

**Words  
Are  
Windows**



**Words  
Are  
Windows**

**Boyce Mouton**

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. . . As His Spirit Leads

. . . And for God's glory

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. . . For the building up of His Body

. . . And for the evangelization of the world

## **Dedication**

To Don DeWelt, whose use of words has been a source of edification and encouragement to me and to multitudes,

And to friends from the Copeland Christian Church whose generosity has made this publication possible.



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## Introduction

It has been suggested that the human being only learns to speak when spoken to. Individuals who have been isolated from all contact with words are incapable of using them.

In this regard it is significant to note that God spoke to Adam in the Garden of Eden. The words which He used were vehicles of communication. Like windows to the soul they opened the mind of man to the thoughts of God.

We may critically say that "words are cheap" and that "actions speak louder than words," but we should not forget that the use of words was first of all employed by God.

Neither should we forget that Jesus Christ is described as the "Word" of God. The unseen Spirit God revealed to us the fullness of His Godhead in a human body. Jesus became that vehicle or "Word" by which God communicates His nature to the world which He has created.

This little volume is a compilation of short stories and articles which were written over a period of many years. They cover a wide variety of subjects, but hopefully each will bring light to your mind and ultimately result in the advancement of Christianity. Words can be like windows to the soul, providing enlightenment to make your labors more fruitful and effective for the cause of Christ.

Since some of these studies involve Greek and Hebrew words I harbor the inward fear that someone may mistakenly think that I am a scholar of Hebrew and Greek. I am not. I

have never studied Hebrew and have taken only a smattering of Greek.

The research which I have done has basically been in English. The books which I have used are easily obtained and can hopefully enrich the life and ministry of any Bible student.

Most Bible students will agree that the Bible is itself the best commentary on the Bible. When we come across a word which we do not understand it is important to see how the Holy Spirit uses that same word in other places. The committed Christian is promised wisdom when it is asked for in faith and those who are spiritual are granted special insight and understanding into the mind of the Spirit.

My studies have therefore been centered in the Scriptures. I have used a number of different versions of the Bible together with "Interlinear" Bibles, and I have prayerfully sought to know and to obey the Word of God.

To understand the meaning of Bible words in their original language I have also consulted:

*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*

*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*

*Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (three volumes edited by Colin Brown)

*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*

*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (two volumes edited by Harris, Archer, and Waltke and designed to be used with *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*)

*Young's Analytical Concordance*

*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*

And a wide variety of commentaries and other sources of information.

## INTRODUCTION

By comparison with the works of a scholar this little volume of essays is utterly insignificant. I can only say that they represent many hours of prayerful study in my own life and that I feel a compulsion to share them with others.

Thank you for taking time from your life to share these "words" with me. May they be like "windows" to your soul.

Yours and His,  
Boyce Mouton



## The A and the Z

Four times in the Book of Revelation Jesus is called the "Alpha" and the "Omega." He is the first letter of the alphabet, and He is also the last letter too. He is the beginning and the end . . . but He is also everything in between.

The English alphabet has 26 letters. There have literally been millions of volumes written in English – some are romantic, others are scientific. Some are hilarious comedies, and others are heart rending tragedies. Some are simple books for little children, and others are so deep and technical that they require an Einstein to understand them. But all of these volumes are written with the same 26 letters.

In much the same fashion Jesus is the entire vocabulary of God. In Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead in a body. Everything that Deity desires to communicate to man is expressed through Jesus.

He is the Door to the Sheepfold, but He is also the One waiting inside the door to welcome those who enter in by faith. He is the Way and also the Destination. He is the Truth and also the Subject which it explains. He is the Light and also the One who is illuminated. Christ is all!

When we begin our Christian journey, it is important that we fix and maintain a proper goal. It is easy to become so engrossed in the Word expressed in the Bible that we forget that the Bible is but a vehicle to bring us to Jesus who is also the Word of God but in a more literal sense.

We must not become so enamored with the vehicle that we forget the destination. The vehicle is a means to an end, and not the end itself. If we are to "apprehend" that for which we have ben apprehended, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. Maturity is "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

To demonstrate that this is not some inane tangent or mean-

ingless exercise like "beating the air," permit me to focus your attention upon Galatians 4:19. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. . . ." The Apostles of Jesus did not give priority to the Holy Trinity of "Budgets, Buildings and Baptisms." They focused their aim on the transformation of every Christian into the likeness of Jesus. It became such an obsession with Paul that His personal agony over their spiritual development was like the travail of a woman with child. The goal was "Christ in you, the hope of glory" and all else paled into significance.

The Scriptures make a direct association with our maturity in Christ and the growth of the Body. When we grow up into Him in all things, then we will experience every member ministering so that the Body will be able to build up itself in love (Eph. 4:15-16). The strength of a church is in direct proportion to its ability to be like Jesus.

He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the A and the Z. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy . . . for in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him . . ." (Col. 2:8-10).

## Abba

The Hebrew word for father "ab." It occurs 1195 times in the O. T. Scriptures. Only 15 times is it used in a religious sense. It seems that the Hebrew people seldom thought of God as a Father.

In those passages which refer to God as a Father, He is only considered as the Father of the nation as a whole, as in Deuteronomy 32:6, or of the King of Israel as in I Chronicles 17:13. In O.T. times God was not considered the Father of an individual, or of mankind as a whole.

The Greek word for father is "pater." It is found in the New Testament Scriptures 402 times and 245 of these are used in a religious sense. Jesus not only considered God as His Father, but wanted us to do the same.

He taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in Heaven. . . ." Realizing how difficult it would be for Jewish people to experience an intimate comradeship with God, He encouraged them to remember their earthly fathers. We came to our earthly fathers in a fearless manner. We could ask for anything with the absolute assurance that our earthly fathers would not permit us to have something which would be detrimental to our welfare.

He then reminded us that if we, being evil, know how to give good things unto our children, how much more shall our Father which is in heaven give good things unto them that ask Him (Matt. 7:11).

But Jesus went one step further. He not only referred to God as His personal Father, but spoke of Him as "Abba" (Mark 14:36). This would be roughly equivalent to our English word "daddy."

Nowhere in the entire wealth of Hebrew Scriptures or of ancient devotional literature do we find a single reference to God being addressed as "Abba."

In the literature of Rabbinical Judaism we do find one reference in the Babylonian Talmud which dates about the first century B. C. Here some school children are quoted as praying "Dear father (Abba) give us rain."

Jesus, however, took the matter further yet. He not only prayed to God Himself as "Abba" but taught that we should do the same. As a matter of fact this is a specific part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Our transition from the life of a slave to the life of a son is so dramatic that we cannot accomplish it successfully on our own. It is therefore the work of the Holy Spirit to give testimony to the fact that we are children of God, not slaves, and to cry out on our behalf "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15).

The same dramatic message is found in Galatians 4:6, ". . . And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying Abba, Father."

We would never dare to do such a thing on our own, but the Holy Spirit leaves us with no alternative. Not only does He impel us to think of God as our personal Father who shepherds us so meticulously that even the very hairs of our head are all numbered. He also emboldens us to communicate with God in the most endearing and intimate terms. We are to use the very kind of language which the trusting youngster uses when they fling their loving little arms around their daddy's neck.

Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus! We shall be eternally grateful that you have broken down the barriers that separated us from God and have sent your Spirit into our hearts that we might cry out, "Abba Father."

## “Abba”

*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15).*

The manner by which Christian worship can be distinguished from Judaism is more obvious to me each time I read the Bible. The difference is as dramatic as the contrast between Isaac and Ishmael. To endeavor to mix the two would be like putting new wine into old skins, or attempting to sew a new piece of cloth into an old garment.

Typical of the chasm separating the two philosophies of religion was the propensity of the early church to pray to God as “Abba.” The word “abba” is a kind of baby talk. It is like saying “daddy.” It is a term of warm endearment totally inappropriate for use in an atmosphere of formalism. Christians, you see, had been delivered from the curse of formalism and the Holy Spirit gave to them the relationship of little children. This emboldened them to approach God with the same confidence that a little child has when he throws his arms about his father’s neck and cries out “abba” or “daddy.”

The devout Jew could never do this. The *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* offers this stunning quotation on page 614 of Vol. I, “Nowhere in the entire wealth of devotional literature produced by ancient Judaism do we find “abba” being used as a way of addressing God.”

To show how scrupulously they searched for such a reference they offer this quotation from the Babylonian Talmud as the closest thing to it. Little children had been clinging to the robes of their local rabbi and crying “abba give us rain, abba give us rain.” The Rabbi then responded with this prayer to God. “Sovereign of the world, do it for the sake of those who cannot distinguish between an ‘abba’ who can give rain and an ‘abba’ who can give no rain.”

Amidst the multiplied thousands of pages of Jewish devotional literature there is not one single reference to be found where a devout Jew ever used the term "abba" in a direct reference to God. Such a designation for Deity would be utterly out of character with Jewish worship . . . but it was both typical and appropriate for Christianity.

When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane He said: "abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:36).

The genius of Christianity enables those of us who have been the bondservants of sin to receive the very Spirit of Jesus. The same Spirit that prayed to God in Gethsemane dwells in our hearts by faith. We are no longer slaves to sin, but we are sons in the family. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6).

It is to be profoundly regretted that many in our day are almost as offended by if informal worship as those pious Jews of the First Century. They feel most comfortable in an atmosphere of formalism, God is seen more as a Royal Monarch or Ruling Judge than He is as a Loving Father. For this reason their worship is pervaded by an atmosphere of sacred gloom. They march in with a somber expression and sit stiffly until the ordeal is over. There may be a few nervous chuckles if the minister tells a joke but generally speaking their gathering is much more like a session in court than a family reunion.

The early Christians did not indulge themselves in the luxury of special buildings erected for the specific purpose of worshipping Jesus. Their worship was of such a nature that they could meet effectively in someone's living room or by a riverside. In times of persecution they even met in the catacombs beneath the city of Rome. They did not meet as spectators in the bleachers but they gathered around a table as members of God's family. And the Holy Spirit enabled them to call Him, "Abba, Father."

## Like an Acrobat

Our English word "acrobat" comes from a compound of two different Greek words. The first part of the word is "akros" which means "highest." It refers to the "topmost point" or "extremity." The second part of the word is from "bainein" which means "to go." An acrobat is therefore someone who goes high. They walk a tightrope high above the ground, or swing from a flying trapeze high above the admiring crowd below.

Needless to say an acrobat has to be careful. The higher you go the more careful you become. Just a few weeks ago I helped a neighbor put a piece of tin on a roof some 25 feet off the ground. The higher I went on the ladder, the more diligent and careful I became.

It is most interesting to observe that this is the very word chosen by the Holy Spirit to describe the way that Christians are to walk. "See then that ye walk CIRCUMSPECTLY, not as fools, but as wise . . ." (Eph. 5:15). The Greek word translated "circumspectly" is "akribos" which is basically our word for "acrobat." It is translated in the King James Version as "diligently, perfectly, and circumspectly." Other versions use "accurately" and "carefully," but the idea is still the same. The man on a tight rope cannot be nonchalant about the way he walks and survive. This is precisely the illustration used by the Holy Spirit to show how that we as Christians are to conduct our lives. We are to be as accurate and careful about what we do as an acrobat.

The Christian is like a soldier in combat, an athlete in competition, a pilgrim in a strange land, or a voyager on a stormy sea. Time after time the Scriptures probe our thinking and stir our intellect with the necessity of extreme diligence and utmost care. We are not to be like someone beating the air" but with genuine effort we are to be deliberate about every move we

## LIKE AN ACROBAT

make lest after preaching to others we should find ourselves rejected.

Not too many are acrobats in the literal sense of the word, but virtually everyone of us has had an experience in a high place which has tested our abilities and concentration. As children it might have been a jungle gym, a slide, or climbing a tree. As adults we sometimes find ourselves in situations which are more demanding. Though it has been many years ago, I still have vivid recollections of working on a water tower in Sand Springs, Oklahoma 85 feet above the ground. I was not really an acrobat but I tried to be as careful as one.

Today I seem to have an easy schedule. There are no major crises which I know of that I will have to face. It is a "regular" day. The temptation, therefore, is to grow careless about today. To become so utterly nonchalant and apathetic that I become easy prey for the devil.

The Scriptures also admonish, us that when we think we stand, we had better take heed lest we fall. There are an incredible number of ways that the unscrupulous enemy of our souls can trip us up. He has traps and tricks so utterly clever that we can never avoid them without divine assistance. Down through the years he has hung some famous scalps on the walls of his wigwam and he is now in the process of making a determined effort to capture yours and mine.

This is at least one good reason why we need to walk today "like an acrobat" . . . not as fools, but as wise . . . redeeming the time because the days are evil.

## Ask

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you: 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? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 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?”

“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall *ask*, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18:19).

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall *ask* in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:22).

“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that *asketh* receiveth; and he that *seeketh* findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him” (Luke 11:9-13)?

“And whatsoever ye shall *ask* in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall *ask* anything in my name I will do it” (John 14:13-14).

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall *ask* what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7).

“. . . whatsoever ye shall *ask* of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall *ask* the

## ASK

Father in my name he will give it you. Hitherto have ye *asked* nothing in my name: *ask* and ye shall receive that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24).

"Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we *ask* or think . . ." (Eph. 3:20).

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him *ask* of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him *ask* in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:5-6).

". . . ye have not, because ye *ask* not. Ye *ask*, and receive not, because ye *ask* amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:2-3).

"And whatsoever we *ask* we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John. 3:22).

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we *ask* anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we *ask*, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him . . ." (I John 5:14-15).

"ASK."

## Brephos

“... from a *child* thou hast know the holy scriptures . . .” (II Tim. 3:15).

The versatile Greek language provides us with at least six different words which are all translated as “child” in the authorized version of the English Bible. They are: *huios*, *teknon*, *pais*, *paidion*, *nepios* and *Brephos*.

The word “*brephos*” is defined by Thayer as (1) an unborn child, embryo, fetus; (2) a newborn child, infant, babe, It is used eight times in the New Testament scriptures.

Luke 1:41 “... the *babe* leaped in her womb. . . .”

Luke 1:44 “... the *babe* leaped in my womb for joy. . . .”

Luke 2:12 “... ye shall find the *babe* wrapped in swaddling clothes. . . .”

Luke 2:16 “... they came with haste and found . . . the *babe* lying in a manger”

Luke 18:15 “... and they brought unto him *infants* that he would touch them”

Acts 7:19 “... they cast out their *young children* to the end that they might not live”

I Pet. 2:2 “... as *newborn babes* desire the sincere milk of the word . . .”

II Tim. 3:15 “... from a *child* thou hast known the holy scriptures . . .”

Note that each usage of the word “*brephos*” is in harmony with the definition given us by Thayer. It refers either to an unborn fetus like John the Baptist or to an infant in the earliest moments of his life as illustrated by Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Now let us apply this meaning to the passage in II Timothy 3:15. Timothy knew the scriptures from the time he was an unborn fetus or an infant in the first moments of his earthly life.

His father was a Greek, and we have no accurate way of determining his relationship with Jehovah. The fact that the infant Timothy was not circumcised may imply that his father was not sympathetic to the Jewish faith. But somehow Timothy was given a constant exposure to the word of God from the earliest moments of his life.

When Paul reflected upon the unfeigned faith of Timothy, he associated it with the same type of faith which dwelt first of all in his grandmother Lois, and then in his mother Eunice. How beautiful.

How easy to envision a young expectant mother praying with her face toward Jerusalem, reading aloud the Scriptures with her pious mother. The birth of a son only served to enrich the deep bonds of religious conviction around which her life revolved, and perhaps the first words to reach the ears of her newborn infant were words of prayer and praise to Jehovah. Can you not see in your mind's eye an elated grandmother chanting a psalm of exultation, and a smiling mother muttering a prayer of gratitude as she held her "brephos" to her bosom. It was this type of an environment that shaped and molded the life of young Timothy. From the time he was a "brephos" he knew the holy scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation. The faith of his godly mother and grandmother provided a beautiful vignette to enrich the first page of his life and to enhance and enrich his every experience thereafter.

What a dramatic contrast this is with the experience of many children in our own generation. Their first knowledge of God comes as they are thrust into Sunday School where a total stranger takes up the belated task which should have commenced at the moment of birth. Their initiation to the world of spiritual things is better late than never, but it places the youngster at a decided disadvantage. Concepts of God need not come abruptly or confuse a childish mind, they can be woven into the fabric of human existence from the moment of conception. The Christian mother is a vessel undefiled by debilitating drugs. No harsh nar-

cotics and addictive toxins will find their way into the bloodstream of her unborn child. She is a temple of the Holy Spirit and has been bought with a price, and the child in her womb is a beneficiary of her lifestyle and conduct. He, like Timothy, need not learn of God from strangers. He can assimilate something of that divine existence from the first sensations he is able to distinguish. Just as the house upon the rock was many days in completion, the formation of a Christian faith may be a long way off from the foundation laid in infancy, but when the rains descend and the winds blow, we will be eternally grateful that our children learned from a child the holy scriptures which made them wise unto salvation.

## Avoiding a Catastrophe

*"Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the SUBVERTING of the hearers" (II Tim. 2:14).*

The Greek word translated as "subverting" in the text before us is "katastrophe." It comes from "kata" which means "down," and "strophe," which means "a turning." Timothy is being given instructions on how to avoid a catastrophe.

The only other time the word is used in the N. T. Scriptures is in II Peter 2:6. Here it is translated as "overthrow." In this verse it has reference to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which God turned into ashes with a "catastrophe" of colossal proportions.

In my younger days I took special pleasure in religious arguments. In retrospect, I probably did not do a great deal of damage to the people with whom I was arguing. I presume that many of them were as mixed up as I was. I do have agony in my heart, however, for those innocent bystanders who may have suffered spiritually because of my intemperance. I fear that for many of them it was a "catastrophe." How tragic that unsaved people are sometimes lost in the shuffle as religious bigots display their egos and their ignorance.

The Pastoral Letters are literally filled with practical advice for avoiding catastrophes. One passage, in particular, is found in the chapter before us.

Verse 23 - Timothy was to avoid foolish and unlearned questions, because they would create strife.

Verse 24 - The servant of the Lord must not strive, but he must be gentle unto all. He must also be capable and patient.

Verse 25 - When the servant of the Lord instructs argumentative people, he must do so with such a teachable attitude that confused individuals will not be backed into a corner with some

## AVOIDING A CATASTROPHE

erroneous position to defend. God may change their minds even if we can't.

Verse 26 – Up to now these people have been under the dominion of the Devil but this strategy will enable them to escape.

The use of the word “subverting” or “catastrophe” in this context, has particular reference to the use of the tongue. James informs us that the “tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity . . .” and in the same passage reminds us “how great a matter a little fire kindleth . . .” (see James 3).

The Great Chicago fire was supposed to have been caused by a modest little lantern which was kicked over by an unruly cow. What a catastrophe!

Today the Christian world has also seen its share of catastrophes. Not only do we have literally hundreds of disputing denominations, but also a wide variety of sectarian debates within the individual denominations themselves. At some point in time we need to stop such fires before they start.

This advice is not heresy or optional, but a direct command of Scripture which we are “charged before the Lord” to obey. Let us obey this command and avoid catastrophes in the Family of God!

## The Bush and the Tree

Jeremiah 17:5-9 compares philosophies of life to two different types of vegetation. Those who trust in men and make flesh their arm are compared to a "heath in the desert." This dry little bush inhabits the parched wilderness and is a pitiful symbol.

Those who trust in the Lord are much different. They are like a "tree planted by the water." The tree by the river bank is lush and green regardless of the changing weather patterns.

It is obviously a wise decision to trust in the Lord.

The Greek language has two different words which are translated as "despair." The first is "exaporeo" which literally means "out of a way through." The last part of the word corresponds to our English word "porous." Those who trust in men inevitably come to despair. They arrive at a situation and humanly speaking there is "no way through it." This is the essence of despair.

The second Greek word for "despair" is "apelpizo." This word literally means "away from hope." Again those who trust in men find hope in only certain circumstances. Man can consistently remedy many illnesses and correct a wide variety of problems. Humanity, however, does have its limits. Ultimately those who trust in man will arrive at a place "away from hope" and this again is what "despair" is all about.

The late Jim Rutherford, Sr. used to tell about the dear Christian lady who was dying of cancer. As her family gathered about her with tears in their eyes she sparkled and said, "Please don't weep for me . . . this is the moment I've been waiting for!" She was like a tree with deep roots in the Water of Life.

When Moses came to the Red Sea with more than two million refugees there was "a way through." No, it was not through human might and the military strength of men. . . . Moses trusted in the Lord and left us a legacy with beautiful blossoms that never wither and fade. He was like a tree planted

by the rivers of water.

The green trees of history have left us a legacy of courage and hope. Through faith they have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens . . ." (Heb. 11:33-34). These were not shriveled up little bushes dying in the parched and arid wilderness, they were living and fruitful sentinels who help us chart a course to the River of Life. They stand strong and tall as perennial reminders of how beautiful it is to trust in God. They are now heroes in heaven of whom the world was not worthy.

But let us turn our gaze inward and seek to analyze the source of our own confidence. Jeremiah warns us that the heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. . . ." How easy it is for us to face one way and walk another and honor with our lips what we deny in our life.

The river bank is narrow indeed by comparison with the broad wilderness. Trusting in men is so utterly convenient. It enables us to immediately put down our roots with little or no thought of the rigors and disciplines of the Christian life. Those who trust in men, however, will only bequeath to the world a little dried up bush which is fit for the fire.

May God grant you the courage and faith to be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

# Christians

*“. . . and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch”*

The name “Christian” has been an honored name for almost two thousand years. Isaiah predicted that God’s people would be called by a “new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name” (Isa. 62:2). James spoke of the “worthy name” by which the followers of Jesus were known (James 2:7). No doubt, it was the name “Christian.” Peter wrote: “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, 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 in this name” (I Peter 4:15-16).

This “worthy name,” however, was not given first in Jerusalem where the church began, but it was given first in Antioch. Inquiring minds will want to know “why”?

The answer, in all probability, is that the church in Antioch was the first congregation in the world to accept Gentiles (Acts 11:20). News of this came to Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas to check out the story (v. 22). Barnabas was so excited that he went to Tarsus and got Saul. These men assembled themselves with the church and taught much people, and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (v. 26).

Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel to all “nations” (Matt. 28:19-20). The word translated as “nations” is the Greek word “ethnos,” from which we get our English word “ethnic.” It is the normal word for “gentile” in the Greek language. Jesus specifically commissioned His disciples to preach to all the ethnic groups of the world. They, however, did not understand their commission.

The church in Jerusalem was composed exclusively of Jews. The process of accepting Gentiles came gradually over a period of many years. Acts 8 tells us that Philip went down to Samaria

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and preached. The Samaritans were half-breed Jews. Next we read in Acts 10 that Peter preached to a Gentile Centurian named Cornelius. He was a devout, God-fearing man, but Peter still did not accept the invitation to preach to him without a certain amount of spiritual coercion.

Finally we come to Acts 11 where the Holy Spirit with a free flow of influence inspired some anonymous disciples to make history by doing precisely what Jesus had commanded all of his followers to do.

The Scriptures teach that "whosoever" believes in Jesus will have everlasting life. As a matter of fact there are a whole series of "whosoever" in the Bible. God is no respecter of persons . . . "whosoever" can come to Jesus and He will in no wise cast him out.

God's people are never more like Jesus than when we display an absence of prejudice and discrimination. The world is filled with barriers which divide. Mankind is divided racially, socially, religiously, politically, educationally, economically, and in other ways too numerous to mention. In Jesus all of these barriers are broken down and we become "one"!

It is altogether possible that when you reach out to all segments of society in the name of Jesus, someone will hate you in the same way that they hated Him. But if any one suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name!

## Looking for a City

*For he looked for a city which hath foundations . . . (Heb. 11:10).*

There is an old joke: "Why is a hippopotamus, called a hippopotamus?" Answer: "Because it looks more like a hippopotamus than it does anything else."

The joke is not quite so funny for those familiar with the Greek language. The word "hippopotamus" literally means "river-horse." "Hippo" is their word for "horse," and "potamus" for "river."

The point is that there is quite frequently a rational explanation for many words which are utilized in human language. The word "city" is an interesting case in point.

The first use of the word city in the Bible is found in Genesis 4:17. In this passage we are informed that Cain builded a city and named it after his son Enoch.

The Hebrew word for "city" is "aw-yar." It comes from the root "oor" which means to "open the eyes." Hence Strong in his *Exhaustive Concordance* defines city as "a place guarded by waking or watch."

A "city" would therefore be of special significance to Cain. His desire to dominate his younger brother had caused him to commit the world's first murder. As a part of his punishment God consigned him to a two-fold curse. (1) When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee of her strength. (2) A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth (Gen. 4:12).

Cain felt crushed! He said that his punishment was greater than he could bear. He believed that everyone who found him would slay him.

God responded by placing a mark upon Cain lest any finding him should slay him (Gen. 4:15).

It was at this point that Cain founded a city!

It seems to me that his motive in doing so was less than honorable. God had condemned him to the life of a wandering vagabond, yet still promised to protect him from the vengeance of his fellow men. By building a city Cain testified to the world that he did not accept the life of a vagabond or the protection of God. It was a testimony to his insecurity and possibly even rebellion.

There is also in this equation the latent element of control. It seems that Cain wanted to dominate his brother. Perhaps he wanted to dominate and control others as well. By building a city it would stand to reason that he would be its ruler. Thus the city would keep him from being a vagabond, provide him protection, and also give him subjects over which he could rule.

The actions of Cain are in stark contrast with those of Abraham. The book of Hebrews testifies that Abraham dwelt in tents while looking for a city whose builder and maker was God. Abraham willingly abandoned the security of city life in Chaldea and became a vagabond for God. He deliberately chose to leave the towering walls of men and the protecting armies of human flesh that he might pioneer the pathway of faith. He proved that God was faithful to perform what he had promised.

When John the Apostle was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos God opened the heavens and permitted him to see a Holy City. Its gates were of pearls and its streets were made of pure gold. That city had no need of the sun or the moon for it was illuminated by the glory of God and the light of the Lamb. Its gates would never be shut, and nothing that worketh abomination or maketh a lie shall be privileged to enter in.

## The Clean Crib . . .

*"Where no oxen are the crib is clean . . ." (Prov. 14:4)*

The Hebrew word for "crib" is "ebuwc." It comes from the root word "abac" which is found only twice in the Scriptures: Proverbs 15:17 where it is translated as "stalled" ox, and I Kings 4:23 where it is rendered "fatted" fowl.

It does not take much imagination to know what a stall is like where an ox has been fattened. Farmers with a feed lot do not even need to use their imagination. The more cattle in the feed lot . . . the deeper the manure . . . only an empty stable stays clean.

This little proverb has been of pivotal importance in my perspective of the church. That which aggravates and annoys many people may prove to be the very thing which excites me the most.

It's like the housewife who loved to do dishes. The more dishes she had to wash the better she liked it. When asked why she responded that every dirty dish was a blessed reminder that her family had something to eat. There are millions of people today who would be happy to have dirty dishes to wash . . . but they do not.

Where no oxen are the crib is clean. The farmer with no manure to shovel is to be pitied. His stables are empty.

Quite frequently our meetings here at the church building are interrupted by the sounds of little children. These sounds are like music to my ears for it reminds me of precious parents who are seeking to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is an encouragement for today as well as a wonderful harbinger for the strong church of tomorrow.

I spoke to a minister recently who told me that there is not one young child in the entire church which he is serving. When

## THE CLEAN CRIB

that church was approached about starting a nursery as an encouragement to young couples there did not seem to be any interest. Nurseries are a lot of trouble . . . and so are little children. Empty churches stay clean just like empty stables.

The last part of the proverb is positive. "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean; but much increase is by the strength of the ox."

The man with no oxen does not have an abundant harvest. What little plowing he is able to do by hand is utterly insignificant by comparison to the work which oxen can do. The ox, as troublesome as he may be, is an expedient to "much increase."

The churches which have much increase are the ones who are willing to clean out the crib. They will carpet the nursery and pave the parking lot. They will train the teachers and show special interest to visitors. They will invest whatever time, energy, and money it takes to minister to the needs of people and the community.

Churches that are stagnant and dying don't want to be bothered with the mess of oxen in the crib. Week after week there is that reassuring sameness which assures them that nothing is happening. The facilities are perhaps a bit dusty, but otherwise in excellent repair. Nothing ever gets marked on or broken, trampled or abused, stopped up or worn out. The empty stable stays in excellent repair . . . no broken boards . . . no nails kicked out . . . nothing to shovel on the garden to make it grow . . . but regrettably not much of a harvest either.

Solomon stated it succinctly, "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean; but much increase is by the strength of the ox."

## Confusion???

*“ . . . God is not the author of confusion, but of peace”  
(I Cor. 14:33).*

The congregation at Corinth had a great deal of confusion. They had so many problems that a lot of preachers would hesitate to even write to them for fear of guilt by association. Here is a short resume of some of their troubles as they are reflected in the first Corinthian letter.

They were divided over human leaders (ch. 1-4); they had tolerated a type of immorality that was even repugnant to the Gentiles (ch. 5); they had taken their brethren to court before unbelievers (ch.6); they had problems over marriage (ch. 7); idolatry (ch. 8-10); communion (ch. 11); spiritual gifts (ch. 12-14) and the resurrection (ch. 15). Their public worship had degenerated to the place that it did more harm than good (Cor. 11:17). In seeking a solution to these serious problems in the church, Paul reminds them that God is not the author of confusion. *Whenever confusion arises in a congregation it is important to remember that God is not responsible for it.*

The word translated “confusion” is the Greek word AKATASTASIA. It means a state of disorder or instability. Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* associated the word with “revolution or anarchy” (p. 227). God is not the author of anarchy. Every aspect of creation and revelation is indicative of order and symmetry. From the smallest snowflake to the largest galaxy, creation reflects a super human precision of arrangement and design. God is not the author of confusion.

The Garden of Eden is but one small reflection of the nature of Jehovah. Every beast of the earth and every fowl of the air was given every green herb for food. The perfect Designer had devised a system that rendered death and bloodshed unneces-

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sary. The wolf could dwell with the lamb and the leopard could lie down with the kid. Every creature could roam the garden without fear. "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." The garden was a model of peace, order and tranquility. God is the author of peace.

The word for "peace" in I Corinthians 14:33 is the Greek word *EIRENE*. This word is used in the Bible to denote harmonious relationships between both men and nations. It means friendliness and freedom from molestation. It refers to the very order and harmony that existed in Eden. God created Eden a model of perfect peace. God is not the author of confusion. When all of nature was turned into a snarling jungle, God was not responsible for it. God does not create confusion anywhere. In a society that is threatened with anarchy it is expedient that we get this straight in our minds. The confusion in our streets and on our campuses was not created by God. He does not create confusion in any home or any church. God is the author of peace. And when the time comes that all men submit to the reign of heaven they will beat their swords into plow shares and their spears into pruning hooks and study war no more.

## Confusion and Peace

*“ . . . God is not the author of confusion, but of peace . . . ”*  
(I Cor. 14:33).

It is relatively easy to fill in that which is missing in an orderly system. 1, 2, 3, \_, 5, 6, etc. or 1, 4, 7, 10, \_, etc.

To speak of a “disorderly system” is to use words that are contradictory. The word “system” literally means “to set together” and implies cohesiveness and harmony. Disorder is a disruption of the system. It is a monkey wrench in the gears, or a scrabbling of order which makes it impossible to predict anything but failure.

When Paul was informed of “confusion” in the church at Corinth he was constrained to remind them that our God is not the Author of “confusion.” The Greek word is *akatastasia* which refers to disorder and instability.

God is not the Author of confusion. He is the God of peace. Everything which He created was “systematic” and “harmonious.” Eden, for example, was a paradise without bloodshed or fear for even the animals initially ate only vegetation (Gen. 1:30).

In the midst of the garden, however, was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The word “evil” is the Hebrew word “ra.” It comes from a root which literally means to “break into pieces.” If man partook of this tree the orderly system of God would be fragmented. Paradise would slip through his fingers and his world would become a snarling jungle of bloodshed and destruction.

Once we understand the nature of God and the nature of evil it is easy to understand why God has ordained civil government (Rom. 13). Anarchy is diametrically opposed to the very nature of God.

Human governments, however, have a tendency to create

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local harmony and international tension. Consequently we live in a world that is filled with wars and rumors of wars.

