Volume Fifty eight

The Voice of Truth International

Editorial

Only One Job!

By Louis Rushmore, Editor

Then, There Is Polygamy

By D. Gene West

Have You Made Your Will?

T. Pierce Brown

Hands Full of Blood

Gospel Gazette Online

Page 101

Serving an international readership with the old Jerusalem Gospel via the Internet

The Gospel Is For All

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men…" Acts 17:26.

J.M. McCaleb

Of one the Lord has made the race,
Thru One has come the fall;
Where sin has gone must go His grace:
The Gospel is for all.

Say not the heathen are at home,
Beyond we have no call;
For why should we be blest alone?
The Gospel is for all.

Received ye freely, freely give,
From every land they call;
Unless they hear they cannot live:
The Gospel is for all.

The blessed Gospel is for all,
The Gospel is for all;
Where sin has gone must go His grace:
The Gospel is for all.

WHO IS OUR GOD?

God is eternal, having no beginning and no end: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17)

God is Spirit, not flesh, not wood or stone: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)

God is the Creator of all things: "The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary." (Isaiah 40:28)

God loves His creation: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

"... you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:9)

God speaks to humans through His Word, the Bible: "... you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit ... having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever ..." (1Peter 1:22.23)

There is only one God: "There is ... one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:6)

The Voice of Truth International

Staff:

Editor: Byron Nichols
Associate Editor: Jerry Bates
Associate Editor: Louis Rushmore
Layout Editor: Betty Burton Choate
Bonnie Rushmore
Typesetting: Gay Nichols
Computer Consultant: Bradley S. Choate

Spanish Edition:
Managing Editor:

Telugu Edition:
Managing Editor, Translator:
Joshua Gootam

Tamil Edition:
Managing Editor, Translator: P.R. Swamy

Braille Edition:
Managing Editor (India) , Philemon Raja

Cost: **$4.00** for single issues; **$12.00** for four issues; **$20.00** for eight issues. Please make checks payable to **World Evangelism Foundation,** and mail to **Byron Nichols, (Managing Editor) P.O. Box 11218, Springfield, MO 65808;** Telephone: **417-823-4918.**

Please send articles for publication and changes of address to Byron Nichols in Springfield, including both old and new addresses, so that our records can be corrected.

The Voice of Truth International is published by **churches of Christ** as a non-profit effort.

World Evangelism, P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967, USA; Phone: 662-283-1192; E-mail address: Choate@WorldEvangelism.org.

Staff Writers:

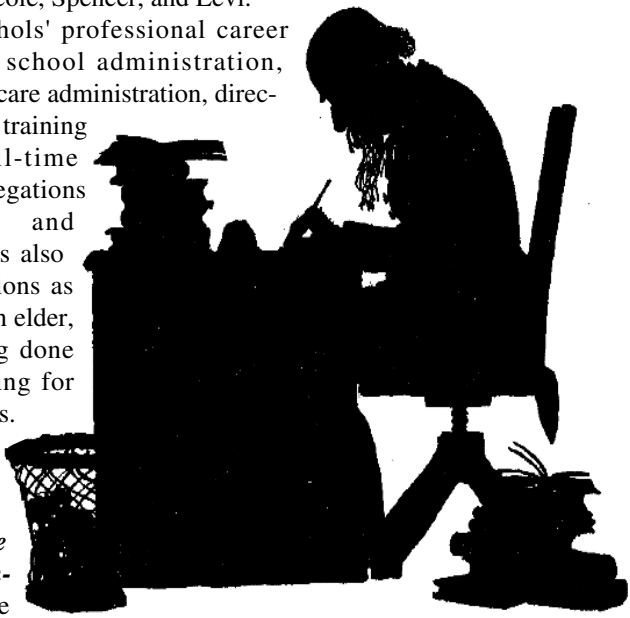
George Akpabli
Felix O. Aniamalu
Rex Banks
Wayne Barrier
Paula Bates
Roy Beasley
Mike Benson
Maxie B. Boren
Ron Bryant
Charles Burch
Jack W. Carter
Ron Carter
Frank Chesser
Betty Burton Choate
Jeril Cline
Glenn Colley
Lance Cordle
Owen Cosgrove
Bruce Daugherty
Sunny David
Jerry L. Davidson
Hans Dederscheck
David Deffenbaugh
Clarence DeLoach, Jr.
Bill Dillon
Bobby G. Dockery
Hershel Dyer
Earl Edwards
Demar Elam
Raymond Elliott
Reuben Emperado
David Everson
Royce Frederick
Albert Gardner
E. Claude Gardner
Joe D. Gray
Gary C. Hampton
Jack Harriman
Parker Henderson
Gordon Hogan
Wayne Jackson
Ancil Jenkins
Jerry Jenkins
Jimmy Jividen
John Kachelman, Jr.
Dayton Keesee
Dalton Key
Michael L. King
Mack Lyon
Joe Magee
J. Randal Matheny
Cecil May, Jr.
Colin McKee
Jane McWhorter
Hollis Miller
Loy Mitchell
Stan Mitchell
Kevin L. Moore
Bill Nicks
Don L. Norwood
Owen D. Olbricht
Max Patterson
Marilyn Peeples
Miles Peeples
David Pharr
Neal Pollard
Bonnie Rushmore
Stanley Sayers
David Tarbet
J.A. Thornton
Betty Tucker
J.J. Turner
Ken Tyler
Don W. Walker
Allen Webster
R.H. Tex Williams

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

Byron Nichols

Byron Nichols is a native of Missouri, but has also lived and worked in Arkansas and Texas. Most of his formal education has come in Missouri, having earned a Master's Degree in School Administration from the University of Missouri.

Byron and the former Gay Potter have been married for 48 years. Their daughter, Jill (Johnson), and their son, Scott, both live in Springfield, Missouri, with their spouses, Doug Johnson and Jenna Nichols, and the grandchildren, Nicole, Spencer, and Levi.



Brother Nichols' professional career includes public school administration, brotherhood childcare administration, director of a preacher training school, and full-time work with congregations in Missouri and Arkansas. He has also served congregations as a deacon and as an elder, as well as having done part-time preaching for more than 40 years.

Brother Nichols has served as the Managing Editor of ***The Voice of Truth International*** since its beginning. He and Gay live in Springfield, Missouri. Brother Nichols is now is the Editor of ***The Voice of Truth International*** since the passing of brother J.C. Choate.

Jerry Bates

Jerry Bates is a native of West Tennessee. He attended Freed-Hardeman University and graduated with a BS in Agriculture Economics from Mississippi State University. Later he obtained his Masters of Art in

Religion from Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, TN.

Jerry and the former Paula Fox from Obion, TN have been married for 29 years. After working several years in the agricultural field, Jerry began his preaching career. He has preached for 19 years,working with four congregations in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi. During that time, he and Paula also served for four years as houseparents at the children's home in Paragould, Arkansas.

In August of 2007, Jerry and Paula moved to Winona, MS and began doing mission work with World Evangelism. Paula serves as the bookkeeper, as well as making mission trips overseas. They have two daughters, Lynette and Cathy, both of whom live in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Lynette is married to Aaron Chastain.

Jerry recently assumed the role of Associate Editor of ***The Voice of Truth International***.

Louis Rushmore

Louis Rushmore, a former Catholic, obeyed the Gospel in 1972. One year later, he preached his first sermon, and after several months of preaching for various congregations by appointment, Louis accepted his first fulltime work in 1974. However, it was not long before he realized his need for further and intensive education in the Scriptures. Subsequently, from 1975 he studied at and graduated from various religious and secular schools.

Louis has preached for over three decades, and has written several articles that have appeared in various Gospel magazines. In addition, he has authored a number of religious class books. He was also an instructor at a stateside school of preaching for 10 years, where he taught a number of subjects.

Louis has some experience in radio and television, and he was Associate Editor of a statewide, pro-life magazine. Since 1999, he has been the Editor of a 20-page, monthly religious Internet journal, ***Gospel Gazette Online.*** Last year, Louis and his wife, Bonnie, accepted the invitation of J.C. and Betty Choate to participate with them and others to help perpetuate the longstanding missionary labors of the Choates, and they moved to Winona, MS in October 2007.

Louis and Bonnie have been married for 35 years, have three grown children and two grandchildren. Louis recently accepted the responsibilities of Associate Editor of ***The Voice of Truth International.***

It's Not Over Yet

Byron Nichols

I was privileged to work with J. C. Choate since 1991 in establishing and continuing one of his great achievements, ***The Voice of Truth International***. With the help of many brethren who have shared his concern for the lost, J.C. was able to experience the joy and satisfaction of seeing 55 quarterly issues printed and distributed around the world. This resulted in several million people being able to learn more about God and how to serve Him in faith and obedience.

J.C. understood better than most that Jesus, in His human existence, had many ministries, but only one mission. Activities such as feeding the hungry, healing the lame, giving sight to the blind, and even raising the dead were not ends in themselves, but were means to an eternal end — His mission — the seeking and saving of the lost (Luke 19:10). J.C. also realized that the Lord intended for His church to have that same mission.

Few, if any, have traveled more or spent more time in evangelistic efforts than J.C. Choate. He succeeded in enlisting the participation of many congregations and individual Christians in carrying out the church's mission. With his encouragement, a substantial amount of money was raised over the years and was used in teaching God's Word in America and in numerous other countries of the world. Much of this would likely have never happened had it not been for the particular efforts and influence of this brother in Christ.

J.C. was a dreamer, a visionary, but he didn't only *dream* dreams — he *did* dreams. Small things can be quite important, and he could certainly deal with them, but here was a man who also had the ability to perceive the need for and ways to accomplish big things.

The church is stronger today because of brother Choate, and countless souls have been brought to the Lord through efforts related to his leadership.

This is indeed wonderful, and we can rejoice in the knowledge that his death has not brought an end to his work and influence, but that his life will continue to bear fruit for no telling how many years into the future. His earthly existence has come to an end, but his influence will continue to be a force for good. Through his writing and publishing (and other teaching methods) his work is not actually over yet.

The same is true of the Lord's church — our work is not over, our assignment has not yet been completed. Our assigned task is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the entire world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). Surely, we all are aware of the fact that this has not yet been accomplished. Thus, there is still work to be done. Dear friends, the church will be a success only when we have introduced the Savior to the sinners!

I recently read a statement made by Paul Rogers several years ago, one that needs to be given serious consideration by the church today. He said, "While we look for the second coming of Christ, millions of people have never heard of His first coming!" Undoubtedly, this was not at all intended to be critical of anyone's concern regarding Christ's second coming; surely, we all need to give the matter much sober thought. I'm confident that brother Rogers' purpose in this statement was to draw attention to the fact that folks must be made aware of Christ's first coming, with its purpose and significance, before the idea of His second coming can take on any meaning for them. The point of it all is that the church must be about the business of teaching the lost concerning That One who alone can save them from their lost condition.

An old preacher once said, "If a man has a soul — and he has — and if that soul can be won or lost for eternity — and it can — then the most important thing in the world is to bring a man to Jesus Christ." As God's people, it is imperative that we see the truthfulness of this wise man's assessment. Every man (person) does indeed have a soul which can be won or lost eternally, and as Christ's servants and disciples, it is our responsibility to do our best to bring every man (person) that we possibly can to Him. Those unfortunate souls that have never learned of Christ's purpose for leaving heaven and coming to earth, and thus made aware of their lost spiritual state, will most surely be subject to the fearsome pronouncements of eternal condemnation found in such Scriptures as 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 4:17.

Souls are won *intentionally*, not *accidentally*! If the church is true to Christ, we will be fervent and faithful in our loving proclamation of the Gospel to the entire world. Much work remains to be done — indeed, it's not over yet! ✞

True Spirituality

Jerry Bates

It should not surprise us that most Americans have a pretty good opinion of themselves. Generally, Americans think they are good people with few faults, at least few *serious* flaws. When it comes to their relationship with God, the same principle holds true. According to the George Barna survey of August 2006, we find that the vast majority of Americans consider themselves to have a very close and committed relationship with God. For instance, 88% feel "accepted by God". In addition, 62 % see themselves as deeply spiritual, and 59% describe themselves as "fulltime servants of God". All of that appears good, and we might think that all is well on the religious home front. However, before we start congratulating ourselves, let's notice one other statistic. This one is from the Barna survey of January 2006. In that survey, we find that only 15% of all adults placed their faith in God at the top of their priorities.

What can we learn from the above statistics? Many Americans are willing to expend some energy in "going to church", reading the Bible, etc. Thus, they convince themselves that they are spiritual, but they stop short of making a genuine commitment to God. We want to be spiritual people, and we want God's favor, but we don't want God taking control of our lives. In other words, just about everyone feels accepted by God — on *their* terms — while few put God *first* in their lives. Yet, the Bible makes it abundantly clear that — on *God's* terms — He must be first in our lives if He is really in our lives at all.

As we compare the above attitudes to the Bible, we can also see that most people have no idea of what true spirituality is all about. True spirituality is much more than just having good thoughts about God, and it is cer-

tainly more than just saying you are spiritual. It is more than occasionally going to worship and reading the Bible. It is more than praying to God, even on a regular basis. To be truly spiritual means that you are willing to turn your life over to God and to live under His control.

"*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the laws of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God*" (Romans 8:5-8).

True spirituality means that our minds are set on spiritual things. We turn our minds over to the will of God. We make our lives a "living sacrifice" to God as a spiritual service to Him (Romans 12:1). Paul made a similar statement in Colossians 3:2, "*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*" In other words, we focus our attention upon God and His will.

Christ said to seek **first** (emphasis mine) the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). That means that God must always be at the top of our priorities. If He is not, then our minds are not controlled by Him, and therefore, we are not really being spiritual. That doesn't mean we are bad people, at least in the way man judges good or bad. It simply means that we control our own lives rather than God controlling us.

Our measure of spirituality is not determined by how we "feel" or by what "experience" we might have had, but rather by how we live and how we conform to what the New Testament teaches. Who controls our lives? If God is in control, then we are spiritually minded and life is the result. If God does not control our lives, then we are carnally minded and death is the result. Therefore, we must be sure that we are not deceiving ourselves into thinking we are spiritual, when in actuality we are carnal. Who is really controlling your life? ✝

The difference between listening to a radio sermon and going to worship, is the same as the difference between calling a girl on the telephone and spending the evening with her. — Selected

The Mechanics of Preaching: Organization

Louis Rushmore

Versus aimless rambling with one's words, to be an effective communicator, one must organize his thoughts. This is especially true when one purposes to communicate the Word of God to his fellow man. No communication is as important as or more desperately needed by humanity than divine revelation. Therefore, preachers and teachers must carefully prepare beforehand how to convey selected truths from God's Word. Due to the sheer volume of divine revelation (the Bible) and the limited capacity of mortals to absorb it on any one occasion, the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) must be proclaimed in installments. The whole counsel of God needs to be preached, but not all at once and not in such a disorganized fashion that it is incomprehensible.

The most important element to a well-organized presentation (including sermons and Bible studies) is the thesis or purpose statement. Nothing belongs in a particular sermon or Bible lesson that does not pertain to and explain the thesis or purpose statement. While various sermons or Bible lessons, indeed, may contain a wide range of biblical material, not every biblical truth belongs in the same outline. The thesis or purpose statement needs to be carefully worded to be direct and simple enough to allow the subsequent outline to explain it thoroughly within the anticipated available time allotment. One must guard against making either a vague thesis or purpose statement or making the thesis or purpose statement too long or complicated.

The thesis or purpose statement is the anchor for the sermon to which one organizing his thoughts (usually in written form) repeatedly visits throughout the process of organization and composition of one's outline. While some people do not need to use an outline or notes while preaching or teaching, one

must at least refer to a mental outline while publicly speaking, especially to ensure that he makes an organized, understandable presentation while avoiding as much as possible unintended and pointless repetition (not all repetition is unintended or pointless, 2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1).

One's well-organized thoughts need to be balanced, respecting quantity and discernible transition from point to point. It must be apparent to the auditor of one's preaching and teaching what the purpose of the sermon or Bible study is, as well as that the presenter has clearly and adequately demonstrated that the thesis statement has been satisfactorily developed.

The best communicators lead their hearers not merely to acquire information, but challenge the auditors of their speeches to act consciously upon the facts presented (e.g., repent, apply to themselves, commit themselves, etc.). Good preachers and teachers exhibit genuine enthusiasm for the object of their preaching and teaching (i.e., not just speaking more loudly, but become animated by the subject matter); they pass this zeal for the Word of God to the honest hearts (2 Corinthians 9:2) of those who hear them proclaim the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:8).

While enthusiasm cannot be written on paper (or a computer screen), organization can be committed to printed form. Frankly, the mechanics of outlining a sermon are so simple that it is almost no more difficult to write a good sermon than to fill in the blanks! Every line of a sermon outline should be a full sentence; abbreviated statements do little to convey the intended thoughts maybe to the presenter and certainly to anyone else to whom the outline may be given. In addition, one can flesh out his thoughts more fully in full sentences in his outlines, and he can practice word choice and good grammar in full sentences in outlines. One need not say the exact words in his sermon outline when making the presentation (either by reading the manuscript or memorizing it, neither of which make for effective presentations), but every preacher and teacher of God's Word needs to be familiar with the lesson material and have a plan on how to best present it. Often, full sentence outlines provide for extended opportunities for teaching by giving the notes to others as handouts, or the outlines provide the basis of written articles or books or radio or TV sermons at some future time. Don't re-invent the wheel, but build in the future on past studies; don't merely open canned goods (previous sermons, etc.) in the future and warm up what one used in the past, but use the past efforts as a foundation for building new sermons, Bible studies and articles.

Following is the outline that I use tenaciously. In addition, for ten

years, I taught students in a school of preaching to mold their sermons after this pattern. See if the following template doesn't prove useful for you, and amount to filling in the blanks with your Bible study on a particular topic or passage of Scripture.

Title: _____
Text: _____
Thesis: _____
Song: _____
Introduction:
1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
Body:
I. _____.
  A. _____.
    1. _____.
    2. _____.
  B. _____.
    1. _____.
    2. _____.
II. _____.
  A. _____.
    1. _____.
    2. _____.
  B. _____.
    1. _____.
    2. _____.
III. _____.
  A. _____.
    1. _____.
    2. _____.
  B. _____.
    1. _____.
    2. _____.
Conclusion:
1. _____.
2. _____.

3. _____.

Invitation:

1. _____.

2. _____.

3. _____.

A symmetrically balanced outline is not lopsided in any area as opposed to some other area of the outline. For instance, if there is a sub point "one", there is at least a sub point "two" also. In addition, one section of an outline will not have numerous sub points while another section of the outline has no or few sub points. Pretend to build an airplane, and consequently balance it so that it can fly.

Every statement throughout the outline should almost demand what the next statement will be; going back to the airplane illustration, one ought to be able to glide from one point to the next point throughout the outline. Alternatively, to use another illustration, imagine the difference between driving a car with an automatic transmission versus an automobile with a standard transmission. No one wants a jerky ride, and likewise, one's presentation should be smooth from point to point, automatically and naturally, not jerky and awkward.

Every sermon needs an invitation. The invitation to the first recorded Gospel sermon appears in Acts 2:38. A sermon needs to call listeners to action (e.g., to save one's soul or apply some part of God's Word to one's life). Going back to the concept of smooth transition, the first point under the invitation should provide for a smooth transition or bridge from the sermon to the invitation. There is no need and no benefit to divorce the sermon from its invitation. Use some prominent principle from the sermon to introduce the thoughts in the invitation. Then, tell non-Christians how to be saved, and tell erring Christians, likewise, how to be saved (Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:9).

Organization isn't everything to a sermon or Bible study or some other public presentation, but organization is a crucial part of the mechanics of public speaking, including preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Successful communication of God's Word to one's fellow men is the reason for which one preaches, and that is more likely to occur when proper organizational skills are used. Fill in the blanks and preach a good Gospel sermon, everywhere and at all times (2 Timothy 4:2). ✞

Tribute to J.C. Choate

Gordon Hogan

Betty, J.C.'s widow, while going through some things recently, found a book entitled **Karachi Bible Lessons**, by Gorgon Hogan and J.C. Choate. These were lectures he and I presented October 21-28, 1962 in Karachi, Pakistan. The second lecture is entitled, "What Is Truth?" by J.C. Let me give excerpts from that message, "Truth is said to be sincerity, conforming to rule, that which corresponds with reality, or that which is free of falseness. But how may one determine whether a thing is the truth or not? May I suggest that some rules need to be kept in mind while dealing with this question:

1. **Truth never contradicts itself.** It does not overlap contrarily. It does not oppose itself. For sure, we need to remember this when someone suggests that two or more religions are of God.

2. **Truth never changes but always remains the same.** It is eternal in nature. Christ said that heaven and earth would pass away but His word would never pass away (Matthew 24:35).

3. **Truth promotes unity.** It results in oneness when accepted. It is opposed to division and confusion.

4. **Truth is simple.** There is nothing complicated about it. A thing is either true or false and that is it.

5. **Truth is based on some accepted standard or authority.** Christ said, *'All power (or authority) is given unto me in heaven and on earth'* (Matthew 28:18).

6. **Truth is good.** It encourages goodness. It is opposed to that which is bad.

7. **Truth is from God.** Jesus taught, '*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*' (John 8:32). On another occasion, when speaking to God, he said, '*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*' (John 17:17). Therefore, anytime that God says something you can know that it is right."

The greatest truth in all the world is from God. Truth was a sacred word to J.C. His life was driven by the need for proclaiming the truth that Jesus is the Savior of the world. He took very personally the command of Jesus, "*…go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*" (Matthew 28:19,20).

