Volume Fifteen

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Souls — Lost

Millions and millions of precious souls
Grope through a world of night;
They have no Savior's hand to hold
To lead them to the Light.
The gods they have are made by hands,
Yet blindly do they serve;
For hardly a man has gone to them
To teach the Master's word.
They have not learned the sweetest name
That mortal lips can say;
They do not know that Jesus died
To take their sins away.
They do not know the Saviour said:
"Ye weary, come to me."
They have not heard of His blood-shed.
They'll die and never see.

Like they, we too shall cease to live —
We're looking toward a rest;
We long to see that heavenly home
And dwell there with the blest.
But will God say, "Well done, my sons,"
And take us home with Him
When those poor souls we should have
taught
In blindness stand condemned?
Oh, brother, let us see them saved,
Let's work while yet 'tis day,
And tell them Jesus died for them
To show that heavenward way.
Yes, millions and millions of precious souls,
Just waiting to be taught;

Will they die, just waiting still,
Or will we teach them
As we ought?

— Author Unknown

The Voice of Truth International

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"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

The churches of Christ salute you (Romans 16:16).

ARE THE UNTAUGHT SAVED?

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

There are comparatively few in the church who are doing what Jesus said we should do: to take the gospel to all mankind. The question is, Why? Surveys show that many, especially among our college-age young people, believe that those who have never heard the gospel will be saved in the judgment, because they did not know God's commands.

Based on this reasoning, the conclusion would be that if people *are not lost in their state of ignorance,* we should *not* take the gospel to them because if we do teach them and they *reject* the message of salvation, they will have no excuse and will stand condemned in the day of judgment!

Obviously, those who believe that the masses are safe, having never heard the gospel, will not be making any great effort to take the Lord's message of salvation to them. And it is true that if they will be eternally saved *because of their ignorance,* then we are doing them a great disservice to teach them.

While the foregoing may sound *logical,* it is not *biblical.* The fact is that people are not lost because of *whether or not they have heard the gospel;* they are lost *because they are in sin and are sinners.* Since they are sinners, if they die without the forgiveness of their sins they will be lost for all eternity.

But how can they be saved? They must be taught the gospel, that Jesus Christ can save them, but even after hearing His will they must

still obey the gospel to be saved (Mark 16:15,16). The Lord is coming back to take vengeance on all who *know not God* and all who *obey not the gospel* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Please notice that Paul says that the Lord will return to punish those who are *ignorant of God,* and those who have become knowledgeable of His will but have not *obeyed* Him. Peter asked, *"For the time is come that judgment must* ***begin*** *at the house of God: and if it first begin at us,* ***what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?*** *And if the righteous* ***scarcely*** *be saved,* ***where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"*** (1 Peter 4:17,18). The answer is obvious.

When man and woman disobeyed God in the garden, their eyes were opened and they became sinners. While no one is born with the guilt of the sins of Adam and Eve, once a person reaches the age of understanding right from wrong, he does become a sinner. Paul says that all accountable beings are sinners (Romans 3:23), and that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). That being true, if the sinner will obey God's will (Mark 16:16) he can be saved, and if he continues to walk in the steps of Christ, then the blood of Jesus Christ will continue to cleanse him from all of his sins so he can be saved in heaven (1 John 1:7).

But how is the sinner to know God's will? He must be taught. That is why the Lord commanded the Apostles, and all who would follow them in the timeline of Christianity, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Matthew said that we must go and teach all nations (Matthew 28:19,20). But why do that if man was *already* saved, and if people are saved today simply because they do not know what God asks of them?

But can you imagine the Lord *saving people because of their ignorance* of His will and then *condemning us for disobeying Him* in not taking the gospel to them — but then if we take the gospel to them *that might cause them to be lost because of their subsequent failure to obey it?* What a mixed up world that would be! The message that is intended to save would actually become the means of condemnation! But the truth is that the ignorant are already lost *because of their sins* and their *only hope* is

for us to take the gospel to them.

If man could have been saved in ignorance, why did the Lord have to die on the cross to pay the price for salvation and to give the hope of eternal life? **Ignorance, in such a case, would become a more powerful savior than the blood of Christ!**

But no one can be saved in sin, and therefore no one can be saved in ignorance. And, further, if we fail to take the gospel to those who do not know God, not only will they be lost because of their ignorance of how to be saved from their sin but we will also be lost because we failed to obey God, ourselves. On the other hand, if we take the gospel to them and they are lost because they failed or refused to obey it, we will be saved because we did what Jesus asked us to do.

We must remember also that the over-all world may be more knowledgeable then we realize. For instance, the Bible has been translated into most of the world's language's and copies have been circulated all over the globe. Then the Catholic and Protestant churches have sent their missionaries around the world, making the masses at least aware that there is a God and a Savior, and that the Bible is their message. Of course, much teaching has also been done by the church of Christ, through on-site mission efforts and through correspondence work. The church exists in the major countries, and even in the major cities and countless minor cities of the world.

Add to these factors the literature distribution, radio and TV programs, and numerous other means of proclaiming the teaching of Christ, and you can see that the Bible message whether in part, by error, or in its full truth, has surely reached the world to the point that most of the population should have been awaken to the fact that man is lost and needs a savior. How much God, then, holds the hearer responsible for pursuing a growing knowledge of the truths that have been initially brought to him, only the judgment will reveal.

But certainly it is our responsibility to take God's word and go on to finish the job by proclaiming the gospel of salvation to one and all. Only the blood of Christ — not ignorance — can save a soul from sin. ✞

PEACE-MAKERS: PASSIVE OR ACTIVE?

BYRON NICHOLS
MANAGING EDITOR

We are familiar with the beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew chapter 5, including the one in verse 9: *"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God."* Let's look again at this idea of peacemaking, this time from perhaps a different perspective.

Peace is a wonderful thing and should be sought after with much diligence. Peace exists because of peacemaking. We need to understand that the peace referred to by Jesus is much more than just the absence of bad things — it also involves the presence of those things which are good and spiritually healthful. It includes that which helps to bring about man's highest good. This all results from the activity of peacemakers.

Peacemakers are themselves peaceable and peace-lovers, but they are much more than that: they bring about or produce peace. They love peace enough to sacrifice themselves in an effort to create, restore, and maintain peace. Many who are *peaceable* and *lovers of peace* are unwilling to put themselves in a position of risk by becoming peace*makers*. Peace is the result of much activity and effort.

Peacemakers are children of God who love both God and

their fellow man enough to do that which is often difficult and unpleasant, that which can result in alienation and a loss of popularity. Peacemakers are willing to pay the cost that goes with presenting themselves to God as His instruments for making and maintaining peace. They sometimes suffer disappointment and discouragement as they see that their efforts are not always successful. Paul urges in Romans 12:18, *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."*

We learn here that peace will not always exist, in spite of the efforts of peacemakers and peaceable persons. Unfortunately, not everyone wants peace. Thus, peacemakers do not always succeed in their peacemaking efforts. However, Proverbs 12:20 states a principle that remains true today: *"Counselors of peace have joy."* Those who allow God to use their love for truth, righteousness, and souls truly experience joy through knowing that they have walked in the footsteps of *"the Prince of Peace"* (Isaiah 9:6).

Peace that results from the sacrifice of principle is not really peace. That one who would compromise the Word of God so that folks can "get along" is not a peacemaker. Let me say in all honesty and kindness, that person is actually a peacebreaker rather than a peacemaker.

When peace has been destroyed or is being threatened, by far the easiest course of action is to take no action at all, but to simply ignore the problem or pretend that it does not exist. Sweeping a lack of peace "under the rug" does not get rid of the matter and certainly does nothing toward correction and the making or restoring of peace. Failing to take appropriate action to eradicate a problem and restore peace is not *making* peace, but is in reality making trouble. Such decisions actually compound the lack of peace. It is just like failing to treat an illness in its early stages, only to learn later to our dismay that what became a life-threatening condition could have been avoided

with appropriate early treatment. Evading and avoiding problems does not make for peace. Again, Jesus did not say, "Blessed are those who desire peace whether or not they are willing to pursue it." Instead, He said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers . . . ."*

Elders are particularly responsible for being peacemakers. Paul discusses some qualifications and responsibilities of elders in Titus, chapter one. Beginning in verse 9, he declares that elders are to be men who know the Bible and who use the Scriptures to bring about peace by confronting and silencing those who are destroying the peace through their false teaching and deceitfulness. There are even times when the peace has been so shattered by those who are *"walking disorderly"* that the Lord would have us to *"withdraw ourselves"* from such wayward and disruptive brethren (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15), and elders must take the lead in this unpleasant action.

Peacemakers are spiritually-minded individuals who are willing and able to view situations in relation to a longer period of time rather than merely the present. They are not concerned simply with the current circumstance, but with the ultimate results which are likely, depending on what is or is not done now.

The Bible frequently refers to God as *"the God of peace"* (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20). In His beatitude in Matthew 5:9, Jesus promises that peacemakers *"shall be called sons of God."* What Jesus is saying is that by being peacemakers we can become partakers of the character of God, we can become God-like. Please be reminded, however, that this is possible only for those who promote peace by actively pursuing it. May God raise up more peacemakers, Christians who have the courage and conviction to do all within their power to bring about and preserve peace. ✝

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The Voice of Truth International

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JCC

The Language of Hands

Hands that flutter
Gesticulating,
Making accents,
Exclamations in the air;

Gentle hands
Exuding kindness,
Love, and sweet concern;

Teasing hands,
Tweaking cheeks,
Smacks of light endearment;

Serving hands,
Bringing cake,
A steaming cup of tea,
Dispensing balm for
minor hurts
And pains.

Loving hands,
With goodbye hugs
And words that speak
the soul;

Reaching hands,
Needing one last touch
To span the space
To span the time
Of separation;

Lonely hands,
Empty hands. . . .

—Betty Burton Choate

Jesus and the Extra Mile

Michael L. King

As the shadows of the cross began to fall across the path of Jesus, you could see Him struggling to go a little farther. Jesus epitomized the kind of attitude and response that He had earlier taught in His discourse on the mount (Matthew 5:38-42). Our Lord has never asked us to go places where He has not been or do things that He has not done. He truly is our "trail-blazer" in every aspect of life. It does make sense for us to *"look unto Jesus"* for the example and pattern after which we fashion our own lives. Consider some thoughts about areas in which Jesus pressed a bit further than others might have gone. When Jesus came to do the will of the Father who had sent Him (John 4:34), He took the assignment seriously. We, too, should take our responsibility seriously and be willing to *"abound in the work of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Much of the incarnate life of Christ was spent in **PRAYER**. Jesus could be found praying before daylight (Mark 1:35), in the garden (Matthew 26:36), and before His death, when His heart must have been very heavy (Hebrews 5:7). Jesus prayed in behalf of those who come to God, as their intercessor (Hebrews 7:25). During times of crisis and decision-making, Jesus prayed (John 7:5). Almost always, others were the object of His prayer life.

Jesus went further than most are willing to experience in the area of **LOVE**. Those Pharisees and Romans who made His life and ministry on earth so difficult were loved by Him. He loved His enemies and, for them, laid down His life (John 15:13). He loved those who could or would not love Him in return (Luke 6:32). The Lord's love was not just a much-talked-about and little-done kind of love, but He demonstrated His love in life and in death (Romans 5:6-8). Luke referenced his Gospel as being a *"treatise . . . of all that Jesus began both to **do and teach**"* (Acts 1:1).

How could anyone have asked for more in the area of **SACRIFICE**? He was the greatest giver of all. Jesus died, not a martyr, but as a **willing** sacrifice (John 10:18). The figurative expression has been made, with a full realization that Jesus was **nailed** to the cross, that the "Chords that bound him to the cross were: a Savior's love; loyalty to the eternal purpose of

God; and a resignation to God's will." We are instructed to *"abound"* in the grace of giving, which means "to exceed a fixed or expected amount" (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Consider the **WORK** which Jesus did during His earthly pilgrimage. Jesus explained His purpose for being on the earth as, *"I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister"* (Matthew 20:28). We know that He worked until He was weary, as was the case with the time spent with the woman at the well (John 4:6). Paul was influenced by Christ in His work, for he worked night and day (2 Corinthians 11:25). The need for sacrificial workers today is great! We can look to Jesus and the apostles to find the kind of commitment necessary to be a godly person (1 Corinthians 15:58).

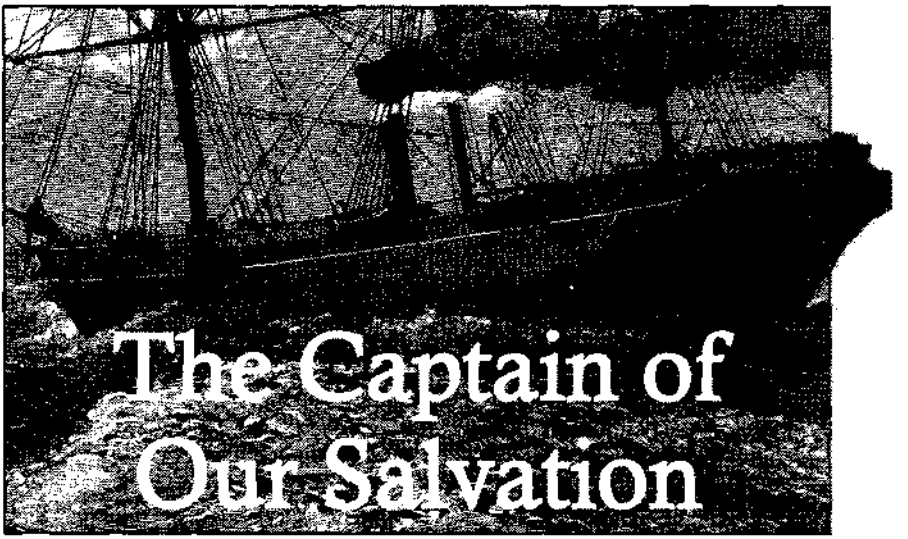
One final area is possibly the key to Jesus' willingness to extend Himself and go beyond a nominal level of service. Jesus was generous in His **SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL.** The relationship that Jesus had with His Father could be characterized by what Jesus said: *"I can of my own self do nothing . . . because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me"* (John 5:30). The language which He spoke demonstrated His submission to God, for even as He prayed He always made allowance for *"Thy will be done"* (Matthew 26:42). The life of Jesus was a fulfillment of God's mission to the world — to seek and save those who were lost, and in so doing, to honor His Father's will (Hebrews 10:7).

In virtually every area of the life of Christ, He could be found "going the extra mile." Confidence has been given to those who follow Christ, that if they *"seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"* that *"all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33).

Furthermore, we know that *"all things work together for good to them that love God"* (Romans 8:28). This passage promises that when we love God (limitation), things work (operation) together (cooperation) for our good (compensation). Our Lord has not asked that we **die** to prove our love for Him, but that we **live** for Him. *"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your spiritual service"* (Romans 12:2).

God and Christ have gone far beyond that which is deserved by those of us, the recipients. It is time now for us to respond as Isaiah of old, *"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me"* (Isaiah 6:8). ✞

Michael L. King preaches for the Grant Street Church of Christ in Decatur, Alabama, U.S.A.



The Captain of Our Salvation

Bill Dillon

On one of his ocean voyages to the South Sea Islands, Robert Louis Stevenson related that a terrible storm arose and the passengers feared the ship would be lost. One of the men finally went to the upper deck, braving the wind and the rain, to see the captain quietly pacing the bridge. With undisturbed face, the captain issued orders for the handling of the ship. The man made his way back to the other worried passengers huddled together and said, "I have seen the captain's face, and all is well!"

In 2 Corinthians 5:14 we read, *"The love of Christ compels us."* The words used here literally mean, "holds together." Christ is the "super-glue" that holds our lives together so we can be whole persons — pure, honest, upright, persons of integrity.

Amid all the sorrows and strifes, and the anxieties and confusions of our times, and amid all uneasiness over what may lie ahead, we take heart to face life courageously by centering our heart's devotion and life's desire upon the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10).

Jesus is the Revealed, the Redeeming, the Risen, the Reigning, and the Returning Lord whose example runs like a golden beam of glimmering light, piercing the darkness of uncertainty that often surrounds us.

Hebrews 12:2 says we are to be *"looking unto Jesus, the author and fin-*

isher of our faith." We arise from our knees to take hold of our responsibilities with calmer minds and fresh courage. Mary James wrote:

> Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus,
> I've lost sight of all beside.
> So enchained my spirit's vision,
> Looking at the Crucified."

Christians can be calm and controlled knowing the Captain is at the helm. ✝

Bill Dillon is editor of *Gospel Gleaner* and preaches for the Lord's church in Mountain Home, Arkansas, U.S.A.

I wonder if in the exultation of painting a tree and blending the colors of a mountain, my heart is sharing the sweet satisfaction God had in creating them?

Evidence

Barren hills and valleys
And one lonely flower
Blooming where
— by nature's law —
It would not grow:
Man was here.

Deserts dry and barren,
Bursting forth in springtime
With a million blooms
Of resurrected life:
God was here.

— Betty Burton Choate

What Does Forgiveness Mean?

The realization of guilt is a terrible burden to live with. Even in human relationships it is imperative that wrongs be erased by *penitence,* with *apologies offered* and *forgiveness received.*

In the Bible we read, *"....your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).*

How can our sins be forgiven, or *removed* from our lives? *"...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,* ***not imputing*** *their trespasses to them..."* (2 Corinthians 5:19). Through the blood of Jesus, our sins are washed away.

Forgiveness, therefore, means the removal of the sin-stain from God's record book of our lives, leaving our souls pure.

"And now, why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins..." (Acts 22:16).

Next: Can I Be Perfect?

Frank Chesser

Israel thought that God hated them and was seeking their ruin in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 1:27). Israel's refusal to think right about God led to their rebellion and a forty-year delay in reaching Canaan. No man can respond to God in love and gratitude if he is convinced that God is his enemy.

Unexcelled in the earth, Job was stripped of his wealth and stood with bowed head and broken heart over the caskets of his ten children. He was right when he declared, *"the Lord gave,"* but he was wrong when he said, *"and the Lord hath taken away"* (Job 1:21). That was Satan's action, not God's.

Job proceeded to accuse God of shooting him with arrows (6:4); crushing and wounding him without cause (9:17); laughing at the afflictions of the innocent (9:23); breaking him like a leaf (13:25); filling him with weariness and desolation (16:7); and ignoring his desperate cries for help (19:7). In all probability, Job's faulty view of God would have drowned him in despair had not God pierced the heavens with corrective instruction.

When nature runs amuck and life and property lie twisted in its wake, such tragic destruction is described as an "act of God." A drunk driver closes the eyes of a child in the sleep of death and a father blames God for taking his son. From the bed of affliction, man looks up to God, whom he views as the source of his distress, and cries, "Why me?" How can a man serve God in love and gratitude when he believes He has robbed him of his home by fire, his health by disease, and his mate by death?

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17). God is the source of health, happiness, and life, not disease, despair, and death. Conversely, every negative thing about life is the result of the influence of Satan and sin in the world. It is imperative that we think right about God. ✝

Frank Chesser is the preacher for the Panama Street Church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama, U.S.A.

The Goodness of God

Jack W. Carter

Rarely do I spend time with my God without dwelling mostly on His goodness. In this regard, I find that I can't fully express the sense of gratitude within me.

Idolatry has ever been the great sin of humanity. It had an early start in our history and it is still flourishing in many parts of our world.

I guess the foremost question on my mind is, why? Why are people determined to turn away from such a loving God to bow down in worship to objects that cannot speak, cannot act, or even know the meaning of love?

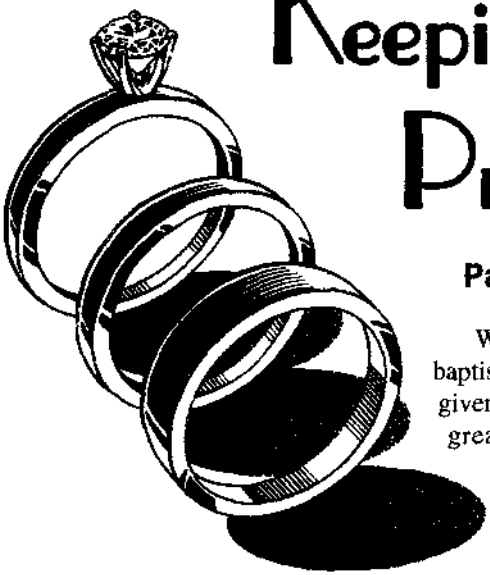
For centuries people have been trying to somehow give life to their gods. They attempt to feed them, appease them (often even with human sacrifices) and conjure up every form of superstitious ritual in the hope of coming up with a formula that will make life a little easier.

Our God doesn't need to be fed. Through the Psalmist He spoke, *"If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is mine and all it contains"* (Psalm 50:12). He doesn't want human sacrifice. Concerning this He clearly stated that it was *"a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind"* (Jeremiah 19:5).

Our God wants to love us with a warm, living love. He wants us to live with hope and the assurance that He is ever present to watch over us in every circumstance. I am so glad that we have such a loving God as our Creator and Father. I am so very glad that He is not at all what so many seem to want Him to be. ⇧

Jack Carter preaches for the Lord's church in Castle Rock, Colorado, U.S.A.

Keeping the Promise



Patrick Boynes

You know that she had to be special for him to have spent so much money on her. When the most he'd ever bought for anyone before was a tee shirt from Blackpool, a seven-diamond ring was really going to the other extreme. And it wasn't only the money. It was the selfless way he had asked her to be his bride — he'd put his money where his mouth was.

The ring was his word. It was the best way he knew how to say that his intentions were both loving and honourable. He had made a promise he planned to keep. If he gave the ring, he would later give himself. It was his guarantee.

