like Jesus."²⁴ We cannot reach the lost unless they see Jesus in our lives (Eph. 4:1).

"Although Christ won the victory at the cross, the reality of conflict presently continues for the believers."²⁵ We cannot rest on Jesus' laurels because Satan is after all of us. He never rests and we are all responsible for our own sins (Ezek. 18).

Eternity rests in the balance. "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing" (2 Thess. 3:13). "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11).

End Notes

- 1 John Phillips, Exploring Ephesians and Philippians (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993), 185.
- 2 http://dailychristianquote.com/dcqspiritwarfare.html, Accessed on August 26, 2009.
- 3 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references will be from the King James Version.
- 4 Phillips, 187.
- 5 Peter T. O'Brien, The <u>Letter To the Ephesians</u> in the <u>Pillar New Testament Commentary</u> series edited by D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 464.
- 6 Kenneth L. Boles, <u>Galatians and Ephesians</u> in the <u>College Press NIV Commentary</u> series edited by Jack Cottrell (Joplin: College Press, 1983), 334.
- 7 Phillips, 190.
- 8 Phillips, 185.
- 9 Harold Hoehner, Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002), 853-854.
- 10 Ibid, 833.
- 11 Ibid, 823.
- 12 Ibid, 840.
- 13 Martyn Lloyd-Jones, <u>The Christian Soldier</u> (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1977), 223.
- 14 Hoehner, 844.
- 15 Hoehner, 848.
- 16 Lloyd-Jones, 299.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Hoehner, 849.
- 19 Hoehner, 850.
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STANDING IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION

Andrew Nelson

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of time there has been a war that has raged between those who follow God and those who are led by the lusts of the flesh, following Satan. The first record of persecution in God's Word tells of the murder of righteous Abel, whose sacrifice was acceptable to God because it had been offered by faith (Gen. 4; Heb. 11:4). Throughout Jesus' life on earth He was the recipient of increasing persecution that began with ridicule and ended with His death on the cross. Knowing the hatred that the world possessed for God's will and those striving to live by it, Jesus warned his apostles of the reality of persecution (Matt. 10:24, 25). Paul knew the reality of persecution, after working in the Lord's vineyard of service for many years, and as he was preparing to leave that field of service, Paul wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy to warn and to prepare him to face the struggles with persecution that he would have to endure.

A COMPARISON

As Paul began to conclude the instruction and the encouragement of his son in the faith, Paul spoke of the difficulties that he had endured for the cause of Christ. Then he warned Timothy of the persecutions that are guaranteed to all who seek to follow Christ. This was a problem with which Paul was quite familiar, and for which Paul wrote to prepare his son in the faith, Timothy.

The Persecuted

Paul guaranteed persecution to "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:12). Those to whom Paul referred are people who are "faithful to God in all things," and have been brought into Christ through obedience to the Gospel (Gal. 3:27). They continue to submit to

God's will by not conforming "to this world: but" by being "transformed by the renewing" of their minds by way of studying God's Word and applying It to their lives (Rom. 12:2; Jam. 1:21-25). During this transformation one's way of life slowly changes from being compatible with the world to being in harmony with God's will. Peter described this change as he reminded those to whom he wrote of "the time past of" their lives when they "wrought the will of the Gentiles," and "walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:" (1 Pet. 4:3). He continued to point out that the Gentiles (or unconverted) thought "it strange" that these Christians did not continue in their previous way of life, running "not with them to the same excess of riot" and they spoke evil of the Christians (1 Pet. 4:4).

Persecution was not an unforeseen result of Christianity. Jesus spoke of His entrance into the world as light that came into the world and was hated by the majority of its residents (John 3:19-21). As Jesus' obedient loyalty to God became more evident to those of His day, many (especially the religious leaders) despised Jesus for His faithfulness to God. As time continued these evil men began to look for ways to entrap Jesus through His teaching and ultimately for ways that they could kill Him without causing trouble for themselves (Lk. 10:25; Matt. 22:15; Matt. 26:4). Recognizing the nature of the message He was sending throughout the world, Jesus warned His apostles: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matt. 10:24, 25). After the Lord called Paul to service, he strove diligently to follow in the footsteps of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). In submitting to the Lord's doctrine and way of life, Paul, like Jesus encountered persecution. Paul called to Timothy's remembrance the persecutions and

afflictions that Paul had faced in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, but he emphasized that he had been delivered from these places and their persecutions by the Lord (2 Tim. 3:11).

Paul's warning of the persecution of "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus" still stands. Throughout the world true Christianity stands in stark contrast with the ways of the world, and like the days of Jesus and the days of Paul, the persecution of God's faithful continues. In the United States, persecution is normally limited to mockery and to ridicule, similar to that described by Peter (1 Pet. 4:1-4), although, it can move on to discrimination and even violence. However, the changing tides of public opinion and national law at least points to a time (if things continue in the current direction) when persecution will move past mockery and ridicule into the realms of censorship, arrests, and even bodily harm. Sadly this is occurring while God's people in the United States have the right and the responsibility to choose their leaders carefully. How sad it would be to realize that the reason one must face persecution is because one did not stand for the Lord and His people in the voting booth, when the opportunity was available!

The Persecutors

In contrast to those who are striving to live for the Lord, Paul speaks of "evil men and seducers" that "shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). This group of people consists of those who are neither concerned with knowing nor with doing the Lord's will. The group can include those who have never obeyed the Gospel as well as those who have turned away from the Lord's way. These individuals do not benefit from the direction one receives by submitting to God (Ps. 119:105), and therefore their way of life goes from bad to worse. These individuals have been deceived, or "blinded" by "the god of this world...lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4). In this condition, they believe that they are traveling the right course through life.

They seek traveling companions with similar beliefs and practices and they deceive others, leading them down a path of destruction, away from God. Timothy would have to work carefully to help such people to recognize their need for the Gospel, realizing that the people he was attempting to save might be the source of the persecution that he would face.

God is interested in the salvation of all mankind, including those whom Paul described in this passage (1 Tim. 2:4). For this reason, God has sent His people into the world with the Gospel message (Matt. 28:19, 20; 2 Tim. 2:2). When one who is not following the Lord's will hears and obeys the Gospel that individual is saved from the destruction awaiting the evil (2 Thess. 1:6-10). Sadly, when the Gospel is preached to the lost, resistance is often stirred, for the Gospel calls for one to leave one's former way of life and to begin a new life (Rom. 6:1-4). This resistance or persecution may be evidenced by the questioning of the preacher's motives or the preacher's character being attacked, or it might be seen through the expulsion of the preacher or teacher from the home of the one with whom they had been studying. Still other more extreme exhibits of persecution have been employed as those trying to reach the lost have been threatened or received bodily harm or damage to their personal property. Even though persecution comes, there is a course that one must maintain to be pleasing to God and to go to heaven.

THE COURSE IN WHICH TO CONTINUE

For the direction Timothy needed to continue to serve the Lord faithfully, Paul pointed Timothy back to what he had "learned and" had "been assured of," (2 Tim. 3:14), namely, the Old Testament Scriptures, which were "able to make" Timothy "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

Paul reminded Timothy of several things about the Gospel in which he could find comfort and assurance as he faced the coming persecutions of his work. First, Paul reminded Timothy of those who had taught him the scriptures: his mother, Eunice; his grandmother, Lois; and his father in the faith, the apostle Paul (2 Tim. 3:15). By remembering the love that these faithful children of God had shown to Timothy, as well as the trust that he had in them, Timothy had a great source of strength to help him face the persecution that came his way in the Lord's vineyard. Second, Paul reminded Timothy that the scriptures were beneficial to him being "able to make" him "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). Paul further pointed the way to salvation, pointing out that the scriptures are "profitable for doctrine" (teaching needed to know God and how to be pleasing to Him), for reproof (for convincing an individual of wrong doing), for correction (shows what is wrong and teaches what is right), for instruction in righteousness (teaching one the right way to live before God): That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16b, 17).3 By knowing God's Word, Timothy would be able to know how to live in order to obtain the salvation offered by God through His Word. Third, Paul reminded Timothy of the assurance of scriptures as God is their source (2 Tim. 3:16). The scriptures with which Timothy was quite familiar emphasized the surety of God's Word (Ps. 19:7; Is. 40:8).

With the comfort and assurance of God's Word Timothy had the foundation that he needed to continue in the "good works" in which he was to be involved (2 Tim. 3:17). While working in the Lord's vineyard, even after Paul's death, Timothy would have the support and encouragement that he needed to continue in the course that he began when he obeyed the Gospel. Likewise, one can find comfort and encouragement in the memory of those who taught one the Gospel as well as one's knowledge of the salvation promised by "God, that cannot lie promised before the world began;" (Tit. 1:2). This knowledge coupled with one's love for the Lord and a desire to serve Him will push one forward in service, even in the face of persecution.

A CHARGE TO KEEP

Having warned Timothy of coming persecutions and reminded him of the comfort and assurance of his faith in God's Word, Paul gives Timothy a solemn charge "before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1). Giving reference to the presence of "God, and the Lord Jesus Christ," Paul brings divine authority as well as awareness of Jesus' coming to judge mankind, to the greatness of the charge that is about to be given. In view of these facts, Timothy is to keep the charge that is given to him, meeting its demands, even during the departure of others, fulfilling his duty to God.

The Demand

Paul's charge, to Timothy, demanded that he "Preach the word;" (2 Tim. 4:2). The word to which Paul referred was the word of God, the scriptures that he had reminded Timothy were "able to make" him "wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15). This charge demanded that Timothy proclaim "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), as Paul had done throughout his time in the Lord's Kingdom. It required Timothy to preach about God's standard of living, which was being revealed through the Word that He was giving to mankind. As he did this Timothy would have to identify and speak against sin, and he would have to announce to those to whom he preached the cure for sin and the way to live being freed from sin (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

The time period covered by this charge to Timothy was defined by the time that he lived in this world. Paul told him to "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;*" (2 Tim. 4:2). Timothy was to be constantly involved in this work with great urgency and diligence. Timothy's level of activity in this work was to be maintained at a high level at all times. Whether people wanted to hear the Gospel or not, Timothy was to preach God's Word wherever and

whenever he had the opportunity.⁵ Paul had provided Timothy with such an example, for wherever Paul traveled he preached to anyone who would listen (Col. 1:23). At times Paul found favorable opportunities to teach people the Gospel (Acts 16:1-15), but at other times Paul made opportunities to preach out of bad circumstances (Acts 21:37-22:24).

As Timothy preached the Gospel, Paul's charge demanded that Timothy follow a specific model: "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2c). As Timothy worked to spread the Gospel, he was to prove to the lost, by way of the scriptures that they were lost and in need of the Gospel. He was to identify, by the scriptures those things that were contrary to God's will, warning of the coming punishment to those who do such things, and he was to urge those who were lost to aspire to reach the standard of living made available through obedience to the Gospel that he preached. Paul alluded to the difficulty of such a task, stating that this work was to be done "with all long-suffering and doctrine." While preaching to the lost and to the erring, Timothy would have to work patiently with those that he would teach, providing them with the teaching and with the time that they would need to realize where they were and where they needed to be spiritually.

Paul's charge to Timothy still stands, and the demands of this charge are placed upon every Christian, for each Christian lives under the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20). God's Word furnishes or equips those who are striving to live for the Lord unto "all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17). One of these works must be taking the message of salvation to those who are lost and deceived in the darkness of sin. Realizing that godliness and worldliness cannot coexist one must be prepared for resistance to the proclamation of God's Word, and yet one must still preach God's Word, "in season, and out of season;" (2 Tim. 4:2). Fortunately God's Word is still powerful, and when God's workers preach His Word "with all long-suffering and doctrine"

those who have good and honest hearts will receive the truth and bear much fruit (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23). Yet, the emphasis in Paul's charge is not on the obedience of the lost; Paul is emphasizing the responsibility of the child of God to preach the Word. When one has presented the whole counsel of God to the best of one's ability, this charge has been met, whether such work results in the obedience of the lost or the persecution of the righteous.

The Departure

Paul added urgency to this charge, reminding Timothy of the departure from the truth that had already been discussed: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). During this departure there would be Christians who would turn away from the truth. The demands of the Gospel and perhaps the pains of persecution would overwhelm them to the point that they would turn to an easier more pleasant standard of living. Paul described them as having "itching ears" bringing to mind the pleasure given to an animal, such as a dog that is having its ears scratched. Those who would turn from the truth would desire something that would bring pleasure to their ears. The truth would require work and endurance, but fables and false doctrines based upon the lusts of mankind would sooth their itching ears.

Many in modern times might be characterized by Paul's description of the apostates. For many, the demands of the Gospel are too great, and they seek doctrines that will soothe their itching ears. For this reason many refuse to leave denominationalism, having found such pleasure, being deceived by the doctrines and commandments of men. Still the sadder situation has to be those who have obeyed the Gospel, but have turned to the false hope that the religions of the world have to offer. When confronted by the Gospel, both those who remain trapped in

error as well as those who have turned from the truth to error, are likely to reject the truth and possibly persecute the preacher to some degree. Acknowledging the difficulties ahead Paul urged the faithful proclaimers of the Gospel to fulfill their duties to the Lord and to the lost.

The Duty

There were certain things that Timothy had to do for his work to be successful. First Paul admonished Timothy to "watch...in all things" (2 Tim. 4:5). Timothy had to be alert in his work, looking for opportunities to teach as well as dangers that would impede his work. Second, Timothy was to "endure afflictions" (2 Tim. 4:5). During the course of his work, Timothy was assured of persecutions that would arise (2 Tim. 3:12). In addition to the persecutions that Timothy would face there were other afflictions that would arise. Paul had experienced many difficulties at the hands of those who opposed the Gospel and by some whom he identified as "false brethren" (2 Cor. 11:24-33). Paul knew the difficult road ahead of Timothy, and Paul charged and encouraged Timothy to carry on through those difficulties. Finally, Timothy was to "do the work of an evangelist," (2 Tim. 4:5). Again Paul exhorts Timothy to continue to preach God's Word while facing the difficulties of living the Christian life and the persecutions that would arise. He was to do this in such a way as to "make full proof of" his "ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). Through the faithful completion of his work and keeping of this charge, Timothy would be able to say with Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:" (2 Tim. 4:7).

Those who are working in the Lord's vineyard today must heed these admonitions given by the apostle Paul. The only way that a Christian will successfully navigate through this life is by being watchful: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15, 16). Such alertness comes only through the

knowledge of God's Word. By walking in the light of His Word one is better equipped to recognize and overcome the snares of the devil. In addition to overcoming temptations, one who is alert will be looking for opportunities to evangelize the lost and the fallen. By faithfully executing one's work and enduring the hardships that come because of that work, one will have fulfilled his ministry with the same hope of eternal life about which Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

CONCLUSION

Paul knew of the hardships that one faces while working in the Lord's vineyard, and he knew by faith that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). With this in mind Paul warned Timothy of the coming apostasy and the persecutions that could result from it. Paul compared for Timothy the status of both the persecuted and the persecutor, pointing out that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). However, Paul reminded Timothy of the source of his faith and the beginning of his walk with the Lord, and Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in that course, fulfilling the charge to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). The completion of his duty to the Lord would insure Timothy that he would love the Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

Persecution is not something for which Christians look, but it is the result of living godly lives in a sinful world. Christians in today's world must not flee persecution to the point of neglecting their service to God. Remembering that the Lord and many faithful Christians have faced persecution through the years, one must not give up the fight. By considering Paul's comparison, the reasons that he gave to continue in the correct course, can be strengthened to

continue to live for the Lord and fulfill the charge that Paul gave to "Preach the word" even in the face of persecution.

End Notes

¹ <u>THE HOLY BIBLE, King James Version</u> (Cambridge: England, Cambridge University Press, 1991) All scripture references are to this version unless otherwise stated.

² Bob Winton, <u>Outlined Commentary on I Timothy II Timothy Titus</u> (Manchester, TN: 2006) p. 188.

³ Ibid. p. 191

⁴ Ibid. p. 196

⁵ Ibid.

"Lessons from First Peter"



The Fifteenth
SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 30, 31 2010
HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA

Editor: Riley Nelson

PREFACE

What a wonderful day it was when Andrew went to his brother Peter with the news, "We have found the Messiah". Peter was to become one of the most out spoken followers of Christ. In him we can see the enthusiasm that all Christians should possess. It was this apostle who stepped out of the boat when the Master said, "Come". It is true his faith began to waver when he saw the waves but how many would have had the faith to take that first step. He even taught a lesson when he started sinking, for he cried out, "Lord save me". Only Christ can save.

When studying his life his human qualities burst forth, as when the Lord was washing the feet of the disciples. At first Peter was not going to let the Lord wash his feet, but after the Lord told him he would have no part with Him, Peter proclaimed, "Lord not my feet only, but also my hands and head". Many words have been used to describe his character: bold, confident, courageous, frank, impulsive, energetic, vigorous, strong, and loving, and faithful.

Peter directs those to whom he is writing to act as "obedient children". They were directed to put aside the character of the world and to "desire the sincere milk of the word". His pleas were designed to help Christians to maintain a Christ like spirit in all they did. He addressed the Christians dealings with the government; the servants' dealings with their masters; how wives should deal with their husbands especially those whose husbands were not members of the Lord's body.

The elders of the Church were exhorted to feed the flock. How important proper "spiritual food" was at a time when the flock was being persecuted. So many things could cause the Christians to stop following God and to start acting like the world. They needed the oversight that qualified leaders could give them to remain true to the Living God. These men needed to

know how to lead the flock, not as "lords over God's heritage" but as leaders who set the proper example before the flock.

His writings are a look at how to remain a faithful child of God having favor with God and man. It is with this in mind we look to the pages of First Peter for our study.

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October 30, 2010

DEDICATION

For the Lord's church to prosper there must be Christians who are willing to give freely of themselves and their possessions. Many times the deeds done to help the work, go unnoticed by those who enjoy the fruits of others labor. Over the past years many such persons have had a volume such as this dedicated to them, and they were well deserving of the honor.

This year this volume is dedicated to a couple who exemplify Christianity in their lives. They have put forth time, talent and money to help the work prosper and grow down through the years. They have given words of encouragement to those who have been down trodden, including me and my family. Visitors to the congregation are met by one or both of these individuals and encouraged to come again. They spend hours doing things at the building that many never even notice, but would miss if they were not done. They are the supplier of the candy dish which our children love so much.

It is a great privilege to count them as Christian friends and to dedicate this volume to Larry and Libby Brown.

Riley Nelson

Fifteenth South-East Georgia Lectures

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

By Alan Wright

INTRODUCTION

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, "Into each life some rain must fall, some days must be dark and dreary." ¹ Indeed every one has at some time or other experienced the dark and dreary side of life. Job says, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." (Job 14:1) And Solomon writes, "For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity" (Eccl. 2:22, 23). Of course, life is not always heart-breaking and spirit-crushing, but in the moments of our deepest despair, it can feel that way. To each of us, life brings suffering.

There are three sorts of suffering that a person may face. First there is what might be termed *consequential suffering*; suffering that comes as a consequence of bad decisions and bad behavior. We eat the wrong foods and experience a stomachache. We drive too fast and receive a speeding ticket. We steal someone's property and go to jail. We cheat on our spouse and are served divorce papers. In such cases, the suffering we endure is directly caused by our own actions. This doesn't make it any less painful or difficult, but at least in our more reflective moments, we can admit that it has certain fairness to it. Thus the Bible warns, "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin" (Prov. 5:22).

Then there is *coincidental suffering*, suffering that coincides with the everyday affairs of life. There are things that just happen, and they happen to everyone – the rich and the poor, the black and the white, the young and the old, the good and the bad. Everyone gets toothaches and allergies. Everyone faces storms and droughts. Everyone experiences times of loneliness and

disappointment. Everyone deals with the pain of bereavement. We often do not understand why these things are happening, but at least we can take some solace in knowing that they are the common lot of all humanity. We need not take them personally, even when they strike at the most personal and precious parts of our life.

But there is also *controversial suffering*, suffering which is intentionally and purposefully inflicted by those who would controvert, or speak in opposition to, our character, our beliefs, or our way of life. Human history has demonstrated time and again that when people disagree and disapprove and dislike, they too often feel compelled to heap abuse and cruelty on their fellow man. And while we can make our peace, more or less, with that suffering which comes as the result of our own misdeeds or as part of the vicissitudes of life, it is truly incomprehensible to all reason and sense to consider why we would deliberately inflict such pain on one another.

Yet Christianity has always had to endure such suffering and persecution. Indeed the Scriptures assert that godliness and persecution are inseparably linked. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Christianity is a religion born out of an act of persecution, for it stands squarely fixed upon the death of Jesus on the cross. And within days of the beginning of the proclamation of the gospel, the disciples faced threats and imprisonments and physical violence. When the message moved out into other parts of the world, the warning was given, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

At a time when many Christians were struggling with the effects of this persecution, with some of them considering giving up their faith and others looking for ways to retaliate, the apostle Peter wrote a wonderful letter of encouragement and advice for the suffering saints of the regions on the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. We can do well to spend time with this letter and garner some powerful lessons for our own struggles.

Authenticity of the Epistle

Before we can delve into the story behind 1 Peter, we must first ask a basic question. Is this letter authentic? Is it an actual inspired epistle from the apostle Peter to saints of the eastern provinces? For if it is not, we are wasting our time examining its contents, for it is nothing more than a fraud. But if it is a divinely inspired message, then we ignore it at our own peril.

First it is important to understand that there were numerous writings from the early years of Christianity that purported to be from the apostle Peter. Yet all of them with the exception of the two epistles contained in our New Testament were considered heretical. For instance, *The Gospel of Peter* teaches the doctrine of Docetism, the concept that Jesus did not actually have a physical body, but only maintained the illusion of a body, and therefore he did not actually die on the cross.² It was soundly rejected as heresy. Other supposed writings of Peter were debated and, one by one, excluded from the canon of Scripture. Yet the letters of First and Second Peter remain. Thus the verdict of the early Christians, including many who had known Peter firsthand, was that the letters were genuine.

Quotations and allusions to 1 Peter are found throughout the writings of the early Christians, including Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Barnabas, Hermas and Polycarp. The letter is attributed to Peter by Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. ³ It would seem that the overwhelming view of the early Christians was that this letter was genuine.

Most modern scholars have supported this view and, unlike many of the New Testament books, there have been very few challenges to the authenticity of 1 Peter. There are two objections occasionally put forth which the student of the book may encounter.

Some have argued that the grammar and syntax of the Greek text is too good to have been written by a Jewish fisherman from Galilee. Aside from the obvious prejudice of such a statement, there are at least two good reasons for dismissing it as unworthy of consideration. First, it is likely that Peter used Silas as an amanuensis, or secretary, in writing the letter. "By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand" (1 Pet. 5:12). If this is the same Silas who had traveled with Paul in his missionary journeys, then he would almost certainly have spoken fluent Greek and could assist Peter is stating his thoughts in the best possible language. More importantly, Peter himself was endowed with the miraculous gift of speaking in other languages, and therefore he should have no difficulty expressing himself in whatever vernacular might be required.

But it is also objected that the great persecution against the church had not begun during Peter's lifetime, but was a product of the edicts of the Roman emperor Diocletian in the late third and early fourth centuries. But this view completely ignores the continued harassment and intolerance against Christianity that had existed from its earliest days, which frequently erupted into physical violence against the Christians. The New Testament itself is filled with examples. There is nothing in the letter of Peter that requires a formal pronouncement of hostilities by the government.

Having sufficiently dismissed these quibbles, we may now proceed to look at the background of this great letter.

A Look at the Life of Peter

Peter is one of the best known characters of the New Testament. His brother Andrew is responsible for introducing him to Jesus (John 1:35-42). A short time later Peter and Andrew along with James and John are called to follow Jesus (Luke 5:1-11; Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20). Over approximately the next three years, he had the opportunity to see Jesus perform many great miracles, including one in his own household (Mark 1:29-31; Matt. 8:14-15; Luke 4:38-39).

One of the predominant characteristics we see in Peter is his impetuous nature. When the disciples see Jesus walking on the water, Peter leaps from the boat to meet him (Matt. 14:28-31). At the transfiguration, Peter excitedly recommends building three tabernacles (Matt. 17:4,5; Mark 9:5-7; Luke 9:33-35). When Jesus prepares to wash the disciples' feet, Peter first adamantly refuses and then, when he is reprimanded, asks to be cleaned head to toe (John 13:4-10). Peter's natural instinct seems to be to act quickly without thinking.

He witnessed the great crowds that surrounded Jesus, and heard his proclamation announcing the coming of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:36,37; Matt. 4:24,25). As the multitudes grew, he certainly must have felt that a glorious new day was dawning. But he also began to see the resistance to Jesus from the established leaders of his people, the Pharisees and Sadducees, the priests and scribes. In time, many of the multitude that followed him from place to place left him as well.

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. (John 6:66-69)

Here we see Peter's faith and confidence in Jesus is unshaken by the difficulties they are encountering. A short time later he would make a similar confession, prompting Jesus to give to

him "the keys of the kingdom" (Matt. 16:15-19). At this stage in Peter's career, he seems assured that nothing can stop the progress of Jesus' kingdom. Indeed Jesus himself says that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Thus when Jesus remarks that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, Peter tries to brush off the notion.

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men (Matt. 16:21-23; see also Mark 8:31-33).

Jesus understood what Peter had not yet grasped – that the path to glory leads first through pain and suffering; that God's people are always in a conflict with the arrogance and ignorance of the world, and we will not subdue our enemies with the power of our might, but with patience, service, virtue, love and sacrifice.

When the hour of Jesus' death drew near, Peter again asserted himself, boasting of his constancy and unwavering loyalty.

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples (Matt. 26:31-35; see also Mark 14:27-29; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38).

Jesus was preparing to give himself as a sacrifice through the bitter agonies of the cross, but Peter was psyching himself up for a battle that he fully expected to win. It was only a few short hours later when the soldiers approached the small band in the garden of Gethsemane that Peter valiantly took sword in hand to smite down his enemies. But his only blow cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest (Matt. 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:49, 50; John 18:10). No sooner

had he done this than Jesus stopped him, and then, no doubt to Peter's great astonishment, Jesus healed the man's injury and turned to surrender to the soldiers.

When the soldiers took Jesus away, Peter followed behind and entered into the courtyard of the high priest's palace (Matt. 26:58; Mark 14:54; John 18:15). It is then that Peter falls to his lowest point. The event is so significant in understanding Peter's life that it is worth quoting all four accounts.

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:69-75).

And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept (Mark 14:66-72).

Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly (Luke 22:54-62).

But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself ... And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew (John 18:16-18, 25-27).

Matthew Henry, in commenting on Matthew's account of this event, makes note of an interesting progression in Peter's denials. First Peter merely professes not to understand what he is being asked. When this proves insufficient, Peter then declares flatly that he does not know who Jesus is. And when this too fails, he resorts to cursing and swearing to vindicate his statements.⁴

Why does Peter do this? Perhaps it is shame, embarrassed by Jesus' apparent cowardice, when Peter knew full well that Jesus had the power to decimate his enemies with a single word. There was also likely a certain amount of fear, wondering if he too might be arrested at any moment. He may have even been acting out of a self-deception that he was doing what was in Jesus' best interest, laying low and waiting for an ideal opportunity to affect some sort of rescue. All of these notions and many more, have been put forward, and there is likely some degree of truth in each. But underlying the shame and fear and self-deception, there is the great subverter, doubt.

Peter had been so confident and certain of everything. Jesus was no mere pretender. He was the very Son of God. He was the Messiah, the chosen Redeemer of God's people, whom they had been awaiting for generations. He had come in the power of God's glory, healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead, walking on water, and commanding storms to be still. He easily averted the sophistry of the Jewish leaders when they tried to trap him in his words.

And more than that, he confronted them, calling them hypocrites, blind and feeble leaders, who needed to repent of their sins. He overturned their tables and drove out their moneychangers. And when he spoke, even the men sent to arrest him for his insolence declared, "*Never man spake like this man*" (John 7:46). His message was a clarion call to all people that the days of weakness and discouragement were over, that no longer would the corrupt politicians and priests have their way, but the very kingdom of God is about to burst forth upon the earth.