Through all the 50 years that I knew and worked with J.C., he was preaching, teaching, writing, pub-

lishing, or broadcasting by radio and television, the truth — God's Word. He was single-minded and believed that if he were the only person entrusted with the truth he must share it with every person on the planet.

Like the apostle Paul, he made countless missionary journeys, helping to plant the church in many places and to provide mass media tools for local preachers. And like Paul, he also wrote letters, filled with truth, to those churches and individual Christians for the purpose of continued training and encouragement.

My friend and brother in Christ has graduated to glory, and I look forward to being with him soon. ✞

Gordon Hogan teaches at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, USA.

A Good Man

Loy Mitchell

"*He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. A large number was added to the Lord*" (Acts 11:24).

What a beautiful description of the man named Barnabas. He was a good man. He was a preacher, encourager, and gave freely. He was a missionary who loved God and people.

J.C. Choate was a good man! He was true to the commandments of God. He did his best to tell others of the salvation that is found in Christ. He strove to keep men from straying from the truth. He knew that when you leave the truth, then you leave God.

J.C. and his wife Betty were a team. How many miles they traveled in the USA, Asia, and Africa, I do not know, but I do know they traveled far more than most of us. Was it hard? Yes! Did they get tired? Yes. The body of J.C. was worn out with work and disease.

I heard him preach to large crowds, to men in training to be preachers, and to poor people in an African village. He loved people and wanted them to know about Jesus Christ! One night in Mutare, he walked with me in the dark to teach a family. No complaints when he slipped and fell. He loved the Gospel of Christ.

Yes, the Choates have printed hundreds of good books. They were not afraid to ask brethren for help. May this good printing work continue. Someday I, too, will quit the walks of men. When I depart this life, I expect to see my Savior face to face, and my brother. No, we cannot bring him back, but we can join him and all the redeemed through the ages. ✞

Loy Mitchell, a former missionary to Zimbabwe, resides in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.

Table of Contents

God

Were You There? ..... Owen D. Olbricht 17
Let Your Enemies Be Scattered ..... Loy Mitchell 18

The Word of God

The Book Called the Bible ..... Charles Box 19
Old Testament — "Cast Out" ..... David Tarbet 20
A Cup of Rice ..... Mike Benson 21
The Bereans and the Thessalonians ..... Royce Frederick 23

Evidences

The Old Testament in Archaeology ..... Rex Banks 26
Finches, Fossils, and Falsehoods ..... Kyle Butt 30
The First Lie; But Not the Last ..... A.L. Franks 32

Salvation

What Is Your Best Place? ..... Jimmy W. Cox 34
They Were Supposed to be "in Church" ... Dale Jenkins 35
Abanah and Pharpar ..... Sunny David 37

The Church

Why Is the Great Comission "Great"? ... Author Unknown 39
The Joy of Giving ..... Maxie B. Boren 41

Doctrine to Live By

Sin's Disappearance ..... Dalton Key 42
Restoration ..... Cecil May, Jr. 43
A Difficult Prophecy ..... Jeff Bell 44

Worship

Worship Rejected ..... John Gipson 47
The Lord's Supper ..... Wayne Jackson 48
Our Lord's Communion ..... Betty Burton Choate 50

Christianity in Action

Don't Be Ashamed ..... J.C. Choate 55
Do You Love Me? .....Bonnie Rushmore 58
A Half-Baked Pancake ..... Ernest S. Underwood 59
Do You Want to Do More? .....Marilyn Peeples 60

Daily Christian Living

The Acid of Anger ..... Clarence DeLoach 62
The Vacant House Parable .... Owen Cosgrove 63
Wise Old Man! ..... Demar Elam 65
Seek First the Kingdom ..... Wayne Barrier 66
Are You Living the Abundant Life? .... Jerry Jenkins 67
Making Plans ..... Ancil Jenkins 68
Light in a Dark Place ..... Daniel McAfee 70

A Moment of Lust ..... Frank Chesser 72

The Christian Home

Starting Early ..... T. Pierce Brown 74
Our Responsibility to Our Children .....Rod Kyle 76
10 Mistakes ..... Author Unknown 77

Proverbs 17:22

Humor 78

Hey, You Kids!

The Unknown ..... Alex Gibson 80

Church History

Out of Confusion into Confidence ..... Dessain Terry 83

Charts and Outlines

Bible Baptism ..... E. Claude Gardner 85
What Soul Winning Will Do for You ..... Dale Grissom 87

Textual Studies

"See That You Put Him at Ease" ..... Harvey Porter 88
Suit Up, Soldier! ..... Perry N. Hall 89

Bible Questions

How Can I Stay on the Right Track? ..... Ken Taylor 92
Can a Homosexual Be a Christian? ..... Jimmy Jividen 93

Bible Characters

Judas' Mistake ..... Bill Dillon 94
Gideon — Unlikely Hero ..... Betty Tucker 95
Paul, the Myth, Versus the Real Paul ..... Kevin L. Moore 97

Features, Poems and Fillers

Who Is Our God? 1
New Editors 3
Editorial: It's Not Over Yet ..... Byron Niichols 5
Editorial: True Spirituality ..... Jerry Bates 7
Editorial: The Mechanics of Preaching ... Louis Rushmore 9
Tribute to J.C. Choate..... Gordon Hogan 13
A Good Man ..... Loy Mitchell 14
Verse Search ..... Jerry Bates 24
Hymn: You Are God ..... Don Petty 46
Bible Find .....Bonnie Rushmore 54
5-Minute Bible Study .....Paula Bates 73
Quick Commentary .....Betty Burton Choate 91
How Do You Measure Up? 100

From the Heart of . . .

Gospel Gazette Online .....Louis Rushmore 101

Were You There?

Owen D. Olbricht

Some conclude that they cannot accept the resurrection of Jesus because they were not there to see it happen. This might sound like good logic, but the question must be asked of those who make such an argument, "Do you believe only those things you have personally consciously witnessed?"

If so, you cannot believe you were born, who your parents are, or that you have great, great grandparents. Much that we believe to be true is accepted, not because we were present to witness it, but because of the testimony of others who are reliable witnesses.

The Witnesses

Our faith in the resurrection of Jesus is based on the testimony of those who saw Him alive after He was raised. We today can accept the testimony of the witnesses who wrote (Matthew, John, Paul, and Peter), as true because of:

- **The character of the witnesses.** All available evidence concerning the witnesses is that they were men of good character.
- **The number of the witnesses.** The Old Testament considered the testimony of two or three witnesses adequate proof. Eleven apostles saw Jesus, plus two on the road to Emmaus, as did the women, Matthias, Joseph Barsabas, Justice, and over 500 others at one time.
- **Consistency of the witnesses.** In all their writings, they are consistent in their testimony.
- **Agreement of the witnesses.** Even though some suggest disagreement in some of the details in the Gospel accounts, with careful consideration, they can be harmonized.
- **Eye witness of the witnesses.** Those who wrote had a first-hand experience with Jesus after He came from the grave.
- **Faithfulness of the witnesses.** In the face of persecution and death, they never denied the truth of the resurrection.

Conclusion

"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted at the right hand of God..." (Acts 2:32,33a). *"When He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:20a,21).* ✝

Owen Olbricht is a writer living in Sherwood, Arkansas, USA.

Let Your Enemies Be Scattered!

Loy Mitchell

"*So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said; 'Rise up O Lord! Let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you*'" (Numbers 10:35).

Why could Moses speak such words? Did he lead a well-trained army? Did they have the latest in military hardware? No, not at all. Moses knew there would be victory because of the faithfulness of God! God had already delivered them from slavery in Egypt, and Moses was confident Israel would defeat its enemies. They would be scattered and would flee. Canaan would be given to Israel because God would be with them.

Down through biblical history, we read time and again of the victory of the righteous victory and of the defeat of the enemies of God's people. Why? Winning over the foe depends on God and our faithfulness to Him. Listen to the words of David in Psalm 68:1, "*Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those who hate Him flee before Him.*" The righteous can rejoice because this wonderful God is the "*father of the fatherless, a defender of widows*" (Psalm 68:5a). This should cause us to sing praises and to rejoice exceedingly.

This God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the all-powerful God. He has defeated the greatest armies. What are His people to do? "*Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; sing praises to the Lord*" (Psalm 68:32). "*Ascribe strength to God; His excellence is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds. O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people*" (Psalm 68:34,35).

Today, we need not fear that we are out-numbered, that Christians are few compared to the population of the world. When we place our trust in God and submit to His will, our foes will be scattered. Yes, there will be difficult times and problems, but our God will enable us to win! Let us submit to Him daily and praise His name at every opportunity. ✝

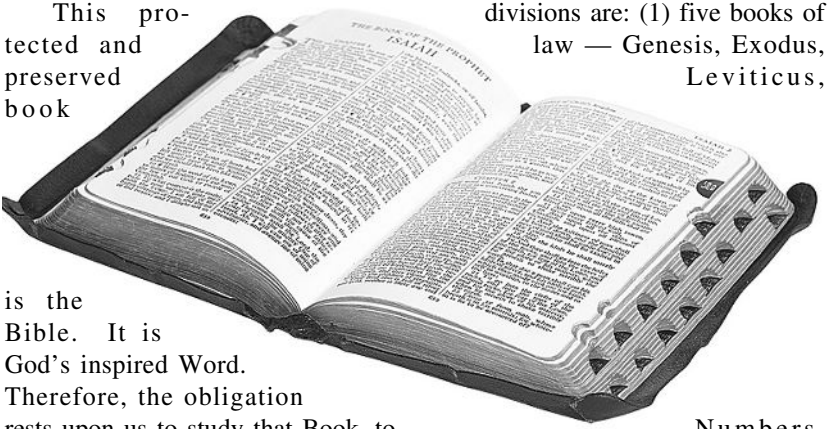
Loy Mitchell was a longtime missionary to Zimbabwe and now works for the Lord in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.

This Book Called The Bible

Charles Box

Solomon said, "*...of many books there is no end*" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). Yet, one book stands out as far different from all others. This book has been protected and preserved by the providence of God. "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away*" (Matthew 24:35).

This protected and preserved book is the Bible. It is God's inspired Word. Therefore, the obligation rests upon us to study that Book, to handle it correctly, and to believe and obey its teachings.



Can the Bible be understood? Yes! It *can* be understood. Knowing some simple things can help. The Bible is made up of the Old Testament and the New Testament — actually, sixty-six (66) books, which together tell one story. The message is, "Someone is coming, Someone has come, and Someone is coming again." Thirty-nine (39) books are in the Old Testament. Twenty-seven (27) are in the New Testament.

Can the Old Testament be understood? Yes! The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament can be divided into four catagories. The divisions are: (1) five books of law — Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; (2) twelve books of history — Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther; (3) five books of poetry — Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon; (4) Seventeen books of prophecy — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos,

Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. This inspired historical record is true and dependable.

Can the New Testament be understood? Yes! The twenty-seven books of the New Testament can be divided as follows: (1) the Gospel records — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — tell of the life of Christ and His personal ministry; (2) Acts tells of the establishment of the church and forgiveness of sins, (3) twenty-one books tell how to live the Christian life — Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, and Jude; and (4) Revelation tells of the eternal victory for God's people.

Take time to learn God's Word, live by its teaching, die by it, and go to heaven when life is over. The Bible is true! You can depend on its teaching. Your soul is safe as you follow its precepts. ✞

Charles Box works with the Walnut Street Church of Christ in Greenville, Alabama, USA.

Old Testament — "Cast Out"

David Tarbet

In Galatians, the apostle Paul contrasts the Old Testament with the New Testament in an allegory of two women mentioned in Genesis: Hagar and Sarah. It is an important illustration, for it clearly affirms that Christians do not live by the Old Testament, but by the teachings of the New Testament.

"*These women are two covenants,*" Paul declares (Galatians 4:21-31). Hagar represents the Old Covenant (including the 10 Commandments), while Sarah represents the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. Hagar's child was a slave, while Sarah's child was free. Those who live by the regulations of the Old Testament are enslaved to a law-keeping system that cannot save. The children of the New Covenant are free from sin. As Sarah's son was conceived and born by the power of the Spirit, so those who follow the New Covenant are made children of God by the Spirit's power (John 3:3-5).

The Old Covenant is to be "cast out", as was Hagar's son. He was not allowed to share the inheritance with Sarah's son. The laws of the Old Testament must not be mixed with the teachings of the New Testament, for the Christian's guide is the New Testament. ✞

David Tarbet preaches for the White Rock congregation in Dallas, Texas, USA.

A Cup of Rice

Mike Benson

You're lazily flipping through the channels on your new flat screen TV. Despite the vast array of viewing options, there's nothing worth watching, at least for the moment. Your thumb stops on a random station. It's a half-hour long commercial for "Feed the Children".

The broadcast depicts a hungry African child. His arms and legs exhibit no muscle at all. He's a veritable skeleton with dark brown skin stretched over the bones. Green bottle flies encircle his eyes and ears. His belly is unnaturally distended and swollen. He's weak, pale, sickly and frail. He's had one "meal" in the past seven days — a small cup of rice.

A phone number flashes at the bottom of the television. You're being asked to donate. Just the change out of your pocket. For the price of a cheap cup of coffee you could support this poor, starving child. You could put food in his growling belly. Your heart and emotions are aroused by this undernourished youth. "How in the world does he make it?" you ask yourself. "He can't live on one meal a week." Determined to help, you pick up the phone and punch in the 800 number.

Stay with me for just a moment ...

We all recognize that to be healthy, we must maintain a steady, balanced diet. We can't skip meals for days on end. We certainly can't live off of a single meal once a week. And yet, isn't that exactly what we're doing when our only source of spiritual nourishment comes from the Sunday morning sermon? When we habitually skip Sunday morning Bible class, aren't we saying that we can be healthy and strong by eating just one meal a week? When we miss the Sunday evening and Wednesday night assemblies of the church, and the only time we take in real, biblical sustenance is the 11 o'clock Lord's Day message, aren't we saying — at least by our actions — that a child of God has to eat only one meal every seven days?

When we fail to open our

Bibles at home and pore through the sacred Word each day, but then manage to "squeak in" at the last minute for that one hour worship assembly on the first day of the week, aren't we communicating that a Christian requires little food for the soul? A small cup of rice, indeed. What we acknowledge in the physical realm, we tend to forget in the spiritual. Some of us are starving ourselves to death (Hosea 4:6) and we don't even realize it!

When we go to the New Testament book of Acts, we find a group of folks who understood the correlation between regular Scripture "meals" and a strong, maturing faith. The text says, *"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true"* (Acts 17:11 NIV).

Did you catch that? The Bereans were more nobly disposed than the Thessalonians because **(1)** they received the spoken Word with great eagerness (A.T. Robertson says "eagerness" carries the idea of rushing forward), and because **(2)** they *"examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."*

Watch it! The Berean Jews were commended because they personally investigated the Old Testament prophecies to which Paul appealed, on a DAILY basis. You might say the Thessalonians had a cup of rice once a week, while the Bereans ate "three squares" a day.

Dear Christian, if the Word of God is food (Matthew 4:4; cf. Psalm 19:9,10; Jeremiah 15:16; John 6:26, 63) — and it is — shouldn't we "pull up to the table" and fill our plates every day? If we can make time for television, sports, shopping at the mall, going to the movies, and a myriad of other fleshly pursuits, we certainly can make time to read and study God's Word.

When would be the best time for your Bible Study? At the breakfast table? During break at work? Before you go to bed after the kids are asleep? Pick a time that is best for you and then enjoy the feast. ✞

Mike Benson works with the Main Street church of Christ in Calhoun, Kentucky, USA.

Another side to this coin: How often are we stirred to action by the physical hunger or calamity people endure in some situation of war or natural disaster, but we feel no concern about the spiritual starvation they have suffered all of their lives? Let us be alarmed for starving souls!

The Bereans and the Thessalonians

Royce Frederick

When Paul and Silas preached the Gospel of Christ in Berea, they found that the Jews there "*...were more fair-minded [noble] than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so*" (Acts 17:11).

Does this mean that no one at Thessalonica was willing to hear the Gospel and carefully consider it? In Berea, more of the Jews were willing to listen and examine the Old Testament prophecies about Christ. They were able to see that those prophecies were fulfilled in the life of Jesus, and that He is truly the Christ. In that city, Paul and Silas also preached to Gentiles ("Greeks" or non-Jews). "Many" Jews and "not a few" Gentiles "believed" (17:12). They became "brethren" because of the Gospel (17:14)!

In Thessalonica, the opposite had occurred. "Some" of the Jews and "a great multitude" of the Gentiles had obeyed the Gospel there. When the Gentiles compared Christ and His Gospel to the empty religious practices they had been following, they "*...received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit*" (1 Thessalonians 1:6). Their obedience and faithfulness through persecution became examples to other believers, and the Word of the Lord "*sounded forth*" powerfully from them (1:7,8)! People throughout the region talked about how the Thessalonians "*turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come*" (1:9,10).

So, there were some Jews and many Gentiles at Thessalonica who carefully considered the Gospel. They showed great courage and faith by obeying the Gospel and becoming one in Christ! (See Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:11-18). However, they still needed a reminder to study all teachings carefully. In his first letter to the Christians at Thessalonica, Paul urged them to "*Test all things; hold fast [hold firmly] what is good*" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Today, it is a great joy to see multitudes from many nations turning to Christ and becoming one in Him! However we, too, must always be watchful. We must test all teaching by searching God's Word to see if it is true. We must never allow the teachings of men to lead us away from Christ and eternal life (1 Corinthians 10:12; 9:27; Hebrews 2:1-4; 3:12-14). ✞

Royce Frederick is the Editor of *International Gospel Teacher* and lives in Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.

Romans 4:1-8

Jerry Bates

1. Whom does Paul use as a pattern for justification by faith apart from works of law? (v. 1)
2. If Abraham had been justified by works would he have a reason to boast? (v. 2)
3. What reference does Paul use in regards to justification by faith? (v. 3)
4. What does it mean when it is said that Abraham's faith was "credited" to him for righteousness? (v. 3)
5. What is the difference between wages and a gift? What is the point of that in this case? (v. 4)
6. What is the basis of our righteousness, according to Paul? (v. 5)
7. Does this mean that there is nothing man could or should do in regard to his justification? Why? (v. 5)
8. What surprising statement does Paul make concerning the people God justifies? (v. 5)
9. What other Old Testament example does Paul use to prove his argument? (v. 6)
10. Which Old Testament verses are quoted in vs. 7,8?
11. What did David mean when he said that his sins were covered? (v. 7)
12. Against whom does God not record sins? (v. 8)
13. What is the point of this whole section in regard to faith and works?

(See inside of back cover for answers.)

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 7 Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sins.

Romans 4:1-8 — *New King James Version*

NOTE:

This chapter shows the continuity between Paul's teaching and the Old Testament in general. Abraham is used as an example to teach the truth regarding salvation. What did Abraham find to be true concerning justification? Using Abraham as an illustration shows that justification has nothing to do with the Law of Moses, since Abraham lived about 400 years before the law was given. This chapter also shows that Paul's doctrine of justification by faith was not really a new one.

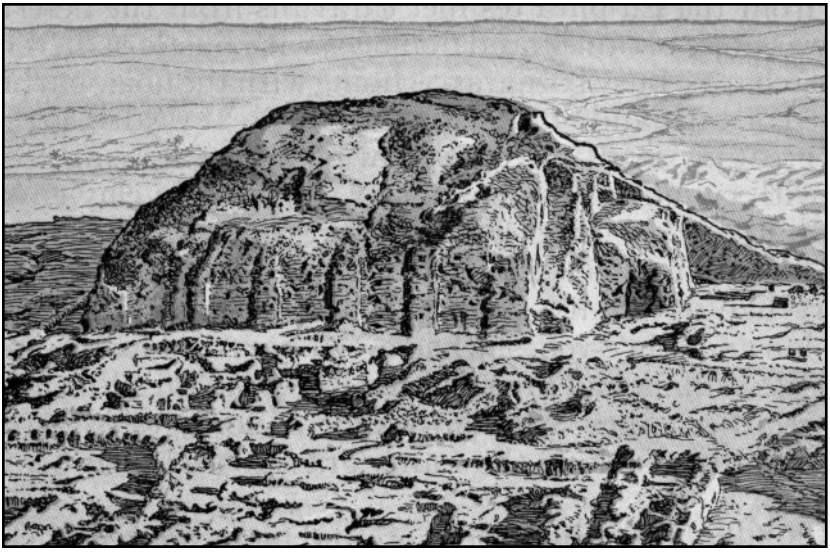
Jewish tradition taught that Abraham was justified by his own works. One writing said, "Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life." The apocryphal writing, "Prayer of Manasseh", declared that Abraham never sinned and therefore needed no repentance. Yet Paul declared that such was not the case. If it were true that Abraham was sinlessly perfect, than he would have a reason to boast before both God and men. Paul bypasses all human opinions and goes to Scripture for final authority. He refers back to Genesis 15:6. It is interesting that James also quotes Genesis 15:6 in his discussion of faith and works. This fact shows that, when properly understood, there is no contradiction between James and Paul, or between faith and works. We are justified on the basis of our faith in Jesus Christ. This does not preclude all works of obedience. It simply means that our obedience do not earn us salvation, nor do our sins necessarily prevent our salvation. True faith will always exhibit itself by acts of obedience. Can others see your faith by your works? (James 2:18).

The Old Testament in Archaeology

Rex Banks

Turning now to written materials recovered from Sumer, it is fascinating to learn that there is also the very real possibility that a reference to the confusion of languages recorded in Genesis 11 has been preserved. A recovered work entitled "Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta" contains the following:

> "Chant to him the holy song, the incantation sung in its chambers — the incantation of Nudimmud: 'On that day when there is no snake, when there is no scorpion, when there is no hyena, when there is no lion, when there is neither dog nor wolf, when there is thus neither fear nor trembling, man has no rival! At such a time, may... the whole universe, the well-guarded people



Remains of a ziggurat mound in Ur,
probably similar to the tower the people of Babel planned to build.