When John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, he spoke of One greater who would baptize the people with the *Holy Spirit.* Before Jesus departed this earth, He told His followers that He would send the gift His Father had *promised,* the one they had heard Him speak about. When Peter stood up on that memorable day of Pentecost, he explained to the people that the resurrected Jesus had poured out the *promised Holy Spirit* which He had received from the Father, and that the promise was for them, their children, and for all whom the Lord would call. And when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he spoke of being marked in Christ, *"with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit."*

The Scriptures repeatedly insist that God is a keeper of promises. Men of faith such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, Daniel, and many more

would readily testify to God's faithfulness to His word. When God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him, He's fulfilling a promise — He's keeping His word.

But more than that, when God gives His Holy Spirit, He's providing a guarantee to fulfill all the other promises He has made. The Holy Spirit *"is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance"* (Ephesians 1:14). He is *"in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come"* (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). Where each of these verses uses the word "deposit," Paul uses the Greek word "arrabon" — a word denoting, in the ancient business world, a pledge or down payment which assured the subsequent payment of the full amount. And, significantly, it is a word which the modern Greeks use for an engagement ring!

If we have the Spirit of God living within us, we have assurance of *"the **promised** eternal inheritance"* (Hebrews 9:15), *"an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade"* (1 Peter 1:3,4). It's not a question of, "I'll be going to heaven **if** I've been good enough, or **if** I've attended enough meetings." It's rather a matter of, "I'll be going to heaven if I have the Spirit of Christ within me." **If God has given us His Spirit, He will also give us our inheritance.**

And when God comes to invade our lives with His presence, He doesn't come with a suitcase. He comes with a removal van and plans to stay. He's not like a tenant who is willing to put up with that ghastly wallpaper until it's time to move on to the next place — God has plans to redecorate and remodel us to His liking and by His Spirit.

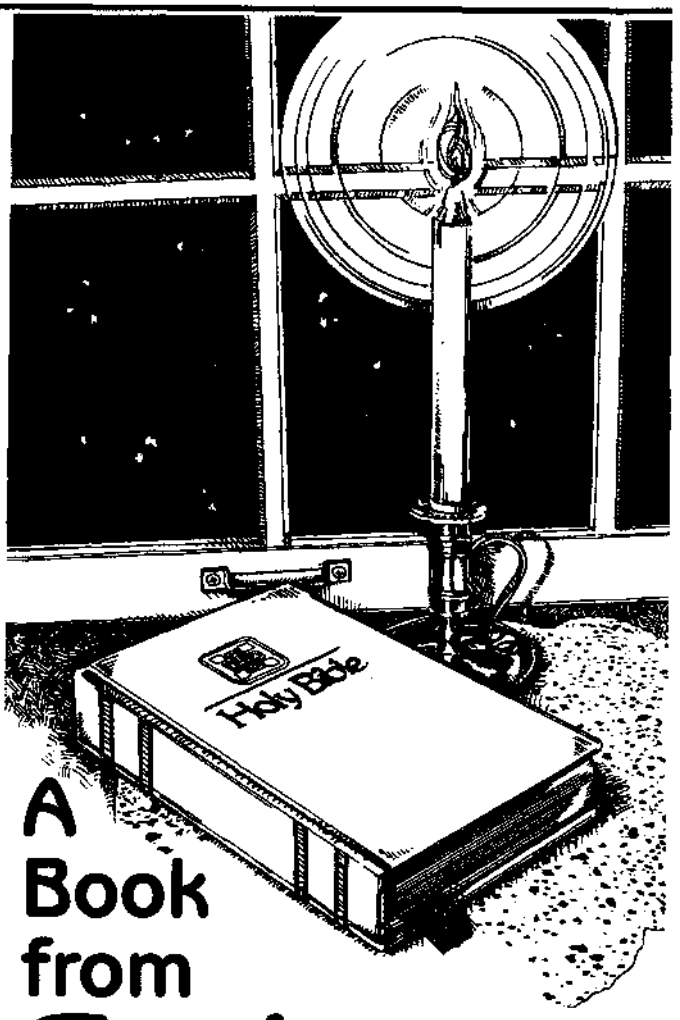
The abiding presence of God within the life of every true believer is a constant assurance that our hope is real and everlasting. *If He has given us His ring, then He will give us His all.* ⇧

Patrick Boynes preaches for the Eye Church of Christ In Peterborough, England.

Look To Jesus Today —

in His eyes is the light of life...
in His voice, the word of truth...
in His feet, the paths of peace...
in His hands, the kingdom's work...
in His heart, the Father's love!

—Anonymous



A Book from God

Gary C. Hampton

Before we start to study the Bible, we need to recognize that it is God's Word. Such recognition will help us to study with a more serious attitude.

The Bible lays claim to in-spiration. Paul told Timothy, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Paul used the Greek word *theopneustos* in the place where we find "inspiration." *Theo* means "God" and *pneustos* means "breathed," thus, God-

breathed, or God breathed out. The idea is that God spoke, since we exhale, or breathe out, through the vocal cords to speak.

Peter explained inspiration when he wrote, *"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:21). The Hebrews writer must have recognized this, as he often said that God said a certain thing, when we know that man did the actual writing (see Hebrews 1:5,8; 5:5,6).

Many Old Testament writers claimed inspiration, as did some New Testament writers (see Isaiah 1:1,2,10,24; Jeremiah 1:1,2; 2:1; Ezekiel 1:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:2). Jesus considered Old Testament Scriptures inspired and used them as authoritative (Matthew 4:4,7,10). His whole purpose in coming to earth was to do God's will by fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Matthew 5:7-18; John 15:25). The New Testament writers considered Old Testament writers inspired (Acts 1:15,16; 4:25; 28:25-27; Galatians 3:16-19).

However, such internal claims would be meaningless if they were not supported by evidence. In fact, such claims force us to test their validity. We can know the Bible is from God because of the scientific facts which were written in it long before man recognized them or knew about them. In Genesis 1:11,12,21,24,25 we find the expression *"after his kind"* in reference to the grasses, trees, fish, birds, cattle, and other beasts. These statements are made despite the fact that man, even hundreds of years later, believed in spontaneous generation. Only recently doctors have found certain special elements in the blood of a boy baby eight days old which help to heal. Yet, Moses, thousands of years ago, wrote by inspiration that boy babies were to be circumcised the eighth day (Leviticus 12:3). In George Washington's time doctors believed "bleeding" a patient would rid the body of impurities. Now doctors realize that the blood is the life of the body, just as Moses wrote in the long ago (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11,14).

Specific prophecies about an event hundreds of years in the future could come true only if they were inspired of God. The Bible has many examples of such specific prophecy that was fulfilled. In the case of Christ alone, we find prophecies made from 400 to 700 years before the event which are true in details that could not have been guessed at. The place of His birth and the fact that His mother would be a virgin are found in Micah 5:2 and Isaiah 7:14.

Matthew tells us He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem (Matthew 1:20-2:1). His triumphant entry into Jerusalem is foretold in Zechariah 9:9 and fulfilled in Matthew 21:1-5.

The miracles worked in the Bible prove that the spokesmen who worked them were from God. God gave Moses certain miraculous signs to use in proving to the Israelites that he was from God (Exodus 4:1-5). The miracles worked in bringing the ten plagues upon the land of Egypt were done to prove that there was one God in the world and that He was with Moses and the people (Exodus 7:5,17; 8:10,14-29; 10:2; 11:7; 13:3; 14:14). Christ was raised from the dead to prove He was God's spokesman (Romans 1:4). That the apostles were speaking by God's direction is clear because of the signs they were able to work (Mark 16:14-20; Hebrews 2:3,4).

Other areas of proof could be explored, such as: the historical accuracy of the Bible; the unity of 66 books written by over 30 writers, in different languages, over 1,600 years; geographic accuracy; and the greatness of the message. However, I believe we can see that the Bible claims to be "God-breathed," with proofs that are undeniable. ✝

Gary C. Hampton is a writer and preacher working with the Lord's church in Valdosta, Georgia, U.S.A.

Why the Teaching of Jesus Was So Effective

1. He treated people with respect (Mark 10:46-52).

2. He spoke plainly (John 3:1-3; Matthew 13; Matthew 4:19; John 4:1-4).

3. He spoke sympathetically (Mark 8:2; Luke 13:34).

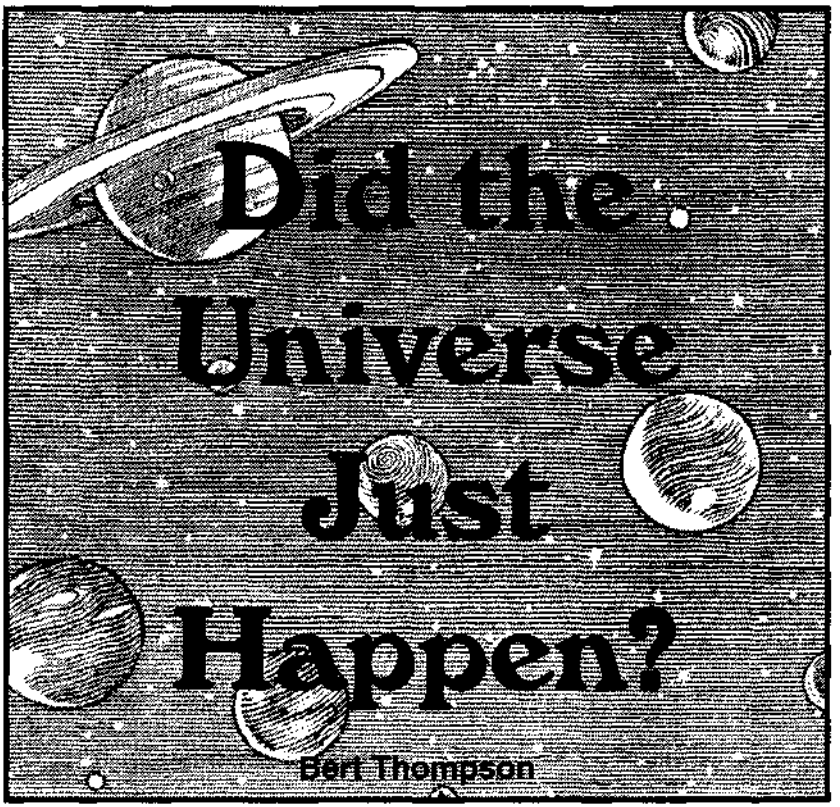
4. He showed no partiality (Matthew 8:2,3; Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:21).

5. He appealed to the deepest human needs (John 9:1-38).

6. He spoke as One having authority (Matthew 7:28,29; 4:4-10).

7. His own life was in perfect accord with his teaching (Isaiah 53:9; Hebrews 4:15 and 7:26; John 8:29,46; 1 Peter 1:19).

– Shield of Faith, Marion, IL



Imagine this scene. You have just purchased a new Cadillac limousine, and you are showing it to a group of your friends. You explain to them how the metal was molded into fenders, bumpers, tailpipes, etc. You point out the slick chrome trim, along with the tires made of a combination of rubber and steel belts. You open the door and show your friends the beautiful sculptured interior of carpet, Corinthian leather, and teak-paneled doors. There is a digital clock, windows that go up and down at the touch of a button, emergency blinkers, rear-window defroster, and a host of other conveniences. One of your friends remarks to you what a beautiful car you have. You reply that you are indeed proud of your new car, since it cost you approximately $85,000!

Then, one of your friends turns to you and asks, "Who made this

car?" Without so much as a moment's hesitation, you reply, "No one made the car; it just happened." Can you imagine such a thing? Your friends would have you committed for a mental disorder were you to suggest such a scenario. And rightly so. It is obvious to all sane people that the beautiful piece of engineering we call the Cadillac did not "just happen."

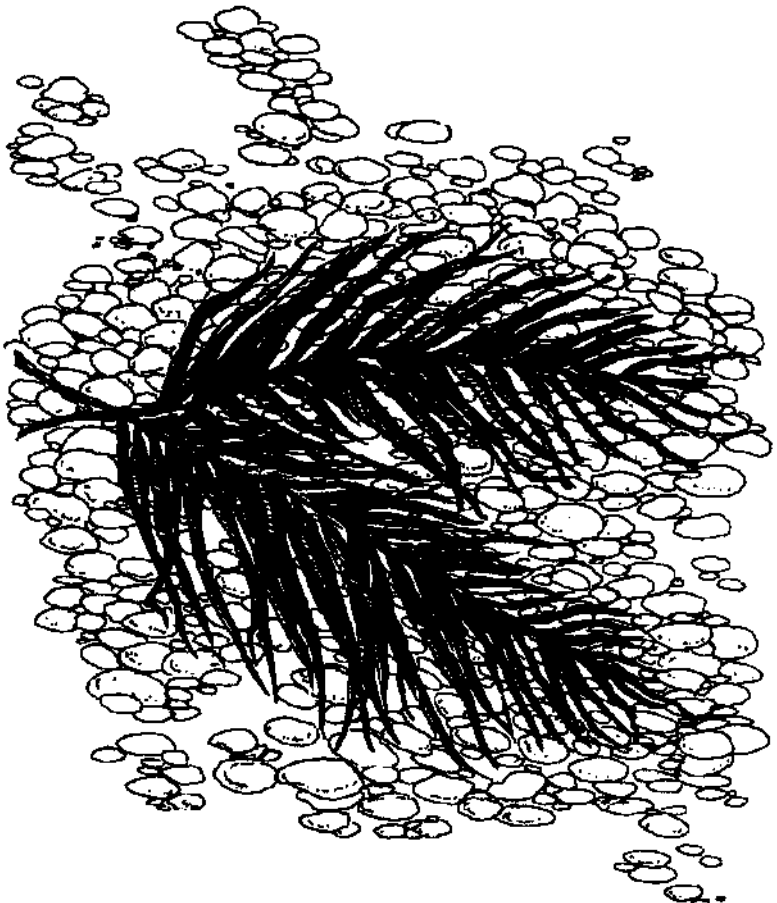
Yet this universe you live in is infinitely more complex than a Cadillac limousine, but you are being asked every day to believe that it "just happened" by accident. The universe is composed of over 2,500,000 galaxies. There are over 25 sextillion stars known to exist (and that's as far as our most powerful telescopes can see at the present time). Our own galaxy, the Milky Way, is over 100,000 light years in diameter. Light travels 5.87×10^{12} miles in one year. In 100,000 years it would travel 5.86×10^{17} miles. Our nearest neighbor, the Andromeda Galaxy, is over 750,000 light years away. That's 4.4×10^{18} miles!

The sun which heats our galaxy is poised in space at 93,000,000 miles from the earth. If it were just 10% closer, it would literally burn everything to a crisp. If it were just 10% farther, eventually temperatures would drop so drastically that life as we know it would perish. The moon, which is precision-placed at 240,000 miles from the earth, would cause 35-50 feet tides over the earth twice a day if it were moved just one-fifth closer.

The earth is traveling around the sun at a speed of 70,000 miles an hour, or 19 miles per second. The solar system itself is traveling through space at a speed of over 600,000 miles per hour, in a path so large it takes an estimated 220 million years just to complete one orbit. If the earth traveled at only 35,000 miles per hour, our seasons would be doubled, and the intense summer heat would bake the earth, while the intense winter cold would freeze it. The earth's troposphere contains exactly 21% oxygen. If it were just a little smaller, say 10-15%, man and beast would die due to lack of breathable air.

All of these things are infinitely more complex than a Cadillac limousine, yet we are asked daily to believe that organic evolution is true, and these things just happened by chance. If we cannot believe that the limousine "just happened" by accident, by what kind of logic do we then say that our great universe "just happened?" ✝

Dr. Bert Thompson writes and lectures widely on science and the Bible, and he is Executive Director of Apologetics Press in Montgomery, Alabama, U.S.A.



The Stones Cry Out

Wayne Jackson

During the past several years, a number of very significant archaeological discoveries have been made in Palestine which provide further confirmation for the historical accuracy of the Bible.

✡ Excavations at Shechem, where the book of Genesis says that

Abraham built an altar to God (12:6,7), reveal that an organized community existed there nearly 4,000 years ago — at the time of the patriarchs.

✡ A dig in the central region of Palestine produced a stone tablet with a Phoenician inscription bearing the name of Ekron, the city where the Ark of the Covenant was taken after being captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 5:1-10).

✡ Archaeologists were sifting through a 2,000-year-old garbage dump at Masada in southern Israel. They unearthed a wine jug inscribed with the name of King Herod. It was the first object ever found bearing the name of this famous king (Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptizer).

✡ Israeli archaeologists digging in Tel Dan in the Golan Heights unearthed a piece of a stone from an ancient monument (called a stele). It contained an inscription, in Aramaic, containing the words "King of Israel" and "House of David." Many liberal critics had doubted that David ever lived — he was reputed to be merely a "myth" from Israel's ancient past. Liberals have been forced to acknowledge that the Bible was right regarding the historicity of the great singer of Israel.

✡ An ivory pomegranate came to light which was purchased by Israeli authorities for $550,000. This artifact is now believed to be the first relic ever found from Solomon's temple (likely one of the decorations, see 1 Kings 6). It bore the inscription: "Holy to the priests, belonging to the temple of Jehovah."

✡ The book of Joshua represents the city of Hazor as being destroyed by the Hebrew invasion of Canaan. The city was burned by the Israelites (Joshua 11:10,11). Excavations have demonstrated that the city was indeed destroyed by fire at the time of Joshua.

In a time when more and more critics are attacking the Bible as an authentic work, it is refreshing to note that the spade of the archaeologist is increasingly testifying to the historical accuracy of the Scriptures. One is reminded of Jesus' statement (in another context) that *"the stones cry out."* ✝

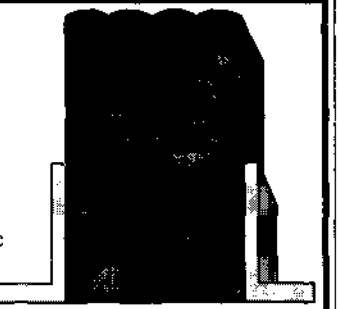
Wayne Jackson is the editor of *Christian Courier* and preaches for the East Main Street congregation in Stockton, California, U.S.A.

"And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to Him, 'Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.' And He answered and said, 'I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out'" (Luke 19:40).

It Helps to Enrich Your

BIBLE WORD POWER

BY FENTER NORTHERN



Are you sure you are understanding the richest meaning of the Bible? Test your comprehension of the following words used in the context found in Hebrews chapter 3, (KJV) After making your choices, turn the page for the correct answers.

1. partakers *n.*— A: to part with a possession B: to join in a celebration C: to be a partner in the heavenly calling D: take the Lord's Supper.
2. calling *n*— A: to shout repeatedly for help B: God's invitation to accept the benefits of heaven C: to ask for a show of cards D: to pay a visit.
3. profession *v*—A: one's career; B: one's choice of a belief or church C: to speak the same thing, to admit. D: to speak the truth.
4. faithful *adj.*—A: to be reliable B: work of a university instructor C: never divorced D: geyser in Yellowstone National Park
5. appointed *v*—A. to receive a cabinet position B: To do or to make C: to be selected for a service D: to name someone to follow you in an office
6. glory *n*—A: a shout in a church assembly B: heavenly sunshine C: see the heavens open D: to seem, as an opinion
7. house *n*—A: a dwelling B: one's kinfolks C: to take one into your home D: to be benevolent
8. honor *n*—A: a judge B: the mayor of a city C: a valuing D: to pay a debt
9. servant *n*—A: an attendant who heals B: a slave C: an elected official D: one who does household chores.
10. testimony *adj.*—A: to give a personal statement at church. B: an oration C: one's will D: witness
11. fast *adj.*—A: a rapid speed B: firm, secure C: to diet D: to be asleep
12. confidence *n*—A: trust B: to confide with someone C: boldness D: to reveal a secret
13. wilderness *adj.*—A: a desert B: bramble bushes C: hot and sandy D: home of wild animals.
14. departing *v*—A: to take one's last breath B: leave on a journey C: to divorce one's mate D: draw back or fall away.
15. rest *n*—A: the remainder of something B: to sleep C: to sit D: to pause from work
16. hardened *v*—A: cured cement; B: to make dry or without feeling; C: non elastic D: extremely difficult
17. deceitfulness *n*—A: giving a false impression by what ever means; B: to lie; C: to seduce D: that which is extremely tempting
18. steadfast *adj.*—A: Character in *Pilgrim's Progress* B: walk a straight line C: faithful D: firm, sure
19. evil *adj.*—A: the devil; B: ugly ways C: wickedness that causes labor and pain D: ungodliness

Answers to
It Helps to Enrich Your Bible Word Power

1. **partaker**—(Gk. metochos) C: to be a partner in the heavenly calling, sharing or having fellowship in.

2. **calling**—(Gk. klesis) B: God's invitation to accept the benefits of heaven We are called by the Jesus through the Gospel (Matt. 11:28; 2 Thess. 2:14)

3. **profession**—(Gk. homologia) C: to speak the same thing, to admit. Appears as "confession" in later versions than the KJV. Here profession broadly means the entire spectrum of the Christian life.

4. **faithful**—(Gk. pistos) A: to be reliable. In this context, Jesus is completely dependable as our high priest. He ever atones for our sins and intercedes on out behalf

5. **appointed**—Gk. poico) B: To do or to make. God has appointed Jesus as high priest. Unlike the old priesthood, it never passes from him because He ever liveth.

6. **glory**—(Gk. doxa) D: to seem, as an opinion. In this usage, to have a more highly esteemed opinion of Jesus than Moses.

7. **house**—(Gk. oikos) A: a dwelling The house of Israel in which Jesus is the Son and not a mere servant as Moses.

8. **honor**—(Gk. time) C: a valuing. To esteem the Son as precious, dear treasure. See I Peter 2:4

9. **servant**—(Gk. therapon)) A: an attendant who heals. A term of dignity when used in reference to God, as with Moses.