God's solution to the fragmentation of earth is a new kind of government. It is a kingdom which is not of this world. It crowns Christ as King and includes people from every nation, race, kindred, and tongue.

Those who swear allegiance to the kingdom of heaven are "peacemakers" and not "piecemakers." They are soldiers engaged in a war of ideologies endeavoring to bring every thought into captivity to Christ.

In the wake of their conquest the home becomes a scene of tranquility. Each member of the family becomes so submissive and sensitive to the needs of others that love and harmony abound.

When these ambassadors of peace conquer a community the slaves and masters are sitting around a common table sharing a feast of love.

When Jesus is Lord men learn to beat their swords into plowshares and study war no more.

We know men by their fruits. You do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles.

May God hasten the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

## “And be Content with your wages”

Luke 3:14

Those who are determined to live the “Jesus” kind of life will invariably find themselves out of step with society. The sandaled carpenter left us an example that we should follow in His steps. He demonstrated that it is possible to obtain our daily bread without avarice and greed. His aim in life was to accomplish the will of God . . . thus he was free from the canker of covetousness and also from riches, deceitful thickets which choke out the good seed so that it becomes unfruitful.

The scriptural admonition “. . . and be content with your wages” came from one who was preparing the way for the Lord. The soldiers demanded of him, “And what shall we do?” The inspired advice of John the Baptist was threefold:

- (1) *Do violence to no man*, that is, do not take advantage of your positions to extort from the public.
- (2) *Neither accuse any falsely*. The word employed here is “sukophanteo” from “sukon” (a fig) and “phaino” (to show). Originally it denoted they who exposed those who were involved in the unlawful export of figs. It is always used in a bad sense and thus refers to a cringing and malignant informer who made his accusations from the love of gain.
- (3) . . . *and be content with your wages*. The word translated “wages” is “opsonion” from “opson” (meat) and “oneomai” (to buy). It is translated as “wages” in Luke 3:14, Romans 6:23 and II Corinthians 11:8, but its derivation indicates that it includes not only money, but daily provisions for the sustenance of life.

This triad of closely related ideas is in perfect harmony with

"AND BE CONTENT WITH YOUR WAGES"

the teaching of Christ and His apostles but probably would not be compatible with the lectures delivered to the local labor unions.

Sid Allsbury said to me some time ago that a survey indicated that Americans in every income bracket need one-third more in order to satisfactorily meet their obligations. If they were making about \$100 per week they needed about \$130. If they were making \$1,000 per week they needed about \$1,300. Feeling the uncomfortable pinch of inflation and faced with unanticipated expenses we send our representatives to the bargaining table with demands for more. Yet, when we get more we are still not satisfied. Everyone needs "enough" to get by on . . . but how much is "enough"? Regardless of how much we make, "enough" seems to be "about one-third more."

Paul wrote,

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, there with to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me (Phil. 4:11-13).

John the Baptist was sent to prepare men to receive the Kingdom of Heaven. When we view his words in the light of this divine truth it illuminates our need to depart from carnality's debilitating treadmill and learn to live within our income. Contentment is a state of mind . . . not a state of events. The man who is interested in the Kingdom must rise above the earthly standards of those about him. Contrary to the unwritten creed of our day "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth." "Man," the Savior would remind us, "does not live by bread alone."

We, too, can do "all things" through the power of the same glorified Savior . . . being "content with our wages" might be a good place to start.

## Constrained

We are living in an age of pressure and constraint. Some pressures are social, some are financial, some are political, some are physical but these pressures are very real and they play an important role in shaping and directing our lives.

A good deal of the pressure which we face is objectionable. Consider for example, the turmoil in our Southern states. The long arm of the Federal Government has pulled the intergration lever and the squeeze is being felt . . . but strongly resented. Businesses frequently succumb beneath the grinding wheels of mergers and conglomerates, and the lower echelon of executives dance like puppets in response to financial strings. The same type of resentment is often triggered on the personal level. We often go, say, and do things because of social blackmail – not because we want to.

The Kingdom of our blessed Savior presents a refreshing contrast to the conniving and skulduggery of the carnal. The only pressure Jesus ever put on anyone came from the constraining power of love. Listeners were free to come and to go at will. When the multitudes withdrew He asked His disciples, "Will ye also go away?" Those who sought to follow Him were reminded that even though the birds and foxes had dwellings . . . He did not. When Judas arose from the table to consummate his bargain for 30 pieces of silver the Savior simply remarked, "What thou doest, do quickly." Peter drew his sword and slashed at Malchus . . . Jesus healed His wounded enemy and told Peter to put away his sword.

In describing that long night of torture Luke remarks, "And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him" (Luke 22:63. The word translated "held" is the Greek word "sunecho" which means "to hold fast" or "constrain." It is interesting, and perhaps significant to note that this is the very word used by Paul to describe the way that he was "held fast" or

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"constrained" by the love of Jesus. He wrote, "For the love of Christ constraineth us . . ." (II Cor. 5:14). Those who have been captured by the magnetic love of Jesus can understand and appreciate the accuracy of these words. We are free to live any way we choose, but we are constrained by an inward compulsion to choose the way that He lived.

At first we are tempted to despise the toothless regime which the sandaled Carpenter began in Jerusalem those many centuries ago. But with a little reflection we concur with Napoleon who is reported to have said, "Alexander the Great, Charlamagne, Julius Caesar, myself \_ all founded kingdoms upon force. Those kingdoms have crumbled into dust. Jesus Christ built His Kingdom on love, and today millions would die for Him." The genius of the Christian institution has survived the flames of persecution and the erosion of the centuries. His love will never lose its power to constrain His followers to sacrifice and service.

The longer I meditate upon the beauty and wonder of the wisdom of Heaven the more disgusted I grow with the gimmicks and contraptions which men devise to prop up the rotten timbers of the institutional church. I find it difficult to conceive of Jesus sponsoring a contest in order to whip up a little enthusiasm among His disciples. No trinkets were dangled as prizes to those who would put forth a little effort. The invitation involved a cross and Demas, or anyone else was free to go over the hill anytime he wanted to. All those who love Him will keep His commandments, and those who do not love Him are resigned to "Anathema Maranatha." When the ecclesiastical machinery of our generation has rusted to a grinding halt and when the seasonal schemes of religious promotion have blossomed and withered - the love of Jesus Christ will still be constraining to evangelism and martyrdom. AMEN.

## Corrupt Communication

*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying . . . (Eph. 4:29).*

A word cannot be accurately defined without considering the context in which it is used. If I say, "Quit being so IRRESPONSIBLE and start paying your bills" I am partially defining the word by the way that I use it. I could just as easily say, "Quit being so IRRESPONSIBLE and shut up," or "Quit being so IRRESPONSIBLE and start letting people know how you feel."

Thus the word "corrupt" is partially defined by the very text in which it occurs. It is used in opposition to "edifying." We are not to let "corrupt" communications proceed out of our mouth, but rather we are to speak in such a way that we can "edify" our brethren.

Both of these words are picturesque and meaningful. The word "corrupt" is from the Greek word "sepo" and means to become rotten. It is from the root which signifies to rot off or drop in pieces. The word for "edify" comes from the Greek word "oikodome." This is a compound of two words. Oikos means house, and dome means to build.

We are to speak in such a way that we will not cause members of His body to drop off and fall away, but rather that they will be built firmly into the house of the living God.

In this context, "corrupt communication" takes on a new significance. It may not be vulgarity or profanity at all. It does not have to include risque jokes and suggestive stories. Corrupt communication is anything which does not build up our brethren in the most holy faith.

Corrupt communication might well be the unvarnished truth. Suppose, for example, that some leader in the church is involved in a sin or indiscretion which is not public knowledge. I do not choose to go to him with the problem, but instead I tell

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the sordid matter to some new Christian. Should this information cause that Christian to fall away the communication has been rotten to the core, no matter how true it is. Corrupt communication is anything which does not build up, but rather tends to make someone fall away.

Perhaps this is one reason why the Scriptures teach us to be "slow to speak" (James 1:19). Before we pop the clutch on our tongue we need to have shifted our minds into a spiritual gear. Before we say anything to anybody it would be well for us to prayerfully consider how our words will benefit the kingdom. Are we house builders whose words are carefully chosen to enhance and edify those to whom we speak, or do we carelessly poison our brethren with words which will deteriorate their dedication to Christ or reduce their relationship with the church?

I deal with people almost daily who once were interested and active in the work of the kingdom, but who have since fallen away. The infection which rots away may begin with a sour word or negative disposition. Grumbling and contention are said to eat like gangrene in the body of Jesus and they are totally out of character for those who are housebuilders desiring to edify. A negative report from the ten spies corrupted a nation. Caleb and Joshua prove that it would have been possible to be positive.

Let us determine to let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouths, but rather that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearer.

## The Covenants

Alexander Campbell in *The Christian System* lists eight covenants mentioned in the Bible.

1. The Covenant with Adam - Hosea 6:7.
2. The covenant with Noah - Jeremiah 53:20, Gen. 9:9.
3. The Covenant with Abraham - Genesis 12:1-3, Galatians 3:17.
4. The Covenant of Circumcision - Acts 7:8
5. The Ten Commandments - Deuteronomy 4:11-13, 5:1-3, etc.
6. The Covenant of Peace - Exodus 40:13-15; Numbers 25:12-13.
7. The covenant with David - II Samuel 7:12-17, Jeremiah 33:20-21.
8. The New Covenant - Hebrews 8:8-13.

He further notes that commands, promises, appointments and ordinances are equally called "covenants" and that every covenant mentioned in the Bible originated with God not man.

The Ten Commandments are of particular interest to us for they are designated as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith. The many analogies between the nation of Israel and the church of Jesus Christ are so obvious that we need not expatiate upon them in any great detail. See Hebrews 2, 3, I Corinthians 10, etc. Suffice it to say that just as Jehovah bound a multitude of redeemed slaves into a united community directed from Heaven through the Ten Commandments and a mediator named Moses, in a similar fashion. He has also bound together a multitude of redeemed sinners into a united community through His New Covenant and a mediator named Jesus. Christ is the head of His body, the church.

But let me direct myself to the common misconception that the first 39 books of our Bible are the Old Testament and the

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last 27 books are the New Testament. There is no doubt that when the Scriptures refer to the "Old Testament" they refer only to the Ten Commandment. As proof of this I offer the following:

1. The Scriptures explicitly teach that Moses received a covenant while he was 40 days upon Mount Sinai; the covenant was written upon two tablets of stone; the covenant was called "The Ten Commandments," and once the covenant was completed God added no more to it. See Exodus 24: 27-28; Deuteronomy 4:11-13; 5:1-3; 22: 9;11; etc. The canon of Hebrew Scriptures is never called a covenant.

2. The receptacle where the Ten commandments were kept was called "The Ark of the Covenant" (Num. 10:33). The ark disappeared before some books of prophecy were even written.

3 The covenant was made in Horeb (Deut. 5:2) or Mt. Sinai in Arabia (Gal. 4:25), but the Hebrew Scriptures were written in Palestine, Babylon and Persia.

4. The covenant was made when God took His children by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt (Heb. 8), but hardly any of the Scriptures were written at this time.

5. The covenant was broken by the time Jeremiah wrote Jeremiah 31, but many books of the Hebrew Bible were not written at this time.

In similar fashion the New Testament or New Covenant is not the 27 books usually so designated.

1. The New Covenant was a reality before any books of the Greek scriptures were written (Acts 2).

2. The New Covenant consists of putting the laws of God on people's hearts and minds - not on paper or tablets of stone (Heb. 8:10, II Cor. 3:3).

3. The Scriptures came gradually as a result of inspired men being guided into all truth (John 16:13), but the New Covenant was a complete reality from the very first convert to Christianity.

## WORDS ARE WINDOWS

The fact that John had not yet received the visions which he incorporated into the book of Revelation did not affect the covenant which God had already made with His people at Pentecost and which was referred to in II Corinthians 3, Hebrews 8 and other parts of the Christian Scriptures.

Legal documents such as the Ten Commandments or the Constitution must be interpreted. An inspired Moses did it for the nation of Israel, and the Supreme Court does it for the U.S.A. The New Covenant which God has made with man transcends such technicalities in the same way that Isaac transcended Ishmael. The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.

## Cunning or Plain

*. . . and Esau was a cunning hunter . . . and Jacob was a plain man . . . (Gen. 25:27)*

Please forgive my propensity for generalizations but I am intrigued by the contrast which the Scriptures make between Esau and Jacob. Esau was a "cunning" hunter and a man of the field, and Jacob was a "plain" man who dwelt in tents.

It is with some reluctance that I make reference to Hebrew words and their translation. I am not a Hebrew scholar and I have such a high regard for the Scriptures that I certainly do not want to "read into" the text ideas which did not originate with God. This is why I refer to these thoughts as "generalizations." Having offered these words of caution let us look more closely at Genesis 25:27.

The Hebrew word translated as "cunning" is "yaw-dah" which comes from the primary root "to know." It is used 944 times in the Scriptures and expresses a multitude of shades of knowledge. I think it is fair, however, to say that Esau was noted for being "knowledgeable."

Jacob, by contrast, was a "plain" man. This is the Hebrew word "tawn" which is defined by Strong as "complete" or "pious." In the K.J.V. it is translated nine times as "perfect," twice as "undefiled," once as "upright" and once as plain.

Thus, it seems that one brother was noted for his "knowledge" and other for his "piety."

For those familiar with the deceptive actions of Jacob it may seem incongruous to find him described in such a complimentary way. We must remind you, however, that this analysis from the Scriptures is inspired. Permit me to pursue the story a bit further.

Esau "despised his birthright" but sought diligently for his father's "blessing." The writer of Hebrews seems to express

amazement that Esau would sell his birthright for "one morsel of meat" (Heb. 12:16). Yet, the very next verse indicates that he sought his father's blessing "carefully with tears."

Perhaps by distinguishing between the birthright and the blessing we can more readily appreciate the analysis of Esau given to us by God. One principle feature of the birthright was the privilege of mediating at the family altar. In the age of the Patriarchs the oldest male member of the family ministered as a priest. This apparently did not interest Esau. Hebrews 12:16 describes him as a "fornicator" and "profane." He was noted for his knowledge and not his piety!

The blessing, by contrast, involved physical prosperity. The blessing which Esau craved and Jacob received is described in Genesis 27:28-29. It involved the "dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine." Nations would bow down to him, people would serve him, and in particular, his brother would be subject unto him.

It seems that Esau despised his birthright and sought after the blessing, and Jacob sought after the birthright and despised the blessing. Jacob only received the blessing at the insistence of his mother, but he sought the birthright on his own.

Someday we shall all stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ. At that time we shall be separated as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. On the one hand will be those who, like Esau, craved only the treasures of earth. On the other hand will be those like Jacob who sought to be pious. Let us strive to be "plain" and not "cunning"!

## Death

Sometime ago a woman who was over one hundred years old was asked the secret of her longevity. She replied, "Just keep breathing, brother, just keep breathing."

This simple formula is instinctively a part of everyone. Yet we must admit, realistically, that the time will come when we will inevitably stop breathing. Most of us will wage a last ditch struggle to the bitter end. We will leave this life screaming and choking and clutching for the proverbial straw – but we will die. The Wicked One expressed it in these words, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Hobbes of Malsbury is quoted as saying upon his deathbed, "If I were master of the world, I would give it all to live one more day." The instinct for self preservation is one of the strongest factors at work in the human family.

Christianity involves death. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Paul declared, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). The sixth chapter of Romans is replete with references to the death which forms a part of Christian conversion. Jesus used an analogy which is both simple and yet profound when he stated: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:24-25). There is no way for a grain of wheat to produce new life until it dies. In the same way there is no way for an individual to experience the new birth until self is mortally wounded and destroyed.

Death is perhaps the most dramatic and traumatic experience we face in either the world of the spirit or the world of the flesh. We approach conversion reluctantly – it involves death. We cling tenaciously to our own plans, hopes and dreams. We

struggle to maintain our own identity, our own friends and our own ways, but Christianity involves a death. Conversion is often the climax of the most vicious mental and emotional struggle we face between the cradle and the grave, but the corn of wheat that does not die abides alone. The sunshine of a bright new life is waiting beyond the dark threshold of our suicidal surrender to Jesus. We enter that new life by death. When we succumb to self, when we "let go and let God," when we hate our life in this world, we find it unto life eternal.

The Christian abides in the world of Eternal Spring. The cold and bitter winds of winter are gone forever. The old life has disappeared and in its place is found the marvel of tender plants responding to the radiance of a warm and redeeming love. Once this transformation from death to life has been experienced, we will never again face separation from the Father. Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and those who believe in Him shall never die. To be absent from our body is only to be at home with the Lord. The sting of death is gone, and the grave is robbed of its victory. Thanks be to God.

## Debates?

Sometime ago I went to sleep listening to a debate between two P.H.D.'s on the subject of creation and evolution. It was nearly midnight and I frequently close out the day by playing something which might be instructive. The next morning I awakened with the stark realization that the Scriptures refer to "debate" as a work of the flesh. It was not yet 5:00 a.m. Why is it fleshly and sinful to debate, I kept asking myself? "Didn't Paul contend for the faith? Didn't he "dispute" with unbelievers virtually every place he was? The answer is obviously "yes," but apparently there was a dramatic difference between what Paul did to convert people to Christ, and what Paul condemned among those people who were already in Christ.

The word "debate" occurs but once in the K.J. version of the Bible (Rom. 1:29). It is from the Greek word "eris" which occurs nine times in the N. T. Scriptures (Rom. 1:20, 13:13; Phil. 1:15; I Cor. 1:11, 3:3; 12:20; Gal. 5:20; I Tim. 6:4; and Titus 3:9). It is translated as: debate, contention, strife, and variance.

When the word occurs in conjunction with the "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:20 it follows immediately after the sin of "hatred" and is translated in the K.J. version as "variance." Hatred and debates are associated. The one is a state of mind toward people and the other is the result of that state of mind.

When you do not like somebody it is easy to disagree with them and natural to seek to dominate them.

The Christian, however, does not seek to dominate anybody. His desire is to see people surrender to Christ. Whatever discussion the Christian has is colored by a different hue than the ugly debate which merely pits one human mind against another.

William Barclay speaks eloquently to this point in his book, *Flesh and Spirit* (page 44).

## WORDS ARE WINDOWS

Whenever in a church Jesus Christ is dethroned from the central place, all personal relationships go wrong. When a man begins to preach, or to exalt Jesus Christ, but to exalt his own personal and private view of Jesus Christ, that is to say, when a man preaches a theology rather than a gospel, when a man begins to argue to demolish his opponent rather than to win him, the "eris" comes in.

It is in this vein that Timothy was instructed, "In meekness instructing them that oppose themselves . . ." (II Tim. 2:25). Meekness is listed as a fruit of the Spirit. It denotes an attitude of submission which precludes disputing or resistance. It comes from the Greek word "Prautes" which is the opposite of the brawling, belligerent, and pugnacious spirit of debate.

Titus 3:1-2 puts it like this:

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men. . . ."

I am constantly reminded of the "dispute" which Michael the archangel had with the Devil over the body of Moses. It never degenerated into a debate because Michael was content to let God be God. He did not have to be right or prove the Devil wrong. He merely said, "The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9) and went on about his business.

God give us the meekness to do likewise!

## Three Desires

Young's *Analytical Concordance* lists 13 different Hebrew words which all mean "desire." Each has its own particular emphasis and peculiar shade of meaning.

The word upon which we shall focus for this particular study is the Hebrew word "teshugah." Young defines it as "desire, longing." Strong says it means: ". . . in the original sense of stretching out after, a longing, desire." Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on Genesis are even more radical in their definition (p, 79). They call it ". . . a desire bordering upon disease . . ." and a state that it comes from the root which means ". . . to run, to have a violent craving for a thing. . . ."

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* confirms that the noun appears but three times in the Bible First of all it is used of the desire of Eve for Adam (Gen. 3:16), secondly of the desire of sin, crouching like a beast, and desiring Cain (Gen. 4:7), and finally in Song of Solomon 7:10 it is used to describe the desire of the bridegroom for his bride.

Let us pause to reflect upon each occurrence.

As a result of sin the Lord pronounced this curse upon the woman: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children . . ." (Gen. 3:16). Once the woman associated her great travail and pain in childbirth with her sexual activity with her husband one might assume that she would never want to be near him again. Yet, the Lord said: "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." This is a paradox that borders on the miraculous. In spite of the pain of childbirth, the woman will still have a strong desire and great longing for her husband.

For the purpose of balance let us next consider Song of Solomon 7:10 where the same strong word is also use of the husband. The bride confirms: "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me." Solomon felt that such a desire was too wonder-

ful for words (Proverbs 30:18-19). he likened it to the thrill of an eagle soaring high above the mountains, or the mystery of a serpent threading its way up the side of a rock without the benefit of arms or legs. It was as majestic and profound as a stately ship which might weigh many tons floating easily upon the bosom of the sea. Since he was a man with a thousand wives his words reflect the perspective of personal experience which cannot be denied.

Finally, let us take another look at Cain. As the firstborn son he undoubtedly excelled in many ways over his younger brother. When God granted respect unto Abel upon the basis of faith Cain was wrought and his countenance was fallen. The Lord tried to reason with him by assuring him that by doing well he, too, could be accepted. But if he chose not to do well he was warned that sin was crouching at the door and "desired" to have him (Gen. 4:7). In the same way that a man has a strong desire for his wife, and a wife has a strong desire for her husband, the devil also has a strong desire. Like a ravenous predator he crouches at the door watching intently for a moment of weakness when he can pounce upon us. Driven as he is by such a strong desire his vigil is too intense for words.

Since these are the only three times this particular word is used in the Sacred Scriptures one might feel led to inquire where the Lord fits in with respect to such desire.

This, too, is a great mystery! For when the Bible talks about the love of the husband for his wife, and the submission of the wife to her husband . . . it is in fact also talking about the relationship of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:32).

## Disciples of Moses

*. . . thou art His disciples; but we are Moses' disciple . . .*  
(John 9:28).

The Bible word "disciple" comes from the Greek "mathetes" which literally means a "learner." Our English word "math" comes from this same root. The noun "mathetes" occurs 264 times in the N. T. Scriptures and is found exclusively in the Gospels and Acts.

In Bible times a disciple would quite frequently live with his teacher. Both John the Baptist and Jesus had disciples like this.

Moses was different. He had been dead for almost 1,500 years. It was not possible for anyone to be his disciple in the primary sense of living in his presence or of following him from town to town. Moses, however, was a writer. The first five books of the Bible are the books of Moses. When a person read those inspired words which Moses wrote, and tried to put them into practice, he became a disciple of Moses.

The invention of writing provided a dramatic breakthrough in the world of education. It was no longer necessary to travel great distances to sit at the feet of some wise scholar or inspired teacher. His exact words could be brought to you in precisely the order in which he gave them.

Even the art of writing, however, was only of limited value until the invention of the printing press. Thus, the world of education took another gigantic stride during the days of John Gutenberg.

The electronic age has continued to accelerate and enhance man's ability to learn. Automated presses produce mountains of material to be read by mankind but the electronic age has done even more. It has made it possible for us to hear the actual voices of our teachers. Not only through loud speakers at some gigantic stadium, but over the radio

waves, and also by means of recordings.

More than twenty years ago I was challenged by the thought that the greatest educational tool of the 20th century was the video cassette. Now it is possible for us to see and hear our teachers over and over again in the privacy of our own homes.

At this very point in writing this article my secretary just brought in the mail. A man from Ohio came across two audio cassettes of messages I had delivered at the 1986 Northmen's convention. He wrote, ". . . I came across the tapes quite by accident, but was thoroughly encouraged by your words. . . ."

Almost every usage of the word "disciple" in the Scriptures involves a personal encounter. Paul, for example, has to journey to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of Gamaliel. Moses and his disciples were an exception . . . because Moses was a writer.

The implications of this are at least twofold. First of all it means that you and I have the privilege of studying at the feet of an almost limitless number of teachers. It does not matter where they live . . . or even when they lived. We can still have the blessed privilege of reading their words . . . and sometimes even hearing their voices and seeing their faces.

In the second place it places before us the opportunity of teaching others who are far beyond the reach of our earthly voice. Someone has written:

The printed page never flinches, never shows cowardice; it never is tempted to compromise; it never tires, never grows disheartened, it travels cheaply, and requires no hired halls; it works while we sleep; it never loses its temper; it works long after we are dead. The printed page is a visitor which gets inside the home, and stays there; it always catches a man in the right mood, for it speaks to him only when he is reading it; it always sticks to what it has said and never answers back; and it is bait permanently left in the pool.

As Jesus commanded – Let's go and make disciples!

## Discouragement

Probably no sin ever mentioned in the Bible is as universal, as effective, and as deceptive as the sin of discouragement.

Many temptations appeal to only a specific segment of society. Some will not succumb to the passions of youth or the animal appetites of the carnal mind. Our journey through life provides us with different desires at various stages of development and different pitfalls to face with the changes of climate and terrain – but the temptation of discouragement relentlessly dogs our steps from the cradle to the grave. It hounds the young and old alike. It plagues both rich and poor. No business or occupation provides relief from the constant pressure of this malicious enemy of the soul.

The temptation of discouragement is particularly effective because it always appears to be so harmless and unimportant. We flee from the lions of murder, and immorality into the open and caressing arms of depression and despair. Frequently this proves to be a tragic and fatal mistake. Many who would never dream of theft or adultery consistently seek refuge in the gloomy and dismal shadows of discouragement. It is usually in retrospect that we discover discouragement to be the tiny wedge that pried open a Pandora's box of countless sins. It is usually the discouraged man that turns to alcohol, rape, or suicide. It is the discouraged woman who turns to pills and infidelity. It is the discouraged youth who quits school and experiments with "mind expanding" drugs.

There is no place in the Christian life for discouragement.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (II Tim. 1:7). On the eve of Calvary the Saviour of the world admonished His disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled. . . ." He said again, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

The flames of Christian faith need not be smothered or extinguished by pain and persecution. Listen to these radiant words from a cell in Caesar's prison, ". . . I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto 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. . . . And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever" (II Tim. 1:12, 4:6-8, 18).

Take a long look at Lincoln. He failed in business in 1831; defeated for legislature in 1832; failed again in 1833; elected to legislature in 1834; sweetheart died in 1835; nervous breakdown 1838; defeated for land office 1843; defeated for speaker 1836; defeated for Congress 1843; elected to Congress 1846; defeated for Senate 1858. In 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected as President of the United States of America.

Optimism, persistence, and determination are essential ingredients to every successful life. The world is full of educated derelicts and geniuses who never made good. Every generation is characterized by talented men who tangled with discouragement and tossed in the sponge. Simon Peter was not deterred by his denials and blunders and therefore assumed his place in the Apostle's Hall of Fame. Judas Iscariot gave up and stuck his infamous neck in the coward's noose at Aeldama.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end (Heb. 3:12-14).

## Durst

"And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: . . . and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:13-14).

The word "durst" is from the Greek word "Tolmao" which means to "risk" or "dare." This Scripture indicates that a certain segment of society couldn't stand the "risk" of being a Christian, but multitudes were still added to the Lord.

The "risk" of being a Christian probably involved a variety of circumstances which we may never completely comprehend. A few observations, however, are quite obvious.

First of all, there was the hostility of the Jewish leaders. Jesus began his public ministry by a dramatic cleansing of the Temple. He overturned the tables of the money changers and exposed the malignant hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. They never forgave Him. John 5:18 reveals, ". . . Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him. . . ." Matthew confirms: ". . . the Pharisees . . . held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him. . ." (Matt. 12:14). Both of these Scriptures refer to circumstances early in His public ministry.

By the time He raised Lazarus from the dead the Disciples considered a trip to Judea as suicide (John 11:16), a very real danger which culminated at Calvary.

Following the crucifixion we find the Disciples huddled in an upper room, and the doors were shut for fear of the Jews (John 20:19), yet the church was to have its beginning in Jerusalem. How tempting it must have been to start preaching the Gospel somewhere else where the "risk" would not have been so great.

The first days of the Church were marked by hardship and adversity. There were severe economic problems resulting from overcrowding and discrimination. There was persecution from

the Jews who beat and imprisoned the Apostles and who ultimately drove the Christians out of the city. It was a risky business to be a Christian in those days and those who couldn't stand the heat stayed out of the kitchen. But let it forever be remembered that those risky days were days of growth!

Many years have trickled through the hour glass. Cushions have supplanted crosses and comfortable Christians have all but lost the exhilarating element of risk. They prayed for "boldness," and we extol the virtues of "tact" and "diplomacy." We are more cautious with our tithes than they were with their lives.

When the late General MacArthur redeemed the American cause in Korea, he did so at great personal risk. The allied retreat had taken us to the southern extremity of the peninsula, but it had also extended the length of the Communist supply lines. MacArthur made the daring proposal to land troops at Inchon and sever these arteries of supplies vital to Communist troops. When his colleagues refused to concur because of the incommensurable beach at Inchon, MacArthur reasoned that such a circumstance would actually be in our favor. It was the last place the Communists would expect us to attack. MacArthur stood alone, and he was willing to gamble his entire reputation and his career upon the decision. History has vindicated him for his courage.

How will history remember us? Will we be like the man with five talents who risked a total loss to gain five talents more – or will we play it safe and bury our talent in the ground? The church of the First Century was a church that took risks. "Durst" anyone follow their example?

## The Message of Ed

The word "Ed" is a Hebrew word which means "witness" or "testimony." It is used in the Bible to refer to an altar constructed on the banks of the Jordan by the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh (Josh. 22:10,34). Consider with me the origin of this altar and the meaning and message which it holds for today.

The war of conquest for Canaan had come to a glorious conclusion and Joshua wisely disbanded his troops. The armies of Israel were now to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Its is interesting to observe that the two and one half tribes who were first to be assigned their inheritance were the last to be discharged so that they might enjoy it. The first verses of Joshua 22 describe the honorable discharge of these valiant men. They had been courageous and obedient in all that they were commanded to do. Now they returned to their tents with the blessing of Joshua and the spoils of war. As they departed Joshua urged them to "take diligent heed to do the commandments of the law" and to strictly adhere to the doctrine of Jehovah.

When the departing warriors came to the borders of Jordan they paused to construct a gigantic altar. The implications of this act were frightening and appalling. Moses had specifically commanded the people of God to worship at one altar (Deut. 12:5-14). They were not to make "burnt offerings in every place . . ." but were to faithfully journey to the one place where the Lord had chosen to put His name. The suspicion of apostasy was intensified by the "pattern" of the altar. Exodus 20:25 forbade the use of tools in the making of stone altars. Since these altars were of unhewn materials they were usually just a "heap of stones" similar to the one constructed by Jacob and his servants (Gen. 31:46).

The altar named Ed, however, had a definite pattern (Josh.

22:28) – probably fashioned after the horned altar of the tabernacle. The children of Israel were well aware of the penalty for rebellion against Jehovah. The iniquity of Peor (Josh 22:17, Num. 25:3-4) and the trespass of Achan (Josh. 22:20; 7:1ff) were vivid in their memories. To tolerate such blasphemy would summon the wrath of heaven upon them, therefore they assembled at Shiloh to go to war against their own brethren. There was “sin in the camp” and the nation was prepared to spill the blood of its own brethren to exterminate it.

It is at this juncture that we need to pay particular attention. You cannot always tell what a brother thinks, simply because of something which he does. Therefore, before the nation was plunged into fratricide ten representatives were sent to investigate the charge of heresy. Even though they were completely prejudiced against their brethren their efforts to avoid war are very commendable. “If the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the Lord, wherein the Lord’s tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the Lord . . .” (Josh. 22:19).

The response of the accused brethren was both gracious and restrained. They reaffirmed their loyalty to Jehovah without impugning the motives of their brethren who viewed them with suspicion. The first words they used were “The Lord God of Gods” or “El, Elohim, and Yehovah” the three main designations for God used by the sons of Jacob. They then proceeded to explain that the altar they built was not for burnt offerings and sacrifices at all (v. 26). Their motives had been completely and totally misunderstood. Instead of trying to revolt against God they were seeking to prevent such rebellion. They feared that in time to come their brethren on the West bank of Jordan would feel estranged from those on the East so they built this altar to preserve national unity and to insure that their descendants would never cease from fearing the Lord (v. 25).