— may they all address Enlil together in a single language! For at that time ... Enki ... shall change the speech in their mouths, as many as he had placed there, and so the speech of mankind is truly one."

This is one of 400 Sumerian texts which can be accessed at the following site: Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Robson, E., and Zlyomi, G., The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (http://www etcsl.orient. ox.ac.uk/) Oxford 1998. Certainly the reference to a god's having placed different languages in the mouths of men reminds us of the biblical account of the confusion of tongues.

Equally fascinating is the story of The Flood preserved in another Sumerian document (see The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature [http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/catlist.htm]). The document is fragmentary but the basic story is clear enough:

"A decision that the seed of mankind is to be destroyed has been made. The verdict, the word of the divine assembly, cannot be revoked. The order announced by An and Enlil cannot be overturned. Their kingship, their term has been cut off; their heart should be rested about this ....

"All the windstorms and gales arose together, and the flood swept over the .... After the flood had swept over the land, and waves and wind-storms had rocked the huge boat for seven days and seven nights, Utu the sun-god came out, illuminating heaven and earth. Zi-ud-sura could drill an opening in the huge boat and hero Utu entered the huge boat with his rays. Zi-ud-sura the king prostrated himself before Utu. The king sacrificed oxen and offered innumerable sheep ....

"More and more animals disembarked onto the earth. Zi-ud-sura the king prostrated himself before An and Enlil. An and Enlil treated Zi-ud-sura kindly .... They granted him life like a god, they brought down to him eternal life. At that time, because of preserving the animals and the seed of mankind, they settled Zi-ud-sura the king in an overseas country, in the land Dilmun, where the sun rises."

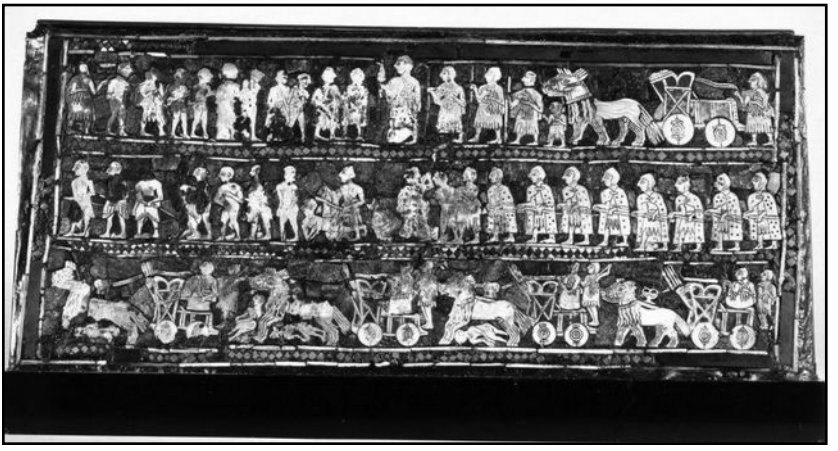
Clearly, then, archaeological discoveries relating to the earliest known civilisation harmonise well with the Genesis account of man's activities in the land of Mesopotamia in the post Flood period.

Ur and Haran

The first mention of Abraham, father of the chosen nation occurs in Genesis, chapter 11, where we learn that he is the son of Terah, brother of Nahor and Haran and husband of Sarai. The chapter closes with the important information that *"Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran and settled there"* (Genesis 11:31).

The discovery of the city of Ur provides another good example of how archaeology can illuminate a brief biblical reference. Werner Keller wrote that "no one could have guessed that the quest for the Ur which is mentioned in the Bible would lead to the discovery of a civilisation which would take us farther into the twilight of prehistoric times than even the oldest traces of men which had been found in Egypt" (The Bible as History).

Between 1922 and 1934, Sir (Charles) Leonard Woolley carried out the work of excavating the site of this ancient city, and the results were remarkable. Britannica describes Ur as "an important city of ancient southern Mesopotamia, situated about 140 miles (225 km) southeast of the site of Babylon and about 10 miles (16 km) west of the present bed of the Euphrates River." We are told that the city "became the capital of the whole of southern Mesopotamia under the Sumerian kings of the 1st dynasty of Ur (25th century B.C.)" Excavations revealed a very advanced civilisation



From the Royal Cemetery in Ur

whose "architects were acquainted with the column, the arch, the vault, and the dome — i.e. with all the basic forms of architecture" (ibid).

At the time of Abraham, the houses of private citizens "were comfortable and well built two-story houses with ample accommodation for the family, for servants, and for guests, of a type that ensured privacy and was suited to the climate" (ibid). Clearly when Terah departed from Ur with Abraham and his family, he left a great city, sophisticated surroundings, and a comfortable lifestyle. Interestingly we are told that although heading for Canaan, the family *"went as far as Haran and settled there"* (Genesis 11:31). Now we are not told why the family settled at Haran but, again, archaeology may shed some light upon this.

In an article entitled "The Genesis Narrative in the Light of Recent Scholarship", we find the following in Britannica:

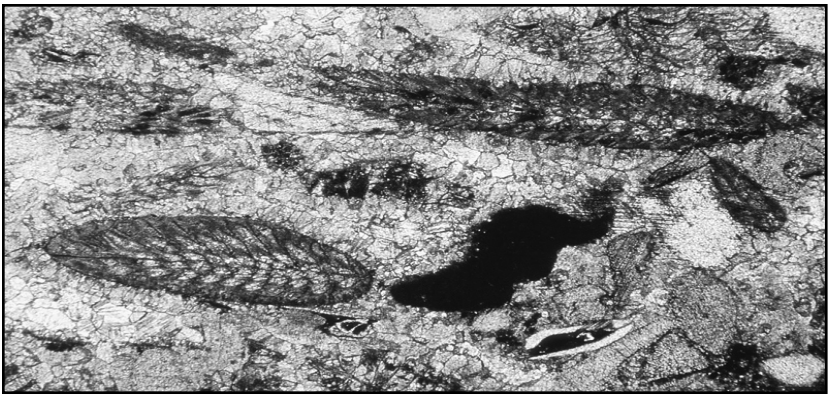
> "The city (of Haran [Rex]) has been definitely located in upper Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, in the Balikh valley and can be found on the site of the modern Harran in Turkey. It has been shown that Harran was a pilgrimage city, for it was a centre of the Sin cult and consequently closely related to the moon god cult of Ur. The Mari tablets have shed new light on the patriarchal period, specifically in terms of the city of Haran."

Now in light of the close ties between the cities of Ur and Haran and the fact that the latter was a pilgrimage city, it is no surprise that Terah found the latter an agreeable place to settle. Once again, archaeology has illuminated the text for us.

Finally, there is the significant fact that whereas the city of Haran was a busy commercial centre in Abraham's day, from 1800 to 800 B.C. it was not occupied. Clearly it is not likely that an individual living at a much later date (as the critics allege), and at a time when the city was long deserted and desolate, would accurately represent the very different condition of Haran many centuries earlier. ✞

Rex Banks preaches and works in Hamilton, New Zealand. His web site is http://www.angelfire.com/80s/rjdb/coc.html. This excerpt is from Banks' book, *Archaeology and the Bible*.

"Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).



Finches, Fossils, and Falsehoods

Kyle Butt, M.A.

In the May 6, 2002 edition of Newsweek, Fred Guterl wrote a brief article titled "Evolution: Birds Do It" (139[18]:11). The gist of the article centered on a couple named Peter and Rosemary Grant, "a married team of biologists from Princeton, [who] have worked for three decades to fill in Darwin's blanks."

The major problem with Mr. Guterl's article hinges on the fact that he is not aware of the true "blanks" that need to be filled in with regard to Darwin's theory. In the opening paragraph of the article, he wrote: "Charles Darwin described how the daily struggle for food and sex ultimately determines the future of a species, be it dinosaur, bird or human. He had plenty of fossil evidence to back him up, but he never actually observed natural selection taking place."

In sharp contrast to this statement, the tenth chapter of **The Origin of Species** is titled, "On the Imperfection of the Geological Record." In it, Darwin argued that, due to the process of natural selection, "the number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed, [must] be truly enormous." However, he went on to admit: "Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most

obvious and serious objection which can be argued against this theory. The explanation lies, I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record" (1956, pp. 292-293).

Darwin most certainly did **not** have "plenty of fossil evidence to back him up." He hoped that future geological research would fill in those blanks, due to the fact that fossil evidence was the major lacking evidence needed to verify his theory. Unfortunately for Darwin and his theory, that evidence has been much less forthcoming than he had hoped. In fact, if Mr. Guterl had checked his own publication's archives before he printed his misleading article, he would have discovered that in the November 3, 1980 issue of Newsweek, Jerry Adler went on record as stating: "Evidence from fossils now points overwhelmingly away from the classical Darwinism which most Americans learned in high school: that new species evolve out of existing ones by the gradual accumulation of small changes, each of which helps the organism survive and compete in the environment" (96[18]:95). Nothing in that regard has changed in the more than two decades since Mr. Adler made that statement.

Mr. Guterl made two common mistakes in his article. First, he attributed evidence to Darwin's theory that it does not (and never will) have. Second, he discussed thirty years of experience by two intelligent scientists who documented minor changes among the various beak sizes and body weights of finches. He then used those minor changes to imply general (amoeba-to-man) evolution, but failed to recognize the fact that those minor changes have built-in limits. The finches never changed into anything other than finches. You could put scientists on the Galapagos Islands for the next million years (if the Earth were to stay around for that long) and they never would see a finch change into another type of animal. Evolution is a theory that lacks scientific evidence. Darwin looked to the fossils, and Guterl looked to the finches, but it is time that we all start looking past the falsehoods. ✞

References

Adler, Jerry (1980), "Is Man a Subtle Accident?," *Newsweek*, 96[18]:95, November 3.

Darwin, Charles (1956 reprint), *The Origin of Species* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons).

Guterl, Fred (2002), "Evolution: Birds Do It," *Newsweek*, 139[18]:11, May 6.

Kyle Butt serves in the Bible department at Apologetics Press in Montgomery, Alabama, USA and as Editor of *Discovery* magazine. He speaks frequently around the country at youth rallies, lectureships, Gospel meetings, etc.

The First Lie; But Not the Last!

A. L. Franks

True "Christianity" is the world's greatest blessing. It centers around Jesus, the Christ — the Son of God. It is empowered by faith in the actual, physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The apostle Paul stated that the resurrection of our Lord "*declared*" Him to be "t*he Son of God with power*" (Romans 1:4). If Jesus was not raised; if He was not made "*alive forever more*" (Revelation 1:18), then what is called "Christianity" falls flat on its face and is of no lasting or eternal value.

An inspired apostle wrote about several sad realities… "*If Christ be not risen.*" Among them, he included: (a) "*preaching is vain*" (b) "*faith is vain*" (c) Gospel preachers are "*false witnesses*" (d) believers are "*yet in their sins*", and those who have (e) "*fallen asleep in Jesus*" are "*perished*" (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

The actuality of the resurrection of Jesus is plainly and repeatedly taught in the Holy Scriptures. The four Gospel writers of the New Testament all relate vivid details about the literal resurrection of the "*One called 'Jesus'*". According to Matthew, an angel spoke to certain women saying, "*Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay*" (Matthew 28:5,6).

In Mark's record, he wrote about a "*young man clothed in a long white garment*" who announced to the women that came early on the first day of the week to Jesus' tomb, bringing spices to anoint His body, "…*He is risen; he is not here…*" (Mark 16:6).

Luke relates this amazing, miraculous event by asking those who came on a Sunday morning to Jesus' grave, "*Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen*" (Luke 24:5,6).

John, in his account of the gospel story, related how the disciples of Jesus, including Peter and the "o*ther disciple whom Jesus loved*", found the tomb empty (John 20:1-10).

The New Testament is filled with plain and emphatic teachings about the ***living*** Christ — who was

dead, but ***was*** raised—***never to die again***. Hundreds of witnesses of our Lord's resurrection are mentioned throughout the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians chapter 15). When a successor to Judas was selected, it was required that the new apostle to be chosen must have been a "*witness*", along with the other apostles, of "*His resurrection*" (Acts 1:22).

Men have marveled through the centuries concerning the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the world. However, when the truth of Jesus' resurrection is considered and believed, we can begin to understand why the message of the Gospel had so much power as it was boldly proclaimed "*first in Jerusalem, then in Judea, Samaria, and even unto the uttermost parts of the earth*" (Acts 1:8), and, as Paul wrote, "*to every creature which is under heaven*" (Colossians 1:23).

When we realize that the very heart (core) of the preaching of Christ is the reality of His glorious resurrection, and that He was, in truth, raised never to die again ("*alive forevermore*"), we can understand why the enemies of the cross have, since the very beginning (Matthew 28:12-15), denied His resurrection and have sought diligently to keep others from believing in Jesus — the Savior, the Son of God.

Let us not, therefore, be shocked or surprised when atheists and infidels make false claims that are intended to create doubt in the hearts of believers and those who may become believers and/or Christians. Yes, lies have been told. The "box with bones", the ossuary which some have speculated to be the "burial box of the family of Jesus", is not the first lie promoted by unbelievers, and it will not be the last. But be assured: **our Lord Jesus Christ is alive.** His tomb was, and is, empty. ✝

A. L. Franks is the Editor of Magnolia Messenger and lives in Kosciusko, Mississippi, USA.

What Is Your Best Place?

Jimmy W. Cox

What is the best place for your *spiritual* being? There are only two spiritual realms: "in Christ" or in the world. You cannot be in both realms at the same time. Jesus said: *"He who is not with Me Is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad"* (Matthew 12:30).

"In Christ" is a place of personal choice. You are not automatically "in Christ" by physical birth. God does not automatically put you "in Christ" unless you make that choice.

We cannot be "in Christ" unless we hear His Gospel (Romans 1:16). The basic facts of the Gospel are: *"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). Yet, facts alone will not put us "in Christ". Hebrews 5:8,9 says Christ is the "*author of eternal salvation to all who* ***obey*** *Him."*

Jesus taught His apostles for a little over three years. Just before He was to return to heaven, He said: *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:15,16).

Fifty days after the resurrection of Christ, His church had its beginning (recorded in Acts 2:36,37). *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, shall we do?'"*

Peter gave this answer to these penitent believers: *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (*Acts 2:38). During His time on earth, Jesus told the people, *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3). In Matthew 10:32,33, Jesus said that we must publicly confess Him.

To be "in Christ" we must hear the Gospel, believe the Gospel, repent of sins, confess our faith, and be baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-5). "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). ✞

Jimmy Cox lives in Sandy Hook, MS and attends the Columbia church of Christ in Columbia, Mississippi, USA.

They Were Supposed To Be "In Church"

Dale Jenkins

Six prisoners tunneled their way out of a south Florida prison last week. At this writing, four of the six have been apprehended. The story has been quite interesting.

Perhaps the most interesting thing has been the news that they, according to one official, "were supposed to be in church". Each day they would go into the chapel and after a few minutes they would sneak out and go underneath the building where they had a separate change of clothing. They would change into those clothes, tunnel awhile, change back into their "church clothes" and get back into the chapel before the service concluded.

They were hypocrites. They were "going to church", but for the wrong reasons. There are plenty of folks like that today. They "go to church" to be seen, or to see, to critique the services and the lives of those around them. They are counted present, but in reality their minds and hearts are a million miles off. "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him*" (John 4:23).

The prisoners were living a lie. They put on clothes that made them look like they had spiritual intentions, but when they got those clothes off, they were up to more evil. There are plenty of folks like that today. They put on coats and ties, heels and hose, and "go to church". While there they are friendly and spiritual, but they go home, change clothes, and change personalities. They yell at their families, they cheat in their business, and their language is the devil's. They are living a lie. "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Galatians 6:7).

While spiritual freedom was being preached in the chapel, the only interest of the prisoners was in physical freedom. There are plenty of people like that today. The lesson is designed to help them reach heaven, but they only want a "feel good", pop-psychology sermon. They are so imprisoned in making more money that they miss the freedom of the Gospel. "*If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*" (Luke 16:11).

And then there is the fact that they weren't even there. They were supposed to be "at church", but they weren't. There are plenty of people like that today. They are at the lake, or the golf course, or the job when they ought to be at the church building. Then there are those who can make it to the ballgame, to work, to the grocery store, to the beauty shop, but come Sunday, they are "too sick" to go to worship. "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching*" (Hebrews 10:25).

Four of the escapees have been caught. I don't know if the other two will be or not, but I do know that Satan has already "caught" those living in spiritual sin, and if they don't receive their freedom from sin, theirs will be a long sentence.

"*When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come …*" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). ✞

Dale Jenkins is the preacher for the Spring Meadows congregation in Spring Hill, Tennessee, USA.

There are plenty of people like that today!

Abanah and Pharpar

Sunny David

Abanah and Pharpar were the two rivers of Damascus. Naaman, about whom we read in the Old Testament book of 2 Kings, chapter 5:12, thought those two rivers were better than all the waters of Israel.

Naaman is described in the Bible as a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, whom he served in his army. But the Bible says, he was a leper. One day, however, he learned from his little servant girl, who was from Israel, that there was a man of God in Israel who could cure Naaman of his disease. Without losing any time, he came to Israel with his horses and chariot to meet the man of God. As he stood at his door, the prophet — to humble Naaman's pride and to teach him that he owed his cure not to man but solely to the power of God — did not come out to meet the important visitor but, instead, sent a message that he should go and dip seven times in the river Jordan. Naaman, feeling affronted and despising the means, got very angry and started to go back home in a passion, saying, "*Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?*" But on the way, his servants soothed his temper and urged him to dip in the Jordan, as the man of God had said. Naaman thought about it, and changed his mind,

humbling himself. He came to river Jordan and dipped himself seven times, as the prophet had said, and was cured immediately.

The most important lesson Naaman learned that day was that when God specifies something, it cannot be substituted with another. When God, through His prophet,

said *Jordan,* He did mean Jordan, not Abanah or Pharpar or anything else. Just as in the case of building the great ark, God had commanded Noah to use gopherwood (Genesis 6:14), and the Bible says, "*Thus Noah did, according to* ***all*** *that God commanded him, so he did*." (Genesis 6:22). The Bible also says, at Romans 15:4: "*For whatever things were written before were written for our learning*."

One of the most important lessons from the Bible that we all need to learn today is that we should not change or substitute or add or take away anything from what God has taught in the Bible. (Revelation 22:18,19). For example, when Christ said in Mark 16:16, "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved,*" that is exactly what He meant, and a person would need help to misunderstand Him. That is, to be saved from sin one must both believe and be baptized. It cannot mean that one is saved when he merely believes in Christ, before baptism. It cannot mean that one can be saved by faith alone, and that one may be baptized later to show what has already taken place by faith only. This is absolutely different from what Christ has asked man to do to be saved.

Also, when Christ said, "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*," He did not mean to baptize little babies or infants who are not capable of believing in Him. It is also of great importance to learn that Christ commanded to be baptized, not sprinkled or poured. The Greek word "baptisma," means a burial or immersion, not sprinkling or pouring. In Romans 6:3,4, the apostle Paul said that by being baptized we are buried with Christ into His death. Colossians 2:12 says, "*... buried with Him in baptism in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*"

Like Naaman, who at first rejected God's command of specifically going to the Jordan to dip and be cleaned, many today have rejected God's plain, simple, and specific command to believe and be baptized to be saved. But Naaman was persuaded to do exactly what God, through His prophet, had asked him to do. And as Naaman obeyed, he was cured of his leprosy. Should not those who sincerely want to be saved from sin and go to heaven to live with Him forever do the same today?

Please, let us hear from you if we can help you in any way in your obedience to God and His Son. *"The Lord is ... longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). ✞

Sunny David works with the church in New Delhi, India.

Why Is the "Great Commission" *Great?*

THE "GREAT COMMISSION" WAS GIVEN BY JESUS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AND JUST BEFORE HIS ASCENSION TO HEAVEN.

Matthew 28:18-20 — And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

Mark 16:15-16 — And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Luke 24:46-48 — Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things."

While originally given to the apostles, the "Great Commission" is to guide the work of the church in every generation.

Why is it acceptable to refer to the post resurrection commission as the "Great Commission?" We can name at least four reasons:

1. IT'S GREAT BECAUSE IT INCLUDES ALL PEOPLE.

Matthew 10:5,6 — These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: **"Do not go** into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Mark 16:15 — And He said to them, **"Go into all the world** and preach the gospel to every creature."

Matthew 28:19,20 — "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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

Galatians 3:28 — There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

2. It's Great Because It Was Given By The Lord Jesus Christ.

John 1:35-37 — Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

Matthew 28:16-18 — Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, ... And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ..."

Mark 16:15 — And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

3. It's Great Because Of The Message To Be Preached.

Romans 1: 16 — For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

I Peter 1:22-25 — Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because "All flesh *is* as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

4. It's Great Because Of The Hope It Gives.

Colossians 1:22,23 — ... to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven ....

I Peter 1:3-4 — Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

It is this Gospel that gives the church of Christ its life and message.

—Author Unknown

The Joy of Giving

Maxie B. Boren

Happiness is obtained in making other people happy. A sense of deep satisfaction results from doing something beneficial for another. There is joy in giving — the giving of one's time, energy, and resources. Living for others, doing for others, bringing cheer and sunshine into the lives of others will be rewarded in one's own life, tenfold! When doing good for others, a person is doing good for the Lord. That being true, we need to understand that the greatest joy of all comes to the Christian in knowing that he or she is giving generously (financially) to the ongoing of the cause of Christ. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-10. "*God loves a cheerful giver*" (verse 7).