10. **testimony**—(Gk. marturion) D: witness. One who offers evidence of truth - Jesus - even unto death (Rev. 2:10) A good witness is not merely dying for Jesus, this could be satisfied by suicide in some minds. Jesus calls to abaundant life, not death, unless, of course, the enemy of Christ kills us for being a Christian.

11. **fast**—(Gk. bebaios) B: firm, secure. Be mature and never waver from the faith. Not Eph. 4:14, but as Paul in 1 Cor. 9:27.

12. **confidence**—(Gk. parrhesia) C: boldness. A frank confession of life spawned by a great faith in Jesus.

13. **wilderness**—(Gk. eremos) A: a desert. Where Israel wandered for 40 years in the plains of the Sinai peninsula.

14. **departing**—(Gk. aphistemi) D: draw back or fall away. A severe warning follows in Heb. 6:1-6 and 10:26 ff for those who would fall away.

15. **rest**—(Gk. katapausis) D: to pause from work There remains the rest of heaven for the faithful Christian.

16. **hardened**—(Gk. skleruno) B: to make dry, or without feeling;. As Pharaoh, who's heart became a wasteland of rebellion because of the 10 plagues sent against him.

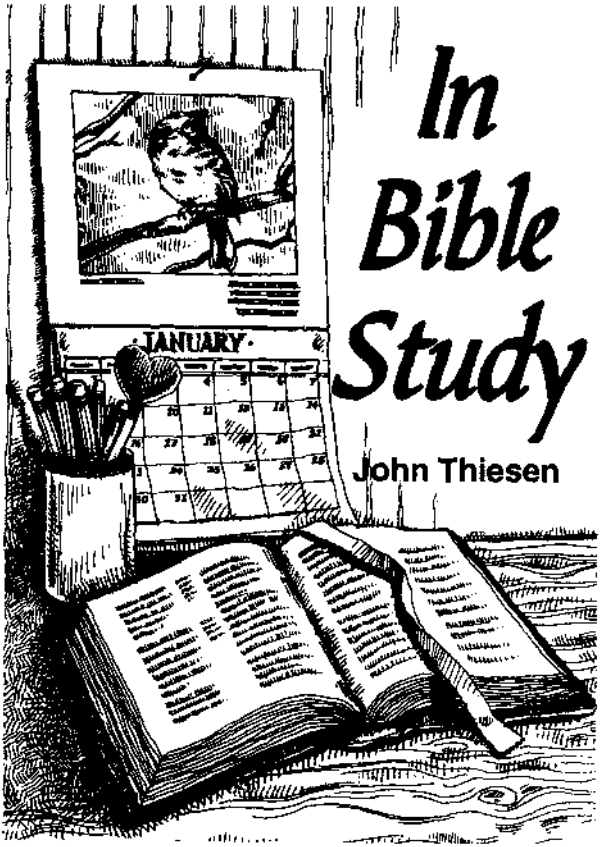
17. **deceitfulness**—(Gk. apate) A: giving a false impression by what ever means; One may deceive by words, looks, a false signal, actions etc.

18. **steadfast**—(Gk. Bebaios) D: firm, sure See I Cor. 15:58

19. **evil**—(Gk. poneros) C: wick-edness that causes labor and pain. Extreme selfishness that demands anything at any price form others.

Vocabulary Scale

7—10 correct.....good
11—13 correct.....Bible Student
14—15 correct.....Bible Scholar



In Bible Study

John Thiesen

The attitudes we have towards the Bible will greatly affect what we learn from it. Many say that no two people can derive the same thing out of the study of God's Word. This is a wrong attitude which from the outset will drastically influence our study.

The right attitude is that God wants all to get the same message from His Word. If we go to the Bible doubting that we shall come up with the truth, the pages of God's book will seem to us to bear some secret, mysterious meaning between the lines. As a result, we will be searching for hidden meanings rather than plain truth. This is an attitude of mistrust, thinking that God is trying to trick us with His words, and will only result in our becoming confused.

God Wants Us to Understand the Bible Alike

God wants us to know the truth, believe, and obey it. He wants us to enjoy the grand knowledge about Himself and His Son, and for us to have all the blessings of forgiveness of sins and eternal life which He freely offers. He is not a God who throws stumbling blocks in our way and hides

the truth from our eyes. He is not playing games with us to see how many He can fool or surprise. How the devil must laugh every time he can persuade someone to believe that the Bible is an unfathomable mystery which no one can understand with any certainty.

God Is Speaking to Us through His Word

We should go to the Bible with the attitude that God is speaking to us through it. The words contained therein are not the product of human learning or the thoughts of great men. They are not the work of talented dramatists, artists, politicians, or poets. Most of the writers were simple people of ordinary, everyday occupations. But all of them had the same thing in common: God had chosen to speak to the world through them. By inspiration, God miraculously placed in their minds the words which He wanted them to use to convey His thoughts. *"Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (2 Peter 1:21). If we have this attitude, we will listen with deep respect to God speaking through these prophets.

The Bible Is Authoritative

Another attitude that we should have toward the Bible is that it is authoritative. That is, we must believe that it communicates the only religion that will carry us to Heaven. No other idea about God, no other way to immortality, no other means of reaching God has been given by the Lord but that way revealed in the pages of the Holy Bible. If we do not possess this attitude, then we will be fair game for false teachers, easily persuaded to stray into paths leading in the wrong direction and away from God. ✞

John Thiesen is a former missionary to Malawi and presently works with the church of Christ in Buffalo, Missouri, U.S.A.

The Lord gave us the Bible
and a brain,
and He expects us to use both.
– Unknown

PURPOSES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Royce Frederick

The law of Moses, in the "Old Testament" portion of the Bible, was given only to the Jews, the nation of Israel. It was **removed** when Jesus died on the cross: *" . . . And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross"* (Colossians 2:14; see Galatians 3:24,25; Romans 7:4,6). Jesus **replaced** it with His New Testament (or "covenant"; Hebrews 8:6-9; 9:15-17). This covenant is for all people of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Since the Law of Moses has been removed, why does the New Testament contain many quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures? Although it is not God's law for His people today, the Old Testament still

serves many purposes:

The Old Testament tells us about God.

It reveals that He is our Maker (Matthew 19:4,5).

It reveals that He is the Author of both the Old and New Covenants (Hebrews 8:6-9).

It teaches us about His character (1 Peter 3:10-12).

The Old Testament tells us about ourselves.

It tells us of sin's origin and destructive power (Romans 5:12; 1 John 3:11,12).

It shows us how sinful we are (Romans 3:10-23; 7:13).

It shows us that we cannot earn righteousness by trying to perfectly obey laws (Romans 7:22-8:4).

The Old Testament tells us about Christ.

It tells us the historical and religious background of the nation through which Christ came (Luke 2:23,24).

It foretold His life and work, verifying His identity as the Son of God (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:13; Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6).

It ruled the Jews to lead them to Christ (Galatians 3:23-25).

It leads us to Christ as we "walk" through its pages with those people (2 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 10:7,11).

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). ✞

Royce Frederick is the editor of *International Gospel Teacher* and lives in Lufkin, Texas, U.S.A.

The Holy Bible

Though the cover is worn, and the pages are torn,
And though places bear traces of tears;
Yet more precious than gold is this book worn and old,
That can shatter and scatter my fears.

— The Reminder

For The Record

Maxie B. Boren

- Men say that there are "many churches," **but for the record**, the Bible teaches there is one: Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 1:22,23, and Ephesians 4:4.

- Men say that "salvation is through God's grace alone" and that human response has nothing to do with it, **but for the record**, the Bible teaches the importance of human response: Matthew 7:21-27; Titus 2:11,12; Acts 2:37,38; 10:34,35; James 1:22-25; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

- Men say that "salvation is by faith only" and nothing else is required, **but for the record**, the Bible teaches that Christ saves those who obey (Hebrews 5:9, and 1 Peter 1:22), and His wrath will come upon those who do not obey (Romans 2:8, and 2 Thess. 1:8,9).

● Men say that baptism is non-essential and has nothing to do with salvation, **but for the record**, the Bible teaches baptism for the forgiveness of sins: Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:16, and 1 Peter 3:20,21.

● Men say that "once saved, always saved," **but for the record**, the Bible teaches that it is possible for Christians to depart from the faith, and thus, ultimately be lost: 1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Timothy 2:19,20; 4:1; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Matthew 13:41,42.

● Men say "it doesn't matter what a person believes, how he worships, or what he teaches," **but for the record**, the Bible teaches that it **DOES MATTER**: John 8:31,32; James 1:21; John 4:23,24; Matthew 15:6-9; 28:20; 1 Timothy 4:16; Acts 26:25.

● Men say that people can live any way they want to, and that it doesn't matter how many times they marry and divorce, engage in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, or gamble, booze it up, or do drugs, **but for the record**, the Bible teaches differently: Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 5:3-11; Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7,8.

● Yes, men say all sorts of things; men oftentimes distort, pervert, and change things, they sometimes lie and speak blasphemy. **But for the record**, God's Word remains constant and true, and by it we shall all be judged: Matthew 4:4; 24:35; Acts 20:32; Hebrews 4:12; John 12:48. ⇧

Maxie B. Boren preaches for the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas, U.S.A.

Poor Taste and Lack of Diplomacy?

A preacher went into a town where there was no New Testament church. He preached in a house of worship and then in the market place. Soon the religious leaders of the city heard him and invited him to address them. They thought that if his religious claims were meritorious, they would fellowship him. But, to their dismay and confusion, he preached that they were wrong and that their worship was not acceptable to the God of Heaven.

Such a preacher! Don't you know he hurt their feelings? Evidently, they were sincere. Surely he could have made a nice talk without causing discord. Didn't he know how to be diplomatic? We surely wouldn't want him here, would we? Just who was he?

His name was Paul, and he preached his sermon in Athens. It did cause some stir. It did not please those religious leaders, and they got up and left before he finished. But the sermon pleased God. Read it for yourself in Acts 17.

— Bert M Perry

Would I Study the Bible If...?

Paul F. Johnston

William McPherson had a charge of dynamite go off in his face. He lost his eyes and hands and the feeling in parts of his face. He realized how much the Bible meant to him and he needed its strength greatly. He could not read it in Braille because of his artificial hands. He tried to place his lips on the dots, but they were numb. He found that he could use his tongue to decipher the Moon Type system of dashes. The metal left his lips and tongue bleeding and very sore, but he prayed to God to help him to continue to learn just one letter of the alphabet. In the 65 years that followed, he read the Bible through four time with his tongue.

Would I study the Bible if the same thing happened to me that happened to Mr. McPherson? Would I have the desire, the intense desire, to know God's will that I would go through what he did to learn? I wonder if I would not rather have decided, "I can't ever read the Bible again!"

Would I study the Bible if I had to get up an hour earlier each day to work it into my busy (?) schedule? Or miss my favorite TV program if, at that hour, I remembered I hadn't studied my Bible for the day and wouldn't have time afterwards?

Would I study my Bible (I wish I hadn't heard of that McPherson fellow) if I didn't feel just right, or if I had had a hard day at work, or if I was just too tired? (I wonder how that fellow learned to read with his tongue?) Or would I study even though I was a slow reader and it took me all day just to read one or two chapters?

Would I study the Bible on occasions when the saints were assembled (Sunday morning, Wednesday night, etc.) if I had to go without supper till after service, or walk or drive several blocks to get there?

How many "IF'S" keep YOU from studying the Bible? Is this matter of no importance to you at all? If it is, THEN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!!

That McPherson fellow — I guess his example will haunt me the rest of my life!! ✝

Before his death in 1993, Paul F. Johnston had faithfully preached the Gospel of Christ for 53 years. He was living in Edmond, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

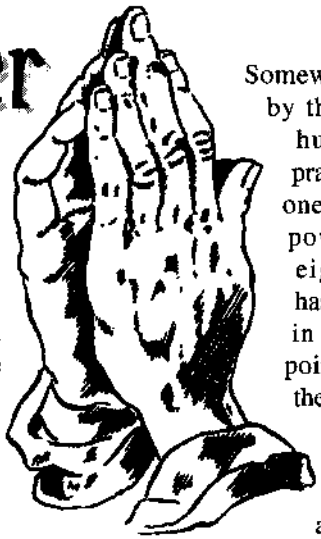
Verse Search

Supply the missing information from the gospel of John, chapter fifteen.

1. *"I am ___ _____ _____, and My Father is the _____"* (V. 1)
2. What will happen to the branches that bear no fruit? to those that bear fruit? (V. 2)
3. Why must we be careful to abide only in Christ? (V. 4)
4. *"If anyone does not abide in Me, ___ ___ _____ _____ ___ _____ _____ _____; and they gather them and throw them into ____ _____, and they are burned."* (V. 6)
5. On what basis can the Christian's prayers be answered? (V. 7)
6. *"If you _____ ___ _____, you will abide in ____ _____, just as I _____ _____ ____ _____ _____ and abide in ____ _____."* (V. 10)
7. What was the specific commandment that Jesus gave? (V. 12)
8. What is the greatest love one can show for another? (V. 13)
9. On what condition can we be the friend of Jesus? (V. 14)
10. What contrast does Jesus make between a servant and a friend? how did He prove His friendship? (V. 15)
11. Jesus' followers were chosen and appointed for what purpose? (V. 16)
12. Why did the world hate Jesus? (V. 18,19)
13. How do Christians know that they should expect persecution from the world? (V. 20)
14. If Christ had not come and taught people the truth of God, they would have had ___ _____. (V. 22)
15. He who hates Christ, "_____ ___ _____ _____" (V. 23)
16. What kind of works did Jesus do among the people? (V. 24)
17. God had foreseen this response of hatred toward Christ, and so He had said what, in Psalm 69:4? (V. 25)

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

The Human Side of Prayer



Ancil Jenkins

A recent cover story of **Newsweek** almost floored me. How unexpected was a cover story on prayer! The study brought to light some interesting facts. Prayer is one of the most popular activities in the U. S. Seventy-eight percent of the population pray weekly and 54% pray every day. Surprisingly, the study reveals that one out of five atheists pray. They seemingly want to cover all the bases in case there is Something out there.

Equally as interesting are the reasons people pray. Some sincerely believe God is there and that He will answer prayer. Others pray in times of distress and peril. It can be a psychological exercise to some that produces tranquility and purpose in life. To those of us concerned with our country's spiritual life, it is encouraging to see that many, perhaps even the majority, see a God who heals the hurts caused by living.

Somewhat overlooked by the article is the human side of prayer. Even when one accepts God's power and sovereignty, man still has responsibilities in prayer. James points out some of these.

Prayer is rooted in faith. But when one asks, he must believe (James 1:6). Prayer must be more than touching all the bases. How thankful we, His children, must be that we have a Father who **can** supply all things. We must believe this. *"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work"* (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Prayer must be a total surrender to the will of God. Our faith must be that He can do what He wills. Praying is our surrender to Him and being willing to accept what He gives. We can ask boldly because

of Who He is.

Prayer must not be mixed with doubt. *"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind"* (James 1:6). Some accept God's power to do all things, but deny His willingness. How thankful we, His children, must be that we have a Father who **will** supply all things. *"And my God will meet all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19). Those whose prayers are mixed with doubt will receive nothing from the Lord (James 1:7).

We must have a **purity of heart and motive.** James continues, *"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures"* (James 4:3). God is concerned about His children. Yet even these must combine a purity of life with a singleness of purpose. Man cannot live like a rebel and expect the Father's blessings.

What a power is available! *All* of God's power is available to us who believe — even more than we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:21). This, combined with man's faith, trust, and obedience, provides a power beyond human measure. ✝

Ancil Jenkins preaches for the Sunset congregation in Miami, Florida, U.S.A.

Be Sincere

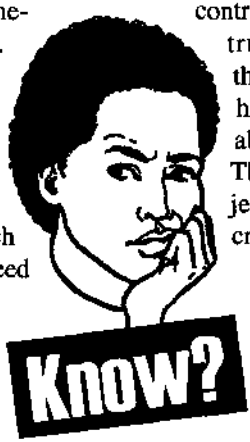
We often say our prayers,
But do we ever pray?
And do the wishes of our heart
Go with the words we say?

We may as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone.

For words without the heart
The Lord will never hear,
Nor will He to those lips attend
Whose prayers are not sincere.

—The Biblical Messenger

How Can One Know?



Jimmy Jividen

Contradictory doctrines are taught in the name of religion. Teachers on both sides cause confusion by claiming that what they teach is the will of God. *How can one know who speaks for God?*

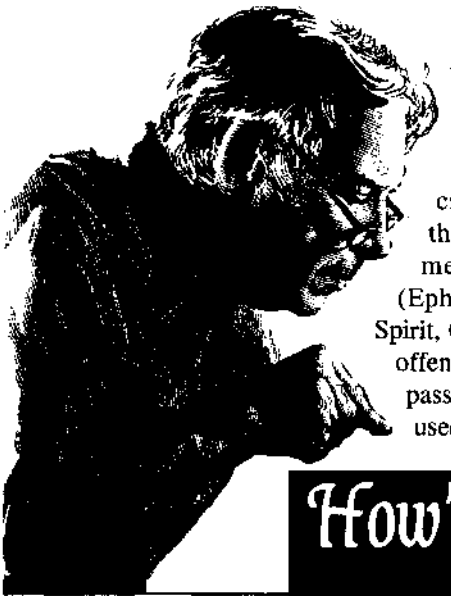
One claims his doctrine is from God because what he says has the support of time-honored human tradition. Churches, councils, and human creeds have affirmed it. The problem is that human traditions are *changing and contradictory.* The creed of one church is directly opposed to the creed of another. One cannot depend on such human traditions for religious authority. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Another believes his doctrine is from God because he has been given new revelation. The problem is that these so-called latter day revelations are *changing and contradictory.* When latter day doctrines conflict, it is evident that one or both are false. When they change, it is evident that they cannot be from God. God does not change, nor does He contradict Himself. One cannot accept new revelation as a criterion for religious authority.

Another claims his doctrine is from God because it is accepted by many people. To him the voice of the people is the voice of God. He believes that the truthfulness of a doctrine is determined by the receiver — if he "existentially" perceives something as true, it is true "to him." Two contradictory doctrines can be true at the same time if they are so perceived. For him there is no objective, absolute, universal truth. This view of relative, subjective truth is a popular criterion people use to determine their faith. Such faith is *contradictory and changing.* It undermines the very nature of God, who *"is the same yesterday, today, and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8).

The one and only criterion for religious truth must remain the Scriptures. They are inspired, absolute, and do not conflict. *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). ✝

Jimmy Jividen preaches for the Oldham Lane Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, U.S.A.



Many have lost confidence in the sufficiency of God's Word because they have never really learned its truths or how to apply it properly. Yet Scripture is a crucial part of the spiritual armor that makes up the essential equipment for the complete Christian (Ephesians 6:11). The sword of the Spirit, God's Word (verse 17), is the only offensive weapon Paul mentions in that passage. Like any weapon, it must be used skillfully to be most effective.

How's Your Skill?

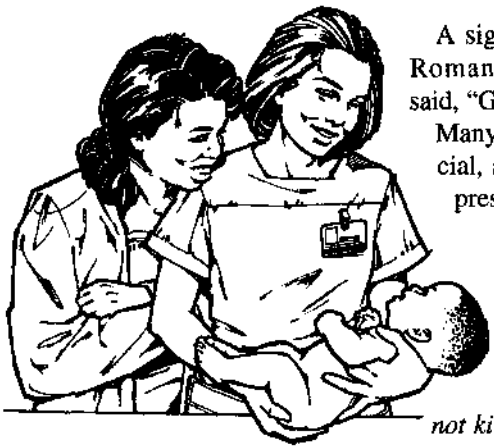
Tom Kelton

Luke described the Jewish people at Berea as noble (Acts 17:11) because they searched the Scriptures before they accepted anything Paul said as truth. If only people today would be so noble! It is a praiseworthy thing to uphold God's truth and support those who accurately proclaim it. On the other hand, it is spiritually lethal to tolerate false doctrine and apostate teachers — and foolish not to know the difference. But the spirit of ignorant tolerance that plagues the church today often brands any attempt to scrutinize others' teachings as narrow-minded, unloving, or divisive. The flip side of tolerance of error is indifference to truth — and that is disastrous.

The church has become lazy. It has moved away from careful biblical thinking and has tolerated far too much non-biblical teaching. Fewer and fewer Christians are approaching life with the Berean perspective.

People don't often go into error all at once. It is gradual. And they do not do so intentionally most of the time. They slip into it through laziness in handling the Word. All it takes to start on the road to error is a craving for something new and different, a flashy new idea, along with a little carelessness in handling the truth of God. ✝

Tom Kelton is a gospel preacher and writer in Pharr, Texas, U.S.A.



A sign on the marquee of a large Roman Catholic church building said, "God is pro-life."

Many will consider that a prejudicial, arrogant statement. Who can presume to speak for God!

I cannot. The priest in that Catholic church cannot. But God Himself can. He tells us in His word that He is pro-life.

God said, *"You shall not kill." "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." "You shall do no murder." "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you."*

"God Is Pro-Life"

Cecil May, Jr.

Pro-choice advocates say, "We can trust women to be mature and sensible enough to make the right choices about their own bodies."

However, most of those choosing abortion have already shown that their ability to make right choices is flawed by immaturity or seriously impaired by erroneous moral viewpoints.

Further, the choice being made is not just about the woman's own body. It is about another body, an infant formed inside the womb.

Pro-abortionists prefer to be called pro-choice, but it is the same thing. Most who are pro-choice object to anything that makes abortion less convenient, less available on demand. The child inside the womb is considered as nothing more than a bit of unwanted protoplasm.

Some are quick to apply the word "extremist" to anyone who believes abortion is murder of an unborn but still distinct person. What word applies to those who believe the baby in the womb is comparable to an appendix or a tumor? ✝

Cecil May, Jr. is retired from serving as President of Magnolia Bible College in Kosciusko, Mississippi, U.S.A.

How do you measure up?