So “the children of Reuben and the children of Gad call the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the Lord is

## THE MESSAGE OF ED

God" (v. 34). In addition to this it is a monument which speaks volumes to brethren who disagree. It serves to temper our suspicions with restraint and encourage us to discussion and dialogue. It applies the brakes to factional warriors who would lay siege to the camp of brethren condemned "in absentia" for the "unscriptural" altar they have erected. It makes us wonder how many religious wars could have been avoided by an attitude that "suffered long" "was not easily provoked" and "hopeth all things." This is the message of Ed.

## Esthesis and Gymnastics

Hebrews 5:14 contains two Greek words which are quite familiar to Mr. Average American. The first is the Greek word "aistheterion" which we use in "esthesia," "esthesia," etc., but is perhaps better known through our English word "anesthesia." The Greek word in the text is translated in the Authorized version as "senses," and it makes reference to the faculty of the mind for perceiving. It corresponds to our English word "esthesia" which means, "capacity for sensation and feeling." "Anesthesia," of course, is exactly the opposite. It means, "no feeling." a drug which destroys our capacity to feel is called an "anesthetic," and the one who administers this is termed an "anesthetist."

The second word to which I make reference is the Greek word "gegumnaomena" which forms the basis for such English words as "gymnastics," "gymnasium," etc. It is translated as "exercised" in the text. It means to exercise vigorously as an athlete in training for competition. It is also used in Hebrews 12:11 to describe the way that chastening enhances our training for God. It is, therefore, appropriate that Timothy be urged to "exercise" himself unto godliness, and that he be reminded that "bodily exercise" profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things (I Tim. 4:7).

With this brief introduction let us now consider the text: "But the strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their *senses exercised* to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:14).

Have you ever noticed how many young Christians are not sensitive to the evils which will destroy their witness for God. They may respond in all sincerity, "I can't see anything wrong with that." Their lack of sensitivity often leads them to go places and do things which maturity would have prompted them to avoid. The Proverbs teach, "A wise man feareth and

departeth from evil, but the fool rageth and is confident." The cure for this common malady is the vigorous exercise of our "senses." The constant use of our mental faculties and discernment will season us with perception into those things which are constructive. It will enable us to determine what is good and what is evil in a manner beyond the reach of the novice.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil . . ." He demonstrated this principle in His own life and frequently withdrew for prayer and solitude from situations which seemed harmless to his students. One such example occurred in conjunction with the feeding of the 5,000. At the very height of His popularity he first of all "constrained" His disciples to leave, dispersed the multitudes and "departed again into a mountain Himself alone." The ability to "feel" something amiss in a given situation is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the fact that He remained sinless in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

There is a reason why insurance premiums are high for young drivers. Their vision is keen, their reflexes are fast, and their ability to manipulate a vehicle is often superior to what it will be in later life. Their problem, however, is in their judgment. The unseasoned driver will attempt many things which maturity would preclude. Thus, it is in spiritual matters also. The young Christian may have a radiant faith, a sparkling zeal, and a tremendous desire to witness for God, but his accident rate is high. There is no easy way through these difficult years of Christian growth. The gymnasium of the faithful echoes with groans of exertion and reeks with the stench of human sweat. Beyond the horizon, however, is a crown that fadeth not away, and our exercise for godliness is not in vain.

## **“Extincto Nomene Christianorum”**

These are the words which were placed over the ashes of the Holy Bible by order of Diocletian, the Emperor of Rome in 303 A.D. They indicate his belief that the Christian name had become extinct.

Diocletian had reason to believe that Christianity was doomed. He was the last in a long list of Roman Emperors who had used their powerful position to harass the cause of Christ.

Imperial persecutions were conducted in the reigns of: Nero 64 A.D.; Domitian 96 A.D.; Trajan 98-117 A.D.; Hadrain 117-138 A.D.; Antonius Pius 138-161 A.D.; Marcus Aurelius 161-180 A.D.; Septimus Severus 193-211A.D.; Maximin 235-238 A.D.; Decius 249-251 A.D.; Valerian 253-260 A.D.; Diocletian 284-305 A.D.!

During these difficult days it seems that there was little chance for the church to survive. Its leader had been publically condemned by both ecclesiastical and civil courts. His followers were predominantly from the poor and undeducated who were victims of discrimination at every level in society. They did not have any special buildings in which to meet and in the Capital of the Empire were even driven to the burial vaults beneath the city in order to find a place to worship God. They were given no consideration in the form of tax exemptions, religious holidays, or special days for rest and worship. To confess the name of Christ would immediately jeopardize their job, their family, and their very life. Literally thousands of Christians were burned at the stake or thrown to wild animals because they refused to renounce their faith in Jesus.

From this vantage point in history it is easy to see that Diocletian was wrong. As a matter of fact within nine short years of his audacious declaration about the extinction of the Chris-

tian name, Constantine was Emperor of Rome and had publically confessed the name of Christ. The symbol of the cross which had previously been an object of humiliation and shame was now worn proudly upon the shields of the Roman Soldiers. The Bible, which had previously been the object of ridicule and persecution, was now produced by Imperial Edict.

One of Constantine's first acts as Emperor was to order fifty Bibles to be prepared for the churches of Constantinople. Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea was commissioned with this task and the letter to him from the Emperor is as follows:

I have thought it expedient to instruct your Prudence to order fifty copies of the Sacred Scriptures, the provision and use of which you know to be most needful for the instruction of the church, to be written and prepared on parchment, in a legible manner and in a commodious and portable form, by transcribers, thoroughly practiced in their art. You have authority also, by virtue of this letter, to use two of the public carriages for their conveyance; by which arrangement, the copies, when fairly written, will most easily be forwarded for my personal inspection. One of the deacons of your church may be entrusted with this service, who, on his arrival here, shall experience my liberality. God preserve you, beloved brother.

In this book which Diocletian burned, and which is now the most widely circulated and sought after book in all the world, we find these words about the name of Jesus:

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

Someday, even Roman Emperors will confess that name which they thought to make extinct.

## Evidence

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).*

The physical world can be experienced by the exercise of our five senses. We can see, hear, taste, feel, and smell physical things.

There is, however, another world to be experienced which is not physical. Communication between the world of physical things, and the world of spiritual things is accomplished through the antenna of faith.

The Scriptures call faith the "substance" of things hoped for. The word translated "substance" is "hupostasis." It is a compound of two different Greek words, "hupo" meaning "under," and "statis" which means "a standing." It, therefore, refers to that which is foundational, or stands under. It is interesting to note that this very word is used in Hebrews 1:3 of the reality of God. The certainty of God is foundational to what we hope for.

But God is a Spirit. He is invisible to the human eye. No man hath seen God at any time. Therefore, we must contact God by means of faith. Faith involves that which we cannot see. "Seeing" is not "believing" for faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things NOT seen.

The word translated as "evidence" is "elenchos." Adam Clarke indicates that it refers to the conviction which is produced by the demonstration of a problem, after which demonstration there can remain no doubt. Aristotle used the word of mathematical demonstrations and defined it as ". . . that which cannot be otherwise than that which we assert." It is a word used by logicians to signify, "A demonstration of the certainty of a thing by sure arguments and indubitable reasons."

This is basically the word which is translated as "rebuked" in II Peter 2:16. Balaam had his eye on physical things. He "loved

## EVIDENCE

the wages of unrighteousness." The lure of these physical treasures almost proved fatal to him as an angel of God stood in his path with drawn sword. Balaam's ass had greater insight into the realities of life than did his master. Repeatedly he avoided the angel. Each time inflicting some momentary pain to the prophet. Oblivious to the reality around him Balaam began to beat his beast. At last the dumb ass began to speak and "rebuked" his master.

Faith is precisely this type of rebuke to an unbelieving world. It proves beyond the shadow of a doubt the reality of spiritual power. It is the logicians answer to the questions of humanity. It is the demonstration of certainty by evidence which rational men cannot dispute.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

## Faith Is Like Gold

Since our faith is compared by the Scriptures to gold, this quotation about gold may be both interesting and helpful.

“Gold is defined by chemists to be the most perfect, the most ductile, the most tenacious, and the most unchangeable of all metals. Its specific gravity is about 19.3. A cubic foot of pure gold, cast and not hammered, weighs 1348 pounds. In its native state, without mixture, it is yellow, and has no perceptible smell or taste. When exposed to the action of the fire it becomes red hot before it melts, but in melting suffers no alteration; but if a strong heat be applied while in fusion, it becomes of a beautiful green colour. The continual action of any furnace, howsoever long applied, has no effect on any of its properties. It has been kept in a state of fusion for several months in the furnace of a glass house, without suffering the smallest change. The electric and galvanic fluids inflame and convert it into a purple oxide, which is volatilized in the form of smoke. In the focus of a very powerful burning glass it becomes volatilized, and partially vitrified; so that we may say with the apostle, that though gold is tried by the fire – abides the action of all culinary fires, howsoever applied, yet it perisheth by the celestial fire and the solar influence; the rays of the sun collected in the focus of a powerful burning glass, and the application of the electric fluid destroy its colour, and alter and impair all its properties. This is but a late discovery; and previously to it a philosopher would have ridiculed St. Peter for saying, gold that perisheth

Gold is so very tenacious that a piece of it drawn into wire, one-tenth of an inch in diameter, will sustain a weight of 500 lbs. without breaking.

One grain of gold may be so extended, by its great malleability, as to be easily divided into two millions of parts; and a cubic inch of gold into nine thousand, five hundred and twenty-three

millions, eight hundred and nine thousand, five hundred and twenty three million, eight hundred and nine thousand, five hundred and twenty three parts: each of which may be distinctly seen by the naked eye!

A grain and a half of gold may be beaten into leaves of one inch square, which, if intersected by parallel lines, drawn at right angles to each other, and distant only the 100th part of an inch, will produce twenty five million of little squares, each of which may be distinctly seen without the help of glasses!

The surface of any given quantity of gold, according to Mr. Magellan, may be extended by the hammer 159,092 times!

Eighty books, or two thousand leaves, of what is called leaf gold, each leaf measuring 3.3 inches square, viz. each leaf containing 10.89 square inches, weigh less than 384 grains; each book, therefore, or twenty-five leaves, is equal to 272.25 inches, and weighs about 4.8 grains; so that each grain of gold will produce 56.718, or nearly fifty-seven square inches!

The thickness of the metal thus extended appears to be no more than the one 282.020th of an inch! One pound, or sixteen ounces of gold, would be sufficient to gild a silver wire, sufficient in length to encompass the whole terraqueous globe, or to extend 25,000 miles!

Notwithstanding this extreme degree of tenuity, or thinness, which some carry much higher, no pore can be discerned in it by the strongest magnifying powers; nor is it previous to the particles of light, nor can the most subtile fluids pass through it. Its ductility has never yet been carried to the uttermost pitch, and to human art and ingenuity is probably unlimited.

Gold was considered the heaviest of all metals till the year 1748, when the knowledge of platinum was brought to Europe by Don Antonio Ulloa: this, if it be a real metal, is the hardest and weightiest of all others. The specific gravity of gold is, as we have seen, 19.3; that of platinum is from 20.6 to 23: but gold will ever be the most valuable of all metals, not merely from its scarcity, but from its beautiful color and great ductility,

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by which it is applicable to so many uses, and its power of preserving its hue and polish without suffering the least tarnish or oxidation from the action of the air.”

—*Clarke's Commentary*, Vol. VI (I Peter 1:7).

## Our Father

Someone has observed: "There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come." The idea that God is "our Father" is more powerful than words can convey. Please consider its implications!

The Hebrew people did not conceive of God as their Father. They saw him "high and lifted up" and consequently quite distant and remote from their lives and needs.

Typical of the way they thought of God is this passage from Exodus 19:11-13:

. . . be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it; whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death. There shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live. . . ."

Because the Ten Commandments forbade taking the name of God in vain the pious Jew would not even attempt to pronounce the name of God for fear that he would not do so correctly.

When the disciples came to Jesus and asked: "teach us to pray," they were in for quite a surprise. Jesus said: "When you pray, say, Our Father . . ." This was a revolutionary concept. We have had fathers in the flesh with whom we felt quite comfortable, but before Jesus came, no one could feel comfortable in the presence of God. We have had earthly fathers whom we could approach with ease and confidence, but no one would dare to approach God this way before Jesus made it possible. Jesus said that if evil people like us know how to give good gifts unto our children, how much more would our "Heavenly

Father" give good things unto them that asked Him.

But Jesus even went a step further. He not only called God "Father," He called Him "Abba" (Mark 14:36). This is the word that is framed by the lips of infants. It is a term of endearment that betokens a beautiful relationship of access and trust.

The Scriptures promise the believer:

For ye have not received the spirit of bandage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15).

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6).

Again I must focus attention on the dramatic difference between the Jew and the Christian. The Jew would not draw near to God or even attempt to pronounce His name, and the Christian enters boldly into the presence of God and cries out "Abba, Father."

There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come. It may be that the time for this idea has come in your spiritual pilgrimage. If it has, then the words of Jesus will be of special significance to you as He tells us:

. . . Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to Him that knocketh it shall be opened (Luke 11:9-10).

## The Fearful

Revelation 21:8 contains a catalogue of lifestyles which are incongruous with the Christian calling. They are: . . . the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars. . . ." All of which shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone.

There are three different Greek words which are all translated as "fearful." "*Eulabeia*" is used predominantly in a good sense as in Hebrews 5:7. "*Phobos*" is sometimes good and sometimes bad. "*Deilia*" (the word in our text) is always used in a bad sense. It denotes cowardice and timidity.

It is sobering to realize that "cowards" are seen by God in the same light as those who have committed crimes of great moral turpitude. To be timid and afraid is just as unchristian as to be an idolater or a sorcerer. For a Christian to lie or commit adultery he must do something contrary to his basic Christian character. The same is true with cowardice. It is diametrically opposed to the impulse of the Spirit in our lives.

Solomon once observed that "the wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1). The inward peace and stability of those who are right with God exudes itself in a very natural display of assurance. We are bold in our access to Jesus (Eph. 3:12). The "Holy of Holies" was off limits to every Jew in the world but one, but by the blood of Jesus every Christian can enter boldly even into the holiest place of all (Heb. 10:19). An audience with the King does not terrify the Christian for our King can be touched with the feeling of our infirmity; therefore, we come boldly unto His throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). The slave mentality cringes in the shadows, but the Holy Spirit enriches our lives with the assurance that we are sons, not slaves, and for this reason we can boldly cry out, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). Jesus sent out His disciples without

purse or script, and with no weapon to protect themselves, and yet He expected them to behave like children of the King. Their lives were not to be obsessed with worry about their daily provisions, and they were not to be intimidated though they were sent out like sheep in the midst of wolves. Little flowers never worry and neither should we, not even in the face of death.

The word for "fearful" in our text is found only a few times in the scriptures. It is a strong and abrasive word reserved for occasions of special rebuke. It is noteworthy that Jesus used this word when His disciples panicked during a storm. He said in essence, "Why are ye cowards, O ye of little faith (Matt. 8:26, Mark 4:40). Their attitude in such circumstances would directly affect their work as apostles.

The conversion of John Wesley is linked with a similar event. While crossing the Atlantic with their ship beset by storm, he was obsessed by the calmness of Christians who refused to be intimidated by the prospects of death. In a similar manner the demeanor of the apostles would be a strong influence in their evangelistic efforts. Those who heard them perceived their boldness and took knowledge that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). Even when threatened they prayed for more boldness (Acts 4:29), and the answer to this prayer gave "great power" to the witness of the apostles. Men like Stephen are not afraid to live or die, and their faces can shine like an angel's when surrounded by mortal enemies (Acts 6:15). This very experience may partially explain the "goad" which was a constant irritation to the memory of Saul of Tarsus and helped to lead him from torturing others to submitting himself to torture for the cause of Christ. It might also have been in his mind when he wrote:

And do not (for a moment) be frightened or intimidated in anything by your opponents and adversaries, for such (constancy and fearlessness) will be a clear sign (proof and seal) to them of (their impending) destruction; but (a sure token and evidence) of

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your deliverance and salvation . . . " (Phil. 1:28, Amplified N.T.).

But the fearful shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. . . .

# The Fool

*The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God (Psa. 14:1).*

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia lists eight different Hebrew words which are all translated as “fool.” They are:

1. Nabal – shamelessly immoral
2. Ewil – hasty, impatient, self-sufficient
3. Kesil – thickness, sluggishness
4. Sakhal – thickheaded
5. Pethi – simple
6. Baar – brutish
7. Taphel – insipid, untempered
8. Toholah – folly, error

It is interesting that “nabal” is used by the Psalmist to describe the man with no concept of God. The word also occurs in Isaiah 32:6 where the Scriptures provide us with an apt definition or description of the “nabal.” In the King James version “nabal” is here translated as “vile person.” “For the *vile person* will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practice hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.”

Students of the Bible will recognize “Nabal” also as the husband of Abigail. She described him as a “man of Belial” and then remarked, “For as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name and folly is with him . . .” (I Sam. 25:25).

Now let us note again the 14th Psalm. “The fool hath said in his heart there is no God. *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works. . . .*”

The fool herein described may not be an “atheist” in the

generally accepted usage of the term. It might well be someone who is a professing Christian, but anyone who is "shamelessly immoral" is without any real concept of God. Every departure from the moral standards of the Christian life reflects a spiritual deficiency, but the "man of Belial" described in our text is openly immoral.

The word is used in Genesis 34:7 to describe Shechem who raped Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah. Shechem was not ashamed of his vile conduct but boldly pursued his intentions to take Dinah for his wife. The word is used in Deuteronomy 22:21 to describe that woman who would "play the whore in her father's house." It is used in Joshua 7:15 to describe Achan who stole garments and money from Jericho. It is used in Judges 19:23-24 to describe the sexual perverts who lusted after a Levite and abused his concubine to death. It is used in II Samuel 13:12 to describe the immoral conduct of Amnon with Tamar, the sister of Absalom.

Every one of these despicable crimes against God bears symptoms of the same fatal infirmity. This kind of person cannot possibly have a correct view of Jehovah. Regardless of their songs, prayers, and affirmations of faith, they are saying "in their heart" that it doesn't matter.

I know of a preacher who has embezzled money and abandoned his wife for another women. I know of other church leaders who have trampled holiness for personal gain or pleasure. Our churches are replete with renegades who had their fingers crossed at the marriage altar and who swap off their mates with little or no regard for divine justice. They say in their heart that there is no God. They may be professing Christians but they are practicing atheism. Their brazen rejection of truth betrays their deepest conviction. No matter what they say, they still expect to get by with it. In their heart there is no God. Mike Pratt once put it like this: "If living men knew what dead men know, the world would be saved in less than one hour."

## Forbearing One Another In Love

In Ephesians 4 we find a series of practical admonitions regarding Christian unity. In particular I would like to call your attention to the Biblical command "forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:2).

Our English word "forbear" is a translation of the Greek word "Anecho." "Ana" means "up," and "echo" means to "hold." We are to "hold up" one another in love.

The Christian Church has spiritual roots which cause this verse to come alive with meaning. Nearly 200 years ago our fathers in the faith were involved in uniting believers from a variety of denominational backgrounds. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and others determined to be "Christians Only." They certainly did not claim to be the only Christians, but they did make a determined effort to avoid a sectarian spirit and be Christians only. They used no book but the Bible, they had no creed but Christ, and they used no name but the divine.

After years of discussion a certain amount of "forbearance" was needed in order for unity to become a reality. Walter Scott described some of the struggles experienced in 1827: "There are three parties struggling to restore original Christianity: the first of them, calling themselves "the Churches of Christ," the second calling themselves "Christians," and the third lying at that time chiefly in the bosom of the regular Baptist Churches and originating with the writings and labors of Brother A. Campbell. . . ."

The "Churches of Christ" had spiritual roots reaching back to the Haldanes and the Scotch Baptist churches of Scotland and England. The "Christians" were associated with B.W. Stone of the Presbyterian Church and the Rice Haggard and James O'Kelly revolt in Methodism. The Baptist reformers

out of those influenced by the writing and teaching of Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

Some of these believers were coldly intellectual, unemotional, and formal. Others of them believed in "fire" evangelism and were revivalistic. B.W. Stone thought A. Campbell was wrong about the Holy Spirit, and Campbell thought Stone was weak on the divinity of Christ. Stone thought the name "Christian" was given by divine authority and ought to be the distinctive title of every follower of Christ, but Campbell preferred "disciple" as a more humble designation and felt it was of earlier and more frequent use in Scripture. Some felt the need of structure and others preferred the free flow of the Spirit.

In such a context it would be easy to tear down one another, or as Paul wrote to the Galatians, to "bite and devour" one another. Christian unity, however, is not an option for the believer. It is an explicit command from Christ. In order to achieve this unity we must, among other things, "forbear one another in love." We need to "hold up" those with whom we differ instead of tearing them down.

The body of Christ is not one member, but many. Each member of the Body has his own spiritual gift and his own unique contribution to make to the work of God. We need those who are "coldly intellectual" and also those whose emotions are sensitive to both laughter and tears. We need those who feel the need for structure and also those who prefer to remain unencumbered by programs and restrictions of men. Those parts of the Body which seem to be unimportant to us may turn out to be the most important of all. When any member of the Body ceases to function at full capacity, the Body of Christ is handicapped.

It is not necessary to agree with someone in order to "forbear" with them. As a matter of fact it seems that forbearance is most appropriate for those with whom we do not agree. We can hold them up, however, instead of holding them down. We can build them up instead of tearing them down. When we

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**“forbear one another in love” we are helping to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

## The Form of God

The versatile Greek language has a variety of words which are all translated by the English word "form."

Morphosis	a form, outline, or outward semblance
Tupos	a form pattern or mould
Eidos	an appearance or external form (form eidon - to see
Hupotuposis	an outline, sketch, pattern or form

In Philippians 2:6, however, when the Scriptures teach that Jesus was in the "form of God" the inspired writer used the Greek word "morphe" to describe that reality.

Thayer states that "morphe" comes from a root which means "to lay hold of" or "seize."

W.E. Vine quotes Gifford in what he describes as an excellent definition of the word; "morphe is therefore properly the nature or essence, not in the abstract, but as actually subsisting in the individual, and retained as long as the individual itself exists. . . ."

The Dictionary of N.T. Theology concurs, "the change of morphe involves the change of essential character. . . ."

The word "morphe" is found but three times in the N.T. Scriptures.

Jesus existed in the "form" of God (Phil. 2:6).

Jesus took upon himself the "form" of a servant (Phil. 2:7).

Jesus appeared in another "form" to two of his disciples (Mark 16:12).

The first two references are easy for me to understand. Jesus was not superficially God - He was God in essence to the very core of His being. Nor was He merely a servant or slave in external appearance. His very nature compelled Him to serve others. I feel comfortable with such thoughts.

I'm not certain, however, just how to understand that Jesus

appeared to two of His disciples in another "morphé."

Some might suggest that the last verses of Mark's gospel are not inspired because they are not found in some of our best manuscripts. I do not feel comfortable resorting to this position.

The idea that Christ could assume another form should not surprise us. On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus is said to have taken on another form. The Bible word used to describe this is "metamorphoo." The first part of the word "meta" implies change, and the latter part of the word is from "morphé." A metamorphosis is a change of form. The caterpillar becomes a butterfly. It is in reality the same being, but with a change of form (Matt. 17:2 and Mark 9:2).

Saul of Tarsus gained spiritual insight into this mystery when he encountered the risen Christ on the Damascus Road and heard the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4).

Saul would later be "transformed" into Paul the Apostle who would write, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me . . ." (Galatians 2:20).

The identity of Christ with Paul was so closely related that Paul spoke of "becoming like him in his death" (Phil. 3:10). The Greek word used here is "symmorphizomenos." *The Dictionary of N.T. Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 707 remarks on this verse that it is not that Paul would become like Jesus in the sense that both were martyrs: "Rather the apostle in his suffering sees the death of Christ becoming a reality in his own death. The death of Christ acquires a 'morphé' in the death of the apostle. The death of Jesus is not simply an historical datum of the past for Paul. It is a present event. . . ."

While I do not profess to understand this mystery of godliness I mention it with the prayerful hope that it will help us to be sensitive and kind in our treatment of all people . . . perhaps that stranger is Christ in another "form" and will someday say "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me . . ." (Matt. 25:40).

## Misunderstanding and Grace

A preacher friend became excited about the grace of God. His enthusiasm led him to preach and write upon this subject. Some of the "raised eyebrows" in the area belonged to his fellow preachers, and one of them took him aside for a little fatherly advice.

"The way you teach grace," he said, "can be turned into license." He seemed to indicate that such a course of action was too dangerous for a loyal gospel preacher. My friend responded with this question: "Could anyone ever take your teaching about grace and turn it into license?" "Absolutely not," came the firm reply. "Then you're not teaching grace," he said, "in the same way that Paul did."

Someone has observed that the truth of God is like light, and every time we seek to protect light we produce darkness. How aptly this is illustrated by our approach to the subject of grace. We have become so obsessed with the many perversions and corruptions of grace that when we teach on the subject, it comes out with so many shadows that it is depressing and negative. To simply read a passage on grace without apologies is to create a fear that we have been corrupted by some Baptist doctrine.

This very experience happened to me in a revival meeting some years ago. I had simply read Ephesians 2:8-10. As innocuous as this might seem it was enough to trigger a friendly warning from one of the local elders.

There is an old joke about the little boy who asked his daddy if the cows were Christians. "Why do you ask?" said his father. "Well . . . they all have long face," came his sincere reply.

Christianity is supposed to be a relationship which creates "joy unspeakable and full of glory." The Ship of Zion should leave a multitude of happy, singing people in its wake. There should be no propensity to gloom in the Christian cause, and

those who smile should not be under suspicion. Our sins are washed away, and we abide in a blessed state. We have a High Priest and Advocate who ministers continually in our behalf. We are united with a power that is able to accomplish exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. We are in fellowship with a Spirit that intercedes for us in the presence of God with groanings which cannot be uttered. It's time to take off the brakes and sing our way into new realms of glory.

Admittedly, there are some dangers in such a course of action. Some will turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 4). Others will slanderously say, "Let us do evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8). Still others will insist that we continue in sin that grace may bound (Rom. 6:1). All of which should not deter us from the positive proclamation of the happy news that man is saved by grace.

Without grace we all are doomed. With law, or without law, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Even if the only standard which God used to judge us was our own concept of right and wrong, we would still be condemned. But our God whose judgments are unsearchable and whose ways past finding out has revealed a mystery that was inconceivable to man and even beyond angelic eyes to comprehend.

We are saved by grace, through faith. it is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.

Hallelujah!

## Grasshoppers

*“ . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers . . . ”*  
(Numbers 13:33).

Ron Key pointed out to me something which is now quite obvious. Everybody knew there were giants in the land, but only the faithless spies considered themselves as “grasshoppers.”

Their major problem was, therefore, not something external, but something internal.

The twelve spies searched out the land and came back with their report. Everybody had the same information about what they saw, but not everybody had the perspective on the way they saw themselves.

The faithless viewed themselves with an incredible distortion. “ . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers. . . . ” What a pitiful self-image.

I remember many years ago listening to Philippine General named Romulo lecture on Campus in Hays, Kansas. He was a close friend of Douglas MacArthur and even waded ashore with him when he made his famous return to Leyte. Someone asked the diminutive little General how he felt being in company with all those American Generals who were over six feet tall. He responded with a twinkle in his eye, “like a dime among nickels.”

But the Hebrews saw themselves as only “grasshoppers.” In their own eyes they were inadequate and deficient that they assigned to themselves a sub-human status. Before they saw the giants they were regular people. After they saw the giants they began to shrivel up into something utterly insignificant in their own eyes. The giants remained the same size, the walled cities remained the same size, the size of the grapes, and figs and pomegranates remained constant, and even the spies themselves remain the same size. The only variable was not in reality, but in perspective. Therefore, in their own eyes . . . they became as mere grasshoppers.

As we rethink this Biblical story it is well to remember that God does not like negative reports. Usually these negative reports tell more about us than they do about the reality we are trying to describe.

Caleb and Joshua are the only two spies whose names have become a hallmark in history. The Bible mentions the names of Shamua, and Shaphat, and Igal, and Palti, and Gaddiel, and Gaddi, and Ammiel, and Sethur, and Nabbi, and Geuel. These were the names of the men who saw themselves as grasshoppers. Since they considered themselves as unimportant, history has considered them the same way.

Can you give me the name of Walt Disney's brother? probably not. He was the man who kept telling Walt Disney that it couldn't be done.

We don't need any more grasshoppers in the church reminding us of our inadequacies. We need a generation of soul winners with the mentality of giant killers. We need people who can stand with the ragged apostles on Olivet and dream of world conquest. The power behind us is always greater than the task before us.

We need to be reminded that we are "more than conquerors" through Him that loved us. We need to give thanks to God "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (II Cor. 2:14). We ought to cry out with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me . . ." (Phil. 4:13).

The faithless spies not only died and went to a faithless grave, they even took an entire generation of people whom they influenced to be as faithless as they were. In the wake of their negativism and defeat God raised up a new generation who were led by Caleb and Joshua to a victory which could have been theirs.

Today, as we search out the lost world around us it is important that we see ourselves, not as grasshoppers, but as laborers together with God. In His power we remain eternally "more than conquerors."

## “Hedonism”

Our English word “hedonism” comes from the Greek word “hedone” which means “pleasure.” It comes from the same root “hedys” which means “sweet pleasing, or pleasant.” Originally, it meant something pleasant to taste.

The word is used only five times in the N.T. Scriptures and each time it has a bad connotation.

It is used in Luke 8:14 of the pleasures of this life which choke out the Word of God so that it does not produce good fruit in our lives.

It is used in Titus 3:3 to describe the selfish life style which Christians experienced before conversion.

It is used twice in James 4 (see verses 1 and 3) to explain the way that lust for pleasure precipitates conflict in the human race.

Finally, it is found in II Peter 2:13 amidst a long catalog of conducts which are incongruous with the Christian life.

S.I. McMillen offers some critical insight into the hedonistic philosophy in his excellent book, *None Of These Diseases*.

He tells of a young minister who gave up the pulpit to become a medical doctor. When asked why, he replied, “I took up the practice of medicine because I discovered that people will pay more money to care for their bodies than for their souls.”

Some years later the young man gave up the practice of medicine to become an attorney. When asked why he replied: “I took up the practice of law because I discovered that people will pay more money to get their own way than for either body or soul.”

On the surface, hedonism, seems to be a rather benign and harmless vice. In reality it is so utterly antagonistic to Christianity that it is perhaps the root cause of virtually every other problem faced by humanity.

Christianity involves the denial of self. Unless we are willing to take up a cross and die we cannot be his disciples.

Once we die to self, a marvelous transformation begins to take place. Like a grain of wheat that surrenders to the earth we become the recipients of a brand new kind of life. We are delivered from suffering to a place of royalty. Following in His steps we soar to new heights and transcend the difficulties and troubles which beset and hound those who are locked into the world of mere time. Our cross is exchanged for a crown and we reign with Jesus.

Hedonism seeks to circumvent the selflessness of suffering. It is a grain of wheat that refuses to die. It stalks through Eden with the philosophy of no restraint. It licks its lips in the presence of forbidden fruit and defies the Great Lawgiver with laws of its own. It is the embodiment of self worship which inevitably results in moral decay. It tramples over everyone and everything in its climb toward a happiness which is always too elusive to hold for very long. After a moment of pleasure it slips from our grip to taunt us into another mad scramble or irrational fling.

True happiness is not a product to be sought after as much as it is a by-product to be received.

The Savior of the World said it like this: "Whoever exalts himself will be abased but whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

# The Road To Heresy

(Galatians 5:19-21)

“. . . Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresie!”

1. *Hatred*. Also translated as “enmities.” It is the Greek word *εχθρα*. It is defined by Thayer (p. 265) as “enmity.” It is used in the Bible of:

the enmity between Pilate and Herod (Luke 23:12).

The enmity between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:14-16)

See also James 4:4 and Romans 8:7

Vine states, “It is the opposite of *αγαπη* love.”

NOTE: *The Road to Heresy Begins with a Lack of Love.*

2. *Variance*. Also translated as “strife.” It is the Greek word *ερις*:

It is defined by Thayer (p. 249) as “contention, strife, wrangling.” It is translated as “debates” in II Corinthians 12:20.

The word is also found in: I Corinthians 1:11; 3:3; Titus 3:9; Romans 1:29; 13:13; Philippians 1:15; I Timothy 6:4.