Too many of us give far less than we should because of a lack of motivation to give sacrificially. This reminds me of the story of the old country preacher who told the congregation, "Brethren, we need for this congregation to walk tall for the Lord." Numerous "amen's" were verbalized. The preacher, encouraged by that, elevated his voice and declared, "Brethren, we need for this congregation to run speedily for the Lord!" Again, "amen's" resounded with fervor. Excited by this response, the preacher proclaimed loudly, "Brethren, we need to cause this church to fly high in the sky for the Lord!" "Amens" were many and given adamantly. Then the preacher paused, lowered his voice, and said, "Now, brethren, we all surely know that it's gonna take a lot of money for this church to fly high!" There was dead silence for a moment, until one brother ventured to speak out and say, "Maybe we should just let 'er walk, brother; yes sir, let's just let 'er walk."

The question is, "Are we willing to generously support the work of the Lord?" Let's examine our giving and resolve to do better! ✝

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher living in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

Sin's Disappearance

Dalton Key

Some years back, Carl Menninger wrote a book with the intriguing title, **Whatever Became of Sin?** The book's third chapter was entitled, "The Disappearance of Sin: An Eyewitness Account".

In the minds of many, sin has lost its meaning as anything other than a weak punchline to an even weaker joke.

A drunkard is no longer a drunkard, but an alcoholic suffering with a devastating disease.

A thief is no longer a thief. The poor unfortunate is more likely afflicted with kleptomania. If he steals items from the shelf, he's a shoplifter. If he takes cash from the register, he has committed petty larceny. If he drains the company bank account and heads for Bermuda, he has either misappropriated funds or is guilty of accounting irregularities.

When was the last time you heard someone accused of lying? Nowadays folks may "stretch the truth", they may "spin the facts", they may even "wage massive campaigns of disinformation", but lying is out of the question. What of sodomy and homosexuality, once vilified as perverse, yet now glorified as "gay"?

The words of Scripture seem completely out of touch with our culture now spinning — and sinning — out of control: "*Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death*" (James 1:14,15).

Make no mistake: **Sin is serious business!** ✝

Dalton Key is the editor of Old Paths and preaches for the 10th & Rockford Church of Christ in Tulsa, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21)

Restoration

Cecil May, Jr.

Manasseh led Judah into total apostasy, into more evil, the Bible says, than the Canaanites whom God had driven out of the land before them (2 Kings 21:9). God and His work were totally forgotten. Then Manasseh died, his son Amon, who followed briefly in the evils of his father as king, also died, and Josiah became king.

Josiah wanted to please God. He ordered the abandoned Temple to be cleaned and used again. Workers found the Book of the Law there. They read it, and Josiah and the people determined to walk as the Lord commanded in it.

They destroyed the idols they had worshipped, and they set out to do all that the Lord required. In the Book of the Law, they learned of the miracles God had wrought in their deliverance from bondage and their establishment as a nation. They also discovered it was time for the feast of Passover.

Though Passover had been neglected for many years and its prescribed manner of celebration had been forgotten, when they read the directions in the Book of the Law, they celebrated it again, just as God commanded in His Word.

Restoration, today, follows that same pattern. If the instruction concerning conversion is forgotten or ignored, and believers seeking salvation are being told just to pray, rather than to repent and be baptized, then "reading the book of the Lord" (see for example Acts 2) and putting into practice what is found there is the means of restoration.

If the worship of the church is changed to include things God has not indicated He desires, such as burning incense, praying to departed saints, adding instrumental music, or omitting things He has commanded, such as the Lord's Supper, then by reading the book of God and beginning to practice the things commanded in it, restoration occurs.

If members' lives are immoral, if their attitudes are belligerent and unforgiving, or apathtic about evangelism or division, the solution is to read the book of the Lord and to practice the holiness and commitment commanded in it. Restoration!

Restoration is not an invention of nineteenth century man. It is done at the impetus of the eternal and holy God. ✞

Cecil May, Jr. is Dean of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

A Difficult Prophecy

Jeff Bell

Few books in the Bible have been more neglected than Ezekiel. This is a shame because Ezekiel was a great man of God and left us with some powerful words of instruction and encouragement. One reason for this neglect is undoubtedly the apocalyptic nature of some of his material. Chapters 37 and 38, for instance, contain a great deal of figurative language. As a result, these chapters have often been misinterpreted, misunderstood, and misapplied.

Mormonism finds support for its belief system in the latter part of chapter 37. Ezekiel was instructed to take a stick and write on it: *"For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions."* On another stick he was to write: *"For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions."*

Then he was to join the two sticks together (Ezekiel 37:15-17). Mormons contend that the stick of Judah is the Bible while the stick of Joseph represents the Book of Mormon. What really makes this twisting of the Scriptures so incredible is that God Himself gave the proper interpretation. God would take the children of Israel from among the nations and make them one nation (Ezekiel 37:21,22). No longer would there be division among God's people as in former days, but they would be one united people.

This prophecy was perhaps partially fulfilled in the return of Israel to its homeland in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, its ultimate fulfillment is seen in the establishment of the church. This was the great mystery that Paul said had now been revealed: that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel (Ephesians 3:6; 2:14-16). The King who was to rule over them was not literally David (Ezekiel 37:24), but his descendant, the Messiah (2 Samuel 7:12,13; Isaiah 11:1-5). He would be their prince forever

(Ezekiel 37:25). He would make an everlasting covenant with them (Ezekiel 37:26; Jeremiah 31:31f).

Premillennialists also use these two chapters as proof-texts for their erroneous views. In his book, **Late Great Planet Earth**, Hal Lindsey contends that Ezekiel 37 and 38 show the Jewish nation being reborn before the battle between God and Satan, the battle of Armageddon. He says that Ezekiel 37 does not refer to the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonian exile, but he tries to identify God as Russia and the battle in Ezekiel 38 as a Russian attack on the Middle East. He thinks that after the ensuing war, Jesus will return and save man and set up His kingdom here on earth (Merideth, **Difficult Texts of the Old Testament Explained**).

It is readily admitted that the symbolism of these verses is difficult to understand, but the concept of premillennialism is clearly refuted by other Scripture. Premillennialsists argue for the coming of a **future earthly kingdom,** but **people were already in the kingdom in the first century** (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

Jesus taught that His kingdom would not be of this world (John 18:36). Rather, it is **spiritual** in nature and is made up of **those who have been added to His church** (Acts 2:47; Matthew 16:18,19).

Christ will not return to set up an earthly kingdom because when He does return, the earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:1-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). When He returns, there shall be no one left on earth to be in an earthly kingdom, because we shall meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord, according to the letter of Paul to the Thessalonian church:

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). ✝

Christ's kingdom is **spiritual** in nature
and is made up of
those who have been added to His church.

Jeff Bell preaches for the church in Union City, Tennessee, USA

Members of the Lewisville, TX church of Christ have written beautiful new hymns of worship:

You Are God

by Don Petty
arr. by Robert Fullingim

1. You are God, You are love, You are
2. You sent Christ by your grace down to
3. You say "go, preach the word un - to

You are God, You are love,

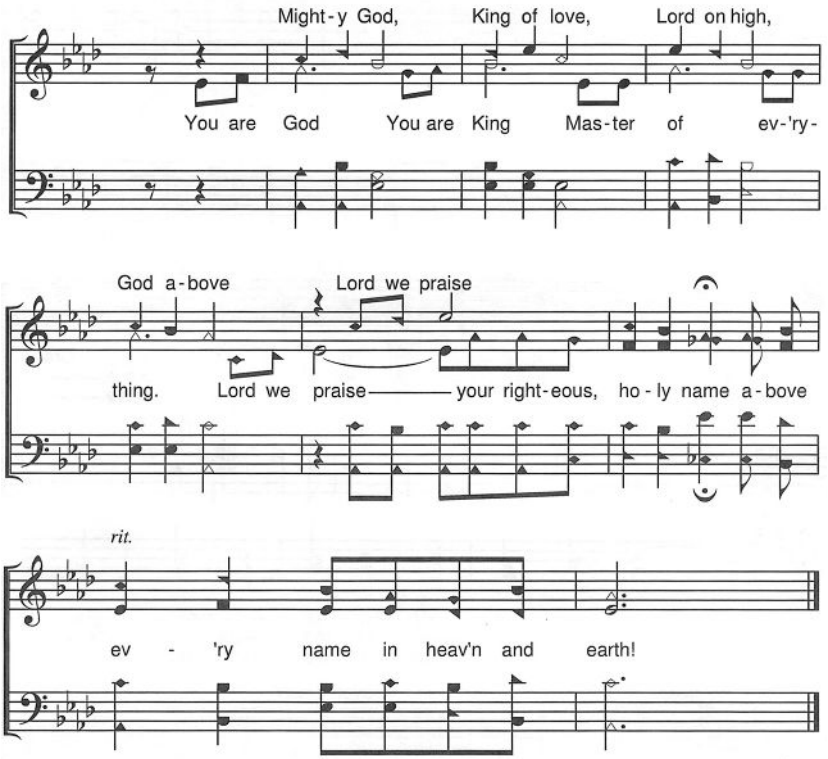
Lord from a - bove. You are our
earth, death to face. He is the
all" who've not heard. You are our

You are Lord from a - bove.

King, the King of all king - doms, You sent your
Truth, the truth for all na - tions, He is the
God, au - thor of cre - a - tion, You are our

king - - - doms,

Word from hea - ven a - bove.
Word, the Son of Your love.
Lord from hea - ven a - bove.



What do you owe?

What do you owe God, you ask? Suppose He sent the bill:

One hundred thousand dollars for the sun upon the hill;
Two thousand for the little brook that runs along the way;
Five hundred for the nighttime, and a thousand for the day;
Five hundred for the little birds that trill and chirp and sing;
Six hundred for the tiny flowers, which tell us that it's spring;
Ten thousand for the love that flows from family and friends;
A million more for grace that covers all your sins;
These are the bills which everyone of every clime forgets
If God should charge you what you owe
You'd always be in debt!

— Marcella Hope

Worship Rejected

John Gipson

The Bible makes it clear that worship should be the response of man to God. Jesus quoted with approval the Scripture that says, "*You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.*" The directive to worship is clear and plain.

Ancient Israel worshipped! In fact, she loved to do it (including bringing freewill offerings). Yet, Amos thundered against them and insisted they were multiplying their transgressions in doing so. Wait a minute! Doesn't that sound a little strange to you? Sinning while worshiping? If it happened in the long ago, do you suppose it might still be possible today?

God's rejection against Israel's worship was total. Look at the verbs that march across the page of your Bible: "I hate … I despise … I take no delight … I will not accept … I will not look upon … take away … I will not listen" (Amos 5:21-23). Worship rejected!

How would you feel, looking into God's Book and seeing all of the Sundays you worshipped, if you then saw, written across every one of them in bold letters the words, "Worship rejected"?

God makes it plain that worship that is different from the life one lives will never avail. "*But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream*" (Amos 5:24).

Perhaps you remember the old joke about a man entering into heaven and shouting back to those in line, "Wednesdays don't count!" We may laugh, but Wednesdays do count. The worship we engage in on Sunday is important, but the way we live the other six days of the week may well determine whether any of our worship is acceptable. ✞

John Gipson works with the Windsong church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas, U.S.A.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

(John 4:24)

The Lord's Supper

Wayne Jackson

One of the distinctive features of the church of Jesus Christ is the practice of observing the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week. Quite often our religious neighbors cannot understand our strictness in this regard; they feel that the time of such participation is relatively inconsequential and thus an optional matter. What does the New Testament teach?

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night prior to His death (Matthew 26:36-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20). In connection therewith, He said, "*This do in remembrance of me.*" Later, Paul wrote: "*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come*" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

However, is there a specified time for eating the Lord's Supper? It is true that Christ Himself, so far as the New Testament record goes, did not specify a time, but we must remember two things. First, not everything that Jesus taught is recorded in the Gospel records (cf. Acts 20:35). Also, Christ sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles (and, through them, the entire church) into truth that He personally did not commit to them (John 16:13). So, it is not merely a matter of what the Lord Himself taught, but also what the practice of the early church was, under the leadership of inspired men. An understanding of this is of utmost importance.

The first century church observed the Lord's Supper with a consistent frequency. Of those early disciples it is said: "*And they*

continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). The phrase "*the breaking of bread*" is a reference to the memorial Supper. The definite article "the" specifics a particular event, in contrast, for example, to a common daily meal mentioned in verse 46, "*…breaking bread at home, they took their food…*" The verb "continued steadfastly" (verse 42) is in the Greek imperfect tense, suggesting their customary or habitual practice of eating the Lord's Supper. Still, however, the time is not stated.

Later, Luke writes: "*And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread …*" (Acts 20:7). Here we do have a time specified. It is upon the first day of the week, Sunday.

However, notice some other important points in this verse. First, the disciples "were gathered together". The verb is in the passive voice, indicating that the assembly was not of their own initiative; it was a DIVINE appointment! Second, the infinitive phrase "to break bread" (the Greek may be rendered literally, "for the breaking of bread") denotes the primary purpose for which the Christians were assembled. Thus, the purpose of that meeting on the first day of the week was to observe the Lord's Supper. Now, if we can learn the frequency of their Sunday meetings, we will know how often, under Divine guidance, the disciples remembered the Lord's death in the Supper. The answer is supplied in 1 Corinthians 16:2, where Paul admonishes the saints to lay by in store "*on the first day of every week*" (NASV). Though the King James Version omits the word "every", it is in the Greek text. This demonstrates that the early Christians met each Sunday. Since the purpose of that assembly was "to break bread", it conclusively follows that they observed the Supper each Lord's day. This argument is simply unanswerable, and those who wish to be apostolic in practice will follow the divinely led example of the first century church. ✞

Wayne Jackson is the former Editor of *Christian Courier* and lives in Stockton, California, USA.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

(1 Corinthians 10:16).

Our Lord's Communion

Betty Burton Choate

Snap! Crack! Snap! Crack! The sound works its way down the rows of pews from the front to the back of the auditorium — the sound of Christians in the twenty-first century remembering their Lord's death, as He commanded.

You wouldn't have heard that sound in the first-century church. Back then, they were very little removed in time from the days when the Law given to Moses was in force. God had been very specific about minute details pertaining to the observance of feasts, when and how it was to be done, often stating how they were to prepare their bodies and their clothing in preparation for coming into His presence. He gave measurements and ingredients – a recipe – for grain offerings. He described the kind of animals He would accept as blood and burnt offerings. He drew the architectural plans for the tabernacle, for each piece of furniture in it, and for the placement of each piece. He gave tailors' measurements and weavers' designs for the curtains for His place of worship.

There was a reason for these precise requirements. By making exact regulations and by demanding that they be respected and followed, He was creating a constant realization in the hearts of devout Israelites that He is Holy above all, Lord over all, and the ultimate authority to Whom every soul must bow. Moses explained this to his brother Aaron after his sons had been slain by God because of their desecration of His worship.

"And Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what the LORD spoke, saying: ***"By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified" ' "*** (Leviticus 10:3).

God's law in dealing with His people has changed, **but GOD has not changed.** Just because we are allowed to come into His presence under the covering of the blood of His Son does not mean that we have the freedom to approach Him casually. He is still above everything that exists, and if we

could see ourselves as we actually are and could see Him as He actually is, we would come into His presence with fear and trembling, falling on our faces before Him as Daniel did when the Angel of His Presence appeared to Him, visually (Daniel 8:17,27).

When Jesus instituted His Memorial Supper, by what sort of guidance had the bread been made? We know that, for some reason, before the actual Passover feast, the Jews were not to have leaven even in their houses for seven days. Therefore, we know that the bread was unleavened. What else do the Scriptures say about how the grain offerings were to be made? They were called "cakes" or "wafers". In Leviticus 2, details were given concerning the various offerings. With regard to grain offerings, these were the instructions:

> Leviticus 2:4-7; 13: *"And if you bring as an offering a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of* ***fine flour mixed with oil,*** *or* ***unleavened wafers anointed with oil.***
> *"But if your offering is a grain offering baked in a pan, it shall be of* ***fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil.*** *You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering.*
> *"If your offering is a grain offering baked in a covered pan, it shall be made of* ***fine flour with oil.*** *And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with* ***salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking*** *from your grain offering.* ***With all your offerings you shall offer salt."***

The bread that Jesus would have broken and offered to His disciples would have been made according to these instructions. First-century Christians would have respected the precedent. Within each congregation, which in many cases met in the homes of Christians, a dedicated Christian woman would have risen a little earlier than usual to lovingly and carefully prepare the bread for the memorial of Her Lord's body. I feel sure that other sisters in the congregation would have begged for the privilege of serving their Lord and their brothers and sisters by having their opportunity to be the one to prepare the Supper. Further, I can't imagine that they would have looked to *Jewish* hands to have made that most sacred emblem for them. Can you?

However, we live in MODERN times. Today, men dressed in play or work clothes presume to go in their casual and disrespectful appearance to the Lord's death memorial, and even to stand before the congregation as

leaders — yet their very dress shows that they are not honoring the age-old requirements God has made concerning the respect due Him. In addition, Christian women sit before God and their brethren in worship, dressed with plunging necklines and other fads of grossly immodest dress, never considering what God has had to say about that. In Exodus 28:42,43, when detailing the clothing for the priests, in addition to the outer robes, God said,

"And you shall make for them ***linen trousers to cover their nakedness;*** *they shall reach from the waist to the thighs. They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come* ***near the altar*** *to minister in the holy place,* ***that they do not incur iniquity and die."***

Obviously, from these words spoken by our omnipotent God Who does not change, He was adamant that those who would presume to come into His presence show Him due respect by being properly clothed. The penalty for insulting God by one's lack of modest dress? Death. It was a pretty serious matter to God. Why do we deal with it so casually — or think nothing about immodesty at all? Are the elders in the church properly looking after the souls of the sheep under their care when they tolerate such disrespect for God? We avoid "offending" each other by daring to offend the very God we claim to serve.

Further, we MODERN women have no time or desire to make the bread for Communion. No! We can buy *readymade* Matzos. See? It says on the box that they are "unleavened". So, we buy a big box and keep it in our refrigerators and serve those things to our brothers and sisters, week after week, in bits and pieces until the box is finally used up. Is there an "expiry" date on those boxes? We wouldn't even eat cereal that is as old as those crackers.

Do we look close enough to see that even the *Jews* who made the crackers recognize that they in no way satisfy the biblical requirements for unleavened bread? They know that any bread offering was made with fine flour, oil, and salt. (Why is the oil omitted from Matzos? Because oil develops a rancid taste when it gets old, so, eliminate that problem by eliminating one of the required ingredients.) They they print plainly on the box, "Not for Passover". Those little Matzos morsels are not good enough for the Jews to use in remembrance of their coming out of Egypt, but they are just fine for MODERN Christians today to conveniently use to remember the death-price that was paid for our coming out of sin.

Shame on us! Shame on us!

I long for the day when, in every congregation of the church of Christ, worldwide, Christian women will vie for the coveted privilege to make fresh bread weekly, with fine flour, oil and salt, as was required for the bread offerings when Jesus and the apostles ate that first Memorial Supper.

Recently, I worshiped with a congregation that had an exemplary observance of the Supper. The brother who presided at the table made a lengthy talk concerning what we were about to do, drawing from the Scriptures and also reflecting on our need for the continual cleansing of the blood of Christ. When he had finished his remarks, Scriptures pertaining to our sin and the forgiveness we have in Christ were shown on the screen. He asked the congregation to stand and read the passages aloud together. Then followed a meaningful prayer. The entire service was moving and was a great aid in causing each one to examine himself/herself before eating the bread and drinking of the fruit of the vine, as we are commanded to do.

I hope that those who read this article will understand that it is not simply about using a different bread than is commonly accepted. It is about attitude. Recently, when some women in one congregation were asked if they would take turns making the bread, if the congregation decided to stop using the Matzos, one replied, "I don't know how to do that, and I don't want to learn." Another's answer was, "I just don't want to get involved with all of that."

Yes, the article, bottom line, is about attitude. What is lacking when Christian women refuse to be bothered with such a simple but meaningful service as weekly preparation of fresh bread to enable their brothers and sisters to partake with their Lord in thankful remembrance of the hideous death He died for them?

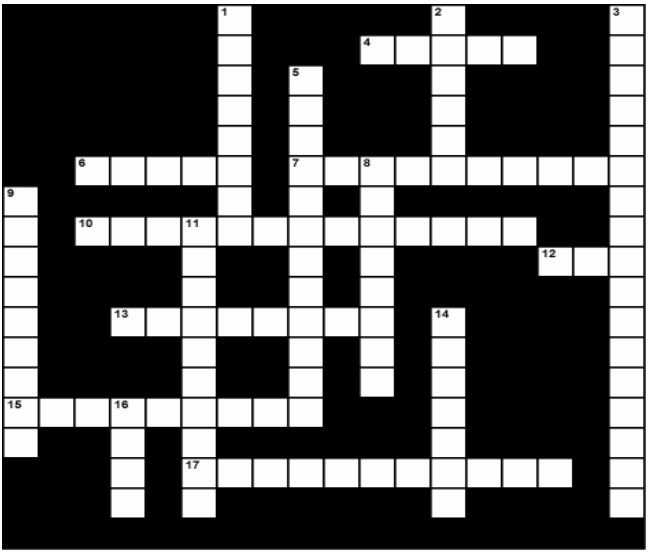
Recipe for 200 one-inch squares of bread:

1 3/4 cups of bread flour
1/2 cup of olive oil
1/4 tsp salt
1/3 cup of water

Roll out into two 10 inch by 10 inch squares on baking sheets. Score with a seamstress tracing wheel. Bake at 400 degrees for 10 minutes, or until lightly browned. ✝

Betty Burton Choate, of Winona, MS, USA, is the wife of J.C. Choate.