Jesus, a few hours earlier, told Peter that Satan was desirous to ensnare him, but Jesus was praying for Peter that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:31,32). Jesus does not specifically pray for Peter's courage or loyalty, but for his faith. Jesus is saying in effect that Peter is about to have his convictions shaken to the core, but he must not lose faith. He must not give up his hope and trust that Jesus is who Peter has believed him to be, and that he will accomplish exactly what he has promised.

But now Peter sees his Master taken by his enemies and shamefully mocked and abused, falsely accused of crimes against Israel. This is not how it was supposed to be. Peter was expecting glory and triumph, not shame and defeat. And in this moment, even before Jesus is taken and abused by the soldiers, before the multitudes clamor for his death, before the nails are driven into his flesh, before he is taken down and wrapped in a shroud, Peter loses his faith.

And then he hears something he had no doubt heard many mornings in his lifetime - a rooster crows. And as Jesus is being led from the judgment hall, he casts his gaze upon his friend and disciple. And the sound of the crowing and the look of his Master tear into Peter's heart.

There is a very interesting word used in this account in Mark 14:72, where we are told, "And when he thought thereon, he wept." The Greek word here translated thought is epiballo,

meaning literally "to throw upon." It is used earlier in this chapter when we are told, "And they laid their hands on him, and took him" (Mark 14:46). It describes how the soldiers seized Jesus in order to arrest him. The word is often used in this way. Later Peter himself would be seized by other soldiers (rf. Acts 4:3; 5:18; 12:1; all of which use this same Greek word). But now it is his own conscience that seizes him, and it would seem that his deep sense of guilt was a far worse tormentor than anything he ever endured at the hands of his persecutors.

The scene ends with Peter in tears. The man who boasted so proudly that he would never desert Jesus had three times denied even knowing him. The following hours saw Jesus buffeted and beaten, ridiculed, spit upon, and then nailed to the cross. When the day's monumental work was over and Jesus was taken from the cross and buried, Peter, and indeed all the apostles, seem utterly defeated in body and spirit. In the space of one day, Peter has gone from boastful arrogance to bitter tears. This one act of persecution against his friend and Lord had broken the man.

We move forward a few weeks. Jesus has been raised from the dead, and Peter and the other apostles have had their faith and their joy restored. Jesus ascends into heaven, telling them to wait in Jerusalem to be imbued with power from the Holy Spirit. Then comes that great day of Pentecost and Peter, inspired by God, proclaims the gospel to the crowd assembled there that day.

At the heart of his message to the people was an affirmation concerning these events; He says,

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it (Acts 2:22-24).

Notice three important truths that Peter has now learned. 1) The things that Jesus had done, the very miracles that had been so convincing to Peter, did indeed show him to be a man approved of God. Peter had not been wrong to put his faith in Jesus. 2) The things that Jesus had suffered, those things that at the time seems to be an utter defeat, had all been part of the plan. They were by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. 3) There was no defeat. There could be none. It was not possible that death could defeat Jesus, and stop what he had come to do.

And so the story of Peter continues, and Peter faces many episodes of persecution. But he has learned his lesson. He will not strike back, as he had tried to do in the garden. Nor will he run away and hide, as he had tried to do in the high priest's courtyard. Rather he will follow the example of his Lord, enduring whatever he must, but remaining always steadfast in his duty and always confident in his faith.

Persecution Comes to the Eastern Provinces

As the gospel moved out beyond Judea and Samaria, it was generally best received amongst the Gentiles. The apostle Paul, along with several coworkers, traveled widely throughout the regions of the eastern Mediterranean on a series of missionary journeys. Once a persecutor of Christians himself, he too suffered much at the hands of those who opposed the new teachings. Much of his first journey was spent bringing the gospel into the southern regions of what is now the country of Turkey, a peninsula reaching out from the continent into the great sea. This area in Paul's day was divided into several territories, all governed by representatives of the Roman Empire. In his second journey, after revisiting churches established previously, he is rushed through the territory at the behest of the Holy Spirit, and on into Macedonia and

Greece. On his final journey, Paul spends a good deal of time in the western coastal cities of this peninsula, especially Ephesus. It should not be thought that the congregations throughout these regions were limited to those personally begun by the apostle Paul. For instance, we read that while Paul worked at Ephesus, "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). Such a result could not have been produced solely by the preaching of Paul and his companions, but must have included the outreach of local members into neighboring communities. This of course was the divinely appointed method of spreading the gospel (rf. 2 Tim. 2:2).

These Christians faced persecution, just as those in Jerusalem had done in earlier years. In Antioch of Pisidia, "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts" (Acts 13:50). In Iconium, "there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them" (Acts 14:5). In Lystra, Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). And at Ephesus, there was a full-scale riot that threatened to destroy the church (Acts 19:23-41). These churches had known the hardships of persecution from their earliest days.

Peter writes the letter we have under consideration before us to these congregations to encourage them and help them remain steadfast in the face of persecution. It is likely written near the end of Nero's reign, perhaps shortly after the death of the apostle Paul. Peter urges the brethren to recall the way Jesus had dealt with those who persecuted him and take him as a model for how they should behave.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our

sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

End Notes

- 1 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Rainy Day," in *The Complete Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1883), 39.
- 2 rf. "The Gospel of Peter" in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume IX, ed. Allan Menzies (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 3-31.
- 3 A summary of these references is listed in many commentaries. For example, refer to G. W. Blenkin, *The First Epistle General of Peter* (Cambridge: University Press, 1914), xxvii-xxix, contained in the series *Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges*.
- 4 Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* (1706), http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/matthew/26.html (accessed October 11, 2010)

KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD

By Stacey W. Grant

INTRODUCTION

1 Peter disclosed to its original recipients their **past**, **present**, and **prospective** blessings. It also disclosed to them that suffering, howbeit severe at times, was temporary in nature. As well, it divulged to them the greatness of their salvation. Moreover, it revealed and reminded them of the final step of salvation – going home to be with Christ. 1 Peter 1:1-12¹ offers the reader a great deal of "meat upon which to feast." Oftentimes brethren either hurriedly or casually read the salutation of a given epistle. This, of course, could be a grave mistake. Salutations often "lay the foundation" of an epistle. 1 Peter 1:1-12 is no exception. In these twelve verses we see: (1) the description of the writer and the recipients (v. 1); (2) the defined roles within Deity regarding salvation (v. 2); (3) the delightful depiction of the Christian's inheritance (vv. 3-4); (4) the design, duty, and destiny of personal faith (vv. 5-9); and (5) the duties, desires, and disclosures concerning the prophets (vv. 10-12).

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WRITER AND THE RECIPIENTS (v. 1)

The writer identifies himself as Peter, a translation of the Greek *petros*, which means, "rock" or "stone." He then reveals that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. "Apostle" is from two Greek words – *apo* (from) and *stello* (to send); hence, an apostle was an envoy or an ambassador--one who was given authority to represent another. Guy N. Woods made this comment concerning the apostles of Christ:

The credentials of the apostles ere the miracles they were enabled to perform in confirmation of their work (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:1-4), and their mission was the proclamation of the gospel of Christ under the great commission (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). Peter was one of the twelve chosen by the Lord to be apostles at the outset of his public ministry (Luke 6:12-16), and his name appears first in all the lists thereof (Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:13; Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:13)²

Those to whom Peter wrote are first described as "strangers" or "sojourners" (v. 1). This term is translated from a compound word that means, "to dwell alongside those of a strange land." They too are referred to as "scattered" or "exiles of the dispersion." This is the designation the Jews used to describe the Hebrews that lived among the Gentiles (John 7:35). As well, James wrote to the diaspora or scattered ones (Jms. 1:1). This term now refers exclusively to Christians (1 Pet. 2:11). These particular Christians were scattered in five different parts of the Roman Empire, all of them in northern Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). We Christians are citizens of Heaven (Phi. 3:20). We, like Abraham, have our hearts set on residing in the city of God (Heb. 11:8-16).

They are likewise described "the elect" (v. 2). Of course, the term "elect" is not a reference to doctrine of demons known as *Predestination*. One becomes a part of the *elect* when he obeys the Gospel (Eph. 1:3-6) or "through sanctification of the Spirit" (v. 2). The sanctification of the Spirit is through obedience to the Word (John 17:17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). The Scriptures do affirm that Christians are the *elect* according to the foreknowledge of God. However, there is never any intimation of God's choosing throughout eternity some to be saved and some to be lost. If such a proposition were proven true, the Bible is rendered unreliable and useless, because blatant contradictions would exist in Holy Writ. The Great Commission is universal in nature (Matt. 28:18-20). How much clearer can the Father be when the Book Divine expressly states His ultimate desire: "Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Tim. 2:4)?

Even under the Old Covenant, God's eternal desire for mankind's soul is passionately expressed in a clearly comprehensible rhetorical question: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die" (Ezk. 18:23)? This is the premise of Ezekiel 18. God presents a three-generation argument or syllogism in response to the fallacious charges levied against Him by those who were properly punished. (A) There was a father who lived righteously (vv. 5-9); (B) his son was an unrighteous man (vv. 10-13); (C) his grandson, though reared by a wicked a father, and lived righteously (vv. 14-17). Conclusion: Each man will be judged according to his own works (vv. 18-20). This argument "kills two birds with one stone." It invalidates the false doctrines of "Inherited Sin" and "Irresistible Grace."

THE DEFINED ROLES WITHIN DEITY REGARDING SALVATION (v. 2)

This author has received shocking answers from members of the Lord's church – some had been Christians for numerous years--when he posed the question, "From what or whom are we saved?" How can one know that he is saved, if he cannot answer the most important question concerning mankind? Absolutely, salvation is deliverance from the wrath of God (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 5:6; Rev. 14:10, 19).

The three members of the Godhead worked in perfect harmony regarding man's salvation. Though equal in nature, intellect, and power, the Son and Spirit accepted subordinate roles (John 14:26; 17:5). This preacher has long taught, based upon what he learned from men far more capable than he, that the Father is the **Planner**, the Son is the **Purchaser**, and the Holy Spirit is the **Presenter/Protector** of the Plan of Salvation. Notice the statement "according to the foreknowledge of the Father" (v. 2). "Foreknowledge" carries the thought of a plan that was previously determined. The foreknowledge of God speaks to His eternal plan relating to the Messiah, His mission, His message, His reconciling fallen man to Himself, and His establishing His church (Eph. 3:10-11). All things were done "according

to the good pleasure of his will...according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself" (Eph. 1:5, 9). On several occasions, the Christ explained the role of each member of the Godhead:

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which sent him...But I have a greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me and the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me (John 5:17-23, 36-37).

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you...But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me...Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of the world is judged. I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you (John 14:25-26; John 15:26; John 16:7-15).

The Greek preposition *eis* (ace), translated, "unto," always looks forward; in this case, it explains the intent of the Gospel – obedience – man's responsibility. This same apostle encouraged the first audience that heard the pristine Gospel, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:38, 40). "Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" is a reference to a penitent sinner's entering into a covenant

relationship with God via Christ's blood. In addition, this phrase has an Old Testament connection. Moses literally sprinkled the people with blood as a sign of their entering into a covenant relationship with Jehovah (Exo. 24:1-11). Many in the religious world have ignored or rejected the conditions connected to the doctrine of election; nevertheless, Ephesians 2:8 is crystal clear about the means and manner through which one obtains salvation. Incidentally, verse two "shoots down" the false notion that baptism is not essential unto man's salvation. The only way one accesses the blood of Christ is through the medium of baptism (Rom. 6:3-4).

Because of Deity's flawlessly executed formula, those who are saved are the recipients of special blessings – grace and peace multiplied. Christians have access to all spiritual blessings (remission of sins, justification, reconciliation, providence, prayer, fellowship, benevolence, evangelism, etc.) (Rom. 5:1-11; Heb. 4:9-16).

THE DELIGHTFUL DESCRIPTION OF THE SAINT'S INHERITANCE (vv. 3-4)

One of the blessings Christians have is praising or eulogizing God. "*Blessed*" is the Greek verb from which we get our English word "eulogy" (Rom. 1:25; Rom. 9:5; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3). The idiom means to speak well of another. The Christian's praise is, and rightly so, restricted to God. God's abundant mercy was/is the motivating factor behind His wanting to save mankind (Tit. 3:3-5).

Those who obey the Gospel experience the new birth or are born anew or from above at baptism (John 3:3-7), become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17), become a part of a new family (Gal. 3:26), are given the new name (Isa. 62:1-2; Acts 11:26), change their spiritual address (Acts 2:40-41, 47), are made alive (Eph. 2:1), and possess a lively or living hope – joyful expectation--by or through Christ's resurrection. According to the Holy Oracles, Christians are saved by hope (Rom. 8:24). The saint's foundation is Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 15). The consummation of the Christian's hope is the return of Christ from Heaven (1 Thes. 4:13-18).

Through Christ the saved, as children of God through adoption, obtain an inheritance (Eph. 1:3-14; Acts 20:32). Christians become joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). There are three descriptive expressions in reference to the Christian's inheritance. First, the Christian inheritance is described as "incorruptible" or "imperishable." Additionally, this term is used to describe God (Rom. 1:23), the saint's victory crown (1 Cor. 9:25), the saint's glorified body (1 Cor. 15:52), king Jesus (1 Tim. 1:17), the Seed or Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23), and the inner man (1 Pet. 3:4). NOTE: Romans 1:23 and 1Timothy 1:17 destroy the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses argument that Jesus is a created "god."

Second, it is "undefiled" or "pure, chaste, or unstained." This phrase also describes Christ (Heb. 7:26), sex in a lawful marriage (Heb. 13:4), and acceptable religious activity (Jam. 1:27). Third, the child of God's inheritance "fadeth not away." This term carries the thought of perpetual beauty and desirability, meaning that its attraction to the saint is unfading. Too, this phrase is exclusive to the wonderful gift that awaits all of God's faithful children.

Dear Christian, eternal life is "reserved in heaven for you" or "kept in watchful custody." Reservations for this inheritance began at one's baptism and are sustained through one's faithful living (Rev. 3:10). Since it is in Heaven, no one can disturb or demolish or destroy it.

THE DESIGN, DUTY, AND DESTINY OF PERSONAL FAITH (vv. 5-9)

Christians are "kept by the power of God." Woods provides insight concerning the meaning of "kept" (guarded, ASV).

The term thus has a military connotation, and as used here, metaphorically suggests a band of soldiers thrown about the faithful to protect and to guarantee their safety so long as they remain within the stockade of faith! The present tense indicates action in progress, and the guarding is, therefore, continuous and unfailing. It is exercised by (in) the power (*dunamis*, from which is derived our words, dynamic, dynamo, dynamite) of God, a statement reminiscent of Rom. 1:16, where we are informed that the "Gospel is the power of God unto salvation;" and the guarding is through faith, and not by independent operation of God's power, apart from human participation or effort. It is possible for one's faith to fail (Luke 22:31,32), a fact with which Peter was painfully conscious.³

The term "power" is also translated "able," speaking of the inherent nature of God's Word (Acts 20:32). God does not do anything directly to the saint to keep him saved. However, God provides abundantly and perfectly each saint with everything he needs in order to remain saved (2 Pet. 1:3).

As has been already noted, God reserves the saints' inheritance in Heaven. Faith is man's part of or contribution to this equation. Faith or faithfulness is a God-ordained lifestyle (Rom. 1:17); therefore, one must sustain relations with the Almighty through faith. God has delivered unto us the Faith--the sole source capable of producing personal faith (Acts 6:7; Eph. 4:5; Jude 3). Faith is according to God's design (Rom. 10:17); In 2 Peter 1:3-11, faith is pictured as the foundation or starting point in the Christian's life. "Add" means "to supply generously" (v. 5). Thus, the child of God, because of his faith, develops his character by adding to his person the Christian graces. James 1:19-27 and 2:14-26 reveal very plainly that there must be works attached to one's faith--for this chief reason the church exists (Matt. 5:13-16; Eph. 2:8-10). Faith delivers us from dread, doubt, and defeat. (Matt. 8:2, 6-13, 23-26); faith is a navigational system of sorts, "guiding us through" trials (1 Cor. 10:10-13); faith enables the child of God to grow in wisdom (Jam. 1:1-7); faith is a key component in prayer (Jam. 5:15). Conclusively, faith is designed to protect or guard the righteous.

The steps in the salvation process are: (1) justification/remission, being declared not guilty of sins, occurs when one obeys the Gospel (Acts 2:38; Rom. 5:1, 9; 1Tim. 2:6); (2) redemption, which is through Christ's blood (Rom. 3:24; 1 Tim. 2:5-6); (3) reconciliation/atonement, peace with God through Christ, also takes place through Christ's mediation (Rom. 5:1,11; 1 Tim. 2:5); maturation, growing in knowledge and service (Heb. 5:11-14; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18); (4) sanctification, which is an ongoing process whereby the saint lives as a chosen, holy vessel of God (1 Thes. 4; 2 Tim. 2:19-21; Jam. 1:27; 1 Pet. 1:16); (5) perseverance or patience, enduring the difficulties associated with the

Christian sojourn (1 Cor. 10:10-13) and (6) glorification, when the disciple receives his incorruptible body, is the final step (1 Cor. 15:50-58).

There are some paradoxes associated with the Christian life and verse six reveals one of them – joy in spite of intense suffering. The comparison is made between suffering and salvation; suffering is for a "season," while salvation is eternal. Christians certainly experience heaviness or sorrow (Phi. 2:25-28). This is why the writer to the Hebrews encouraged the brethren at that time not to cast away their faith or confidence, reminding them that the Christian life is not a "sprint," but a "marathon" (Heb. 10:34-39). He then provided them instructions and illustrations regarding Bible faith (Heb. 11). He concludes his admonition by reminding them to stay in shape, stay in the race, and stay focused (Heb. 12:1-2). Paul, the same apostle who encouraged others to rejoice (Phi. 4:4), admitted to being in a state of continual sorrow over his countrymen's refusal to obey the Gospel (Rom. 9:1-5; Rom. 10:1-4).

It is possible for a child of God to maintain a positive attitude while enduring manifold or various trials (Phi. 1:12-21). Trials are pictured as a conduit – a blessing--through which one grows in patience (Jam. 1:1-8). The brethren at Macedonia overcame tremendous trials through their faith, with abundant joy, because they had their priorities set properly (2 Cor. 8:1-5). 2 Corinthians 4:17-5:4 summarizes the thought in a perfect fashion. Without question, trials give the Christian the incentive to yearn even more for Heaven.

Verse seven reveals the incredible worth of genuine faith. "Trial" is translated "genuineness" (NKJV) and "proof" (ASV). Trials test our character, a barometer of sorts. As gold passes through fire for the purpose of determining its value, so do trials in the Christian life. Genuine faith is **precious**, **purposeful**, **perpetual**, and **preserving** in nature.

In addition, love is attached to one's faith and joy. Faith and love for Christ are inseparable (v. 8). As the saint's faith grows, so does his love for Christ. Affirmatively, faith has an end or a definite point or goal (v. 9). Faith, love, and joy/hope keep us prepared for the promise of salvation (1 Cor. 13:13).

THE DUTIES, DESIRES, AND DISCLOSURES CONCERNING THE PROPHETS (vv. 10-12)

Faith, grace, and salvation were certainly under the two previous dispensations. Yet, God reserved a dispensation of grace that was restricted to the adherents of the New Covenant. Only at "the fulness of times" was this grace revealed (Gal. 4:4; Tit. 1:11-12). Concerning this matter, one has commented:

Peter has reminded his readers of the wonderful future they have through faith in Jesus. He has addressed the fact that their present trials will prove the depth of their faith. He now continues his effort to encourage them to remain faithful in the face of suffering by reminding them that the prophets of the past, and even angels, were interested in what they now have (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Again, Peter's design is to prove to them the value of the religion they profess. Sometimes we do not realize the value of something we have until we learn how much someone else values it.⁴

The prophets of old – along with the angels--wanted to know the "who, what, when, and where" of their prophecies. Moses and Jesus, the two great lawgivers, inform us of Deity's and man's role regarding revelation, inspiration, and prophecy (Deu. 29:29; Acts 1:6-7). 1 Corinthians 2:9-13 and 2 Peter 1:20-21, wherein the process of plenary, verbal inspiration is stated, likewise provide insight relative to this issue. Great men of God such as Isaiah undoubtedly were inquisitive about the things they were writing. "Enquired" means "to seek out, to scrutinize closely." "Search diligently" means "to explore or sift or to trace out in detail." Daniel was one of the prophets who was perplexed over the visions he received and sought out answers (Dan. 7:15; 28; 10:8-9).

God's faithful seers "bore witness" or "testified" of the sufferings and the glory to follow regarding Christ (Isa. 53:4-5). They revealed the Virgin Birth 700 years before it occurred (Isa. 7:14). In addition, they identified with pin-point accuracy the place of the Savior's birth (Mic. 5:2). They similarly foretold the Messiah's mission, message, and manner of life and death (Isa. 53). Further, they presaged the coming of the great Prophet and Lawgiver (Deu. 18:15-18). The coming of the Kingly High Priest they foretold (Gen. 49:10; Zech. 6:12-13). Christ's consuming kingdom was forecasted

(Dan. 2:44). They proclaimed the coming of the church/house of God (Mic. 4:1-2). God's New Covenant was prophesied (Jer. 31:31-34). They revealed the coming of the Christian Age, which included miraculous gifts (Joel 2:28-30). As well, they pronounced the building of the ultimate temple (2 Sam7:12-14). Christ's resurrection they foresaw (Psa. 16:8-11). King Jesus was prophetically seen sitting upon His father David's throne in Heaven (Psa. 132:11; Luke 1:32, 69). Conclusively, all their prophecies have been fulfilled (Luke 24:44-47; Acts 3:18; Acts 26:23).

Those prophets of old were the "first leg" of the "Gospel relay team." They "passed the baton" to the prophets and apostles of the Gospel Age. The Spirit of God or Christ guided both groups (1 Cor. 2:9-13; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). (Incidentally, these verses "throw a monkey wrench" in the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Jesus is a created being).

The Gospel or good news was preached under all three dispensations. In the first two ages, the Gospel was presented in prophecy in "bits and pieces" (Heb. 1:1-2). Additionally, how fitting is it that Christ is God's final messenger and the Gospel is God's final message. Now, the Gospel has been made fully known to mankind (Eph. 3:1-4). God revealed it on Pentecost after Christ's resurrection and ascension (Acts 1-2). Those who were blessed to foretell Christ's coming ministered to those of us who live after the Cross.

CONCLUSION

What is most evident in 1 Peter 1:1-12 is the providence of God. Through all of Israel's and the Gentile world's unrighteousness, God's plan still came to fruition at the time determined by the Almighty. Too, through multiple failures by those chosen as judges, kings, priests, etcetera, the plan still progressed. Through the process the faithful succeeded while the pretenders were exposed. When Pharaoh and Herod slaughtered scores of innocent babies, God's chosen seed was protected (Exd. 1:15-22; Mat. 2). With the royal seed's "holding on by a thread" because of wicked Athaliah's

murderous rage, the Scheme of Redemption nonetheless continued (2 Kng. 11:1-2). Satan and his henchmen could not destroy or deter God's plan to bring fallen man back to Himself. Affirmatively, God has always had "seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal" or a faithful remnant to carry out His plans (Isa. 10:22-23; Joel 2:32; Rom. 9:27; 11:5).

End Notes

- 1 All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise stated.
- $2~{\rm Guy~N.}$ Woods, A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1983) p. 19.
- 3 Ibid. p. 27.
- 4 Gene Burgett, God's Great Mercy And Our Living Hope, Studies in 1, 2 Peter and Jude, The Seventeenth Annual Denton Lectures, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1998), pp. 58-59.

AS OBEDIENT CHILDREN

By Jeff Johnson

INTRODUCTION

As we enter this study together, this writer expresses his thanks to the congregation at Richmond Hill. It is a great honor to be invited to participate in this year's Southeast Georgia lectureship.

Our task for this study is to consider the text, 1 Peter 1:13-25 and glean lessons pivoting on verse fourteen. In the course of this study we will use the King James Version.

Peter opens this discourse pointing out the audience at the beginning of the chapter. The period of writing accepted by most scholars' ranges from 64 to 67A.D.¹ during this time great persecution was leveled on the Lord's church at the hand of the Roman ruler, Nero.² In a time of persecution, daily survival can trump thinking ahead. This loss of direction over the long haul can cloud our realization of the effects of daily behavior.

In a similar consideration for us today, we should not just, "let life happen". God has given us the ability to reason. Therefore we must manage our lives on a daily basis. Jesus was plain. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

Following Jesus means humbling ourselves to Him. In submitting to Him we will put away the former, self-serving, ways of our own and appear before Him as children. Peter points out the need to look to Jesus in a spirit of humility and trust. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:" (1 Peter 3:14).

Children are most often driven by a desire to please a parent in the ideal circumstance. In like manner, companies desire to please their customers. Many companies employ of system of production called "Total Quality Management" in order to produce defect free products. This approach requires each part of the process to humble itself to checks and measures in order to achieve the goal of defect free products. "TQM" requires daily management. Similarly, children require daily direction. As children of God, we must keep our eyes on the prize daily and strive to present a defect free product before God on the Judgment Day.

Some in this life will allow the immediate to overpower the important and refuse to make corrections. Some businesses have been naïve enough to expect customers to settle for products that do not deliver as promised. Those businesses fail. On the other hand, those who humble themselves and seek remedies for problems can find success.

Peter indicates to us that we must humble ourselves to Jesus as children and make changes where necessary. We cannot please God by holding on to sinful behavior. Trusting Jesus as our guide we will find His path to product defect forgiveness.

In order to achieve the goal of Heaven, we must present a defect free product before God at Judgment. Presenting a defect free product requires "Total Life Management". The obedient child of God realizes his product will be defective. Therefore we must turn to Christ for Quality Control and process correction. The first stop on our journey of continuous improvement is a review of our thinking.

GETTING READY (1 PETER 1:13-16)

Peter looks back over his notes so far and writes because of these things we must be prepared and get ready.³ Trusting in Jesus with the humility of a child, we must review our thinking. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;" (1 Peter 1:13).

In Peter's day it was very common to see men wearing clothing that would be long and cumbersome. Around the waist of these men there was a belt into which the long garment could be tucked in order to do heavy work or to run.⁴ Peter uses this picture to communicate the need to gather the loose ends of our thinking in order to focus.

Children often have wonderful intentions and yet can get off track very easily. It takes a parent or a teacher to remind them to get themselves together in order to be successful in the tasks ahead. Even as adults we can find ourselves off track and in a position that needs to be corrected.

Some businesses can be so caught up in the process they forget about the product. The defects in the product are seen as a necessity of the process. Focus is lost and the customers lose interest causing the product to fail. We would criticize that business for its folly and yet the child of God can follow a similar pattern.

Satan will use the good things in life to draw us off course. Satan will use the process of family, work, community involvement and recreation to mislead our priorities. The daily process of survival can so occupy our thinking that measurement of our product according to God's word is neglected. Peter points out that we must regularly consider seriously the result of our daily behavior for eternity's sake.

The God of Heaven gave us powerful minds. These minds make decisions each day, every hour. Do we respond to the immediate and forget about the important? One important lesson we find is that the children of God must strive to focus our minds on things eternal lest the storms of life cause us to lose our place.

God has called all men to hear His voice. Those who respond to Him are set apart from the world and become targets for Satan.⁵ Peter wrote, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye

holy in all manner of conversation;" (1 Peter 1:15). God is Holy and His children are called to be holy.

Peter brings us the thoughts of the Father to consider every part of our lives by God's standard. This standard begins with our obedience unto Him. We must follow the path of Christ unto salvation. There we come in contact with His blood in order to be a defect free product as an innocent child at the Day of Judgment.

While waiting on the Day of Judgment our product must be in working order and focused. We must consider God's standard in our worship unto Him. Our world has seen the development of theologians who believe that improvements on God's plan of worship are necessary and pleasing. Let us not get so caught up in the process that we forget the quality of the product. God has demonstrated His displeasure in our adjusting His plan. (cf. Leviticus 10:1-2). God has given us the manual for defect removal, worship and relationships. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:" (2 Peter 1:3). Godly living in all areas of our lives is an expectation that does not change. "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

Having the mind focused in the right direction, it is time to take action in Total Life Management.