Add to your faith virtue,
to virtue knowledge,
to knowledge self-control,
to self-control perseverance,
to perseverance godliness,
to godliness brotherly kindness,
and to brotherly kindness love.
For if these things are yours and
abound, you will be neither barren
nor unfruitful in the knowledge of
our Lord Jesus Christ
(2 Peter 1:5-8).

What Is the Church of Christ?

G. F. Raines

In the second chapter of Acts of Apostles we read of the establishment of the church of Christ in the great city of Jerusalem upon the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On that day Peter preached remission of sins in the name of Christ, in obedience to the Great Commission that our Lord had given to His apostles before His ascension into heaven (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47).

Those who believed the Gospel and obeyed it by repenting of their sins and being baptized in the name of Jesus were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:37-47). If you hear the same Gospel today, believe it as the multitude of Jews did on that day of Pentecost, and obey it as they obeyed it, the Lord will likewise add you to His church — the church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail (Matthew 16:18), because God is no respecter of persons. Peter said to the household of Cornelius, *"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him"* (Acts 10:34,35).

The church of Christ is composed of people who have done what the three thousand persons did on the day of Pentecost; and have, consequently, been added to the same church to which those people were added — the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18). As members of the body of Christ, we have organized congregations like the congregations that are called "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16) in the New Testament. We worship as the first century Christians worshipped (John 4:24), and we engage in the same work in which the first century church engaged (Acts 6:1-6; Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Timothy 3:15). The church of Christ of today is, therefore, not a denominational religious organization; it is a reproduction of the church of which we read in the New Testament.

Foy E. Wallace has well said: "The wrong creed, the wrong doctrine, the wrong worship, the wrong organization and the wrong name could not possibly result in the right church. But the right creed, the right doctrine, the right worship, the right organization and the right name, for a like reason, cannot be the wrong church."

We solemnly urge you to investigate the church of Christ in your community in the light of the teaching of the Bible concerning the church that Jesus built.

The church of Christ refused to be governed by human creeds and confessions of faith because:

1. They divide believers by enjoining tests of fellowship apart from the Gospel of Christ.
2. They are unnecessary. By the Holy Scriptures we are *"thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).
3. They are uninspired products of theological speculation.

Mr. James Alexander Haldane of Edinburgh, Scotland, said: "Man-made creeds of any nature, whether they be pronounciamentos of the Pope at Rome, the Augsburg Confession of the great Martin Luther, the Thirty-nine Articles, or the Westminster Confession of Faith of our own John Knox, serve no purpose except to bind men to the opinions of other men."

The Gospel of Christ, for the following reasons, is the only rule of faith and practice to which we adhere:

1. Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18).
2. Christ is the only lawgiver (James 4:12).
3. By the knowledge of Christ our faith is established in the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).
4. Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18).
5. We are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10).
6. All that we do is to be done in the name of Christ (Colossians 3:17).
7. It is sinful to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

We should study the Word of God daily because, *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). The Bereans *"were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (Acts 17:11). ✝

G. F. Raines is a writer and preacher living in Celina, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Salvation Is in the Church

Max Patterson

Most people claim that we do not have to be members of the church to be saved. If they mean a member of some denomination, they are exactly right. But, if they mean the blood-purchased church of the New Testament, they are *dead wrong*. Membership in Christ's church is essential to salvation.

First, every spiritual blessing is in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). How can one be saved apart from every spiritual blessing?

Second, it is the church that Jesus saved (purchased) with His blood. Church members were bought with blood (Acts 20:28). Surely God did not allow Jesus to die for something that was non-essential. The church is the only thing bought with blood; therefore, those not in this blood-bought church are lost.

Third, Paul said Christ is the Savior of the body, the church (Ephesians 5:23; 1:22,23). He is not the Savior of those outside.

Fourth, Paul argues that we are reconciled (brought back together with God) in the one body (the church) by the cross. In no other relationship is one reconciled to God.

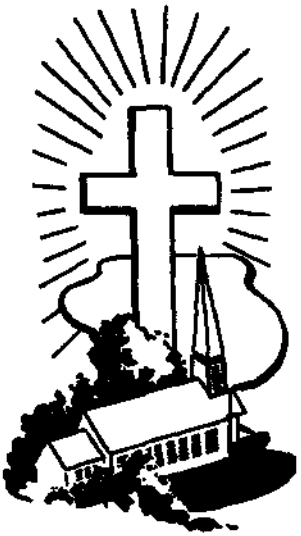
Fifth, the church is that group of people that Jesus is to present to Himself (Ephesians 5:27). If man is saved he is added to the church, and is in a position to be presented to Jesus as one who belongs to Him.

Sixth, since the church is the family of God, to say one can be saved outside the church is the same as saying one can be saved without being a member of God's family (1 Timothy 3:15).

Seventh, if one is not in the kingdom (the church), one is still in the power of darkness. God had delivered the Colossians *"from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"* (Colossians 1:13). This "translation" is another way of saying these had been born again, of water and the spirit (John 3:3-5).

When people today do exactly what people did in New Testament times to become Christians, they are added to the church. Being a member of the church represents one's spiritual covenant relationship with Christ. ✝

Max Patterson is the preacher for the Hillcrest congregation of Christ's church in Neosho, Missouri, U.S.A.



"What Makes A Great Church?"

Daniel S. Hamm

JESUS DID! *" . . . upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). *" . . . Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it"* (Ephesians 5:25). *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:47). **The Lord made a great church!** Romans 16:16, *" . . . The churches (congregations) of Christ salute you."* **Other churches (organizations) are not great! Jesus promised,** *" . . . Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up"* (Matthew 15:13).

THE BIBLE DOES! When the church is patterned after the New Testament only, it is great! 1 Peter 4:11, *" . . . speak as the oracles of God."* Revelation 22:18,19 forbids addition to and subtraction from the Scriptures. Galatians 1:8,9 promises damnation to all who teach false doctrines, and such cannot be accepted into the fellowship of faithful brethren (2 John 9-11).

The church has a great name:

"churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16); *"church of God"* (Acts 20:28).

The church has a great organization:

elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers, and faithful members (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Ephesians 4:11-16).

The church has applied a great plan of salvation:

hear (Romans 10:17); believe (John 3:16); repent (Luke 13:3); confess (Matthew 10:32); and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

The church has a great worship service:

"in spirit and truth" (John 4:24); on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), including the Lord's supper; singing (Ephesians 5:19); giving (1 Corinthians 16:2); prayer (Acts 2:42); teaching (1 Timothy 4:2); and faithfulness of all members to attend (Hebrews 10:25).

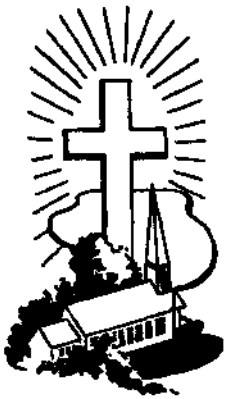
The church is great because of her faithfulness:

(1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10). Faithful brethren enjoy fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7), and unfaithful brethren must be disciplined (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17), and, if necessary, withdrawn from (2 Thessalonians 3:6,15). This keeps the church of Christ great (1 Corinthians 5:5,7; 1 Timothy 1:20; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Matthew 13:41,42).

YOU DO! The church is not a building of wood, brick, or stubble! It is the *body of Christ* (Ephesians 1:22,23), **made up of priests** (1 Peter 2:4,9). **Those who enter the church of Christ** (John 3:3-5; Acts 2:37; 1 Corinthians 12:13) **make the church great. Those who remain loyal to her and repent, confess, and pray when they falter** (Acts 8:22; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9) **keep the church great.**

The church is as great as you make her! *How great is the church?* ✝

Daniel S. Hamm preaches for the Bishop Street congregation in Union City, Tennessee, U.S.A.



A Great Church

has a great **plan** for the future.
has great **faith** in God and His promises.
believes that **prayer** is very important.
has a great **willingness** to work in God's kingdom.
has a great spirit of **togetherness** in God's work.
has great ***compassion*** for the needs of others.
has a great **burden** and **vision** for souls.
has great **persistence** and will not be stopped.
has great **respect** for the Word of God.

FOCUS ON THE LOST

Congregations must make evangelism a priority.

Clayton Pepper

When a congregation does not grow, there is a reason for it. It may be that it simply does not have the capacity to produce spiritual fruit. Or it may be that it is out of focus. A careful examination of what we do will show that many of our congregations have an *inward* focus rather than an *outward* focus.

Church Growth Inc. in Monrovia, CA discussed this matter in a book titled *Growth and New Vision for the Bible School.* Its conclusion was that the major difference between Bible schools that are growing and Bible schools that are not is the way they view their purpose. Whether specifically stated or subtly implied, every Bible school and every congregation has a philosophy of ministry, a reason for existence. *The purpose for being is nearly always different in declining Bible schools than in growing ones.* In most declining Bible schools, the reason for being is almost exclusively to minister to existing Christians and to mature members of existing congregations.

CONCERNS BECOME PREOCCUPATIONS

Although concern for edification, spiritual growth, spiritual health and fellowship within existing Bible schools is necessary, these concerns have become the entire preoccupation of the classes and the curriculum in declining Bible schools. Growth of inward-focused Bible schools through

reaching unchurched people in the community either is not mentioned or is assumed to be an automatic by-product of nurture.

The activities of inward-focused Bible schools also reflect an introverted concern toward their members. Social activities tend to be member-oriented with little or no effort to find and bring in non-Christians.

The name "Bible school" here could be changed to "church" and would be an accurate analysis of many congregations today. So we have to change an inward-focused church into an outward-focused church.

CHANGES BRING INWARD FOCUS

I can remember, as a child, once attending a brush arbor meeting. It was in the days before television, and there were not many automobiles. Most of the people were farmers. The wives were mostly homemakers along with helping their husbands on the farms. There were not many social activities for the community; therefore, when a gospel meeting was held, people would come from far and near to associate with their friends and neighbors.

Many congregations of that day began in tents, school buildings or brush arbor meetings. So in that circumstance, progress was viewed as getting a building, hiring a preacher and organizing a Bible school. Out of this seems to have developed the notion that the lost will come once we are prepared to receive them.

Our system seems to have been set up more on the denominational pastor system than it was on the New Testament pattern. Of course, in their infancy, congregations had to rely heavily on the preacher for leadership because few men were qualified to be elders. The members believed that regular attendance, good moral living, and meeting the budget were the primary goals. What this did was lead to inactivity and indifference. Now, as we try to get the church to be evangelistic, we uncover these hindrances to reaching out.

When we concentrate on ourselves, losing sight of the untaught, we have also lost sight of God's purpose for leaving His people in the world.

We have been taught by *people*

and by *Bible school materials* that do not focus on winning souls. In fact, bringing the lost to Christ seems like *an optional thing to do.* Indifference toward the lost makes it difficult to get the church to be evangelistic. Indifference and apathy are so widespread that many Christians do not respond to the message to become evangelistic.

The Bible school is not evangelistic, and most of our preachers have been trained to be pastors of churches, which is what we want when we hire them. So the preacher comes to *serve the congregation,* and the congregation hires the preacher to serve *them,* which again gets back to the inward focus.

Many preachers seem to feel threatened by evangelism. It is easy to get in the pulpit and talk about it publicly, but they find it difficult to talk personally to an individual about his soul's salvation and to teach him the Gospel. Many cannot train others to win the lost because they have not been schooled in this, themselves

TURNING THE CHURCH AROUND

How can we turn the church around? It is not an easy task. Generally speaking, ours is not a religion of deep commitment by the majority, the kind of commitment it takes to teach the lost.

When we talk about changing the focus of the church, we are talking about **raising the standard of commitment on the part of the church, giving more time, visiting neighbors and non-members, seeking to restore those who have gone astray, and learning to utilize the talents of the new converts before they slip away because of indifference.**

The time has come that we really must look at what we are doing and see if the church **can attract and hold** outsiders in today's worldly culture. This does not mean we need to turn to liberal ideas.

The issue of church growth could be simplified by getting brethren to practice *friendship evangelism.* The task ahead is not simple or easy. We must be committed to making *long range changes in attitudes.* Our enthusiasm for evangelism comes in spurts; we lack continuity and consistency, and this *must* change if we are to change the declining trend in church growth.

One of the things I find in studying about the Jerusalem church is that it was united around its mission. This is obvious in the first few chapters of Acts. However, today's church is not united around the mission of evangelism — not even around the idea of evangelism at home! Some of the elders may

be evangelistic, and others may not be. If such diversity exists among the key people, it is difficult to build a growing church.

The entire group needs to be together in its understanding and concept of growth. They need to decide which programs the congregation will participate in, and then determine how to make the programs evangelistic. Efforts should be made to develop an *outward focused* Bible school.

The church growth people say that $1 out of every $10 should go to advertising. Normally we use advertising for special occasions or to give a general listing of the name of the congregation, time of services, address and phone number. However, this type of advertising attracts primarily the people who are already members of the church.

Advertising that is going to reach the public has to target certain audiences, whether they are young adults, singles, or whoever, and there needs to be some rotation of emphasis. The quality of pro-

The Great Decline

To get to the cause of the attendance declines in congregations, we must go back to the early '60s. *After the Bible, along with prayer, was taken out of the public schools, worship attendance and Bible school attendance in almost every religion went down tremendously.* There were congregations within certain fellowships that did not suffer, but according to one writer, there has been *no increase* in the size of Christendom in America since 1980. Eighty to 85 percent of all congregations have plateaued or are declining.

Bible school and worship attendance began declining in the late '60s. Bible school attendance throughout the nation declined 8 million from 1970 to 1980. Flavil Yeakley, in an article commenting about the decade from 1965 to 1975, said, "If the trend of the past decade continues into the future, the present new growth rate of around one percent will continue to decrease until around 1980, when growth will totally stop." That did occur. He wrote in 1993 that the church had not grown in numbers in 13 years.

However, while church attendance has gone down, *crime and immorality* have increased. *The '70s could be called the decade of abortions, the '80s the decade of homosexuality, and the '90s the decade of disease.*

grams we offer will determine whether people who respond to advertising keep coming

Also, personal visits in the homes of guests is urgent. One preacher's study showed that *when members call on visitors within 36 hours of their attending the Bible class or the worship of the congregation, and visit for 15 minutes, 85 percent return the next Sunday!* With a visit made within 72 hours, only *60 percent* will come back. Among those visited seven days later, only *15 percent* return.

The average congregation loses 6 to 9 percent of its membership every year through people who fall away, move or die. Thus, a congregation of 200 will lose 12 or more people, so they must bring in 13 new people a year to grow.

In general, about 15 percent of first-time visitors will become members of the congregation if we do an adequate job with them. If we attract 167 first-time visitors in our area per year, we may hold 25 of them. That means that we must have three first-time visitors each Sunday in order for us to grow through this particular avenue.

PULPIT PREACHING

It may be difficult for us to face but the congregations that have grown and have been most effective in reaching out have preachers that eat, sleep and dream growth and reaching the lost. One of the things the elders need to do is to remove a lot of pastoral duties from the preacher, allowing him to spend more time teaching the lost

But the preacher cannot do it alone. In the first century, the entire church was scattered abroad because of persecution, and they *"went everywhere preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4). This must be the focus of the church today if we are to see true growth. ✝

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Clayton Pepper is a preacher of the Gospel who works with mass media through *Restoration Radio Network* in Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Quick Commentary On Crucial Verses

Acts 20:28-29

Qualified elders first heed the word themselves

Shepherding the flock is without discrimination

The eldership is an office of sacred privilege and awesome responsibility

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, . . . shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Not to entertain or Lord it over, but to feed God's church His word. (See I Tim. 3:1ff.)

The church belongs to Christ, not the elders. He died for it. He loves it.

Ambition and lust for control have often caused the flock to be scattered. True shepherds lay down their life for the sheep

Apostasy began with elders lusting for preeminence. Elders must not forget the upper room

—FenTer NorThem

"Thanks To God"

Betty Tucker

In the Chinese/English hymnbook used at Wanchai (Hong Kong), there is a prayer/song entitled, "Thanks To God." It is a hymn of thanksgiving, and each time we sing it, we consider the beauty of the content. It is our purpose in this article to analyze the words, and glean vital truths contained therein.

Thanks For Blessings

Verse one enumerates the many good gifts from a loving Father:

"Thanks, O God, for boundless mercy
From Thy gracious throne above;
Thanks for every need provided
From the fullness of Thy love!
Thanks for daily toil and labor
And for rest when shadows fall;

Thanks for love of friend and neighbor
And Thy goodness unto all."

We appreciate the thankful attitude for "daily toil and labor . . . and for rest when shadows fall." Ecclesiastes 5:12 tells us that *"The sleep of a labouring man is sweet . . . ."* Blessed are those who learn this valuable lesson early in life. Only after a good day's earnest toil can we truly find solace in sleep. We cannot feel real pleasure in rest if we have played all day or passed our time in boredom.

Thanks For Troubles!

Verse two is the really thought-provoking one, and the verse that some of us dare not sing:

"Thanks for thorns as well as roses,
Thanks for weakness and for health;
Thanks for clouds as well as sunshine,
Thanks for poverty and wealth!
Thanks for pain as well as pleasure —
All Thou sendest day by day;
And Thy Word, our dearest treasure,
Shedding light upon our way."

Maturity causes us to realize we cannot have roses without thorns. So, wisdom dictates that we learn to be thankful for the prickly thorns. Had Adam not sinned in the beautiful garden, mankind would never have had to hear the dread sentence, *" . . . cursed is the ground for thy sake . . . thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee . . . ."* (Genesis 3:17,18).

Most of us long ago realized that there is a reason for times of weakness in body. Frail humanity gets so engrossed with daily living that it becomes necessary for us to have a "season of illness" . . . a quiet time to reflect on God, to rethink our values, and to set our compass toward heaven once again.

God has promised that we can know that *" . . . all things work together for good"* in our lives; but that promise hinges on the latter portion of Romans 8:28, *"to those that love God . . . ."*

How often have you seen people rise to greatness from beds of affliction? Charles R. Brewer penned a moving prayer during his last illness. His "Post-Dated Prayer" is an outpouring of worship and thanksgiving, a beauti-

ful testimony to the dedication of the man, as now he begs God, " . . . as once You healed the wretched lad so long ago, Even so bid now my striving cease, and let my ransomed soul come home in peace."

Line 4 of the second stanza reminds us of Paul's great statement in Philippians 4:11, *" . . . for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."* We must grow to this spiritual plane, accepting those things in life that we cannot alter, and going on to greater things, despite trials. Helen Keller might never have accomplished a fraction as much had she been blessed with the senses of sight and hearing.

Line 5 mentions "pain, as well as pleasure." Troublesome times sooner or later come to us all. May we be able to accept our sorrows and heartaches with the attitude of the apostle Paul. When he prayed three times for his *"thorn in the flesh"* to be taken away, he was told by God, " . . . *my strength is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Then, the tired old soldier of the cross, in effect, asked for still more handicaps, " . . . *for when I am weak, then am I strong"* (verse 10).

Line 7 expresses thanks for God's Word. It must be hidden in our hearts (Psalm 119:11). In Deuteronomy 6:7 the people of old were commanded to talk of God's teachings *" . . . when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."* Can we afford to do less?

Thanks For All Good Things

Verse three climaxes the song of thanksgiving in an attitude of adoration. The one who penned the lyrics had a profound sense of what is good and beautiful in our lives. Listen as the third stanza emphasizes the ever-present goodness of God.

"Thanks, O God, for home and fireside,
Where we share our daily bread;
Thanks for hours of sweet communion,
When by Thee our souls are fed!
Thanks for grace in time of sorrow
And for joy and peace in Thee;
Thanks for hope today, tomorrow,
And for all eternity!" ✝

Betty Tucker is the wife of a gospel preacher, and they live in Linden, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Does Anyone Care?

Leon Barnes

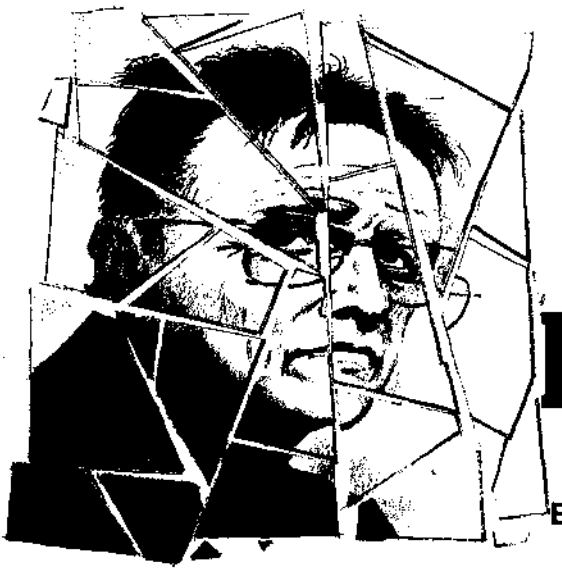
In one of his moments of self pity, David cried out, *"No one cared for my soul"* (Psalm 142:4). Have you ever felt like that? I was visiting with a lady in my office some months ago who was deeply troubled about many things. I asked her if she had some friend she could talk to and just be with. She said, "No, I have no one who cares if I live or die." What a sad situation to be in. Whether it is true or not matters little. If we feel that no one cares, it brings the same pain as if they really do not.

One of the things that characterized Jesus throughout His earthly ministry was His care and compassion for people who were hurting. In Matthew 9:36-38 the Bible says, *"And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'"* Jesus had compassion. He wanted those who followed Him to have compassion, and He wanted them to pray that God would send out more workers with the same nature of compassion.

God cares. We are challenged to *"cast all our cares on Him for He cares for you"* (1 Peter 5:7). This means that for us to be like Him, to have the nature He wants us to have, we too must care. Compas-sion must show from the heart.

It is so easy in a world tormented by crime, cruelty, and greed to become calloused and to hide behind locked doors with a heart cold from the pains of that world. But, to follow Jesus we must care. When we care, the actions will come to back up the compassion. Remember, if we close our heart to keep it from being broken, we also keep it from feeling love to make it full. ⇧

Leon Barnes works with the Barrow Road church in Little Rock, Arkansas, U.S.A.