Fruit of the Spirit



Across

4. A Christian virtue (1 Peter 1:5-8).
6. A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).
7. A Christian virtue (1 Peter 1:5-8).
10. A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).
12. A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).
13. A Christian virtue (1 Peter 1:5-8).
15. A Christian virtue (1 Peter 1:5-8).
17. A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).

Down

1. A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).
2. A Christian virtue (1 Peter 1:5-8).
3. A Christian virtue (1 Peter 1:5-8).
5. A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).
8. A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).
9. A Christian virtue (1 Peter 1:5-8).
11. A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).
14. A Christian virtue (1 Peter 1:5-8).
16. A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).

Don't Be Ashamed

J.C. Choate

Many are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. They are ashamed to let others know that they believe in God, and that they are followers of Christ. They are ashamed of the church of Christ, and they are ashamed to proclaim that it is the only church that was bought and cleansed by the blood of our Lord. They are reluctant to speak out against things that are wrong and to stand up for the truth.

Why do people remain quiet? Because they love the world and want to be approved by the majority in the secular world and also in the religious world. They want to be popular and accepted. They don't want to be considered narrow-minded and associated with the minority. Rather than speak out for Christ, they quietly try to blend with their friends and neighbors, and

with their family members who are not Christians, so that no one will have hard feelings toward them. Their attitude is opposite that of early Christians who were willing to die rather than deny their Lord. They rejoiced *"that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name"* (Acts 5:41).

The apostle Paul said, *"For **I am not ashamed** of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith"* (Romans 1:16,17).

We read, *"As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and **whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"*** (Romans 9:33). Again, *"For the scripture saith, **Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"*** (Romans 10:11).

Paul declared, *"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that **in nothing I shall be ashamed,** but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death"* (Philippians 1:20).

Paul continued, ***"Be not thou therefore ashamed** of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:*

*"Wherefore I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless **I am not ashamed:** for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"* (2 Timothy 1:8-12).

Again, Paul said, *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, **a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,** rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15).

The Hebrews writer in speaking of God and His children, said, *"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause **he is not ashamed to call them brethren,** Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren,*

in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Hebrews 2:10-12). Continuing, he said, *"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore* ***God is not ashamed to be called their God:*** *for he hath prepared for them a city"* (Hebrews 11:16).

Peter wrote, *"Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers,* ***they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*** *For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that ye might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"* (1 Peter 3:16-18). He went on to say, *"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief; or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian,* ***let him not be ashamed;*** *but let him glorify God on this behalf"* (1 Peter 4:15,16).

Christ said, *"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever therefore shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:32,33). He also said, ***"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me*** *and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall* ***the Son of man be ashamed,*** *when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels"* (Mark 8:38).

My friend, where do you stand before the Lord?

Do you **believe** in Him (Hebrews 11:6; John 14:1), or do you reject Him?

Will you **believe** and **be baptized** to be **saved** (Mark 16:16), or have you accepted the teachings of men?

Are you a member of **the church of Christ** (Matthew 16:18), or do you belong to a denominational church that began with man?

Do you wear **the name of Christ** (Acts 4:12), or do you wear a manmade name?

Remember that in the last day we will be judged by the word of the Lord itself (John 12:48).

Please do not reject Christ and His will. Do not be ashamed of Him. Believe in Him, obey Him, and live for Him, and one day He will acknowledge you as His own and give you an eternal home in heaven. ✝

J.C. Choate, the founding Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*, devoted his life to spreading the Gospel.

Do You Love Me?

Bonnie Rushmore

Do you care about my soul? Do you have the courage to tell me when I sin? Are you more concerned about my reaction to the message than the importance of the message? Or maybe you are not convinced that I can sin so that I can be lost. I am reminded of examples in the Bible where someone was concerned enough about someone's soul to tell him he had sinned.

Do you remember Jonah? God told Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach repentance to that wicked city. However, Jonah did not want to preach to the Ninevites and chose to flee to Tarshish on a ship. Quite content with himself, he settled into the sides of the ship and fell asleep. God caused a great storm. The sailors confronted Jonah about the cause of the storm (Jonah 1:10). Jonah immediately acknowledged that he was fleeing from God. He spent three days praying for forgiveness, then he obeyed God's initial command to preach repentance to the Ninevites. The purpose of reminding you of this biblical account in the Old Testament is to emphasize that someone willingly told Jonah of his sin.

I am also reminded of Nathan and King David. David committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba. To hide what de had done, he committed the sin of murder by having Bathsheba's husband killed in battle. God sent Nathan to David to confront him with his sin. I imagine it would be difficult to stand before your king and accuse hime of such evil. When confronted with the reminder of his sin, King David immediately ac-knowledged that he had sinned and he repented. Nathan showed concern for King David's soul.

Paul "withstood Peter to his face" when Peter separated from the Gentiles as Jews entered the room. Paul accused Peter of the sin of prejudice (Galatians 2:11-13). Not only did Peter sin, but his example led others to do wrong. This shows the importance of exposing error and restoring the lost Christian before the influence of the erring one corrupts others. These are just three biblical examples of someone telling another of sin in his life.

Luke 15:7,10 teaches that the angels in heaven rejoice for one sinner that repents, over 99 just persons that need no repentance. Angels are concerned for lost souls. Jude 23 states, "*... others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*". This verse shows the urgency of telling others they are sinning and that repentance is needed to save their souls.

Christ said, "*If you love me you will keep My commandments*" (John 14:15, 21). If we love God, we are to keep all of His commands. Included in these is the necessity to restore those who have fallen into sin.

Paul commanded the Galatians to restore a brother who has been overtaken in a fault [sin] (Galatians 6:1,2). Verse two continues with the thought, encouraging the Galatians to "bear one anther's burdens", to help and encourage them as they overcome their sin.

Sometimes we allow our fear of rejection or the fear of physical or mental harm to keep us from telling people they are sinning. Paul said in Galatians 4:16, "*Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*" Paul's love for God and his desire to obey all of God's commands gave him the courage to tell Christians they were living in sin. Many of the epistles Paul wrote were written to Christians, condemning them for sin and encouraging them to repent.

The sailors told Jonah; Nathan told King David; Peter told Simon the Samaritan (Acts 8:18-23); Paul told Peter, the Corinthians, and other Christians to repent of sin. These men showed compassion for the lost. They showed their love by encouraging them to repent of sin.

Do you love me? Will you tell me when I sin? ✞

Bonnie Rushmore is a staff writer and works with World Evangelism in

A Half-Baked Pancake

Ernest S. Underwood

If you went out to eat and ordered pancakes, how would you react if they were done on one side, but were uncooked on the other side? Doesn't sound too tasty, does it? This is how God described Israel in the days of Hosea the prophet. In Hosea 7:8, the prophet said, "*Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned.*" The nation of Israel thought it could give lip service to God, while participating in all the things of the world. The Israelites offered sacrifice, but their hearts were not in it.

Jesus told His disciples that they were *in* the world, but were not to be *of* the world. Paul warned that those who practiced the works of the flesh would not inherit the kingdom of God.

If you are trying to hold on to the world while being a "little religious", you need to make some changes. Today would be a good time to begin. Are you a half-baked cake? ✞

Ernest Underwood preaches in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, USA.

Do You Want to Do More ?

Marilyn M. Peeples

A Christian should DAILY be trying to do better, not just at the beginning of a new year. This should be our DAILY resolve — to do MORE.

The first thing we must do is to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"* (Matthew 6:33).

The second thing we must do is to deny self. *"Then He said to them all, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"* (Luke 9:23).

The third thing we must *not do is* compare ourselves to others. Jesus said, *"And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?"* (Matthew 5:47).

The fourth thing we must remember is that others are not our standard — *not even Paul!* Jesus Christ is our standard. *"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

The fifth thing is that if we want to do MORE, there are particular areas about which we should be concerned: **Personal habits, dress, and talk.**

All these are important, BUT WHAT ABOUT GOOD WORKS?

Jesus commands good works, and ***there is a lot said in the Scriptures about them!***

- "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).
- "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10).
- "*... but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works"* (1 Timothy 2:10).
- *"Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden"* (1 Timothy 5:25).

- *"Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share"* (1 Timothy 6:18).
- "*In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility"* (Titus 2:7).
- *"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works"* (Titus 2:14).
- "*This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men"* (Titus 3:8).
- "*And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful"* (Titus 3:14).
- *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works"* (Hebrews 10:24).
- "*Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation"* (1 Peter 2:12).

Let's read about the judgment scene as Jesus described it.

- Jesus said we will be judged by the good works we DID or DID NOT DO (Matthew 25:31-46).
- "*And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And* ***the dead were judged according to their works,*** *by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged,* ***each one according to his works"*** (Revelation 20:12,13).

I want to Challenge each one of us to:

1) **RESOLVE** to do more in the kingdom.
2) **SEARCH** for opportunities to minister to others.
3) **MAKE TIME** for **DAILY** Bible study and prayer time.
4) **DEAL** with each sin in life **as it happens**. Don't wait till bedtime.

We cannot receive forgiveness of sins until we ask! ✞

Marilyn M. Peeples is a writer and the wife of Miles Peeples, minister of the Chaffee Road church of Christ in Jacksonville, Florida, USA.

THE ACID OF ANGER

Clarence DeLoach

"*...Be angry and sin not...*" (Ephesians 4:26)

Anger is one letter short of danger, and is like an acid that eats through whatever it touches. It is a problem built within the fabric of human nature. It is one of the most dangerous weapons in Satan's arsenal of destruction. If uncontrolled, it can damage and destroy people emotionally and spiritually.

However, not all anger is bad. You can be good *and* mad! Once when Jesus healed a man, the Pharisees reacted against the miracle, and Jesus was "*moved with anger*" (Mark 3:5). When our Lord saw others abused, misused, or neglected, He was moved with anger.

There are some things that should move us to anger—the pornography racket, child abuse, the drug traffic, the slumlords! The way to be angry and sin not is to be angry only at sin. Love the sinner, but hate the sin! Sometimes, anger is the best expression of love.

Yet, there is an uncontrolled, ungodly anger. How can you determine if your anger is a sinful anger? Analyze it and determine if there is sufficient or insufficient cause for the way you feel. Jesus spoke of one being angry with his brother *without cause*. If anger is not provoked by a righteous reason, it is sinful. If it is against the *person* rather than the *offense*, it is sinful. If your anger calls for revenge, it is sinful. If it is harbored and you are unforgiving, it is unrighteous.

Solomon said, "*Anger rests in the bosom of fools*" (Ecclesiastes 7:9), and, "*He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls*" (Proverbs 25:28). One man said, "I'm at the mercy of anyone who can make me mad."

There's a lot of rage in people. Often the slightest thing can set off an explosion. When we are angry, we open ourselves to the devil's invasion. Immediately after Paul said, "*Be angry and sin not*," he added, "*Don't give place to the devil*" (Ephesians 4:26,27). We are an easy prey to Satan when we are angry!

Remember, harbored anger is like an acid that destroys its container. We are weak, and we must learn to lean on Jesus to overcome this problem. ✝

Clarence DeLoach works with the Willow Avenue Church of Christ in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

The Vacant House Parable

Owen Cosgrove

In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus told a parable about a vacant house. The owner apparently evicted a bad tenant and cleaned the place up, but he left it vacant.

There is nothing more vulnerable to mischief than a vacant house. That is why it is difficult to obtain insurance for one. Property can run down in a hurry if it is not occupied. In Jesus' parable, the evil spirit slipped back into the house and brought seven of his friends, and they trashed it.

There is a powerful lesson in this seldom-noticed parable. Nature abhors a vacuum, and life cannot be lived successfully in a spiritual vacuum. It is not enough just to take sin out of our lives; we must put something better back. It is not enough just to quit our meanness; our conduct must then be filled with positive goodness.

Negative morality prides itself in what it does not do, but *what we do not do does not make us anything!* A telephone pole does not

drink or curse or smoke. It does not steal or covet or hate. These negatives do not make it moral. A field can be left unplanted and unworked and it will grow up in weeds. It is not enough just to clear the land. All of the weeds can be removed, but the field will be unproductive if the good things are not cultivated and nurtured there.

In that marvelous contrast of spirituality and carnality in Galatians 5:16 and 6:10, Paul begins by saying, *"Walk by the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."* That's the way to keep sin out of our lives. Fill the soul with the good things and there will not be any room left for the bad.

But a house that is "full" of empty space that ought to have been filled with knowledge and faith and prayer and hope and Christian fellowship is a vacuum for evil to conquer. The parable of the sower shows how the seed of the Gospel cannot grow productively in a heart encumbered with the weeds of the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. Neither do the weeds of carnality grow well in a heart that is full of truth and faith and discipline.

Christ does not just take away evil; He puts something better back. That is how Christianity offers positive solutions to life's problems. When we live prayerfully and well for the Lord, we will not have to worry about Satan breaking in and vandalizing the place. Walk after the spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). ✞

Owen Cosgrove is the preacher for the Northside congregation in Waxahachie, Texas, USA.

Have You Noticed?

... That the people who visit the sick and teach the lost have as much to do as those who do not?

... That those who never miss a service have just as many kinfolks as those who miss when they don't feel well or when company comes? They just put first things first.

... That those who are teaching Bible classes don't have any more time to prepare than others do? They just take time to do that which is most important.

... That those who get the most out of being a part of the church are those who put the most into it?

— The Watchman

Wise Old Man!

Demar Elam

"*Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end*" (Proverbs 19:20).

One of man's greatest challenges is the ability to listen to counsel and receive instruction. However, Solomon says that if you want to be wise in your latter days you must listen to counsel and receive instruction.

Isn't it amazing how difficult it is for man, first to listen to counsel, and secondly, to receive instruction? Many people receive only the counsel and instruction that agree with the way they want to do a thing or the way they want to believe a particular thing.

Youth is consumed by the speeding robber called age. Years bring old age, and man reflects on the life and the understanding those years have produced in him. Sadness fills the minds of those who reflect and realize that they refused to listen to counsel and receive instruction.

Do you want to be a wise old man? Then listen to the mighty Word of God regarding this matter. Hear the Lord and receive His instruction. "*Love the Lord your God, with all your heart and all of your soul and strength*" (Deuteronomy 6:5). "*Love your neighbors as yourself*" (Galatians 5:14). "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*" (Matthew 6:33). "*Lay up treasures in heaven*" (Matthew 6:19-21). "*Go the second mile*" (Matthew 5:38-42). "*Love your enemies*" (Matthew 5:43-48). Develop the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). Assist others and help them bear their burdens (Galatians 6:2). "*Husbands love your wives*" (Ephesians 5:25). "*Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increases*" (Proverbs 3:9).

When your arms and legs are feeble due to the passing of the years, will you be viewed by those who know you as a "wise old man", or a foolish old man who never listened to God or man?

"*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck*" (Proverbs 1:7-9). ✝

Demar Elam is actively involved in world missions and lives in Athens, Alabama, USA.

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM

Wayne Barrier

Bookstores are filled with books that tell us how to be successful in our business careers, personal lives, relationships, and other areas of life. Each area is usually discussed and presented as the most important of all. Almost everyone is confronted with situations that demand that we set priorities and choose and emphasize one facet of life over others.

With all this advice, many people still seem to be torn and frustrated with feelings of failure, uncertainty, and emptiness. Christians should not have these problems. Guidance is given in the Bible for these matters.

Consider the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:33 where He states, "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.*" "All these things" are actually the physical things that most people devote themselves to obtaining. They should be second priority. When we put Jesus first, He promises to help with other priorities. Jesus had stated earlier in Matthew 6:24, "… Y*ou cannot serve God and mammon.*"

This message of Jesus is discussed further and presented in practical terms as Paul writes in Colossians 3:1-10, "*If then you were raised with Christ, seek these things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created Him."

The message of Paul continues in Colossians 3:12-17 as he says, "*Therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in*

you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

The Christian is provided with perfect advice and guidance to help find meaning, purpose, behavioral standards, and priorities in life. The Bible is all we need to set our course and achieve success that is rewarding, pleasing to God, and everlasting. Can you be disciplined to "seek these things above"? If we are "in Christ", we can have the knowledge and strength to follow this path of success and reward. The way to get "in Christ" is through obedience to His teachings found in His Word. Baptism is the act of obedience that puts one "into Christ" (Galatians 3:26,27). ✞

Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA, and is involved in taking the Gospel throughout the world.

Are You Living the Abundant Life?

Jerry Jenkins

Many who profess to be devoted followers of Jesus find themselves living far short of what could be classified as the "abundant life". The *abundant* life is not the same as the *affluent* life or the life *without problems*; the abundant life is a life promised to those converts to Christ who make a total response of their lives to the Lord.

1. The abundant life comes to those who have genuine faith. This faith is total trust in the One who created us and redeemed us. It involves dependence upon Him and acceptance of His suggestions and corrections.

2. The abundant life comes to those who live a life of prayer. Prayer is not bringing a grocery list to God. It is a trusting child speaking to his loving Father, Who desires to fulfill every need.

3. Abundant living comes to those who submit fully to His will. Two lives that must be contrasted are: (1) the joy in the life of a person who obeys God and (2) the guilty, hard life of one who is in rebellion to God.

4. Abundant living comes to those who live a life of giving. The more selfish a person is the less he will truly enjoy the blessings of God. ✞

Jerry Jenkins preaches for the Roebuck Parkway church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.

MAKING PLANS

Ancil Jenkins

"Now listen, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that" (James 4:13-15).

James vividly reminds us of this great truth: it is foolish for a Christian to plan without considering God. Note that man's plans in the above verses differ from God's.

Man plans, thinking he can control his location: *"... today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city ..."* He thinks he controls his time, *"... spend a year there ..."* Some even think they control profit and loss: *"carry on business and make money ..."* The Christian controls none of these. Instead, all plans must be made with the following commitment, *"... If it is the Lord's will ..."*

As Christians, we have a unique, intimate relationship with our heavenly Father. He knows us far better than we know ourselves. *"And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered"* (Matthew 10:30). God loves the whole world, yet His love for His children is even more (John 3:16; 14:21).

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). Being His child does not mean we will never hurt, suffer, or be sad. It does mean that no matter what happens, God will work for our good if we love Him and are following His call. We may propose our plans, but God proposes the final result. When our plans are changed by His work, we must learn to say, *"The Lord's will be done"* (Acts 21:14).

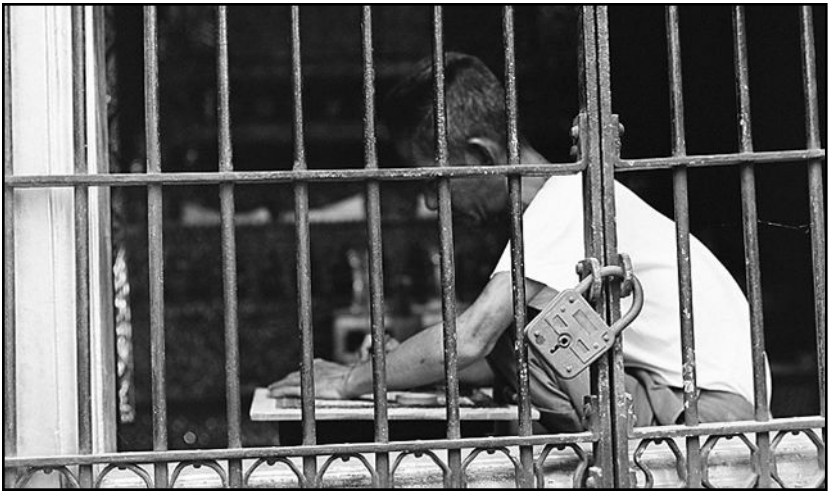
The key to living within God's will is our submission to Him. Not only does He work for our good, He also keeps us from any trial and temptation that might be more than we can overcome. *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Our confidence is in God's faithfulness. We believe He is willing and able to keep His promises.

How do these truths affect our planning? We must always remember that, in planning, it is possible for our will to conflict with God's will. When this happens, we must trust the Faithful One to know what is best for us.

We also can make big plans. Our Father wants the best for us and will let only what is best come our way, *if* we make submission to Him our top priority. If our plans are God's plans, He will honor and bless us. If not, He will send our way what is for our good. Make great plans, for our God is great. ✞

Ancil Jenkins is a writer and preacher in Jamestown, Tennessee, USA.



Light in a Dark Place

Daniel McAfee

Here in prison, I can feel the air around me and I get claustrophobic. Pressure seems to rise when people are confined in one place for too long. It is true that it takes only one bad apple to spoil the whole bunch. There's nothing more memorable than learning from experience, rather than by word of mouth.

The people in here are always angry at some other person. Some are mad at family that they hurt, or family that can't help them. Some carry a load of hate against their victims and the laws. They blame the government or our society for where they are. Others are mad at the prosecutors and the judges, even despising the public defenders that help them. Me? I'm mostly mad at me.

All these people know anger too well. Anger is the most used emotion in here. It is bred into the minds of men so that in every aspect, people praise it. Anger covers many feelings and approves low self-esteem. It grows in the face of indifference.

Being quick to anger or being quick to fight keeps people away, but hostility will also make you friends. People boast about a show of anger in any given situation. They'll say in different ways how the receipent of their anger "was put

in check", each telling stories, with anger being an unnamed hero.

I try not to let myself get caught up in such things as to let anger breed in this mind of mine. I carry my own burdins and do my time alone. For those whose loads I do share, in my prayers I ask God to lighten them. The burdens in my life weigh me down, and I can only thank God for getting me this far. I pray that He will continue to help me see my way through. I hope to keep the anger that grows around me out of my heart. I look for God to guide me, but sometimes I am blind. I listen to hear His guidance, but sometimes I am deaf. I can feel nothing in this soundless and dark place as I try to find my way. When all of these emotions crowd in on me and I am blind, deaf, and lost, I ask, "What is the Lord trying to teach me?"