NOTE: *Step 2 on the Road to Heresy is Contention, Debate, Wrangling.*

3. *Emulations*. Also translated as “jealousies.” It is the Greek word *ζηλος*. It is defined by Thayer (p. 271) in two ways: (1) It is used in a good sense of “zeal, ardor in embracing, pursuing, defending anything.” II Corinthians 7:7, 11; 9:2, etc. All zeal is not good, however. The word also is used in a bad sense: (2) “An envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy.” See Romans 13:13; I Corinthians 3:3; James 3:14; Acts 5:17; 13:45; II Corinthians 12:20. The JEALOUS are sometimes very ZEALOUS.

NOTE: *After a Wrangle or Debate you will almost always find “an envious and contentious rivalry.”*

4. *Wrath*. It is the Greek word θυμος. It is defined by Thayer (p. 293) as "Passion, angry heat, anger – forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again." Thayer further states that this word emphasizes a "sudden burst of anger" as opposed to the word οργη which means "indignation which arises gradually." It is found in Colossians 3:8; Romans 2:8; II Corinthians 12:20, etc. It also means "GLOW, ARDOR." Revelation 14:8, 10; 18:3, etc.

*NOTE: After a wrangle, and after people become zealous in their contention, you will ordinarily find someone "blowing up" in a "glowing passionate burst of anger."*

5. *Strife*. Also translated as "factions." It is the Greek word επιθεια. It is a very picturesque word which is used only 8 times in the New Testament. Aristotle used the word to represent those "who electioneer for office, courting popular applause by trickery and low arts." It comes from the verb επιθος which means "working for hire, a hireling." Thayer (p. 249) says that the word is used in the New Testament as "a courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts." It is used in II Corinthians 12:20; Philippians 1:16, 17; 2:3; Romans 2:8; James 3:14, 16.

*NOTE: After someone has blown up in a church brawl, when they cool down they will often begin a low and dirty campaign to further their selfish aims.*

6. *Seditious*. Also translated "divisions." It is the Greek word διχοστασια. It is defined by Thayer (p. 153) "to stand apart," "dissension, division." Paul said "Mark them which causes DIVISIONS . . . and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). It is used only three times in the New Testament. Other usage is I Corinthians 3:3.

*NOTE: Once someone has begun to politic and electioneer, divisions soon appear!*

7. *Heresies*. It is the Greek word *αιρεσις*. It is only used 9 times in the New Testament. Thayer (p. 16) says that the word comes from *αιρεομαι* and means "choosing, choice" or "that which is chosen; a chosen course of thought and action." It then applies to those who separate from others because of this choice.

Of the nine times the word "heresy" appears in the Bible it is never found in the gospels. It is used only by Luke, Paul and Peter. It is used six times in Acts.

- Acts 5:17 "... which is the *sect* of the Sadducees. . ."
- 15:5 "... certain of the *sect* of the Pharisees which believed . . ."
- 24:5 "... ringleader of the *sect* of the Nazarenes . . . "
- 24:14 "... after the way which they called *heresy* (a *sect*) so worship I . . . "
- 26:5 "... after the most straitest *sect* of our religion I lived a Pharisee."
- 28:22 "... concerning this *sect* we know that it is everywhere spoken against."

It is used twice by Paul:

Galatians 5:20 "... strife, seditions, heresies . . ."

I Corinthians 11:19 "... for there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. . ."

It is used once by Peter:

II Peter 2:1 "... even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily (secretly, craftily) shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. . ."

The Sadducees were a sect or "heresy" simply because they chose to separate from the rest of their Jewish brethren. The reason why they separated does not hereenter the picture. The

Pharisees composed a sect or "heresy" for identically the same reason. Inasmuch as the Christian separated themselves from the Jews they also, in the strictest sense of the word, formed a sect (or heresy).

Alexander Campbell has thus observed:

As the word sect or heresy, found only in the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles, does always in the former simply mean a party, without any regard to its tenets, the term has nothing in it either reproachful or honorable. Hence it is equally applied to Pharisees, Sadducees, Nazarenes or Christians, without any insinuation as to the character of the party. *In the Christian Epistles it is, however, used in a bad sense, and is always connected with censure*" (emphasis mine, B.M.)

He continues in another place:

Christians, contradistinguished from Jews, Mussulmans, Pagans, Infidels, are lawfully, righteously, and innocently a sect, a heresy: but a sect among these is corrupt, treasonable, and most reprehensible, according to every precept, doctrine, and saying of the New Institution. Thus a man may be a Christian or of the sect of the Nazarenes, but not a Lutheran, a Calvinist, and Arminian, without blame.

Note this comparison between II Corinthians 12:20 and Galatians 5:20:

II Corinthians 12:20

Galatians 5:20

Debates	Same word	Hatred
Envyings	Same word	Variance
Wraths	Same word	Emulations
Strifes	Same word	Wrath
Backbiting	(evil speaking)	Strife
Whisperings	(secret slandering)	Seditious
Swellings	(Puffing up of soul, loftiness, pride)	Heresy

Tumults (instability, a state of disorder, confusion. It refers to the type of commotions that are often associated with war, Luke 21:9)

John 17:20 ff:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all 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 hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. . . .

# Holiness

*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall the Lord (Heb. 12:14).*

Whatever "holiness" is, it is essential to salvation for the Scriptures teach that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. It is therefore both wise and expedient to pursue the study of this word that we might be permitted to "see the Lord."

The words holy, hallow, hallowed, holiness, consecrate, saint, sanctify, and sanctification all come from the same root word. No one word can be adequately treated without reference to the others.

Someone has observed, "It is not only necessary to speak where the scriptures speak, but it is also necessary to speak as the scriptures speak." In other words we must use Bible words to mean what they did in Bible times. Today the word "saint" is frequently used to refer to a dead person who has been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. Needless to say, such a concept is completely foreign to the word of God. Many people will readily admit that they do not know just what a saint is, but they feel pretty sure they have never met one.

Actually the scriptures teach that every Christian is "sanctified" and is thereby properly designated as a "saints." Paul wrote to the "saints" at Rome (Rom. 1:7), Corinth (I Cor. 1:2), Ephesus (Eph. 1:1), Philippi (Phil. 1:1), Colosse (Col. 1:2) etc. These people were human beings who were capable of making mistakes yet they were referred to in the language of heaven as "saints."

The word translated "holiness" in Hebrews 12:14 is also translated as "sanctification." It simply means to be "set apart" or "consecrated." In the strictest sense of the word one could even be sanctified, or set apart to paganism. For example, the

word translated "harlot" in Genesis 38:21 comes from the Hebrew word "khash" which literally means "the sanctified, or consecrated one." In pagan cultures, female slaves were frequently "set apart" or "sanctified" to the service of their immoral gods.

Note these Bible usages of the word "sanctify."

1. A day was sanctified - (Gen. 2:3). It was set apart to God.
2. The first-born was sanctified (Exod. 13:1-2). Both man and beast were to be set apart to God. They could not be used for man's selfish purposes.
3. A mountain (Exod. 19:23). This mountain was not to be used by man (v. 13).
4. An altar (Exod. 40:10).
5. Vessels (Exod. 40:9).
6. The Tabernacle (Exod. 29:44).
7. Holy things (I Chron. 23:13) etc.

Most important, however, is the fact that men are to be "sanctified." We are to be separated from the world and dedicated to God. We are not our own, we are bought with a price. We are sanctified by:

1. God (Jude 1).
2. By the offering of the body of Christ (Heb. 10:10).
3. By Christ's blood (Heb. 10:29; 13:12).
4. By the washing of water by the word (Eph. 5:26).

The Scriptures teach that we are (I Cor. 6:11).

1. Washed (Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:16, John 3:5, Acts 2:38).
2. Sanctified (Eph. 5:26, II Tim. 2:19-21, etc).
3. Justified (Rom. 3:24, 5:1, 8:33 etc.).

The question to you is this! *Are you set apart to God?* If you are not, you will not see the Lord.

## Imitators of God

Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God. Genesis 1: makes a fourfold emphasis in telling the story. "Image . . . likeness . . . image . . . image." The fact that man was to be like God is difficult to overlook. The "fall" of man is equally obvious. The whole of creation became subject to decay and up to this very moment is groaning and traveling in pain waiting to be delivered from corruption.

The essence of the Gospel is to redeem man for his fallen state and restore him to the likeness of God. This is accomplished, with the help of the Holy Spirit, by means of "imitation." The Scriptures are explicit: "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us . . . (Eph. 5:1, NIV).

The Greek word translated as "imitators" is "mimetes" from which we get our English word "mimic" or "mime" and it is always used in a good sense in the Scriptures. Almost everything which we learn in life we learn by imitation. Evil examples corrupt good morals, but good examples form the very foundation of the Christian system.

Jesus said: "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 He himself doeth . . ." (John 5:19-20). There is a sense in which Jesus, who was God, still "imitated" God.

The Disciples were to have the same relationship with Jesus that He had with the Father. Jesus said: ". . . As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you . . ." (John 15:9). "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one . . ." (John 17:22).

The Disciples continued the cycle. Paul wrote: "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

## IMITATORS OF GOD

Michael Griffiths in his book *The Example of Jesus* offers this poignant insight:

It is possible to be overfamiliar with great truths: but this really is an absolutely devastating one, a totally mindboggling concept that takes the breath away. We scruffy, frail mortals, whose hair and teeth fall out, who look in our mirrors to see the lines, creases and blotches marking our inevitable progress towards senility and decay; we empty, shallow, morally bankrupt people, totally impoverished in spirit, self-doubting, "non events," are to be remade in a godlike mould, into the image of Christ, glowing with glory and divine vitality. It is a glorious doctrine which is rarely presented to nonChristians: if it were made more of in evangelism people would begin to see what God is doing for people in the world he has created, and come stampeding into the Christian family. "Eternal life" seems a relatively feeble concept by comparison, even though it is saying the same thing in other, less contemporary words (page 35).

The Biblical admonition to be imitators of God is cast in the context of the family. We are to imitate God like children. The newborn infant is a very poor representation of his father. With no teeth and little or no hair it is hard to believe that an 8lb. youngster will ever be six feet tall. As he continues to grow, however, the likeness becomes more apparent. Because the young man is the product of his father's "seed" . . . he will grow up to be like his father.

The believer is "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (I Pet. 1:23). We have a power over sin which the unconverted do not have because we are begotten of God and possess his "seed" within us (I John 3:6).

Let us, therefore, be "imitators of God as dearly loved children. . . ."

## Incredible?

*"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8).*

If I could raise the dead . . . that would be incredible!

If you could raise the dead . . . that would be incredible!

If medical science could raise the dead . . . that would be incredible!

But why should it be incredible that God could raise the dead? God is all powerful all knowing, and everywhere existent (*omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent*) . . . what would keep Him from raising the dead? If God can speak the universe into reality, control and contain the power of the atom, and bring new life to a rotten potato – what is so all fired unbelievable about the resurrection?

The universe in which we live is infinitely large. We have absolutely no idea how many billions of stars or systems of stars are scattered throughout the heavens and we lack the mental acumen to even talk intelligently about "infinity" . . . and still we worry about the resurrection.

The tiny planet on which we live is spinning on it's axis at a thousand miles an hour and whirling in it's orbit about the sun at 16,000 miles per hour . . . we are not even aware of any movement at all . . . yet, we sit up nights wondering if it is possible for God to bring our loved ones back to life.

Our little earth contains a million mysteries which mystify your most brilliant scholars and astonish the students in virtually every sphere of scientific investigation . . . yet, we stand slack-jawed and incredulous when someone talks about a resurrection.

We believe that God can turn a caterpillar into a butterfly, an acorn into an oak tree and a microscopic sperm into an olympic athlete – why couldn't He also raise the dead?

## INCREDIBLE?

The resurrection of the dead is not incredible at all. It is, in fact, in perfect harmony with the power and personality of our Creator. It is the very kind of manifestation that we have come to expect from Him. It is the one sign to which he constantly directed a doubting world.

God is sympathetic to our nature. He is deeply touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows our frame and He remembers that we are dust. In every age, therefore, he has patiently granted abundant evidence to authenticate and conform His revelation to man. He turned the rod of Moses into a serpent and manipulated like magic the flesh of a leprous hand. Moses was convinced (Exod. 4:1-9). He promised fifteen years of life to the dying Hezekiah and granted assurance of this pledge by the shadow on the sundial moving backward ten degrees (II Kings 20:8-11). Hezekiah was convinced. He gave to Gideon the tests of the food, the fleece, and the enemy's dream (Judges 6:17-24, 36-40; 7:9-15). Gideon was convinced.

The age in which we live is characterized by doubt and insecurity. Thousands turn on with mind expanding drugs while others tune out with the merciless machinery of suicide. While the world totters on the brink of a nuclear volcano, God incarnate offers to mankind a single sign. He focused the world's attention to a solitary miracle which would either make or break the influence of His life. He said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." An evil and adulterous generation sought after a sign, but no sign was granted save the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was delivered from the power of the sea monster even so the Son of Man would triumph over the grave. Never in Christian history have informed and rational men been able to evade or avoid the witness of the empty tomb. The fact of His resurrection triumphed over the frustration and doubt of His disciples, the scrutiny of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the scourge of Roman persecution, the indifference of the dark ages, the rationalism of the renaissance, and even now stands like a Gibraltar in the midst of a crashing sea of doubt.

## WORDS ARE WINDOWS

The essence of the Christian gospel is “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

What’s so incredible about that?

## Ingratitude

There is a sense in which "ingratitude" is involved in almost every sin. Adam and Eve were not thankful for the myriad of blessings which they enjoyed in Eden . . . they wanted more. They did not appreciate the Tree of Life and the environment of serenity and peace . . . they wanted more. They overlooked their perfect health, their flawless food, and the warmth and protection from storms and discomfort . . . they wanted more. Their dissatisfaction and ingratitude was exploited by the wicked one to the ruination of the human race.

Achan was not thankful for his daily bread and their signal victory over Jericho . . . he wanted more. Saul was not content with the thousands of acres and countless vineyards he already had . . . he wanted more. This dearth and dissatisfaction of soul is the breeding ground of a million woes. It spawns the sins that wreck and ruin our lives and bring havoc to a nation. The thankless heart is the lever that pries open a Pandora's box of heartaches and trouble.

The thankful man is hard to tempt. He is happy where he is and with what he has. His life is characterized by joy and gratitude. Thankfulness and ingratitude are never affected by the state of events . . . only by the state of mind. These words reflect not where we are, but what we are. Adam and Eve were not happy in Paradise . . . the apostle Paul was happy in prison. Saul, David, and Solomon were sovereigns over a mighty Kingdom. Human words are strained to describe the majesty and magnificence of their wealth and splendor . . . yet this in no way guaranteed their gratitude. Thankfulness is a state of mind . . . not a state of events. The widow with her mites can be more thankful than the king with his millions. Thanksgiving can warm the fires of a shanty and make it seem like a palace. Ingratitude can frost over a palace and make it seem like a shanty.

Probably no nation in human history has ever enjoyed more physical blessings than our own. Yet alas, we roam the thermostatically controlled comfort of our Eden in search of forbidden fruit. The Pilgrims could smile at the sunrise and sing merrily as they labored throughout the long day. Their crude clothing could not dampen the fires of joy that welled up within them. Their simple food was received with abundant joy and Thanksgiving was their way of life. There seemed to be no way to smother the happiness of that little band. The hardship, toil, sickness, privation and death which they experienced only fanned the flames of appreciation and magnified the blessings which did come their way. The Pilgrim eye sees beyond the sickness and the cemetery, the Pilgrim heart clings in love to the memory of a single joy and to the expectation of a better tomorrow.

How sad indeed the angels must be as they behold us strut and fret our time upon the stage and then pass on into the wings of eternity. We stand bewildered and perplexed as the spotlight is turned our way. We have missed our cues and forgotten our lines. In our confusion we are not even aware of the embarrassment we produce. The theme of the drama is all but lost as we ramble on in a greedy search for amusements and selfish pleasures. Ever receiving but never satisfied we live a thankless life and die a thankless death.

Oh, for a change of heart that would bring Revival to a nation of ungratefals. Oh, for the philosophy of Paul and the Pilgrims that would enable us to be content, regardless of our circumstances. Oh, for a rebirth of old fashioned gratitude that would bolt the door on sin, let in the sunlight of God's blessings and transform our dreary Christians into singing soldiers of the cross.

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

## Insight

*But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain (John 20:11-12).*

Insight is an essential ingredient to the process of learning. What we observe is not nearly as significant as the meaning which we are able to derive from those observations.

My aunt once observed a little red light on the dash of her automobile. She did not, however, make a correct association with the significance of that light. Consequently she continued to drive the car with no oil pressure and ruined the engine.

A specialist can get real excited by glancing at a heart monitor or reading numbers on a patient's chart. The same information would be all but meaningless to me.

It is a fact that Jesus died and rose again. Most Americans and many people throughout the world concede these facts with little or no argument. The meaning which we associate with these facts, however, is the crucial question. It divides the world into "saved" and "lost" and determines a destiny in "heaven" or "hell."

It is also a fact that after his resurrection Mary visited His tomb and found two angels sitting where His body had lain. One of the angels was at the head and the other at the foot.

John wrote with great economy of words. The last words of His gospel indicate that even the world itself would not contain the whole story. All that is written, therefore, in the 21 brief chapters of John's gospel is extremely significant.

The reference to Mary's observation of the angels is utterly profound. It may have been a turning point in the life of John himself as he was just coming to grips with the reality of the resurrection and the atoning death of Jesus for the sins of the

world. If you can come to the same understanding or "insight" it can bring about your eternal salvation.

The Hebrew mind had been trained to think of forgiveness in association with the Ark of the Covenant. The ark was covered by a golden slab called the "mercy seat" with angelic beings called "cherubim" at either end. It was here that God promised to meet in communion with man. It was here that the High Priest sprinkled blood on the Day of Atonement.

The Hebrew word for atonement is "kaphar" which means "to cover" and was associated with the golden covering called the "mercy seat." The law was covered by mercy. This enabled sinful man to meet and commune with God.

Years later John would write:

My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world . . . (I John 2:1-2).

The Greek word for "propitiation" is "hilasmos" and corresponds to the Hebrew "Kippurim" or "atonement."

Jesus is our "propitiation" - our "covering" - our "atonement." It is in the person of Jesus that we meet and commune with God. One cannot help but wonder if His precious blood might not have soaked through His grave clothes and stained the slab between the two angels which Mary saw.

The fact that God so loved us is used to argue that we should also love one another.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (I John 4:10-11).

## The Joy of the Lord

The Babylonian Captivity ended in 536 B.C. when Zerubbabel came back to Jerusalem with 42,360 Jews (Ezra 2:64). Ezra also informs us that there were 7,337 servants, 200 singer, 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, 6720 asses, and 5,400 gold and silver vessels which had been taken from Jerusalem.

Ezra himself returned to Jerusalem in 457 B.C. with 1,754 men, 100 talents of gold and 750 talents of silver.

By the time that Nehemiah arrived in 444 B.C. almost 100 years had gone by and still the walls of Jerusalem lay in shambles. It is incredible, and almost miraculous to discover that under his leadership those walls were rebuilt in only fifty-two days (Neh. 8:10).

For generations these people had been beaten down and oppressed. Seventy long years of captivity in Babylon had given to them a slave mentality. Though they had now been free for almost one hundred years they still had not escaped the stigma of failure and oppression.

Then one day a dream was born in the mind of a man who was cup bearer to the King. Through the power of God he was emboldened to ask the King for help and assistance. In his mind the dream began to become reality. As he journeyed around the city of Jerusalem one night a plan emerged which would turn those shambles into a citadel of strength. His optimism was contagious. Soon the men who had loitered about so long were busy in God's business.

Naturally there was criticism. There always is when people have a mind to work. The enemies of God began to laugh in scorn and derision. The Jews had been so passive and so feeble for so long there seemed to be some substance to their skepticism. Tobiah the Ammonite taunted them by saying that even a fox could break down their stone wall if he tried to walk upon it.

These prophets of doom, however, had underestimated the determination of the people for "the people had a mind to work." Around the clock they maintained a constant vigil. Without even pausing to change their clothing they labored with half of them holding spears from the rising of the sun until the stars appeared at night. Undaunted by danger and unintimidated by threats, the walls took shape and the tide of battle was reversed. Nehemiah 6:16 reports that the heathen were cast down in their own eyes. Or as the NIV has translated it, "our enemies lost their self-confidence."

THE JOY OF THE LORD had triumphed. A positive mental attitude had prevailed. An inspired group of people had accomplished more in 52 days than their ancestors had accomplished in 52 years.

In a new age of pessimism and discouragement it is exciting to believe that THE JOY OF THE LORD can still be our strength.

## The Kiss

Judas Iscariot gave a sign to those men who would arrest Jesus. "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he. . . ." Therefore when Judas came to Jesus in Gethsemane he said: "Hail, master, and kissed him . . ." (Matt. 26:48-49).

It is both interesting and significant that two different Greek words are used in this passage to mean "kiss."

The first is the normal word for "kiss" which is "philesen." It was a customary greeting in Bible times much as a handshake is today.

The second word used is "kataphilesen" which means to "kiss fervently." The word "kata" in front of "philesen" strengthens and intensifies it. Thayer states that it means "to kiss much, kiss again and again, kiss tenderly. . . ."

The word is used but six times in the New Testament Scriptures. Twice it is used with reference to Judas kissing Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:49 and Mark 14:45).

It is used twice in the story of Jesus visiting the house of Simon the Pharisee. A woman of the streets fervently kissed his feet (Luke 7:38). Jesus distinguished her love from the absence of Simon's love by saying to him: "Thou gavest me no kiss (philema) but this woman since I came in hath not ceased to kiss (kataphilousa) my feet . . ." (Luke 7:45).

It is used of the Father of the prodigal son who fell on his neck and "kissed" him (Luke 15:20). This, no doubt, was much more than a casual greeting.

Finally, it is used of Paul's tearful goodbye to the elders of the church in Ephesus. When they heard that they would see his face no more they "wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him . . ." (Acts 20:37).

Students of the Scriptures know that Judas did kiss Jesus fervently when he betrayed Him . . . but we are not sure why.

It is possible that Judas did so in the ultimate manifestation

of hypocrisy.

It is also possible that Judas really did love Jesus in his own twisted way. Some think that the whole scheme was calculated to precipitate an armed rebellion against Rome and force Jesus into the role of an earthly King. When this did not happen Judas returned the money and went out and hanged himself (Matt. 27:3-5).

In either instance Judas was a sinner who called Jesus Lord . . . but would not submit to do His will. He wanted to be a follower . . . as long as it did not conflict with his predetermined plans. He could sing loud and pray long and put on a passionate display of his affection for Jesus . . . but the bottom line adds up to rebellion. Jesus prayed to God saying: "Not my will but thine be done. . . ." Judas could never quite pray that with sincerity.

Passion for God which is not coupled with submission is a common malady in our modern world. It is nothing new. It is much like the sin of Judas who betrayed His Sovereign Lord with a "kiss."

## Saved by His Life

*Romans 5:10*

The Scriptures teach that Christ loved us when we were unlovely. Romans 3:13-16 presents this rather gross description of mankind:

. . . their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways. . . .”

Yet he loved us! He died for us when we were “*without strength*,” “*ungodly*” and “*yet sinners*” (Rom. 5:6-8). The Scriptures then affirm that if He was willing to do all of this for us while we were enemies, certainly He will be willing to do even more for us now that we are His friends. When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son . . . but ***NOW THAT WE ARE RECONCILED WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE.***

The ancient Hebrew people worshipped God with a tremendous handicap. In order to obtain forgiveness for their sins it was imperative that they journey to the tabernacle (or temple) and solicit the help of a priest to make atonement for them (Lev. 6:1-7 for example). Naturally, there were many sins committed in ignorance and these sins too required special sacrifices and the service of a priest (Lev. 4:2, 5:17; Numbers 15:24, etc.). The Day of Atonement was perhaps the highlight of the Hebrew religious experience. It was on this day that the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies with blood which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. Upon other occasions the worshippers of God may have doubted their relationship to Him . . . but on this day . . . while the priest was ministering . . . they knew that they were right with God. “For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to

cleanse you, that ye may be clean from ALL your sins before the Lord" (Lev. 16:30).

This "blessed assurance" which was experienced only upon occasion during the days of Moses, can be ours 365 days a year.

By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament and they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: **BUT THIS MAN, BECAUSE HE CONTINUETH EVER, HATH AN UNCHANGEABLE PRIESTHOOD.** Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, **SEEING HE EVER LIVETH TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR THEM** (Heb. 7:22-25).

We are not only saved by the death of Christ . . . we are also saved by His life. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He is our advocate at the right hand of God (I John 2:1-3). Christ has not entered into Holy Places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into Heaven itself, **NOW TO APPEAR IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR US** (Heb. 9:24). This ministry is not once a week . . . or once a year . . . for the Lord sware and will not repent that Jesus is a priest **FOREVER** after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:21).

His continuing and unchangeable priesthood means that there is **NO** condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). The fact that He is our advocate with the Father means that His followers are a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). Because He is the propitiation for our sins we have confidence that we are "holy, and unblamable, and unreprouable in His sight" (Col. 1:22). Because He ever liveth to make intercession for us we believe that we shall be presented **FAULTLESS** before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24).

Certainly we sin. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). But those who

## SAVED BY HIS LIFE

abide in Jesus know that these sins will not be imputed, or charged, to us (Rom. 4:8). Our great High Priest does not slumber nor sleep. The blessed Holy Spirit intercedes continually in our behalf with groanings which cannot be uttered.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Rom. 5:10).

Note! The Day of Atonement is still celebrated by modern Jews. It is called "Yom Kippur."

## Love in the Book of Acts

The word "love" occurs some 175 times in the N.T. Scriptures. In addition, there are numerous references to "loved," "lovest," "loveth," etc. The concept of love was to be the hallmark of the Christian movement. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Paul wrote to Timothy, "the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart;" that is, the reason why God gave commandments was to produce love. The summation of everything God expects can be stated in two simple commands – loving God in the right way and loving our neighbor in the right way. John stated it succinctly when he said, . . . "This is the message that we have heard from the beginning that we should love one another. . . ."

With this background it came as somewhat of a shock to me when I discovered that the word "love" does not occur one time in the book of Acts. It is found frequently in the gospels reflecting both the life of Jesus and His teaching. It is often in the epistles as a guide to Christian living and the ultimate aim of the Godly life. But the word "love" does not occur one time in the book of Acts.

I am tempted to be more specific and state that the word "love" is not found in the book of Acts in any form. That would be true if you are thinking merely of human words like "love," "loved," "lovest," etc., but it would not be true if you are thinking of love personified in the lives of the redeemed. In this latter respect the book of Acts is replete with references to love. True love will always express itself in action. The man who merely says, "Lord, Lord," but does not obey, in reality does not love. Jesus put it like this, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:23). "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings" (John 14:24, etc.). John, the apostle of love, expressed it like this: "But whoso hath of this world's goods and seeth his

brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth . . ." (I John 3:17-18).

I conclude, therefore, that the book of Acts speaks of love in its highest form, not merely in word but in actions. When I see the early Christians so obsessed with one another that not one of them looked upon any of the things which he possessed as his own, I must conclude that love is not absent from the book of Acts by any means. It is there in a language far more eloquent and intelligible than sounds in the air or marks upon a page. We would rather see a sermon than hear one any day. Love is much more apparent in the lives of believers who talk about Jesus and share with one another than it is among those who claim to "share with Jesus" while talking about one another. We would rather see a sermon than hear one any day. In this regard the sacred history of Acts literally comes alive with love.

What prompted the apostles to abandon their homes and their occupations to go forth like "sheep in the midst of wolves?" What profound emotion was responsible for the self denial and evangelistic zeal for the Jerusalem church? What was the impetus for world evangelism and for bridging the barriers of hostility which divided mankind? If Jesus had never said one word about love, Calvary would have proved his affection for the world, for "hereby perceive we the love of God because He laid down His life for us." In a similar fashion "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3:16).

How would Luke write about us if he should suddenly return to chronicle a 20th century version of Christianity in action? Would he say, "I was hungry . . . and you prayed for me when you thanked God for your meals. I was thirsty and you sang, 'Shall we gather at the river.' I was a stranger and you sent me to the Salvation Army. I was naked and you let me rummage through your rags. I was sick and you hired a minister to make

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hospital calls. I was in prison and you stayed home to watch TV. I was lost, but you resented an emphasis on missions. I was in trouble, and you referred my problems to a committee.”

My apologies to Robert Burns as I paraphrase his famous poem:

O would some gift the Giver give us  
to see ourselves as Jesus sees us  
It would from many a blunder save us  
and many a foolish notion!

## Love and Power

Dr. Anthony Campolo points out the inverse relationship between love and power. Some have called this the principle of least interest. When two people have a relationship the one who loves the least has the greatest power. The man who would just "do anything" to keep his marriage together is in a position to be controlled by his wife . . . and vice versa.

The person who loves becomes vulnerable. If you should love more than you are loved, you by virtue of that fact are exposed emotionally, and even physically.

Frederick Nietzsche believed that the drive for power was man's dominant motivation. That which Freud attributed to sex, Nietzsche attributed to power. Even in cases of rape, sex is now considered to be of secondary importance. Psychologists now believe that the rapist may be primarily driven by the desire to dominate.

God is all powerful, but the Scriptures affirm that His basic nature is described by love. Over and over the Scriptures remind us that God is love.

Since love and power are inversely related this placed the Christ in a position to be abused and controlled by men. No man took His life, He gave it. Hereby perceive we the love of God because He laid down His life for us. . . . He so loved the world that He gave, and in the giving of Himself He became vulnerable.

Since God loves us more than we love Him we are in a position to treat Him almost any way we want to. We can go to church if and when we want to; pray if and when we want to; give if and when we want to; and study the Bible if and when we want to. When our Lover stands at the door and knocks we can turn up the TV and shout obscenities through the keyhole if we want to. Today we are in positions of power . . . because we do not love.

C.S. Lewis offers this critical insight into the way we are exposed by love:

To love at all is to be vulnerable, love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure to keep it completely and perfectly intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round about with hobbies and little luxuries, avoid all entanglements, lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. it will not be broken, but something far worse, it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, unredeemable. . . .

The tragedy of the unredeemed heart is not only realized by a diminished life of misery upon earth, but an eternity of misery hereafter. Soon the age of grace will come to a conclusion and the Lord Jesus will return from heaven. In flaming fire he will take vengeance upon them that know not God and obey not the gospel. They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (II Thess. 1:7-9). Someday every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:11).

Today the relationship of love and power is such that God manifests the love and we manifest the power. Someday this will be reversed. Sinful man will not be permitted to forever thumb his nose at God and trample under foot the blood of His precious Son.

There will be a payday someday!

Until that day we have the choice of love or power . . . God help us to choose love.

## The Magnification of Christ

*. . . 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 (Phil. 1:20).*

The concept of magnification is quite simple, but it offers to us profound spiritual implications.

If you were to hold a magnifying glass over this paper, the paper would remain constant, but your perception of it would change. Magnification does not alter the object, only our perception of it.

In this regard it is immediately obvious that Christ was not changed at all because Paul "magnified" Him. As a matter of fact Jesus is the only real constant that there is in the entire universe. He is without variation or shadow cast by turning. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Our perception of Him, however, changes.

Sometimes God seems very far away. Sometimes it is difficult to see that He really cares for us individually and personally. In such a state we frequently grow disheartened and discouraged. Our depression feeds upon itself until a vicious cycle is created which robs us of happiness and joy.

Then along comes someone like Paul who specializes in the "magnification of Christ." All of a sudden we see things about Jesus which we had never seen before. Through the lens of a dedicated life we discover that He is nearer than we had ever dreamed. We discover to our wonder and amazement that it is not necessary to go into Heaven and bring Christ down, or to go down into the deep and bring Christ up. As a matter of fact we find that Christ is everywhere and that when we believe in our hearts and confess with our lips we find salvation.

Jonah certainly had a distant and distorted view of God. He was naive enough to believe that if he could only make it to

Tarshish He would be outside the pale of God's jurisdiction. Someone has observed that sometimes you can see further through a tear than you can through a telescope. At any rate Jonah saw more of God from the belly of that great sea monster than he had ever seen before in his life.