"Why Me, Lord?"

Billy Joe Gooden

How many times have you or someone asked, "Why me, Lord?" when found with a health, financial, or personal problems? "Why did this happen to me?" and "What have I done to deserve this?" are questions often asked during troubled times.

How many of us ask these same questions in regard to our good health, our ability to make a living, our ability to keep the home and care for our children, as well as the ability to make our home a place of love and security? How many of our young people ask these questions in regard to being blessed with parents that love and care for them? "Why me, Lord? What have I done to deserve such blessings in my life?"

In May of 1994 I was diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. At that time I was 55 years old. My wife and I were told that I had two to five years to live. Of course, this was quite a shock. Some time later my wife asked the question, "Why did this happen to you?" I had even asked myself this question when I was first diagnosed. My immediate answer was, "Because I was born." You see, from the time we are born into this world we begin to die. Each day we live is one day closer to that appointment we all must keep (Hebrews 9:27), unless, of course, the Lord should return first. It seems we sometimes forget that when Adam and Eve

disobeyed God, sin entered the world, bringing with it sickness, suffering, and death. We all have to deal with these things, but thanks to God, we can overcome them (1 Corinthians 15:57,58).

Friends, please listen to me. We live in a busy world, one that demands too much of our time. Unfortunately many of us stay so busy with the things of the world that we often forget to take time to study and meditate on the Word of God and often fail to commune with God in prayer. We take too many things for granted and fail to thank God as we should.

"Why me, Lord?" Every time I ask this question I think of another blessing for which I ought to be thankful. For example, I am now 57 years old, and I stand amazed that God blessed me with 55 years of almost perfect health. I have been able to run and play, participate in sports, fish, hunt, and work for the same company for 36 years. During that time I have seen others who have not been as fortunate. They were not able to walk, run, or participate in the things we take so lightly. Certainly I have no reason to complain.

Then there is my wife. We recently celebrated our 36th year together as man and wife. Of course, I would like to be able to celebrate our 50th and even our 60th anniversaries. But again I am forced to ask, "Why me, Lord?" Why have I been so blessed? Why have I been fortunate enough to have a wife stand by me in bad times as well as good times, in health and in sickness? Why have I been so blessed to have a wife who believes in me, who believes in God and His Word, one who took my hand when I was diagnosed with ALS and said, "We will fight this together"?

Then there is our daughter. I believe every God-fearing father and mother have a desire to live long enough to see their children grow up and begin their own homes. Again I ask, "Why me, Lord?" Why did You bless me with a daughter that brought so much sunshine and joy to my life as she was growing up, one that I can still picture in my mind climbing up in a chair to reach some material in my office on "Why It Is Wrong To Dance," and then have the conviction to present that material to her classmates? Now my blessings continue to flow as I see her in her own home with a fine Christian husband who is proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Why me, Lord?" Why have I been blessed with two wonderful grandchildren who think their "Papa" hung the moon? The pure love I see in them makes me think of the joy that will be in heaven. Now that my legs will no longer carry me about, my grandchildren have adjusted to my being in a wheelchair. Again, I thank God for the blessing of technology which

allows me to have an electric wheelchair, one that will carry me outside and allow me to continue playing with my grandchildren and attend worship.

Why have I been blessed to have hundreds of Christians encouraging and praying for me and my wife as we battle this disease? I could go on and on, but hopefully enough has been said that the next time you are faced with an adverse situation and are tempted to ask the question, "Why me, Lord?" you can stop, meditate on your overall life, and see that the real question is, "Why me, Lord? Why have You blessed me so?" ✝

Since writing this article, Billy Joe Gooden lost his battle with disease, but he has won the victory. He was a member of the Ward Street congregation in Hardy, Arkansas, U.S.A.

What A Blessedness It Is

While on this pilgrimage below we meet with clouds of strife
And streams of troubles overflow to flood the road of life.
But there's a friend somewhere above Who's watching day by day
To soothe the heartaches with His love and drive the clouds away.

So long and painful is the road that we must travel on
And oft so heavy is the load our strength is quickly gone,
But there's a friend somewhere on high Who's watching over all
And with His love He's standing by to lift us when we fall.

This pilgrim journey we must take is often filled with care,
Our hearts with sorrows often break when we've too much to bear,
But there's a friend on Heaven's throne Whose heart goes out to them
Who need His arm to lean upon and we can trust in Him.

When falls the fearful shade of night and we in darkness roam
There is a friend to give us light and lead us safely home.
He gives us grace because we're His while thru this life we plod,
O what a blessedness it is to be the friend of God.

— Harry Presley

God's Care for Widows

Sylvia L. Camp

Widows are to be found over all the world. Statistics show that many women live longer than men. Adequate provisions allow some to live comfortably — others are less fortunate.

However, widows have never gone unnoticed by God. In Exodus 22:22-24, He ordered that they should not be afflicted. If they were, He would hear their cries. His anger would wax hot and He would kill the oppressors with a sword. Then their wives would be widows and would suffer afflictions.

In the New Testament, James wrote that pure religion is caring for the afflicted widows (1:27). An example is found in Acts 6:1. When it became known that they were neglected, several good men were selected to see to their needs.

The teaching in the New Testament is that a widow must be cared for by her family so that the church can care for those who have no one (1 Timothy 5:16). Paul wrote Timothy that if one refused to do this, he had denied the faith and was worse than an infidel (verse 8).

The beautiful story of Ruth and Naomi illustrates family care of widows by in-laws. Ruth had married Naomi's son, but he died. The women continued to love each other and to provide for each other's needs. Ruth gleaned in the fields so that they could have food (Ruth 2:2). Naomi, in accord with the law, helped arrange a marriage for Ruth with a near kinsman.

Acts 9:39 records the kind deeds of a woman named Dorcas who helped clothe widows. When she died they wept and showed Peter the coats and garments she had made for them.

God wants widows to have care. We've noted examples of men, in-laws, and a woman doing what God wanted done for these bereaved women.

If you are a widow, never forget that God loves you and has given orders for your care. You are not alone! ✝

Sylvia Camp is a Christian writer who has been married to a gospel preacher for more than sixty years. They live in Amarillo, Texas, U.S.A.

Self-Control

Bill Nicks

"And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 9:25). This passage is an allusion to the Olympic games, familiar to all athletes. The principle of self-control is still a major factor in athletic contests today.

At the 1992 Wimbledon tennis finals, Andre Agassi became the champion for the first time in his career at the age of 22. Over and over again, amidst the grueling and demanding physical and mental stress of meeting world class players, he showed marvelous self-control, both mentally and physically. In spite of 37 aces from his towering opponent, he continued in the finals to struggle, finally winning the championship cup in five sets. Overwhelmed with emotions that had been under control during this draining match, he collapsed on the ground and wept when the last point had been won.

If athletes can succeed by exercising self-control, we as Christians can take a lesson from their lives. This is what Paul is telling us in 1 Corinthians 9:25. If they can do it to win a corruptible championship cup, we can also exercise self-control for the everlasting crown of life.

We are *"fearfully and wonderfully made"* with inborn desires and

propensities. A successful Christian life cannot be gained by ignoring the need to restrain our capacities. We have the capacity to control our tongues, or "speak roughly," as did Rehoboam, son of Solomon. By taking the wrong advice from younger men, he plunged Israel into a division which meant 10 of their 12 tribes would rebel under Jeroboam, never more to be a part of Israel, but to be swallowed up in Assyrian captivity. The Christian is told, *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one"* (Colossians 4:6).

Every Christian should regularly read James 3 — extremely valuable information on how to control that little member which *"boasteth great things." "Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell"* (James 3:5ff). Many homes have been broken, and churches divided, because members could not control the tongue. Self-control is the factor which makes the great difference. Divorced couples often admit, too late, that "we could have worked it out if we had tried harder to communicate." *"A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous* (harsh) *words stir up anger"* (Proverbs 15:1).

Controlling the temper is closely allied to controlling the tongue. *"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he who ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city"* (Proverbs 16:32). *"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few"* (Ecclesiastes 5:2). *"He that is soon angry* (quick-tempered) *dealeth foolishly"* (Proverbs 14:17). *"He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly"* (Proverbs 14:29). ✞

Bill Nicks is a former missionary to Africa and is now serving on the island of Trinidad in the West Indies.

Life is a grindstone and whether it polishes you up or grinds you down depends on the stuff you are made of.

DISTANT DISCIPLESHIP

Joe Magee

"Then, having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed at a distance" (Luke 22:54).

Judas had done his deed. The betrayal was complete. Public sentiment against the Lord had reached a fevered pitch. Peter was about to be sifted as wheat. It was the beginning of the end for the Lord's earthly ministry. It was the end of the beginning for Peter's.

Distant discipleship leads to disaster. Peter took counsel of his fears just long enough to lose his spiritual footing. The decline was rapid and sure.

We follow at a distance when we are lacking in devotion. In the attitude of praise and prayer or in studying His will, if we find ourselves irregularly and infrequently involved, we are distancing ourselves from Him who spent so much time with His Father and found so much strength in His presence.

We follow at a distance when we carelessly allow our lives to be influenced by the impurity of the world. When we run after the "gusto" of this life, thirsting after the pleasures of the flesh, and entangling ourselves with the cares of this world, we forget the promises and the responsibilities given to the Christian.

We follow at a distance when we stay just close enough to the church to be aware of its activities but not close enough to be involved in its purpose. When we enjoy the comforts of its facilities and the plaudits of its good name but will not contribute to its efforts, or when we fail to give sacrificially of our resources, spiritual or material, to the cause of Christ, we follow at a distance.

The grave danger of following at a distance is that it takes us too close to the slippery slopes of indifference and the perilous pits of spiritual poverty. Peter recovered. As stated above, it was the end of the beginning for him. He raised himself from that awful experience and became the great apostle. He learned not to trust in his own strength, but to take confidence in the strength of the Lord. So must we. ✝

Joe Magee is the preacher for the Lord's church in Berryville, Arkansas, U.S.A.

Who Am I?

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's word. I am an example of one who wavered but then grew strong.

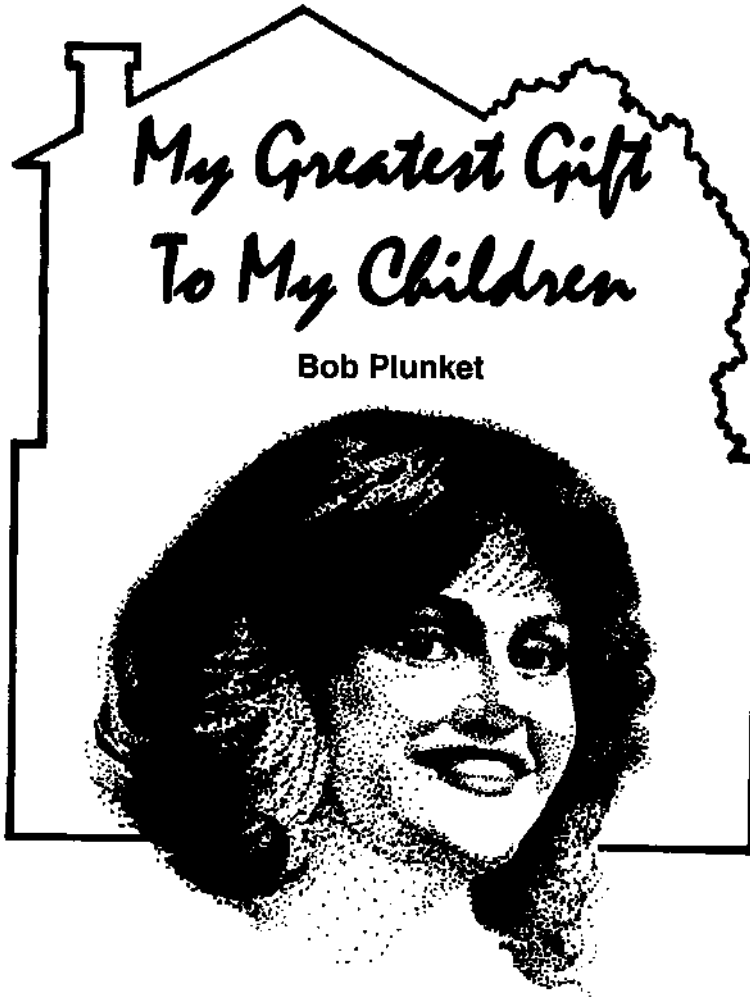
1. **100** Tradition says that I was inspired by God to write a book of the Bible.
2. **90** My mother's house in Jerusalem was used as a meeting place for the church (Acts 12:12-17).
3. **80** My mother's name was Mary (12:12).
4. **70** My cousin was from the island of Cyprus, and his name was Barnabas (19:2).
5. **60** I wanted to be a missionary (12:25).
6. **50** From Jerusalem I traveled with Paul and my cousin to Antioch (12:25).
7. **40** After traveling some time together, I went back to Jerusalem (13:13).
8. **30** When Paul and Barnabas proposed a second journey, Barnabas wanted to take me along, but Paul said no; so Barnabas left Paul and then he and I traveled together to Cyprus and taught the people there (15:36-41).
9. **20** Later, Paul and I were reconciled, because Paul told Timothy to bring me to him, "for he is useful to me for ministering" (2 Timothy 4:11).
10. **10** My first name was John, and it is thought that I was the young man who ran away from the garden when Christ was arrested (Mark 14:51,52)

My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.

My Greatest Gift To My Children

Bob Plunket



I worked hard to give my children a sense of security. I wanted them to feel safe, giving them shelter, food, and clothing. I wanted to give them an education. Greater than these, I wanted to give them a good name, which the wise man says is better than silver and gold. Perhaps greater than this was the giving of my time and love to them.

And greater than this was to give them a good example, that walking in my steps, they would be on the right track. Even greater than this was to show them a wonderful heavenly father with whom they could walk and talk when I am gone. I know I didn't do all of these perfectly, but I tried.

But my greatest gift to them embraced all of the above. It was the gift of a Christian mother. I can't tell you that this was at the top of my list when I was dating, but I owe a debt of gratitude to my own dear mother who put me in an environment where Christian girls were abundant. I found this special person in Searcy, Arkansas, at Harding College. Along with her striking beauty were the qualities of kindness, humility, patience, generosity, and selflessness. She is 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 in motion.

She is adored by her children and grandchildren as one who has always been there for them, the one who always listens, the one who makes each of the five think he or she is the most important. She worked and helped me go to college. I promised then that if we could succeed in that challenge, she would never have to work out of the home again, and she didn't. We had to live on less, but our children did have a full-time mother.

I'm convinced today that it really isn't cars and clothes and things that children want. I am sure they would trade all of those things for a good Christian father and mother who love each other and love the Lord and who give the children their love and time. *The church can never be what God wants it to be until the home is what it ought to be.* I am so thankful for the many Christian homes that do exist in the church, the loving, dedicated mothers and fathers.

Young men and young women, remember when you choose your mate that you are also choosing the father or mother of your children.

I want to say to my children and to all children so blessed with a Christian mother, "You surely should *'rise up and call her blessed'*" (Proverbs 31:38).

Bob Plunket preaches for the Tuscumbia Church of Christ in Tuscumbia, Alabama, U.S.A.

No Cheap Divorces

Bobby Dockery

A lawyer's ad in a metropolitan newspaper proclaimed: "Simple Divorce; No Complications: $49.95."

Ads like this one offer a biting commentary on contemporary culture. In such a climate of broken commitment, people must be made to understand that divorce costs much more than $49.95. There are no cheap divorces! The cost of divorce is also paid in the form of misery, bitterness, sorrow, and regret. Consider some additional costs of divorce . . .

I. The Spiritual Cost.

Divorce is a violation of the will of God. In Malachi 2:16, God says unconditionally: *"For I hate divorce."* Jesus taught: *"Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery"* (Matthew 19:9). **Divorce is not, and never has been, a part of God's plan for marriage.**

2. The Emotional Cost.

A special report on the after-effects of divorce appeared in the December 31, 1984, issue of *USA Today* under the headline: "After Split-Up A Difficult, Lonely Time." Those who have been through it will probably agree that divorce is an experience filled with emotional anguish, heartbreak, and grief. A research study conducted by Dr. Mavis Hetherington of the University of Virginia determined that 12 months after they were divorced, 73% of women and 60% of men felt their divorce was a mistake. Dr. Lee Salk summed up the emotional devastation of divorce like this: "The trauma of divorce is second only to death."

3. The Social Cost.

After divorce, many men and women feel cut off from former friends and, often, even from relatives. Former social ties may become embarrassing; former acquaintances may grow cool. A sense of restlessness, isolation, and loneliness often sets in following divorce.

4. The Cost To Children.

The emotional trauma of divorce spills over from husband and wife to touch the lives of children as well. A 10-year study of the children of divorce by psychologist Judith Wallerstein concluded: "Divorce can traumatize young children to the point where they enter adulthood as emotional hostages to past events, psychologically incapable of leading happy lives." Another study of more than 18,000 school children in 14 states shows that children from homes broken by divorce have "much more" difficulty at school than children from homes which have not been touched by divorce (*Time*, January 4, 1982, p. 81). According to a *Newsweek* cover story, "the comforting old saw that children are flexible enough to cope and bounce back from divorce" is contrary to the evidence (February 11, 1980).

Divorce is never inexpensive or easy. There is a price to be paid in emptiness and enduring scars. And, for those whose divorce leaves them estranged from God and outside His will, there remains a price to be paid at the Judgment. There are no cheap divorces! ⇧

Bobby Dockery preaches for the Baldwin Church of Christ in Fayetteville, Arkansas, U.S.A., and is deeply involved in the preaching of the Gospel by means of the printed page.

Out of CONTROL

Dale Grissom

The family is in serious trouble; many homes have been broken by divorce. Divorce causes much emotional suffering by both husband and wife, but the ones who suffer the most are the children. Their world is turned upside down. They love both their mother and their father and don't understand why they can't get along instead of fighting and breaking up. Many children end up being raised by one parent.

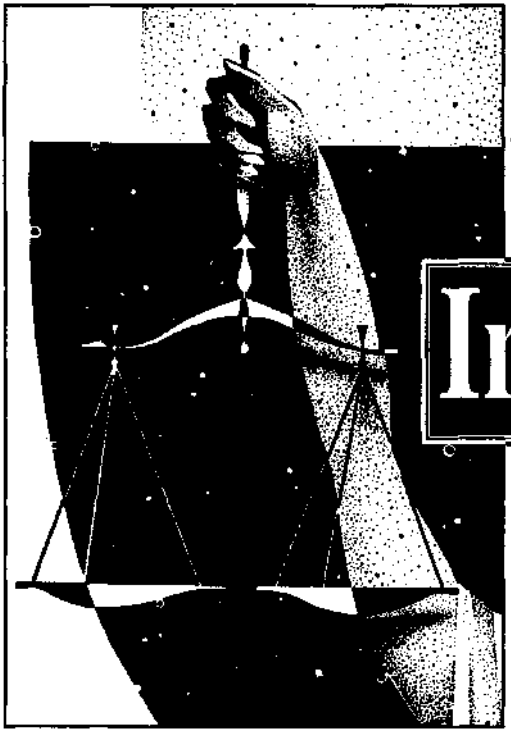
Even in families where the parents have stayed together, children often rebel against their authority. Perhaps they leave home and go to a shelter, or live with friends, or on the streets. This has happened thousands of times. Many parents have lost all control of their children.

It hasn't been so many years ago that parents taught their children to obey them. If they would not obey, they were punished. Then so-called "experts" began to write books telling parents that children should not be disciplined. These experts claimed that if children were made to do things they did not want to do, it would cause lasting hurt emotionally. Many parents decided that the experts knew how to raise their children better than they did, and they didn't want the responsibility anyway. Children grew up very rebellious, with no respect for anyone or anything.

Many children learn to intimidate their parent or parents. Sometimes they do this by threatening to withhold their love from them. The children are the real bosses and they tell their parents what they will or will not do. If they want something, they expect and demand that their parents provide it for them — immediately.

The family situation in many, many instances is out of control! Drugs, alcohol, and fornication have become a way of life for great numbers of people. We must turn to the Bible and take seriously the instruction found there if we want to save our homes and nation. ⇧

Dale Grissom works with the Lord's church in Dexter, Missouri, U.S.A.



Is a Woman Inferior to a Man?

Betty Burton Choate

Some people say that a woman is nothing more than a servant to a man, even though he is her husband. She is good only to bear children, to keep the house, and to prepare the food. Some religions teach that a woman cannot be saved in the body of a woman. She must first be reborn as a man.

In rejection of this thinking, the "Women's Liberation Movement" which has swept through the developed nations of the world declares that woman is in every way the equal of man. Not only does this movement seek to establish equality, but its ultimate goal is to gain power for the women of the world to overset the established authority of men. This attitude has created a sense of competition between women and men which results in enmity and bitterness.

Our concern is to learn what God has to say about the role of woman and her relationship to man. Neither the pagan view nor the Liberation Movement is directed by God. But in the Bible we can clearly see the work,

the role, and the position of woman, as God intended it to be.

Is woman inferior to man? In the first book of the Bible — Genesis — we see the answer to this question: God had created the universe and living things. Last of all, He made man. Then He *"brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him"* (Genesis 2:19,20).

The words, *"a helper comparable to him"* tell us what God intended woman to be: **a companion, a helper capable of matching man.**

In order to bring woman into existence, *"...the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made* (the original language literally says, 'He built') *into a woman, and He brought her to the man."* (Genesis 2:21,22).

When Adam saw the woman God had made he said, *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man"* (Genesis 2:23).

The concluding comment in the Genesis text is, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"* (V. 24).