GETTING TO WORK (1 PETER 1:17-20)

Focused on the prize of Heaven we begin our journey following Christ. By His example we see the need to give great attention to God's will and take our daily thoughts and concerns to the Father in prayer. "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:" (1 Peter 1:17).

Children find themselves welcomed when they communicate with their parents. The parent has experience in the difficulties of life; therefore the parent can be compassionate and comforting in these

times. When the work load becomes a burden the child finds comfort and the parent finds joy in providing help. In one respect one might say that the parent provides customer support for the child working this product called life.

Our Heavenly Father desires that we, as His children, come to Him in prayer. We bring our concerns and desires to Him and find comfort and compassion. The God of Heaven hears all the righteous that come before Him. Just as the children sing, "red and yellow, black or white, they are precious in His sight," God is no respecter of persons. Regardless of the ability or talent we possess our God sees the value in each of His children. (cf. 1 Corinthians 12).

God expects us to remain focused and use what we have to His glory. God expects us to work. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." (James 2:18). Each of us has wonderful abilities as blessings from God. Though we are each responsible for our own journey we rarely travel alone. Some will choose God's path while others wander lost. Some will travel paths of ease while others will weather storms and difficulties. We need not look upon each other with the eye of pity, pride or envy. The fair and righteous God will consider each person's blessing and ability and take into account our product called life based on these parameters. (cf. Matthew 25:14ff).

God the Father loves His children so much that He was willing to send His innocent Son to bear the burden of our defects. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13). The motivation for our work is before us.

Peter scribed the words of the Holy Spirit to remind us of our value to the Father, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain

conversation received by tradition from your fathers;" (1 Peter 1:18). All the riches in the world could not pay the price for our defects called sin. When a defective product leaves the plant it is of no choice of its own. The child of God, on the other hand, chooses to have a defect and separates himself from his Loving Father. Just as a child that is disrespectful and disobedient will cause pain for the parent, the disregarding human will cause pain for God the Father. Even still the price has been paid to redeem or recall this product, human life.

"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you," (1 Peter 1:19-20). Jesus shed His blood innocent blood that we can have forgiveness and present a defect free product before the Father at Judgment. Some would say they have heard the story and have become bored. They look for something new. Peter is the hand that rings the bell of attention and reminder. This was no small sacrifice.

The farmer's tale is that a breakfast composed of eggs and ham is merely a morning's work for the chicken but a life commitment for the pig. John scribe the words of Jesus that there is no greater sacrifice than to lay down one's life for his friend. Jesus laid down His life for you dear friend. Would you do the same for Him by dedicating your thoughts and actions in obedience?

The prophets spoke and the plan of God came just as He intended. God's plan is complete and perfect. God has blessed us with this wonderful product called life. By the time we realize its splendor we have already created defects. The Holy Spirit guided the pen of Peter as he reminds us to go back to the standard and measure ourselves. We must focus our minds on things important and put the immediate in its proper perspective.

Peter knew all too well the need to keep our eyes on Jesus. Satan can create so many diversions that are real and immediate.

"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, it is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou; bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:22-33).

Getting Quality

Taking action to be pleasing to the Heavenly Father will include our learning and refining our skills. Staying focused on the Son of God will keep our priorities in the correct order.

Every endeavor in life requires practice to maintain skill and make improvements. The teacher in the classroom has the children practice their language, math and science skills. The coach, music teacher, or mentor will have the student practice over and over again. The old tale rings true, "If you do not use it, you will lose it." The same that is true for the worker in business is valid for the Christian. We must practice our skill for each day is a journey.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." (1 Peter 1: 22-23). A quality life in the eyes of God will be one that is practiced out of desire and not of obligation. There are no secrets or hidden motives for the child of God. It is simply his desire to please his Heavenly Father for he seeks to be with Him for eternity.

Getting Retirement

The child grows up and eventually matures. The business sees the product life pass and obsolescence takes its toll. Many industries manage their product "From the Cradle to the Grave". The same is true for the successful Christian.

From the time he learns the Gospel and is a babe in Christ, he manages his life daily until time is no more. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away" (1 Peter 1:24). Our bodies are simply packaging for a precious gem called the soul. Within each human being there lies this precious gem, more valuable than all the earth. This precious gem has been invited to spend eternity with the Heavenly Father. The product called life has an expiration date that is unknown to its possessor. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

This section of Peter's discourse closes with a reminder that though children grow to maturity and physical bodies fail, God is eternal. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:25). Our Loving Father sends us a message we need to hear over and over again. The basic message is: stop and consider again all that God has done for us. Let all of God's creation answer His call in obedience and daily "Total Life Management."

End Notes

- 1 Stancliff, Leon D., "The book of First Peter." God's Messages Bible Commentary Series, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sain Publications, Inc. 2000), p 71.
- 2 Barclay, William, "Circumstances Behind the Letter." & "The Christless life and the Christ filled life." The Letters of James and Peter, (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, Inc. 1960), pp 173-174.
- 3 Berard, Bob, "Redemption from sin through the blood of Christ." Studies in 1,2 Peter and Jude, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc. 1998), p 63.
- 4 Barclay, William, "The necessary virility of the Christian faith." & "The Christless life and the Christ filled life." The Letters of James and Peter, (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, Inc. 1960), pp 215-223.
- 5 Stancliff, Leon D., "The book of First Peter." God's Messages Bible Commentary Series, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sain Publications, Inc. 2000), pp 81-86.

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- Barclay, William, "The necessary virility of the Christian faith." & "The Christless life and the Christ filled life." The Letters of James and Peter, (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, Inc. 1960), pp 173-174, 215-223.
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A CHOSEN GENERATION

Andrew Nelson

INTRODUCTION

God's Word teaches mankind how to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" and It provides hope in the world to come (Tit. 2:12, 13). The direction given by God's Word enables mankind to come from the pit of sin into the "marvelous light" of God (1 Pet. 2:9). Unfortunately, as one's life becomes acceptable to God, it becomes unacceptable to man, and persecutions occur (1 Pet. 4:1-4). First Peter was written to encourage Christians who were being persecuted to remain faithful as they endured persecution for Christ's sake, following in His footsteps as God's chosen people (1 Pet. 5:12; 2:21; 2:9).

YE ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION

Peter identifies the Christians to whom he was writing as members of "a chosen generation" (1 Pet. 2:9), "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:" (1 Pet. 1:2). Before the world was created, God chose to save mankind by the Gospel system. This system involved the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross (Rev. 13:8; Rom. 8:28-33), and instruction given by the Holy Spirit to the apostles who then recorded the Gospel system in written form "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (Jno. 14:26). This enabled those of the first century and beyond to read and to understand God's plan for saving mankind (Eph. 3:1-4). Those who hear and obey the instruction of the Holy Spirit, and contact the blood of Jesus, in baptism, are the chosen people of

God (1 Pet. 1:18-23). This opportunity is available to everyone, by God's love, through the preaching of the Gospel (Jno. 3:16; Gal. 3:27-29).

In addition to salvation, God's people have been chosen to be, "a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;" (1 Pet. 2:9). All of these distinctions, which Peter applies to Christians, were once used to describe the Israelites, who were chosen by God, because of His love for them (Deut. 7:6-8). While speaking to Moses, God spoke of the relationship He desired to have with the children of Israel: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. There are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Ex. 19:5, 6). Yet, because of their unbelief, physical Israel was rejected by God and spiritual Israel (the church) has been accepted by God (Rom. 11:13-23). Now members of the church comprise a holy nation, which God has chosen as a peculiar people to serve as His priesthood in the Christian age (Matt. 16:18, 19; Rom. 8:28, 29; 1 Pet. 2:5).

Having obtained citizenship in the Kingdom of God, through obedience to the Gospel, one is obligated to "shew forth the praises of him who hath called" him "out of darkness into his marvelous light:" (1 Pet. 2:9). That is, Christians, those who are citizens of God's Kingdom are expected to publicize the "virtues" or "gracious dealings…) of him who called" them "from a sinful life into the marvelous light of truth." God's greatness is evidenced by the changes made in one's life (1 Pet. 2:1, 2; Matt. 5:13-16), and through the verbal proclamation in worship and in evangelism. In worship, God's greatness is declared in song and the proclamation of God's Word (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 2:12; Acts 17:22-31); His greatness is relied upon as His people approach His throne with their prayers (Heb. 4:15, 16); when His people partake of the Lord's Supper, His

great sacrifice is remembered (1 Cor. 11:20-26). In evangelism, God's people go to the people of the world, because of God's greatness and with evidence of God's greatness, to encouraged them through the proclamation of the Gospel to become citizens in God's Kingdom (1 Pet. 1:18-23). All of this is possible because of the mercy of God to people who were not His people, but who are now the chosen people of God.

A CHOSEN GENRATION...

Those who have received God's mercy, and are numbered among God's chosen people, possess certain spiritual characteristics, by which they are identified. Such people:

Have A Spiritual Hunger

In chapter one, Peter describes the transition of one's life from being in the world to becoming one of God's chosen people as a birth "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1:18-20). Continuing with this comparison, Peter describes the hunger Christians ought to have for God's Word: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:" (1 Pet. 2:2). "There is an ever-present longing or desire of the babe to return to the mother's breast or the prepared formula in a bottle for its desired nourishment. Newborn babes in Christ should long for the sincere or spiritual milk of the gospel." This hunger develops in the spiritual palate, after one partakes of the sumptuous Gospel feast, and it can only be quenched by the "sincere milk of the word" or "the spiritual milk which is without guile" (1 Pet. 2:3). Milk, in ancient days, would be mixed with gypsum, "a chalky-like substance to increase its volume, thus rendering it impure and contaminated."

Much care must be given to the preparation of spiritual food. For any addition to the "sincere milk of the word" will create a deadly poison that will kill anyone who ingests it.

For hunger to exist there must be room in one's stomach. If one is to have the kind of spiritual appetite that Peter describes, some things must be removed from one's spiritual "stomach." Specifically, Peter mentions: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings," (1 Pet. 2:1). "Malice" refers to "vicious character" or the "desire to harm another." "Guile" comes from a word meaning "a bait, snare, deceit". "Guile is 'deceitfulness, especially lying and false speech; thus it is usually spoken of as being on the lips or found in the mouth." "Hypocrisies" "denotes 'a reply, an answer'; then, 'play-acting'"10, and refers to "one who is merely playing a part."11 Behaving this way, one dishonestly hides one's wicked behavior under a mask of righteousness. "Envies" refers to feeling "displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others;"12 "All evil speakings" encompasses anything in the realm of backbiting. 13 Such speech is by nature, destructive to the brotherly love, which is to be cultivated among those who are God's chosen people, the church (1 Pet. 2:17). 14 To develop a healthy, spiritual hunger, one must remove these characteristics from his life and never take them up again, allowing room for the "sincere milk of the word," (1 Pet. 2:2).

Are Part Of A Spiritual House

Turning his attention from the spiritual hunger, which ought to exist within all Christians, to the spiritual household to which all Christians belong, Peter describes the relationship one has in striving to approach Christ, by way of a lifetime of Christian living: "To whom [Christ] coming, as unto a living stone... Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house," (1 Pet. 2:4, 5). The building blocks of this spiritual house, Christians, are brought together by the

Gospel, and held together by the pursuit of Christian living. Changing from the structure of the house to those who occupy it, Peter speaks of God's people as "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). Having answered the call to come out of darkness, into the marvelous light of God, this priesthood is holy or separated from the world for spiritual service to God. This service includes worship as well as the daily sacrifices of Christian living (Heb. 13:15; Rom. 12:1, 2). This service is acceptable to God because the blood of Jesus has purified the priesthood of all sin, and it is offered by Jesus' authority (1 Pet. 1:18-23; Col. 3:17).

Like other buildings, this spiritual house has a corner stone. 16 Referring to Isaiah's prophecy, Peter states: "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, and precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" (1 Pet. 2:6). Jesus was chosen by God to be the corner stone of His spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:4). He is therefore authorized to set the form of the rest of the house, and to those who recognize the value of His direction; Jesus is "precious" or highly valuable. However, Peter points out that Jesus is not valued by all men. In fact, he states that Jesus is "disallowed indeed of men," and "the stone which the builders disallowed" by those who are disobedient (1 Pet. 2:4, 7). While on earth, Jesus was rejected by many, specifically the Jews, because His life and His teachings were contrary to the expectations of many "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-53). Today this occurs when people are presented with God's Word, and they refuse to align their lives with Jesus' direction. To everyone

who rejects Jesus' authority, He becomes "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," (1 Pet. 2:8). God's Word and Jesus' sacrifice are for everyone (Matt. 28:18-20; Heb. 2:9). Those who reject God's Word and the benefits of Jesus sacrifice cannot become part of God's spiritual house or offer spiritual sacrifices as long as they persist in their disobedience.

Have Spiritual Habits

The lives of those who are numbered among God's chosen people are in a transitional state, changing from worldly living to spiritual living. No longer living as people of the world, but as the people of God, Peter identifies these beloved Christians as being "strangers and pilgrims" (1 Pet. 2:11). Those who have obeyed the Gospel are not at home in the world; they are on their way to the home that God has prepared for His people (Phil. 3:12). As such Peter admonishes: "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). Fleshly lusts or desires work against one's spiritual goal of reaching Heaven (Gal. 5:19-24). By successfully navigating around these obstacles, with constant effort, and by participating in good works, a Christian's "conversation" or lifestyle becomes "honest" (beautiful and good), to those who observe that individual's life. Peter mentions specifically those who would observe one's life in order to "speak against you as evildoers" that "they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12). "The day of visitation" refers to the time when the Gentiles would glorify God, having thoroughly inspected the character of the Christians living among them. 17 There is a great need for Christians to heed these admonitions, because there are souls looking to them for direction. Sadly, when the lives of some who profess to be Christians are examined there is plenty of room for "evil speaking" because their lives do not align with the life of the Savior.

These changes produce certain spiritual habits, which are based upon a new outlook on others. Peter captures this new way of looking at others in a series of commands, stating: "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Pet. 2:17). In honoring all men, one places value upon all men. Honor is to be given without regard to the flaws that characterize mankind, for man was created in the image of God and within every human being is an eternal soul (Gen. 1:26, 27; Matt. 16:26). While honor is to extend to all men, God's chosen people are to love the brotherhood or one another. The love Jesus directs His people to have through the pen of Peter is characterized by seeking the best for each other. This love is displayed by care for one another's physical and spiritual necessities. The next command, to fear God, is not a fear of God's judgment; rather it is a "fear of displeasing our Father in Heaven." While teaching those of Cornelius' household, Peter declared: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respector of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35). A reverential fear of God will cause one to value all men as God values them, love the brotherhood as God loves His people, and honor those who are in positions of civil authority. Honoring the king or civil government is done through obedience to civil laws as well as praying for them and supporting them in well doing "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior;" (1 Tim. *2:1-3*). ¹⁸

Speaking of one's relationship to those in positions of authority, Peter speaks specifically of one's relationship to government officials and the relationship of servants to their masters. Concerning one's relationship to government officials Peter writes: "Submit yourselves to every

ordinance of man" (1Pet. 2:13). Whether the law is from the highest level of authority or from local officials, God expects His people to obey the laws of the land. The only exception to this expectation is when man's laws contradict God's laws "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). One might say, however, that God's authority supersedes the laws of any nation. Therefore, unless God has commanded a certain law, there is no law. The enemies of God's people, as already mentioned, carefully scrutinize the lives of Christians and the teachings of the Gospel. If a Christian were to maintain such a mind set, then the people of the world could look at the lifestyle of that Christian and accuse: "Those people (Christians) are lawless and troublemakers." Yet when Christians willfully submit to the laws of the land, "As free, and not using...liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" (1 Pet. 2:16). Likewise, servants are told, "be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle but also to the forward" (1 Pet. 2:18). These Christian servants, would be aware that God is no respecter of persons "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35). However, to rebel against their masters, in a land where slavery was lawful, would "bring unnecessary suffering to themselves, and cause the religion of Christ to be denigrated." ¹⁹ Thus to strengthen the influence of the cause of Christ, Peter admonishes servants to submit to their masters, because of their love for God, which is "thankworthy" or praiseworthy. Conversely, there was no honor to be had in being punished for rebelling against one's master, "but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Pet. 2:20). The relationship between servants and their masters seems foreign in modern times, yet the principles given by Peter to the first century servants can be beneficial in the workplace.

For in submitting to those in positions of authority, whether they are government officials or employers, "ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:" (1 Pet. 2:15).

Have A Spiritual Hero

Having discussed the spiritual hunger that drives Christians to partake of God's Word, the spiritual house to which Christians belong, and the spiritual habits that Christians are to develop, the second chapter of First Peter concludes with a description of the spiritual hero of God's people. Jesus came to earth to lead mankind to Heaven. Jesus' work in this effort led Him to suffer on the cross. In his words of exhortation and encouragement to these suffering saints, Peter reminds them and Christians today that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:" (1 Pet. 2:21). An examination of Jesus' life and the suffering He endured for the sake of mankind proves Him to be the perfect example, and truly the spiritual hero of God's chosen people.

Throughout Jesus' life He was faced with the temptations of life, but He committed no sin (Heb. 4:15). Even when faced with persecutions and ultimately His death, Jesus did not lower Himself to using vicious or malicious, words or actions against those seeking His harm. Instead, Jesus "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:" (1 Pet. 2:23). Jesus trusted in the Father, Jesus was faithful to His mission, and those who follow His example can overcome any persecution that arises and reach their goal of Heaven.

This is possible because of the service that Jesus rendered, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). At the cross Jesus paid the price for the sins of the world "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death,

crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:9, 10), and by His manner of life and the instruction He has given through His Word, Jesus serves as the spiritual guide of mankind. Peter uses the image of sheep who have gone astray, coming back to the guidance, the protection, and the provision of the good and caring Shepherd "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25). Indeed, those who will hear His words and follow in His footsteps are blessed with the care and direction that is needed to overcome the difficulties of this life and to enjoy the blessings of that which is to come.

CONCLUSION

God has chosen those who will hear His Word and who will obey His Word by faith, to be His people. Those who submit to His will are characterized by a spiritual hunger for His Word, and they are part of His spiritual house. While serving in God's house as priests, good spiritual habits develop as God's people follow in the footsteps of Jesus, their spiritual hero.

End Notes

- 1 <u>THE HOLY BIBLE</u>, <u>King James Version</u> (Cambridge: England, Cambridge University Press, 1991) All scripture references are to this version unless otherwise stated.
- 2 Guy N. Woods, "1 Peter," in <u>A COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES OF PETER, JOHN, AND JUDE</u>, vol. 13, (Nashville, TN.: GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY, 1991) p. 64.
- 3 Robert Taylor, Studies in FIRST AND SECOND PETER (Ripley, TN: 1992) p. 22.
- 4 THE HOLY BIBLE, American Standard Version (NEW YORK, NY, THOMAS NELSON & SONS, 1929) p. 250.
- 5 Woods, p. 35.
- 6 W.E. Vine, <u>VINE'S COMPLETE EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT WORDS</u> (Nashville, TN, 1996), p. 388.
- 7 Taylor, p. 21.
- 8 Vine, p. 285.
- 9 Robert G. Dodson, Jr., "CHRIST: THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE AND OUR FOUNDATION," in <u>STUDIES IN 1, 2, PETER AND JUDE</u>, ed Dub McClish (Denton, TX.: VALID PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1998), p. 76.
- 10 Vine, p. 316.
- 11 Bob Winton, Outlined Commentary on First Peter (Manchester, TN: 2005) p. 48.
- 12 Vine, p. 204.
- 13 Vine, p. 212.
- 14 Woods, p. 54.
- 15 Taylor, p. 22.
- 16 "The cornerstone was the one which determined the alignment of the entire wall; the entire building was aligned according to the placement of this chief cornerstone." Winton, p. 56.
- 17 Some have suggested that this would be at the final judgment of mankind. If this is the case, "it was Peter's desire that the godly lives of the saints would influence many of the Gentiles to obey the gospel so that they could glorify God on that great occasion." Winton, p. 67.
- 18 Tim Ayers, "SUBJECTION TO RULERS NAD MASTERS," in <u>STUDIES IN 1, 2, PETER AND JUDE</u>, ed Dub McClish (Denton, TX.: VALID PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1998), p. 94.
- 19 Winton, p. 73.

COMPASSION ONE FOR ANOTHER

By Johnie Scaggs, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

In 1 Peter 3:1-12, Peter sets forth three different relationships: 1) the relationship of the wife to her husband, 2) the relationship of the husband to his wife, 3) the relationship that we as Christians must maintain in every area of our life.

One of the key words or thoughts in this section is the word "Love." Love is the one thing each person must have if they are going to be successful in life. Whether we are speaking about the relationship spouses are to have with each other or about the relationship we are to have toward other Christians, or even the relationship we are to have toward those in the world, we must begin with "Love." How much love is in our hearts and do we seek to manifest that love toward others? Do we always show our love in any given situation? Love will enable us to have a happier and more productive marriage. Love will help us be long-suffering toward our fellow brothers and sister in Christ. Love will ensure that we treat those who are outside of Christ in a manner as to win them over to Christ.

THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP AS IT RELATES TO THE WOMAN

Marriage was designed by God. We read,

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Matt. 19:3-6).

Many times men are more prone to listen to self-help books and other books of this nature to resolve their marriage problems. However, because God designed marriage and not man, we should give heed to the words of God on the matter instead of other things written about marriage. In I Peter 3:1 and verse 5 Peter says that wives are to be in "subjection" to their husbands. To be in subjection simply means to be "under obedience" according to W.E. Vine's, however, it does not mean to be under bondage. The word bondage is the word Paul used in I Corinthians 9.27 and it is translated "subjection." They are, however, two different words with completely different meanings. The Bible never gives the husband the right to bring his wife into a bondage relationship with him. It is always to be a relationship of mutual respect for each other and with respect for the God-given roles each in this relationship is to play. God made the woman to be a help meet for man, his partner in life; both man and woman should respect the position which God has given them. Warren W. Wiersbe lists three reasons why woman should be in submission to her husband, 1) Submission is an obligation (3:1), 2) Submission is an opportunity (3:1b-2), 3) Submission is an ornament (3:3-6).

In verse one of I Peter, Peter begins to set forth a very beautiful picture of a woman of God. A spiritual minded person is one whose very purpose is to bring glory to the name of God, her creator. Wives have a great influence on their husbands. Sometimes, the best influence she can use is her manner of life (conversation KJV). If her husband is not a Christian and will not hear the Word of God, she still might be able to win him over to the Lord through her life she lives before him every moment. It is by this means that her true spiritual beauty will raise to the top and her husband will be able to see the Lord is truly living in her life. He will see she does not just say the words of her Lord, but she lives by the words and they direct her footsteps. As James said, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"

(James 1:22). David said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). The Word of God not only leads one in the right path, but by the same Word, one can lead another to get on the same path and be lead by the Word of God. This is true only if their lives truly show God's Word is hidden in their heart.

In Verse two Peter writes, "While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear" (1 Pet. 3:2). Chaste conversation refers to her pure manner of life and is joined together with the idea of her respect (fear) for God and His Holy and Divine Word. When a husband sees he cannot cause his wife to leave the Lord's way, he will begin to think more soberly about what and why she believes the way she does.

According to verse three, wives are not to "adorn" their selves with the outward adorning, but they are to be adorned with an inward beauty according to verse four. This inward beauty shows their true spiritual nature. According to W.E. Vine, the word "adorn" is the word we use as "kosmos" meaning "A harmonious arrangement or order, then, adornment, decoration, hence came to denote the world, or the universe, as that which is Divinely arranged."³

It is the character and conduct of the wife that will win the lost husband – not arguments, but such attitudes as submission, understanding, love, kindness, patience. These qualities are not manufactured; they are the fruit of the Spirit that comes when we are submitted to Christ and to one another. A Christian wife with "purity and reverence" will reveal in her life "the praises" of God (1 Peter 2:9) and influence her husband to trust Christ. ⁴

Peter is not forbidding the wearing of gold, and fine clothes, rather he is defining for us what will really be seen by the husband which will cause him to turn to the Lord. Wearing the latest in style and having rings of gold on your fingers and gold on your neck will not impress your spouse with the gospel of the Lord. These things tarnish with time. They grow old and even at times lose their value. But the text says, "...let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which

is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (I Pet. 3:4b).

In verses five and six Peter points us to some examples of holy women of old. It is good that we can go back and look at the women of the Old Testament and see how they looked upon their husband. He points out Sara who was Abraham's wife as a great example for women today. Sara showed Abraham respect by calling him lord. "*LORD*" – kurios, a title of reverence and respect. Thayer's definition is "He to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, lord. The word is properly translated "*sir*" a number of times in the New Testament: Luke 13:25, Jn. 4:11, 15, 19, 5:7." ⁵

One of the responsibilities of the aged women is to teach the younger women how to be good wives.

"The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5).

Too many today take their responsibility for granted and they are not the kind of women God wants them to be. Because of this fact, many will never be what they could be in the home or in the church.

THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP AS IT RELATES TO THE MAN

As with the woman, man also has an important role to be played in the home. The word "likewise" as used in verse seven, connects the proceeding thoughts with that which the writer is about to say. We might say it this way, "as I was saying about the responsibilities of the woman, so it is with the man." In order for any relationship to work, both parties must play the part given to them. Woman should not place herself in the place of man and likewise, man should not place himself in the place of the woman.

Husbands are commanded to "dwell with them (wives JJS) according to knowledge." "Smart Husbands Are Not Superior, (Verse 7). "Knowledge:" "with an intelligent recognition of the nature of the marriage relation." (Vincent). (Ignorance is enemy of happy marriages.)" In speaking about the husband and wife relationship, Paul said, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). He also stated, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25); whether a man is a Christian or not, he should show respect to his wife. God never intended for the woman to be a person who was to be looked down on by her husband. However, in many societies she is thought of as no more than a slave or that which is to be trodden under foot. Still today in many places woman are not to speak anything in public. In many places today, the woman is used as an instrument to satisfy the needs/desires of a man. This is not God's idea of a woman. The woman was created to be a help meet for the man. She was taken from his side that she might walk side by side with her husband through all the perils of life. The husband never has the right to mistreat his wife.

Peter says the husband is to give "giving honor unto the woman." The word "giving" "translated from a term which occurs nowhere else in the scriptures (aponemo), means to assign; to apportion; and "honor" in the text is the rendering of the same word translated "precious" in 1 Pet. 1:19. Christian husbands are to regard their faithful wives as precious and to assign them the honor that is their due. Peter refers to the woman as the "weaker vessel." This is not to be taken that she is weaker spiritually, this writer believes many woman are stronger spiritually than men (this is my opinion JJS). The weaker vessel refers to her physical strength. It is true in most cases the woman is physically not as strong as the man; therefore, the husband is to treat his wife with respect to her as being the weaker vessel. Peter also calls for the husband to remember he and his wife are "heirs together of the grace of life." Being heirs together we should be there for

each other and help each other grow as God would have us grow. It is only then ours prayers will not be hindered. If the husband does not treat his wife as God would have him treat her, He will not hear his prayers. God takes a very hard position toward the husband who does not help his wife in every way possible.

RELATIONSHIP CHRISTIANS ARE TO HAVE IN OTHER AREAS

Peter changes from writing about husband and wife relationship and turns his attention to the relationship Christians are to have with each other as brother and sisters in Christ. We are to be of one mind. As Paul said to the brethren at Corinth, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). To be of the same mind means to think alike, to think as our Lord thinks. Peter goes on to say we are to have "compassion one to another." When one has compassion on another, it shows the tender-heart of an individual. Christians are always to be tender-hearted toward each other. When one fully understand the compassion which Christ showed toward us, then and only then can they show compassion toward others. We are also to "love the brethren." The Hebrew writer said, "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1). Christians should have a strong bond to each other because of the relationship they enjoy in Christ. This relationship cannot be enjoyed any place else, but in Christ. Therefore, we should show a special love toward each other as brethren.