Isn't it exciting to believe that the way we live . . . or the way we die . . . can magnify the Christ. Everyone of us know people who are invariably an inspiration to us. To merely be in their presence is to feel that God is near. Their confidence is so contagious that we find it easier to pray, easier to witness, easier to live and easier to die because of the insights which their lives make possible.

This is the kind of a person that we can be! We can become the lens through which the beauty of Christ is seen by those around us. We can cry out with Mary . . . "My soul doth magnify the Lord. . . ."

The song writer expressed it beautifully with these words:

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me  
All His wonderful passion and purity  
Oh, my Savior divine. All me being refine  
"Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

## Mansions

A little child once asked me if there would be toys in heaven. After pondering that question for some time I answered "yes." I certainly did not want to misrepresent eternity to that little child . . . and admittedly I did not have book, chapter, and verse for my answer. Yet, I think the answer conveyed the right concept.

Heaven is far more wonderful than the finite mind is capable of comprehending. To a little child happiness is not represented by golden streets and gates of pearl, but by toys. Therefore, I think it is legitimate for little children to think of heaven as a place full of wonderful toys.

The transition from this world to the next may be much like our transition from our mother's womb. It was painful but certainly worth all the pain. If an unborn child could reason he would probably have some grave concerns about happiness outside of the womb. How would he eat? How would he stay warm? What would he do, etc.? By comparison . . . there is no comparison. The joys of life are literally without number and the painful process of being born gave us access to them all.

Those of us who are more mature do not think of heaven as a place of toys, but rather a place where we will have a "mansion." Our thinking is based on a passage of Scripture in John 14:2, ". . . In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. . . ."

Thus, we have come to think about mansions to live throughout all eternity. We even sing "I've got a manison, just over the hill top" and other similar songs.

It is with considerable reluctance that I explore this verse in greater detail. Heaven is far more wonderful than the finite mind can conceive and if the thought of a mansion makes you happy I see nothing wrong with it.

A closer look at the verse, however, leads me to question this imagery. On the very surface, whatever these mansions

are, they are in our "Father's house." Mansions in a house is not the way we usually think of mansions.

Actually, the English word "mansions" is only found one time in all the Bible. It is a translation of the Greek word "mone." Interestingly enough, this word only occurs twice in the Bible, and both instances are in John 14.

The other usage is in John 14:23, "Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The word "mone" is not easy to define. Thayer defines it as "a staying, abiding, dwelling, abode." But we are led to ask, "What kind of dwelling?"

The *Dictionary of N.T. Theology* suggests that it means an "inn" or a place of halt on a journey and they quote Origen who felt that the word in John 14 meant "stations on the road to God."

F. Hauck takes John 14:2 to refer to our movement from below, up to God and said, "The word seems to be deliberately chosen to express the fact that our earthly state is transitory and provisional. . . ." He then states that John 14:23 "depicts salvation after the departure of the Savior as a permanent abiding of Christ and God in believers."

The Latin "mansio" and the old English "mansion" referred merely to a dwelling as opposed to a large sumptuous house.

The meaning of the passage, therefore, seems to be this. The apostles were already deeply concerned about their future . . . and they would even be more troubled when Jesus was crucified.

At this juncture Jesus reassures them and pleads with them not to worry. God would always have provisions for them. They would never be turned away from His shelter.

As a matter of fact Jesus was going away to prepare a place for them. he intended that where He was they would be also.

Now the question is this, "If God is willing to prepare a place

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for us, are we willing to prepare a place for Him? He wants to dwell in our hearts. he lovingly knocks at the door and pleads for us to open that door and invite Him in.

Judas, not Iscariot, asked Jesus "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:22).

The answer involved the loving of Christ and the keeping of His words. When we do this, God will come and make his "abode" or "dwelling" in our hearts. He will care for us, and we will care for Him. Then it will no longer be I that live, but Christ that lives in me.

God has a place for you, but do you have a place for Him?

## “Nehustan”

The word “nehustan” is found but one time in the Bible (II Kings 18:4). It refers to something which is made of brass or copper and is the name which good King Hezekiah gave to the serpent which Moses made in the wilderness. The story behind “nehustan” is both interesting and profitable. As a matter of fact the Scriptures teach that the things which happened unto the nation of Israel were recorded for our admonition and instruction (I Cor. 10:6, 11).

When the nation of Israel journeyed in the wilderness they became discouraged and began to complain against God and also against Moses. Because of this the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people so that many in Israel died. When the people repented of their sinful attitude, God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and to put it upon a pole. Everyone who looked upon this brazen serpent would live.

Over seven hundred years had gone by since Moses had made the brazen serpent and yet it still existed in the days of Hezekiah. As a matter of fact the people had even come to worship it.

Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, was a wicked king who encouraged the people in idolatry. He even burned little children in the fire after the abominations of the heathen (II Chron. 28:3). The kingdom was corrupt and disorganized and was forced to pay a heavy tribute to Assyria.

When Hezekiah came to power there was need for a tremendous reform. He was only twenty-five years of age but with great courage he removed the high places and brake the images and cast down the groves. He was obliterating anything that was associated with idolatry. The extent of his reform is indicated by the fact that he would even dare to destroy the sacred serpent which had been constructed by Moses those many centuries before. He called it “nehustan” or pieces of

## "NEHUSTAN"

brass. That sounded almost blasphemous. The people had carried that serpent throughout the remainder of their long journey to Canaan and carefully preserved it throughout the many centuries since that time. In their spiritual poverty, however, they had lost their perspective. They worshipped all sorts of idols and had even made an idol out of this serpent. God never intended it to be that. The serpent of brass was merely a thing. It was a tool to be used at one specific time and for one specific purpose. The people, however, came to worship the serpent and to neglect the God who commanded its construction. Hezekiah, the great reformer, knew better. He called it "nehustan" or "pieces of brass."

We, too, live in a time when great reform is needed. As in the days of Hezekiah many have lost their perspective and worship relics and traditions which God used in days gone by but which have no meaning or relevance today. We need men with the courage of Hezekiah who can call them "nehustan."

## Never, Never, Never, Never, Never

*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee (Heb. 13:5)*

The versatile Greek language had more than one way of saying "no." Perhaps the strongest word was the simple denial "ou." Dana and Mantey observe in their Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, "It is clear-cut, point-blank, negative, objective, final."

As strong as the word is, however, it can still be strengthened or intensified by using it with "me" which also means "no." Thus, "ou me" is a double negative which means "no, not by any means."

The above Scripture is interesting because it contains this double negative two times and sandwiched in between is "oude" which means "neither, nor, or not even."

Thus, Matthew Henry paraphrases the promise as "I will never, no never leave thee, nor ever forsake thee" and correctly observes, "Here are no less than five negatives heaped together, to confirm the promise; the true believer shall have the gracious presence of God with him in life, at death, and forever."

This is the promise which I have childishly rendered as affirming that God will never, never, never, never, never forsake us."

When I think of this promise my mind inevitably goes back through the years to a hospital scene where I saw this Bible verse literally come alive with meaning. My sister in Christ, Grace Ogden, was nearing the end of her sojourn upon this earth. She was too weak to visit and I sensed also that she may have been too near death to concentrate upon a lengthy passage of Scripture. Therefore, I elected to read but this single

verse. "Let your conversation, or your manner of life, be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have." Always a family reflecting contentment with their modest means, it seemed superfluous to tarry long upon that thought. Before I could continue, however she smiled and completed the verse herself. "For He hath said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' "

Her voice was weak but filled with conviction. In a short while she was gone. yet, gentle reader, we have every confidence that she was not compelled to make that journey alone. To the very end she claimed the blessed promise of Jesus who had bankrupted the Greek language to convey the certainty of His presence.

In this world of flux and change it is refreshing to discover such an unchanging Gibraltar of truth. Whatever the shifting tides of fortune may bring your way, the Christian can claim the certainty that our blessed Jesus will never, never, never, never, never leave us or forsake us.

## On Oversight

When I was a student in college, longer ago than I care to admit, we had a chapel speaker who insisted that every missionary ought to be under the oversight of an eldership. His text upon that occasion was Acts 13. He pointed out that Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church at Antioch and that they reported back to that church upon the completion of their journey.

This seemed to me to provide a Biblical and a practical "check and balance." I was already aware of the painful fact that some missionaries had betrayed the trust of their supporting churches and the thought that oversight by the elders was "Scriptural" made the matter beyond the jurisdiction of human judgment.

Thus, I became a zealous proponent of this concept and was pleased to hear of certain missionaries who never made a major decision without a prayerful consultation with their supporting elders. I know of one missionary who has been on the field for more than twenty years who still cannot even return to the States to attend a missionary convention without the permission of his elders. The fact that he had been extremely successful as a missionary and that his supporting church had shriveled up and almost died was beside the point. I even participated in this kind of "oversight" by acting as a part-time liaison between a missionary in South American and an eldership here in the Midwest. Whatever problems we encountered in such an arrangement were considered as merely a "part of the territory" for when something is "Scriptural" it is obviously too sacred to tamper with.

Several years ago I determined to set forth in order some of these things which are most surely believed among us . . . and to prove them by the Scriptures. The Antioch example seemed like a good place to start and I expected to use this example to

prove the Biblical validity of missionaries serving under the "oversight" of elders.

Permit me to confess that the more closely I examined the Scriptures the more my preconceptions tended to vanish like a vapor. As a matter of fact, I could not even prove that the church in Antioch of Syria had elders. Furthermore, I came to conclude that my understanding of the relationship of Barnabas and Saul to the church at Antioch was 180 degrees off course.

*A turning point* – a turning point in my own study came with reference to the Greek word which is translated as "recommended" in Acts 14:26 and 15:40 (King James Version).

I noted that Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from which they had been "recommended" to the grace of God (Acts 14:26).

I also noted that when Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement Paul chose Silas and departed being "recommended" by the brethren unto the grace of God.

I was curious to know what the Bible meant by "recommended" for it might provide insight into the relationship between these men and the Antioch church.

The Greek word translated as "recommended" is *paradidomi* which literally means to "give over" in this regard.

The word to me seems incredibly strong and must have created a special sensation in the minds of people in the first century. Luke used it in Acts to refer to the "delivering up" of Jesus to be crucified (3:13); the "delivering" of Christians to prison (8:3; 22:4); the "delivering" of Paul to the Gentiles and imprisonment (21:11); and of Paul's subsequent "deliverance" to a Roman Prison (28:17).

The meaning of the word is quite obvious. For example, when Pilate "gave over" Jesus it meant that he was relinquishing whatever control he may have had to someone else. He even dramatized this by publicly washing his hands.

When Saul of Tarsus "gave over or "delivered" prisoners, it

meant the same thing. He turned his prisoners over to someone else. They could do with these prisoners as they wished while he went out and rounded up some more.

As incredible as it might seem, this is the very word which the Holy Spirit used to describe the relationship between the church at Antioch and their missionaries. Barnabas and Saul were not given over to prison and death, but with the same dramatic sense of finality they were given over to the grace of God. Whatever control the church may have had over these men in the past was now being relinquished. The future was no longer in their hands but in the hands of their Creator and thus, they were "recommended" by the brethren unto the grace of God.

*Rivers and fountainheads*— I used to say "a church can no more rise above its leaders than a river can rise above its fountainhead." Yet, it was obvious to me that Saul of Tarsus advanced beyond any of the leaders in the church at Antioch. He labored more abundantly than any of the apostles and was used of God to write more books of the Bible than any other inspired man. I am convinced that such a dramatic development would not have been possible if Paul had been under the "control" of the church at Antioch.

It is also erroneous to assume that leaders in a church are its source of spiritual life. They may be channels through which the "River of Life" passes, but the fountainhead of that river is Jesus Christ. He is the Author and Perfecter of our faith and those who are "given over" to Him have access to the ultimate in "oversight."

Every parent ought to have the dream that their children will do better than they did. Quite frequently this does occur, but it can only happen when the parents are wise enough to permit their children at some point to be liberated from their control. A father who is completely illiterate can have a son graduate from college . . . if he will only let him. It is a frightening thing

to see your children go away to college. There are many dangers associated with such a risk. There is a certain sense of security which we feel when our children are dutifully at home responding to our personal instructions.

Church leaders may feel the same sense of security and well being when they are in absolute control of everything which goes on. That may be the way it is done in many congregations, but that is not the way it was done at Antioch.

The church at Antioch did not try to control Barnabas and Saul. They took their hands off of these men and turned them over to the grace of God. They recognized their own limitations and recommended them to the care of the ultimate teacher and guide. They believed that God was perfectly capable of delivering the godly out of temptation and of reserving the unjust unto punishment. The benefits involved in such a risk far outweighed the dangers, and the Christian world should be eternally grateful that Paul was not controlled by anyone but the Holy Spirit.

*The track record* – Whatever they did in the first century certainly seemed to work. In a matter of only ten short years Paul had fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum and was excited about the possibility of preaching also in Rome and Spain (Rom. 15:19 ff).

When he needed helpers God guided him to men like Timothy and Luke. In the absence of human help God sent an angel to his side to bring him comfort during those dark and difficult days of storm and shipwreck.

Certainly there are dangers associated in granting such freedom to a fallible human being. He may betray the Lord like Judas did. He might love this present world to such an extent that he would depart like Demas. He may even make shipwreck of the faith like Hymenaeus and Alexander.

Based upon the information given to us in the Holy Bible, however, it seems that the confidence which the church at Antioch placed upon Barnabas, Saul and Silas was well found-

ed. We have every reason to believe that these men remained faithful unto death and have now received the crown of life.

*Shall we dare?* – It may be that some of you have had experiences similar to my own. Perhaps you too have made the mistake of equating “oversight” with “control.” Perhaps you have in all good conscience felt an obligation to try to control some church, or missionary, or Christian worker.

Now we have injected into the picture additional information upon which you might feel constrained to “reflect” just as I have, perhaps the Christian workers with whom you are associated need to be trusted more than they need to be controlled. Perhaps God is better able to orchestrate their work and ministry than any human board or committee. Perhaps the crying need of the hour is for these workers to be handed over to Jesus with no strings attached.

The Good Shepherd has had a lot of experience with sheep of every description. When His sheep hear His voice and follow His leading they will dare the incredible and do the impossible. They do not need to be “conformed” by outward pressure and human manipulation, they need to “transformed” by the power of His Spirit within.

There are some who may betray this trust, but I am convinced that they are few and far between. The crying need of the hour is not to protect the cause of Christ by burying His workers in bureaucracy, but by turning them loose on the cutting edge of life.

The beautiful trust which Paul received he passed on to others. When he left his beloved brethren from Ephesus he gave to them this beautiful benediction.

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

God help us to do the same.

## The Pain of God

Pain is a phenomenon beyond the ability of the human mind to classify and comprehend accurately.

A glass of water contains millions of microscopic life forms, but it is doubtful that they know pain. Hal Hudson said recently in Moberly, MO that he had even witnessed ocean crabs devouring one another with no apparent awareness of discomfort. Such lower forms of life display no emotion and little or no reaction to painful stimuli.

All pain is not physical. The higher we ascend in the scale of creation the more we become aware of emotional affliction which compounds the problems of physical pain. Virtually everyone has observed the distress of a bird or a beast bereft of her young. With the flutter of her wings or the wail of her voice she communicates a measure of concern that is indiscernible in creatures that are inferior.

But now let us pursue our climb from these lower forms of life to man. There is little doubt that the higher the form of life the greater is the capacity to experience pain. Thus in man we find the turmoil of the spirit mingled with the agony of the mind and the torment of the body. In man is the capacity to weep with a profusion which it is impossible for inferior animals to experience or understand.

But now let us carry this analysis of pain to its ultimate conclusion. If a bird can feel the loss of her missing young or cry out from the pain of a wounded wing; if man can write a tear stained letter, know the agony of a troubled conscience, and scream at the piercing of a sword; how much greater must be the capacity of God to experience the phenomenon of pain.

Though such a subject transcends the ability of the finite mind to comprehend adequately, we can catch a glimpse of God's pain personified in Jesus. We see Him weeping like a little child when he gazed upon a city that it was too late to save.

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He saw beyond the moment of prosperity to the time when Jerusalem would be covered with ashes and wet with human blood. Not one stone would be left upon another that would not be cast down. The agony of that hour is utterly beyond our comprehension.

Nor can we totally appreciate his tears at the tomb of Lazarus or the crimson sweat drops of Gethsemane. We can love our wives and children, but our devotion to them will forever be inferior to the manifestation of His perfect love at Calvary. So when we mourn their loss and weep in loneliness at the decoration of their graves, we only share a trifling intimation of the heartbreak which can be experienced by the infinite mind of God.

Isaiah said it like this:

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 55:8-9)

The song writer put it in these words:

None of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed. Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through ere He found the sheep that was lost.

Oh, God, forgive us our trespasses which have caused you pain greater than we are capable of understanding.

## The Persecutor

It has now been 30 years since I began the study of the Greek language. I never considered myself a good student of Greek and am actually embarrassed about how little I remember from my classroom days.

Somehow, however, the word for "persecute" comes to my mind with remarkable clarity. It is the word "dioko" and the definition which I memorized from my grammar book was "I follow after, pursue, persecute."

The *Dictionary of N.T. Theology* associates it with the Homeric "diemai" which means literally "to chase, pursue, run after, drive away, and fig. to pursue something zealously. . . ."

The definition is quite appropriate for Saul of Tarsus who persecuted those which were of the Way. He was not content to sit idly at home, he persecuted the Christians. He hounded their steps. He had letters of authority to go as far away as Damascus. He followed after, he pursued, he persecuted.

Then, a remarkable thing happened to Paul. He stopped persecuting people. he experienced a dramatic "conversion." His whole approach to life was turned inside out.

The Greek word "dioko" is translated as "follow" a number of times in the Scriptures. Now Paul began to "follow after and pursue" those things which make for peace (Rom. 14:19). This he did with the same energy and enthusiasm which he had once displayed in following after and pursuing Christians.

Paul also followed after love (I Cor. 14:1); that which is good (I Thess. 5:15); righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (I Tim. 6:11), righteousness, faith, love, peace (II Tim. 2:22), and sanctification (Heb. 12:24), etc.

It seems to me that there is a dramatic difference between following after people, and following after righteousness and peace.

I recall a number of experiences from my early ministry

when it seemed to me that I was all but playing God. When I found others in what I determined was doctrinal error I took it upon myself to set them straight. If and when they did not respond in what I perceived as an appropriate way I was inclined to dog their steps until they did.

Jude 9 played an important part in helping me to change my mind. This verse pictures Michael the archangel contending with the devil about the body of Moses. The dispute was ended, however, when Michael simply said, "The Lord rebuke thee." Vengeance belongs to God. It was not Michael's responsibility to dog the steps of the devil until he changed his mind.

This verse has come to my mind literally hundreds of times as I meet many different individuals with whom I differ on various points of Christian doctrine. I need not assume the role of the persecutor. I need not harass them and compel them to change. Conversion comes from within and not without. Even Saul of Tarsus was not transformed by argument.

Debate are described in Scripture as "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19 ff). There is a point in perpetual argument which infects us with the virus of our own righteousness. Once convinced that we are right we are tempted to mount a crusade to convince everybody that we are. With this mentality we are more apt to pursue people than peace.

Paul was a peacemaker. He followed after it with all of the determination and zeal that once caused him to mount a house-to-house crusade against the church. Peace with God and peace with his fellow believers became the star by which he steered. He went to bed with it at night and awakened with it in the morning.

Let us follow in the steps of the old persecutor himself and be transformed from persecution of people to the pursuing of peace.

## Preparing a Place

Jesus promised that He was going to prepare a place for His disciples (John 14:2). The Greek word used to describe this place is "mone." It is used but two times in all the Bible. In John 14:2 it is translated in the KJV as "mansions" and in John 14:23 as "abode."

In the first Scripture Jesus is going to prepare a place for us, and in the second we need to prepare a place for Him. He and the Father want to come and make this "abode" with us.

Before proceeding any further it is important to note that God thinks differently than man. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so the thoughts of God transcend the thought patterns of the finite mind. For this reason the preparation of a place for God will be much different than it would be for a human being.

Let us suppose that a missionary is in your area and is planning to stay at your home. As you prepare a place for him you will probably try to make the best impression possible. You may want to pick up some of the clutter that inevitably accumulates around the house and stash it in the closet. Sweeping and dusting would also be customary, and you may want to put fresh linen on the bed where your guest will sleep. Usually we will try to put our best foot forward and convey the impression that we are really nice, neat and responsible people. There will probably be no loud arguments or embarrassing behavior during his stay, and we may be tempted to breathe a sigh of relief when he is gone.

Let me categorically and emphatically say that this is NOT the way to prepare a place for God.

God wants to dwell in a humble and contrite heart. The Hebrew word for "contrite" is "dakka" and comes from a root which means to "crumble" or be "crushed." When you prepare a place for God it is exactly the reverse of the way you prepare

a place for man. God wants to be invited into a heart that is crushed and broken.

Jesus spoke of two men who went up into the temple to pray. One of them was proud that he fasted and gave tithes, the other was so ashamed of his sin that he would not even lift his eyes to heaven. It was the sinner with whom the Lord chose to dwell. God resists the proud but gives grace unto the humble.

God is "omniscient." He sees everything and He knows everything. It is offensive to Him for us to sweep something under the rug, or attempt to hide the clutter of our lives behind the veneer of a closet door. Conversely, He is honored when we love Him so much and trust Him so explicitly that we smash down every barrier and are totally exposed in His presence.

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psa. 34:18).

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart" (Psa. 51:17).

Isaiah 57:15 reminds us that God dwells in the heavens, but also with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit.

The same contrast is found again in Isaiah 66:1-2. God made the heavens, and He dwells there. How ridiculous it is for us to attempt to create a dwelling place for God with our human ingenuity and cleverness. God is not looking for someone to rival His ability and "impress" Him with the beauty of their handiwork. He said, ". . . but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

It strains our credulity to believe that God actually wants to be invited in to the debris and rubble of a broken life, but this is exactly what the Scriptures teach. To believe otherwise is to be deceived!

Behold, even now He is standing and knocking at the door of your heart. Why not "prepare" a place for Him, and invite Him in. Knock down and destroy every vestige of pride and

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self-sufficiency, crush every barrier to His free access to your life, and permit every facade of human achievement to crumble in the presence of His glorious perfection.

God wants to dwell in a broken and a contrite heart!

## Pleasures in Infirmities

*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (II Cor. 12:10).*

Paul was able to boast about his infirmities, or weaknesses (the word literally means "want of strength"). He could take pleasure in being reproached or insulted (the word is very strong indicating an intensive form of insult. The noun form is translated as "injurious" in I Timothy 1:13. He could be happy about necessities. (The word means "distresses" whether external or internal in nature.) The word translated "persecutions" means to put to flight, pursue, persecute. The word translated as "distresses" literally means a "narrow place." It presents the picture of one who is trapped and is therefore translated in the revision as "anguish" or "calamity."

But the question remains, how is it possible to triumph in the midst of trouble? How can we glory in tribulations also? How can we count it all joy when we fall into manifold temptations? Where do we get the strength to endure the fiery trial that inevitably comes upon us?

The answer is found in the preceding verse . . . My grace is sufficient for thee" (II Cor. 12:9). Our loving Father will never allow us to be tempted above that we are able. When we arrive at the proverbial "end of the rope" we are suddenly buoyed up by a power that is able to accomplish exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. In the life of Paul this "grace" was sometimes realized by the coming of a friend (II Cor. 7:6) or by a vision in the night (Acts 18:9) or by an angel standing by his side (Acts 27:23-24) but, whenever or however he was in need of God, help was only a prayer away.

But again the nagging question presents itself. Why? Why do the righteous suffer? And again the answer is found in the text, for our ". . . strength is made perfect in weakness"

(II Cor. 12:9). Our spiritual muscles are developed by repeated demands of spiritual energy. Just as the athlete is honed for competition by a constant program of rigorous exercise the Christian is also prepared for the contests of the spirit by a life of perpetual struggle. Those who are sheltered from such circumstances do not develop real strength. They remain in immaturity and carnality and are incapable of eating spiritual meat or assuming the work of spiritual men. This is why Paul took pleasure in his infirmities . . . he knew that only through these could he ever be strong.

Jay Van Andel (co-founder of Amway Corp.) captured the meaning of this verse when he spoke to a group of salesman. After speaking of a myriad of problems which he had personally overcome in life, he quoted these memorable words:

The tree that never had to fight  
For sun and sky and air and light  
That stood out in the open plain  
and always got its share of rain  
Never became a forest king  
But lived and died a grubby thing.

The man who never had to toil  
By hand or mind mid life's turmoil  
Who never had to win his share  
Of sun and sky and light and air  
Never became a manly man  
But lived and died as he began.

Good timber does not grow in ease  
The stronger the wind, the tougher the trees  
The farther the sky the greater the length,  
The rougher the storms, the greater the strength  
By sun and cold and by rain and snows  
In trees as in man, good timber grows.

Therefore let us take pleasure in infirmities.

## Sarah's Pleasure

*Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, after I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also (Gen. 28:12).*

Abraham was 99 years old (Gen. 17:1). Sarah was 10 years younger (Gen. 17:17). It had ceased to be with her after the manner of women (Gen. 18:11).

When the messengers of God announced that she would have a son she laughed, apparently believing that she was too old to have "pleasure."

At the risk of being indiscreet it seems obvious that she had reference to a sexual relationship with her husband.

It is interesting to observe that the Hebrew word translated as "pleasure" is "ednah" which is defined by Strong as "pleasure, elicate, delight. . . ." It comes from the primary root "adan" which means to be soft or pleasant.

The word used by Sarah provides us with an interesting insight into Paradise for it is the very word used by God to describe the original garden which he prepared for Adam and Eve. "Ednah" or pleasure is the feminine of which "Eden" is the masculine. The Garden of Eden is therefore literally the Garden of Pleasure.

Jesus once lamented to Nicodemus, "If I have told you of earthly things and ye believed not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

The joys of eternity are beyond human comprehension. We must wait for that face-to-face encounter before we will know as we are known.

In the mean while, however, it seems that God has provided us with a foretaste of eternal intimacy and delight by creating us "male and female" and ordaining that a man should cleave unto his wife and become one flesh with her.

When Adam "knew" his wife it meant that he became intimate with her so that a new life was produced. This intimate face-to-face experience was ordained by God to teach us something infinitely wonderful. The sexual union is so profound in its pleasure that it is utterly indescribable. Those who experience it in the context of marriage, however, gain insight regarding our entrance into that heavenly kingdom which shall never pass away.

When the Hebrew people witnessed fire descending upon the Tabernacle the experience was so profound that they cried "glory." The Hebrew word for "glory" is "kabod" which literally means "heavy." The experience was so "weighty" that it was for practical purposes beyond description.

In this regard it is interesting to observe that Paul describes the woman as the "glory of the man" (I Cor. 11:7). When commanded that we are to "flee from fornication" he reminds us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Just as the "glory" of God was experienced in association with the Jewish temple we are instructed to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits which are God's (I Cor. 6:18-20).

I trust that it is not inappropriate for me to remind you that Isaac did not have a virgin birth. Abraham was not weak in faith, therefore ". . . he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And, therefore, it was imputed unto him righteousness."

The beautiful relationship between Abraham and Sarah provides us with allegorical understanding of the New Covenant which enables those who are barren to rejoice (Gal. 4:19 ff).

When Paul reminded the Ephesians that holy matrimony involved a man leaving his father and mother, and becoming one flesh with his wife he continued, ". . . this is a great mys-

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tery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32).

Thus, the pleasure of Sarah provides us with insight and anticipation . . . even so come Lord Jesus!

## Two Poems by God

The Greek verb "poieo" means to "make" or "do." It is found 565 times in the N.T. Scriptures. The noun "poiema," however, is found only twice, and is the basis of our English word "poem."

Both times the word "poiema" or "poem" are found in the Scriptures they refer to the work of God. The first time is in Romans 1:20 where it is translated as "made," and the second is in Ephesians 2:10, where it is translated as "workmanship."

The first "poem" of God is the universe which He created. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are *made*, even his eternal power and Godhead. . . ."

We live in a "universe" and not a "multiverse." That which God created is characterized by rhyme and harmony. God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace. The heavens declare His glory and the firmament showeth His handiwork. All of God's creation reflects the unity and harmony of His very being. The nature of God is clearly seen by means of the things which He made. This is the first "poem" of God.

The second "poem" of God is the "new creation." The Scriptures teach: ". . . we are His *workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. . . ."

The handiwork of God is "clearly seen" in creation. The man who can miss the majesty of a mountain, or the glories of Springtime is blind. How can a rational person gaze into the splendor of the heavens and not see something of God? That "poem" is obvious. So also is the second. Those who have been "born again" or "recreated" cannot be hidden. They are like a city that is set upon a hill. They do not need to "sound the trumpet" or in other ways seek to advertise what has happened to them. It is utterly obvious. Like flowers of the field the beauty and fragrance of their lives cannot be contained.

Unfortunately, something else is also obvious in the world around us. Not only do we "clearly see" the work of God, we also see the work of Satan. Not only do we see beauty and harmony, we also see disease and death. There are "tares among the wheat."

Fortunately, God will prevail. Someday the tares will be bound up and burned with unquenchable fire. Someday everything that worketh abomination or maketh a lie shall be cast into outer darkness. God will not be mocked! Someday every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess His glory.

In the meanwhile, however, we are caught up in conflict between good and evil. We are soldiers in the army of King Jesus and are commissioned to carry the Good News of His message to the ends of the earth. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, they are spiritual. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Someone has observed that there is more hope for someone who "cannot see" than there is for someone who "will not see." Some are blinded by circumstances beyond their control . . . and others are blind by choice.

May the God who opened the eyes of the blind touch your life with the power of His presence. May He work in you the same power and peace which He has manifested in the heavens, and the same beauty and fragrance which blossoms in the rose.

There are two great poems by God We can enjoy the one and experience the other. Maranatha!

## Poorly???

"If anything is worth doing at all, it is worth doing poorly." This is a motto of the Elmbrook Church in Waukesha, Wisconsin where Stuart Briscoe preaches. He dropped this saying on me as he departed from Joplin to catch a flight back home and did not have time to elaborate. Based upon a brief conversation which I had with him over dinner, let me try to fill in the pieces.

World population in the days of Jesus is estimated to be about 250,000,000. Surely among that vast populace there must have been a great many highly educated and polished individuals, It is both interesting and significant, however, to note that He selected His original twelve apostles from among the unpolished peasants. None of these men, as far as we know, were noted for their education, their wealth, their social position, or their religious achievements. They were very ordinary men. Their Galilean accent was obvious and perhaps offensive. Yet, the church of our blessed Lord is built upon a foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone.

Since the original followers of Jesus were peasant folk who would be stereotyped as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" by the aristocracy of the day, it is not surprising that "not many wise, not many mighty, and not many noble" became involved in the Christian movement.

In spite of this, however, the early church seemed to grow. While Paul was in Ephesus, for example, all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10) and by the time Paul wrote to the Colossians the Gospel had been preached to every creature which was under heaven (Col. 1:23).

Today, it seems that a great many take exception to the policy of Jesus regarding the involvement of "unlearned and ignorant" individuals. Our preachers are expected to be educated,

cultured, and refined. Our musicians are expected to be polished and professional, We desire for our callers to be trained and tactful. Almost everything that we want to be done in the church today, we want to be done "well." So only certain people can sing, or play, or teach, or preach, or call. Our propensity to do things well and to place a premium upon what we think is excellent may prove to be counter productive. It may discourage the common folks from the joy of spiritual growth through exercise and involvement.

Our armed forces advertise for recruits by saying, "We don't ask for experience, we give it." The youngest recruit is encouraged to get involved and learn by making mistakes. The fact that he does things poorly does not prevent him from trying for he is not the only one who is a novice. When you have a whole boot camp of people doing things poorly it makes clumsy folks like us feel right at home.

Perhaps this is the genius of what Stuart Briscoe has been able to accomplish in the Elmbrook Church. If something is worth doing at all, then somebody is going to have to do it poorly before they develop the ability and the expertise to do it well. By emphasizing their little motto they take a lot of pressure off of the common folks who love Jesus but lack the professional touch of the more experienced and capable.

I am told that their attendance runs about four thousand at the Elmbrook Church.

Who knows, if something is worth doing at all, perhaps it is worth doing poorly?

# Prayers . . . Wrath . . . and Disputing

*(I Timothy 2:8)*

The word translated “prayer” is “proseuchesthai.” This is the normal word for praying to God, and its general meaning is so clear that it needs no further comment.