It's like a math problem — you try and try, but you just don't get it. The problem doesn't make sense. Nothing figures out right. Numbers come from nowhere. Their order is not understandable. I get frustrated, never coming up with the right answer, mad sometimes and ready to quit. I try again. I step back, look at it differently, and I start over — still blind, deaf, and lost. I try again.

Then, like a guiding hand, like a gentle light, like a voice whispering to me, a sudden jolt, and understanding comes. It is like when a teacher sees the answer in a student's eyes. I get it! I know the problem and, thanks to God, I can see. It is so clear where the numbers come from and where they go, and how the answer comes about. It is good and honest work, hard, and yet so easy, once you understand. God is always part of the equation, and the answer always contains His love more than anything else.

My eyes are open and I can see a soft light brightening my way. My ears are clear and it is as though I can hear the Lord's softest whisper. I can even feel the slightest breeze blowing in the right direction. These are the times I cherish the most. The closeness of God and all the love He gives me.

Sometimes on the worst of days and unfriendly nights, all I hear are the cursing shouts of other inmates. Nothing good is said when I'm lonely and lights are out. I feel that I don't have a friend, and all I have are my memories of close times with God. I find, for some reason, discouragement overwhelming my heart and … I must cry.

However, I don't cry alone. The Lord weeps also. ✞

Daniel McAfee is one of several Christians serving prison terms for earlier mistakes, but who have managed to make needed spiritual changes, for which they deserve commendation.

A Moment of Lust

Frank Chesser

He was alone and idle, fertile soil for sin. Upon viewing the unclad form of Bathsheba, he could not help the stirrings within, a manifestation of desire divinely implanted. However, he looked too long and lost. His lust "conceived" and gave birth to sin (James 1:15). Adultery was the fruition of David's unrestrained desire, followed by deception and murder (2 Samuel 12).

Sometime later, Amnon, David's first-born son, raped Tamar, his half-sister. David's own sin rendered him impotent in dealing with the sin of his son. For two years, Absalom plotted revenge for his sister's shame. His moment came at a sheep-shearing festival, and he stained his servant's sword with the blood of his half-brother.

Five long years passed before Joab effected reconciliation between David and Absalom. Those years enabled the seed of bitterness to sprout and grow within the heart of David's son. Thus, Absalom schemed to extort the kingdom from his own father. By means of subtlety and flattery, he "*stole the hearts of the men of Israel*" (2 Samuel 15:6).

When David learned of Absalom's rebellion, he fled Jerusalem with his family and loyal followers. Barefooted, head covered, bathing the earth in tears, he ascended the Mount of Olives, his heart pierced with arrows of grief (2 Samuel 15:30).

Ahithophel, David's counselor, turned traitor and urged immediate pursuit of David and his followers. Inconceivably, Ahithophel's call for David's death *"pleased Absalom well"* (2 Samuel 15:4). However, the advice of Hushai, David's friend, counteracted that of David's former counselor, as the providence of God worked to assure Absalom's defeat.

The battle lines were drawn. It was father against son. The child he once held in his arms now coveted his life. A sword had supplanted a warm embrace. The battle was joined and Absalom died. As David ascended the steps to his chamber he cried, "*O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son*" (2 Samuel 18:33). Oh, the sin that was spawned in a moment of lust. ✝

Frank Chesser is an author and the preacher for the Panama Street congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

5-Minute Bible Study

AM I A SEEKER?

❂ **Deuteronomy 4:29** "But if from thence thou shalt SEEK the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou SEEK him with all thy _____ and with all thy _____."

❂ **1 Chronicles 16:11** "SEEK the _____ and his strength, SEEK his face _____."

❂ **Psalm 9:10** "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not _____ them that SEEK thee."

❂ **Zephaniah 2:3** "SEEK ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; SEEK _____, SEEK _____: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger."

❂ **Matthew 6:33** "But SEEK ye _____ the kingdom of _____, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

❂ **Luke 11:9** "And I say unto you, _____, and it shall be given you; SEEK, and ye shall find; _____, and it shall be opened unto you."

❂ **Hebrews 11:6** "But without _____ it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must _____ that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently SEEK him."

Deuteronomy 4:29: heart, soul
1 Chronicles 16:11: Lord, continually
Psalm 9:10: forsaken
Zephaniah 2:3: righteousness, meekness
Matthew 6:33: first, God
Luke 11:9: ask, God
Hebrews 11:6: faith, believe

Starting Early

T. Pierce Brown

It has been said that a mother once asked, "At what age should I begin to teach my child?" The person replied, "How old is he now?" The mother said, "Two years." His response was, "You have already lost about two years."

Recent studies indicate that babies may begin to learn some things even before they are born. However, it is a fallacy to suppose that children will love their homes and learn properly from them just because they eat and sleep there. Wise parents will not only try to make their children satisfied and happy in their home environment, they will also try to make home a place where good memories will be created that will serve good purposes in the difficult years that lie ahead.

Parents should provide room and occasion somewhere in the house for indoor activities that will charm, educate, and improve the child so that he will not be restless for the street when school hours are over. Projects should also be included to broaden his interest in nature, hobbies, or other things that will enrich his life as he grows older. If parents would deliberately find ways to create in their children a love and respect for nature as part of God's heritage, and a love of

study and learning about all that is around them, great results could follow. The child will then be interested in where we came from, what our purpose in life is, how to achieve that purpose, and what our spiritual destiny is to be. The answer to those questions can come only from God's Word, an intense study of which will be profitable for this world and the world to come.

Parents cannot start too early to develop these inquisitive minds in their children and should never say or do anything that would dampen their normal desire to know things. Their questions may sometimes seem to have little significance or value, but parents should encourage all desire to learn truth while letting their children know in humility that humans simply do not have answers for all questions of life. God reveals only those things that we need to know to make life happier and more productive.

It is probable that there will be time later to help children learn to "*avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they do gender strife*" (2 Timothy 2:23). This admonition has reference, not to the inquisitive minds of children about all the things that may be of interest to them, but of religious questions about things God has not revealed, and which, if one knew, would not be of any value. These are the kinds of things Paul mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:14 where people "*strive about words to no profit, subverting the hearers.*" If you start early enough, you can help children to learn about the things that would be valuable enough to spend time learning and also about those that would not matter even if they found the answers. ✞

T. Pierce Brown, longtime elder and preacher, passed away August, 2008.

Inborn Reaching Out

A Child,
hurting or afraid,
Runs to find security
In the arms of someone
bigger,
older.

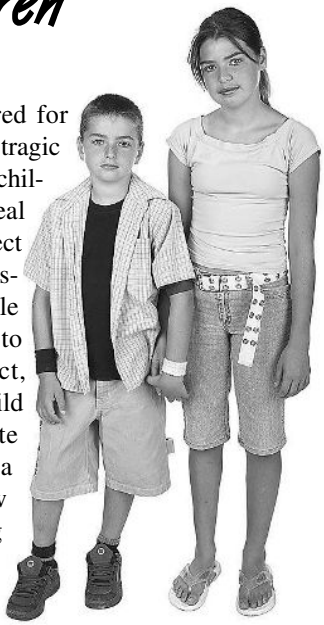
Unquestioning faith is there,
but what causes such
conviction
That older
bigger
arms can make things right?

It is from the soul's
inborn reaching out
to God,
to older, bigger arms?

— Betty Burton Choate

Our Responsibility to Our Children

Rod Kyle



Our children are born needing to be cared for materially, emotionally, and spiritually. It is tragic indeed that hundreds are not caring for their children's material and emotional needs. The real tragedy, however, is the hidden, spiritual neglect of our children. This statistic, I fear, would easily surpass all other forms of neglect. The Bible commands all parents to rear their children to know their Creator (Ephesians 6:4). In fact, Jesus warns that any person who deflects a child from God's goal of heaven will suffer a fate worse than being thrown into the sea with a millstone tied to his/her neck (Matthew 18:6,10). So where do we begin in fulfilling our spiritual responsibility to our children?

It is certainly not sprinkling a little water on our child and calling it baptism. Such a practice is without biblical authority. Instead, the Bible clearly teaches that parents need to learn and practice the truth in the Bible for themselves first (1 Peter 1:22). Children see through hypocrisy, and the best way to bring up children is never to let them down!

The apostle Paul described the young preacher Timothy's upbringing in this way, "…*from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15).

God's Word must be taught to our children in the home by the parents (2 Timothy 1:5). Yes, children need to be taken to the worship assemblies and Bible classes that the Lord's church arranges (i.e. Acts 20:7-12), but the over-all spiritual rearing of each child remains a parental responsibility (Ephesians 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

So, what are you doing to enable your children to go to heaven? ✞

Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel in New Plymouth, New Zealand.

10 Mistakes ...

... That Fathers Make Regarding Their Children' (Ephesians 6:4)

- Putting their careers before their children.
- Not being the head of the household.
- Failure to hear what their child is saying.
- Setting standards too high for the child's ability.
- Expectations of duplication of father's career or desires.
- Being more suspicious than trusting.
- Showing special attention to one child over the other.
- Substituting "things" for love.
- Rebuking children often and in the presence of others.
- Failing to show love toward their mother every day.

... That Mothers Make Regarding Their Children' (Proverbs 31:10·31)

- Leaving the children too early in life to fulfill career goals.
- Holding on to the children too tightly and too long.
- Living out their dreams through their children.
- Belittling the children with words.
- Expressing mistrust due to past conduct.
- Setting standards motivated by what others say.
- Substituting "things" for love.
- Imbalancing attention between husband and children.
- Criticizing fathers in the presence of children.
- Assuming the dominate role in the home.

... That Children Make Regarding Their Parents· (Ephesians 6:1·3)

- Allowing a day to go by without telling them you love them,
- Feeling that you must please them or you are a failure.
- Thinking of them as your "buddy" and not your parents.
- Failing to understand that discipline is a form of love.
- Desiring the right to do something without assuming responsibility.
- Refusing to listen to them.
- Seeing them as older but not really wiser.
- Accepting "things" for love.
- Never talking to them about your troubles.
- Depending on your parents always.

"Train a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

A dog truly is man's best friend. If you don't believe it, just try this experiment:

Put your dog and your wife in the trunk of the car for an hour.

When you open the trunk, who is really happy to see you?

The judge took his seat in his chambers, facing the opposing lawyers. "So," he said, "Each of you has offered me a bribe."

Both lawyers squirmed uncomfortably. The judge said, "You, attorney Paulson, gave me $15,000. And you, attorney Harris, gave me $10,000."

The judge reached into his pocket and pulled out a check. He handed it to Paulson. "Now then, I'm returning $5,000, and we're going to decide this case solely on its merits!"

Two mothers were having a conversation about their children one day.

Joan: "How do you get your Marvin up so early on school mornings?"

Marilyn: "Oh, that's easy. I just throw the cat on his bed."

Joan: "Why does that wake him up?"

Marilyn: "He sleeps with the dog!"

Two elderly women were fussing about their husbands over tea one day.

First lady: "I do wish my Leroy would stop biting his nails. That makes me terribly nervous!"

Second lady: "Oh, my Elmer used to do the same thing, but I broke him of that habit real quick."

First lady: "What did you do?"

Second lady: "I hid his teeth!"

It seems that this man was suing his company for injury to his right arm. The judge said, "How high can you raise your arm?" The man struggled to raise it waist high.

The judge then asked, "How high could you raise it before the injury?" The man raised it over his head and said, "This high."

A man approached a local person in a village he was visiting and asked, "What's the quickest way to York?" The local scratched his head, then asked, "Are you walking or driving?" The man said, "I'm driving." The local thought for a moment and answered, "Well, I'd say that's the quickest way!"

It was rumored that the captain of one of those really big cruise ships could not swim. One of the passengers who heard this just could not believe that the captain of a ship would be unable to swim. He decided to ask the captain about this, firsthand.

"Is it true that, as the captain of this ship, you cannot swim?"

The captain answered, "It's true, I can't swim. Can pilots fly?"

My therapist told me that the way to achieve true inner peace is to finish what I start. So far today, I have finished two bags of chips and a chocolate cake. I feel better already.

An Arkansas State Trooper pulled over a pickup truck on 1-40. He walked up to the driver and said, "Got any ID?"

The driver said, "'Bout what?"

A lady was walking past a pet store when a parrot called out, "Hey, lady! You're really ugly!" The lady was furious, but she continued on her way.

Later, as she was making her way back through the mall, she passed by the pet store again and the parrot once more said, "Hey, lady! You're really ugly!" She was incredibly upset now, so she went into the store and said that she would sue the store and kill the bird. The store manager apologized profusely and promised that he would make sure the parrot didn't say it again.

The next day, she deliberately passed by the store to test the parrot. Sure enough, the parrot said, "Hey, lady!" She answered, "Yes?" He replied, "You know."

Tell me: what is the first thing you think about when I say "the unknown", in particular, in reference to the future? There are two common responses. The most common is fear, believe it or not. People don't like it when they don't know about what's going to happen. This may seem odd to you, but I'll need only a few seconds to convince you. Have you ever had a test that you weren't too sure about? If it wasn't an important one, you probably weren't bothered much, but I'm referring to an important trial of some sort. For some it's finals, for others it may be a project at work or, in my case, combat.

The Unknown

PFC Alex Gibson

Often times, we worry about failing in those tests. We think about what problems might come up and hurt our performance. It's these things that haunt our minds most often, knowing that the outcome is not set in stone. If only someone would just tell us the ending and maybe a few key points in the middle so there wouldn't be too much surprise, then we could be at ease about life and its trials.

However, there is another way people see the unknown — with hope.

There are some who allow themselves to dream about the unknown with wonder and hope that it will be better than they can imagine. These people are often called optimists or dreamers, because they are always letting their hope overstep what will more than likely happen. They are also often disappointed by what really happens, but they are seldom discouraged. Why? If you had a pot of water and burned your hand when you touched it, most would consider you crazy to keep touching it, hoping not to be burned.

So then, should we conclude that these people who have a greater hope of the unknown must be crazy? No. In fact, they are the ones who are right.

This point is one that will make sense only to some, but I'm targeting Christians when I make it. We believe that God has a paradise in store for us when we die. Death is the single largest unknown out there. No one ever comes back, and everyone goes. So then, what happens when we die? That's simple enough: we don't know. Therefore, it makes sense that most people fear death. You'll get some who say they fear *how* they're going to die, not death itself, but don't be fooled. They're uneasy about the whole thing. Yet, Christians should never be uneasy about death; in fact, we should be eager for it. While I may be pricking at a nerve or two, let me explain.

I have always said my goal is not heaven, it's to be *with God*. When I die — shuffle off this mortal coil — my soul will be free to join God. So, therefore, the nearest I can get to God comes only after my death — a thing that promises to be a rough transition, as all are, but from this place to God's side is unarguably a better place. Are you following me? Maybe, but let's tackle something a bit more down to earth.

How about tomorrow? Well it's story time.

When I went on my mid-tour leave, I had a lot of plans and was expecting things to go swimmingly. Imagine my dismay when I got back home to Colorado, only to find that I had lost a friend, and had no way to get around, with no place to stay — not to mention that the disappointment took out most of the rest of my plans for leave.

I was slightly thrown. There were even some things that happened that were painful on a scale that I had never yet hit, and that's saying a lot. After all I've been stabbed, almost electrocuted, beaten, semi-drowned, and a lot more. However, I decided to pray about it and to say, "God, I don't know what You've got planned, but whatever You want is fine." I laid my cares at His feet, then forgot about them, and had a bit of faith. While doing so, I didn't worry about what reality had taught me to expect; I let myself go and dreamt of what God might do. Lo, and behold, He out-did my dreams!

I spent a lot of time with friends and family, got a place to stay and a jeep to drive around in. Those came from my church family. Then, I reconnected with some other friends of mine, and even met some new ones. A good time was had by all, and any issues I had were solved

with no real involvement on my part. God took care of me through the unknown. I even had the pleasure of spending time with a good friend whom I hadn't seen in over a year. The funny thing is that I didn't even know we were going to be in town on the same dates. I got to see my best friend move into his new apartment and be happy with his family. I got to hang out with my mentor and have some much needed conversation about life. While leave started out on a sour note, it ended perfectly, and happened to be a surprise the entire time.

Now I'm back in Iraq and facing the unknown again. I expect some hard times, but I'm letting my hope get ahead of reality, as I always will. I have faith that God will take care of things, and if they don't turn out well now, He'll take that and use it to make life better later. You see, a Christian should always let his faith wander and go beyond what the world expects because God will take care of things. Maybe not the way you want Him to, but He has yet to disappoint me. ✞

For any comments/challenges to head-butting competitions, or other complaints, email me at zex1@hotmail.com. Can't say I'll be able to write back but if I can I will. God bless.

Alex Gibson is currently in the US Army, stationed in Iraq.

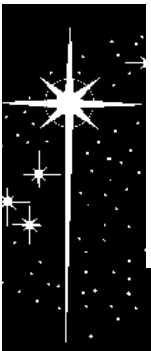
"The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him." ***Psalm 28:7***

"God is my strength and power, And He makes my way perfect." ***2 Samuel 22:33***

"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." ***Deuteronomy 31:6***

"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." ***Revelation 3:10***

Out of Confusion into Confidence



Can sincere people find their way out of the confusion of churches into the assembly that God intended? Jesus said in Matthew 5:3,6,8 (ESV), *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* [6] *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."* [8] *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* Historical evidence over the centuries has proven these promises to be continually fulfilled in the lives of sincere seekers.

The American Restoration

Dessain Terry

Many historical accounts demonstrate that, as people escaped the domination of European denominations, they sought a purer form of Christianity, following only the Bible and reproducing its teachings in their lives.

The story I know best is the one concerning the Danbury Church of Christ, because I was privileged to be its minister for nearly eleven years. I am especially grateful to the research done by David Tarbet, who served this church in the 1960s and beyond.

It began in 1736 when Ebenezer White was ordained as minister for the First Church (Congregational). As the years passed, he began to study what the Bible had to say about the practices of his denomination. He became a proponent of returning to the simple practices of the Christians described in the New Testament. He heard of a man named Robert Sandeman of Perth, Scotland, who was preaching the same concept. He sent for Sandeman, who came to Danbury in 1764 and made it his home until he died in 1771. He is buried in Danbury's Wooster Cemetery.

As time passed, the little group began to adopt practices such as having the Bible as their only authority for doctrines and deeds, observing communion every Sunday rather than occasionally, and refusing to call Sunday "The Sabbath". Other practices were abandoned as their knowledge of the Bible grew. Sandeman, however, held to the doctrine of sprinkling rather than the immersion of people who expressed their faith in Jesus as the Christ.

By 1817, some families who wanted to pursue the purity of practice even

further left the Sandeman group and continued to search the Scriptures. Levi Osborne became convinced that Biblical baptism was immersion. He heard of a group in New York City which believed in immersion for the forgiveness of sins (see Acts 2:38), and he traveled the 65 miles to be immersed by one of them. He came home and immersed his believing wife and a Mr. and Mrs. Wildman.

The years ahead saw believers struggle for growth and continued repentance from man-made teachings. The Bible defined the church for them and described how it was to conduct its work. Christ was to be the head and only head of it, according to Colossians 1:18. Its members entered and became members of it through faith in Jesus Christ, repentance from sin, confession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and immersion in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:14-47, Acts 8:36-40). Only God added people to the church, neither a vote of the church nor the will of human beings (Acts 2:47). The members were commanded to obey all of the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 28:20) and to be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10). As the congregation matured spiritually, they were to select elders and deacons, according to the instructions of God in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus.

In attitude, the church was commanded to love one another (John 13:35). As the people obeyed these Scriptures, they became the church Jesus gave His life to establish. Anyone claiming to be members of the church of Christ who did not practice these Scriptures was making a false claim out of ignorance or deliberate disobedience. It was this ideal that established and sustained the church of Christ in Danbury over the years.

The church has had its ups and downs, doctrinally and in size, through the centuries but the ideal of following only what the Bible teaches would not die. In the early 1960s, there were only a few people in Danbury who still practiced the ideal. David Tarbet came from Texas to work with them and help them grow. And grow they did! They increased in number and built a very usable building in which to meet. They continue to this day to teach that people should believe and practice only what the Bible says.

After two hundred and seventy-two years, the sincere commitment of one man to follow only the Bible is still cherished in the hearts of believers in Danbury, Connecticut. Jesus has kept His word to the world. Blessed, indeed, are those who have decided to follow Him and no one else. ✞

Dessain Terry is minister of the church of Christ at Dale City in Woodbridge, Virginia, USA.

Bible Baptism

E. Claude Gardner

I. Introduction

A. Simple but profound truths about baptism in the New Testament.

B. Should be easy to understand and not controversial.
No one argues with God and the Bible.

C. Basic questions: what, who, why, and when.

II. Discussion

A. **WHAT?**

1. An act in water. John 3:5; Acts 8:34; Acts 10:47.
Not necessary to be "running" or warm or cold.
2. One person baptizes another. Acts 8:38.
3. It is immersion — dip, plunge — the mode.
   a. Like Jesus was — Matthew 3:14.
   b. Burial — Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12
   c. Baptidzo anglicized by denominational founders (becoming known as the word "baptize" rather than the real

meaning, "immerse") to accommodate sprinkling.