We are not to render "evil for evil or railing for railing." As Jesus said, "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39). Paul said, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if

thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:19-21). Also, Paul stated, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17). Knowing the blessing we are to receive as Christians, we should desire to be a blessing to others.

In verses ten and eleven Peter shows us how we can "love life and see good days." Life is good and we should be able to see the blessings which come from life; in doing so our days here on earth will be good days. In order for one to see this, his/her attitude must be changed. It has often been said "attitude determines ones altitude." So it is with life. If you desire to be happy in life, change your attitude and happiness will be yours. To make this happen, one must guard the tongue from speaking evil. The tongue can be a good thing in one's life, or it can be a very bad thing. James said, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (Jam. 3:5-6). With the tongue we can speak blessings and likewise we can speak evil. But, if we are to "see good days and love life", we must point the tongue in the direction of speaking blessings. Only then can one truly enjoy life and help cause life to be a blessing for oneself. We must also "eschew evil" or turn away from evil and do good. Evil is all around us. Christians must always be on guard, understanding the Devil wants to destroy you. He wants to take you away from God and turn you against God. Hence, we must always be watchful and stay away from anything and everything that even appears to be evil. Paul wrote, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). Far too many Christians want to flirt with evil; that is, see how close they can get to evil without it biting them. One should

understand the nature of evil is to capture you into its trap and enslave one. How can one flirt with something that wants to destroy you? Instead of turning to evil, we are to seek peace. When peace reigns in one's life, happiness will be all around them.

In verse twelve Peter explains that the Lord sees all things. To the righteous, His eyes are upon them as a blessing and His ears are open to their prayers. But, on the other hand the Lord also sees that which is unrighteous and He turns His face away for the unrighteous. He does not want to keep His help from the unrighteous, for indeed God is a loving God who has mercy on all of mankind, but rather it is because the unrighteous have rejected God. Isaiah wrote, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2).

CONCLUSION

Great things await each child of God if we treat others the way we are supposed to. The Christian's attitude must always be in check if he/she is to receive blessings and be a blessing. Whether we are speaking about the relationship of husband and wife or we are speaking about the relationship between brethren, we must always check our attitude and make the necessary adjustments as needed in order to ensure that we are living and acting as God wants us to live and act.

End Notes

- 1 Vines, W. E. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words) Fleming H. Revell, Grand Rapids, MI., 1985, p. 87.
- 2 Warren W. Wiersbe, (Be Hopeful) Chariot Victor Publishing Co., Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1998, pp.68,69,71.
- 3 Vines, W. E., p. 32
- 4 Warren W. Wiersbe, 70.
- 5 Oberst, Bruce, (Letters From Peter) Bible Study Textbook, College Press, Joplin, Missouri, 1962, p. 77.
- 6 Holland, H. Thomas, (Strength for Suffering Saints) Penmann Books, Brentwood, Tennessee, 2009, p.138.
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"SANTIFY THE LORD GOD IN YOUR HEART"

By Larry Acuff

INTRODUCTION

The third chapter of first Peter deals with several topics. The writer begins by giving instruction first to wives, instructing them to "be in subjection to your own husbands" (1 Pet. 3:1), 1 then to the husband "Likewise ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge" (1 Pet. 3:7).

This is followed by general instructions to those to whom he is writing. Note Peter's teaching in these verses:

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:8-12).

Beginning in verse thirteen he gives them admonition regarding the fact of persecution by writing, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good" (1 Pet. 3:13)? Peter is actually telling them that they may be persecuted and that the body may be harmed but those who persecute can not harm the spirit. The entire paragraph of 1 Peter 3:13-22 is bolstering the Christian in his defense of the gospel and building his courage in so doing. He points out to them that even though men may speak evil of you by living the right kind of life they will be ashamed having spoken evil of you. Peter gives them courage by emphasizing that Christ suffered and that it is better that they suffer for well doing rather than evil doing.

Peter gives them two examples in verses 19-22. One was that Christ preached even in time of difficulty. He uses the phrase, "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. 3:19) meaning that he had preached to those who are now dead not that he went to preach to the unseen world. Bro. Burton Coffman wrote the following regarding this, "there is not a line in this passage which requires us to believe that Christ preached personally to those "spirits in prison" during the three days his body lay in the tomb!" ² I am of the opinion that Peter's reference to Noah is also and indication that Noah preached even in a time of great wickedness and when men would have ridiculed him for so doing.

Now focus with me on one verse that seems to center Peter's message to them in this section of the book. Even though persecution looms ahead Peter says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:14).

"Be ready always to give an answer...." In this message I want to examine five areas that are involved in being ready to give the Bible answer. 1) The Act That Precedes the Bible Answer. 2) The Authority of the Bible Answer. 3) The Ambition to Give the Bible Answer. 4) The Area of the Bible Answer. 5) The Attitude of the Bible Answer.

THE ACT THAT PRECEDES THE BIBLE ANSWER

The act that precedes the Bible answer is the act of "SANCTIFY". The word "sanctify" simply means "to set apart". Christ must be set apart in the life of the Christian before he will ever be able to give an answer. He may spew out words but his life may convey something entirely different. On occasion Hollywood will try to portray a Bible subject. They may try to convince the public they know what they are doing but the public knows better. Going into

McDonalds doesn't make you a Big Mac. Trying to give a Bible answer with bad life defeats the purpose.

In the penitential Psalm David wrote, "Create in me a clean heart" (Psalm 51:10). In other words David is saying God is to be set apart in my life. Is that not what is involved in Jesus words when he said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness..." (Matt. 6:33)?

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE ANSWER

The scripture says, "Sanctify the Lord God." It is the Lord God that is the authority. He is the creator (Gen. 1:1). When God appeared to Abraham he said, "I am the Almighty God" (Gen. 17:1). Regarding God Isaiah said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts that your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9).

Christ has authority. Jesus said, "All things have been given unto me by the father" (Matt. 11:27; 28:18). God declared the authority of Jesus in his birth (Matt. 1:21). God declared the authority of Jesus at his baptism (Matt. 3:17). God declared the authority of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5).

Not only did God declare the authority of Jesus but he did so himself. In the Sermon on the Mount, more than once, he said "It hath been said...But I say unto you..." (Matt. 5:31-32). 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).

God declared his authority. Jesus declared his authority. Others declared his authority. When the soldiers went to take him but returned without him the chief priest and Pharisees wanted to know why they did not bring him back and they answered, "Never man spake like

this" (John 7:46). After Jesus had delivered the Sermon on the Mount the scripture states, "For he taught them as one having authority..." (Matt. 7:29).

The Apostle Paul declared the authority of Jesus in the New Testament when he wrote, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22).

So the authority of the Bible answer is the Lord God.

THE AMBITION TO GIVE THE BIBLE ANSWER

"Be ready!" Don't withdraw. When the opportunity arises be ready to give the Bible answer. Here are the words of the Apostle Paul, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Rom. 1:14-15). Just as Peter said be ready Paul said, "I am ready". Are we ready to give an answer?

Paul wrote, "I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). He was ready. To the Philippians Paul wrote, "...I am set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17).

It takes preparation to be able to give an answer to every man who ask a reason for the hope which is in you. We are taught to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Some are not willing to give an answer because they don't know one because they haven't studied sufficiently.

Folks sometime will say, "Oh, I don't want to get into an argument." It is not arguing it is giving an answer. Others may say, "That is the preacher's job." Peter didn't say preachers but rather is speaking to all.

Do we have the ambition to give an answer? Do we have a determination to give an answer? Do we have the knowledge to give an answer?

THE AREA OF THE BIBLE ANSWER

There are two areas involved in giving the Bible answer. First of all the scripture says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your heart...." The heart must be right. David said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11). Jesus said, "...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Mt. 12:34). If God is set apart in our hearts then that which proceeds out of it will be what is right (Mk. 7:21). This must come from the heart.

Some folks are anxious to give an answer for the purpose of winning an argument and are happy when they have done so. It is fine to win an argument but what about winning a soul? The essence of this passage is — do not be afraid to give an answer even though it may mean persecution. "Blessed are ye, when shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Mt. 5:11). John gave this message, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). We must be reminded that Peter said in verse thirteen, "And who is he that will harm you?"

The second area of the Bible answer is that we are to be ready to give an answer for the hope that lieth in us - the reason for our salvation. Why does the Christian have hope? What would have caused the Apostles to lay down their lives for the gospel? The hope that is found only in Christ Jesus. Note the following passages which reveal this to us:

"Now the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in **hope**, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:13).

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the **hope** of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18).

"For the **hope** which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col. 1:5).

Do not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Be ready and willing to preach Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2).

THE ATTITUDE OF THE BIBE ANSWER

We must have the right attitude in giving the Bible answer and that attitude is "With meekness and fear." Not arrogance. Not better than thou. Not I know more than you. That answer is to be given with a spirit of love. Paul wrote the Corinthians and declared, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). Love must be in the heart.

Years ago it was not uncommon for some members of the church of Christ to say to someone, "If you're not a member of the church of Christ you are going to hell." While it is true that we must be members of the Lord's church to be saved this statement was made many times with the wrong attitude. It was like, "Boy I really plowed him under, didn't I."

As Christian in defending and preaching the truth we must do it with the right spirit as Paul said, "But speaking the truth in love..." (Eph. 4:15).

CONCLUSION

In this section of the 1 Peter the writer is admonishing them to be prepared to give and answer for their hope even though it may mean persecution.

End Notes

- 1 All scripture references are from the King James Version
- 2 Burton Coffman, Executable Links, www.searchgodsword.org.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN

By Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

One of the key thoughts in 1 Peter is the subject of suffering. In the King James Version the word, "suffering" or some form of it, is employed sixteen times in this short epistle, and six times in chapter four alone. Peter knew that the Christians he addressed would go through times of persecution and severe hardship. Interestingly, some have suggested the main reason Peter wrote this letter was because the Apostle Paul had just been executed in Rome. This would explain much toward the subject matter of this epistle. And although we may not be able to ascertain this with any certainty, there are some interesting observations to support the idea that this letter was written immediately after Paul's death. We know that Mark was with Peter at the time of this writing (5:13); and from 2 Timothy 4:11 we understand that Mark had possibly made it to Rome before the death of Paul. Thus, Mark may have been in Rome when this epistle was written. Henry Halley remarks:

It is thought, possibly, that Peter may have written this Letter immediately after Paul's martyrdom, about A.D. 66, and sent it by Silas (5:12), who had been one of Paul's helpers, to these Churches which Paul had founded, to encourage them to bear up under their Suffering, Silas personally carrying the news of Paul's martyrdom to Paul's Churches ¹

This letter was addressed to Christians from Asia Minor; from the provinces Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1:1). During his second missionary journey, Paul was not allowed of God to go into any of these regions, except Galatia and later Asia, (Acts 16:6-7; 18:19; 19:1). Nevertheless, it is certain that Paul's influence was known throughout all these regions where he had established so many churches. Perhaps Peter sent this letter to help soften the news of Paul's death.

Many believe that 1 Peter was written as late as A.D. 68. If this is true, then the Neronian persecution would have been in full force. During that time, the Judaizers were continually harassing the spread of the gospel, bringing persecutions upon early Christians and causing general havoc for the Roman Empire (1Thessalonians 2:14-16). Also in A.D. 67, one year earlier, Vespasian with his Roman forces had already begun to move to Galilee and Judea, setting the stage for the onslaught of the Jewish Wars and the destruction of Jerusalem which fell in A.D. 70. These were trying times for anyone to live, but especially so for Christians because they were hated so fiercely by so many.

Chapter four culminates Peter's thoughts on suffering. Christians ought to expect to suffer. It follows as naturally as the principle that good versus evil; God's people must suffer (2 Timothy 3:12). Suffering is a character-builder which tempers us unto God's good pleasure, as a people strong and endued with hardship into a force of righteousness not easy to be reckoned with by the adversary.

Thinking analytically, there may be many reasons why a person suffers: 1) One may suffer because of his lifestyle or choices; 2) he might suffer because others dislike him; 3) he might suffer because of his surroundings; or 4) he might suffer from the direct judgment of God. In chapter four, viewing the entire gamut of the Christian's life of suffering, we will look at the Christian's past, his present condition and his future outlook toward suffering.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PAST LIFE OF SUFFERING (VS. 1-6)

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he <u>no</u> longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.² [Emphasis RV].

verse 1:

Christ's suffering, in particular, is a central theme in this short epistle. Christ's suffering is vicarious. Peter mentions His passion at least five times:

- 1:11 The prophets "testified beforehand" of Christ's sufferings.
- 2:21-24 Christ's suffering is an example that we "should follow in his steps."
- 3:18 Christ suffered "that he might bring us to God."
- 5:1 Peter was an eyewitness to Christ's sufferings.

And now, in **4:1**, "As Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." This is a continuation of the thought started in 3:18 that Christ suffered to bring us to God. Chapter headings will sometimes break the train of thought when there is no break in thought. This is the case of chapter four.

In 3:19-22 there is a parenthetical thought about preaching and baptism, which is seemingly removed from the subject of Christ's suffering. Any inquiring reader is forced to ask; how do these topics relate to Christ's suffering? The answer, very simply, is that in baptism a sinner puts on Christ (Galatians 3:27), and through the emulation of Christ's death and resurrection, he is born anew (Romans 6:3-4; John 3:5). The Christian is literally born by the sufferings of Christ.

When Peter says, "Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind," he is reminding us that we are saved by Christ's sufferings, therefore, we should expect our lives to be filled with suffering too. Paul taught a similar thought in Philippians 2:5 when he said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Indeed, the Christian is born by Christ's suffering in order to undergo suffering, so that he might avoid eternal suffering.

Peter then says, "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin," literally, "he has been stopped from sin." Peter is not saying suffering forgives sin. Just because one suffers does not mean that he no longer sins. In reality, suffering is common to all humanity, saints and sinners alike. Many have suffered greatly and are still yet in their sins. Nor is Peter talking about sinless perfection (1 John 1:8). But rather, a Christian ceases from sin because he has a new life in Christ and no desire to return to that filthy mire of his old lifestyle. Our salvation by the gospel is a picture of Christ's suffering. If one has been baptized into His death, his sins have been washed away and he no longer lives a life of sin because he is dead to it (Romans 6:3-7, note especially 7).

verses 2, 3:

The way in which a Christian is to "arm" himself is to, "No longer ... live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." This should be the rule by which everyone shapes his life. While we live in the flesh, we live to serve God. Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ..." (Philippians 1:21).

Interestingly, in verse 3, Peter makes a slight change in the use of the word, "Gentile." Before, in the scriptures, a Gentile was anyone who was not of Jewish descent. But now, Peter, writing to Gentiles, calls anyone who is not a Christian a "Gentile." Next, Peter gives a list of Gentile practices which are to be abandoned by Christians. This list includes six forms of sensuality, three personal and three social:

- ασελγείαις⁴ translated in the KJV as "lasciviousness" six times, is also rendered in the KJV as "wantonness," "pernicious," and "filthy." This word includes, being immoral in manners such as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, or inappropriate handling of male and female.⁵ Lasciviousness also carries with it a note of insolent pride. Those who are guilty of it are proud of their self-proclaimed liberation from moral restraints.
- επιθυμίαις "Lusts," desire, craving or longing; could be used in a good or bad sense depending upon context. As used here in this connection with the other words, Peter is suggesting sexual or fleshly desires.
- οινοφλυγίαις "excess of wine." A compound of two words, "wine" and "to bubble up" or "overflow." It not only means, "drunkenness," but implies the consumption of very large quantities of wine.
- κόμοις "revellings." It signifies a merry-making; most probably a village festival, from κόμη, a village. Theyer says of it, "a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before the houses of their male and female friends; hence, used generally, of feasts and drinking-parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry."
- $\pi \acute{o} \tau o \iota \varsigma$ "banquetings." Drinking parties involving unrestrained indulgence in alcoholic beverages and accompanying immoral behavior.
- αθεμίτοις ειδωλολατρείαις "Abominable or unlawful idolatries." In Acts 10:28, the only other place where αθέμιτος occurs in the N.T., it is used by Peter of that which is forbidden by the law of Moses; and this is probably the meaning here. That which is contrary to law and justice, prohibited by law, illicit, criminal.⁸

Our past life may have been spent doing such things, but that time was sufficient; it is enough, and the Christian is not to run this course any longer.

verses 4, 5:

In verse 4 the heathen world thinks it strange or odd that the Christian does not participate in these activities. Ungodly people build up resentment when someone does not endorse their lifestyle. They resist any puritan sentiment because it is seen as an attack on their right to do evil. They speak ill of the Christian and persecution is the inevitable outcome.

In verse 5 Peter states that these bewildered blasphemers (the pagan Gentiles of verse 3) will "give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." The phrase, "to give account" is

from αποδιδόναι λόγον – "to render an account to a master or judge, to stand trial," generally implying that it will not be easy to make a defense (Matthew 12:36; Luke 16:2; Hebrews 13:17). ⁹ The Judge is ready. This means He is shortly going to perform His role and execute judgment. This judgment is not necessarily referring to a tribunal, as in the Great Day of Judgment, but rather was a time of persecution, punishment or purging that both the church and the world would shortly be enduring.

Who are the "living and the dead" that Peter is referring to? This is not an easy phrase to determine with absolute confidence. This cannot mean that people will be preached to after they die. Why give the gospel to dead people when they will not be able to obey it? And so, the questions are asked: does this have a reference to everyone still physically living and to those who have physically died? Or rather, does the phrase mean those who are spiritually alive in Christ and those who are spiritually dead without Him? Or, is it a combination of both ideas?

Peter uses two different Greek words for "life" in chapter 4. In verse 2 he uses the verb, βιόω (to spend life, to pass time) to suggest that we should not live to the lusts of men. But in verses 5-6 he uses ζάω. In some contexts, this word can mean, to enjoy vigorous spiritual life that brings forth good fruit (cp. Revelation 3:1). Peter is saying in verse 5 that Christ will "judge the living and the dead" (possibly meaning the church and the world), and then in verse 6 that "the dead (i.e. saints who are physically dead) might live (i.e. are alive in spirit, although physically dead) according to God in the Spirit."

The word, "dead" (νεκρός) can also have different connotations in the Scriptures. There are the physically dead, and the spiritually dead. One may be dead IN sin (Ephesians 2:1), or he may be dead TO sin (Romans 6:2; 1 Peter 2:24). Thus, It seems that Peter is referring to "the living" as Christians and "the dead" as those of the world who are dead in sin. The reasoning for this is that in verse 17,

God's judgment begins first with the "house of God," but this judgment is not the final Day of Judgment, as will be discussed in verse 7. However, it also seems that Peter gives a double meaning to the "dead" in the next verse, the literal "dead" in Christ, i.e. saints and martyrs who have already passed from this world. Notice the next verse.

verse 6:

The gospel was preached to those who are now dead, but were not so while they were being preached to. These (now dead) had obviously heard the gospel and obeyed it while still living, thus becoming Christians. But prior to Peter's writing this epistle, these Christians had died. While living, they were victims of the same "evil speaking" of verse 4 which Peter's audience is now suffering. And although judged/condemned by "men in the flesh," perhaps even martyred; they now "live according to God in the Spirit" though they are physically dead.

So, the Christian's past life was begun by putting on the sufferings of Christ, and in order to stand approved to God in the judgment (1:23), he should not let his old life control him any longer. It is buried with Christ. Next, Peter discusses the Christian's present life of suffering.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT LIFE OF SUFFERING (Vs 7-11)

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. [Emphasis RV].

verse 7:

What is meant by the phrase, "The end of all things is at hand?" It cannot mean the end of the world! If Peter was referring to the end of the world, then he was mistaken, because some two millennia have passed and the world has not ended yet. The very idea that Peter made a mistake is unacceptable, because that would deny the inspiration and infallibility of the scriptures.

There are many expressions in the Bible for an "end" that do not refer to the end of the world. There was the end of Christ's redemptive work. While on the cross He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30 cp. Luke 12:50). There was the end of the Jewish nation (Matthew 24:6, 15-24; Mark 13:7, 29; 1 Thessalonians 2:16). "Christ is the end of the law" (Romans 10:4). The Jews of the O.T. are examples to future generations "upon whom the end of the world (ages) come" signifying the N.T. age (1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 9:26). The "end" can also mean, the purpose of a thing, Christ is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" (Revelation 1:8). He is the beginning and ending purpose of everything God has done for this world.

Most likely, this "end of all things" was either a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and end of the Jewish nation, or else it referred to the end of the apostolic age of revelation soon to be accomplished in the written canon of scriptures. If referring to Jerusalem, the "end" was less than five years away from the time Peter wrote. If so, then the, "all things" would mean everything that the O.T. had prophesied concerning Israel's final purpose and destruction (Daniel 9:24-27). However, if referring to the end of the apostolic age, remember that Paul had probably just been executed, and Peter knew that he would soon be following Paul (2 Peter 1:12-15). According to tradition, the other apostles would also soon be killed. Thus, the, "all things" would mean, everything which God had planned from past to present was soon to be consummated and brought to a finished plan of salvation for all the world to read in the finished scriptures.

There are other passages related to this subject which are often mistaken to teach that the apostles believed the end of the world was imminent. But they did not teach this. Some of these are Romans 13:10-14; James 5:7-8; Philippians 4:5; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 1:3, et al. Note, that in all of these, the end of the world is not the conclusion to draw from their context.

Because it was a time of suffering, Peter said that the Christian had a three-fold responsibility: to himself, to others and to God. Please notice; 1) There is the admonition to one's self personally, "be sober and watch unto prayer." This is reminiscent of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:6, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Peter warns these Christians to be attentive because a cataclysmic upheaval is soon to occur. Whether it be Jerusalem's destruction or the consummation of the apostolic age, be on guard. It is of interesting note that two different Greek words which are translated as "sober" in other places are both used here; σωφρονέω (to be of a sound mind, to think right) and νήσω (to abstain from wine, or to have self-control). Thus, Peter says Christians are to think right and live right.

verse 8:

2) Next, there is the Christian's responsibility to others: "Have fervent charity among yourselves." Peter has already stated this before in 1:22, "...see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." The word, "fervent" is from εκτενής, literally, to stretch out, hence to be extended, intense or earnest. Because love is the badge of discipleship (John 13:35), it is necessary for them to show intense love for each other. He also says that this love is to be "above all things," that is, before all other things in order of importance. He then says, "Love shall cover the multitude of sins," love toward another will hide a great many imperfections so that you will not notice their flaws. "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins" (Proverbs 10:12). In James 5:20 sins are covered when a brother is converted from his error. The difference between James and Peter is that in James, those sins are covered/atoned as far as God is concerned. But, in 1 Peter 4:8 sins are forgotten or at least less acerbic as far as fellow Christians are concerned. That is, they shall be held as less offensive because love overshadows them.

verse 9:

Hospitality is from φιλόξενος, literally, "friendly to strangers." The New Testament gives much emphasis to this subject: (Romans 12:13) (Hebrews 12:2) (1 Timothy 3:2) (Titus 1:8) (3 John 5-6). In the first century Christian travelers were often unable to find proper accommodations. The inns and hotels of the time were rare, and when they were found they were known to be places of the grossest sin and corruption. So, local Christians would need to host fellow Christian travelers in their own homes to help them along on their journeys. However, to guard against unworthy guests staying or advantaging over the hospitable, letters of commendations by Paul were customarily used (2 Corinthians 3:1).

verses 10, 11:

3) Lastly, there is the Christian's duty to God. "As every man has received the gift," he is to "minister" that gift to others so that "God in all things may be glorified." The word, "gift" is χάρισμα, which was used by Paul to reference the extraordinary spiritual gifts given to one by the imposition of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:18), (cp. also Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 9, 28, 30-31). Peter is referring to these same spiritual graces as well. In context he is saying, use these God-given abilities in your hospitality toward each other, so that God's manifold grace might be promoted among the churches. Peter mentions two of these apostolically endowed gifts specifically: speaking as the oracles of God (prophetic utterances needed then before the completed N.T., 1 Corinthians 12:10; Romans 12:6) and ministry (διακονέω, verb form of the word deacon, Romans 12:7) or service to others by the endowed gifts like healing, discernment, working of miracles, etc.

Because of the times in which they lived, and because of the world's hatred toward God and His righteousness, Christians must be armed for the violence that was being perpetrated against them. But, the worst was yet to come.

THE CHRISTIAN'S FUTURE LIFE OF SUFFERING (VS.12-19)

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. [Emphasis RV].

Knowing that a fiery trial was coming, it was necessary for Peter to admonish Christians to persevere through their persecutions. What he says to them is certainly beneficial for all ages and for us today as well.

verse 12: Expect Persecution.

Twice Peter stresses the idea of "strangeness." This is from the word, $\xi \acute{\epsilon} vo\varsigma$ or $\xi \epsilon v\acute{\iota}\zeta \omega$ (a stranger; to be strange, new or unusual, hence to be surprised, bewildered). Essentially, Peter was saying, do not think it unusual that you are going through these fiery trials. Other Christians were experiencing them as well as you (5:9). Jesus warned that hard times would be coming:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me (John 15:18-21).

But, why does God allow His children to suffer? "Fiery trials" try our faith like gold is purified in the fire (1:6-7). The church is filtered into a purer, more sincere people by these persecutions. God let the

devil persecute Job. If God blessed him afterwards, He will also bless us. First comes the cross, then the crown.

verses 13-14: Rejoice in Persecution.

This was not a new thought. Jesus taught this in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:11-12). Paul said that he gloried in tribulations (Romans 5:3-5). And James commanded Christians to rejoice in their "diverse temptations" (James 1:2-4).

Why rejoice in persecution? Because "great is our reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12), and because they persecuted the prophets before you. Paul said, "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope." (Romans 5:3-4). James explained, "The trying of your faith worketh patience" and patience can help one become "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:3-4).

Peter gives three reasons why Christians should rejoice in sufferings: 1) You will have glory in the future, "When his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." 2) Blessings in the present, "Happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." and 3) Christ is being glorified through you; "On your part he is glorified."

verses 15, 16: Suffer Well

If one must suffer, he must be sure to suffer innocently. Peter mentions four specific types of criminal activity that rightly brought about a severe penalty under law, maybe even the death penalty. These were murderer, thief, malefactor and spy. The Roman government would especially extract severe punishment for these indictments. It is of interesting note that the word translated, "busybody" in the KJV is from, αλλοτριοεπίσκοπος. This word's only occurrence is here in 1 Peter 4. It does not even occur in classical Greek writings. So, the meaning can only be determined by the context of the

New Testament. It is not very likely that a "busybody" would incur the wrath of the government as a criminal activity. It is more likely, instead, that the meaning is a "calumniator" and "informer." ¹⁰ Christians were not to be brought before the heathen tribunals for these kinds of criminal activities. Rather, let the Christian be slandered as criminals, but be found obviously innocent in the eyes of all. In this way the world would know that their suffering was only due to the interdict of wicked rulers, and not because they deserved to suffer so harshly. Their willingness to submit to injustice would serve to prove even more the veracity of their convictions that Jesus is the Christ and Savior of the world.

verses 17-18: Judgment is Coming

The word, "time" is καιρός and means a specific measurement of time, a fitting season, opportunity. Peter uses καιρός in connection with judgment. This is not a reference to the final Day of Judgment, but rather to the same sufferings mentioned in verses 5 and 6. A time was beginning by which God would finally champion in the N.T. age and change the old world order. This would be a time of upheaval, destruction and death. Peter is probably referring to the Roman-Judeo wars already beginning to heat up. But, Peter is letting these Christians know that a persecution or purging must first target the house of God. God allows the persecution of his children because it serves to judge and purify the church. In 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 Paul says:

...We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.

A contrast is made. If God is willing to so judge/purge His own children what about the disobedient? "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" This is a direct quote from the LXX in Proverbs 11:31. The Old Testament Masoretic Text has a different reading in Proverbs, as is seen by the KJV

reading. Peter asks this rhetorically, the answer being obvious. But the answer is also given by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9:

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. [Emphasis RV].

Everlasting destruction will be the end of those who have persecuted the churches of Christ.