The word for “wrath” is “orge.” It refers to a long standing resentment inclining to revenge. The word “thumos” refer to a blazing display of anger which quickly appears and subsides like fire in a pile of straw. Orge by contrast is deep seated and long lasting.

The word translated as “doubting” in the KJV and “disputing” in the revision is the word “dialogismou.” It comes from “dia” – through and “logismos” – a reasoning. It is primarily an inward deliberation, but inward thoughts frequently manifest themselves in some sort of an external controversy. For this reason the word is translated as “disputing” in Philippians 2:14 and disputation in Romans 14:1.

Thus we have before us an incongruous combination of “prayers,” “anger,” and “argumentation.”

We gain insight into this outrageous circumstance through a prophecy by Paul combined with the context of the pastoral epistles. Over ten years before the writing of I Timothy, Paul had warned the Ephesian elders of impending trouble. The problem would arise from two sources. First of all, outsiders would enter in like grievous wolves in a flock of sheep, and secondly from among the elders themselves divisive men would speak perverse things in order to obtain a following (Acts 20:29-30). The context of the pastoral epistles is a strong indication that these predictions were coming true. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus for the specific purpose of correcting those who had turned aside from “loving one another” to endless disputes.

This is the way the *Living Bible* paraphrases I Timothy 1:3-7:

As I said when I left for Macedonia, please stay there in Ephesus and try to stop the men who are teaching such wrong doctrine. Put an end to their myths and fables and their idea of being saved by finding favor with an endless chain of angels leading up to God – wild ideas that stir up questions and arguments instead of helping people accept God's plan of faith. What I am eager for is that all the Christians there will be filled with love that comes from pure hearts, and that their minds will be clean and their faith strong. But these teachers have missed this whole idea and spend their time arguing and talking foolishness. They want to become famous as teachers of the laws of Moses when they haven't the slightest idea what those laws really show us. . . .

I challenge you to read I and II Timothy and Titus with careful attention to Paul's strong desire to stop these people from arguing. The gentle, congenial spirit is woven repeatedly into the qualifications for elder (I Tim. 3:1-7) and is also mandatory for anyone who would be a vessel of honor fit for the Master's use (II Tim. 2:21-26).

When Michael, the archangel, contended and disputed with the devil about the body of Moses, he saw the futility of endless argumentation and withheld his accusations. He simply said, "The Lord rebuke thee" (Judge 9). Michael came to realize that God is perfectly capable of handling those in error and contented himself with something more constructive. Such a passive attitude is quite offensive to the legalistic mind. The legalist would much prefer to solve some genealogical controversy, dote over a question, or strive over a word than to place his arm around some weak brother and offer a word of encouragement. This is why Timothy was to avoid the useless babblings of those who had all the answers and give himself to the promotion of love, a wholesome spirit, faith and purity.

But the extremes of legalism cannot be appreciated without

Paul's divine instructions for prayer. The brethren were so strung out on debate that they could not pray without a frown and a verbal gouge at those whom they considered to be wrong.

Perhaps it is time that we too prayed everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputation.

## Proof

*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.”*

*I John 3:16 – “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”*

These two verses in the Bible are very much alike. They were both written by the same inspired man; they both are found in the same chapter and verse of their respective books; and they both deal with the subject of love. The first scripture affirms a fact, the second offers proof of that fact.

The concept of the cross is found upon almost every page of the Bible. It is foreshadowed by every sacrifice from Eden to Calvary. It is typified by Isaac who was bound upon the altar of Mt. Moriah. It is seen in the slaughter of the Passover Lamb and pictured by the priest who made his annual entrance into the Holy of Holies. Isaiah envisioned the Christ as a “lamb that was led to the slaughter.” Zechariah beheld a betrayal for 30 pieces of silver and the Psalmist saw pierced hands and feet and crude men gambling for His garments.

The cross may have many meanings and much significance to the child of God, but high upon the list is the fact that it proves his love. We would rather see a sermon than hear one any day, and in one glimpse of Calvary we know more about God’s feelings for us than we do from a thousand psalms. Pious platitudes may have their significance but actions speak much louder than do words. We can discern something about God from the voice that thundered from Sinai and from the muffled cry from the manger. We learn from the miracles He wrought and the sermons He preached. We thrill at every shred of information that illuminates our knowledge of the Father, but

every other fact is eclipsed by the splendor of the cross. . . . Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."

The language of love is universal in its appeal and in its understanding. Golgotha means as much to the unlettered aborigine as it does to the College professor or philosopher. It speaks the same sublime message to the aged and infirm as it does to the straight backed youth who peers at Calvary through the undimmed eyes of adolescence. This is the way we understand that God loved us, because he laid down his life for us.

The writer to the Romans assures us "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." The proof of God's generosity and concern was found just outside of Jerusalem where justice and mercy struggled until both had gained a victory. While the sun hid its face in amazement and the earth trembled in unbelief the man who personified the "fullness of the godhead in a body" died for the sins of the world. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.

With all of the uncertainties of tomorrow there is one fact that stands as a Gibraltar in the midst of a crashing sea of doubt. That fact is this, God loved the world. The proof of that love is indelibly written in the blood of Jesus. The cross bars of Calvary convince the world. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

## Prove All Things

Nikolani Lenin (1870-1924) was a Marxist revolutionary, creator of the Bolshevik party, and founder of the Soviet state. Lenin graduated from St. Petersburg University with a law degree in 1891. In 1893 he began underground revolutionary activities and ultimately led the overthrow of the provisional government of Aleksandr Kerenski in November of 1917. Lenin is thus given credit for the creation of the first successful party of professional revolutionaries, and paved the way for an International conspiracy which not only dominates the Soviet Union but also other unfortunates throughout the world. Lenin wrote:

Why should freedom of speech and freedom of the press be allowed? Why should a government which is doing what it believes to be right allow itself to be criticized? It would not allow opposition by lethal weapons. Ideas are much more fatal things than guns. Why should any man be allowed to buy a printing press and disseminate pernicious opinion calculated to embarrass the government.

Thus Communism can only survive with the help of ignorance. Every Communist country must have its firing squad, its political prisons, and the ability to black out news and truths from other parts of the world. Ideas are fatal to the Communist cause.

What a contrast such a program is to the philosophy of Jesus. His followers are not imprisoned by barbed wire and machine guns. There is no "news blackout" within the framework of the Christian movement. Quite to the contrary we are admonished to "prove all things" (I Thess. 5:21). Barnes makes these comments in his commentary on I Thessalonians:

Other religions require their votaries to receive everything upon trust; Christianity asks us to examine everything. Error, supersti-

## PROVE ALL THINGS

tion, bigotry, and fanaticism attempt to repress free discussion, by saying that there are certain things which are too sacred in their nature, or which have been too long held, or which are sanctioned by too many great and holy names, to permit their being subjected to the scrutiny of common eyes, or to be handled by common hands. In opposition to all this, Christianity requires us to examine everything – no matter by whom held; by what councils ordained; by what venerableness of antiquity sustained; or by what sacredness it may be invested. We are to receive no opinion until we are convinced that it is true; we are to be subjected to no pains or penalties for not believing what we do not perceive to be true; we are to be prohibited from examining no opinion which our fellow-men regard as true, and which they seek to make others believe. No popular current in favour of any doctrine; no influence which name and rank and learning can give it, is to commend it to us as certainly worthy of our belief. By whomsoever held, we are to examine it freely before we embrace it; but when we are convinced that it is true, it is to be held, no matter what current of popular opinion or prejudice may be against it; no matter what ridicule may be poured upon it; and no matter though the belief of it may require us to die a martyr's death (Barnes Commentary Thess. – Phil. p. 61).

Christ never asked a man to be credulous or to disregard reason. We are not expected to blindly follow any leader without first of all putting him to the test. The word translated “prove” is the word properly applicable to the assaying of metals. It means that we are to take apart and analyze every concept to evaluate its worth.

All truth is compatible with all other truth. Every light enhanced and augments all other light. Darkness, however, fears even the light of a tiny candle. The shadows of evil retreat before the search light of truth.

The Christian philosophy can stand the full glare of publicity and the careful scrutiny of intense observation. This is why the Lord was not afraid to command – “prove all things.”

## Put Up With One Another

Christianity espouses the highest form of human behaviour. It is the superlative good among mortals. Those who are risen with Christ should therefore set their minds on things above and not on things of earth (Col. 3:2). Our every thought and action should transcend the lower world around us for we are to be "renewed in knowledge" so that we can live the Jesus kind of life (Col. 3:10). This superior mentality is especially appropriate for a fellowship composed of Greeks and Jews, Barbarians and Sythians. When a humanity polarized by different social and psychological extremes is drawn together into a common crucible the participants must manifest something superior to the carnal temperament. For this reason we are commanded to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and longsuffering, forbearing and forgiving one another in the same superlative Spirit manifested by Jesus when He so willingly forgave us (Col. 3;12-13).

The word translated as "forbearance" is "anechomenoi" which comes from "and" - up and "echo" - to have or hold. It means therefore to "bear up with" or "endure" and is translated by Knofel Staton as "put up with one another."

This particular phraseology seemed to strike a responsive chord with me for I could envision in my mind's eye a woman stoutly affirming over the back fence to her neighbor "well, I wouldn't put up with it if my old man did that to me." A recent newspaper article related the grim story of a woman who didn't want to put up with her children so she locked them in a car where two of the three died in agony from the unmerciful heat. Such a temperament seems characteristic of our society: Our sky-rocketing divorce rate is ample proof that husbands do not want to put up with wives . . . and vice versa. The sordid story of child abuse and teenage derelicts is an unavoidable indication that many parents and children do not want to put up with

each other. Racial violence and social unrest are a strong indication that society doesn't want to put up with anybody either. A divided Christendom is a painful indication that even Christian people do not want to put up with one another.

In the midst of marital confusion, social unrest and religious resentment the voice of inspiration cries out *Put Up With One Another*. Of course you don't like everything done by someone else but put up with it just the same.

I spoke to one lady some time ago and reminded her that her marriage vows were, "For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health." Then after reflecting upon her husband I said - "Well, at least he's healthy and one out three is better than nothing." Go ahead and put up with him. You may have a few years of tough sledding but someday when your children and grandchildren gather around the Christmas tree you'll be glad you put up with him and they will be too. When the figures are all tallied there's a lot more to life than some people are willing to admit and the chain reaction of people who "won't put up with it" needs to be broken somewhere . . . maybe it can start with you and me.

So just like the Bible says - Let's "put up with one another."

# Repentance

*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death . . .”  
(II Cor. 7:10).*

The versatile Greek language has two different words for “repentance.” Someone has quipped, “One of them means that you’re sorry, and the other one means that you’re sorry that you got caught.”

The word for a genuine repentance is “metanoeo” and literally means to change your mind, or purpose. It is always used in Scripture of changing the mind for the better. It is a change of mind that results in a change of life.

How beautifully this word is illustrated in the lives of Joseph’s brethren.

When Joseph was a young man his brethren hated him and determined to take his life. Through the influence of Reuben he was not killed, but rather sold into slavery.

When Joseph came to power in the land of Egypt ten of his brothers came before him to buy grain. At this point Joseph inaugurated a plan by which their sincerity would be put to the test.

The essence of the plan involved Benjamin. Joseph’s father, Jacob, had 12 sons by four different women. He was so blindly prejudiced, however, that he only thought of himself as having one wife and two children. This is specifically stated in Genesis 44:27 when Jacob said, “Ye know that my wife bare me two sons. . . .” It was Rachel that Jacob loved more than any other, and it was Rachel’s children that Jacob exalted above everyone else in the family.

This, as you know, was one of the reasons that Joseph was hated by his brethren. His Father had given him a coat of many colors. This was in all probability, an indication that Jacob

## REPENTANCE

intended Joseph to rule in the family after his decease.

Since Joseph was thought to be dead, Benjamin would naturally be exposed to the same hatred that Joseph had experienced. Therefore, Joseph insisted that Benjamin be brought to Egypt.

When Benjamin did arrive, Joseph instructed his steward to put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack of grain when they departed. *Touche!* History was about to repeat itself. Ten of Jacob's children were again placed in the position to get rid of the "favorite" son who was destined to become heir of his estate.

When the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack, Joseph offered to his brothers the "perfect out." He said that the guilty person should remain in Egypt as His servant, and the rest could go in peace to their father (Gen. 44:17). This was precisely what they had wanted those many years before when Joseph was sold as a slave . . . but times had changed . . . and they had, too!

Their repentance was genuine. They hadn't even been caught and they were still sorry. Judah came forward with the sincere offer to give himself as a slave if it would secure the release of Benjamin. He loved his father and his brother too much to see this evil come upon them.

Joseph could not refrain himself. He wept aloud and made himself known unto his brethren.

God, too, is overcome by the presence of a broken and contrite heart. He longs for his children to manifest that godly sorrow which leads to repentance and salvation. It is the sorrow of the world which leads to death (II Cor. 7:10).

## The Divine Right

"But to all who did receive him, to those who have yielded him their allegiance, he gave the right to become children of God . . ." (John 2:12, N.E.B.). The word "father" comes from a root which means "nourisher, protector, upholder." Not everyone has the right of this relationship with God . . . only those who "believe and receive." Not everyone shares the blessed fellowship at the table of the redeemed and the divine inheritance of the royal family . . . only those who are born of that incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth forever (I Pet. 1:23).

The word "Father" denotes a spiritual relationship. This is the reason why an illegitimate child is considered fatherless. Not that the child was "virgin born" at all, only that he was deprived of that nourishment and protection, inspiration and guidance, which comes from a spiritual relationship with the one who begat them.

Though everyone was created by God, not everyone sustains that spiritual relationship with Him that enables Him to be their father. Jesus said to the Jews, "If God were your Father, ye would love me" (John 8:42). And again, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). The character of these wicked men reflected the character of their father . . . like father . . . like son. Their ideas and motivations stemmed from impulses that were selfish and satanic.

Individuals such as this can be adopted into the family of God, but this relationship can only be initiated by faith. "For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). The scriptures teach "wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean

thing; and I will receive you, *and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*" (II Cor. 6:17-18).

The word translated "power" or "right" in John 1:12 is the word "exousia." The primary meaning of this word reflects "liberty of action." It means that the believer who has yielded to God has the perfect freedom to enjoy the father-child relationship. But many of us are so inhibited by our sins and our sluggishness that it would be impossible for us to fully enjoy this beautiful freedom were it not for the Holy Spirit who emboldens us to cry out "Abba" "Father" (Gal. 4:6). We once walked in darkness, but now we are the children of light (Eph. 5:8). We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear . . . but we have received the Spirit of adoption . . . and the Spirit himself 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 . . ." (Rom. 8:15-17).

## The Sign of the Resurrection

The Creator of the universe is understanding and compassionate. The Scriptures assure us that he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He was tempted in all points like as we are . . . yet He was without sin. He knoweth our frame and He remembers that we are dust. He created us with a streak of skepticism and He is sympathetic to our doubts. Consequently, God has never asked man to do anything without providing him a rational basis upon which to proceed.

Moses was asked by God to return to Egypt and liberate a nation of Hebrew slaves. Several incongruities were immediately evident to Moses. A combination of his personal inadequacies and police record coupled with the disposition of a pagan tyrant made the task seem irrational and impossible. At this juncture God gave to Moses a series of signs that convinced him to give it a try. The miraculous rod, the leprous hand, the burning bush, and the voice from heaven combined to convince Moses that the smart thing to do was to head on down to Egypt. He had to face either the wrath of Jehovah or the wrath of the Pharaoh and he intelligently chose the latter.

Gideon could not believe that the least in the poor families of Manasseh would be endowed by God to deliver Israel from the Midianites. He asked the plaintive question "where be all his miracles which our father told us of . . ."? God was understanding to Gideon and graciously presented him with evidence to bring his commission within the realm of reason. A God whose miraculous flames consumed the cakes and who directed the dew of heaven and the dreams of the enemy could surely bring deliverance to the nation of Israel.

A dying King was promised fifteen years of additional life and also deliverance from the King of Assyria. It seemed impossible. Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me . . ."? (II Kings 20:8). The gracious

God who understands our doubts turned back the clockwork of the heavens and the shadow on the sun dial of Ahaz went back ten degrees.

The world has catalogued and condemned its doubting Thomases but the Saviour did not. He simply said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." The word "Didymus" means "twin." God could understand the skepticism of a man who had been mistaken for his twin brother upon many occasions, and he graciously gave him evidence that was irrefutable.

But, pause, dear friend, to consider the commandment of God to you. He demands of you a change of mind and life and an immersion in water. He calls upon you to faithfully assemble and to sacrificially give of your possessions. He may place upon you a burden to die a martyr in some forgotten jungle or to turn you cheek to a vicious enemy. He will never be content with a part of your devotion but he jealously calls for total submission and surrender.

A doubting world cries out "What is the sign?" We dare not gamble everything we are on hunches and superstition! The sympathetic Savior responds - "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Thus, the sign of the resurrection is deemed sufficient by the Judge of Heaven to convince rational men to align themselves with the cause of Christ. The logic of the apostles focuses world attention upon an empty tomb and proclaimed - ". . . if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins . . . we are of all men most miserable." But the Christ was raised from the dead. His glorious resurrection is historical fact. Honest skeptics have always been converted by their analysis of the

historical Jesus . . . dishonest skeptics will not believe even though one rises from the dead and confronts them.

A sign is significant because it points to something better. Thus the sign of the resurrection directs the world down the path that leads to everlasting life.

## Sacrifice . . . or Mercy

*I desire mercy and not sacrifice . . . (Hosea 6:6).*

It seems to me that there is something basically selfish which is an integral part of the sacrificial system. When I am involved in making a sacrifice a major part of my thinking is focused upon my own personal sin, and my own personal need for forgiveness. This is not to say that my thinking is totally divorced from the Holiness of God and the needs of my fellow man, but certainly a major emphasis of the sacrificial system is on myself.

The thrust of mercy is exactly the opposite. When I extend mercy the focus of my action is upon the needs of others. Admittedly, our human emotions are so utterly complex that we are seldom capable of doing anything with an absolute singleness of purpose. For example, when I show mercy to you, it is impossible for me to forget that by showing mercy I gain the opportunity to obtain it.

Still, however, God does make a distinction between "sacrifice" and "mercy." They are obviously different in His mind, and the Scriptures before us is crystal clear that the God of Heaven desires the mentality of mercy in preference to the mentality of sacrifice.

This difference is illustrated in a dramatic way by the parable of the Good Samaritan. The priest and the Levite are representatives of the sacrificial system. They wanted to serve God in the framework of that system and for that reason it was essential that they keep themselves pure. They not only passed by the man in need, but they passed him by on the "other side." They went out of their way to avoid the man who was wounded and half-dead. A study of the book of Leviticus reveals many reasons for their conduct. They obviously avoided the man, and as representatives of the sacrificial system it was undoubtedly to keep themselves pure (See Lev. 5:2-3; 7:21; 21:1, etc.)

The Good Samaritan, by contrast, showed mercy. He was willing to risk personal impurity and reached out to touch the wounded man. Such contact carried with it the inevitable danger of contamination. There is something about mercy which causes us to become a living sacrifice.

Again we ask the question! Which does God desire in our lives? The answer reverberates through the heavens . . . "I desire mercy and not sacrifice. . . ."

It needs to be remembered that this text before us comes from the book of Hosea. Hosea was the prophet who took a wife of whoredoms, and had children of whoredoms, and lived in the land of whoredoms (Hosea 1:2). How utterly contaminated he must have been . . . yet he married his wife and accepted her children and lived in the land by direct commandment from God.

The word "mercy" is found 10 times in the book of Hosea. The concept of mercy is woven as an inseparable part of the story. It not only reflects the fabric of God's nature but is to be an integral part of our nature as well.

Early in my Christian experience I went to great efforts to jealously guard my reputation. "A good name is better than precious ointment. . . ." I said, and my good reputation was to me a matter of strong commitment to Christ.

Then it dawned upon me that Jesus "made Himself of no reputation . . ." (Phil. 2:7). Like Hosea He was willing to take a wife and children of whoredoms, and to live His life in the midst of contaminating influence. This is the message of Hebrews 10:5ff. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not . . ." (v. 5); "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou has had no pleasure . . ." (v. 6); "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein . . ." (v. 8).

Instead of "making" a sacrifice . . . Jesus "became" a sacrifice. Him, who knew no sin, became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God through Him.

May God grant unto us the courage to follow in His steps.

## Scandal

Our English word "scandal" comes from the Greek word "skandalon." "Skandalon" comes from the root which means to "jump up. or snap shut." Originally it referred to the part of a trap or snare to which the bait was attached.

This word is used in Revelation 2:14 to refer to the way that Balaam taught Balac to trap the children of Israel into fornication and idolatry.

A trapper friend informs me that there are three basic types of lures which he uses with his traps.

The first is the curiosity lure, the second is a food lure, and the third is a gland lure.

Every animal has its own peculiarities and successful trappers make a science of understanding them. Deer, for example, mate at only one season. Should you try to lure a deer with the mating instinct at the wrong season you may actually frighten him away. So while there is plenty of food you use a curiosity lure. When food is scarce you use a food lure. During the mating season you use the gland lure.

Other animals, such as the fox, mate the year around. My friend informs me that foxes are easy to trap. First, he said, you take some scent from a female in heat. This draws the victim to the vicinity of the trap. Next you place some urine collected from a domesticated fox on a bush about 12-15 feet away. Then you set your traps about 18 inches away from the bush. The victim assumes that a rival male has marked the bush and he then is driven by his animal instinct to challenge that male for the mating privilege. This assumption is a fatal one. It is not a mating privilege at all . . . it is a trap.

One can easily see how our word "scandal" has become associated with this kind of trap.

The book of Revelation indicates that Balaam used this kind of strategy to set a trap for Israel. Balaam had traveled hun-

dreds of miles and sacrificed on 21 altars to no avail. Every message from God involved a blessing for Israel.

At this juncture, Balaam, who incidentally loved the wages of unrighteousness (II Pet. 2:15) became diabolically clever. If God was not going to curse the sons of Israel he conceived a plan whereby they would curse themselves.

Therefore, he taught the king of Moab to set a trap. The trap involved the satisfying of their curiosity, there was probably plenty of good things to eat and drink, and there were plenty of beautiful Moabite girls dancing seductively.

All of this was just too much for the Israelites. Blinded by their animal instincts they stumbled headlong into the trap which had been so carefully prepared and there fell in one day 24,000 Hebrew men.

But now let us consider the very practical matter of how you and I can avoid a scandal. It would certainly be a fatal mistake to assume that we are clever enough to outsmart the Devil. Satan is super human. Even in the spirit world he is perhaps the most cunning and clever of them all. This is the reason why he was presumptuous enough to lead a rebellion against God.

Our only chance for a successful defense against the wiles of the Devil is to put on the whole armor of God and stay close to Jesus. We are not in the battle alone but are working together with God.

Solomon said it like this, "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident" (Prov. 14:16).

Paul said, "Flee fornication" (I Cor. 6:18).

What do you say?

## **“Sending” Laborers to the Harvest**

*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest . . . (Matt. 9:38).*

W.E. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* lists 12 different Greek words which are all translated in the N.T. Scriptures as “send.” Each of these words, of course, has its own particular flavor and special meaning and significance.

When Jesus asked His disciples to pray for the Lord of the harvest to “SEND” forth laborers he chose to use a form of the Greek word “ekballo.” The word “ballo” means to “throw” and “ek” before it signifies “out.”

The word “ekballo” means literally, to “throw out.” It is used over 80 times in the N.T. Scriptures. The KJV translates it “cast out” (52 times).

Thayer defines the word “with the included notion of more or less violence.”

This is the word which the Holy Spirit used to describe the cleansing of the temple when Jesus “cast out” the money-changers (Matt. 21:12, Mark 11:15 and John 2:15).

This is the word which describes the way that Paul and Barnabas were driven out of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:50).

This is the word used to describe the way that Sarah wanted Abraham to cast out Hagar (Gal. 4:30).

This is the word describing Diotrefes who prated against the apostles with malicious words. He would not receive the brethren and “cast out” those who did (III John 10).

This is the word used to describe the way that Jesus was “driven” into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil (Mark 1:12).

The word is also used of the way that Rahab sent out the

spies another way (James 2:25). I thought perhaps this example lacked the notion of violence. After reflecting upon the story, however, there was considerable pressure for those men to leave when Rahab sent them out. The soldiers of Jericho were searching intently for them and would certainly have killed them if only given the chance.

This, then, is the way that our Lord sometimes "sends" forth laborers into the harvest. He may find us so utterly complacent that it is difficult for Him to get our attention. He, therefore, lovingly increases the pressure until we may start to feel a bit uncomfortable. Still we may be like the proverbial hound who sat on the thorn and howled because he was too lazy to move over. Ultimately we are apt to find ourselves literally "thrown out" into the harvest.

Almost everyone knows of some Christian worker whose ministry was founded on the smoldering ashes of what seemed at the time to be a tragedy. In retrospect it might not have been a tragedy at all . . . just the Lord "sending out" another worker to the harvest.

The 32nd Psalm teaches that we should not be like the horse or the mule which have no understanding. God doesn't want to jerk us around like some dumb animal in order that we might do His will. He wants to guide us with his eye and instruct us gently in the way that we should go (Psa. 32:8-9).

If this does not work, however, He is ready, able, and willing to "send" for laborers into His harvest.

Maranatha . . . even so come Lord Jesus!

## 7 to 40

The other evening it was my privilege to sit next to Dr. Dan Curtis at a banquet. Dr. Curtis is a department head at the University in Warrensburg, Missouri and teaches in the field of communications. At the present time he is teaching a regular course for law enforcement officers. Included in the course are ways to detect when someone is lying to you. Dr. Curtis indicated that only a small percentage of the way we communicate is verbal. As a matter of fact, he said, some experts believe that only 7% of communication is verbal, and no one, he added, puts it at over 40%.

Isn't that astounding? The most important aspects of communication are "non-verbal." What an encouragement this is to the vast majority of us who are not eloquent. The bumbling farm boy who stammers for every word may communicate his love to that special girl far more effectively than a Philadelphia lawyer. The expression on his face, the tone of his voice, the gesture of his hands, the shuffle of his feet, the look in his eyes all combine to say what his lips may find it difficult to frame into words.

Just the other day I sought to phone a friend who ministered in another state. The secretary informed me that he was "no longer with that church." Though we spoke but a brief moment there was a certain "coldness" about her conversation which was impossible to miss, but difficult to define. It communicated to me that there had been trouble. In retrospect, the tone of her voice was a more accurate indication of what had happened than her words.

This message is of a special significance to preachers and Christian workers. Moses was of a slow speech and a slow tongue, but Pharaoh still got the message. Amos had no prophetic background or training but God still used him to stir a nation. The Apostles of Christ were unlettered peasant folk but

they were still able to hold captive the masses by their boldness and the simplicity of their faith. Words play only a small part in the way that we communicate.

Several months ago I met a lady in Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas who was in charge of a sewing ministry for refugees. The refugees all spoke Spanish, yet their communication was both meaningful and effective. I understand that she had worked equally as well with Vietnamese refugees though she did not speak their language either. The limited language barrier did not erase the more important aspects of their communication. No one who observed her at work could misunderstand or overlook the obvious fact that she cared.

There is an old illustration about two men who recited the 23rd Psalm. After one recitation the audience applauded, after the other they wept. The difference was explained by the fact that one man knew the Psalm, and the other knew the Shepherd, but it is most significant to note that they both said identically the same words.

I have a growing conviction that every Christian has a divine mandate to communicate the Gospel. It is important to remember that only 7 to 40% of this communication involves words.

## Shepherds

It is impossible to accurately understand our modern world without an awareness of class struggle. It matters not whether it involves a union dispute here in the U.S.A. or a bloody riot in the streets of San Salvador, there seems to be a classic confrontation between the "haves" and the "have nots."

It is intriguing to discover this same struggle on the pages of our Holy Bible, and it is somewhat frightening to see our Lord display such an affinity with the "have nots."

Perhaps no event so dramatically and poignantly displays this fact as does the Christmas story.

Jesus was born of a peasant girl who knew the harsh reality of grinding poverty and discrimination. In the presence of her kinswoman Elisabeth, she rejoiced that God had regarded the "low estate of his handmaiden." Her psalm of praise was laced with phrases which must have been offensive and inflammatory to the aristocrats of the first century. She acknowledged that God had "scattered the proud," "put down the mighty from their seats" and the rich he hath sent empty away." By contrast she felt that God had "exalted them of low degree" and "filled the hungry with good things" (see Luke 2:46-55).

The fact that Jesus was born in a manger and never had the privilege of formal education gave to him a strong bond of association with the masses of people who existed in abject poverty. The Scriptures record that the "common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37).

In harmony with His strong identity with the victims of poverty and discrimination is the astounding fact that a multitude of the heavenly host made an appearance to shepherds announcing the birth of our Saviour.

It would be a mistake to think of these shepherds in association with such Biblical heroes as Abel, Abraham, Moses and David. It would be more appropriate to remember the terse

note in Genesis 46:34 that ". . . every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians."

The *Dictionary of N.T. Theology*, Vol. 3 page 566 offers this insight.

. . . After the exile the Pharisaic rabbis brought about a striking devaluation of the occupation of shepherd in Palestinian Judaism. In a time of poor pay, shepherds were suspected, perhaps often rightly, of dishonesty. The pious were forbidden to buy wool, milk or meat from shepherds. Civic privileges (the functions of judge and witness) were withdrawn from them as from the tax collectors. . . .

One reason why these men were deemed as so unholy is that their occupation prevented them from taking part in the regular feasts and festivals of Judaism and from a regular attendance at the temple. Thus, while commenting upon Psalm 23 the Midrash observes "No position in the world is as despised as that of the shepherd."

Perhaps this will help you to understand the utter disgust which some would display for a man who kept referring to Himself as "The Good Shepherd." His propensity to fraternize with the "wrong kind of people" and his obnoxious illustrations became the focal point of much criticism and culminated on a cross.

Be that as it may, it is nonetheless a fact that the angelic announcement did not come to the theologians and the socially acceptable . . . but to shepherds.

## As Long As You're Sincere

The word "sincere" comes from a compound of two Latin words and literally signifies "without wax." It hearkens back to the days of ancient Rome when artisans who worked with marble sometimes concealed the blemishes in their work with an artful application of paraffin. Items which were genuine in their appearance came to be known as "sincere" or "without wax."

I think it highly appropriate that such a beautiful word has found its way into the vernacular of modern America. It does not at all indicate that someone is perfect, but it does mean that they appear just as they really are with no hypocritical veneer to melt away.

Frequently we use the word "sincere" with reference to religion. Many are convinced that it does not matter what you believe or how you attempt to worship God as long as you are "sincere." The fallacy of this philosophy became even more apparent to me during this past summer as I was privileged to observe the ruins and relics of ancient Mexico. It is difficult to imagine a people more "sincere" in their approach to God than were the Aztecs. Their devotion to their deities was the all-consuming passion of their lives. It dominated virtually every aspect of their society. It was the governing principle in their politics and the central hub around which their social life revolved.

Illustrative of their devotion is the dedication of a holy pyramid in 1486. The pyramid was called "toecalli" which means "House of God." The dedication ceremony of this pyramid was so elaborate that preparation was begun four years in advance of the festivities.

The highlight of Aztec worship involved human sacrifices. Upon this particular occasion King Ahuitzotl desired something special for the gods and ordered the death of 60,000-70,000 human beings in one magnificent ritual. When the appropriate hour had arrived, he began the bloody work with his own

hands. The victim was stretched upon a sacrificial stone by four assistants. A twelve inch obsidian knife was plunged into his chest and his heart was ripped from his body, still throbbing, and "sincerely" offered to the gods. Throughout the long day the ghastly ritual continued. The cheers of the worshippers were mingled with the shrieks of the doomed and dying and the groans of the exhausted priests. This horrible incident is so well authenticated that even yet the name of King Ahuitzotl is an adage or a proverb among the inhabitants of Mexico.

With my own eyes I beheld an elaborately carved sacrificial stone nine feet in diameter and three feet high where 5,000 wretched human victims were slaughtered in a single year. With my own feet I walked the famous "Highway of the Dead" where countless human beings were dragged to human butchers. I thought how utterly absurd was the damnable philosophy that sincerity is a valid substitute for truth. I am filled with hideous visions of the widows and orphans produced by such insane and senseless religion no matter how "sincere" they were. I am more determined than ever to use my one short life in the education of my fellow man regarding the One True God who manifested Himself to the world through Jesus Christ.