4. Can be done privately or with audience — Acts 8:36-39.
5. No voting or probation.

B. **WHO?**

1. Those who desire it — Acts 8:36.
   A little child does not have the ability or need.
2. Those who are accountable or responsible for sins — Acts 8:12.
3. Those who acknowledge they are sinners — Acts 2:37.
   They do not claim that they are already saved and that their baptism is a testimony to the fact that they were saved by faith only.
4. Those who have met the prerequisites of baptism.
   Those who have heard the gospel and believed it, which has led to repentance, and readiness to confess Christ as the Son of God — Mathew 17:5; John. 3:16; Luke. 13:3; Matthew 10: 32,33.

C. **WHY?**

1. For the remission of sins, to be saved — Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; Mark. 16:16.
2. For entrance into Christ's church, the church one reads about in the New Testament — Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:13.
   To be baptized into Christ (the only way to get into Him) one also comes into the church (not a denomination).
3. Baptism is not:
   a. For the cleansing of the flesh — 1 Peter 3:21.
   b. Not a human work.
   c. Not water salvation — the power is not in the water but in the blood of Christ. Hence, we are baptized into His death where He shed His blood — John 19:33,34.

D **WHEN?**

1. In New Testament times, as soon as a person accepted these truths, he was commanded to obey them — Acts 8:3 8; Acts 2:41; Acts 16:33.
2. NOW. 2 Corinthians 6:2.

III. Conclusion

A. After baptism, one is a New Testament Christian — Acts 26:28.

B. We are to worship acceptably (John 4:24), faithful in living, and have the hope of heaven (2 Timothy 4:7-8). ✝

What Soul Winning Will Do For You

Dale Grissom

I. IT WILL BRING A GREAT CHANGE IN YOUR LIFE.

A. You will recognize that the harvest is white and that the laborers are few.

B. You will understand the necessity of Bible study in order to gain knowledge.

C. Life will take on more meaning. Your family will grow closer.

D. Some nights you may not be able to sleep, thinking about someone's soul.

E. Thougts of the importance of this work and the great meeting on Judgment Day will stay with you.

F. You will realize that there is no substitute for living the Christian life.

II. IT WILL CAUSE YOU TO TRY TO DO GOOD TO ALL MEN.

A. You will learn much about the needs of others.

B. You will become more benevolent toward the poor.

C. You will endeavor to practice the golden rule.

III. IT WILL CAUSE YOU TO BE MORE CONCERNED FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT THEIR FIRST LOVE.

A. You will try hard to restore them to a good relationship with God.

B. Your own resolve to remain faithful to the Lord will be deepened.

IV. IT WILL CAUSE YOU TO THINK MORE OF OTHERS AND LESS OF YOURSELF.

A. You will desire to give up those things that hinder you from serving Christ.

B. You will strive to live as close to the Lord as you can.

C. You will realize the great honor in winning souls for the Lord.

D. You will become more compassionate toward the lost.

E. You will demonstrate your love for others by reaching out to them with the Gospel.

F. You will learn to confront in a kind, gentle, and loving manner.

G. You may be assured of your own soul's salvation. ✝

Dale Grissom works with the church of Christ in Dexter, Missiouri, USA.

"See That You Put Him At Ease"

Harvey Porter

In the last chapter of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, he gives them a series of admonitions. He says, "*When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am*" (1 Corinthians 16:10).

Have you ever thought how much better people function when they are *at ease?* Tension, stress, and nervousness hinder performances in so many ways. All who have taught a class, made public announcements, led in singing or a prayer, preached, or have been in charge of a public meeting know how important it is to feel that the people are with you and not against you.

What would the Corinthians do to "put Timothy at ease"? They would support him, encourage him, correct him in a gentle manner. They would let him know that they, too, were interested in the Word of the Lord. They would talk "up" and not "down" the work. This does not mean that they would not offer suggestions for improvement, but it means that their whole demeanor and attitude would be positive and not negative. There are those who never have a positive word to give about the work of the church. They can spoil a class or any gathering by just one comment. They put no one at ease; they make everyone feel uncomfortable.

When new members place membership with us, we all ought to make an effort to put them at ease. We ought to welcome them, to include them, to inform them. They will be "at ease" when they think that they are accepted and feel that they are a part of the family.

The same thing is true of those who visit our services. They are strangers and are usually a bit apprehensive. They are looking for friendliness and acceptance, too. We have the duty to go out of our way to make them feel "at ease" in the house of God.

It is the work of the Devil to hinder the work of the Lord, rather than the work of fellow Christians to hinder the work of the Lord. Paul's main reason to "set him at ease" was "he is doing the work of the Lord as I am." That is certainly reason enough to "set at ease" anyone who might be having trouble functioning in the Lord's work. ✞

Harvey Porter (1929-1998) preached for many years in Albuquerque, New Mexico, U.S.A.

Suit Up, Soldier!

Perry N. Hall

In Ephesians 6:10-20 we find an outstanding admonition from the Captain of our salvation. In verse 10, through his servant Paul, He calls upon us to be continually strengthened in the power of His might, which power is inherent in Him. This power is available to us as a result of our union with Christ (3:16).

If we are to be able to hold our ground against the plots *"of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience"* (2:2), we must clothe ourselves in the panoply of God. The words "whole armour" of God are from panoplia, which literally means "all the weapons" of God. At the very time Paul wrote these words, he was chained to a Roman soldier. How well he knew that the Christian life was a battlefield, not a lifestyle of soft enjoyment and ease. In his struggle against Satan he had come to know hard conflict with foes within and without (2 Corinthians 1:23-33). Only the divine equipment in its completeness will render one victorious in this struggle against the deceit, craft, trickery, and cunning arts of our enemy.

Having the constant discipline of self in view, Paul issued with military snap and curtness the command, *"take unto you the whole armour of God"* (verse 13). This is a once-for-all act. We are never to lay it down until the

battle is ended. We must continue to stand against, resist, and oppose Satan until death.

We are to gird ourselves in truth, i.e., completely surrounding ourselves with truth. Only then will all the armour be kept in place. The Christian solider must be deeply concerned with both objective and subjective truth. As a defender of the faith, he must *contend earnestly* for the truth once for all time delivered (Jude 3). But we must contend honestly, sincerely, and in reality; not with shame, hypocrisy, and levity.

To protect the vital heart and soul of the Christian with the breastplate of righteousness, we must live a righteous life. Having been made righteous through the forgiveness of our sins in the power of Christ's blood, we must through God's grace maintain the life of moral rectitude. One that is right in principle and practice is all that will protect our spirits from Satan's fiery darts.

We must have firm footing if we are to stand. The sandal was bound to the soldier's feet by thongs, and the soles were thickly studded with nails. Battle was hand-to-hand. If the foot slipped, the battle was lost.

Preparedness must be ours in the Gospel of peace. We are soldiers of peace, the Lord's peacemakers. This can be possible only with the Gospel of peace. The peace of justification (Romans 5:1) must be ours, and a maintenance of the peace that passes all understanding which accompanies it (Philippians 4:7) will give us the firm foundation needed to dispense the peace made possible by the blood of the Lord's cross.

In addition to the equipment we have already mentioned, a Christian must possess the shield of faith. Here is the victory that overcomes the world. Faith is built upon the Word of God. (So the Word of God serves both to parry the thrusts of the enemy and to make the offensive attack.)

We must also take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We must know how to handle aright this sharp two-edged instrument of the Spirit. It is the power and wisdom of God as it searches the innermost recesses of man's being. With our heads protected by the helmet of our salvation we can go forth with confidence and joy in the struggle against intellectual surrender, rationalistic doubt, and moral decadence. With constant prayer and unremitting alertness, we shall overcome. ✞

Suit up, solider! The battle is on!

Perry N. Hall is a gospel preacher living in Tyler, Texas, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Ephesians 4:1-6

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, a prisoner in Rome and facing death because of his faith, makes this impassioned plea for unity among believers.

Knowing that most of the problems among humans stem from wrong attitudes, he pleads for humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance founded on love, and commitment to the pattern set by the Holy Spirit.

The beauty of the **unity** for which Paul was pleading is its simplicity and Truth. How can there be division among followers of Christ if their lives and their beliefs are built solidly on Truth? What is the Truth? That there actually is only **one body** (or family or church) — every human born spiritually to God is added by Him to that one body of unified believers; that there is only one **Holy Spirit,** given at baptism to every new-born child of God, which makes us His possession; that we have the **one hope** of our Lord returning to take us to that spiritual home; that, regardless of the claims made by imposters, there is only **one Lord** and Savior, Christ Jesus who died for our salvation; that there is **one faith,** one body of truth in which we can believe; that there is **one baptism,** a burial in water for the remission of sins, the new birth into the church of Christ; that there is **one God** Who is our spiritual Father, and Who is above all, Who is everywhere present, and Who is in each of His children through the indwelling of His Spirit.

How Can I Stay On the Right Track?

Ken Tyler

I am trying to grow as a Christian. What are important things for me to do to stay on the right track?

1. **Christians practice the "golden rule".** "*Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets*" (Matthew 7:12).

2. **Christians put the Lord and His kingdom (the church) first.** "*But seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33).

3. **Study your Bible each day.** "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2).

4. **Christians attend every service possible.** "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the day approaching*" (Hebrews 10:25).

5. **Christians pray regularly.** "*Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17,18).

6. **Christians are concerned about their influence.** "*That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world*" (Philippians 2:15).

7. **Christians are concerned about the souls of others and do what they can to get the Gospel to them.** "*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matthew 16:26).

If you will pay close attention to these seven crucial areas, you will grow as a Christian. ✝

Ken Tyler preaches for the church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, USA.

Can a Homosexual Be a Christian?

Jimmy Jividen

There has been a lot of discussion in religious groups about whether or not a homosexual can be a priest or pastor. A more basic question is, "Can a homosexual be a Christian?" The Bible says, "*Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor* ***homosexuals*** *shall inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Corinthians 6: 9,10).

Language cannot be plainer. These words cannot be qualified by saying that the Bible condemns homosexual immorality because it was a *cultural taboo* then, but it is now accepted in our culture. There was probably a greater ratio of homosexuals in the ancient Greek and Roman world than in the modern world. The Scriputres went cross-grained to the culture then as well as now. The difference is that first century Christians did not try to whitewash the sin of homosexual immorality.

To condemn such immorality is not to nullify grace. God's judgment is against *all* immorality — including homosexual immorality. The most loving thing one can do is to tell the soul enslaved by sin and damned to hell about this judgment. Only by such confrontation can a sinner be motivated to repentance.

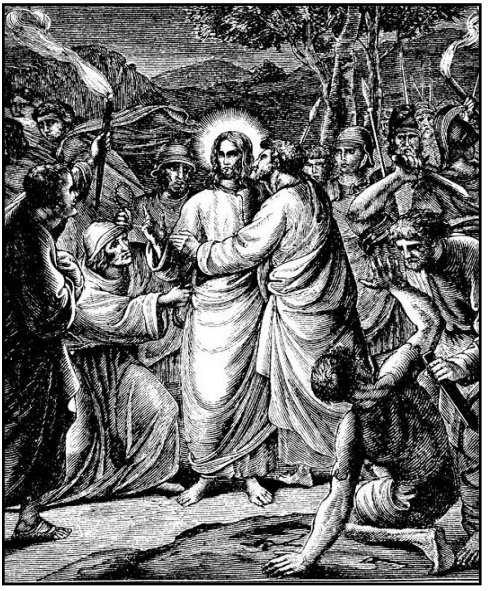
Immediately after condemning such immorality, Paul makes a powerful declaration. He says, "*Such were some of you*" (1 Corinthians 6:11). This statement reveals both the magnitude of grace and the demands of repentance. Those who had been condemned as homosexuals were "washed," "sanctified," and "justified." The grace of God is sufficient to cover all sin. Homosexuals can become Christians.

The passage also shows that they no longer practiced homosexual immorality. Paul's affirmation, *"Such were some of you,"* shows they were no longer living that lifestyle. The demands of repentance meant they quit practicing homosexual immorality. A homosexual, if he repents and obeys the Lord, can become a Christian. ✝

Jimmy Jividen is a writer and preacher in Abilene, Texas, USA.

Judas' Mistake

Bill Dillon



Only the dead and the unborn make no mistakes. Some mistakes are minor and can be easily fixed. Others are major and carry consequences that may last for a lifetime — or an eternity.

The worst mistake any man can make is to reject Christ. Judas Iscariot committed this error and found himself condemned.

Judas' Beginning

Judas started out well. He was a close associate of the Lord, even being the treasurer for the band of apostles. He was chosen by Christ; he was given numerous opportunities; he witnessed some of the most notable and significant events in the history of the Gospel, but Judas allowed the Devil to enter into him, and he went out into the darkness of night to betray the Son of God (John 13:26-30).

Judas' Character

John 12 tells us something of the character of Judas. Judas "*was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it*" (John 12:6 NKJV). Nothing is said in Scripture about any noble motive Judas may have had. The only excuse for Judas was that he was covetous and greedy, and this was a poor excuse at that.

Paul wrote that "*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" (1 Timothy 6:10). The desire for ill-gotten gain preyed upon his mind, and Judas betrayed the best friend mankind ever had. ✝

Bill Dillon is the editor of *Gospel Gleaner* and preaches for the Lord's church in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas, USA.

GIDEON — UNLIKELY HERO

Betty Tucker

Bible students remember how the children of Israel wavered between following Jehovah God and going off after other gods. The last verse of Judges 5 tells us that "*... the land had rest forty years.*"

That was long enough for them to settle down to indifference, and to once again turn to the evil practices of the Canaanites. Judges 6:1 repeats the old story: *"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Midianites."*

This roving band swept down upon Israel at the time of harvest. They took what they wanted, leaving "*no sustenance for Israel ...*" (verse 4). The Israelites holed up in caves in the mountains to wait until the invaders should leave. Israel had sinned, and God was no longer with them, so they were weak and were easy prey to their warring neighbors .

At last, the Israelites cried to the Lord for relief (Judges 6:7). He sent an unnamed prophet who reminded them that God had delivered them from Egypt, but they had not obeyed His voice (6:10).

Then, the Lord began to prepare a man to deliver His people. His name was Gideon. An angel found him threshing wheat in a winepress, where he hoped the Midianites would not find his crop. The angel's first words to Gideon were, "*The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour*" (6:12).

Then Gideon was told that God wanted him to deliver Israel from the Midianites! He protested that his family was poor, and that he was the least in his family (verse 15). He was humble and felt ill-equipped for such an important assignment.

However, the Lord was insistent, and further instructed him to destroy the altar of Baal, to cut down the grove beside it, and to replace it with an altar to God. That night, Gideon took ten of his men and did as God demanded.

Working feverishly, they destroyed the altar to Baal, cut down the grove, and erected an altar to Jehovah God in its place. The reason for Gideon's decision to do this task under cover of night was that he realized that should he attempt his assignment during the day, he would be forced to stop.

This feat accomplished, Gideon felt a new sense of self-worth. In addition, he was perceived in a different light by the people; he went from being a "nobody" to being a "somebody".

Still, our unlikely hero asked for a sign from God that He was truly with him. He placed a fleece on the ground and asked the Lord to make it wet the following night, leaving the ground dry. God graciously did this, and Gideon wrung a bowl full of water from the fleece (verse 38).

Even this was not enough to make the young man sure of the Lord's assistance. He asked God to make the ground all around the fleece wet, while leaving the fleece dry. It was done as Gideon requested, and so he felt assured that God would indeed be with him.

Judges 7 tells the amazing story of Gideon's army, and how God chose to reduce the number, lest the people think they had saved themselves. God instructed Gideon to tell the men that all who were afraid should return to their homes.

Of the 32,000 troops, 22,000 went back home, leaving only 10,000! Still, God demanded another test, telling Gideon to have the men go down to the water to drink. Those who lapped like a dog, taking the water up into their hands, would remain. Those who bowed down on their knees to drink were rejected, reducing the army to 300!

Gideon's battle plan was not like you read in military books. He gave to each man a pitcher, a lamp within the pitcher, and a trumpet. He divided them into three units, so that they would surround the large encampment of Midianites.

At Gideon's command, all blew on their trumpets, broke their pitchers, held their lamps high and shouted, "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon*" (7:20). The surprised Midianites perceived that they were compassed about, and they fled. Gideon's small army pursued them, and the battle was won.

Gideon was an humble servant of the Lord, but when called upon to lead a small band of men against a huge army, he served well. He knew that the Lord was with him, and this made the difference. Our unlikely hero is mentioned in God's "Hall of Fame" in Hebrews 11:32. ✞

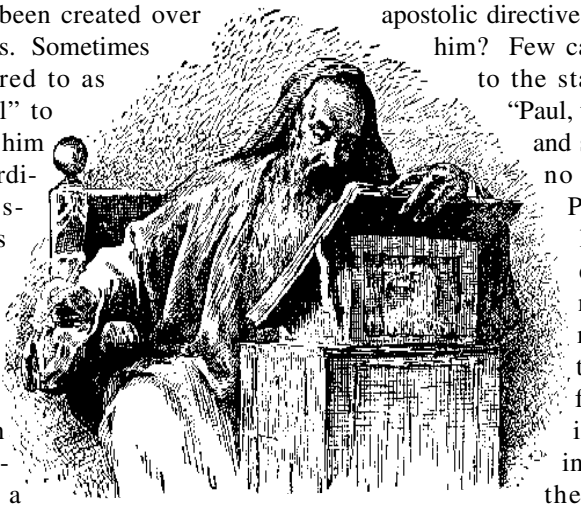
Betty Tucker is a Christian writer living in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Paul, the Myth, versus the Real Paul

Kevin L. Moore

Paul gives his readers a very lofty admonition: "*Imitate me*" (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1). The problem is, we tend to have such a distorted view of Paul that this seems to be an extremely difficult, if not impossible, thing to do.

One of the reasons this is such a challenge is because "Paul, the myth" has been created over the centuries. Sometimes he is referred to as "Saint Paul" to distinguish him from the ordinary Christian. He is commonly viewed as an inaccessible authority figure, high up on a pedestal with a halo encircling his head.



We hear of "Pauline theology", as though he were a lone maverick who developed his own brand of Christianity, distinct from that of the Jerusalem apostles. He is often regarded as a fearless missionary who boldly marched into unknown territories, bravely confronting religious error and conquering men's souls without the slightest apprehension.

With such an inflated view of Paul, how can any of us mere mortals ever hope to comply with the apostolic directive to imitate him? Few can live up to the standard of "Paul, the myth", and since I am no "Saint Paul", I have an excuse for not doing more for the Lord, for not being more involved in the church, and for not being more faithful in my Christian walk.

However, to be fair to Paul, to give more credit to God (who was the real reason for the apostle's success), and to take away some of our

excuses, we need to have a more realistic view of Paul. The purpose of this article is not to take anything away from the apostle that is his due, but simply to dispel some of the Pauline myths.

Paul, the "Theological Genius", Is a Myth

Is it legitimate to speak of "Pauline theology" as though Paul developed his own doctrine and his own brand of Christianity? What does Paul himself say? "*But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 1:11,12). The Gospel which Paul preached was something that he himself had "received" (1 Corinthians 15:1-3), and the things he wrote were ultimately "*the commandments of the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Whether or not Paul was highly intelligent, talented, or creative, no one really knows. What we do know is that everything he believed, taught, and stood for did not come from himself. It all came from a much higher source. Rather than promoting anything about himself, he hid behind the message of a crucified and risen Savior. How, then, do I imitate Paul in this regard? "*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God...*" (1 Peter 4:11).

Paul, the "Fearless Warrior", Is a Myth

Is it realistic to think of Paul as a man without inhibitions, apprehensions, or fears? If so, it makes it much more difficult for most of us to imitate him. But is that what the apostle was really like? While Paul obeyed the missionary call, it was anything but easy for him. He later wrote, "*... when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were* ***fears***" (2 Corinthians 7:5, emphasis added).

From Macedonia Paul's team moved to Achaia, where the Lord reassured him, "*Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you ...*" (Acts 18:9-10). Paul later admitted to the Corinthians, "*I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling*" (1 Corinthians 2:3). If that does not destroy the "Pauline myth", I don't know what will!

Based solely on the information available to us, there does not appear to have been anything all that remarkable about Paul. Both his bodily presence and his speech were considered unimpressive (2 Corinthians 10:10). A second-century description of him portrays him as a man of small stature, with a bald head, hooked nose, and crooked legs (Acts of Paul and Thecla).

Considering the extreme maltreatment he endured through the years (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28), it is not surprising that his body bore visible scars (Galatians 6:17). On top of all that, what he describes as his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) was probably some physical malady that he struggled with for the rest of his life.

If Paul were such a pitiable and unimpressive specimen of humanity, how does one explain his phenomenal success as a missionary? First and foremost, credit must be given to the mighty working of God (1 Corinthians 2:4,5; 15:10). Secondly, one cannot discount the invaluable assistance of Paul's co-workers (Acts 20:4, etc.) But as far as Paul himself is concerned, what made the difference in his life was a convicted heart and the burden he carried for a lost world (1 Corinthians 9:16). No matter how inadequate, untalented, or fearful you might feel, if your heart is convicted by the message of Christ, you will be compelled to step out in faith and allow God to accomplish great things despite your weaknesses.

Paul, the "Individualist", Is a Myth

The "lone maverick," the "inaccessible authority figure," and the "saint on a pedestal" are not the images of Paul we get from the New Testament. Of the thirteen letters bearing Paul's name, only five begin with his name alone (each for a special reason). However, Paul's normal practice was to include references to co-senders: "Sosthenes" (1 Corinthians), "Timothy" (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon), "all the brothers with me" (Galatians), "Silvanus and Timothy" (1 and 2 Thessalonians). In addition, there are numerous co-workers mentioned in the body of Paul's letters as well as those who send greetings at the end. The apostle was anything but a solo worker for the Lord. Of course, the chief partner in Paul's lifelong ministry was the Lord Himself (cf. Acts 14:27; 15:4, 21:19; 1 Corinthians 3:6,7).