From the facts of this creation scene, we can learn several things:

- Adam was created *first;* therefore he *was* first, before the woman.
- Whereas Adam was made from the *dust of the earth,* woman was formed, or built, from *a bone taken from the side of Adam.* She was, therefore, literally, a part of man.
- The bone was not taken from his head, that she should rule over him, nor was it taken from his foot, that the man should trample the woman; rather, it was taken from his side, that she should be *a partner with him.*
- God made man and woman literally as two halves of a whole. Without both halves, there can be no reproduction of humanity. Therefore, *both halves are of equal importance* and necessity in their contribution to the continuation of the race.
- God intended that the two individuals — the man and the woman — *leave other family members* in order to form a new family unit.
- The man and the woman were to be joined together so that they became "one flesh" — *two halves of one whole.*

So, from the beginning God formed woman to complete man, to be a helper together with him. In the development of their lives, their family, their work, and their relationships with God and with other humans, the woman was designed to fit together with the man, so that their lives would be complete. In truth, she was literally of the very essence of man, in no way inferior, or of lesser quality or value. ✝

Betty Burton Choate is the wife of J.C. Choate, long-time missionaries to India and other countries in Asia.

Every Christian Husband should see his wife as:

- *a sister in the Lord.*
- *the most delicate vessel to be cared for.*
- *his best friend.*
- *the most important human being in the world.*
- *his most critical permanent investment.*
- *his lifelong partner.*

— David Marube

Marriage

Marriage is the product of love that begins as blind excitement and matures into commitment and responsibility.

Marriage is stronger than death, yet so fragile that we celebrate the achievement of staying together.

Marriage is a lot of routines, yet it needs daily attention . . . and never taken for granted.

Marriage is growing up and growing old together, but it is also growing in trust and contentment.

Marriage is disappointments and hurts along the way. It is also happiness and laughter along the way. But the bad times are made a little easier, and the good times are made even better, by sharing them together!

— David Sain

Thanksgiving

If you were God, and God were you
And you gave Him a holiday
To go to worship, praise, and pray
And then He carelessly stayed away,
Without a thought of you or prayer
Or thanks for all your love and care —
If you were God and God were you,
Say — what would you do?

If you were God and God were you,
And a nation set a day for prayer
But only one had time to spare
For every hundred that didn't care,
Would you believe they were sincere
And bless that nation again next year?
If you were God and God were you
Say — what would you do?

If you were God and God were you,
And millions professed a faith in you
As giver of all good gifts and true,
But never said "Thanks" or thought it due,
But then when trouble came their way
Expected your help without delay —
If you were God and God were you,
Say — what would you do?

— Unknown

"HOW WISE ARE YOU?"

Dan Jenkins

The name of Solomon is eternally tied to wisdom. As a young king he asked God for wisdom, and God granted his request. The theme of much of Solomon's writings centers around the topic of wisdom. Notice these words from Proverbs 11:30: *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."*

Jesus made ignorant fishermen into wise men. The Jews thought of Peter and John as *"unlearned and ignorant men"* (Acts 4:12). Yet Jesus saw far more in them. He made them *fishers of men.*

One must pay a high price to obtain this wisdom. The knowledge

of God's Word demands hours of dedicated study of the Bible. It demands a sacrifice of time. It demands a giving up of one's own will in becoming *as others* to help teach them.

Paul says, *"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more . . . I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some"* (1 Corinthians 9:19-22). He had to overcome the obstacle of racial difference as a Jew seeking to win Gentiles. Yet he made the sacrifices necessary to reach them. When he labored among Jews there was also resentment from them toward him because he had left that religion. Yet he made the sacrifices needed to do this. We must not lose sight of Paul's words, *"I have made myself servant to all . . ."* This is the price of wisdom.

Finally, there is eternal reward for soul-winners. Daniel said, *"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"* (Daniel 12:3).

Let me say it again, "How wise are you?" ✝

Dan Jenkins is an evangelist for the Palm Beach Lakes congregation in West Palm Beach, Florida, U.S.A.

The Important Words

Someone gave a short course in public relations, and it went something like this: The six most important words are **"I admit I made a mistake."** *The five most important words are* **"You did a good job."** *The four most important words are* **"What is your opinion?"** *The three most important words are* **"If you please."** *The two most important words are* **"Thank you."** *The one most important word is* **"We".** *Finally, the least important word is* **"I".** *It is good when we can forget self long enough to acknowledge others and to show some respect and gratitude to them. Others are happier, and so are we, in the long run.*

— Selected

International Evangelism

Hans J. Dederscheck

Christianity is demonstrated by life. However, it is proclaimed by lips. If there is a failure in either respect, the Gospel cannot be communicated. A sound proclamation makes sense only if behind such reality is sound gospel preaching and a sound proclaimer. The early church did not know church buildings and an academic preaching between four walls. Every Christian proclaimed the Good News publicly in plazas and on the street and in homes. The effect was powerful, since there was no visible difference between theory and practice, a plague of our day.

Of course, there was the synagogue as an ideal place to communicate the Gospel to God-fearing souls, in a given religious environment. The preaching was done in the strict sense of proclaiming Christ's Gospel without human innovations. Here was a ready-made congregation for Christian missionaries to address. The synagogue was one of the most important factors in the early spread of the faith. Jesus Himself was invited to read the prophets in His home synagogue at Nazareth. Paul was so often invited, as a distinguished Pharisee visitor, to read and address the congregation during his missionary journeys. It was his practice first to use the syn-

agogue, and then public places.

The Christian home was another powerful tool for evangelism in the early church. Paul used his rented home in Rome to meet people and to proclaim the Gospel. In his approach, he was brief, factual, conciliatory, and to the point. He offered them hospitality, showed his understanding of the Scriptures, his loyalty to the hope of Israel, and his deep conviction that in Jesus salvation was to be found. When Paul spoke to the elders of Ephesus, he said, *"I have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Acts 20:20,21).

This house-evangelism was more fruitful than any. Polycarp wrote a text which is most important to the missionary enterprise if we really want to restore the first century church: "Let us teach, first of all, ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord. Next, teach your wives to walk in the faith given to them, and in love and in purity tenderly to love their own husbands in all truth, and to love others equally in all chastity: and to train up their children in the knowledge of God."

Missionary work without purity will cause nothing but harm and set the church to ridicule. Clement of Rome laid equal stress on the example, the training, and the discipline of the house where Christian faith is the guiding principle.

If public proclamation of various types and the private use of the home were crucial factors in the spread of the Gospel in the first century, no less important was personal evangelism as one individual shared his faith with another. And today, from the first moment each man finds the truth about Jesus, he is constrained to pass it on. It was through the personal witness of John the Baptist that the two disciples found Jesus. No sooner had one of them, Andrew, made the discovery, than he found his brother Simon Peter and brought him to Jesus. Next, Jesus Himself took the initiative and encountered Philip of Bethsaida. Philip then carried on the good work and found Nathanael, and he in his turn was brought to confess that Jesus was the Son of God. All of these instances show the vital importance of personal evangelism in the outreach of the church. ✝

Hans J. Dederscheck is an evangelist in Vienna, Austria.

He stands best who kneels most.

4 Aspects Of Christianity

T. Pierce Brown

In Acts 2:42, we read, *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."* For all those who are interested in the idea of having a life or a church patterned after that which Christ ordained, a continued emphasis on the four aspects of Christianity mentioned here should be valuable.

First, we need to consider the apostles' doctrine. What was it? How do we discover it? What difference does it make? Is it good for us to continue steadfastly in it? Paul said to Timothy, *"Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee"* (1 Timothy 4:5). If Paul's language to Timothy does not teach that doctrine is important, what does it teach?

In taking heed to the apostles' doctrine, we need to make some significant distinctions. First, we need to make distinctions between the Old Testament and the New.

We need to see that there is a definite distinction between faith and opinion. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Opinion is guessing about what God wants. I have faith that Peter preached as recorded in Acts 2. I have an opinion about why God chose him instead of John.

We need to distinguish between the things that were temporary and those that were permanent. I still hear folks refer to God's providential acts of today as miracles. They say such things as, "It is a miracle that the Berlin Wall came down." There is and always has been a difference in the provi-

dential and miraculous. Miracles could be seen and verified as absolute evidence of the power of God and confirmation of the Word of God.

We need to make a distinction between the circumstances of a situation and the requirements of the situation that apply to us. The breaking of bread that was mentioned and the fellowship that was involved in it are important. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He had the disciples follow a man bearing a pitcher of water, prepare an upper room, and He reclined at the table with the twelve. There are those who seem to think that if we follow Jesus, we must follow His example and meet in an upper room. We need to understand the difference in the principles underlying an action and the means of expediting the command. In 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 there are at least four principles set forth. 1. All things should be done decently and in order. 2. God is not the author of confusion. 3. Women are to be in subjection. 4. All things are to be done unto edifying. The means of carrying out those principles may differ in various circumstances.

We need to know the difference between divine law and a statement concerning the custom of the times. The holy kiss and the wearing of veils can be shown to be customs. The principles underlying those commands are constant.

The general principles underlying these things are: We are obligated to do certain things at certain times and in certain ways. Sometimes we have a choice. How do we tell when we are bound or not bound? The simplest way to tell is: when the inspired instructions and example show that any aspect of the activity was important, we need to be aware of it. There is nothing in any record at any time that shows there was significance or importance in the upper room. Everything about the example and command indicates that the day was significant.

Space does not permit dwelling on the fact that the early Christians continued steadfastly in prayers, but every Christian and every congregation today should realize the importance of learning to pray as the Bible teaches. Studying the prayers of Jesus and Paul is probably the best way to learn the nature and value of prayer. ✝

T. Pierce Brown works with the Lord's church in Cookeville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

If you want to convince others of the value of Christianity, live it!

A Wagon Full of Children

Ron Stough

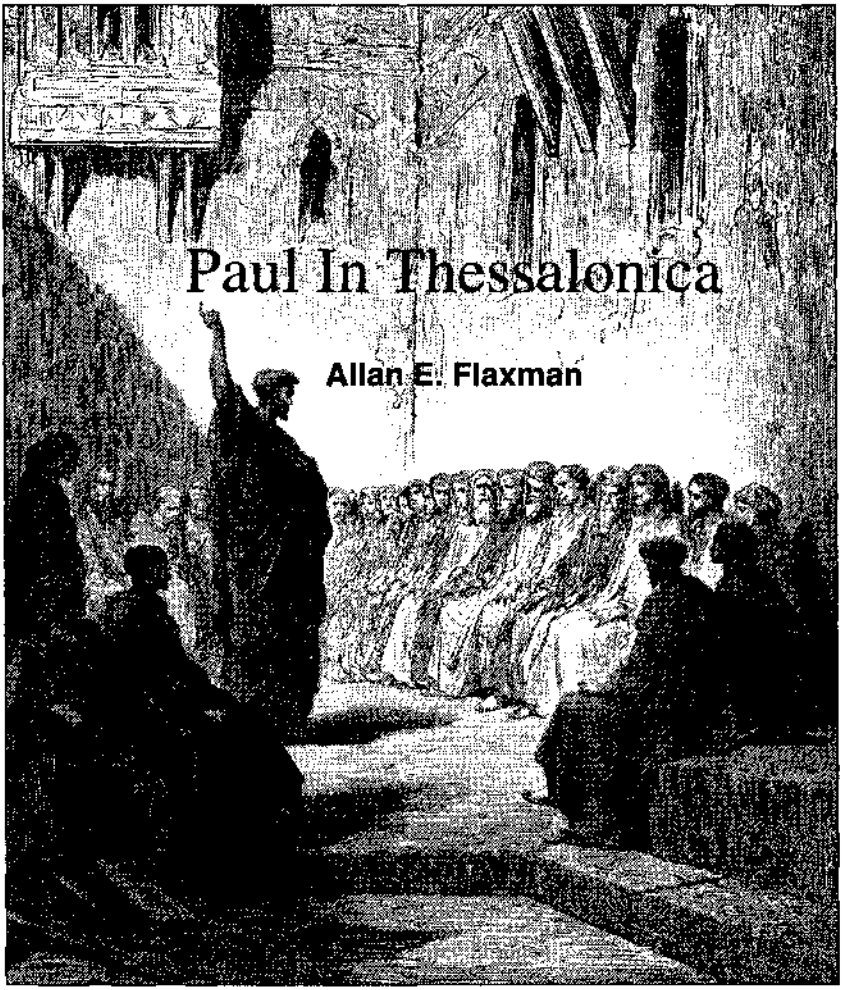
Around 80 years ago, in a small community in West Texas, there lived a large family with eight children. That family did not attend church services anywhere, but down the road lived a man who worshiped regularly. In fact, he began driving by in his wagon and picking up the children each Lord's Day. One by one, those children grew to maturity and were baptized into Christ. Eventually, the parents too were baptized.

Today those parents and all eight children have died, but they had children and grandchildren who still serve the Lord. One, in particular, comes to mind. She left five children, thirteen grandchildren, and fifteen great-grandchildren who are all workers in the kingdom. She was my wife's grandmother, and I had the privilege of speaking at her funeral service.

As that Christian family gathered for her funeral, we could not help but wonder what might have happened if that loving neighbor had not picked up those children for worship long ago. Would she ever have heard the Gospel? Would her family be united in Christ today? What a difference that man made on generations yet to come!

We may never know what an impact our actions may have on those yet unborn, but we can know that God has promised that He will give the increase if we will sow the seed. Let's make sure to take advantage of every opportunity. ✝

Ron Stough preaches for the Eastside Church of Christ in Duncan, Oklahoma, U.S.A.



Paul In Thessalonica

Allan E. Flaxman

The apostle Paul's exploits, often referred to as his "missionary journeys," make fascinating reading. Were we to have read them for the first time, as though they were from the pen of the author of adventure stories, we would have considered them exciting, to say the least. Knowing, however, as we do, that the record of these adventures constitutes an important part of the inspired Word of God, they not only

hold our close attention, but cause us to raise questions that we would never have raised had we been reading mere fiction.

For example, one question we might raise is, "Why did Paul choose to simply pass through Amphipolis and Apollonia, even though the last-mentioned was a very important city in Paul's day, and continue on to Thessalonica"? Why Thessalonica? Well, we can do some guessing and supposing, of course, but that is all we can do, for God's Word just doesn't answer the question for us. One thing we do know is that Thessalonica was a city with a *"synagogue of the Jews"* (Acts 17:1), and that Paul made a practice of using these Jewish synagogues as places where he could depend on getting an audience of non-Christians to hear him proclaim the Gospel. To him, that was his all-important task.

Isn't that what we as the church today need to be doing? It would seem to this writer that we should be making this a number one priority — searching for places where we can get audiences of non-Christians to hear the Gospel message. And I deeply appreciate the aggressive and militant, yet loving, approach that Paul and the infant church adopted in this matter.

Paul truly used a militant approach to his task of preaching the Gospel. By "militant" we don't mean to imply force of arms, closed fists, protest marches, or even mobs with placards. What we do mean is that Paul took the initiative. What is more, we know that he did so with love, or he would not have instructed his fellow Christians to do so (Ephesians 4:15). Notice that Paul went to Thessalonica; went into the synagogue; brought up the subject of Jesus Christ, and persisted with his aggressive work there for three Saturdays in a row! That's aggressive! That's active! That's getting on with the work (Philippians 3:13)! Are we equally militant in spreading the Gospel message today?

Notice, too, that Paul *"reasoned"* with them *"from the Scriptures"* (Acts 17:2). God has given us reasoning intelligence, and we should use it in preaching the Gospel. God has always expected us to THINK! Through the prophet He said, *"Come let us reason together. . ."* He also told those ancients to *"present . . . your strong reasons . . ."* (Isaiah 1:18; 41:21). Through the apostle Peter God tells us to *"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear"* (1 Peter 3:15).

Continuing with that militant, yet reasoning approach, we are told in Jude 3 to *"Earnestly contend for*

the faith . . ." which, as we have seen, Paul did in Thessalonica.

Perhaps we should be asking ourselves some questions. Do I have this eagerness to preach the Gospel that is so evident in all of Paul's activities and is especially clear in the record of his visit to Thessalonica? Does my home congregation have in place a militant program of work aimed at reaching the lost millions all around us with the Gospel of Christ? What am I doing to encourage the approach displayed by Paul in Thessalonica — and, for that matter, everywhere else he went — to *"Earnestly contend for the faith . . . ."*? ✝

Allan E. Flaxman is a gospel preacher in New South Wales, Australia.

Help Wanted

Servant — Someone to do often undesirable work for the sake of others. Needs strong sense of self-worth in God's eyes and true compassion for others.

Must be personally acquainted with the greatest Servant of all in order to continue his training. Must be willing to give up one's rights. No experience necessary. Job begins today, right where you are. — **Selected**

How Well Do You Know God's Word?

It takes 70 hours and 40 minutes to read the Bible at pulpit rate.

It takes 52 hours and 20 minutes to read the Old Testament.

It takes 18 hours and 20 minutes to read the New Testament

It takes 4 hours and 28 minutes to read the longest section in the Old Testament — Psalms.

It takes 2 hours and 43 minutes to read the longest book in the New Testament — Luke.

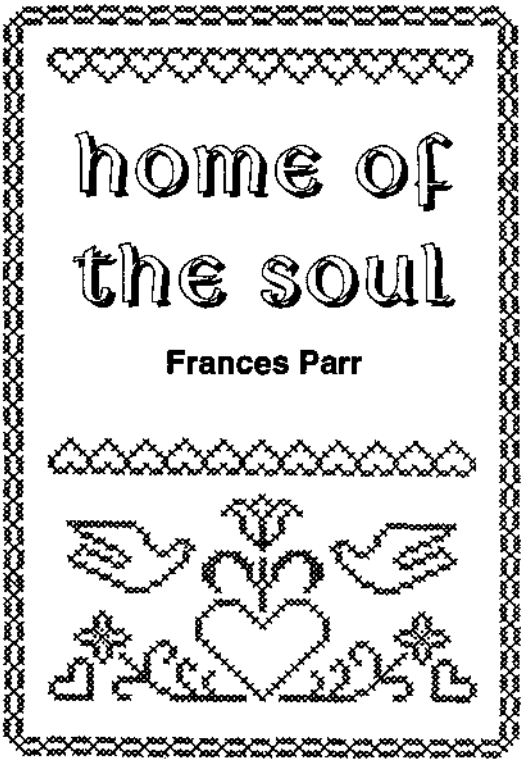
Do you really have some better way to spend your time than with the written word of God?

— Anonymous

The Book of 1 Timothy for adults

Use the brief description to help unscramble the people mentioned in 1 Timothy.

ULAP	**An apostle of Christ Jesus.**
HOTTIMY	**Paul's child in the faith.**
STRICH	**Came into the world to save sinners.**
SECONDA	**Serious, willing to serve, hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience.**
STEMIRSIN	**Trained in godliness, nourished on the words of faith.**
THOUY	**An example for the believers in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity.**
SDIOWW	**Left alone, but have set their hope on God**
DREESL	**Ruling, worthy of double honor**
LEAVSS	**Regard their masters as worthy of honor**



What is your mental picture of heaven? Do you imagine streets of gold, glistening white angels with large feathery wings, beautiful music, loved ones happily gathered? Whatever your imagination conjures up as a vision of the soul's eternal home, it is far inferior to the actual place.

The Word of God gives us glimpses, and several biblical people saw the splendor of heaven. Jesus told His disciples in John 14:2, *"In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you."*

The apostle John was given a spiritual tour of heaven. In Revelation 21 he describes what he saw — gates, each made from a single pearl; walls built of precious stones in myriad colors; and the whole city, including streets, were of gold, transparent as glass. Heaven is more beautiful than the human mind can comprehend.

The most thrilling aspect of heaven is the glorious presence of God and Jesus. Genesis 28:12-16 tells about Joseph's dream of a stairway leading from earth to heaven. Going up and down the ladder were angels of God. The Lord stood at the top.

Acts 7:55,56 describes what Stephen saw as he was dying from stoning. The door of heaven opened and he observed Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Others who saw the glory of heaven described the sky as sapphire blue and Jesus on the throne. His body was like amber with fire all around it, and His train filled the

whole temple. Daniel observed Jesus with hair like pure wool and a garment as white as snow.

Heaven is the ultimate gift of God to ones who believe on Him and obey Him. However, it is not without a price. God paid a tremendous price by sending His Son to die for our sins. It is worth great sacrifice on people's part to inherit such a gift. Consider the parables of Jesus when He was asked about the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 13:44-46 records the stories of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. In each instance, the man sells everything he owns in order to obtain one precious thing.

Paul says in Romans 8:18, *"I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us."*

So it is that a person must consider every earthly possession, even his life, as worthless compared to Jesus and a home in heaven. God created the earth, with all its grandeur and beauty, as a place for us to live for a while. He intends to burn it up and gather the faithful to a place even more splendid. Indeed, how beautiful and wonderful heaven must be, and worth any suffering here on the earth! ✝

Frances Parr is a Christian writer living in Eldon, Missouri, U.S.A.

Growing Old with Christ

◆ Guard against sensitiveness. Refuse to be slighted.

◆ Do not bewail the fact that you are old. If you were not old, you'd be dead!

◆ Do as much for your appearance as you can. Well-kept antiques are considered beautiful.

◆ Morals never change, but customs and habits do. Cheerfully scrap a bushel of your old customs to conform to the present, so long as it does not affect morals.

◆ Remember that you were once young.

◆ No one is ever useless, so long as he retains his mental vigor. Try not to complain of physical ailments.

◆ Learn to be self-sufficient. There may come a time when you will be left all alone.

◆ Don't live in the past.

◆ Believe and live your faith in Christ. There is no situation you and God cannot handle.

◆ Be as cheerful as sunshine, and as willing to change, when convinced, as the weather.

—Gospel Advocate

Was John the Baptist a Failure?