# Spiritual

The word "spiritual" is much used and often misunderstood in our modern world. In order that you might judge how "spiritual" you are I offer the following for your consideration.

The word "spiritual" in our Bible is the Greek word "pneumatikos." The basic idea of the word is to denote that which is "non-physical or "of the spirit." Hence Vine states that it "always connotes the ideas of invisibility and of power. It does not occur in the Sept. nor in the Gospels it is in fact an after-Pentecost word."

The word occurs 25 times in the New Testament Scriptures:

Romans: 1:11; 7:14; 15:27

I Corinthians: 2;13,15: 3:1; 9:11; 10:3,4; 12:1; 14:1,12, 37; 15:44,46

Galatians: 6:1

Ephesians: 1:3; 5:19; 6:12

Colossians: 1:9; 3:16

I Peter: 2:5,5

A break down of these Scriptures will reveal that the word "spiritual" is used of:

*The Law* – "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."

*God's Truth* as opposed to money – "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

*That which sustained Israel in the wilderness* – "And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

*The resurrection body* as opposed to our natural body – "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:44).

*The Church* – "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiri-

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tual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5).

We also see that:

*Blessings* can be spiritual – Ephesians 1:3

*Songs* can be spiritual – Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16

*Wickedness* can be spiritual – Ephesians 6:12

*Understanding* can be spiritual – Colossians 1:9

*Sacrifices* can be spiritual – I Peter 2:5

A *Gift* can be spiritual – Romans 1:11 (Note that in I Cor. 12:1; 14:1,12 the word "gift" is in italics which means that it is not in the actual text.)

Most important of all is that *people* can be spiritual. The characteristics of a spiritual person are:

They judge all things – I Corinthians 2:15

They are not divided over human leaders – I Corinthians 3:1ff.

They restore in meekness those overtaken by a trespass – Galatians 6:1.

## Ye Which Are Spiritual

Many of us have fallen into a mindset which equates spirituality with going to religious meetings and quoting Scripture. The Pharisees did all of this but they were not "spiritual." They were, in fact, quite carnal. They read their Bibles, recited their prayers, paid their tithes, wrapped their self-righteous robes about them and ultimately they crucified the Son of God. When they saw someone in need they would avoid the man in trouble and "pass by on the other side."

The Bible gives a much different definition to the word "spiritual" than the Pharisees were familiar with:

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

This concept of "spirituality" involves relationships. If you speak with the tongues of men and angels that does not necessarily make you spiritual. As a matter of fact your words may sound to God like a "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." The Scriptures teach that it is possible to have prophetic insight and mountain moving faith without having love. It is even possible to bestow all your goods to feed the poor and to give your bodies to be burned without having a vital and living relationship with people. "Spirituality" involves people! The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost and those who possess His "Spirit" must do the same.

Working with people, as Jesus did, involves the burning desire to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." This cannot be done from a distance or by proxy. It cannot be accomplished by casually dropping a few coins in the cup, or by dialing a professional to handle the job for you.

Jesus calls us to follow in His steps. he dared to become involved with the publicans and sinners whose lives were in shambles. He sat down to eat with the messed up and mixed

up refugees of society. Once you do this your life will never be the same. The man who works with metals can go home in the evenings and be left alone. Even the farmer can build good fences and find a measure of isolation and insulation from the animals who might need his attention. But the person who dares to work with people is in a class by himself. this creature called "man" was created in the image of God. He possesses the capacity to act independently and to make choices which defy reason. Working with man provides the ultimate challenge as well as the ultimate reward.

There are no two of us who are exactly alike. We possess the capacity to be totally frustrating and unpredictable. Yet, Jesus came to earth to get personally involved with us. He did not delegate this responsibility to others that He might find protection from the physical pain and emotional trauma of working with mankind, and neither can we. Those who are "spiritual" must by virtue of their very nature behave as Jesus did. A leopard cannot change his spots. He is what he is. So also the one who is "spiritual" is drawn like a magnet to the person who has problems. He cannot help himself. It is no longer he that lives but Christ who lives within him.

In the crucible of life we learn by experience that those who are overtaken in a fault are much like ourselves. In the process of helping others God opens our eyes to some of our own blemishes and imperfections. The Pharisee who proudly announces his righteousness is the victim of self-delusion. He is blind to the fact that he too is in desperate need of mercy and grace and the man who will not see is to be pitied more than one who cannot see.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

## Synergy

A number of years ago I made notes from a radio program regarding the 1885 World Series of Mule Team Competition. The winning team pulled 9,000 lbs. the specified distance. When the first and second place teams were hooked together, however, they pulled 30,000 lbs. I regret that I cannot more accurately document this event but I can say something about the principle of synergy which would make these incredible statistics more believable.

The Dorlands Illustrated Medical Dictionary, page 1492 defines syergism as "The joint action of agents so that their combined effect is greater than the algebraic sum of their individual effect."

The book on *Synergetics* by R. Buckminster Fuller (MacMillan Publishing Co.) provides us with another example of synergy which I can document with greater certainty.

The tensil strength of commercially available -

iron is 60,000 lbs. p.s.i.

chromium is 70,000 lbs. p.s.i.

nickel is 80,000 lbs. p.s.i.

carbon is 50,000 lbs. p.s.i.

Total mathematical strength of these metals - 260,000 lbs. p.s.i.

The actual strength of the alloy, however, is much greater than their mathematical sum. It is 350,000 lbs. p.s.i.

We have been taught that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. If we view these various metals as a chain we would expect their strength to be no greater than 50,000 lbs. p.s.i. which is the strength of carbon, the weakest link.

If we view all of these metals not as a chain, but rather as woven or braided together into a rope or cable, we would estimate their strength to be 260,000 lbs. p.s.i.

The synergic concept, however, transcends either illustration. When these metals are not linked together, or woven

together, but are rather melted together, they have a strength much greater than their algebraic sum. The jet engine would have been impossible in the days before the discovery of the alloy called chrome nickel steel.

The synergic principle is applicable to a great many areas of life, and most certainly to theology. When believers are joined together like links of a chain, or woven together like strands of a rope, we will never know the miracle working power we could experience if we were only melted together into the same kind of oneness that Jesus had with the Father. When all believers experience this kind of unity Jesus promised us that the world would believe (John 17:20 ff).

We should further note that an entity which is meant to be one cannot be accurately analyzed except as one. For example, should we remove the earth from its solar system it would immediately lose many of its essential characteristics. The sun, the moon, the stars, the rotating orbit, etc. all combine to give to us our days, our seasons, our tides, much of our energy, and etc. If we removed the earth from its God given environment it would be nothing like God intended it to be.

Surely the same is true of the Christian. The fact that we are estranged from one another in direct violation of His eternal purpose is a factor that forever precludes that natural state of victory and power which we were created to experience and enjoy.

This is the God given principle of synergy.

## Tarry One for Another

*Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another (I Cor, 14:33).*

A few short days ago, I was privileged to travel with a singing group from our church to Mexico. By Mexican standards, the people with whom we worshipped were not poor. They had fine clothes and lived in homes with doors and windows. The average income per family, we were told, was \$25-30 per week.

At each place we sang, we were treated with great respect. Invariably there was food. By American standards there was usually not enough to go around. Each time, however, our Mexican brethren always insisted that we eat first; and they also insisted that we continue eating until it was gone. Sometimes they ate nothing at all.

It was an awkward experience for us, for we would have preferred that it be the other way around. We were told, however, that it was something which they deeply wanted to do and that to refuse their hospitality may prove to be offensive.

Is it any wonder that when we left, we were hugging one another and crying? The beautiful love of Jesus had spanned the barriers of language and culture and enabled us to experience a unity too wonderful for words.

The same generosity displayed by the Mexican churches was also exemplified by individual families. Some of us were privileged to stay in Mexican homes; and reports came back that again we were privileged to eat, while sometimes they did not. We were privileged to sleep in beds, while they would sleep on the floor.

In retrospect, this seems to be the very type of love and consideration which Paul recommended for the church at Corinth. They came together, not for the better, but for the worse

(11:17). They were so utterly selfish and self centered that they thought only of themselves. They took precautions to insure their own well being, regardless of what happened to others. "For in eating everyone taketh before others his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken" (11:21). Such a state of affairs begets hard feelings and strife. It promotes argumentation and division. It resulted in spiritual sickness and death (11:30).

The divine solution was to "tarry one for another." It was to encourage each to assume the mentality of Jesus and to become more interested in the welfare of others than in his own well being.

This is an important lesson which our Mexican brethren have helped us to learn. Let us also follow their example and "tarry, one for another."

## Tasting the Lord

*. . . if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious . . . (1 Pet. 2:3).*

The Bible word for "taste" is "geuo." It means to "taste, eat, or experience." There is a certain finality about "tasting." Either you do taste something or you don't. There is no "in between" with tasting.

In a number of places, for example, the Bible makes reference to "tasting death." In Hebrew 2:9 the Scriptures teach that Jesus tasted death for every man. It seems a bit unnecessary to ask "how much" death Jesus actually tasted. You are either alive, or you are dead. One taste of death is all you need.

So also Jesus predicted that some of his listeners would not "taste of death" until they saw the Son of man coming in His Kingdom (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27 etc.). In a spiritual sense Jesus promised that those who kept His sayings would never "taste" of death (John 8:52).

The same word is also translated as "eat." The early Christians "did eat" their food with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts 2:46). Peter was on the housetop expecting to "eat" (Acts 10:10). When the Christians at Troaz had "eaten" they talked until the break of day (Acts 20:11). A group of fanatical Jews took a vow that they would "eat" nothing until they had killed Paul (Acts 23:14).

Once again the word conveys the concept of something without ambivalence. Either you eat something or you don't, either you taste of death or you are alive.

But now let us apply this very obvious truth to "tasting the Lord." The Scriptures admonish believers who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious" to desire the sincere milk of the word as a newborn babe desires milk. One does not get a little bit pregnant, or a little bit converted. You are either pregnant or

you are not, and you either taste the Lord or you do not! There are certainly various stages of growth for the child of God, but there is no ambivalence or uncertainty about whether you are a Christian or not! To "taste" the Lord is to personally experience Him. It is to know by your own faculties the God of the universe.

There is an old illustration about the little boy who was trying to describe the taste of honey to his father. He stammered and stuttered for several minutes searching for some appropriate analogy and finally said: "daddy, if you want to know what its like you'll just have to taste it for yourself." There is no way for a human being to taste something by proxy. It must be done personally.

To "taste" the Lord is the ultimate experience of life. It places us in touch and in tune with the Creative Force that spoke the universe into existence. The God who became incarnate in Christ has condescended to also make His abode in the believer. In Him we live and move and have our being. When we "taste" of Him we are born from above. We receive His seed into our heart and we reflect and project His likeness to the world.

But now let us consider the ultimate absurdity. Let us think about that person who has "tasted the heavenly gift," and has been made a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and has "tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:4-5). If this person falls away it is impossible to renew them unto repentance. They have "tasted" the Lord and spit Him out . . . and He has tasted them and done the same.

## Therefore . . . be Steadfast

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58).*

I Corinthians 15 is called the "Resurrection" chapter of the Bible. Each verse in this chapter deals in one way or another with the subject of the resurrection.

The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was "according to the scriptures" (vv. 3-4). Every major event in our Lord's ministry was predicted by the prophets and read in the synagogues centuries before it came to pass. This was particularly true of his decease and resurrection. Every slaughtered lamb from Eden to Calvary depicted the sacrifice of Jesus. The one "sign" which Jesus was to give to a wicked and adulterous generation was the "sign of the prophet Jonah."

Faith is the acceptance of testimony. Our faith grows in direct proportion to evidence. The faith of the Corinthians was strengthened by the testimony of hundreds of eye-witnesses to the resurrection (vv. 5-11). Included is the witness of Paul himself who testifies how the fact of the resurrection spurred him to action.

Verses 12-19 makes the resurrection of Jesus the "keystone" in the arch of Christianity. The entire superstructure of the church will come crashing to oblivion by the production of one corpse and the refutation of one fact.

Verses 20-34 relates the resurrection of Jesus to your resurrection and mine. In the same way that we all die because of Adam, we shall all be made alive because of Christ.

The remainder of the chapter deals with some of the technical questions raised. Paul points to the terrestrial and celestial marvels which we too frequently take for granted. If God can

bring new life to a grain of wheat that decays in the earth, can he not bring new life to your body when it is gone? If God can regulate the billions of blazing suns that are scattered to infinity, can he not perform the wonder of the resurrection?

But the last verse is perhaps the most precious. The word, "therefore" relates to all which has been said about the resurrection. It means that nothing is lost which has been entrusted to Christ. Even a cup of cold water given in the name of the prophet shall not be forgotten. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Moth and rust cannot corrupt that which we have done for Christ.

*Therefore we can be steadfast. We do not fear the morning headlines or the Wall Street quotations.*

*Therefore we can be unmoveable. We are not ashamed of the gospel or tossed to and fro like a branch in the breeze.*

*Therefore we are always abounding in the work of the Lord. We are convinced that nothing we have ever done for Christ has been done in vain. Our account is secured by an agency of God. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

What tremendous news this is for our present age of doubt and pessimism. While thousands are jumping off bridges and blowing out their brains, the Christian rests in perfect peace. While the multitudes mill in frustration at the shrines of psychiatry and science, the Christian sleeps like a lamb at the feet of the shepherd. The resurrection makes sense to our labor for the Lord.

*"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always bounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*

## Thermostats or Thermometers

Ron Jones told me yesterday a humorous incident involving visitors from Asia. After spending their first night here they complained that there was something wrong with the furnace. It kept going off and on all night long.

In retrospect, it must have been quite confusing to an outsider who was not familiar with thermostatic control. An ever increasing number of homes are now equipped with a remarkable little device called a "thermostat." The setting on this device controls the temperature of the home.

In the dead of winter that thermostat will summon whatever quantity of heat from the furnace is required to maintain the desired temperature. In the heat of summer it can also be used to regulate an air conditioner for the desired amount of cool.

The thermometer, by contrast, does not regulate anything. On a cold December day it may register a passive twenty below zero, and on a sweltering August afternoon a hundred and twenty in the shade. But it doesn't change anything.

It occurs to me that people can be either thermostats or thermometers. We can passively drift with the tide, or we can actively seek to stem the tide. We can merely register upon our face a frown when things go wrong, or we can roll up our sleeves and get busy seeing that things go right. We can acquiesce to uncomfortable circumstances and simply let the world know how bad things really are, or we can concentrate our energies in a courageous struggle to bring the refreshing change which society so desperately needs.

Jesus was a man of action. The pages of Scripture are alive with the good news He brought to the poor, and with the healing He gave to the broken hearted, and with the deliverance He made available to the captives, and with the sight He gave to the blind, and with the liberty He gave to the broken and bruised. His very presence was like the trumpet sound of

Jubilee. It was a dramatic and unmistakable signal that something good was going to happen. He was a thermostat and not merely a thermometer.

Those who are filled with His Holy Spirit will naturally endeavor to be like Him. We too will want to bring relief to the poor and the broken hearted, the bruised and the blind. We will not be content to sit on the sidelines of life and passively reflect upon what others are doing. If we are to be like Jesus we will be out where the action is.

*Thermostats and not thermometers!*

## Thoughts – Imaginations Strongholds

Francis P. Martin in his booklet *Hung by the Tongue* offers a keen insight into II Corinthians 10:4-5. In this passage we are informed that “. . . the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of *strongholds*; casting down *imagination*s, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every *thought* to the obedience of Christ.

Martin suggests that a “stronghold” begins with a thought. Many times these thoughts come directly from Satan. Using Judas as an example he writes: “Betray Jesus? Oh, no, I would never betray my Master.” “Now wait a minute, if I betray Him, let’s see.” It is easy for a thought to turn on our imagination if it is not cast out immediately. Undoubtedly the imagination of Judas began to run wild. What would happen if he did betray Jesus? Maybe His followers would revolt against Rome . . . maybe He would call down fire from heaven and destroy the Scribes and Pharisees . . . maybe it would be a blessing in disguise . . . etc.

Once you have imagined something too long, that imagination is turned into a stronghold. It is hard to walk an unused path, but walked too often it can become a rut.

Martin uses another dramatic illustration:

For example, the thought of suicide comes to your mind. You can decide to dismiss the thought or keep it. If you choose to keep the thought and dwell upon it, the thought will become an imagination or an intention to commit suicide. If you leave it as an imagination, it will grow into a stronghold and you will be going into the act of suicide with no power to turn back, except you submit that thing to the power of God and pull it down in the name and authority of Jesus’ name.

The Scripture before us is a very positive Scripture. It indi-

cates that we as Christians possess the Spiritual weapons to pull down strongholds, and to cast down imaginations, and to ultimately bring every thought into obedience to Christ.

Is there a "stronghold" in your life from which you are seeking deliverance? That deliverance is available to you through Jesus Christ!

Josh McDowell describes in vivid details his mental bondage to the memories of an alcoholic father. All of his early recollections were poisoned by bitterness and resentment. These negative thoughts continued even past the point of his conversion. It was only as he was in the process of producing his autobiography that he was able to see his father in a different light. The "stronghold" was pulled down and he was able to praise God for the father who brought him into the world.

Corrie Tenboom was filled with bitterness and hatred for the German soldiers who murdered Jews, and especially for the Gestapo agents who were responsible for the torture and death of her sister. These thoughts, as you might well know, filled her imagination until they became a fortress. That fortress, however, was not impregnable. Our weapons are "mighty" through God to the pulling down of strongholds. By the power of God Corrie came to the place where she, like Christ, could pray for those who persecuted and despitefully used her.

You sow a thought and you reap an action. You sow an action and you reap a habit. You sow a habit and you reap a destiny. The cycle of evil can be broken, however, for he that is within you is greater than he that is in the world.

May God grant you that power to pull down your strongholds, cast down any evil imaginations, and to bring every thought into obedience to Christ.

## Truth or Repose

"God grants to every mind the choice between truth and repose, take what you will, you can never have both," Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The night of our Savior's birth the angels announced that there would be peace on earth in the lives of those who were well pleasing to God. This peace, however, was not the kind of peace that the world could give. It was an inward tranquility in the midst of tribulation. Jesus said it like this: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The "peace" of which Jesus speaks is a strange phenomenon indeed. It comes to sheep who are in the midst of wolves. It was bequeathed upon His Disciples at the very time Judas was betraying Him and a few brief hours before His arrest and crucifixion. The blessing was not to evade or avoid persecution, for this is the lot of all who will live Godly in Christ Jesus. The blessing was rather to triumph in such trouble.

How aptly this is illustrated in the lives of the apostles. Beaten, they rejoiced. Imprisoned at midnight, they sang hymns. Reviled, defamed and persecuted, their personal lives remained a Gibraltar of unmitigated trust.

The paradox would not be complete without some reference to the life style of the persecutors. Isaiah described the wicked like a troubled sea. From a distance it may seem peaceful, but when examined closely it reflects a churning turmoil of mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked. It was hard for Saul to kick against the goads. Stephen could die with an angelic countenance, but the man who held the garments for those who stoned him was possessed of an inward probing from which he could not escape. On the Damascus Road he had a conversion experience which transformed him from the

persecutor to the persecuted. He gave up outward peace and inward turmoil for inward peace and outward pain. Perhaps this is the "trade-off" which Emerson had reference to.

Those who refuse to be conformed to this world are forever consigned to the role of strangers and pilgrims in search of a better city. We do not belong here. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are misfits in a constant struggle against the temptations of the flesh which war against our souls. When we cease the struggle we abandon the truth. Choose what you will, you can never have both.

The God whom we serve is a decision making God, and we are created in His image. We can arrive at decisions in essentially the same way that God does - just because we want to. We don't have to make judgments upon the basis of evidence or coercion. We can decide anything we want to decide. Every day of our lives involves a variety of choices. When we select truth we must be prepared to accept the consequences. We may find ourselves at church when our carnal nature would prefer to be in bed. We may be constrained by our convictions to deal with some distasteful problems when self would prefer not to get involved. The heroes of our faith wandered in deserts and in mountains, and were obliged to live in dens and caves in the earth. The world was not worthy of such martyrs to the truth.

Thus there remains for every man the eternal choice, truth or repose. Choose what you will, you can never have both.

## Unfeigned Love of the Brethren

*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 (1 Pet. 1:22).*

Our English word "unfeigned" comes from the Greek word "anupokritos" which literally means "without hypocrisy." The hypocrite is one who pretends. He projects an image but conceals some aspect of his real character. He speaks in a voice that does not reveal his true identity.

It is quite easy for Christians to be hypocritical. We actually have two natures which war within our souls. Once we have made a public commitment to Christ, we find our lower nature embarrassing. Thus, when we have bad thoughts or do bad things we prefer to hide such inconsistencies behind the mask of our spiritual personality. Each of us have certain stereotyped ideas of how a Christian should act and we will probably have a strong temptation to appear that way regardless of how we feel. The problem, of course, is compounded in the lives of preachers, teachers, and other church leaders for they face additional pressures to project the proper image.

A certain amount of this "acting" is no doubt healthy. We can "act our way into feeling" more easily than we can "feel our way into acting." Our mind should dominate our emotions. A mother may not "feel" like taking care of a sick child in the middle of the night but she must not allow these feelings to prevent her from doing so. There are also many times when a Christian does not feel like going to church, or smiling at an insult, or doing good to those who hate . . . but our feelings must not prevent us from doing so. Our actions are transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Yet, there is a very real sense in which our love of the brethren is to be without hypocrisy. There was a time, for example, when Jesus was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He did not seek to hide such feelings from His disciples but rather sought their help and assistance. Human weakness is not a sin and Jesus was human.

So, also, in the life of the Apostle Paul. When writing to the Corinthians he felt constrained to admit "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength insomuch that we despaired even of life" (II Corinthians 1:8). Perhaps this was the "love unfeigned" to which he made reference in II Corinthians 6:6. Such openness may have made Paul vulnerable to additional criticism from his enemies in Corinth who had already challenged his apostleship. But God's is without hypocrisy (James 3:7) and Paul possessed God's wisdom.

The word "anupokritos" occurs six times in the New Testament Scriptures. We have already mentioned three (I Pet. 1:22; II Cor. 6:6 and James 3:17). The other three are: Romans 12:9; I Timothy 1:5 and II Timothy 1:5. In James the word is translated as "without hypocrisy" and in Romans "without dissimulation." In each of the other references the authorized version has "unfeigned." The two references in Timothy refer to "unfeigned faith"; the others all refer to love.

Several years ago it was my privilege to hear Ray Stedman speak. He said that the secret to the "body life" ministry for which his congregation is now famous can be traced back to a time when he loved "without hypocrisy." When he opened up and admitted his own problems the brethren were not only able to minister to him more effectively, they were also encouraged to open up and admit to problems of their own.

As we love one another with a pure heart, fervently, we must see to it that our love is "unfeigned."

## The Vision of the Apostles

Here is an apple . . . what do you see? Some see only something to eat and throw away. Others might envision something to eat and plant. Some might see an apple tree . . . others a grove of apple trees . . . still others might behold a limitless panorama of trees, and trucks, factories, canneries and market places . . . all from the same apple.

Here is the world . . . what do you see. Some see the world as only a place to gratify their animal appetites. Their philosophy is "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." Others think in terms of providing for a family . . . or a community . . . or a country. The vision of the apostles, however was a world wide vision. It transcended every social barrier, every racial prejudice, and every national boundary. They dreamed of one world united in Christ . . . of swords and spears beaten into plowshares and pruning hooks. They foresaw a society without violence – where the knowledge of the Lord deluged mankind like the waters cover the sea.

Look again at that little band of ragged and illiterate peasants. There they stand upon an obscure hillside just East of Jerusalem. Their clothing is tattered and their pockets are empty. They have no prestigious connections with government and they are outcasts in their own religion. They have lately been intimidated by local authorities and were described by their leader as "sheep in the midst of wolves." Yet they dare to dream of world conquest. They start with the teeming and treacherous multitudes of Jerusalem . . . they fan out into the hostility of the Judean hillsides . . . they progress to the segregated society of the Samaritans . . . and then they lift their eyes to the harvest of a limitless horizon.

From this perspective in history, it is easy to forget how absolutely irrational it must have seemed back then. The flames of persecution seem cooler from the vantage point of an air-

conditioned Sunday School Class. The hatred of the Jews and the contempt of the Romans is not nearly so sharp when it is separated by so many centuries. We find it easier to talk about their battles than to commence any of our own.

One of the rules for safe driving is to "aim high." The man who overdrives his field of vision is vulnerable to destruction. As long as the church is double parked by the local department store there is little danger of this problem, but if we ever get in gear we ought to be in the market for apostolic eye-glasses. The church without that kind of vision is apt to spin out in bogs of trivia or be lulled to sleep by the lullabies of liberal preaching. The straight and narrow can only be traversed by the alert and the active.

Imagine, if you can, how shocking it would be to everyone if the apostles suddenly dropped by during our annual planning session. They would discover to their amazement that we really didn't have any plans. We had suffered no great defeats . . . we had experienced no great victories, and our only combat with evil had been the result of accidental encounters and still worse, more of the same was on the drawing board for the future. What an amazing experience it would be for us to have fellowship with men who stormed empires with greater ease than we turn off the football game and drag ourselves out to hear a sermon. We have more money than the apostles, more education than the apostles, more of virtually everything . . . but vision. They had nothing but Christ and dreamed of world conquest. Yet, in their lifetime they preached the gospel to every creature under heaven (Col. 1:23). We have virtually everything . . . and we're supposed to have Jesus too . . . but attack is as far from our minds as retreat was from theirs. The problem is our vision – look on the fields – they are still white unto harvest – and the laborers are still few.

## No Vision

*Where there is no vision the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he (Prov. 29:18).*

Most of our churches have fallen into a traditional rut. We gather to "hold services with little sense of direction or purpose beyond that of increasing our membership and perhaps even starting other churches "holding" more services. It is imperative that we rise above our traditional trenches and take another look at the battlefield. With world population increasing 35 times faster than people are being saved it does not take much of a tactician to recognize the need for a different strategy.

I am reminded of a friend in Kansas whose Grandfather assured him that tractors would never be widely accepted on the farm. As if the tires packing down the ground wasn't bad enough he reasoned the oil dripping out of the dern thing would surely destroy any chances for a decent crop. It is interesting to observe that Robert Hutchings Goddard was experimenting with rockets at a time when most of us were reluctant to even accept tractors. Goddard died in 1945 and was virtually unknown to anyone but Hitler's scientists who were trying to perfect the rocket as an instrument of war.

As badly as we need visionaries like Goddard to use their genius for the progress of Christianity . . . this is NOT the message of Proverbs 29:18. The word translated "vision" is the Hebrew word "Chazown" which is the normal word for prophetic revelation. In other words this Scripture teaches us, not the importance of human dreams, but the importance of divine revelation.

The word translated "perish" in the King James Version is the Hebrew word "para." It comes from the primary root which means "to loosen." It is translated as "naked" in Exodus 32:25. Perhaps you will recall that Moses returned from his encounter

with God on the mountain to discover that the people were totally unrestrained. The Hebrew word "para" was used to describe this orgy but probably would be better translated as "broken loose" as in the revision.

The idea therefore of this verse is that when there is no revelation from God the people become ungovernable.

The next phrase in the Scripture proves a suitable antithesis to this thought . . . "but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." The word translated as happy is the Hebrew word "eshar" which comes from the root "ashar" which meant "to be straight." The person who walks a straight path of integrity will naturally find happiness, hence this word becomes a very appropriate descriptive regarding that man who keeps the law of God.

When people are without a revelation from God they become ungovernable, those who keep God's law will walk a straight path and will therefore discover happiness and prosperity.

Though these words were spoken about 3,000 years ago their message is as fresh as the morning news. The cohesive which binds the believer into a functioning fellowship is the word of God. Without this God's people are unrestrained. A first century mentality is therefore to be preferred over the traditions of the 19th century of the dreams of the 21st.

The crying need of the church is for a return to the Scriptures . . . a systematic sifting of Bible truth from traditional chaff . . . The willingness to admit that perhaps one of the reasons for our miserable mess is that we have failed to follow the directions. For where there is no vision the people perish.

## Waiting on the Lord

*But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; thy shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa. 40:31).*

Did you ever have the feeling that your “get-up-and-go” has “got-up-and-went”? The context of this passage teaches that “even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall utterly fall” (v. 30).

As a young man I used to compete in distance running. How vividly I still recall a cross country race in Stillwater, OK where a teammate and close friend collapsed from exhaustion a few yards short of the finish line. Fortunately he revived from that experience, but the point is that even young people are vulnerable to weariness and exhaustion.

But they that wait upon the Lord are different. The contrast in the Scriptures is quite obvious. Somehow they that wait upon the Lord are distinguished from others.

The word “wait” in the English language has at least two different meanings. First of all, you can “wait” on a table. By this we mean that you serve those at the table whatever they request. Secondly, we can make an appointment to meet with someone at a certain place and “wait” for them to arrive.

The Hebrew word translated as “wait” in Isaiah 40:31 is “gavah.” It means to “wait, expect, look for, hope.”

The word for “serve or minister” is “sharath.” This word is translated as “waited” in II Chronicles 17:19 but is not the primary emphasis of our present text.

Occasionally we make appointments with people who disappoint us by not keeping their end of the bargain. The more we wait, the more discouraged we become.

They that wait upon the Lord are not so. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises. What He has promised He will also perform. The longer we wait, therefore, the more excited

we become for we are utterly confident that we shall never be disappointed.

We shall "mount up with wings as eagles." High above the mountains are friendly cushions of air that buoy up the eagle in such a manner that his flight seems effortless. Hour after hour he can soar gracefully in the heavens without flapping his wings or feeling the frustration of exhausting effort. He intuitively senses which direction to turn to gain the advantage of favorable winds and can actually climb higher and higher while resting.

Those who claim the promises of God and who wait upon the Lord are promised a renewal of strength that will enable them to mount up with wings as eagles.

But we will also run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. A farmer once told me how exhausted he was at the close of the day, only to discover that when his friends came by inviting him to their favorite recreation his weariness would vanish like a vapor. His exhaustion was as much mental as it was physical.

The yoke of Christ is designed for work, but in the midst of that work we find rest unto our souls. Our positive mental outlook is founded upon His exceeding great and precious promises. These promises provide a firm foundation which enables us to "wait" upon the Lord with a bright-eyed confidence that He will never leave us or forsake us.

So to all who labor and are heavy laden we offer the resilience and refreshment that comes from waiting on the Lord.

". . . They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: thy shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

## Renewed Strength

*. . . they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; thy shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa. 40:31).*

The book of Isaiah is in two parts. There are 39 chapters in the first and 27 in the second. This can be easily remembered as it corresponds to the number of books in the Bible.

The second part has been called the "Book of Consolation" as it offers assurance to the People of God following the Exile. There is something about a slave mentality that is morbid and depressing. There is something electrifying about freedom.

Have you ever noticed the difference in locker rooms following a football game? Both teams played the same amount of time and exerted approximately the same amount of effort. Their locker rooms, however, are dramatically different. One is filled with laughter and excitement . . . the other with frowns and depression. One is filled with back slapping energy . . . the other with weariness and fatigue. The difference is above the ears. There is something about being a "winner" that transforms us.

The word in Isaiah 40:31 that is translated as "wait" is the Hebrew word "gavah." It comes from a primary root which means "to bind together" or "collect." Those that wait upon the Lord are "bound together" with Him. His triumphant power permeates every aspect of our being and we can say with assurance that "all things are working together for good."

Paul said it like this to the Corinthians: "Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ . . . (II Cor. 2:14). Beat him up and throw him in a Philippian jail and he will be singing at midnight . . . before morning his contagious faith will have infected the jailer and his whole household and they too will be rejoicing . . . oblivious to the lack of sleep.

## WORDS ARE WINDOWS

Chain Paul to a Roman soldier and he will be writing a letter of rejoicing that a Christian witness was being made throughout the whole praetorian guard (Phil. 1:13). Cripple him with some painful affliction and he will glorify God for his infirmities and find new strength through his weakness (II Cor. 12:9-10). Much of the difference is above the ears. The same sun which melts the wax will harden the clay. It all depends upon the stuff you are made of . . . and those that "wait upon the Lord: are fashioned from an indestructible confidence.