Verse 19: Commit Your Souls

Peter says to those who go through suffering to, "Commit the keeping of their souls to... a faithful Creator." As Creator, God has the power to do what is right in the end. Isaiah 40:28 says, "...The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding." No one can supersede His authority. He is also "faithful" because He can be trusted to do what is right in the end. God CAN and WILL take care of you. So, we ought to "commit" the keeping of our souls to Him.\

Conclusion

Suffering is a major topic in 1 Peter, and in other parts of the Bible: The book of Job, James, The Revelation of John, the Sermon on the Mount, Romans 12-14 and many other places all address the topic of suffering. Instead of complaining and murmuring, the child of God should practice a silent, holy and dignified quality of character when suffering, 1 Peter 2:20 says:

For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

End Notes

- 1 Halley, Henry H., <u>Halley's Bible Handbook</u>, 24th ed., (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), 663.
- 2 All scripture references are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible unless specifically noted otherwise.
- 3 The Greek phrase, πέπαυται αμαρτίας, is 3rd person, singular, perfect passive followed by the genitive/ablative "from sin." However, some have suggested πέπαυται is middle not passive, rendering the phrase, "he hath stopped himself from sin."
- 4 All references to Greek are taken from H KAINE ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ.
- 5 Thayer, Joseph H. "ασελγεία," <u>Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</u>. 7th ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, March, 2005).
- 6 Ibid, "οινοφλυγία."
- 7 Ibid, "κωμος."
- 8 Ibid, "αθέμιτος."
- 9 Bigg, Charles, D. D., "1 Peter 4:5," <u>A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude</u>, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903).
- 10 Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, Greifswald. "αλλοτριοεπίσκοπος," <u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u>, Ed. Gerhard Kittel, G. W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 622.

EXHORTATIONS AND ADMONITIONS

By Richard Mansel

INTRODUCTION

As a writer, Peter is a figure of great drama. "He was impulsive, impetuous, and warm hearted, disarming, sometimes vacillating, but always humble, devoted, courageous and true." His remarkable life vibrantly adorns the pages of the gospels and Acts, before he moves off-screen.

Re-appearing in his two epistles, older and wiser, we see a man who has learned from his mistakes and victories in Christ. His maturity in the faith is apparent in his writing and we are all wealthier, as a result.

Peter, in his later years, reminds the reader of an aging soldier, sharing his wisdom with younger warriors. He bears the scars from his life on the battlefield. Yet, he has survived through his faith and courage. We must listen to his tales and instruction, if we will persevere.

Paul wrote:

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:11-12).²

Peter understood these realities better than most. Jesus had warned him:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (Jn. 21:18).

Peter prepared himself and urged his readers to be ready for their last end. He writes, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Pet. 4:1).

Final chapters of epistles are often a mix of final thoughts, loose ends, warnings and greetings. Peter follows this form and provides an insight into his concern for the saints. The chapter is poignant when we read the final verse of chapter four: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. 4:19).

Paul's comment in his final epistle, frames Peter's mindset at the end of his own letter, when Paul wrote, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Accordingly, our loving Savior will provide a way for us to survive the onslaught (Heb. 13:5). Peter describes the way of victory and comforts all the saints in 1 Peter 5. Let us heed his wisdom, through the inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

WITNESS

Because Peter worries about the suffering of the saints, he wants to ensure that they will be comforted. He was a witness to Christ, His teachings, miracles and love. Moreover, he was also "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (1 Pet. 5:1).

Selected by Christ to be an apostle (Matt. 10:2-4), Peter moved into Christ's inner circle (Matt. 17:1; 26:37). However, when the time came for Christ's arrest by the Roman army, Peter was running from the danger (Matt. 26:56).

The word "witness" in 5:2 means a "spectator or eye-witness" Peter watched Christ as He taught the people, faced His enemies and no doubt saw the pain in His eyes after Gethsemane. He knew first-hand what Christ endured.

Guy N. Woods writes, "Though Peter had seen—from afar—the agony of Christ on the cross, and was, in this manner, a 'witness' of the suffering of Christ, the word 'witness' here signifies 'testimony."

Peter's denial of Christ was the bitterest of memories and, no doubt, was a perpetual companion as he wrote these epistles. The vivid scene may have revisited his dreams, through the years.

Peter knew the savage temptations of sin. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

Fear led him to deny the Lord he boldly proclaimed, when Jesus was at his lowest point (Matt. 26:69-75). One of the most chilling passages in all of Scripture lays bare the torture Peter's soul felt at the betrayal of His Savior. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61-62).

Undoubtedly, that look tore him apart and motivated his concern for his fellow saints. He is witness to the cold realities of denial and the dangers of apostasy.

WATCHERS

Peter speaks to the elders to implore them to be serious about their responsibilities. He urges them to be leaders, physically and spiritually.

Ezekiel writes about the watchers who must protect the people of God. "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me" (Eze. 33:7).

Shepherds must watch over the flock and be ready always to warn Christians about the dangers facing them. Elders immerse themselves in the Word of God and remain alert to the dangers of the society and attuned to the waves of heresy in the Lord's church.

Elders are to be shepherds and lead the people of God to heaven. The "chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4) watches over his flock and the elders watch over their souls. Elders are working for the Master and they have serious roles in God's kingdom. This is a "reminder that elders serve under the 'Chief Shepherd' to whom they, also, must someday give an account."⁵

These elders serve as spiritual overseers. "They exercise oversight of the flock of God, bishops and elders are obligated to superintend and direct the affairs of the congregation committed to their care."

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb.13:17).

They lead, but not in an overbearing spirit. "The word 'overseer' implies that those who lead the church are to exercise authority. Their authority is not that of swords or guns, but rather the force of their spiritual and moral example."

Elders must stand for truth, regardless of whether people will follow. Their ultimate responsibility is to God and they must attempt to instill this singular attitude in the children of the Master.

Elders lead by example (1 Pet. 5:3). The word "example" refers to "an architect's plan or a sculptor's or painter's model." An example is a pattern to follow and means "an impression left by a stroke." Elders make a difference with their leadership and moral example as protectors and passionate warriors for God's plan.

Driven by godliness and duty, rather than power and greed, pastors are mentors and men of prayer and righteousness. They have authority from God to serve under the Word of God.

"To deny elders the proper exercise of authority in the oversight of the church is as much a perversion of the New Testament teaching as it is for the elders to abuse their rights and privileges through improper seizure of authority."

However, the elders are not to be bullies. They are "warned against the unseemly ambition and abuse of power." If they will fulfill their duties as watchers, they must never waver from the horizon and the souls of men. If Satan can divert their attention, he will exploit it with all of his might. These godly men must "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1).

Satan is always watching for a way to steal the flock from the Shepherd (John 10:10). "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

The Devil is an adversary and he is relentless (Job 1:7; Rev. 12:10). His roaring evidences the "howl of a beast in fierce hunger." He has an insatiable appetite to pull the saints away from the Lord, if we will allow him to deceive us (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-29; Eph. 6:10-11).

We "resist" Satan, which is a "military term, as of an army marshaled for battle." Therefore, we take courage, refusing to be terrified because Christ is on our side. We develop a steadfast, "unmovable trust in God." ¹⁴

We must realize that we are unable to save ourselves from Satan. Only through Christ, do we have any hope (Eph. 2:8-10). We are all sinners, lost and hopeless, without Jesus. Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2) and we become "enemies" of God (Rom. 5:10). However, God had a plan to save mankind. "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9).

If we realize our utter hopelessness without our Shepherd, we will realize how important it is to cling to Christ and follow godly leaders in the faith who are watching out for us.

In humility, we realize our dependence. We are submissive to Christ and those who lead us in the church (1 Pet. 5:5). While they are certainly not the same, Christ being lord of all (Eph. 1:22-23), we do obey our elders. We are "clothed in humility," which means, "Put on and wrap yourselves with humility, so that the covering of humility cannot possibly be stripped from you."¹⁵

"For Christians, submission is given, not forced." We realize the necessity of unity and coalescing as a spiritual family (Eph. 4:4; Rom. 12:16). "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). It is literally us against the world (John 15:18-19).

God watches us, elders watch out for us, we look out for one another and immerse ourselves in the Word, to cover all of the angles/cracks.

WAY STATION

Several factors come together to strengthen our resolve and position and security. We cling to the Word, realize our dependence, bolster our faith and brethren, and "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6; cf. Jam. 4:10).

We have the witnesses to the greatness of God in Scripture and the strength and resolve of our watchers. Finally, we must realize that the church is a way station to protect us until the final day. It is our place of refuge until the Lord comes back for us (John 14:1-6).

"The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Ps. 18:2). We are strengthened and encouraged because we have this fortress in Christ. "The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him" (Nah. 1:7).

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). We allow Him to give us strength and resolve through His Word. Even though we will still suffer, Christ will "perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle [us]" (1 Pet. 5:10). We place ourselves in God's hands and allow ourselves to be reshaped, by His will and Word.

"Perfect" means that God will mend us "like fishermen repairing their nets." Once we are repaired, we are established, which means to "make fast, to support that which totters." We are then able to resist the attacks and stand firm against the "fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16).

We can have hope and peace in Christ (2 Cor. 1:7; Phi. 4:6-7). "Anxiety is the subtle insinuation that God is either unable or undisciplined to see to our welfare." On the contrary,

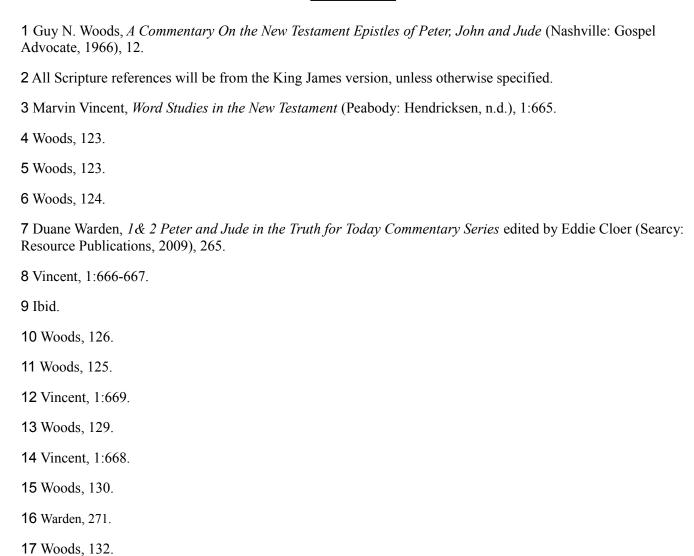
we know that through Christ, we "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phi. 4:13).

The Lord's Church is our protection and place of peace. We must reside in Her and persevere. Christ is all that we need and His blood continues to cleanse us from our sins (1 Jno. 1:17). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

CONCLUSION

The world is an exceedingly painful and difficult place, with Christ. Without Him, it is the stuff of nightmares, where the monsters are real and spiritual murder is encouraged. We have to protect ourselves and remain focused on salvation and bringing glory to God (Eph. 3:20-21). As Peter himself said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

End Notes



18 Woods, 132.

19 Warden, 274.

"Lessons from Second Peter"



The Sixteenth
SOUTH-EAST GEORGIA LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 29 – 30, 2011
HELD AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
RICHMOND HILL GEORGIA

Editor: Riley Nelson

PREFACE

When a great soldier of the Lord approaches the time of their departing from this life, many times they have words of wisdom for those who will be left behind. It is no wonder that the Holy Spirit would direct the great Apostle Peter to write words that would help guard Christians from the error of false teaching which was troubling them. Words that would serve to show them that all they needed had been supplied them, through Jesus Christ.

Knowledge is a thing that has always been needed by Christians. The more study devoted to the word of God the stronger an individual's faith comes as they "grow in the grace and knowledge" of Christ. Those who struggle in living the Christian life many times are found to be lacking in knowledge because they have not spent time pouring over the precious words that are able to give and sustain life.

Peter knew well of struggling to follow Jesus; from losing faith while walking to Jesus on the water, to denying the Lord three times on the night before the crucifixion. This great apostle knew the pain of turning away from the Lord.

If the words of this book are read and studied today, those who struggle and those who stand fast in the faith will be drawn closer to God.

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October 29, 2011

DEDICATION

When thinking of the words of Peter in this epistle it is not possible to do so without thinking of ones who have helped develop faith and dedication in Christian in my life. Taught by my parents to believe in God, I obeyed the gospel at the age of 13. As many teenagers, I fought a weak faith during those years. At times I was not what I should have been. Several people were instrumental in bringing me back to God, but one person stands out in my mind as the one who showed me my need for God. He taught me to study and to gain knowledge which strengthened my faith. Of all that I am as a Christian, I owe to his teaching of God's word and his direction and his example. This man has left this life and has gone home to be with God. It was a distinct honor and pleasure to have sat at his feet as he taught God's word. This volume is dedicated to the memory of William Harold Wood.

Riley Nelson Sixteenth South-East Georgia Lectures

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND PETER

Alan Wright

In one of Peter's early encounters with Jesus, he sees the Lord perform a miracle that allows Peter and his fellow fishermen to catch an enormous multitude of fish. The Scripture then records, "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). Later when Jesus knelt before his disciples to wash their feet, Peter's first reaction was that he was unworthy of such service from his Master (John 13:8). Peter held the firm conviction that anyone who would willfully allow sin in their lives had no right to stand in Jesus' presence or receive Jesus' mercy. But in the early church there arose a group of people who developed quite the opposite view. To those threatened by this doctrine Peter writes a letter.

Authenticity of the Epistle

The second epistle ascribed to Peter is one of the most commonly contested books in the New Testament. The criticism is based upon two observations. First, some writers in early church history disputed the book. Eusebius (c. 263 – 339), though he said some thought the book was "*useful*," yet he did not believe it properly belonged in the canon of the New Testament.

As to the writings of Peter, one of his epistles called the first, is acknowledged as genuine. For this was anciently used by the ancient fathers in their writings, as an undoubted work of the apostle. But that which is called the second, we have not, indeed, understood to be imbodied with the sacred books, $\varepsilon v \delta i \alpha \theta \eta \kappa o v$, yet as it appeared useful to many, it was studiously read with the other Scriptures (Pamphilus, 83).

In another section, he divides the various writings of the early church into four groups – the **homologoumena** (books universally acknowledged as canonical), the

antilegomena (disputed books, accepted by some and rejected by others), the **notha** (spurious books which definitely do not belong in the canon), and a fourth group that he denounced as completely heretical. He assigns Second Peter to the antilegomena.

Among the disputed books, although they are well known and approved by many, is reputed, that called the Epistle of James and Jude. Also the "Second Epistle of Peter," and those called "The Second and Third of John," whether they are of the evangelist or of some other of the same name (Pamphilus, 110).

In evaluating these comments, it should be noted that the writer does not give any specific details regarding who disputed these books or why. Without that information, it is impossible to assess the merits of their position. A number of other works existed which claimed to be written by Peter (e.g. *The Apocalypse of Peter, The Gospel of Peter, The Preaching of Peter*, and *The Acts of Peter*). These books were rejected as spurious works because the doctrines they contain ran counter to the teaching of the New Testament. Yet no such claim is made against this epistle. Jerome, who lived c. 347 – 420, a generation after Eusebius, made note of differences in style between the first and second epistles, but did not think that sufficient cause to indicate two different authors. (Jerome accounted for the difference by suggesting two different amanuenses, or secretaries.)

Why then was the book disputed? We can only speculate. Perhaps some were being overly cautious, having encountered so many counterfeit productions. Perhaps some had genuine doubts because the letter did not seem to be what they think Peter would have said or how he would have said it. Perhaps some were seeking to promote the doctrines and practices that the epistle condemned. Eusebius himself may have simply believed that an authentic letter of Peter would have been more widely quoted

by the "ancient fathers," his predecessors of the second and third century, as he had mentioned regarding the first epistle.

Regardless of their reasoning, we have several facts to consider. First, the book was "well known and approved by many," even in Eusebius' day. Some may have disputed it, but Eusebius does not include the book among those that he considered as notha, worthless counterfeits. Second, there is ample evidence, both explicit and circumstantial, that the book was known and received by second and third century writers. Benjamin Warfield lists likely allusions to the epistle in the writings of Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Theophilus of Antioch, among many others. (Warfield) While it is true that some of these instances on their own may not be conclusive, yet the force of the data collectively is quite impressive. Third, in the generation immediately following Eusebius, a number of churches took up the issue of the canon of the New Testament. With a single exception (that of the Syrian church), they all recognized Second Peter as fully canonical, having presumably the same evidence to work with that Eusebius had.

A second objection to the epistle's authenticity is based upon conclusions drawn from the fields of form criticism and redaction criticism. These fields study the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, structure and style of literary texts in an attempt to trace literary dependencies. The critics challenging Peter's authorship of this second epistle have put forth several arguments. First, there is a marked difference in the vocabulary and grammatical structure of this letter from the first epistle. Second, the letter seems to fit the style of **testamentary literature**, which are letters written by anonymous authors using the names of famous people, written as if they were the final testament of that

person before their death. Third, some critics believe the grammatical structure of the book indicates that its author's native language was Latin, particularly a frequent use of the anarthrous noun (a noun used without an article) (Bauckham, 131 - 163).

When dealing with the work of textual criticism, it should first be noted that the critic might make an accurate observation and still draw an invalid conclusion. This is especially true when subjective assumptions are made regarding an author's style and word choice. For instance, a modern writer may make extensive use of the word **automobile** in reference to the popular motor vehicle. When the critic then finds a document purportedly by the same writer using the simpler word **car**, he may jump to the conclusion that it must in fact have been written by someone else. This conclusion is of course unjustified. Such an illustration is necessarily oversimplified. But the actual arguments, while more complex, are no less erroneous.

In reply to the critical arguments, it should first be noted that both epistles are very short and hardly give a sufficient amount of material to make assessment of the scope of Peter's vocabulary or writing style. Furthermore, while there are notable differences in style between the two epistles, they also have a great deal in common grammatically. It is unfair to emphasize the differences and ignore the commonalities. And there is absolutely no difference between the epistles than cannot be accounted for by the different circumstances of the two letters.

The epistle does have much in common with the pseudonymous testaments of the period. It speaks of the author's impending death, it exhorts its readers to ethical behavior, and it anticipates the future destinies of its readers. Yet all of these characteristics would be likely to be found in a genuine testament as well. This argument proves nothing. In fact, we should ask how such a document might be determined to be false, and the answer is almost always that it contains things that could not have been written by the alleged author (such as doctrinal exhortations in direct contradiction to the author's known teachings, or references to historical events of which the author could have known nothing). There is no such indication in Second Peter.

In regard to the alleged Latin character of the book, it need only be noted that thousands of students and scholars have perused the Greek text of Second Peter and, while they may have found it challenging, they used the same rules of grammar and syntax in interpreting the material as would be applied to any other Greek text of the period, including the other Biblical texts. It may be that the author had a knowledge of Latin (though this is far from being convincingly established), yet this book is clearly not written by someone who thought in Latin.

Before leaving the question of authorship, we should note what the writer of the epistle says about himself:

- 1) He names himself as Simon Peter (2 Pet. 1:1).
- 2) He says that he is an apostle (2 Pet. 1:1; 3:2).
- 3) He indicates that he is in the final portion of his life (2 Pet. 1:13,14).
- 4) He speaks of witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:16-18).
- 5) He says that he has written a previous epistle to his readers (2 Pet. 3:1).

All of these point to the unmistakable fact that the author was intending his readers to believe that he was the apostle Peter. If he was anyone else, we must account for the discrepancy. There is no indication in the letter that the writer was a

false teacher intent on spreading some heretical doctrine. Everything contained in the letter is in perfect agreement with the known teachings of Peter and the other New Testament writers, and the book contains one of the strongest warnings in the New Testament against departing from the received apostolic teaching.

Is it possible then that the writer was a sincere, well-intentioned person who merely borrowed Peter's literary identity in order that his message might be more readily received? Such pseudonymity is a fairly common occurrence in most periods, and there are numerous examples from early church history. This would not be considered, at least in the author's mind, as a deception or forgery. The entire letter would be put forth with an unwritten preamble, which the author expected his reader to understand without explicitly stating it, "If Peter were here, this is what I believe he would say."

Yet the author of this letter not only makes a special effort to identify himself by the items mentioned above, but he also says that he and the other apostles had "not followed cunningly devised fables," and reminds his readers that "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." He warns extensively of false teachers who "speak great swelling words of vanity," and speaks of the woe that comes upon those who "turn from the holy commandment." He condemns those who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. For a man to hold the teachings of the apostles and prophets in such high esteem, and then to presume to put forth his own words as if they were on equal standing, would be an act of unmitigated gall.

The preponderance of evidence, both external and internal, points to the simple conclusion that this letter is exactly what it claims to be – The Second Epistle of Peter.

Occasion of the Epistle

When Jesus sent the apostles into the entire world to preach the gospel, they began first to preach to their fellow Jews, but eventually they broke through this national and racial barrier and brought the gospel to the Gentiles. The book of Acts records the story of the spread of this gospel throughout the eastern Mediterranean world. Those Christians living in what is now the Turkish peninsula had come into the church out of the idolatrous religions that prevailed in that part of the world.

Peter spent most of his life working with the Jewish Christians, but in the later years of his life, and especially it seems after the death of the apostle Paul, he went forth to work among the largely Gentile churches. As one might expect, the new Christians coming into the church brought with them many ideas and practices from their old life that often clashed with the principles of the gospel. Among the Jews, this had produced the so-called Judaizers, who taught that at least certain elements of the old law were still to be kept under the New Testament, especially circumcision. But among the Gentiles, the problem was the infiltration into the church of much of the old pagan religions found in the idolatrous temples of the day.

A particularly troubling doctrine emerged among the new Christians that threatened the moral purity of the church. Many who had come out of the licentious and lewd practices of paganism no doubt had trouble leaving the pleasures of the pagan temples behind, and so they began to rationalize that since Christianity is a religion based upon God's grace and since it had abrogated the Old Testament law, therefore the Christian was absolutely free to engage in any activity he wished without guilt or fear of

condemnation. This was an early, but extremely potent, form of the doctrine that would later be called antinomianism.

The New Testament writers often dealt with this doctrine. Paul, in writing to the Galatian churches and warning about the Judaizers who would take away their liberty and force them back under the Old Testament law, yet warns them, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). He speaks to Timothy about certain false teachers, saying, "For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, <u>led away with divers lusts</u>" (2 Tim. 3:6) Peter, in his first epistle, says that Christians should live "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" (1 Pet. 2:16). Jude warns, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). Even James, who wrote primarily to Jewish Christians, speaks of those who seemed to think that temptation came from God, arguing that God would want us to sin or else he wouldn't have put so many worldly and fleshly temptations around us. (rf. James 1:13-15)

The book of Romans takes considerable time to expose this false doctrine. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4). "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)" (Rom. 3:5). "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do.

evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just" (Rom. 3:8). "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1). "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. 6:15).

This false doctrine was threatening the churches of the Asian provinces, and prompted Peter to write his second epistle. We may trace Peter's description of these false teachers with a careful reading of the letter. First notice a number of words he uses to describe their actions and attitudes. Three times he uses the Greek word **aselgeia**: once translated **pernicious** (2 Pet. 2:2), once **filthy** (2 Pet. 2:7), and once **wantonness** (2 Pet. 2:18). This word is used in both Biblical and extra biblical literature to refer to lewd and licentious behavior, emphasizing primarily the disgusting and offensive nature of such behavior. He also says these men are **self-willed** (2 Pet. 2:10), from the Greek word **authadeis**, meaning not merely stubborn, but consumed with their own pleasures and lusts. He says that are **sporting themselves** (2 Pet. 2:13), from the Greek **entrufontes**, referring to one whose life is saturated in revelry. They have eyes full of **adultery** (2 Pet. 2:14), from the Greek **moichalidos**, a feminine form referring specifically to women who solicit the sexual favors of married men, and likely an allusion to the priestesses of the pagan temples who were in fact prostitutes.

We might reasonably ask, "How can such behavior be condoned by those who would call themselves Christians?" We may deduce at least four arguments used by these false teachers that Peter deals with in this epistle.

- 1) The gospel story is only a myth. These people had come from religions that were based on myths and legends of the deeds of the gods. Most had long ago abandoned the idea that these stories had any reality to them. As an example, we recall the shrine makers of Ephesus who denounced Paul for preaching a doctrine which defamed their goddess Diana, but who were in reality only motivated by the loss of profits they would suffer if people left the temples (rf. Acts 19:24-27). In response, Peter maintains unapologetically, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16)
- 2) Christians have no Lord and Master. Peter says, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). This has been thought by some to refer to nascent Docetist or Gnostic beliefs, but it simply means here that they did not recognize the authority of Jesus as Lord. Peter says that they "despise governments" (2 Pet. 2:10), or literally lordships. They recognized no external authority and would only answer to their desires, a sentiment all too common today as well.
- 3) We have liberty to do what we wish. This was no doubt the same argument that Paul dealt with so thoroughly in Romans. It said that God was full of grace, kindness and mercy, and would therefore freely grant license to his children. When we sin, we are merely giving opportunity for God to display his marvelous grace, and the more we sin, the more God is glorified. But Peter warns, "While they promise them liberty, they

themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2 Pet. 2:19).

4) There is no future judgment awaiting us. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:3,4). By rejecting the doctrine of the second coming, they said in effect that there is no consequence to worldly behavior.

Before we leave the description of these false teachers, it is worth noting the methods they used to propagate their doctrine. Peter says they spoke with "feigned words" (2 Pet. 2:3) and with "great swelling words of vanity" (2 Pet. 2:18). The power of eloquence and rhetoric to persuade men can be a great tool for either good or evil. We must be cautious not to follow someone merely because they are a powerful and charismatic speaker, nor should we deceive ourselves into thinking we are doing what is right and good merely because crowds clamor to hear our every word.

Theme of the Epistle

There is a recurring emphasis on the themes of righteousness, godliness and holiness. In fact in the sixty-one verses of this short letter, the word *righteousness* and its forms (*righteous, just, unjust* and *unrighteousness*) are used eleven times, the word *godliness* and its forms (*godly* and *ungodly*) are used eight times, and the word *holy* is used six times. That's a total of twenty-five occurrences, or an average of once every two and a half verses, in which this theme is found. To those who were being led away into

the ungodly practices of the false teachers Peter gives several motivations for living a godly life.

1) The promises of God ought to lead to a godly life. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:3,4). By the precious promises of God we are enabled to partake of the divine nature. This does not mean that we gain godlike powers such as omnipotence and omniscience, but that we take on a character of purity and righteousness. In doing this we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Every blessing that God has brought into our lives is given so that we may move out of sin into righteousness. As we witness the love and liberality of God, we ought to be moved by a great desire to be more like him every day.

The false teachers also made promises, but these promises were empty (2 Pet. 2:19). They said that their doctrine brought liberty, the freedom to do as we please without rules and laws to constrain us. In reality they brought people into a whole new kind of enslavement, ruled by their passions and suffering the consequences of one bad decision after another.

These teachers mocked the promises of God (2 Pet. 3:4), saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" But Peter says that though God has delayed the fulfillment of this promise, yet he is not "slack" concerning it. This word means that God is not slow in fulfilling the promise. This may seem a contradiction at first reading. However the meaning is that everything is fulfilled promptly in its proper time and not before. A

appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3). In the matter of the second coming, it is because of God's longsuffering that he waits, granting time for men to repent. Do not doubt God's promises. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

2) Knowledge of God ought to lead to a godly life. Over and over throughout this epistle, Peter tells his readers that they already knew God's will, and that knowledge should be nurtured, remembered, and embraced by godly living. Knowledge is the conduit through which God's blessings are received (2 Pet. 1:2). Christians should develop virtue, a desire to do what is right regardless of the cost, and add to that virtue the knowledge that enables them to live the virtuous life (2 Pet. 1:5). A life built on such knowledge will not be unfruitful (2 Pet. 1:8).

These concepts were not new to Peter's readers. He was merely bringing to their remembrance what they had already been taught (2 Pet. 1:12-15). But it would be better to have never known any of the gospel truth if they chose to return to their former worldly lives (2 Pet. 2:20,21).