W. T. Allison

Anyone who boldly proclaims a standard of conduct that is a righteous contrast to all the political and ecclesiastical corruption of his day will face opposition. Such a person was John the Baptist, who preached repentance and the need for an inner change of heart. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. John told his contemporaries that repentance must result in forsaking sin. He informed them that being a member of the nation of Israel would not save them. Calling them a "brood of vipers," he warned of coming judgment and the need to get right with God.

John spoke the truth and forfeited his head. Some might suggest that if only he had been less intolerant of sin he would have lived longer and accomplished so much more for the Lord. If he had compromised God's eternal principles for a temporary truce with sin, think what a success he could have been! But such weakness could not save Israel, and compromising teaching cannot save any nation today.

The Lord Jesus Christ didn't consider John's life a waste. He said, *"I tell you, among those born of woman, there is none greater than John"* (Matthew 11:11). The true standard of greatness, in God's view, is how close to the Lord a person is living and how faithful one is in doing God's will. John called upon his nation to turn from their sin and get right with God. He warned them of coming judgment. He pointed sinners to the Lamb of God who came to take away their sins through His blood shed on Calvary.

A nation will not be delivered from its downward course of decay, death, and destruction until its people come to terms with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Our only hope is in returning to the Living God. He is the originator of all immutable principles of what is right and wrong in human conduct, and He is the source of all our blessings. He can be found if we are willing to seek Him. He has revealed Himself in His Word and through His Son.

He calls on us as He did Israel, *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"* (Isaiah 1:18). ✝

W. T. Allison is the preacher for the Creekwood congregation in Mobile, Alabama, U.S.A.

MISCONCEPTIONS

ABOUT SALVATION

David Pharr

Nothing is more fundamental than a correct understanding of the gospel plan of salvation. All other commendable practices in religion and life are of secondary importance, because if one is not saved from the guilt and consequences of his sins, all else will be in vain. It must further be concluded that a church must teach the plan of salvation correctly if it is to be a church of Christ.

In spite of this, however, Satan has been effective in perpetuating numerous errors concerning the plan of salvation. Many characteristically fail to teach the truth on this, and people generally misunderstand God's will in the matter. Consider some common misconceptions:

1. The notion that salvation is by grace alone.

This view argues that man has no responsibility, but that God saves those who will be saved, regardless of what they do. The proponents of the view, however, are divided into two groups. There are the universalists who reason that God loves all men and that, therefore, no one could possibly be lost. Then there are the old-time Calvinists who argue that God's grace is only extended to certain predestinated souls.

The first view is wrong because the Bible plainly shows that many will be lost in torment. The second is wrong because the Bible equally as plainly shows that God's grace is extended to all (Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2). The truth is that no one can be saved *without* God's

grace, but neither are men saved *by grace alone.*

2. The doctrine that salvation is by faith only.

The view usually held by "faith only" advocates is that one is saved from his sins at the instant he believes in his heart, before and without any additional response to God's commands. This doctrine is directly opposite the plain statement of James 2:24 which declares that we are *not* justified by faith only.

3. The delusion that morality is all that matters.

Many people feel that as long as one lives a fairly decent life, not participating in gross sin and being reasonably charitable, he is justified before God. This view seems plausible because they see it as practical. Their thinking, however, ignores the reality of sin and the need for a Savior. If people could be saved by their own goodness, Christ died in vain. There is absolutely no salvation for any person (regardless of how morally good he is) except *in* Christ and *through* His plan. See Romans 3:23; John 14:6; John 8:24; Acts 4:12; John 3:5. A good moral man is as surely in need of a Savior as is the worst criminal in the land.

4. The illusion that one is saved by a religious affiliation.

This idea may not be commonly expressed, but it seems evident that some people think they are safe simply because they belong to a certain church, regardless of their obedience, or lack of obedience, *to God's commands,* and regardless of how they live. If questioned about their soul's condition they might reply, "I am a member of the _____ church." Such a view does not consider that salvation is personal, not corporate. God saves individuals, not organizations. It is true that all saved people are added to Christ's church (Acts 5:23), but it is a deadly mistake to think one is going to heaven simply because his name is on a church roll.

5. The false security that claims "once saved, always saved."

Few errors are more forcefully answered in the Bible (Luke 8:13; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Peter 2:20-22; etc.). Yet a great many still think that having been once saved, they always will be, no matter how they live. Those who walk in the light, confessing their sins, continue to be cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7-10); but those who wilfully choose to turn away from the Lord will fall from grace (Hebrews 10:26,27; Galatians 5:4).

6. The false doctrine that

baptism is not directly connected with conversion.

Almost every denomination contradicts Bible teaching regarding baptism. Most say that one can have his sins forgiven, is born again, and becomes a Christian without being baptized. The New Testament, however, is clear. From Jesus' words to Nicodemus (John 3:5) to Peter's reminder (1 Peter 3:21), every verse that mentions baptism and salvation (or any equivalent terms) **always shows that baptism comes first.** See Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27, etc.

7. The unscriptural practice of "praying through" at a "mourners' bench".

Many denominations give what they term an "altar call" which has people pray until they feel they have been saved. This may be a very emotional experience or it may be somewhat formal, depending upon the degree of sophistication of the group. Either way it is totally without scriptural sanction. Closely associated with this is the idea that one is saved through some mysterious experience, or by having simply "received Jesus in my heart." Never, however, do we find such things in the Bible. The apostles had a mandate from Christ and were miraculously guided by the Holy Spirit, and they never taught nor countenanced anything like this. Even when the penitent Saul of Tarsus was fasting and praying, he was urged, *"And why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16).

Salvation is always by grace through faith and can never be through the works of merit or invention of men (Ephesians 2:8,9). Those who would be saved through Christ, therefore, must comply with His terms. Five requirements must be met by any person who wants to become a Christian. (1) He must come to **know** the truth of the Gospel (John 8:32; Romans 1:16). (2) He must sincerely **believe** it (Hebrews 11:5). (3) He must **repent** of sin (Acts 17:30). (4) He must **confess** his faith in Christ as God's Son (Romans 10:9-10). (5) And he must be **baptized** in the Lord's name for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38).

When one has complied with these requirements, God forgives him of his sins and adds him to Christ's church, with the assurance that if he faithfully continues, he will have a home in heaven (Revelation 2:10). Friends, this is the plan of salvation that we read in the New Testament. ✝

David Pharr is the preacher for the church in Clinton, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Factors in Salvation

W. Douglass Harris

One of the serious mistakes made by many Bible-believing people in understanding the Bible is focusing on one factor involved in salvation to the exclusion of all the other factors. Even some brethren have fallen victims to this false approach. An established rule of Bible study is to collate all that the Bible says on a particular subject to determine the whole truth on that subject (Psalm 119:160).

An honest and complete search of the Scriptures reveals several contributing factors (causes) in salvation.

Original Factor

God is the original factor. Since man could not devise a plan by which to save himself (Jeremiah 10:23), the divine scheme of human redemption was conceived in the mind of God (Ephesians 1:4,9,11; 3:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:9). In these passages note the expressions *"purpose of his will,"* and *"eternal purpose"* that were in the mind of God from the beginning, but had not been revealed. This conception is a demonstration of God's grace, mercy, and goodness (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8,9). In this sense God is referred to by inspiration as our Savior (1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10).

Sacrificial Factor

Animal sacrifices were not efficacious to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4), but *"without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins"* (Hebrews 9:22). Christ's death is our atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:26; 10:12; Romans 5:8). To reject this sacrifice leaves us without any other atoning death (Hebrews 9:22). Christ's willingness to humble Himself to become our atoning sacrifice is the supreme expression and demonstration of God's grace, love, and mercy. *"There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins"* (Hebrews 10:26).

Procuring Factor

Christ's blood is the procuring factor (1 Peter 1:18,19; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:11-14). By His blood the guilt of all faithful saints in the past was blotted out (Hebrews 5:15; Romans 3:24,25). The blood of Christ even cleanses Christians of their sins as they walk in the light of God's Word (1 John 1:7).

The issue has never been whether or not we are saved by the blood of Christ, but *how* and *when* that blood is contacted or appropriated. If we believe the Scriptures, it could not be before baptism with its scriptural prerequisites (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4). In the light of these passages, if one is saved at the point of faith, *he is saved without contacting the blood of Christ.*

Revealing Factor

We would know nothing about the foregoing factors without this participant, which is the Holy Spirit. Christ's apostles were promised the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead them into all the truth (John 14:26; 16:13). The "mystery" (God's plan not revealed in the past) was revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles, which we have in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Ephesians 3:1-5). The revelation is now complete and all-sufficient (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). This means that there cannot be any "latter-day" revelations.

Instrumental Factor

Revelation, or the inspired Word, is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of sinners (Ephesians 6:17), and in the sanctification of saints. It was given for this purpose (2 Timothy 3:16, *"reproof,"* conviction). This requires hearing and learning the Word (John 6:44,45). Neither can its preaching be bypassed (1 Corinthians 1:21). It is the Spirit *through the Word* that gives life. God's word is not a dead letter (John 6:63; Hebrews 4:12).

Appropriating and Consummating Factors

These involve man's response to God's grace in providing the means of salvation. It is by faith and obedience (appropriative, not meritorious factors) that man is saved. Man comes to God by faith (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24). It is the obedient believer that is saved (Mark 16:16; Romans 1:16),

because faith without works of obedience is dead (Hebrews 5:8,9; Romans 6:16-18). Baptism is a part of this obedience (Acts 18:8; 1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is no more meritorious than faith and repentance; they are simply appropriative in nature.

Sustaining Factor

Paul says that Christians are saved by hope (Romans 8:24), and hope is described by the writer of Hebrews as the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19). Christ's resurrection is the foundation of this hope (1 Corinthians 15:19; 1 Peter 1:3) which is given to us through grace (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

Conclusion

To focus on one of these factors to the exclusion of the others is to do violence to the Holy Scriptures. They are all undergirded by God's grace and work in conjunction with each other. Every passage should be checked to see if we have made correct application, and you are requested to do this. In man's response he believes through grace, repents through grace, confesses Christ through grace, and is baptized through grace (Acts 18:27). Blessed is he who reads and hears the Word of the Lord (Revelation 1:3). ✝

W. Douglass Harris is the editor of the *Caribbean Messenger* and lives in Decatur, Alabama, U.S.A.

What position in the church do you occupy?

A giver or a getter?
A wing or a weight?
A pillar or a sleeper?
A power or a problem?
A booster or a boaster?
A supporter or a provoker?
An attendant or an absentee?
A peacemaker or a trouble-maker?
— Selected

Before condemning a preacher's sermon because it is not original, think how much worse it would be if it were.

Woman to friend: "I have an aunt who married so late in life that Medicare picked up 80% of the honeymoon."

An old rancher had been "taken to the cleaners" several times by a local car salesman. One day the car dealer called the rancher and said he was coming out to buy a cow from him. The rancher placed the following information on the cow:

Basic cow	$500
Two-tone exterior	45
Extra stomach	75
Product storing compartment	60
Straw chopper	120
Four spigots at $10 each	40
Cowhide upholstery	125
Dual horns	15
Automatic fly swatter	38
Fertilizer attachment	185
TOTAL	$1,203

The mother of a small boy noticed with concern that everything was very quiet in the house. She immediately suspected that he was up to some mischief.

When she found him in his room, she asked him what he was doing. He answered, "Nothing. What can I do with you and Jesus and Santa Claus watching me all the time?!"

A husband was at the perfume counter making a purchase. "You see," he said to the clerk, "I'm buying this for my wife."

"A surprise, eh?"

"I'll say so. She's expecting a car."

Scientists say we are what we eat. If that is so, folks must be eating a lot more nuts than I had thought.

A man of very small stature was in a barber shop doing a lot of unnecessary talking. He said, "You show me a politician and I'll show you an idiot."

A large muscular man got out of the next chair and stood up straight. He said, "I'm a politician."

The little fellow said, "Well, I'm an idiot."

Little Tommy got very tired of the long sermon on Sunday. After much squirming around, he finally said in a whisper, "If we give him the money now, Ma, will he let us out?"

A conversation overheard in a nursing home, between two very elderly women: "I've been so long about coming, all of my friends in heaven must be thinking I've gone to the other place."

Bible class teacher: "What is a lie?"

Little boy: "It is an abomination unto the Lord and a very present help in the time of need."

Two men stopped at a truck stop for a cup of coffee. They noticed three tough-looking men seated in the "drivers only" area. Before digging into their food, the truck drivers bowed their heads in prayer. One fellow mentioned to the other that the truck drivers didn't look like the type who would say a prayer in a public restaurant. The other man replied, "Maybe they've eaten here before."

One "good ole boy" from down home complained, "Every time I found a girl who could cook like my mother, she looked more like my father."

At the corporate staff meeting the office manager said: "All those who disagree with me, signify by saying, 'I quit.'"

Many people who can't add very well more than make up for it in their abilty to detract.

One golfer explained, "It's not that I really cheat. It's just that I play for my health, and a low score makes me feel better."

Judging from the specimens they pick for husbands, it's no wonder that brides often blush.

It's the Greatest Question of All Times!

Dan Winkler

"What must I do to be saved?" But what's the correct answer? According to Jesus,

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16)

1. Now, Jesus did not say, **"He that is saved shall believe and be baptized."** Some would have us think that man is unconditionally pardoned by the irresistible grace of God. He, thus, responds in faith.

But, wait! Salvation is conditioned on our **obeying Jesus** (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 5:8,9) **in faith** (Romans 1:16,17), **repentance** (2 Corinthians 7:10), **confession** (Romans 10:9,10), **baptism** (1 Peter 3:21), and **a life of diligence** (2 Peter 1:5-11).

2. Still further, Jesus did not say, **"He that is baptized shall believe and be saved."** Some would have us think that little babies are born with the sin of those before and should be cleansed (thus the sprinkling of infants), only to believe in Jesus and be saved later.

But, thankfully, we are born spiritually innocent (Matthew 18:3,4; 19:14), inheriting neither the good nor the bad of our ancestors (Ezekiel 18:20,21). And, as another has suggested, "That's good news for my children, but bad news for my father's children."

3. Finally, Jesus did not say, **"He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized."** Some would have us think that we are saved when we, in faith, accept Jesus as our personal Savior. Baptism, to them, is simply an outward expression of an inward possession.

But faith itself, without accompanying works, is dead (James 2:14-26). Our faith, to save, must be obedient (Romans 4:12; Hebrews 11:8). That's why **Jesus did say,**

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). ✝

Dan Winkler is the preacher for the Crieve Hall Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Are People under the Law of Moses?

Basil Overton

Only the Jewish people and those who were proselyted into the Jewish religion were under the law of Moses when that law was in force. Now, no one is under that law because the New Testament in many places teaches that Christ abolished the law of Moses when He died on a Roman cross. One of the places this is taught is in the New Testament letter or epistle which Paul wrote to the churches of Christ in the Asia Minor province of Galatia.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24,25).

"Schoolmaster" of this text is the translation of the Greek *paidagogos*. The first part of this compound word is the word for child. The rest is a form of the Greek infinitive *agein* which means to lead. So, the word means a child leader; a tutor; a trainer. Our word *pedagogue* (teacher or trainer) is an Anglicized or transliterated form of this word.

Paul used the figure of a schoolmaster to illustrate how the law of Moses led those who were under it to Christ.

The Greek text of verse 25 contains *tes pisteos,* which means "the faith." Unfortunately, the King James translators left out the *the* of the text. "The faith" is the Gospel. It is "the faith" that Paul preached (Galatians 1:23). It is "the faith" that a great company of Jewish priests obeyed (Acts 6:7). It is "the faith" for which Christians are to earnestly contend (Jude 3). It is the *"one faith"* of Ephesians 4:5.

Paul taught that after *"the faith,"* or the Gospel came, those who had been under the schoolmaster, or the law of Moses, were no longer under it. So, the answer to our question is — No, people are not under the law of Moses today. ✝

Basil Overton is the editor of *The World Evangelist*, and he lives in Florence, Alabama, U.S.A.

Do Men Have the Right to Be Wrong?

Ken Tyler

Many people in the religious world believe that as long as your religion meets your needs and you are satisfied, then it doesn't matter what you believe and practice. After all, we are all headed to the same place. As a result of this attitude, individuals can believe what they want to and teach what they want to, and still be acceptable to God. But is this attitude biblical? Did the New Testament church teach different doctrines that contradicted one another and then say that as long as their needs were met everything was all right? Did men have the right to be wrong in the first century? Do men have the right to be wrong today?

The Bible answer is clear — men **do not** have the right to be wrong. Jesus plainly taught that one's salvation is dependent upon following the truths of the Scriptures. Listen to Matthew 7:21-23: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name: and in thy name have cast out demons? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* Jesus graphically described religious people who were lost. The reason — they were not doing the will of the Father in heaven. They did not have the right to be teaching and practicing that which was contrary to God's will. This passage is very important, and each one of us should pay close attention to the seriousness of it. Get the idea out of your mind that it doesn't matter what you believe. Jesus has plainly told us that it does. God's will, the truth, will take you to heaven, and nothing else can do that.

The devil has done an unbelievable job in deceiving people to believe that it doesn't matter what they do in religion. It's amazing how many different doctrines we have today, and the majority thinks that it doesn't matter. We had better get back to the Bible and listen to God if we want to go to heaven. **No! Men do not have the right to be wrong, ever!** ✝

Ken Tyler preaches for the congregation in Arab, Alabama, U.S.A.

Saints Linked Together with Christ!

GOD REACHING DOWN!

Christ

Salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should kive together with Him" (1 Thess. 5:10).

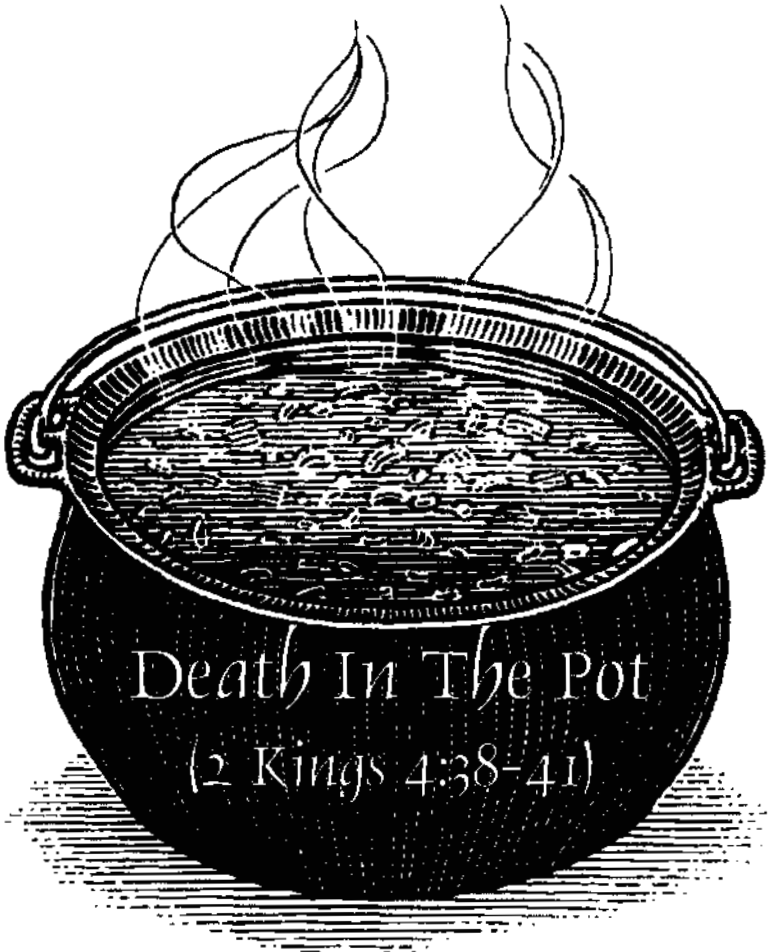
One must be crucified . . .	**Together with Christ. . . . .**	Galatians 2:20
One must be buried	**Together with Christ. . . . .**	Romans 6:3-5
One must be quickened. .	**Together with Christ. . . .**	Ephesians 2:1,5
One must be raised	**Together with Christ. . . . .**	Ephesians 2:6
One is to suffer also.	**Together with Christ . .**	Philippians 3:10,11
One is made an heir	**Together with Christ . .**	Galatians 3:28,29
One is then seated	**Together with Christ. . . . .**	Ephesians 2:6
One is then glorified.	**Together with Christ . . .**	Romans 8:16-18

MAN REACHING UP!

Saints

"And [God] hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

Dillard Thurman



Tom Adams

INTRODUCTION: The incident under consideration in these passages gives a vivid description of the power of poisonous influences. The actions of the participants suggest many valuable lessons applicable in our day (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

1. There was a famine in the land (verse 38). Famines have been frequent throughout the world's history, either by natural or man-made causes. A famine often brings rash and aberrational behavior (2 Kings 6:24-29). Jeremiah prophesied, and then witnessed and wept over, the misery of the inhabitants of Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege (Jeremiah 9:1). Josephus described the siege of Jerusalem by Titus in vivid detail and wrote: "neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries."

2. The sons of the prophets were hungry and put a pot over the fire for pottage.

3. One gathered *"wild gourds"* and placed them in the pot by mistake (verse 39).

4. Because of their poisonous nature, there was *"death in the pot"* (verse 40).

5. Elisha, God's prophet, commanded that *"meal"* be placed in the pot, and the poison was neutralized.

All of the contents of the pot need not be poison in order for the *"wild gourds"* to contaminate the entire pot. Some rat poisons, we are told, are only 2% poison and 98% filler; however the 2% is effective. Likewise, all religious doctrines and philosophies do not have to be erroneous in order to have them rendered useless by one false teaching (1 Corinthians 5:6; 15:33; James 2:10).

Poisonous gourds can be found in at least these 3 areas: (l) Social (2) Religious (3) The church.

I. Social poisonous gourds which war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11; Galatians 5:16-17).

A. Pornography poisons the mind and has many adverse effects upon spirituality. Case after case can be cited of crimes and wickedness being committed after filling one's mind with pornographic material.