It doesn't take long for even a total stranger to discover which locker room he found. In just a few moments he will be able to discern whether they are winners, or losers. The same principle applies to the church.

The late Mike Pratt once observed that some song leaders in church perform like cheer leaders on a losing team. Whatever enthusiasm is whipped up is too artificial to be enduring. People come to such a gathering and leave deflated and depressed.

A close personal friend visited an alive and vibrant congregation in California and described them as having a certain "glow." "Eureka"! They had apparently found that beautiful relationship with God which "renewed their strength." Like eagles they could soar above their pain and problems with the assurance of victory. They could run and not be weary . . . they could walk and not faint.

The secret is found in "waiting" upon the Lord. Human energy is not sufficient for the crises of life. His infinite power is able to accomplish exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think.

Therefore, let us wait upon the Lord.

## **Warn . . . Comfort . . . Support . . . Be Patient**

*Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men (I Thess. 5:14).*

A Gallup Poll conducted some time ago indicated that adult church attendance in the U.S. has decreased from 49% in 1958 to 42% in 1969. At the same time the number of Protestant missionaries sent from North America has declined for the first time since the depression years of the 1930's. These missionary statistics were published in August in the ninth edition of North American protestant Ministries Overseas Directory. At the same time the March 16, 1970 U.S. News and World Report indicates that violent crime is up 131% from 1960 to 1969 while our population increased only 13% during the same period of time.

It is not pleasant or popular to face up to such realities, but sometime we must remove our heads from the sand and admit what has happened to the world. There are several courses of action which confront the Christian. We can continue as we are; we can run like rabbits to burrow into some bomb shelter or isolated retreat; or we can penetrate and conquer the world like Christ commanded us to do.

The church has ceased to be an invading army concerned with the conquest of society. We have shriveled up into little clubs that hire professionals to do our fighting for us. "Ministry" is not something that we do for God but something which we feel God, or God's servants ought to do for us. As we stand upon the threshold of 1971 it is time we overhauled our thinking and got busy. The above scripture provides inspired direction and guidance as we seek to do something about a lost world and a decadent church.

First of all let it be observed that these instructions are given to the “brethren.” These words are not just for church officers and leaders but they are for every person who claims Christ as King.

The Christians who need help are divided by God into three different categories, viz.: the unruly, the feebleminded, and the weak. Each group is to be dealt with in a different way. The unruly are to be warned, the feebleminded are to be comforted, and the weak are to be supported. We are to have patience toward everyone.

*Warn the unruly* – The word translated “warn” means to “put in mind” and is translated as “admonish” in verse 12. It is not just bawling someone out but is a warning based upon instruction. The word translated “unruly” is a military term and refers to soldiers who are out of rank. An army with its soldiers out of rank will be of little value. The confusion created by men who are out of place and out of order has seriously impaired the work of Christ’s church upon earth and all such men are to be “warned” by the brethren. It needs to be emphasized again that this responsibility is incumbent upon all Christians and not just upon elders or church leaders.

*Comfort the feebleminded* – The word translated “feebleminded” literally means “small-souled” and is translated as “fainthearted” in the revision. It refers to those who are dispirited, downhearted, and downcast. Such individuals are not to be “warned” but are to be “comforted”. The word “comfort” literally means “calling to ones side.” How beautiful and appropriate are the instructions of God.

*Support the weak* – The word for “weak” literally means “strengthless” and is sometimes translated as “feeble” or “sick.” The word “support” means “to hold oneself opposite” and by implication “to adhere to.”

*Patient toward all* – the word for “patience” means to be long spirited and for-bearing. It is the same word used in I Corinthians 13:4 – Love is “patient.” Vine calls it “that quality

WARN . . . COMFORT . . . SUPPORT . . . BE PATIENT

of self-restraint in the face of provocation that does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish.”

Here then is some timely and appropriate advice for the New Year. “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”

## Two Kinds of Wisdom

When all the activities of earth are reduced to their lowest common denominator we find that only two forces have been at work. One force for good . . . and the other for evil. Sometimes evil appears to be good, for a time, and vice versa, but in the final analysis the simple dichotomy God and Satan is a valid explanation for life as we know it.

The book of James was directed to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion. It is a matter of record that Jewish converts were involved in a serious and long standing dispute which threatened to destroy the primitive church. The controversy manifested itself in Antioch (Acts 15:1ff) Jerusalem (Acts 21:20ff) Crete (Titus 1:10) Rome (Rom. 14:1ff) and in virtually every other part of the Mediterranean world. It formed the basis for Paul's letter to the Galatians. It is the background for understanding the opposition to Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth. To properly grasp this issue is to take a giant stride toward a proper understanding of a large segment of New Testament Scripture.

The Jewish teachers who traveled the earth attempting to destroy the work of Paul, undoubtedly felt that they were doing God a service. The "debates, envyings, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults" which usually accompanied their efforts, however, indicates a different type of wisdom than God employs.

This truth is brought graphically to our attention in James 3:13ff. After emphasizing the power of a teacher's influence and therefore the strict judgement which all teachers must face, these words are utilized to delineate and describe two types of wisdom:

### EARTHLY WISDOM

*Bitter Envyng* – The word translated "envying" is "zelos"

## TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

which means "an envious and contentious rivalry."

*Earthly* – "epigelos" terrestrial

*Sensual* – "psuchike" animal, as in Jude 19

*Devilish* – "diamoniodes" proceeding from or resembling demons

*Confusion* – "akatastasia" disorder, tumults, anarchy

*Evil* – "phaulon" worthless

### WISDOM FROM ABOVE

*Peaceable* – "eirenike" a state of tranquility like Eden.

*Gentle* – "epieikes" the fruit of the Spirit which makes us like Jesus.

*Easy to be entreated* – "eupetithes" easily obeying, complaint

*Mercy* – "eleous" a readiness to help those in trouble

*Good fruits* – beneficial and constructive results

*Without Partiality* – "adiakritos" wrangling, uncertainty, indecision

*Without Hypocrisy* – "anupokritos" sincere, unfeigned, undisguised

Wars, fightings, killings and covetousness do not originate with God. For God is not the author of confusion . . . but of peace. When God completed Eden it was a model of "peace." There was no need for bloodshed, for even the animals ate vegetation. The author of confusion, however, was more subtle and deceptive than any beast of the field. His cunning devices lured man to tamper with that wisdom from above and thus turned our earth into a snarling jungle.

There are two types of wisdom in the world. One is from the earth and brings misery, heartache, and despair. The other is from above and brings joy unspeakable and full of glory. Choose you this day which you will serve . . . as for me and my house . . . we will serve the Lord.

## The Word of God is Alive

*For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged 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).*

The word of God is alive. It strikes through the veneer that is seen by human eyes and exposes the very thoughts and motives of a man's heart. Like a seed which is planted it takes root in the innermost recesses of the soul and transforms by the renewing of the mind. In the words of the Psalmist - "The doctrine of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19:7).

The Gideons International recently contained the following illustrations regarding the power of the word.

Over two million English-Japanese Testaments were given to university students in Japan. Mike Kumai, orphaned by the bombing of Hiroshima, received one at the University of Yokohama. He hated everything that was Western but during periods of discouragement he found himself drawn to the pages of God's word. The power of the word transformed his life. Today he is a preacher of the gospel broadcasting the Good News from station HCJB of Ouito, Ecuador to the 600,000 Japanese in Brazil and Paraguay. Hundreds of letters are received each month from interested listeners. Mike's wife also has a program and instructs 234 students by means of a Bible correspondence course. The word of God did not return void.

Many years ago a man read the Bible in his hotel room. He became a Christian and then led his family to Christ. From this family have come 17 preachers of the gospel, among whom is Willard Cantelon, artist and missionary evangelist. The power of the gospel initiated a chain reaction that will bring many more conversions in years to come.

Sometimes even an unopened Bible can produce conviction.

A couple checked into a Reno, Nevada, hotel. Minutes later, the woman asked the manager to pick up her luggage. "Is something wrong?" he asked. "No. Well yes," she replied. "This man is not my husband. I was brought up in Sunday School and when I saw that Bible, I could not continue with what I had planned. Can you recommend a minister who can pray with me?"

Perhaps the most thrilling story in this particular issue was regarding a family of atheists who lived in Norfolk, Virginia. The father was the president of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. When their son, Ben, was killed in Korea, his body was shipped home for burial. The father threw himself across the casket and cursed the God he claimed he did not believe in. Later, Ben's belongings arrived home. When his mother opened his possessions, she found a Gideon Testament \_ on the back was a signed statement that Ben had become a Christian. Through this single testament the entire family was won to Christ. The daughter is a missionary and the son is Pastor Sutterfield who told the Gideons this story.

After considerable reflection it seems evident that there is some connection between a weak and powerless church and Biblical illiteracy. Many church members can attend both Sunday School and church services and yet scarcely hear the word of God even referred to. Frequently sermons are long on illustrations, jokes, and current events, but pitifully short on exposition of the Bible. We will never have the kind of church we need until the people of God become so conversant with the word of God that divine thoughts captivate and control our lives.

Ponder these words of apostolic benediction: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

## Whom Having Not Seen Ye Love

“Proskuneo” is a Greek word which means to “worship.” It comes from “pros” – towards and “kuneo” – to kiss. James Strong in his Exhaustive Concordance defines it as “to kiss, like a dog licking his master’s hand. . . .”

almost everyone can frame a mental image of the faithful dog crouching obediently and licking his master’s hand. This is the kind of reverence and obedience which mankind is to give to God.

The loyal dog, however, has no capacity to worship an abstraction. He can frequently be trained to obey many commands from a master whom he can see, but he is totally incapable of worshipping a master whom he cannot see.

Thus, man emerges as something unique in the world which God has created. Every other creature is limited to the experiences which time and space place within the reach of five senses. Man is endowed with a sixth sense. He has been created in the image of God himself. He has the capacity to transcend the realities of time and space and to experience “reality” in a new dimension.

The antenna which permits us to experience this phenomenon is faith. Faith is the “substance” of things hoped for and the “evidence” of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). The word for “substance” comes from “hupo” (under) and “stasis” (standing) and refers to that which stands under like a foundation. Faith is the foundation which enables us to experience the reality of God. It is the indisputable “evidence” of things which the physical eye cannot see.

Therefore, Peter could write about the trial of faith and the resultant glory which we will experience at the appearing of Jesus Christ “whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though

now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (I Pet. 1:8-9).

Thomas the "twin" said he would not believe until he could put his finger in the nail prints and thrust his hand into the Master's side. When confronted by the risen Christ, he cried out, "My Lord and my God." Jesus responded, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

It is our privilege to have this kind of faith. No living person has experienced Christ with the five senses. The risen Lord is at the right hand of God waiting for the grand conclusion of human history. The only way to experience Him is by "faith." Therefore, we hear the testimony of Scripture and consider the evidence of the preached word and arrive at a crossroad which calls upon us to make a decision.

By faith we transcend the physical world in which we live and "receive" Jesus Christ into our hearts. We have never seen Him with human eyes or touched Him with human hands yet He becomes a "reality" in our lives. We "believe" and therefore we "receive."

Though we commit our love to One whom we have not seen the validity of our faith is made manifest by an abundance of physical evidence. The presence of the Holy Spirit produces fruit. The unseen impulses which we accept by faith begin a marvelous process of transformation. Our hatred is replaced by love, our sadness by joy, and our turmoil by peace. The change within is verified by behavior modification.

It is joy unspeakable and full of glory and brings about not only an abundance of happiness in the world which now is, but eternal life in the world which is to come.

## Whom . . . or What?

In a recent conversation with Stuart York I was given this quotation from Joe Dampier. "Our faith is not propositional, it is personal. Paul did not say I know WHAT I have believed, but WHOM."

This states succinctly something which I have been thinking for many months. The faith "once for all delivered to the saints" involved the identity of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the apostles was that God had pitched His tent on earth and any who denied this doctrine of the incarnation represented the spirit of the antichrist (I John 4:3). The false teachers of the First Century were those who would deny the Lord that brought them (II Pet. 2:1).

Our faith is not propositional, it is personal.

The original converts at Pentecost had no alternative. There was no "official position" on anything but Jesus. The first book of N.T. Scriptures would not be written for many years. The N.T. canon would not be complete until near the close of the First century, and the N.T. canon would not be officially accepted until the fourth century.

Our faith, however, is not propositional, it is personal.

The Christians at Rome did not agree about many things. They did not agree about foods and fasts, and days of worship (see Rom. 14). They did, however, agree about Jesus and it was upon this foundation that they experienced a oneness with one another in spite of their differences.

The church at Corinth had similar problems. Since they didn't have Bibles to study on their own they were indebted to various preachers for whatever perspectives or emphasis they came to accept. Thus, we see the emergence of schism in the church. The solution to the problem was not to have the brethren concur with any preacher . . . not even with Paul.

The faith of the Corinthians was to be in the person of Jesus

## WHOM . . . OR WHAT?

Christ. I Corinthians 3:11 states it like this: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The context involves unity. They were experiencing envy, strife, and jealousy (v. 3). they were identifying with human leaders (v. 4). There were many "things" that they did not have in common, but there was "someone" that they did have in common. It was on this foundation they were to unite and build.

We have a great many advantages over our brethren in the First Century. Most of us who are English speaking people usually have several Bibles at our disposal and sometimes these are in a variety of versions. We, also, have concordances and commentaries and a great many other study helps to aid us in understanding and interpreting the Scriptures. Our wide access to differing perspectives also leaves us with a great many points of disagreement.

When we talk about "what" we believe we are sometimes estranged by our differences. When we talk about "whom" we believe we are standing upon a foundation stone which binds us together in love.

## **The Manifold Wisdom of God**

It doesn't take an intellectual giant to recognize that man has created a colossal mess upon this planet. In the name of progress we have stock-piled enough nuclear bombs and poison gasses to destroy the world's population many times over. Great minds are at least coming to realize that the real problems we face are moral and ethical and not scientific.

Hear the testimony of the late Albert Einstein, "The real problem is in the hearts and minds of men. It is not a problem of physics, but of ethics. It is easier to denature plutonium . . . than denature the evil spirit of man. What frightens us is not the explosive bomb, but the equally explosive power of personalities." Einstein continued, "Man's skills have outstripped his morals. His engineering has leaped ahead of his wisdom. We cannot cancel or call back his scientific advance, but we can and must, if the world is to survive, help man to catch up. In God's name," said Einstein, "if you still believe in God, take Him seriously, and somehow get control of what science has given to the world, or else - we shall all like wise perish.

After twenty centuries of experimenting with externals we are at last approaching the crux of man's problem. In the final analysis we have come to fear the perversity of human nature. We tremble at the prospect of dictators expressing their paranoia by the berserk detonation of hydrogen weapons and the suicidal release of nerve gas. Every new discovery compounds the enigma instead of solving it. We now realize that to change men's nature is the most critical problem facing the Twentieth Century.

This brings us, a little belatedly to the "manifold wisdom of God." Jesus did not come to earth to add a new dimension to education or to build a better mousetrap. He came to redeem humanity. His plan did not involve externals, it dealt with renewing the heart. The transformed individual had buried his

## THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD

bias in the grave of baptism. Gone was the bitterness and animosity that characterized the old man of sin, and in its place was a new nature that radiated love.

Before the foundation of the world the Omniscient One decided to use the assembly of Christians to express His many sided wisdom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. 3:10-11). This unique organism has survived the storms of the centuries and penetrated every continent on earth. It now stands as the one and only hope for a doomed world. The transforming of the human heart will never come from the conferences of great governments or the wisdom of political heads of state. The longer we seek to solve our problems by human might and wisdom the more tangled and difficult is the crisis we face. Now is the time for each to individually turn to God.

“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 (II Chron. 7:14).

# Patterns

As a young preacher I was taught that we were to build the church "according to the pattern" (Heb. 8:5). I assumed that just as Moses was given specific instructions regarding the dimensions and materials for the tabernacle, the Christian was given specific instructions regarding the government or structure of the local congregation. This I construed to be the "pattern" and sincerely felt that anyone neglecting the "pattern" would be stricken by God as in the case of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-7). I now conclude that I was wrong in my understanding of the biblical useage of the word "pattern."

For your information here are the words translated as "pattern" in the N.T. Scriptures:

1. *Tupos* - this comes from the word which means "to strike." It means "An impression or mark of a blow," "a seal, stamp or die," "form, mold, pattern." It is used 16 times and is variously translated as: "ensample 5, example 2, fashion 1, figure 1, form 1, manner 1, pattern 2, print 2."
2. *Hupodeigma* - this is from the Greek word "hupo" under and the word "deiknumi" to show. It is used six times and is translated as ensample 1, example 4 and pattern 1.
3. *Hupotuposis* - this means to "outline, sketch." Thayer associates it with a pattern to be held up and copied. It is used two times and is translated as form once and pattern once.

\**Hupogrammos* is used only once (I Pet. 2:21) but is so similar to the words for "pattern" that I feel constrained to include it here. It literally means "under writing" and refers to letters which were traced or copied. *Deigma* is also similar and is used one time in Jude 7.

## PATTERNS

Here is the way these words are used in the Scriptures:

1. Adam was a "figure" or "pattern" of Jesus (Rom. 5:14).
2. The tabernacle, etc. were "patterns" of spiritual realities in the heavens (Acts 7:44, Heb. 8:5, 9:23).
3. O.T. prophets were "patterns" or "examples" for those suffering or in need of patience.
4. Jesus gave a "pattern" or "example" by washing the disciples' feet (John 13:15). When he was persecuted he also gave us an \*example that we should follow in his steps (I Pet. 2:21).
5. Paul became a "pattern" or "example" by means of his conversion (I Tim. 1:16), his personal conduct (Phil. 3:17), and his willingness to work (II Thess. 3:9).
6. Timothy was to be a "pattern" in good works, uncorrupt teaching, gravity and sincerity (Titus 2:7).
8. Elders are not to be lords over God's people but "patterns" or "examples" to the flock (I Pet. 5:3).
9. Timothy was to hold fast a "form" or "pattern" of sound words (II Tim. 1:13). The word "sound" means "healthy" and refers not to the governmental structure of a local assembly but to the moral conduct of one's personal life. (See I Tim. 1:9-10; II Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; Titus 2:1.)

Negative Patterns:

1. Israel is a "pattern" or "example" to us that we should not "lust after evil things" (I Cor. 10:6), "murmur" and "be destroyed" (I Cor. 10:11), or fall after their "pattern" or "example" of unbelief (Heb. 4:11).
2. Sodom and Gomorrha are "patterns or examples for those who want to live ungodly lives (II Pet. 2:6; \*Jude 7).

## **You Are the Salt of the Earth**

Salt is not something which you try to become in Christ. It is what you are in Christ. Here are a few attributes of salt which can provide insight into the nature of our Lord's disciples.

1. Salt was precious in the days of Jesus. It was so valuable that Roman soldiers received a salt allowance along with their pay. Our word "salary" literally means "payment in salt." To this day we say of one who does not measure up that "he is not worth his salt." The fact that Jesus referred to His disciples as salt is a strong indication of how precious and valuable they were to Him.

2. Salt was the best preservative known in the time of Jesus. Sometimes when a corpse was to be transported a long distance it was packed in salt. When a covenant or compact between two parties was to be ratified they ate salt together. The covenant which God made with Israel required that salt accompany every cereal offering.

You shall season all your cereal offerings with salt; you shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be lacking from your cereal offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt (Lev. 2:13).

Our ancestors knew the preserving character of salt and found it indispensable in the preserving of food without refrigeration.

Salt does not make a lot of noise or whip up excitement, but it works quietly, gently, and effectively to preserve our culture from further decay and disintegration.

3. Salt was a purifying agent in the days of Jesus. It was believed to possess antiseptic qualities and when a soldier received a spear wound the hole in the flesh was often tamped full of salt to prevent infection. It was used by Elisha to purify a spring of water (II Kings 2:22) and is illustrative of what Chris-

## YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

tians are to be in a society that is infected by sin.

4. Salt increases the palatability of food. All of us have eaten attractively prepared food in which the cook had forgotten to put salt. It tastes flat and insipid. We feel a sense of compassion for one who has to be on a salt-free diet. Life without the Christian influence is also flat.

It bothers a great many people that Christians seem to have so little influence upon the world in general. There is no simple answer, but it must not be forgotten that salt will do no good while huddling in the shaker. And a great many in our day are trapped inside of religious structures. Here they hold services instead of rendering them. They carry on religious exercises while the world is dying at the doorstep. Lewis Mumford calls these institutional forms of religion "a mere husk of habit."

In his book, *New Light on the Gospels*, Clifford A. Wilson says it was a Jewish tradition that when salt became unfit for use on sacrifices it was sprinkled upon the temple steps in rainy weather to keep the priests from slipping. Barclay makes reference to unfit salt which was thrown on the roadways. Let us never allow our salt to lose its savor and thus be consigned to an all but meaningless existence.

Jesus does not say, "If the salt has lost its strength, I shall have to try something else." There is nothing else. It is you or nothing! If you fail, the question is, "With what shall the earth be salted"? The answer is that it will not be. You are the last divine thrust into the world. Jesus was the Son of God made flesh. You are flesh made a son of God.

Condensed from *Adventure In Faith*  
by W. Carl Ketcherside

## **Bible Facts About Shoes**

Shoes in Bible times were quite simple, and very inexpensive. They usually consisted of a simple piece of leather, wood, or perhaps the bark from a palm tree, which was bound to the foot by a leather thong, or "shoe-latchet." The simple design of this ancient footwear is reflected by both the Hebrew and Greek words for "shoe." The Hebrew word for "shoe" is "na'al" which literally signified "that which is fastened." The Greek word for "shoe" is "hupodema" which means "to bind under." Because these "shoes" offered no protection from the dust of the roadway, facilities for the washing of feet were found in the doorway of almost every dwelling.

These ancient shoes were so simple and easy to construct that their low cost was proverbial. For example, when Abraham returned from the slaughter of the Eastern kings, he demonstrated his integrity by declining to keep even a "thread" or a "shoelatchet" that belonged to anyone else (Gen. 14:23). When the prophet Amos condemned ancient Israel for their utter disregard for the poor he accused them of "selling the poor for a pair of shoes" (Amos 2:6, 8:6).

Since sandals were not worn indoors, anyone who put them on indicated a readiness for activity. Thus ancient Israel ate the Passover with their loins girded and their shoes on (Exod. 12:11). This indicated that they were ready to flee from Egypt. When Peter escaped from prison the angel said, "bind on thy sandals" (Acts 12:8). Christians are to have their feet "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15). It is interesting, and perhaps significant to note that individuals approaching God were given divine instructions to remove their shoes (Exod. 3:5, Josh. 5:15).

The Bible makes reference to some very interesting customs relating to the shoe. It was a law among the Hebrew people that a childless widow was to marry her husband's brother. Any

man who refused this responsibility was to be publically disgraced. The widow would bring the man before the elders, take off his shoe . . . and spit in his face. "And his name shall be called in Israel, the house of him that hath his shoe loosed" (Deut. 25:5-10). Another custom is mentioned in Ruth 4:7. Though the circumstances are very similar with those mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, the expression, "a man plucked off his shoe" "to confirm all things" seems to indicate that at some period in Hebrew history a shoe was given to signify the transfer of possession. As a man possessed land by walking upon it, a shoe was given to consummate a bargain. Perhaps this explains the scripture, "Over Edom will I cast out my shoe," in other words, "claim it as my own."

Shoes with blood on them was a figurative expression denoting war (I Kings 2:5).

Men of rank frequently assigned slaves the lowly task of caring for their shoes. John the Baptist made reference to this practice when he said that he was not worthy to unloose the latchet of Christ's shoes (Luke 3:16), or to bear them (Matt. 3:11).

These ancient shoes apparently did not wear very well. Joshua 9:5 indicates that a pair of shoes could be worn out in a single journey. Yet God provided for Israel in such a miraculous way that their shoes did not wear out in 40 years of wilderness wandering (Deut. 29:5). Isaiah 5:27 indicates that God is able to provide divine strength which will eliminate the necessity of weariness and slumber. These words are enforced by the promise " . . . nor shall the latchet of their shoes be broken."

Ladies of distinction wore shoes of badger skin (Ezek. 16:10). Women's shoes were frequently very attractive (Song of Sol. 7:1) and sometimes were adorned with tinkling ornaments (Isa. 3:18).

The most beautiful feet of all, however, belong to those who preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things (Rom. 10:15).

*THE SHOEMAKER'S PRAYER*

Here is a pair of shoes, dear God. As I hold them in my hand a wave of emotion sweeps across my soul. Perhaps these shoes will someday be scattered in the midst of blood and broken glass beside some highway. Perhaps these shoes will creep quietly through some darkened doorway to rob, to plunder, and to destroy. Perhaps these shoes will rot away in some forgotten prison cell . . . and so dear God . . . I pray for these shoes. You have promised that not even a sparrow can fall from the heavens without your knowledge . . . surely it is not wrong for me to pray for these shoes. I pray that these shoes may ever walk in paths of righteousness. I pray that they will never feel the inside of a prison cell . . . the rugged abuse of violence . . . or the staining touch of human blood. I pray that these shoes will be acquainted with quiet times of prayer and meditation. I ask that they will be found in church or Christian service . . . perhaps by the bedside of a sick friend . . . close by to the bereaved . . . and often by an open Bible. May these shoes be characterized by laughter and radiant joy as they bring warmth, comfort, and protection to the feet of your precious children . . . may they help us to walk these paths of earth in such a way that when they are removed a final time our feet will walk on streets of pure gold.

## Be Still . . .

*Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth . . . (Psa. 46:10).*

Please consider the context.

. . . trouble, v. 1.

. . . earth removed and mountains carried into the sea, v. 2.

. . . waters roaring and mountains shaking, v. 3.

. . . heathen raged, kingdoms moving, earth melting, v. 6.

. . . wars ceasing, bows breaking, spears cut in sunder, chariots burning, v. 9.

. . . BE STILL, v. 10.

Lord, what are you talking about? This is not time to be still. The earth is moving, the mountains are shaking, the water is roaring, the heathen are raging.

The Lord said, "Be still."

But, Lord, there is so much to be done. With trouble like this I'm going to have to work harder than ever before in my life.

The Lord said, "Be still."

But, Lord, you don't understand! The Egyptians have us trapped. The chariots of Pharaoh have us surrounded. On the one side is a wide, impassable sea and on the other is death from a pagan spear.

The Lord said, "Stand still . . ." (Exod. 14:13).

But now we have a theological problem. Certain men have been defiled by a dead body and cannot keep the passover. We're confused, Lord, what do we do?

Moses said, "Stand still . . ." (Num. 9:8).

Saul was destined to be the King of Israel. He had been busy in the futile search for his father's lost animals. He needed to cease from the frustration of his activity and hear the Word of the Lord.

Samuel besought him, "Stand thou still . . ." (I Sam. 9:27).

## WORDS ARE WINDOWS

Jehosaphat was worried. The Ammonites, the Moabites and the inhabitants of Mount Seir had conspired to defeat Judah, and the people of the Lord had no power to stand before them. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehaziel and he prophesied.

“Stand ye still . . . ” (Job 37:14).

If God would speak in the mighty winds that rend the mountains, we could hear His words above the bustle of activity around us. But sometimes the voice of God is not in the wind. If God would speak through the rumble of the earthquake, we could hear His voice above the clash of confusion resounding in our troubled world. But sometimes the voice of God is not in the earthquake.

If God would speak from the crackling tumult of a raging fire, we could focus on His message in spite of the raucous distractions which clamor for our attention. But sometimes the voice of God is not in the fire.

Sometimes the message of God is wrapped in the fabric of a “still small voice.” In times like these we must draw aside from Martha and the clatter of the kitchen and sit like Mary at the feet of Jesus. In times like these we need to take leave of the grinding gears of traditional treadmills on the plains of conformity and climb with Jesus to some lofty mountain peak of transformation where God can be heard with clarity and new horizons can be viewed with a fresh perspective.

When the waters roar and the mountains quake . . . be still and know that He is God!

## Hebrew Words

<i>Word</i>	<i>Page</i>
ab (father) .....	13, 25
ashar (to be straight) .....	200
ay-yar (city) .....	30
baar (brutish) .....	78
chazown (vision) .....	199
dakka (contrite) .....	137
ebuwk (crib) .....	32
ed (witness) .....	61, 62
ednah (pleasure) .....	142
esher (happy) .....	200
gavah (wait) .....	201, 203
kabod (glory) .....	143
kadhash (the sanctified one) .....	97
kaphar (cover) .....	106
kesil (sluggishness) .....	78
kippurim (atonement) .....	106
naal (that which is fastened) .....	222
nabal (fool) .....	78
nehustan (made of brass) .....	124, 125
para (perish) .....	199, 200
pethi (simple) .....	78
ra (evil) .....	36
sakhai (thickheaded) .....	78
sharath (wait) .....	201
taphel (insipid) .....	78
tawn (plain) .....	47
teshugah (desire) .....	53
toholah (folly) .....	78
yad-dah (cunning) .....	47

## Greek Words

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abba (daddy) . . . . .	13, 15
adiakritos (wrangling) . . . . .	209
aistheterion (senses) . . . . .	64
akribos (accurately) . . . . .	17
akros (highest) . . . . .	17
akastasia (confusion) . . . . .	34, 36, 209
anecho (hold up) . . . . .	80
anechomai (forebearance) . . . . .	156
anupokritos (sincere) . . . . .	195, 196, 209
apelpizo (despair) . . . . .	26
brephos (infant, child) . . . . .	21, 22
deiknumi (to show) . . . . .	218
deilia (cowardice) . . . . .	75
dialogismou (disputing) . . . . .	149
diamoniodes (devilish) . . . . .	209
dichostasia (divisions) . . . . .	92
didymus (twin) . . . . .	163
diemai (to chase) . . . . .	135
dioko (to follow, persecute) . . . . .	135
eidos (to see) . . . . .	83
eirene (peace) . . . . .	35
eirenike (peaceable) . . . . .	209
ekballo (send) . . . . .	169
ekthra (enmity) . . . . .	91
elenchos (evidence) . . . . .	68
eleous (mercy) . . . . .	209
eritheia (strife) . . . . .	92
epieikes (gentle) . . . . .	209
epigeios (earthly) . . . . .	209
eris (debate) . . . . .	51, 91

GREEK WORDS

eulabeia (fearful) . . . . .	75
eupeithes (easy to be intreated) . . . . .	209
exaporeo (out of a way through) . . . . .	26
exousia (power) . . . . .	161
gegumnasmena (exercised) . . . . .	64
geuo (taste) . . . . .	185
hairesis (heresy) . . . . .	93
hedone (pleasure) . . . . .	89
hisamos (propitiation) . . . . .	106
hupodeigma (example or pattern) . . . . .	218
hupogrammos (under writing) . . . . .	218
hupostasis (sustance) . . . . .	68, 212
hupotuposis (pattern) . . . . .	83, 218
kataphilesea (kiss fervently) . . . . .	109
katastrophe (subverting) . . . . .	24, 25
mathetes (disciple) . . . . .	55
metamorphoo (changed) . . . . .	84
metanoeo (repent) . . . . .	158
mimetes (imitators) . . . . .	98
mone (mansion) . . . . .	122, 137
morphe (form) . . . . .	83
morphosis (form or outline) . . . . .	83
oikodome (edify) . . . . .	42
orge (wrath) . . . . .	149
ou (no) . . . . .	126
oude (neither, not even) . . . . .	126
ou me (no, not by any means) . . . . .	126
paradidomi (helper) . . . . .	129
pater (father) . . . . .	13
philesen (kiss) . . . . .	109
phaulon (evil) . . . . .	209

WORDS ARE WINDOWS

phobos (fear) . . . . .	75
pneumatikos (spiritual) . . . . .	177
poieo (make, or do) . . . . .	145
polema (made) . . . . .	145
prautes (meekness) . . . . .	52
proseuchesthai (prayer) . . . . .	149
proskuneo (worship) . . . . .	212
psuchike (sensual) . . . . .	209
sepo (rotten) . . . . .	42
skandalon (stumbling block) . . . . .	167
sukophanteo (accuse falsely) . . . . .	38
sunecho (constrain) . . . . .	40
symmorphizomenos (becoming like) . . . . .	84
thumos (wrath) . . . . .	92, 149
tupos (form or pattern) . . . . .	83, 218
tolmao (durst) . . . . .	59
zelos (envying) . . . . .	208