Being entangled in pollution will cause us to be "overcome," crushed, defeated, by the power of sin (II Peter 2:20). Being overcome lands us in a "state worse than ever" which means we are worse off than before we ever knew the truth Whatever else it means it has to mean that we are now lost having the knowledge of the truth of being saved. In eternity it will be awful to remember that we had the knowledge and the opportunity to be saved. We actually had a "taste of the good word of God" (Heb. 6:5), but failed to do what it takes to be saved (Ulrey, 38).

3) The testimony of the prophets and apostles ought to lead to a godly life. Peter reminds his readers that he was an eyewitness of the things that he preached (2 Pet. 1:16). He speaks with reverence and awe of the time when he and James and John had seen the glory of Jesus and heard the voice of God at the transfiguration. No one with an honest heart could see and hear such things, and not be deeply humbled and moved to surrender any self-will and become a willing and faithful servant.

The place where Jesus was transfigured and where God called Peter and his fellow apostles to acknowledge Jesus is called *the holy mount*, in much the same way as the place where Moses stood before the burning bush is called *holy ground* (Exo. 3:5), and as the prophets often referred to Jerusalem and the temple as being God's *holy mountain*, often in reference to the coming spiritual temple, the church (e.g. Isa. 66:20; Joel 3:17; Zech. 8:3). When God declares a place to be holy, he will not tolerate anything that defiles it.

In addition to the apostles' teaching, there was the written record of the prophets. These men did not make up their own message, but spoke as they were moved, or literally carried along, by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20,21). The men who brought God's word to his people are called *holy men*, and they spake as moved by the *Holy Spirit* (2 Pet. 1:21). It follows that if a holy God spoke through his Holy Spirit to holy men then the message itself must be holy as well (rf. 2 Pet. 2:21). And if these Christians receive a holy commandment taught by holy men who were guided by the Holy Spirit, it surely should produce holiness in their lives as well.

4) The examples of history ought to lead to a godly life. Using well-known Old Testament stories Peter demonstrates that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly

out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. 2:4-9). The repeated testimony of history is clear – God rewards righteousness and punishes wickedness. Anyone who teaches otherwise displays a willful ignorance of the past (rf. 2 Pet. 3:5).

- 5) The excesses of the false teachers ought to lead to a godly life. It is a demonstrable fact that a little indulgence to fleshly passions only leads to greater and greater excesses. Peter says these men are presumptuous (2 Pet. 2:10), from the Greek word tolmetes, meaning brazen, having no respect for anyone. They are as brute beasts (2 Pet. 2:12) from alogos, without thought, incapable of higher reasoning. They cannot cease from sin (2 Pet. 2:14), from akatapaustos, indicating that they have become addicted and enslaved to their own lusts. They are unstable (2 Pet. 2:14), from asteriktos, meaning wavering and unreliable. He compares them to wells without water and to clouds blown before a tempest (2 Pet. 2:17), that is, that are useless and powerless. The entire description is of someone whose life is out of control and without meaning or value. Who would want such a life?
- 6) The coming end of the world ought to lead to a godly life. The worldly man values only that which brings him immediate physical gratification and pleasure. Yet this world is but a temporary thing. Notice what Peter tells us of the second coming. First, it is a day of judgment (2 Pet. 3:7), calling all who have lived ungodly lives into account. Second, it is a day of destruction (2 Pet. 3:10), in which all that the worldly man values will be consumed and lost forever. Third, it is a day of redemption (2 Pet. 3:13), in which the righteous will be brought into God's perfect and everlasting new creation.

In conclusion, we may summarize the message of Second Peter with Peter's own closing admonition. "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Pet. 3:17,18)

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THE CHRISTIAN GRACES

2 Peter 1:1-11

Andrew Crowe

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important aspects of life is growth. If a child does not properly grow, it rouses concern from his parents. There are questions of whether the child is on a proper diet or if he has some possible medical malady. A farmer is concerned if his crops do not grow as they should. How much more does the Father grow concerned when His children do not grow as they ought? He knows it is not that He has given the Christian an improper diet, nor is it something medical which can keep one from growing (1 Pet. 2:2). Given that knowledge, God expects His children to grow by taking in and applying His Word to daily living. It is not an option. For one to truly understand growth, a study of Second Peter is important. J. Winfred Clark referred to this epistle as an "Epistle for Growth" (Clark: 327). He outlined the three chapters as: the process of growth, the perils of growth, and the preservation of growth (Clark: 327). The topic of study is what is commonly referred to as "The Christian Graces" or, as brother Clark calls this selection of verses, "The Necessity of Growth" (Clark: 327).

PETER'S GREETING AND INTRODUCTION TO GROWTH

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord (2 Pet. 1:1-2).

Peter begins the epistle with a warm greeting to the recipients. He refers to himself as Simon Peter, which is slightly different from his greeting in 1 Peter. Peter (*petros*) is the Greek

form of the Aramaic word Cephas, the name which is given to Peter when he first meets Jesus (Robertson, 6:78). "And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:42). As Peter introduces himself he includes his Jewish given name, Simon, to designate his identity. He describes himself as "a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." The word servant (doulos) was used "frequently indicating subjection without the idea of bondage" (Vine: 1019). Peter thought of himself as a bond slave to Christ Jesus and was in good company (Jam. 1:1, Rom. 1:1, Jude 1:1). This is an aspect of the Christian life which is often ignored. Peter viewed his life as a Christian as one which was in complete subjection to Christ. There are many who refer to themselves by the name Christian and refuse to allow Jesus all authority. Rather, these want what the Israelites wanted in the days of Isaiah (Isa. 30:9-10). While it may seem harsh to call oneself a "slave" to Christ, it certainly beats the alternative (Rom. 6:16-18). Jesus is the master of Christians because He paid the price to own them (1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 1 Tim. 6:15). An apostle is simply "one sent." Barnabas was "one sent" by the church (Acts 4:14). Christ was "one sent" by God (Heb. 3:1). When looking at the apostleship of Peter, one must narrow his view. Peter was "one sent" by Jesus Christ. This is a claim that only a select few can make because of the qualifications required to receive such a title (Acts 1:21-23). These two descriptors accurately tell the reader of Peter.

Peter transitions from his introduction and turns to the recipients of this epistle. This epistle was written to the Gentile Christians of Asia Minor (1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 3:1). These individuals obeyed the Gospel of Christ, and in doing so obtained blessings and privileges which were equal to those given to the Jewish Christians. One must use care when looking at the "faith" mentioned in this verse. This is not a reference to some subjective belief but rather, a reference to

the gospel system of faith. "It is used in the same sense as in Galatians 1:23, where it is said that Paul preached 'the faith' he once destroyed" (Woods: 147). The Greek word for obtained (*lagchano*) is something "obtained by lot" (Vine: 698). "The object of this 'obtaining' must be just that – an object" (Parrish: 192). The point is that God did not make a distinction between Jew and Gentile in regards to the blessings of the gospel, because God is righteous and will treat all fairly (Gen. 18:25; Psa. 116:5).

Peter continues his warm greeting toward these Gentile brethren. Grace is "God's unmerited favor." Peace is the result which occurs from such favor. Peter's wish is for this unmerited favor and the resulting peace to increase in these Christians. This should be the wish of all Christians, not just for self but for other brethren as well. Yet one cannot ignore what it takes in order to receive this growth – knowledge. Without knowledge, there is no grace or peace. The knowledge listed here is a Greek compound word (*epignosis*) which expresses "a fuller or full 'knowledge,' a greater participation by the 'knower' in the object "known," thus more powerfully influencing him" (Vine: 631). This is one of the wonderful blessings of living the Christian life. Through study, the Christian gains knowledge of God and His will. As a result, Christians have God's loving favor and the peace of mind required to weather the most brutal of troubles.

GOD'S PROVISIONS FOR GROWTH

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

These Christians could grow in grace, peace, and knowledge because God has given mankind everything needed for a godly life and a godly attitude. "This verse is a clear affirmation of the sufficiency of God's revelation to man, as well as an unmistakable assurance that every need of every kind will be supplied" (Woods: 148). Notice the medium through which this is supplied. It is through "the knowledge of him that hath called us." There is a slight repetition used in this verse as Peter uses the same Greek word for "knowledge" found in verse two. This is the knowledge of God (John 17:3; Col. 3:10) who calls man through the Gospel (2 The. 2:14).

It is through the glory and virtue earlier mentioned that His precious and exceeding promises are allotted to Christians. The Greek word for precious is the same word Peter used to explain the value of Christ's blood (1 Pet. 1:19). These promises are priceless by human standards. These promises are precious and exceeding great for a few reasons. The Christian can count on the One who made these promises to keep His word (Tit. 1:2). These promises include: forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; 1 John 1:9), peace that passes all understanding (Phi. 4:7), eternal life (1 John 5:11-13), the ability to be a partaker of the divine nature, and more. Notice the one similar factor found in these verses. All of this is done in or through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3). To be a partaker is to be "a partner, to share in" (Robertson: 6:150). Peter is not saying that by sharing in the divine nature Christians become deity as He is Deity. Woods explained it:

By availing themselves of these precious and exceeding great promises they are privileged to share in the divine nature—the holy character which God possesses. The chastising and disciplining to which children of God are subjected in this life is for the purpose of enabling them to be "partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10) (Woods: 149).

"As we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:18), we become more like Him, [and] in this way we partake of the Divine nature" (Parrish: 195). In order to become a partaker of the divine nature, the Christian is to escape the corruption of the world which is produced by lust (Jam. 1:13-15). A Christian cannot sit on the fence trying to hold to the world while expecting the blessings of God (1 John 2:15-17). "To escape that world is to partake of the Divine nature, one and cannot partake of the Divine nature without escaping the world. The two go hand in hand" (Parrish: 195).

GOD'S EXPECTATIONS FOR GROWTH—THE CHRISTIAN GRACES

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

The American Standard Version translates the beginning as, "for this very cause." In light of the exceeding and great promises given on the part of God, Christians are to make an effort to grow. The ASV translates "giving" from the King James Version as "adding on your part." Concerning this verse, Paul Parrish wrote:

The admonition is for the Christian to bring, alongside all that God has done for him, a determination to labor tirelessly. This determination Peter calls "your part." I would encourage the liberal who believes that there is no human part to salvation to explain this while still holding to his "no-human-part-to-salvation" heresy. If the Christian wants to inherit the precious promises of eternal salvation, then there are things he must do (Acts 9:6). God's fulfillment of His promises is contingent on man's willingness to do his part (Parrish: 196).

This is to be done with "all diligence." Diligence (*spoude*) means "earnestness, zeal, or sometimes the haste accompanying this" (Vine: 303). This is an action which should be done with no delay. The word adding (KJV) or supply (ASV) means "to supply." Woods wrote:

Originally it meant to found and support a chorus, to lead a choir, to keep in tune, and then, to supply or provide. As here used, the graces which adorn the Christian's character are to be chorused into a grand symphony to the delight and pleasure of Him who fashioned and made us for His good pleasure. It will be seen that there are eight of the graces, and that they thus form an octave of soul tones,

the first being faith, the last love, an octave higher. When these are harmonized and played on by the Divine Spirit, disharmony disappears and life's discords vanish. How we should rejoice that we have been privileged to provide such an instrument in the hand of our God (Woods: 150).

There is a popular misconception concerning these verses. Many look at these verses and think, "I need to work towards getting faith. After I get faith, I'll get virtue. After that, I'll get knowledge" and so on. This is not the point that Peter is making. These are all attributes which the Christian possesses. These graces are all connected together like a chain. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. It does not matter how strong a chain is if one of its links is weak. It will ultimately break. The Christian is to strengthen these graces because the Christian is only as strong as his weakest link.

Peter encourages these brethren to strengthen their faith. This is the foundation of these graces. The apostle Paul wrote that "without faith it is possible to please Him" (Heb. 11:6). Virtue is not just the knowledge of what is right and wrong, but also the courage to do that which is right. It took courage in those days, as doing what was right led to a most inhumane death. It takes courage today, as doing God's Will leads to being hated by the world as the world hates Christ (John 15:18-19; 1 John 3:13). Knowledge used in this verse is a different word (gnosis) from the preceding verses. It means "a seeking to know, an inquiry an investigation...especially of a spiritual truth" (Vine: 631). Temperance is self-control, the idea of keeping oneself in control. Just as Paul buffeted himself and controlled his actions, so CAN and so MUST every Christian likewise control himself, lest he become a castaway (1 Cor. 9:27). Patience is endurance through the difficulties of life. This becomes easier knowing that others have finished the race set before all man (Heb. 12:1-3). To be godly is to be like God. The Christian is to live his life in submission to the Father. Brotherly kindness (philadelphia) is literally, "love for the brethren." Peter touched on this subject in his earlier epistle when he wrote, "Love the

brotherhood" (1 Pet. 2:17). How can the Christian claim a love for God if there is no love for his brethren? (1 John 4:20). Charity (*agape*) is one of the four Greek words used to describe love and is the strongest of the four. This is a love which puts others before self. This is the love which God had for mankind in sending His Son to earth so that He might adopt Christians as His children (John 3:16; 1 John 3:1). Paul wrote that this type of love must be the motivation the Christian has in his actions, lest they be in vain (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

THE ALTERNATIVE TO GROWTH

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:8-11).

Verse eight contains a logical "if...then" statement. If the Christian is continually increasing these graces, then that Christian will not be idle in his work for the Lord and will be fruitful in the knowledge of Christ. If the Christian does not commit this work to strengthen these graces, he will be lazy, useless, and like a desert. There is a terrible alternative to growth! Abound or be barren! Peter goes so far as to describe the person who does not do these things as blind or nearsighted. He is only able to see those things which are close to him. "A dearth of the Christian graces leaves the child of God without the ability to discern spiritual reality clearly" (Parrish: 199). It is so bad that he forgets his initial cleansing of sins. "Hath forgotten" implies a voluntary forgetfulness. If one chooses to forsake growth, he chooses to lose sight of spiritual things, the zeal he once possessed, and the fact that his sins were washed away by the blood of Christ.

Rather than allowing these Christians to fall into that state, Peter admonishes them to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Diligence has the same meaning as in verse five. Do not waste time in making your calling and election sure! Every Christian's calling took place when he first heard the Gospel preached (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18-21; 2 The. 2:14). God elects man, not through some arbitrary means before creation, but through obedience to His Commands. The way to Heaven is by doing "the will of the Father" (Matt. 7:21). Those who neglect to obey will suffer a severe punishment (Heb. 2:1-4). Is Peter implying that the Christian can know whether or not he is saved? Absolutely! "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). By doing these things the Christian can make sure he will never stumble. That does not by any means mean that a Christian will be "perfectly sinless." The word stumble gives the idea of "striking ones foot against a rock and falling" (Woods: 154). When a Christian meets the requirements presented in the earlier verses, he can have what is needed to keep from falling from the grace of God. In doing so, the Christian will be supplied with an entrance into God's Eternal Kingdom. The word supply in this verse is the same as in verse 5. If we supply the Christian Graces, God will supply an entrance to Heaven.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Growth Begins With a Proper Mindset (v. 1)

It is imperative for a Christian have the mindset of Peter in correlation to Christ. Simon Peter viewed himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. How can someone expect to grow when he does not view the Christ as his Authority? He opens the door to "pick and choose" what

commands he wants to keep or ignore. Growth begins with the affirmation, "I am the servant of Christ."

God Has Given the Christian Tools to Grow (vv. 2-4)

God has given mankind His Word, which speaks to all of the wondrous characteristics of God. It tells of His love, mercy, severity, and His Will for man. It is through His Word that a Christian grows as God has given "all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

God Expects Growth (vv. 5-7).

Since God has given the resources needed for growth, He expects Christians to make constant use of them. One can even look to the last verse of this epistle. "But grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:18). This is a command, not an option. His expectation is out of His love for man. He wants growth because He knows the alternatives.

Lack of Growth Leads to Death (vv. 8-9)

If a child is receiving the proper nutrients, the child will grow and flourish. A lack of these nutrients will lead to stunted growth, malnourishment, health problems, and eventually death. If a Christian does not receive the proper spiritual nutrients found in God's Word, his vision will fade, and he will find himself diagnosed with a case of spiritual Alzheimer's disease, and eventually death.

Growth Leads to a Surety of Salvation (v. 10)

If one is faithful and growing as a Christian should, he assuredly can know that he is saved. Through proper Christian growth, he can also be assured that he will not fall from the

grace of God. Remember this next time the congregation sings "Blessed Assurance." Can Christians sing this song and be honest about it? Peter said, "Yes."

An Abundance of Growth Leads to the Abundance Found in Heaven (v. 11)

Abundant growth in these Christian Graces will insure that one is properly keeping God's Will. Through growth, the Christian can be assured that God will abundantly reward in His Everlasting Abode.

CONCLUSION

Growth leads to one becoming strengthened spiritually and leads to a wonderful eternal blessing. A lack of growth leads to one becoming spiritually malnourished, which ultimately leads to spiritual death. Keeping that in mind, it is no wonder that God has provided man with the means of growth and the expectations for growth. As one studies this wonderful epistle it should ever be the desire of that Christian to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Pet. 3:18).

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ASSESSMENTS OF AN APOSTLE

2 Peter 1:12 - 16

Andrew Nelson

Peter's epistles, sometimes described as "general epistles", were written to Christians, and as a leader of God's people, Peter was responsible for bringing lost souls to Christ and for helping those who were saved to draw closer to Christ. While diligently working in the Lord's service, Peter was aware that he would not live forever upon the face of the earth. In fact, Jesus had indicated that eventually Peter would be old, and another would bind him and lead him to his death (2 Pet. 1:14; Jno. 21:18, 19, all quotes are from the King James Version unless otherwise stated). With this in mind, Peter worked with urgency to do all that he could for the Lord and His people. As he wrote "to them that have obtained like precious faith" (2 Pet. 1:1), Peter describes part of his work for the Lord, giving some assessments of an apostle.

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Having sat at the feet of Jesus, Peter was aware that one soul was of more value that even the entire world (Matt. 16:26), and as "a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (2 Pet.1:1), Peter spent much time spreading the good news of the Gospel. He preached to the Jews who were present on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), he preached to Jewish leaders (Acts 4), and he preached the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10:5; 12:1-19). Similarly, modern Christians and preachers ought to follow in Peter's footsteps. Jesus commands His people to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:15, 16). There are still souls who need to

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Much effort is required to spread the Gospel throughout the world. Yet, in a world filled with religious error and confusion, God's people must still remember "these things, though ye know them" (2 Pet. 1:12). There are still false teachers, there are still temptations to sin, temptations to turn away from God because of persecution, and there are still difficulties that are faced in day to day life. In order to combat these advances of Satan, one must keep in mind God's will for His people (2 Pet. 1:1, 2; 3:1-12) and remember God's blessings of salvation and spiritual provision for His people (2 Pet. 1:9-11; 3:13-18).

HIS RESPONSIBILITY

As "a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:1), Peter acknowledged and accepted the responsibilities given to him by God. He understood that his work was not just to take the Gospel to the lost, but that he was also to help those who had obeyed the Gospel to remain faithful to God. Those to whom Peter wrote faced great hardships and persecutions because of their faith (1 Pet. 4:1-5), in addition to those who would attack the truth with false doctrines and mockery (2 Pet. 2:1-3; 3:1-3). With these things in mind, Peter proclaimed, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things," (2 Pet. 1:12a).

In this declaration, Peter acknowledged that he was personally responsible for keeping these truths before the minds of God's people. Knowing of their current faithfulness, Peter did not leave these brethren to stand alone in the faith. Even though they were currently strong, Peter did what he could to ensure that they would always remember God's promises and provisions for the faithful, and His punishment of the wicked. He reminded them of these things to warn them of "the error of the wicked," that could cause them to "fall from" their "own steadfastness" (2

Pet. 3:17). In doing this, Peter provided the tools necessary for these brethren to face those who would attack their faith and those who would persecute them for their faith.

Today, the responsibility of reminding God's people falls upon the shoulders of all Christians—especially the shoulders of those in leadership positions. For this reason, wise elders or men of the congregation take special care to be sure that the members of their congregation are receiving a well-balanced spiritual diet (Acts 20:28), and wise preachers prayerfully and carefully consider the various topics and texts they will preach to be sure that they "declare...all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). In fulfilling this responsibility, God's leaders are doing their part to prepare His people for struggles with life and for struggles with those who would oppose the truth.

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As one works to better understand any book of the Bible, consideration must be given to the reason or reasons why the book was written. Second Peter is a letter that focuses on the knowledge that was possessed by "them that have obtained like precious faith...through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:" (2 Pet. 1:1). Peter knew the source of their faith, and he wanted these brethren to protect their knowledge of the faith and to live in view of their knowledge of the faith. However, Peter realized that there were limitations on his ability to influence the lives of these Christians. Recognizing these limitations, Peter did everything in his power to perpetually influence these Christians to be faithful to the Lord.

The things, about which Peter wrote, needed to be remembered because of their origin. Peter and the apostles were not followers or propagators of "cunningly devised fables," (2 Pet. 1:16). When they preached, the apostles testified as "eyewitnesses" of the majesty of Christ, and they "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:16, 21). They were able to speak of His power, which had been exhibited in the miracles that he did during His ministry (Acts 2:22; 10:38), and ultimately seen in His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into Heaven (Matt. 28:1-20). As an eyewitness, Peter could confidently affirm the truthfulness of these things

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Peter's message and purpose for writing are attributed to divine origins (2 Pet. 1:16-21). This makes the motivation for his concern and the methods of his leadership perfect for imitation

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The ability to remember is one of the great blessings that God has afforded mankind. Because of this gift, the great events of one's life can be relived in one's mind and retold to others, and the memories of dangerous encounters that one has survived, provide protection against future encounters. Having given this gift to mankind, God instructed Peter to write a second letter to His people. This letter would serve as a reminder of things that they already knew about God and His expectations of His people. By keeping these things in mind, these Christians would be able to face the errors taught by false teachers and eventually go home to Heaven. Today, God's people still need to remember these same things. In light of this, God's people must continue to be taught and reminded of the truth by godly elderships and Gospel preachers and teachers. Additionally, each Christian must diligently and daily study God's Word. This will keep the truth in the minds of God's people, which according to the assessments of an apostle, is beneficial and is the right thing to do.

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THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FAITH

2 Peter 1:16-21

By Randy Vaughn

INTRODUCTION

There are two epistles in the New Testament that stand out almost like twins. Both 2 Peter and Jude could be placed side by side and a beautiful harmony made from their comparison. Peter was in the inner circle of the three closest to Christ, while Jude was Christ's fleshly brother. Both had an intimate knowledge of the Master. Jude explains that he wrote to "put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this" (Jude 5), while Peter says he would, "not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things" (2 Peter 1:12). They both speak about the problem and plight of false teachers in the early church (cp. Jude 4; 2 Peter 2:1). They refer to these men as mockers and scoffers in the last days (cp. Jude 18; 2 Peter 3:3). They both mention God's judgment upon fallen angels (cp. Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4). While Jude says there is "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), Peter says we have "a more sure word of prophecy" upon which we should "take heed" (2 Peter 1:19). These and several other similarities are not just coincidental. The keynote of 2 Peter is knowledge, while that of Jude is contending for the faith.

2 Peter is eschatological in nature. That is, it describes in some detail Christ's second coming and the end of the world. Peter grabs our attention with such statements as, "Great and precious promises" (1:4) are given to us and "an entrance into the everlasting kingdom" (1:11). Looking forward to these things, everyone, then, should give diligence to make his "calling and election sure" (1:10).

However, it would seem that some doubted the veracity of these things. So, Peter defends himself by explaining the source of his information. He mentions two solid points of evidence: 1) his own eyewitness testimony and 2) the sure prophetic word of the Old Testament scriptures (1:16-21). Upon these two things he bases his conviction that Christ is coming again and that all should prepare for that event. Let us look carefully into these points.

PETER'S EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

What the Gospel Message Was Not:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ... (2 Peter 1:16)

In the KJV what seems to be a subordinate clause, in the Greek is actually the main sentence structure of verse 16 (...εγνωρίσαμεν ὑμῖν τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν, "... we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ..."). The question is, to what is this "coming" referring, to His first advent or to His second? The context leans heavily to the latter. Peter really wanted to stress to early Christians the fact that there will be a powerful return at Christ's next coming.

He explains that this declaration was not some man-made, concocted story that he and the other apostles made up. The phrase, "cunningly devised fables" is σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις. The first word, σεσοφισμένοις, (from σοφίζω, derived from σοφία, wisdom) carries with it the idea of having a specialized knowledge involving the capacity to produce what is cleverly or skillfully made (Louw-Nida), to play the sophist, to devise craftily (Gingrich). Peter is saying that the second coming of Christ was not cleverly crafted by some group of professional story-tellers. The second word is μῦθος. Our English word **myth** is derived from this word. **Μῦθος** is used five times in the New Testament and never carries a favorable connotation (cf. 1 Timothy 1:4;

4:7; 2 Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14; 2 Peter 1:16). In the KJV it is always rendered by the word, "fable." It is of interesting note that the ancient Greeks did not think of the word myth the way we do today. They did not always distinguish between a myth, a story or an actual historical account. These distinctions became more prominent by the time of the New Testament. To Christian readers the word myth had evolved to the concept of "rumor" or "story" in such forms as saga, legend and then "fairy-story" such as women tell children for their instructional value (Kittel, 767).

How does the Gospel differ from an ancient myth? Can Jesus be explained as only a myth? Many have attempted to do just that because of the miraculous element contained in the Gospel accounts. However, there are certain well defined laws according to which myths grow just as there are laws of trees and plants. If the story of Christ cannot come under the laws of myths we must conclude that the character which it portrays is not in any sense a mythical character. Consider a few of these rules that govern ancient myths.

1) Myths as conceptions originate in completed form before written history. Nothing of a mythical character is ever given credence for any length of time after the history of a nation has been written. It may flourish for a time as a rumor, but it does not become a myth. The great myths of the world have all arisen before written history. Back before the dawn of history man dreamed of great gods and goddesses. Rude pictures tell us of the myths. They antedate all letters and records. But Jesus appears after the history of His people has been written. He does not come at the dawn of the history of Israel, but at the twilight, after the greatest and most eventful part of it had been written. According to this first rule, then, He cannot be considered a mythical character.

2) There is always something about all myths that is grotesque if not monstrous. The mythical character shocks our common sense. He is a gross exaggeration. He does impossible and unnecessary things. There is a myth concerning the love of Buddha. While traveling along the road one day he met a hungry peasant. The heart of Buddha was touched and he resolved to feed the man by turning himself into a rabbit. But before doing this great act of kindness he became even more magnanimous in that he carefully shook off a flea so that the flea might not suffer from the heat of the frying pan. This type of miracle amuses us because it is so preposterous, so unnecessary.

While in myths human characters are gigantic and impossible, in the historic character there is sanity and sobriety. And this is the character of Jesus. While He is a supernatural being, yet His supernaturalism is a sane supernaturalism. He appears as other men appear, and there is nothing in His personal appearance or general actions to set Him apart from other men. There is nothing of the monstrous or the grotesque in His life.

In the mythical character there is also invariably an attempt to describe the personal appearance. Contrary to this law of myths, the evangelists nowhere describe the features of the Lord. They are concerned about His teaching and His mission and not about His appearance.

3) Myths reflect the coloring of the time, race, and place. Zeus is Greek in every action and in every thought; Odin and Thor are Scandinavian in every detail; Isis and Osiris reflect the coloring and carry with them the atmosphere of old Egypt; Eel-Merodach is Chaldean. Jesus, however, while a Jew, is not Jewish in teaching, in His conceptions of life, or in His view of man. He is the first and only universal man.