B. Lewd movies and TV programs fall into the same category, for they, too, affect spirituality and behavior. What is placed in the mind by obscene words and pictures will manifest itself in one's

conduct (Proverbs 4:23; 23:7; Matthew 12:35; 15:18).

C. The modern dance, which feeds lust and lasciviousness (Galatians 5:19).

D. Immodest apparel (1 Peter 3:3-5; 1 Timothy 2:9).

E. The use of alcoholic beverages (Proverbs 20:1; 23:29,30; Ephesians 5:18a; 1 Corinthians 6:10).

F. Gambling (Romans 12:17).

II. Religious poisonous gourds

A. Universalism's theory that "all will be saved" (Acts 4:12; Hebrews 5:8,9; Revelation 2:10).

B. Premillennial and dispensational theories which conflict with the Scriptures (Matthew 16:18,19; Mark 9:1; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

C. All denominational doctrines which have as their basis the uninspired ideas of men, rather than the inspired Word of God (Matthew 15:8,9; Galatians 1:6-10; 2 John 9).

III. Poisonous gourds found in the church

A. Indifference, indolence, and neglect of duty (Amos 6:1; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Titus 2:14; Revelation 3:19).

B. Hypocrisy and self-righteousness (1 Peter 2:1; Luke 6:46).

C. Pride and preeminence (Proverbs 16:19; Matthew 18:4; Luke 22:46).

D. Worldliness (Romans 12:2; Matthew 16:26; Colossians 3:2; 1 John 2:15).

E. Liberalism (often defined as "loosing where the Lord had not loosed") (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18,19).

The Word of God is the *"meal"* of our text, and when it is *"put in the pot"* and believed, accepted, and followed "as it is written," it can and will neutralize all of these poisonous doctrines and influences (2 Timothy 3:16,17). ✝

Tom Adams is the preacher for the Lord's church in Calera, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

Things Never Satisfied

(Proverbs 30:15,16)

Jerry L. Davidson

Introduction

The book of Proverbs, with all of its gems of truth, advice, and inspiration, provides an abundance of food for the soul. There is a diversity of subjects and styles in presenting the contents of this great book.

I. **The book presents several numerical proverbs** (see for example 6:16-19; chapter 30). Proverbs 30:15,16 gives these numerical maxims: *"The leech has two daughters — Give and Give! There are three things that are never satisfied, Four never say, 'Enough!': The grave, the barren womb, and the earth that is not satisfied with water — and the fire never says, 'enough!'"* Consider these four insatiable things:

   A. **The grave is never satisfied.** *"Hell and Destruction are never full: so the eyes of man are never satisfied"* (Proverbs 27:20). Can you imagine the grave saying, "No more victims, enough is enough!"?

   B. **The barren womb.** As the grave cries for more bodies, the womb cries for births. The cycle of life is set forth here.

   C. **The earth is not satisfied with water.** The earth continues to cry for rain, even to the point of flooding.

   D. **Fire never says, "It is enough!"** As long as there is something to burn, fire will keep asking for more.

II. **There are also insatiable things in the midst of our lives, such as:**

   A. **Hatred and malice.** The evils never come to a halt unless there is strong intervention.

B. **The covetous heart** never feels that it has acquired enough of this world's goods.
C. **Satan** never calls a halt to receiving lost souls.

III. From the positive side there is also the insatiable:

A. **God's love** longs for the salvation of the lost (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9).
B. **The blood of Christ** cries for more souls to be cleansed (Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7).
C. The faithful Christian has an insatiable desire to **worship and serve** (Philippians 3:3; Matthew 5:6).
D. **The believer never gets enough of God's Word.** He finds that it is like drinking from a pitcher that never runs dry.
E. The Christian must develop an insatiable desire to **see souls saved.** Paul is a good example (Romans 1:13; 10:1-3).
F. Many longings must never be satisfied. ✝

Jerry L. Davidson is a preacher and an instructor at International Bible College in Florence, Alabama, U.S.A.

God Gives to Me

God is my inspiration to face each new born day.
He makes my life far brighter each step along the way.
He comforts and sustains me in times I feel despair.
He helps me face each crisis by always being there.

He is the light that guides me so I'll not go astray.
He gives me strength and courage to help my fears allay.
He gives me hope and confidence in times of great distress.
He shelters me and leads the way to find new happiness.

He always grants forgiveness though sinner that I be,
And with the faults that I possess I know He still loves me.

— Harold F. Mohn

Sri Lanka,

the teardrop-pearl in the Indian Ocean, just off the southern tip of India.

For 2000 years the island now known as Sri Lanka has been a settled and civilized country. Tradition says that Prince Vijaya and 700 of his followers were banished from the northwestern area of India — Gujarat — and sailed south, to land on the west coast of Sri Lanka near what is now known as Puttalam, in the 5th century B.C. But recent archaeological findings indicate that at the time of his arrival and conquering of the island, earlier settlers were well developed in agriculture, the construction of man-made water-collection tanks and irrigation canals, the use of iron, and the making of pottery.

From the blending of these peoples, the Indo-Aryans, and Dravidian settlers from South India grew the Sinhalese culture.

In the third century B.C. Buddhism was brought to Sri Lanka by the Indian emperor, Ashoka. The Sinhalese king was converted, and through his patronage the religion flourished. Land was donated, monasteries were established, missionaries were supported, stupas and

other shrines were built. To this day, Sri Lanka remains predominantly Buddhist.

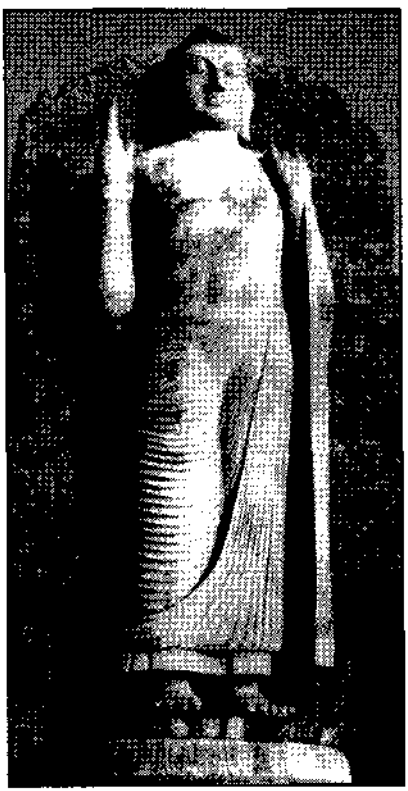
In Sri Lanka's more modern history, both the Portuguese and the Dutch colonized the island, leaving a remnant of "Burghers" behind when the British gained control in 1798. The name of the country was changed to Ceylon. Coffee, rubber, and tea plantations were developed, and Tamil laborers were brought from south India to work the fields.

In 1948 Ceylon was granted independence and made a part of the British Commonwealth of nations. She was governed by an elected legislature, led by a President and a Prime Minister. The name was changed back to "resplendent island" — Sri Lanka.

In 1983 resentment and anger of the Tamils toward the larger Sinhalese population exploded into guerrilla warfare. The "Tamil Tigers" fought for the establishment of a separate Tamil nation. Accusations of injustice and job discrimination fed the flames which have continued to consume the population as well as the economy.

Spiritually, light came to Sri Lanka in 1967 with the arrival of the Randal Harley family, followed by the J.C. Choates. Within a few months a number of people had been converted and a promising young congregation was developing.

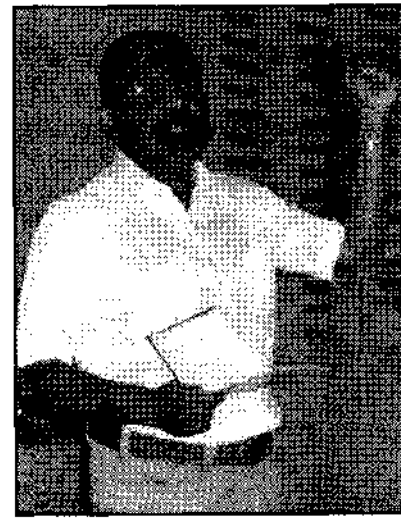
One of the early converts was a man by the name of Reggie Gnanasundaram. Though of a Catholic background and engaged in secular work, Reggie volunteered to use his car — the only one in the congregation, which identified his economic status as above the average — for transporting the filmstrip equipment to various home Bible studies. In



One of the many giant statues of Buddha which dominate the island of Sri Lanka.

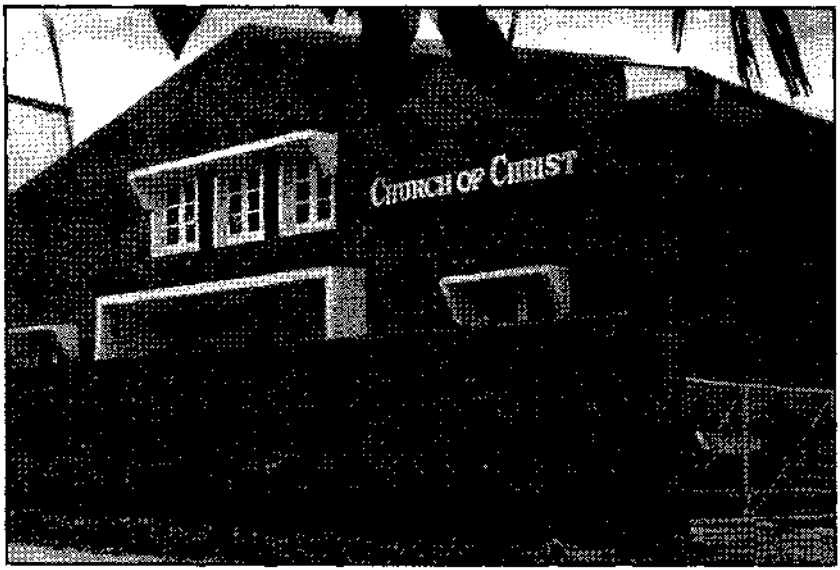
1971, because of the absence of any missionary to work with the church, Reggie agreed to leave his secular job and to devote full-time to evangelism. He developed into an outstanding teacher and leader, showing the filmstrips in countless home Bible studies, and training the families of the church in the use of the Scriptures.

In 1975 radio programs were begun for India, aired over Radio Sri Lanka. Reggie volunteered to serve as the manager for the programs, keeping track of the contracts, the payments, and the delivery and pick-up of tapes from the station. This has been a great blessing in the India work.



Reggie Gnanasundaram leading the song service.

One strong point in the development of the church in Colombo has been Bible classes in the homes of Christians in which singing classes, Bible drills, and memory work are emphasized.



The church building, which will seat 250-300 people, is well located just off the main street through Colombo.

In 1981 property was purchased one-half block off Galle Road in Colombo, and a large granite building was constructed.

The guerrilla warfare which has broken out between the Tamils and the Sinhalese since 1983 has greatly hindered the spreading of the church throughout the country. Some work had been done in Jaffna, Kandy, on a tea estate in Galle and in suburbs around Colombo. Dangers in travel not only brought those efforts to a stand-still, but have also resulted in numerous families migrating from Sri Lanka to other countries.

There are now numerous second-generation children in the church in Colombo who have grown up, obeyed the gospel and married Christians. Still, there is no missionary in the country, so the younger generation is developing as Bible teachers, preachers, song leaders, and personal workers, to be able to carry on the work that has been begun.

The Sri Lankan people are warm and hospitable, more open to study than some in the neighboring countries. If the continuing internal struggle could be brought to an end, the church and the island would have a bright future. Sri Lanka itself is a green and golden jewel in the blue ocean.

Singing As an Act of Worship

Reggie Gnanasundaram

(The following lesson was presented over Radio Sri Lanka, a powerful short-wave radio station located in Colombo and beamed toward India.)

Dear friends, we are so happy to be able to be with you again and to study the word of God with you. Some of you may think that you are merely listening to a talk on the Bible but this is certainly not our intention. We would want each and every one of you to actively participate. When we study God's word together we can be certain that we have God's approval. As we read in 2 Tim. 2:15, *"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*

In this lesson we want to study about singing as an avenue or act of worship. We all know only too well that there are two kinds of music, vocal and instrumental. Vocal music is produced by the human voice through singing, and instrumental music is produced on some type of musical instrument by playing the instrument.

Now the all-important question is, "What kind of music has God authorized for worship in the church?" Let us look to the Scriptures for the answer to this question:

- *"And when they had **sung** an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives"* (Mat. 26:30).
- *"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and **sang** praises unto God"* (Acts 16:25).
- *"For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and **sing** unto thy name"* (Romans 15:9).
- *"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing and making melody in your heart** to the Lord"* (Eph. 5:19).
- *"...I will **sing** with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also"* (1 Cor. 14:15).
- *"Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** with **grace in your hearts** to the Lord"* (Col. 3:16).
- *"...in the midst of the church*

will I ***sing*** *praise unto thee"* (Hebrews 2:12).

✣ *"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? Let him* ***sing*** *psalms"(James 5:13).*

✣ *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is,* ***the fruit of our lips*** *giving thanks to his name"* (Heb. 13:15).

It would now be clear that the kind of music God has *authorized and asked for in worship is* **singing, and not "playing".** Though instruments were widely known and used at the time of the writing of the New Testament, the Scriptures are silent about their use in worship. Therefore this type of music would be an addition to His word. It would actually be **contrary** to what God has commanded, for the simple reason that when God has clearly specified *only* singing, this would naturally exclude playing on instruments — *an entirely different thing.*

Further, we have been specially told by the apostle Paul in Col. 3:17 that whatever we do in word or in deed should be done *in the name of or by the authority of* Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter also tells us in I Pet. 4:11 that if any man speaks he should speak *as the oracles of God,* or in other words, *man should speak where God has spoken.* In the Scripture already quoted it is quite plain and clear that God has *specifically commanded* that we should sing. Nowhere does He mention or ask for the playing of instruments.

It would be well for us to note at this point that there are *two kinds* of commands given by God: specific and generic. In a specific command, God has given a definite, clear and particular thing to be done.

An example of a *specific* command is found in Gen. 6:14 where God told Noah to build an ark of gopher wood. In this command God clearly specified the *timber to be used.* The giving of the name ended the matter, relative to the type of wood for the construction of the ark. Noah was, therefore, not free to use any other kind of timber. If he had used something else he would have been disobedient to God's command, and *to disobey God's command, according to I John 4:3, is to sin.*

Another example of a specific command is given in Ex. 12:3 where God clearly commanded the Israelites to kill a lamb. When He specified the kind of animal for the sacrifice, they were not free to kill any other type. To have done so would have been a *sin of disobedience.*

Even in our daily life we appreciate and observe specific commands. When teak is specified in a building contract, the contractor is not free to use any other kind of timber. Further, when the government

tells us that we must drive on the left side of the road, we understand that we would commit an offense if we drove in any other lane. Similarly, when God said *sing* we must *sing*. To play an instrument, producing instrumental music, would be a violation of God's command.

In a *generic* command, nothing specific is required, but, rather, it is general, extensive and common in nature. If God had simply commissioned Noah to *build,* he might have constructed a house or a box — and this would have been complete compliance.

On the other hand, if the command had been only to build *an ark,* Noah would have been free to use any type of material he desired.

If God had required that the ark be built out of *wood,* but giving no specific type, this would have been a general command and Noah could have used any kind of timber.

All of these are examples of generic commands, but with each one moving more closely to being a *specific command.* Whatever God chose to include became both a limiting and an excluding factor. Noah was limited to whatever God required, and all else by necessary inference was excluded.

In a further example, we find according to Acts 20:7 that the disciples met *on the first day of the week to break bread.* Nowhere in the New Testament is a particular hour specified for the observance of the Lord's Supper, so Christians are free to partake at any time on the first day of the week.

Similarly if God had commanded us to use *music* in worship, we would have been free to use *either instrumental music* or *vocal music* or *both.* From the Scriptures we have read it is quite plain that God did not ask us to use *music* but He specified that we must *sing — a particular kind of music* — which restricts the music to singing alone. We can therefore rightly conclude that when we worship God we must sing *only*; to use any kind of instrumental music would be a violation of God's command.

Let me now share with you some statements concerning this subject, made by various distinguished religious leaders. John Calvin, founder of the Presbyterian Church, said in **John Calvin's Commentary,** *Thirty-third Psalm:*

> ✣ "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews.

Adam Clarke, a respected Meth-

odist commentator, said in **Clarke's Commentary, Vol. IV,** p. 686:

✣ "Music as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity."

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, is quoted by Adam Clarke in **Clarke's Commentary Vol. IV,** p. 686, to have said,

✣ "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen.."

Martin Luther, a distinguished reformer, in **McClintoch and Strong's Encyclopedia, Music, Vol. VI,** p. 762 called the organ "an ensign of Baal."

Charles H. Spurgeon, recognized as an important Baptist preacher, spoke for twenty years to thousands of people weekly in the Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle, London. We read in M.C. Kurfees, **Instrumental Music in the Worship,** p. 196, that he did not have instrumental music in worship.

Conybeare and Howson, famous scholars of the Church of England, while commenting on Eph. 5:19 in **Life and Epistles of St. Paul. Vol. 11,** p. 408, said,

✣ "Make melody with the music of your hearts, to the Lord... let your songs be not the drinking of heathen feasts, but psalms and hymns; and their accompaniment, not the music of the lyre, but the melody of the heart."

In the **Catholic Encyclopedia,** p. 355, Pope Pius XI in 1929 said,

✣ "We declare that accompanied singing is in no way considered by the church to be a more perfect form of music, or more suitable for sacred purposes. Indeed it is fitting that the voice itself, rather than the instrument, should be heard in sacred buildings."

I have quoted these statements made by different religious leaders not for the purpose of *proving* to you that instrumental music in the worship is wrong but to show that they, too, rejected instrumental music in worship of God.

The New Testament clearly commands that we should *sing*. This is our only authority and we should therefore abide by this word of God if our worship is to be acceptable to Him.

We continue to plead with you, let us all be one in Jesus Christ, abiding by his teachings. As we read in 2 John 9, *"...He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."* ✝

Reggie Gnanasundaram is a preacher of the gospel in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Answers to Puzzles

Verse Search — 15 (from page 34)

1. The true vine; vinedresser.
2. The Father takes them away; He prunes them so that they will bear more fruit.
3. Because we cannot bear fruit to God unless we remain a part of the vine — Christ.
4. He is cast out as a branch and is withered; the fire.
5. That he abides in Christ, and that Christ's words abide in him.
6. Keep My commandments; My love; have kept My Father's commandments; His love.
7. That His followers love one another as He has loved us.
8. That a man lay down his life for his friends.
9. That we do whatever He has commanded us to do.
10. A servant does not know what his master is doing, but Jesus proved His friendship by making known to His disciples all that He had heard from the Father.
11. That they (and we) should go and bear fruit.
12. Because He was not of the world, with its worldly thinking and desires.
13. Because the world persecuted Christ, and a servant is not respected more than his master.
14. No sin.
15. Hates My Father also.
16. Things which no one else had done.
17. *"They hated Me without a cause."*

Who Am I?

(from page 63)

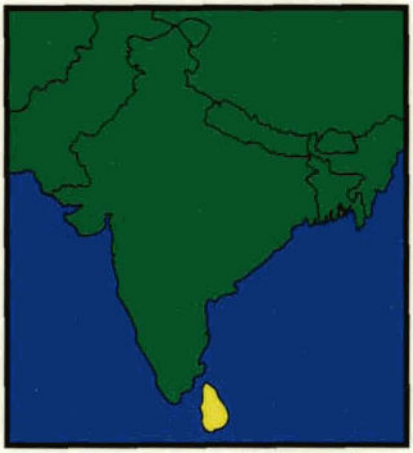
John Mark

The Book of 1 Timothy

Paul
Christ
Deacons
Ministers
Youth
Widows
Elders
Slaves

(page 83)

For further information, please contact:



Sri Lanka

Government: Democratic Socialist Republic
President: Chandrika B. Kumaratunga
Prime Minister: Sirima R. D. Bandaranaike

Secular Facts:

Location: Off the southern tip of India, in the Indian Ocean.

Land Mass: 25,332 Sq. Mi., about half the size of Alabama.

Population: 17,900,000.

Major Cities: Colombo, Kandy, Galle, Jaffna, Negombo, Battcaloa.

Weather: A tropical island, enjoying blue skies and sunny weather, with seasonal monsoon rains.

Language: Sinhala, Tamil, and English.

Ethnic Groups: Sinhalese (74%), Tamilians from India (15%), Dutch, and English.

Literacy: 89%.

Religion: Buddhist, 69%; Hindu, 15%; Muslim, 8%; believers in Christ, 8%.

Economy: *Industries:* processed rubber, tea, coconuts, textiles and garments, refined petroleum products, gems, and jewelry. *Crops* are tea, coconuts, rubber, rice, and spices. *Major trading partners:* U.S., U.K., Germany, Japan, Singapore, India.

Monetary Unit: Sri Lanka rupee.

The Church:

Congregations: Though numerous congregations were established over the island prior to the beginning of the civil war between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in 1983, travel restrictions necessitated by the war and the flight of citizens to other countries decimated those works. The church continues to exist and to be evangelistic in Colombo itself. A granite-stone building was constructed in 1984.

History: The **Randal Harley** family moved to Colombo in 1967 with secular work, but their interest in seeing the church established led to the coming of **J.C. Choate** and his family in December of that year.

The Sri Lankans proved to be very receptive, and 30 had obeyed the gospel in the first few months. Among this number was **Reggie Gnanasundaram**, a Catholic man who had a keen interest in studying the Scriptures. In the more than 30 years since his conversion he has provided leadership for the church, along with the other men. He has preached and taught at every opportunity, concentrating particularly on training members in the knowledge and use of the Scriptures in sharing the truth with others.

Front Cover: **Green carpets of tea plantations** in Sri Lanka.