- 4) <u>In all cases myths defy chronology, they are without dates</u>. Some time away back in the past a certain thing happened. "Once long, long ago," or "once upon a time," these are the introductions to the myths. Their origin is always clothed in mystery. But we know of Jesus the time of His coming and the place of His dwelling. Herod was king in Judea.
- 5) Myths also defy topography, they are without definite localities. They originate far away from the place of their first telling. We know the place of the dwelling and of the life and actions of Jesus. The Bible places are exact. It was said of Jesus. "As to this man we know from whence he is."
- 6) Myths are never completed at one telling. A story is told and then repeated over and over again. The fathers die, and their children tell it to their children's children, and, thus, after centuries, perhaps, we have the well-defined myth. But this is not true of the story of Jesus. Any story told about Him which is not in the New Testament is given but little credence. It is only the inspired record which is today believed.
- 7) Myths belong to the infancy of a nation and never to its old age. We have no trouble proving that Jesus was not at all a mythical character, because of the large place which He held in the life of His time and city. He lived only a few years from Vespasian and after Julius Caesar. The nation which gave Him birth was old; its youth had been long passed.
 - 8) The results of Christ's life in the world could never have come from a myth.

The Church of Christ was not founded upon a myth. It should be remembered that the very first church was organized **in the same city** in which Jesus had suffered and died and **within seven weeks** after the terrible event. If it had been founded upon a myth, its Pentecost

would never have been in the same city where the hero of the myth had had his great humiliation. The Pentecost of a false religion would have been a thousand miles removed from this place. In other words, if the story preached by the apostles had been false, it could very easily have been proven so because all the facts were at hand. But instead of this, the first church was formed of those who just a few weeks before had been such enemies of Christ that they had nailed Him to the Cross. There had not been enough time for a myth to arise before Peter preached his great Pentecostal sermon, and as evidence of the fact that the people realized this there were three thousand converts the very first day. This number rapidly increased until the church had conquered the empire. Rabid enemies, as were those who crucified the Christ, are not converted to the one whom they had so ardently persecuted on insubstantial evidence. The most rigid and searching examination of the facts had been made before they decided to abandon their old position and acknowledge their faith in the one whom they had so lately beaten and taunted even to the moment of his death (Kellems, 23-26).

Then, also, the work of Christianity in the souls of men could not be the result of the life of a mythical character, but could only have its foundation in sober fact. When we think of all the beneficial effects of the religion of Christ, we are constrained to say that if this is the result of a myth, then myth is better than fact. It is a travesty upon the intelligence of modern men to say that, as they date their letters and legal documents, they are dating them from a phantom Savior who never can and never did save a soul because he never really lived. No, Jesus is not a myth, but the most colossal and mighty character that has ever trod the earth.

What Did Peter Witness?

... but [we] were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (2 Peter 1:16a-18)

Some of the benefits of an eyewitness account are: 1) there will be greater accuracy from a firsthand account. The information is not passed down through several layers of interpretation.

2) The potential for collusion is minimized because an eyewitness does not feel compelled to adjust his account to make it seem more sensible, or agreeable. He just tells what he experienced.

3) There is a certain sense of veracity or integrity put upon the account when it is told by the actual person who experienced it.

As an old man, Peter now looks back into his memories. And oh, how notable those memories with Christ would be. Surely among the most prominent of his memories was that experience where he heard the voice of God from the heavenly realm on the mountain top. Everyone in the Bible who experienced a theophany had their lives changed because of it. Consider Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Nebuchadnezzar and the list goes on. But, to hear the voice of "God the father" was a unique experience shared by only a few. Psalm 29 well describes the effect of God's voice in its power and majesty:

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. (Psalm 29:3-9)

And yet, Elijah had an interesting encounter with God's voice:

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rend the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? (1 Kings 19:11-13, emph. RV)

There is no way that Peter would forget this experience or the message of that voice. The apostle was confident in the teaching about the Second Coming because he witnessed the Transfiguration. But, of all the times with Jesus that Peter could have remembered, why did he focus on the Transfiguration? The Transfiguration is the basis for the Second Coming expectation because it is God's appointment of Jesus to a role which He had not yet at that time exercised but would exercise in His glorification. This was seared into Peter's mind and was the source of his confidence that the Gospel is the Truth!

THE PROPHETIC WORD

More Sure

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.... (2 Peter 1:19a)

The "word of prophecy" has reference to the scriptures revealed by the Old Testament prophets. Peter says, εχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, "we have more sure the prophetic word" (RV). The question is, more sure than what? The Greek word, βεβαιότερον is a comparative adjective (more certain, more sure, more reliable, etc.). There are significant differences of opinion as to how to render this sentence. Here are three:

- 1) The KJV chose to give the attributive use of this adjective. This leads one to the idea that the scriptures were more reliable than Peter's personal experience. While this seems attractive to those who believe in the supremacy of the Bible, is that what Peter was actually saying? Could the Old Testament scriptures have been more reliable to Peter than his own personal experience was to him? This seems unlikely. Consider too, that Jesus commissioned the apostles as His witnesses. And it was appointed to them to write the New Testament scriptures. So in a sense, the scriptures are the personal accounts of holy men. It would not make sense to say, the written accounts are "more sure" than the oral accounts of those same inspired men. Also, if the "prophetic word" is referring to the Old Testament then that could have Peter saying the Old Testament is "more sure" than the New Testament witnesses. Would it be sensible to say that one Testament is more reliable than the other? They are both scripture.
- 2) The ASV and NKJV give another idea and construe the adjective in its predicate use and render it as, "we have the prophetic word [made more sure (ASV)], [confirmed (NKJV)]." This leads to an altogether different sense which would have Peter saying that his personal experience confirmed the Old Testament scriptures. This retains the comparative use of the adjective. But, does personal experience confirm scripture? Perhaps not directly, but there might be a sense in which one could say that personal experiences contribute to the conviction that the scriptures are reliable.
- 3) The New English Translation gives yet another idea by rendering it as a predicate adjective expressing elative force, "we possess the prophetic word as an altogether reliable thing" (NET). This removes any question of comparison between the scriptures and eyewitness experience. But it is also fraught with problems. There is no grammatical reason to render the Greek construction in this way. There is no example of this usage of the comparative adjective

either in the New Testament or in classical Greek literature. One writer comments on the NET translators by stating:

They suggest that "made more certain" is a meaning unparalleled for this construction and would require a form of $\pi o \iota \omega$. They do have a point: Peter's words do not seem to be the most natural way to say "made more certain." ... **This fact negates their argument from the non-existence of a precise parallel** ... So Peter's comparative adjective written as predicate may well be the nearest readily available expression for the thought "made more certain," which appears to me to fit the context beautifully (Leedy, emphasis RV).

So, what conclusion can be drawn? This author leans toward the second of these ideas. Peter's experience of the Transfiguration was a confirmation of the Old Testament prophets. The Transfiguration, as witnessed by Peter, was the visible investiture of Jesus with His kingly glory, the beginning of the fulfillment of scriptural prophecy. The Transfiguration confirmed Old Testament prophecy. Thus, Peter was saying as an anticipatory fulfillment of prophecy, the Transfiguration makes the still awaited future fulfillment of Christ's Second Coming yet more certain (Bauckham, 223). As Brother Woods so succinctly states:

...the word of prophecy was made more sure and further confirmed by that which he *[Peter]* had witnessed, and which he was, in turn, passing on to his readers. Being additional evidence, it would serve to strengthen, to corroborate, and to make more sure the faith already existing which, in the final analysis, was based on the testimony of the Old Testament prophets, concerning the deity of Jesus, and established more clearly the relationship which obtains between God and His Son. The testimony of these prophets was thus made more sure by that which Peter, James and John had witnessed in the holy mount, and which Peter was then reciting (Woods, 160).

As A Light That Shineth

... whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: (2 Peter 1:19b)

The phrase, "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place" is ὡς λύχνω φαίνοντι ἐν

αὐχμηρῷ τόπῳ. It is interesting to note that the word "dark" (αὐχμηρῷ) literally means a dry, dusty, dirty, squalid or miserable place (Louw-Nida). The "lamp" is shining not in absolute darkness, but in a place that is gloomy, filthy and enshrouded in a cloudy haze. This is an appropriate picture of man's condition before the light of truth shines upon him. The light of scripture shines through the darkness of sin and ignorance and beams forth showing a better and clearer way. Consider:

For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness (Psalm 18:28).

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Psalm 119:105).

O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles (Psalm 43:3).

For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life (Proverbs 6:23).

But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light (Ephesians 5:13).

The Old Testament is a light for Christians shining through the gloomy night until the day dawn and the day star arises. The "day star" is Christ. Peter uses the word, φωσφόρος (transcribing our English word, phosphorus) literally, a bearer or bringer of light. The Latin word "Lucifer" (from lux – light, and feror – to bear; hence a light-bearer) found only in Isaiah 14:12 is related to the Greek word phosphorus. It is interesting to note that white phosphorous is a chemical that ignites and glows in and of itself. It is not a reflective light, but produces its own light when it ignites as it comes in contact with air. Even so, Christians may reflect God's glory, but in contrast Christ is ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόζης "the brightness of the glory and the express image of his [God's] person" (Hebrews 1:3, RV). Also, Numbers 24:17 mentions, "A star shall come forth from Jacob." Both Christians and Jews understood Numbers 24:17 as a Messianic

prophecy. Jesus is also called "the dayspring." Luke 1:76-78 in reference to John the Baptist says, "... thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation ... through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us." Another similar phrase describing Christ is "the morning star" used in John's Revelation (Revelation 2:28; 22:16). Jesus actually calls Himself, "the bright and morning star" (22:16). So then, Jesus is the star of Jacob, the dayspring, the day star and the bright and morning star.

There is coming a day when the day star will arise in your hearts. That dawning day is referring to the Second Coming. Let us remember that Peter started with the topic of Christ's "power and coming" in verse 16. The return of Christ is the main subject matter of this entire epistle.

In Your Hearts

But, Peter unexpectedly adds the phrase, "in your hearts" to the idea of Christ's Second Coming. In what sense is Christ's Second Coming to arise in our hearts? Peter may be referring to only one aspect of Christ's coming in this statement. The dawning of the day may also be a reference to the time for the completed New Testament scriptures. Consider this, that Christ's first coming into this world brought light to man's dark sinful world. Jesus said of Himself, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). And again speaking of Christ, 1 John 2:8 says, "... the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." The Bible shows that both the Old and New Testament are described as light. The Old Law was called a light. Isaiah 8:20 says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The New Testament is

also called a light. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "...the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." It stands to reason that Christ, who is the light, gives us His words which are also described as light. 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." See how Paul puts the "light of the knowledge" and the "face of Jesus Christ" together into one thought. Thus, the Bible, God's word, shines in our hearts to illuminate the coming of Christ's Parousia, that Last Great Day when He shall be revealed in all of His glorious light.

However, there was a time when the New Testament was still in the beginning stages of its process. In the dawning of the day at Peter's time, it was not yet completed or canonized to the early church (cp. 1 Corinthians 13:8-12; James 1:25; Jude 3). The New Testament would eventually supplement the Old Testament prophecies (Galatians 3:24-25). And of course, when the New Testament would be finalized, then, the Bible, both Old and the New Testaments would become a full revelation in the hearts of every Christian, a light shining and pointing us to that last great Day when God will reveal Himself in Christ in all of His effulgent glory.

Knowing This First

The predicate of the sentence structure from vss 19-21 is, "Ye do well...." There are two participles that follow this verb to show how we are to "do well:" 1) By "taking heed" (προσέχοντες) to the Old Testament prophecies and 2) By "knowing this first" (τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες) – understanding the origin and authority of the Old Testament prophecies.

Point one is a clear statement by Peter that the Old Testament is still valuable to

Christians. There is a tendency today for Christians to ignore or devalue the Old Testament simply because it is no longer a binding covenant. While this may be true from the standpoint of a covenant, it is a mistake to think that it is of no value or even that its principle instructions are not authoritative. The apostle Paul said, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Peter's injunction is that we are to take heed to the Old Testament's prophetic tenor.

The next point Peter makes is that we must remember how these prophecies came to be. We must not forget that the Old Testament prophecies were inspired by God's Spirit. Peter describes this process of inspiration: No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. ²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:20-21) No prophecy IS of private interpretation – πασα προφητεία γραφης ίδίας έπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται (literally, "No prophetic scripture is become of its own interpretation," RV). The verb "is" comes from the Greek word γίνομαι (ginomai, I become) not the usual copulate verb εἰμί (eimi, I am). This would indicate not simply that the scripture is, but rather that it became, it came into being. The Old Testament is not a fable devised by learned and crafty Hebrews, but a revelation from God, given to us by holy men of old, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. What Jew would ever of his own accord have predicted the rise of another priest after the order of Melchizedek, and not after the order of Aaron? What, but the Spirit of the Almighty, could have ever induced David to utter a prophecy involving the abrogation of the whole Jewish economy? Truly, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

The Scriptures Were Carried

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:21)

An interesting note from verse 21; Peter had what seems to be a favorite word he used in Greek, the word φέρω (phero, to bear, bring or carry). He used this word six times in his two epistles. Five of those are found in this second letter and four of those are in this very paragraph to talk about the scriptures. The point is that men did not carry, bear or produce the scriptures, but rather God carried or brought along those holy prophets of old by His Spirit. That is to say, He carried along their words and writings, and this divine carriage is actually what produced the scriptures. (cp. 2 Samuel 23:2; Nehemiah 9:20; 1 Peter 1:9-11) The scriptures are unequivocally the work and product of God.

CONCLUSION

We should have a bold confidence in the Bible because holy men were involved in its writing. Honest men were involved in its transmission. Good men were involved in its preservation. Scholarly men were involved in its translation. Brave men were involved in its distribution. But, above all things, God is its source and fountain of life. And we, therefore, should be involved in its learning and keeping.

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DESTRUCTIVENESS OF FALSE TEACHERS

2 Peter 2:1-16

Johnie Scaggs, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

The second chapter of 2 Peter deals chiefly with the destructive nature of the false teacher. Peter gives hope to the godly, but at the same time pronounces doom on the ungodly. Going back through the span of Biblical history, Peter shows how God dealt with those who were false teachers under the law and therefore teaching us that even today, if we go astray and do not obey His commandments and teach others by our speech or our conduct we will suffer the same fate. Just as there were "false prophets" in Old Testament times, we can expect "false teachers" today (2 Pet. 2:1).

The term "false teachers" is found only in this passage. Peter's use of it and his description of these "false teachers" teach us that he is dealing with those teachers who know they are teaching false doctrine and are purposely doing their best to mislead others. This is not to say there are not others who unintentionally teach false doctrine and thus lead others to their own destruction. Jesus said, "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:13-14). These are not the teachers Peter is dealing with in this context.

FALSE TEACHERS ARE COMING

In verses 1-3 Peter does three things: (1) In verse one he teaches us these false teachers are bringing destruction. These are false teachers who bring privily damnable heresies. The word

"heresy" means, "that which is chosen, and hence, an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects, (Gal. 5:20)." "It not only refers to a "sect" or "party", but sometimes to the doctrine(s) that produce the division." This is the manner in which Peter is using it in this context, (cf. Jude 11-16). (2) In verse two he states, "many will follow them." Instead of following the Lord as they should, they will follow after those who teach blasphemy against the cause of the Lord. Because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-4). One of the sad things about those who teach false doctrine is many in the world will think this is what the Lord's church teaches and will be turned away from the real truth. (3) In verse three Peter describes how they work. Remember they come in "privily or secretly." They will work behind the scenes. All things a gospel preacher preaches or that one teaches should always be open for examination. As John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). If a teacher is not willing to let his doctrine be examined openly by others, let that be a warning sign! They will attempt to appeal to others through covetousness. Through this means, they will use "feigned words." The phrase means, "to answer on the stage, play a part, and so metaphorically, to feign, pretend, a hypocrite." It is that which is made up, and not true. The words they use are deceptive, as Peter says in verse eighteen, "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error" (2 Pet. 2:18). But remember, Peter says they will bring to themselves damnation. Not only will they destroy others with their false doctrine, they will also bring about their own destruction. When the time is right, judgment and destruction will be swift (2 Pet. 3:10).

THE DOOM OF FALSE TEACHERS

Peter turns his attention back to three Old Testament examples in which God's judgment came upon false teachers of the olden times: (1) The angels who sinned against God (verse four). (2) The world during the days of Noah (verse five). (3) The time of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (verse six). The angels who sinned against God refer to Satan and his follows (angels). Those who rebelled against the God of heaven were put forth from heaven in order to keep heaven pure.

There is not a lot of information about the angels who sinned against God. Some have misused different passages in the Bible in an attempt to help us understand what is said about them; hence, we need to be very careful as to what we read from others. Jude makes a reference to this event in Jude 6. What is clearly taught about angels is some of them were "cast down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment" (verse 4). This is somewhat parallel to what Jesus said about the rich man in Luke 16:19-31.

In verse five, Peter describes the ancient world of Noah's time. The "ancient world" is that antediluvian world described in Gen 6:5-7, 11-12. During this age "the wickedness of man was great in the earth." The Bible says "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." God was so angry with the world of Noah's day that He found it needful to destroy the world with a flood which destroyed both man and animal. As Jude makes this point, so does Peter. If God destroyed the entire world because of their ungodliness, what will He do to those who act likewise in this day and age? Note this as well, one can live above the world even in the most wicked of cases. Noah and his family did and thus set a great example for us. We can live above the world and be victorious.

In verses six through nine, Peter turns his attention to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God's judgment is upon these two cities as described for us in Genesis 19:24-28. Jude says these are an example of those "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). But once again, in the mist of all this wickedness, Lot, a righteous man, as described by Peter was saved. Peter says he was "righteous," an adjective used three times by Peter: (1) "righteous Lot" (2 Pet. 2:7); (2) "that righteous man" (2 Pet. 2:8); (3) "his righteous soul" (2 Pet. 2:8). Like Noah, God said Lot had been "righteous before Me in this generation" (cf. Gen. 7:1).

In verse nine, Peter brings this section to a conclusion by comparing the judgment toward the godly to the judgment toward the ungodly. God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations. This is seen in the example of Noah and Lot. This should help the righteous people to understand that if they remain faithful to God, He will be faithful to them and reward us with a home in heaven.

On the other hand God will "...reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." As is the case with the righteous ones, so it is also the case with the ungodly. Their reward awaits them as well. The wicked will be tormented during the "intermediate state" between death and the resurrection. This is clearly taught in Luke 16:19-31 in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. This should serve as a warning to those who may be tempted to follow after "false teachers."

THE DEPRAVITY OF FALSE TEACHERS

In his discourse against "false teachers," Peter has written strongly and harshly against these individuals. They will bring in "destructive heresies," and bring on themselves and those who follow them "destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1-3). Their doom is certain, for God knows how "to

reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment," as illustrated by the examples in (2 Pet. 2:4-9). Why such strong words? Is Peter justified in writing so harshly against these "false teachers?" The answer is yes, for by inspiration Peter knows the true extent to which these depraved individuals have fallen. Peter describes these false teachers as those who "revile" against those in authority in verses ten through twelve. He says they "walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness." They are "presumptuous, self-willed." By walking after the flesh, they become little more than "natural brute beasts." These of this nature "despise authority." That is, they will not submit to the overall principle of authority. They will not submit to the authority of elders and thus to the authority of God. The Hebrew writer said, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). These also "are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries." The word for "dignitaries" is doxa {dox'-ah} and literally means "glories." It can refer to human dignitaries such as church or civic leaders, but also celestial beings (such as good and fallen angels). The context of verse 11 and the parallel passage in Jude 8-9 suggests that fallen angels (those mentioned in (2 Pet. 2:4) may be the "dignitaries" spoken of here. Thus, in some way, these individuals would speak derogatorily of "fallen angels," something even angels "greater in power and might" would not do! They "speak evil of the things they do not understand." They have no respite for those in authority and thus they "speak evil" of them. With such arrogance and evil speaking, they corrupt themselves (Jude 10)

Verses thirteen and fourteen describe the pleasure these have in what they do. They love to "riot" in the day time. The NKJV uses the word "carouse" which has reference to extreme indulgence in sensual pleasures. Like "spots and blemishes," they carouse in their deceptions

"while they feast with you." Jude says, "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 12-13). They take advantage of gatherings with Christians and they are very deceptive in what they do.

Their eyes are "full of adultery" (cf. Matt. 5:28). Because of their action, they "cannot cease from sin." They are people who are "...beguiling unstable souls" that is, they take advantage of the weak and immature Christians. Their heart is "exercised with covetous practices." Or they have "trained" their hearts in this manner. All they want pertains to the flesh! This is implied by the term "adultery." Because of this they have truly become "accursed children." That they are even described as "accursed children" is another indication that these "false teachers" were once true Christians. This can be seen in these phrases, "denying the Lord who bought them" (ver. 1); and "after they have escaped the pollutions of the world..." (ver. 20).

These have forsaken the right way and have gone after that which is wrong (verses 15, 16). This is more proof that these to whom Peter is speaking about once were God's faithful children. It is hard to forsake what you never had, or to go astray if you were never in the right way. They have followed the "way of Balaam." Like the prophet Balaam, they were swayed by the "wages of unrighteousness." The "wages of unrighteousness" refers to the momentary compensation one receives for their sins, i.e., money, fulfillment of fleshly desires. But remember that Balaam was rebuked and restrained by a dumb donkey who spoke (Num. 22:22-35).

How much more should we take heed when it is the voice of an inspired apostle (Peter) who seeks to rebuke and restrain the madness of "false teachers"!

CONCLUSION

With these remarks of Peter, we should understand we must always be on guard for those who would teach false doctrine. Some today do not even believe false teachers exist.

Regardless of what men may say, either directly or indirectly, the Bible still teaches that there are false teachers even yet today. There have always been false teachers and there always will be. In many cases when the Bible refers to false teachers, it makes reference to those who rise up out of the church and begin to teach their "doctrine" (cf. Jude 3-4; 3 John 9; Rev.2, 3; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; etc). These brethren did not announce to everyone that they were false teachers. However, it seems to be the attitude of many today that unless a person walks in and announces to all he is a false teacher, then he is not one. How many false prophets of old told everyone that they were false prophets? NONE! Did the old prophet tell the young prophet of 1 Kings 13 that he was a false prophet? NO, not a word! Even in the New Testament days, we do not see false teachers telling everyone they are false teachers.

Jude describes how false teachers conduct themselves. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation..." (Jude 4). The idea of "crept in unawares" is the idea of, "to enter secretly, to slip in stealthily, to steal in." Further study reveals that the complete idea of the verb is to "go down into and alongside." Thus, teaching that these men, who crept in unawares, came in and settled down into a place alongside of those who were already there. They did not tell anyone of their intentions! They did not say, "Folks, we are false teachers." Peter said, "But there were false prophets also among the people,

even as there shall be false teachers among you..." (2 Pet. 2:1a). Paul said to Timothy, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables" (2 Tim.4:3-4). Yes, the Bible clearly teaches that there are and will be false teachers in the church today. How can a false teacher be known? It cannot be left up to the false teachers to inform us of their intentions! The only means of knowing whether someone is a false teacher or not, is the good book, the Bible. As John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). The Bible must be the guide for deciding who is a false teacher and who is not. And then we must act accordingly to that which the Bible instructs us to do with false teachers.

Yes, there are false teachers among us today. It is time for the church as a whole to wake up and see what is happening around about them. It is time for the church to say, "we will not put up with any more false doctrine being taught in the pulpit of the Lord's church!" It is our prayer that all our brethren will come to their senses and realize that false teachers do exist today and be watchful against this threat to the church. As Paul said to the elders at Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

DECEPTIVE TEACHERS

2 Peter 2:17-22

Larry Acuff

First, let me express my appreciation to the Richmond Hill congregation for this invitation to be a part of this lectureship. It is always a tremendous lectureship that is well planned and each year I personally gain much from all the speakers.

My topic is "Deceptive Teachers". There is no doubt that our world today, as in the past, is plagued with those who would endeavor to deceive. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mt. 7:15). (Unless otherwise noted all scripture references are from the King James Version)

There is a key to identifying those who are false teachers. It is essential that we know and use the Holy Word of God. 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" (Jn. 12:48). The Bereans's were more noble than the Thessalonians' because they searched the scriptures daily to see if what was taught was true (Acts 17:11). Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and these are they which testify of Me" (Jn. 5:39). We must know and use the Bible in order not to be deceived by those who would lead us away with a false doctrine.

The text of this lesson is found in 2 Peter 2:17-22 which reads as follows:

"These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter

end is worse with them than the beginning. 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."

In surveying these words of the Bible there are four things this lesson will cover in looking at "Deceptive Teachers". One will be, <u>The Prevalence of Deceptive Teachers</u>. Two, <u>The Program of Deceptive Teachers</u>. Three, <u>The Promise of Deceptive Teachers</u> and four, <u>The Product of Deceptive Teachers</u>.

THE PREVALENCE OF DECEPTIVE TEACHERS

The Apostle Paul clearly pointed to the prevalence of false teachers when he wrote,

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-10).

As well Peter addresses the fact of false teachers in the earlier part of this chapter (2 Pet. 2:1-3). Jesus gave a great example with a parable when he said, "...The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Mt. 13:24-25). John encourages us, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 Jn. 4:1).

We do not have to look long or hard to find false teaching on every hand. The doctrine of premillennialism, salvation by faith only, false worship with the instrument, false worship by failing to partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, a false view of the Old Testament Prophets are just a few of the doctrines that you can hear on a day to day basis.

The false teaching of homosexuality has religious people all over America cowering at the feet of the politically correct to try not to offend the homosexual (Rom. 1; Lev. 20:13). The false concept of morality is paraded about day by day on television and is undermining the sanctity of the home and the lives of our teens.

So we must be aware of the fact that false doctrine is alive and well.

THE PROGRAM OF DECEPTIVE TEACHERS

What is their program? How do they plan to accomplish implanting their false doctrine into the hearts of men? Deception! Here are Peter's words, "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you..." (2 Pet. 2:3). He follows that up with, "...they speak great swelling words of vanity..." (2 Pet. 2:18). They make it appear to be righteous when in reality it is damning. One writer put it this way, "Carousing in their own deceptions: These ungodly false teachers are a dangerous and corrupting presence in the body of Christ, not only deceiving others but deceiving themselves also" (Guzik)

The writer Jude addresses this deception by recording, "Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear..." (Jude 11).

The only way false doctrine can be effective is by deception and the scripture is very clear on this matter. Note some of the Biblical statements regarding the deception of false teachers. Remember Satan's desire is to condemn us to hell and he will use whatever method works to accomplish that end. Paul wrote, "Lest Satan should get advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). One of his devices is deception. Note the following:

- "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Mt. 24:11).
- "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Mk. 13:6).
- "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18).

Other passages such as Eph. 4:14; Eph. 5:6; 2 Tim 2:13; 2 Jn. 1:7 all point to the deceptiveness of those who are false teachers.

THE PROMISE OF DECEPTIVE TEACHERS

Deceptive teachers promise things they cannot produce. Peter says, "They are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest...they allure through the lust of the flesh, through much wantonness..." (2 Pet. 2:17-18).

Many televangelists today are deceiving many by their deceptive teaching. They tell their audience, "All you have to do to be saved is let Christ come into your heart." Or they are encouraged to say the sinner's prayer and confess, "I believe that God for Christ's sake has pardoned me from my sin."

Others preach a financial doctrine in which they just need to tell God what they want and God will send them buckets of cash (part of which is to be sent to the preacher). God loves you and wants you to have all these blessings so give me your money and it will all come back to you.

They promise you that since God is a loving God **H**e will not send you to hell even though the scriptures teach otherwise (Lk. 16:19-31). If one refuses to obey the will of God that person will be lost eternally (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Regarding "wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest" Burton Coffman wrote this, "These are metaphors of the utter emptiness and disappointment that always come of

accepting the teaching of apostates. This absolute emptiness is what is wrong with all false teaching". (Coffman)

Deceptive teaching appeals to the flesh. It says, "God wants you to feel good" regardless of the fact that you are a sinner and in need of salvation, just as long as you feel good. The Bible teaches us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world..." (2 Jn. 2:15). We are admonished to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27). False teaching appeals to the flesh. In the first Corinthian letter Paul writes to these folks and says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ...for ye are yet carnal..." (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Note that deceptive teachers when they appeal to the flesh make promises they cannot keep.

They promise liberty but they themselves are slaves and make their converts as slaves. The devil will enslave you. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey..." (Rom. 6:16).

THE PRODUCT OF DECEPTIVE TEACHERS

Perhaps they started out as faithful Christians which seems to be implied in verse twenty. They had escaped the pollutions of the world. They did so through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:17; Acts 8, 9, 10). However, as Demas (2 Tim. 4:10) loved the world and went back into it those of whom Peter was writing had done likewise with their false teaching.

So what is the product of deceptive teaching? A falling away; A departing from the faith; A going back into the world. When a false doctrine is taught that is exactly what happens. Men depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1).

Peter's description is not very pleasant. It is like a dog that vomits and then turns around

and eats it. It is like a young man who would wash a sow and then the sow goes back and wallows in the mud.

The product of deceptive teaching is eventually eternal damnation. Notice how Paul describes this, "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

CONCLUSION

As Peter warned about deceptive teachers it seems that Paul draws us a conclusion when he wrote, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). However, Paul continues, "But continue thou in the things that thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Tim. 3:14).

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THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD

2 Peter 3:1 - 11

By Richard Mansel

INTRODUCTION

In an age of uncertainty, hope is the most desirable destination. We need to know that someone is in charge and has answers. As the government and experts flail away, hopeless as to what to do, God stands quietly competent. Man's failures and foibles are as stark a contrast against God's backdrop of perfection, as can be imagined.

God is the answer, the peace, the prosperity and the promise. However, it cannot be purchased. Man is helpless to obtain it by legal or clandestine means. It lies only in Christ and is found within the pages of Scripture (Rom. 10:17). Moreover, the answers we crave come to fruition in the afterlife, where negotiations, schemes, bribery, class order and position cease to exist.

The Lord will be on the throne, we will stand before him, craving his mercy (Eph. 2:8-9). Yet, the decision will have been made in the quiet moments in our daily lives.

The second coming is certain and our choice must be made today.

PETER'S EXPERIENCE

Simon Peter is a complex man who comes to 2 Peter with the wisdom of time and experience. His epistles are reminiscent of Ecclesiastes as the aged man shares his scars and the lessons he gained from them. Accordingly, readers, who study his life, are able to find a cornucopia of lessons.

A study of Peter's journey allows us to see behind the Scriptures and gain insight into his words. Peter's failings are legendary in Scripture. His impetuousness led him to a host of reprimands from the Lord.

His love for Jesus exceeded his wisdom and understanding and he unwittingly stood in the way of the Savior he passionately loved.

First, Jesus taught his disciples about the reality of his death and Peter scolded the Christ. "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matt. 16:22). Jesus chastised him for doing the work of Satan by trying to intervene in His heavenly mission (Matt. 16:23).

Second, Peter swore that he would die with the Lord (John 13:37). Nevertheless, Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny Him three times (John 13:38). When the Roman soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Peter once again stood in the way (John 18:10). Jesus told Peter that His mission was to do the will of the Father (John 18:11).

After Jesus was arrested, Peter denied that he knew Jesus, just as prophesied (Luke 22:54-62). The rooster crowed "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Luke 22:61).

Peter undoubtedly wondered if it was all over for him. If Jesus was dead, then he might never be forgiven. Apparently he feared the death of Jesus because he might never get Jesus back again. He would be lost forever without his Savior. Later, Jesus visited with Peter and let him know that he would still do great things in the kingdom (John 21).

The failures of Peter's life are still on his mind as he writes his epistles. After the greeting in 1 Peter, he immediately turns to something dear to his heart.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3) (All quotations will be from the King James Version).

Peter understood all too well the necessity of mercy and the resurrection of Jesus. He desperately needed the mercy and grace of Jesus after his sins. Moreover, he was one of the first ones to the empty tomb of Jesus (John 20:1-10).

Not surprisingly, the first words out of his mouth in these epistles are about the promise of heaven. When he writes to the persecuted saints in these epistles, he speaks with authority and experience, having spent a good bit of time incarcerated for his faith (Acts 4:3; 5:17-18; 12:3-19). Advanced in age, he longed to find the rest of heaven (Matt. 11:28-29).

ENCOURAGING AND WARNING

Peter's urgency is obvious as he begins the final chapter of his two epistles with an explanation of why he is writing about something familiar to his readers.

We should never have the idea that we only need to hear something once. Some complain if the preacher preaches on something they already know. This is naive and selfish. We need to be reminded of God's teachings and we are not the only ones in the audience. Moreover, we gain a better understanding of fundamentals, so we can teach it to others.

"The things which Peter would have them recall were the principles, the prophecy, the truth, and the doctrine which the apostles and prophets had taught them." (Woods, 180).

First principles are extremely important and the matters under discussion carry even more weight. Amidst persecutions, nothing was more important than the affirmation that Christ would be faithful until the end (Rev. 2:10).

Peter's love for his readers is clear as he calls them "beloved," which "contrasts with the vehement pronouncements against the false teachers and mockers" in previous verses (Coffman). (2 Pet. 3:1, 14, 17).

Peter has just been attacking the enemies of the cross in anger. His tone changes as he addresses the faithful Christians whom he loves. Because of his gentleness, he feels the need to return to the subject close to his heart. His final days are undoubtedly heavy on his heart. Peter knew that the persecution against the Lord's Church would claim his own life, so it was his passion to remain vigilant and vocal in his encouragement to the saints.

Jesus told Peter:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (John 21:18).

In times of respite and calm, the intricacies of a storm are passé. However, when the wind scatters our picnic, we are suddenly alert.

Facing the persecutions of the day, Peter's audience was undoubtedly interested in Peter's topic at hand. He was in the same place they were – under threat by Satan and his agents.

Peter had keen insight into the Man of Darkness (1 John 1:5). Peter had seen his handy work. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). As a result, Peter must warn his brethren and encourage them to cling to the Savior.

Peter wanted them to be reminded of Satan and his agents as he continues through the chapter. Scoffers served Satan well in Peter's day as they did to Israel when they were trying to rebuild Jerusalem (Ezra 4:1-5; Nehemiah 4:1-3).

The scoffers would claim, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:4).

"Far from being any intelligent and well-reasoned objection, the mockery of the scoffers was merely a loud and arrogant denial. This is a perfect example of the enmity of the carnal mind against God" (Coffman).

"Cynicism is as old as the human race. It is the particular affliction of those who demand no law and no restraints." (Warden, 414).

"The motivating factor of the mockers is stressed—they walk after their own lusts. The warning is not new, for from the prophets through the apostles of the Lord, the warning has been issued and the action of the mockers condemned" (Gospel Advocate, 350).

"Years had passed, generations had died, and still the Lord had not returned. The false teachers exploited a disappointed hope that had been long in the making." (Warden, 415).

Nothing has changed today. Nearly two thousand years have passed and Christ has not returned. Accordingly, people become cynical. Jesus endured mocking and persecution and so shall we (John 15:18-19). The Christians must ignore their mocking and return to the only undeniable thing they possessed. God's Word will never let them down (Heb. 13:5; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Peter directed them back to the Scriptures and the inspired Words of the Lord.

"Peter appeals to the apostles and prophets and their teachings since the Scriptures had not been completed" (Woods, 180).

Today, we have the completed canon and can confidently proclaim the promises of God, contained in Scripture, knowing they will come to pass (Psalm 111:7-8).

God, who cannot lie (Tit. 1:2), promised that the Lord would return and Peter wanted to build the confidence of the persecuted saints, so their faith would endure to the end.

COMING DAY OF THE LORD

Peter appeals to creation and the flood, displaying the power and glory of God (2 Peter 3:5-6). If God could accomplish creating the universe with a thought, He could certainly finish the job in the end. Scripture is very clear that there will be a judgment. Trying to avoid this certainty is foolishness.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

"The false teachers failed to understand that the appearance of the Lord Jesus for judgment was no afterthought of Christian doctrine. That Jesus will return is a bold declaration that human history is going somewhere" (Warden, 416).

John even described the judgment scene where we will all stand before the throne of Christ to be judged by our works (Rev. 20:11-15). We will be judged by the words of Christ, not men (John 12:48). Accordingly, the only one we should be listening to is Christ (John 14:1-3).

Augustine said, "God is patient because he is eternal." (Coffman). The Word will come true. Yet, since we do not know when, we must always be ready (Heb. 9:27).

God does not exist in time, as we know it. It is not the framework around which He operates. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isa. 55:8).

"It is unbecoming for God's creation to attempt to force on Him the fleeting conception of time to which humankind is bound" (Warden, 421).

For God, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8). The Psalmist writes, "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Psa. 90:4). Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36).

We cannot count on extra time thinking God is too busy or unconcerned about His Son's return. God's will is moving forward and we have no idea when it will culminate. The end is certain and it can happen today or in a thousand years.

Even though we do not know when the judgment will arrive, we do know when ours will come. When we die, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins. There is nothing we can do. Therefore, when we die, it is our judgment day. So, in one respect, the day of the judgment is superfluous. We must all be ready for our death and that may come at any time.

God does not want any of us to be lost but we have freewill and can choose to follow Christ or ignore Him. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9; cf. Rom. 2:4).

"Here the writer of this epistle enables us to view the summit of the Christian faith, and to rise to a magnificent conception of God" (Coffman). God is consummate goodness. However, He has given us a choice and must abide by it. Heaven and hell are both eternal and real (Matt. 25:46).

Peter writes: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10; cf. 1 Thess. 5:1-6).

Everything that we know in our universe will be destroyed, which is beyond the imagination of humanity. We simply cannot conceive of it with our own senses. Only faith can save us (Heb. 11:1,6).

"For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains" (Deut. 32:22).

"The word for noise is a powerful word used for, 'the swish of an arrow through the air, the rumbling of thunder, the crackle of flames, the scream of the lash as it descends, the rushing of mighty waters, or the hissing of a serpent." (Coffman).

"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world" (Matt. 13:40). "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" (Luke 3:17).

Nothing will remain of humanity's feeble accomplishments. The moment will dwarf the laughable Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). Man's absurdity will be exposed as God incinerates the universe.

All that remains will be the Godhead and the spiritual aspects of humanity. Everything that humans use to divide will be gone. We will stand helpless before God to be judged according to our deeds (Rom. 2:6; Matt. 16:27; Rev. 2:23).

The terror of that day, in the mind of the unfaithful, scoffers and atheists, will be unprecedented. Nothing can prepare us for what will happen if we are outside of Christ. How do we avoid the eternal nightmare from which we cannot awaken?

HOW CAN WE BE SAVED?

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Pet. 3:11).

"The great ethical purpose of Christianity is clear in this. Christ came to save people from their sins, not in their sins; and the recognition of the ultimate fate of all created things, to say nothing of the immediate fate of all mortals, should have but one issue, that of godliness and holy living." (Coffman).

Salvation is only found in Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). We cannot hope to be saved outside of Christ. We will be as helpless as those outside of the Ark (Gen. 8:15-22).

We must be immersed into Christ for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). It is the only path of salvation available to us (John 14:6; 1 Pet. 3:21).

The final fire will burn off the dross and leave the golden and precious. The soul is all that matters and it is often the last thing man considers.

"Whatever wealth one accumulates will be left behind. Whatever one builds will wear out and fail. Even if we were to have no faith in God, it would be foolish to order one's life as if it were no end to it. For the unbeliever, there appears to be only a sorry, hopeless faith that human life means no more than the life of a salamander or a sow bug. One lives for whatever sensual pleasures he can enjoy and then dies" (Warden, 426).

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc. 12:13-14).

Will we be ready when the end comes? Will we be ready to face the final judge when our lives end? If not, make them right today!

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FINAL EXHORTATIONS

2 Peter 3:12 - 18

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INTRODUCTION

Peter ended his second canonical epistle with the seven verses soon to be discussed; however, it is necessary that this author begin his writing with an expression of thanks to the Richmond Hill congregation for the opportunity to participate in this beneficial study of the Word of God. It is always beneficial for the child of God to investigate Scripture, but the study of these verses has proven beneficial beyond measure in teaching and encouraging the author of this manuscript in continued service to the Lord.

2 Peter 3:12-18 must not be viewed as a passage altogether separate from the rest of the epistle, but as the conclusion to the whole matter. The sum of all things taught throughout the epistle is brought to applicable conclusion in these seven verses. Most specifically, it must be understood that these verses are a direct extension of the eleven prior verses of this chapter. The reader will be spared redundancy, understanding that another has been assigned the discussion of the first eleven verses of this chapter. It should suffice to note that these verses deal with the second coming of our Lord. Verses ten and eleven of the passage serve as the conclusion of the prior discussion, but also as the introduction to these final exhortations by the apostle Peter.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Pet. 3:10-11).

Given the fact that the Lord is returning, and that His return will come without warning, how should one live his life? These verses serve as the answer to this question.

BOUND FOR HEAVEN

When the Day of Judgment arrives, every human being will face one of two rewards for the life he has lived: Heaven or Hell. Of the two available options, any sane human being would choose the former, and that takes preparation. One cannot accidently reach eternal glory with our Lord. Verse twelve is written in the prophetic present tense, implying a certain fulfillment of the events described (Pulpit Commentaries, 22:69). The Lord **will** return, the universe **will** be destroyed, and every human being **will** stand before Him in judgment.

The Christian's response to the destruction of the world is much different from the non-Christian's response. Whereas the thought of a certain and immediate destruction of this world is met with worry and fear in the heart of the unprepared, the Christian is "looking and hasting unto" that end (2 Pet. 3:12). Albert Barnes defines "looking" as "a belief that it will occur, and a condition of mind in which we would not be taken by surprise should it happen any moment" (Barnes, 24:263). We might also render "looking" as "expectation," reflecting the definition here given. Barnes likewise defines "hasting" as "to urge on, to hasten; and then to hasten after anything, to await with eager desire" (Barnes, 24:263). "The true Christian does not dread the coming of that day. He looks forward to it as the period of his redemption, and would welcome, at any time, the return of his Lord and Saviour" (Barnes, 24:263). The Christian not only believes this event will come to pass, but lives his life expectant of this occurrence. He lives his life prepared for the day that judgment befalls the world, and he looks fondly toward that day. He realizes that day is not to be feared, but is to be cherished as the day that the temptations and trials of this world are finally brought to an end, and he may then enjoy the reward of "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet. 3:13b).

New Heavens and Earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:13)

Unfortunately, many sources that one might reference concerning this passage will take the opportunity of the usage of the words "new heavens and a new earth" to promote an extrabiblical view of the end of times. The widespread nature of materials teaching such doctrines makes it necessary for the author of this manuscript to take opportunity to oppose these false doctrines, and defend the plain truth of God's Word.

Albert Barnes, a known premillennialist, correctly wrote the following concerning this passage:

Nothing is said of a personal reign of Christ; nothing of the resurrection of the saints to dwell with him on the earth; nothing of the world's being fitted up for their abode previous to the final judgment. If Peter had any knowledge of such events, and believed that they would occur, it is remarkable that he did not even allude to them here. The passage before us is one of the very few places in the New Testament where allusion is made to the manner in which the affairs of the world will be closed; and it cannot be explained why, if he looked for such a glorious personal reign of the Saviour, the subject should have been passed over in total silence (Barnes, 24:264).

Unfortunately, Mr. Barnes continued his adherence and defense of the premillennial doctrine mere sentences following this insightful statement which serves as proof that this doctrine cannot be believed. Barnes went on to erroneously suggest that the word "new" concerning the heavens and earth here mentioned could mean the following things: a second world will be created from nothing following the destruction of this world; after the destruction of the world, men could live upon another of the planets in the universe, and it would be new to mankind; or man will live upon a renovated earth, its renovation making it like-new (Barnes, 24:264). Barnes' adherence was to the latter of these three options given, yet the defense of his position was not based upon Scriptural proof, but upon emotion.

The earth as one of the worlds of God, has occupied too important a position in the history of the universe to make it to be easily believed that the place where the Son of God became incarnate and died, shall be utterly swept away. It would, certainly, accord more with all the feelings which we can have on such a subject...Piety would at least wish that the world where Gethsemane and Calvary are should never be blotted out from the universe (Barnes, 24:265).

Adam Clarke, another well-known denominational commentator, agreed with the conclusion of Albert Barnes, stating "It is more reasonable and philosophical to conclude that the earth shall be refined and restored, than finally destroyed" (Clarke, 2:893). Both these authors sighted their own opinions on this matter as the grounds for their conclusion, but God has not authorized such methods of interpretation.

Guy N. Woods offered an alternative and correct definition of "new" and interpretation of this passage:

There are two words translated "new" in the New Testament; one is prospective and indicates that which is young as opposed to old: the other is retrospective and points to that which is fresh in contrast to that which is worn out. It is the second of these (*kainos*) which is used here (Woods, 188).

It is sufficient for us to note that: (a) The new heaven and earth will follow the destruction of the present heavens and earth. (b) The earth that will then be is not this one. (1) It is this earth which embodies the hopes and expectations of future kingdom advocates. (d) There is no hint of a reign of Christ on the earth which Peter describes. (e) Christ will have terminated his reign and delivered the kingdom to the Father before the events are accomplished which the apostle here details. (1 Cor. 15:23ff.) (f) There is, therefore, no support whatsoever in this passage for premillennial theory (Woods, 189).

(a) The present heavens and earth serve as a figure of the heavens and earth to follow. (b) The words "heavens and earth" are not intended to embrace all of God's material universe, but only that portion where his people dwell. (c) In the antetype, this limitation must be understood, and the words 'new heaven and earth' must then be regarded as a designation of where his people dwell, and not a detailed description of the future abode. (d) Heaven is the final abode of the people of God. (e) Therefore, the phrase 'new heavens and earth' must be understood as a designation for heaven! (Woods, 189).

CHARACTERISTICS OF HEAVEN-BOUND CHRISTIANITY

Understanding the necessity of preparedness in light of eternity, and striving to be Heaven-bound, the Child of God must exhibit certain characteristics. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:14).

The Heaven-bound Christian must be diligent. The service of the Lord is not to be given a half-hearted effort, but is to be the main drive and focus of the Christian's life. This applies to the Christian's study of God's Word, his application of God's Word, and his exhibition of Christian attitude. "Give diligence (study, KJV) to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright (rightly dividing, KJV) the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, ASV). The heaven-bound Christian must thoroughly investigate the Word of God, and internalize the teachings contained therein, so that he may make application in his life. "Let us therefore give diligence (labour, KJV) to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience" (Heb. 4:11, ASV). The Christian must put what he learns from studying the Word into practice; whether in public or private, outwardly or internally, the child of God must diligently serve God. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10a).

In addition to being a diligent servant of God, the Christian must also "be found of him in peace." Christ left peace with His apostles when he ascended (John 14:27), having taught them the Truth so they might have peace (John 16:33). His apostles spread the Gospel throughout the world and, by inspiration, wrote it down to be studied by men and women today. Understanding and obeying the teachings of these inspired men is what grants peace to the Christians of today. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"

(Rom. 5:1). "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). Peace is a byproduct of living the Christian life, because the Christian knows that his sins are forgiven. Peace is also the practice of the Christian toward others (Rom. 14:17-19). Peace is the Christian's reward and responsibility in Christ, and he must be found in peace when the Lord returns. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15).

The Heaven-bound Christian must also be found "without spot" when the Lord returns. Jesus Christ died upon the cross, so that those who choose to obey him might have their sins washed away, making them without spot. The church is the bride of Christ, and those who obey the Gospel become members of His church—His bride. Comparing the love of a husband toward his wife to the love of Christ toward the church, the apostle Paul wrote the following:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

This verse indicates that the church will be presented as the Lord's bride in judgment, which is fitting considering that day will also mark the day the church begins to live with Him in glory. Also, the means by which one becomes spotless is addressed in this verse—baptism. The church is sanctified and cleansed "with the washing of water by the word." This washing of water is the same washing in water that the Christian experiences in order to wash his sins away (Acts 22:16). In order to be found without spot, one must be baptized for the remission of sins, washing away the spots of his sins from his wedding garment. For the child of God who has obeyed this commandment, it must also be understood that baptism is not the end-point of this commandment, but the beginning. After obeying the Gospel, the Christian must do as the

apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:12-14).

In addition to diligence, peace, and spotlessness, the Lord also requires that the Christian be found blameless if he wishes to be Heaven-bound when eternity comes upon mankind. This blamelessness is a qualification for elders and deacons in the Lord's church (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6-7; 1 Tim. 3:10), and is also a command that must be fulfilled by all others that wish to inherit Heaven (1 Tim. 5:7; 1 The. 5:23). This command, like "without spot," does not mean "sinless." To be found blameless, in the Biblical sense, deals with one's relationship to others. "Do all things without murmurings and disputing: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phi. 2:14-15). Here, we are given a working definition of blamelessness. Being blameless is equated with being "without rebuke" and being found different from "a crooked and perverse nation," shining "as lights in the world" in comparison. This commandment simply means to show forth Christianity in your attitude, your speech, your actions, and what you teach. The heaven-bound Christian is to be a light unto the world (Mat. 5:14-16).

In order to be bound for Heaven, the Christian must be diligent, peaceful, spotless, and blameless. God has blessed mankind with an opportunity to obtain eternal bliss, and His Word explains all the entry requirements. It is the Christian's responsibility to meet these requirements—not to earn salvation, but to please God and fulfill His commandments.

GOD DESIRES HEAVEN-BOUND CHRISTIANS

As brother Richard Mansel will have adequately addressed in the manuscript preceding this one, many had accounted the fact that the Lord had not yet returned as proof that He would not return (2 Pet. 3:3-9). Peter responded to this false-assumption by reminding his readers that the Lord postpones His return to give opportunity for more to obey. One day, the Lord's patience will come to an end, but the Lord has spared humanity until now because of His love. The same is stated by Peter again in the passage here addressed: "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (2 Pet. 3:15a). Albert Barnes expounded upon Peter's statement:

Wicked men should not infer, because God does not cut them down, that therefore they never will be punished, or that God is not faithful to his threatening. They should rather regard it as a proof that He is willing to save them...As long as life is prolonged a sinner has the opportunity to repent, and may turn to God...Let any man look on his own sins, his pride, and selfishness, and sensuality; let him contemplate the fact that he has sinned through many years, and against many mercies; let him endeavor to estimate the number and magnitude of his offences, and upon God's patience in bearing with him while these have been committed, and who can overrate the force of such an argument in proof that God is slow to anger, and is willing to save? (Barnes, 24:266-267)

The Father's judgment waits to give the lost opportunity to be saved. This author encourages all to take the given opportunity.

Peter and Paul (2 Pet. 3:15-26)

One cannot read past this verse without realizing the equivalence of the teachings of Peter and Paul. Paul had written letters bearing testimony of God's patience and longsuffering to brethren of the same provinces Peter now addressed (Woods, 190). Peter referenced these writings, realizing them to be inspired and equally as authoritative as his own. He referenced Paul's writings as evidence of his own claims because they were well-known by his readers, and it was well-established that Paul's teachings were from God. Paul was referenced by Peter as an

authority on the matter. In Paul's letters, he addressed many of the same things Peter addresses in the passage being studied: the Judgment (1 The. 3:13; Rom. 14:10), the resurrection (1 Cor. 15), Heaven and the future abode of the righteous (2 Cor. 5:1-10), and the end of the world and destruction of the wicked (2 The. 1:7-10; 2:1-12). It is to these passages that Peter refers when providing support for his teachings in this passage.

THE HEAVEN-BOUND CHRISTIAN AND THE FALSE TEACHER

Are the writings of Paul hard to understand? In some ways, the answer to that question is yes; however, one cannot boldly leap toward a conclusion like many would from this admission of Peter. First, we must establish that "there is not one difficulty relative to the things which concern our salvation left unexplained." (Clarke, 2:894) It is **not** insinuated that Paul's teachings **cannot** be understood, neither is it implied that Paul's teachings concerning the salvation of the soul are difficult to understand. All that is important in instructing a human being and bringing him unto the Lord is expressly taught in Scripture. The problem in understanding is not in the author, nor the language that he used. The troubles in interpretation arise within the reader. "Difficulties of interpretation, and preconceived notions which the people had—particularly the Jews—added to the difficulties" (Woods, 191).

Those who are drawn away from the Truth by a misunderstanding of Biblical teaching are described by Peter as "unlearned and unstable." The "unlearned" are uninstructed individuals, and the "unstable" are those without firm convictions (Woods 191). Speaking of the unstable, Albert Barnes stated, "They are under the control of feeling and emotion, and are liable to embrace one opinion today, and another directly opposite tomorrow" (Barnes, 24:269). "Those who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction are men who are uninstructed in the way of truth and who lack the stability of character necessary to espouse a position and hold it"

(Woods, 191). "The persons here intended are those who proceed according to no fair plan of interpretation, but force unnatural and sophistical meanings on the Word of God." (Clarke, 2:895)

These men who interpret God's Word in incorrect manners are said to "wrest" the Scriptures. Vincent provides a definition for the given verb: "Meaning, originally, to hoist with a windlass or screw; to twist or dislocate the limbs on a rack" (Vincent, 1:708). Very forcible language is used to describe these false teachers as twisting the Word of God and distorting it. When false teachers are done twisting and distorting, Christianity is hardly recognizable by those who understand the plain truth of God's Word. Such a foul distortion of Truth should be spotted easily; however, many are drawn away from the Truth by false teachers, never to realize how far from the Truth their false-doctrines are.

Understanding that there are false teachers in the world (Mat. 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; 2 Cor. 11:13-14; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1), what should be the Christian's response? He must beware. The Christian must study God's Word, and look to it as his only defense against the false teachings of this world. The majority of those who profess Christianity are the agents of Satan himself, and the one weapon in the Christian's arsenal is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). The Word must be read, internalized, and practiced by the Christian. If one is well-grounded in the Truth, he will then be able to spot and oppose false doctrine.

BOUND TO GROW (2 PETER 3:18)

Just as a younger generation of Israelites matured as they journeyed through the wilderness toward the Promised Land, the child of God matures while traveling the path to Heaven (2 Pet. 3:18; Col. 1:9-11; 1 Pet. 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:1-3). One is born again when he obeys the Lord in baptism (John 3:3-5), but a Christian who does not grow from that newborn state is lost

once again.

The life of a Christian is a growth; he is at first born of God, and is a little child; becomes a young man, and a father in Christ. Every father was once an infant; and had he not grown, he would have never been a man. Those who content themselves with the grace they received when converted to God, are, at best, in a continual state of infancy: but we find, in the order of nature, that the infant that does not grow, and grow daily, too, is sickly and soon dies; so, in the order of grace, those who do not grow up into Jesus Christ are sickly, and will soon die, die to all sense and influence of heavenly things (Clarke, 2:895).

The Christian life is focused on pleasing God, and growing in grace and knowledge gives God glory and pleases him. Every Christian should strive to grow, in order to be Heaven-bound, but he must also realize that this growth will require effort.

"No one becomes eminently pious, any more than one becomes eminently learned or rich who does not intend to; and ordinarily men in religion are what they design to be. They have about as much religion as they wish, and possess about the character which they intend to possess. When men reach extraordinary elevations in religion...they have gained only what they meant to gain; and the gay and worldly professors of religion, who have little comfort and peace, have in fact the characters which they designed to have" (Barnes, 270).

If one is bound for Heaven, he is bound to grow. Growth is commanded, but it is also a byproduct of the Heaven-bound life previously discussed. According to Peter, the Heaven-bound Christian will "grow in grace and in knowledge". "Grace" is used to sum up all the favor of God, which increases toward the Christian as he advances in stature as a child of God (Woods, 193). "Religion in general is often represented as grace, since every part of it is the result of grace, or of unmerited favour; and to 'grow in grace' is to increase in that which constitutes true religion" (Barnes, 24:270). "Knowledge" represents understanding of God's Word. The Christian will "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Scripture is profitable (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and to grow in an understanding of God's Word will help one along his path toward Heaven.

CONCLUSION

The Lord will return, and His return will be sudden. The time for preparedness is today. When Judgment Day arrives, the diligent, peaceful, spotless, blameless, evil-opposing, growing Christian will be Heaven-bound. The Lord has postponed His judgment until now to grant opportunity for others to obey, but one day He will return. That day could be today. Every human being should take opportunity to prepare and be Heaven-bound. "To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Pet. 3:18).

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