Paul "the theological genius", "the fearless warrior", and "the individualist" are myths that have no basis in Scripture. The apostle did not give an impossible directive when he said, *"Imitate me"*. To truly imitate Paul, as he imitated Christ, we must: (1) hide behind the message of a crucified and risen Savior; (2) step out in faith, confront our fears, and do what the Lord has commissioned us to do; and (3) understand that we are called upon to work within a community, in partnership with one another, and ultimately with God. ✞

Kevin L. Moore teaches Bible and missions at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

How do you measure up?

Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a smooth path,
because of my enemies.

Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.

I would have lost heart,
unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.

Wait on the LORD;
Be of good courage,
And He shall
strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the LORD!

(Psalm 27:11-14)

Gospel Gazette Online

Louis Rushmore, Editor

gospelgazette.com

In late 1998, *Gospel Gazette Online* (GGO) was born of an idea and a desire to extend one's usefulness beyond the local setting, coupled with the (financial) go-ahead by my wife. From time to time in the past and in various locations around the country, *Gospel Gazette* appeared in printed form. First, *Gospel Gazette* was a quarterly, tabloid-size, newsprint magazine, which was distributed through paid insertion in a city newspaper. Years later, *Gospel Gazette* appeared again as a paperback-size booklet which was mailed to community households.

Gospel Gazette Online made its debut in January 1999 as a monthly, religious Internet journal. Today, it is a 20-page, monthly Gospel magazine read by people all over the world (from all seven continents, including Antarctica). Obviously, GGO via the Internet is available even in some places in the world to which one cannot easily go physically with the Gospel of Christ (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Antarctica). Each issue sports articles by Christian men and women on a variety of biblical subjects as well as several festures (an on-screen, interactive crossword puzzle; youth articles; one or more articles by women especially for women; questions and answers; and an audio message). In addition, thousands of articles from past issues appear in the archives and may be selected with the help of the site search engine.

Dozens of brothers and sisters in Christ have lent their studious pens through the pages of GGO to an international readership of both Christians and non-Christians. By design, short, teaching articles populate *Gospel Gazette Online*. Thereby, GGO purposes to edify both Christians and non-Chrisitians with Bible-based lessons. Response from readers reveals a wide array of religious backgrounds, including members of the church of Christ,

denominational bodies and world religions. Most fan mail is positive and encouraging, though some of it ranges from critical to hostile, bordering on hate mail. A couple of the more heartening posts include correspondence about baptisms in Saudi Arabia and the request from a Muslim in Pakistan that I pray for his sick wife. Subsequently, after initial contact through the pages of GGO, and later studying with Christians in his country, he put Jesus Christ on in baptism.

Any good that *Gospel Gazette Online* has done or continues to do is owing largely to the many Christian writers whose articles comprise each issue. Most of my immediate family has had or continues to have a significant role in any successes that may be attributed to GGO. Beyond that, if GGO is a useful tool today, it is also because of a number of persons in the Christian family of God. Periodically, the recipient of lauds from around the globe, if there is anything praiseworthy, let the glory be to God.

Following are selected statements of commendation received at *Gospel Gazette Online* over the years.

❁We are members of the Church of Christ (non-instrumental) here in [city withheld by editors], **Saudi Arabia**. There are 10 souls baptized INTO Christ (in the Red Sea), aside from 5 others from the Philippines. We are secretly meeting in my flat every first day of the week for the service, and every Friday (Saudi holiday) for the Bible class. I am very happy to have come across of The Gospel Gazette website. Please enter me as your subscriber. More blessings and years for the staff of The Gospel Gazette! Brotherly, [name withheld by editors]

❁I am [name withheld by editors], a Filipino, an overseas contract worker here in [city withheld by editors] **Saudi Arabia**. ... Rest assured that your efforts are included in my prayers and will share GGO with our

Gospel Gazette Now a Part of World Evangelism

Upon Bonnie & Louis Rushmore agreeing in June 2007 to join the World Evangelism Team and their subsequent move in October 2007 to Winona, MS, *Gospel Gazette Online* became simply one more facet of World Evangelism's efforts to proclaim the Gospel to the world through mass media. This Internet venue for evangelism is companion to TV, radio and mass literature distribution already employed by World Evangelism.

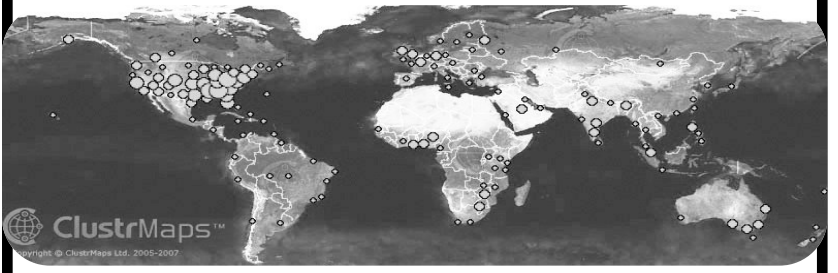
brethren in the Philippines. In God's guidance, your efforts will not go unfruitful where I am. May God's grace be with you and in the church where you serve.

❁Dear Brother Rushmore, I am so grateful to God, like the rest, for your exhaustive information on the Word of God. The reason why your works stand out from the rest is because of your continual and persistent references to the Bible in their explanations. This shows how much you revered and how well you handled God's Word, using the Bible, which is the inspiration of God, as the only authority, making sure there is no deviation from His Word. I would be downloading some articles for group discussions. Thank you! Li, Church of Christ, **Singapore**

❁Dear Brother in Christ, Greetings to you. I am E. Jayaraj, working as a Gospel preacher in Miryalguda, Nalgonda District, A P, **India**. Thank you for your great

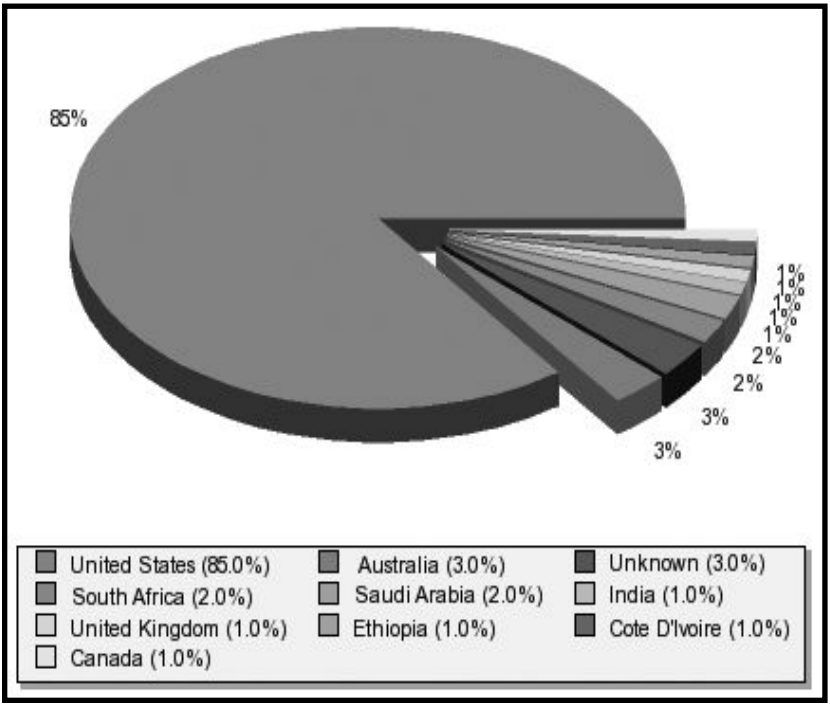
Look Who's Looking at Gospel Gazette Online

Two tools atop the *Gospel Gazette Online* Homepage (www.gospelgazette.com) indicate its widespread, worldwide usage. One is a geographical depiction of the world sporting red dots everywhere on planet



earth that GGO has been accessed in recent years. The other tool, upon following its links, indicates from what countries and the percentage of usage by country of GGO at any given time; this information appears graphically in a colored pie chart as well as statistically. While we are delighted at the widespread, geographical use of GGO, we earnestly desire a dramatic increase in the number of users.

Gospel Gazette Online deserves wide publicity and subsequent use because of the valuable contribution it can make to the mass media proclamation of the Gospel. GGO has a proven tract record, and we only want to make it more effective for the cause of Christ.



work on Internet. Your article are abide with God's word. I appreciate your efforts and hard work for the spreading of His kingdom. Keep up good work. Thanking you ... Yours in His work, E. Jayaraj, Miryalguda church of Christ, India

❁Dear beloved brother, Greetings in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. My name is SAGANTY LAZARUS, working as a Preacher in Surya Nagar Colony Church of Christ, Old-alwal, sec-bad, A.P., **INDIA**. ... I have seen some details of your magazine Gospel Gazette on INTERNET and studied some of the articles and I really amazed to see how strictly your articles abide with the Truth of the Word and it encouraged me a lot to send this mail to you. Some of your articles are wonderful and topics are scriptural. I am really thankful to God for your hard work in Gospel.

❁We sincerely appreciate your labors in upholding the truth, and getting it to many others. It has eternal consequence. It is our prayer

that God will grant you much success in your efforts. I have been an evangelist for many years and heralding the N.T church truth in the populous nation of 900 million Hindus. There is so much opposition from various denominations and persecution from Hindus, yet we rejoice to proclaim the gospel and especially the truth concerning the N.T. church. I am very much interested to translate some of your tracts into our TELUGU language which is very essential to us for the gospel here with the authority of word of God to face the denominations here ... We continue to pray for you and your labors, we need your prayers and encouragement more and more. In His service, NATY SAINT GOOTAM, **India**

❁Dear brother Louis Rushmore: I appreciated your good work in the Gospel Gazette. It is wonderful to view the articles so much and they are very useful to me as an evangelist. Thank you and I encourage you to keep up. ... In Christ Jesus our Lord. [name withheld by editors] **Nepal**

❁Thanks for your all lectures I have got. They are good one. Sometimes I use some of it for teaching the ladies and men in the Bible class in **Cambodia**. And Hello to all. God bless you! Love In Christ Jesus, [name withheld by editors] Cambodia

❁Hi, I'm Lino Luongo from Naples [**Italy**] Church of Christ. Thanks for your great job of the "Gospel Gazette". I would like to be reminded when the new issue is ready. Thank you again, and God bless you. In Christ, Lino

❁God Bless you, I'm a Christian from **Panama**, I am 37 years old, I am working with preacher, I like study with your web links, Im studies Englis too. Salutations And blees you all. Sumaykira Mootoo

❁I need a subscription to Gospel Gazette Online. My name is Hernando Motta Rocha, I am preacher in Church of Christ in Ambato, **Ecuador**, but I collaborate in preaching others congregation in Quito, Santodomingo de los Colorados and Portoviejo. Please send me, a link site web that shower sermons and Bible tracts. Excuse my English.

❁Thank you for the online gazette, although we are here in a third world country, we can access and contact you and ask you some questions. My name is Greg Q. Gallardo, Jr., Gospel preacher of Alabang Church of Christ in the **Philippines** ... In Christ, Greg Gallardo, Jr.

❁I am interested to received the Gospel Gazette Online. Thank you. David T. Quidem, Pangasinan, **Philippines**

❁Hello Brethren, I am Bro. Kingsley Odogwu, a Student Preacher of South West School Of Evangelism, Oyo State, **Nigeria**, West Africa. I visited your Website and developed interest on the wonderful work you People are doing for the sake of propagating this Gospel to the whole World. So, I am saying, may the Almighty God continue to see you through in all that you are doing over there. Moreover, I wish to subscribe to your Monthly. Yours In The Service, Bro. Kingsley Odogwu

❁Dear in Christ I inform you that I am very happy to learned good work you are doing in the Lord ... So may God bless the good work you all doing. ... Yours sincerely . Pr. Rose m Kego **Kenya**

❁Thanks Louis for such an informative web site. May God bless your efforts. I have included your links on my web page. I am a missionary to **Tanzania**, East Africa. Charles Creel

❁Nice page for Christian who need good info about Bible study. I just would like to receive info on sermon outline site that would help a lot, I am a new preacher for the church of Christ in Taguatinga **Brazil.** ... Joao Fonseca

❁Dear Brethren: The Old Paths page listed the Gospel Gazette among its list of publications, so we took a look at it. Congratulations on its set-up .... May the Lord bless your efforts to build up Christ's church. After Him, Randal Matheny, Sao Jose dos Campos, **Brazil**

❁Dear Louis, Greetings from South America! I found your website via Google looking for an interpretation of the parable of the net. Of all the pages, yours was most helpful — THANKS very much! Tony Somervell, **Paraguay**

❁I want to your gazette kwasi Boateng, **Australia**

❁Could make good use of your web page 'down-under'. Would you like more in N.Z. to subscribe? Brotherly, Rod Kyle, **New Zealand**

❁Hello Louis. My name is David and I am a member of the church in Lethbridge, Alberta, **Canada**. I would like to tell you that I really appreciate the work that you are doing online with this website. I have been using your site for a couple of years now and it has been very handy getting information when I do have a conversation with Non-Christians as well as my own personal study. ... I will keep on referring people to your site and God bless the work you are doing. In Christ, David Friesen

❁... keep up your good work. Rocky Bemis, member of North Valley Baptist Church in Redding, California

❁Thank you for your www site. I will be back ASAP. I did refer you to the webmaster of . . . for consideration of a link site. I do not know if he has had time to get to you, but I feel he will. As you must have noticed, if you went to the site for COMBE, I am a Baptist. Chester

❁This is the best site I've seen so far, it's easy to use and the articles are very informative — Keep up the good work, and please notify me of updates. Bill Hayes.

❁I happened to run across your publication on the internet and would like to receive it. I have been preaching the gospel for almost 60 years, and was impressed with what I saw in the issue I saw. Thanks for making this available. Jim Lundy

❁I am truly blessed and challenged by the messages I receive. God bless you and may HE continue to use you to reach many. Mumbi Muriuki

❁I continue to appreciate the Gospel Gazette web site. It is a top quality production in every way. May the Lord abundantly bless you and Bonnie in this upcoming year. Brotherly, Wayne Jackson

❁. . Gospel Gazette Online. . . I find it informative and enjoyable. Keep up the great work. Bubba

❁Hi from the "Great Land" — Alaska! I really appreciate the material and resources you provide. I accidentally ran across the site, but I will pass the word. Thanks again! Brotherly, Ken Smith

❁What A BLESSING to find http://www.gospelgazette.com today! I have spent the last hour and a half browsing, reading articles, and scanning various "links." WHAT A WEALTH OF MATERIAL! I quickly saved this site in my "Favorites" folder. I will share the site with others. Steve Kirby

❁I was really surprised to find so much info on your website. Thanks for making this available to people like me. I don't know what we would do if not for folks like yall who are devoted to helping people understand the true teachings of the Holy Word. I have always enjoyed your teaching in the lectureship books that I have read that includes you. I did not know until this week that you had a website. I have been missing out on a lot. I went to my search engine and pull up your site and thanks to the good Lord for all your efforts. I hope you don't mind if I copy some of those articles cause I like to use them when trying to make a point. Keep up the good work and may God bless you and all that have a part in your work. Al Lawson

❁I have encountered your site for the first time today and must tell you I am impressed both by the

quality of site presentation and the quality and substance of the material that I have read. ... May God bless you all of those who work with you in your effort to "rightly divide the Word of Truth." Paul Dennis

❁Please add my e-mail to your list of subscribers to GGO. A dear friend in Alabama — Nancy Levingston at the Double Springs church of Christ — introduced me to your site. As she told me, it is fabulous. God bless you in your continued work and outreach with your site. I plan to forward your site to other Christians both where I live and away. Sincerely, Paula West

❁Enjoyed your site, copied some material, seems interesting. looked at the plan of salvation and found it to be what was preached at Pentecost. Thanks. Douglas Soileau

❁Dear brother Rushmore, I visit your website frequently and am ever amazed at the accumulation of excellent articles that you have archived. I thank God for your efforts and I thank you for previously giving me permission to reprint some of your items in my bi-weekly ezine. Sometimes I fear that I have become too confident in your site. If I get a question on my mind, I am inclined to come to this site to resolve it. ... Thanks again for such a wonderful site for the brotherhood and God bless your work. Joel Hendon

❁I just wanted to let you know, I use you material from the monthly newsletters for my adult Sunday school class. Many of the articles add to, and greatly help when I'm looking for material. I just want to say, thanks, and I look forward each month for the new letters. You have a great staff, and I want to pat all of you on the back. God bless you for your work, for him, here in his kingdom here on earth. Till he returns, in Christian love. Bill Suffel

❁Mr. Rushmore, I just wanted to thank you for the great web site. I look forward to it each month. It is good to see modern technology being used to glorify God. May God grant unto you the strength, knowledge and wisdom to continue this tremendous work. Thank you. In Christian fellowship, Richard Parsons

❁Hello brother Louis, I have been reading the various articles in the May issue of the Gospel Gazette. I am impressed with the quality of the various articles. ... May God continue to bless your labors of love. In Christian love, Raymond Elliott

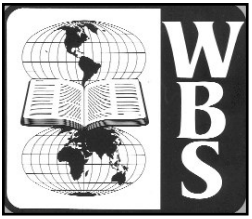
---

We are thankful for the addition of this wonderful tool, enabling more people worldwide to know God's truth.

— The World Evangelism Team

THERE IS NO TIME FOR APATHY IN CHURCHES OF CHRIST!

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONSIDER THESE GOOD WORKS; to subscribe, support, publicize, benefit from, and take advantage of what our brethren are doing to spread the message of Christ.



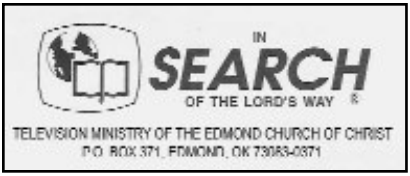
Are you looking **for an opportunity to be a branch, bearing fruit to God?** ***World Bible School teachers*** **have that opportunity. Why not call the WBS office (512-345-8190) or write to wbsinfo@wbschool.org for full information. Make your time count for souls!**

GOSPEL BROADCASTING NETWORK

Support the satellite cable network being developed by churches of Christ for the preaching of the Gospel throughout the USA and ultimately to the world. Send your contribution to GBN, P. O. Box 23604, Chattanooga, TN 37422. Log on to WWW.GBNTV.ORG

"Current Issues from a Distinctly Christian Point of View" **— the theme of "Think" magazine. Phone: 866-313-6474; email: mail@focuspress.org; Web site: www.focuspress.org. Brad Harrub, Jim Palmer and Dewayne Bryant offer faith-building seminars.**

For pennies per household you can spread the Gospel in your city through this doctrinally-sound bi-monthly paper. It wil even be personalized with the local church's address and news. Phone:256-435-9356; email: info@jvillecoc.org; Web site: www.HousetoHouse.com



Mack Lyon's **SEARCH TV** programs are on **76 broadcast TV stations, 41 broadcast radio stations, 192 cable systems, and 5 satellite systems (Dish, GBN, American Life, DirecTV, and INSP).** Benefit from the lessons, support the preaching of the Gospel. **Phone: 800-321-8633; email: search@searchtv.org; Web site: www.searchtv.org.**

The oldest magazine in the brotherhood, Editor Neil Anderson has kept The Gospel Advocate true to the Biblical message, with attention to current issues and needs in the church. You will benefit greatly from its monthly infusion of truth. Phone: 800-251-8446; Web site:www.gospeladvocate.com

Restoration Radio Network International, led by Roy Beasley, uses short-wave radio to reach people in English, French, Philippine dialects, Spanish and Arabic, with a well-organized **"Apollos Follow-Up Program"**. **Phone: 615 833-4771; Web site:www.rrni.org.** Help reach the masses through radio.

Gospel Gazette Online is a 20-page, monthly Gospel magazine on the Internet, begun by Louis and Bonnie Rushmore in 1999. Thousands of articles, written by faithful Christians, are archived and selectable through the onsite search engine. GGO is free to users throughout the world, and it is visited regularly even in parts of the world that remain virtually inaccessible to missionaries. **(www.gospelgazette.com)**

Apologetics Press has been the voice in churches of Christ for many years, speaking clearly, loudly, and Biblically on subjects pertaining to **Creation/Evolution, the Godhead, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and many other vital questions of faith.** Dave Miller has produced excellent DVDs on **The Silencing of God in America** and **The Quran. Phone: 800-234-8558; Web site: www.ApologeticsPress.org.**

What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

For just a moment, put yourself in a village in Africa, or even in a large city in India, or in the jungles of South America. You are an immortal soul, living in a perishing body. How will you knowledgeably prepare for the judgment and eternity that awaits us all?

✤ Does the church of Christ exist in your community, so that you can hear the Gospel preached? For most people in the world, the answer is "No".

✤ Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is "No".

✤ If you have found the Truth and are a Christian, is there a bookstore from which you can order additional study materials? For most people in the world, the answer is "No".

So you are born into an unbelieving home, you live according to the religion of your parents, you grow old, and you die, thrust into eternity to meet the God you never knew. What unspeakable tragedy! The scenario is LIFE for the majority of the people of the world.

Through mass media — radio programs, TV, and literature — we are doing all we can to bring God's Word to people who have so little hope. Half of each issue of ***The Voice of Truth International*** is sent free of charge to churches and individuals who have few or no other study materials, to aid in their spiritual growth. We ask brethren to help us with $35 a month, to cover the $8,000 postage bill incurred with every issue. Will you please have mercy on these souls and help us share the saving Gospel with them?

To help with this particular need, please send your checks to

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
Box 72, Winona, MS 38967

To speed up your announcement that you want to help,
call us at 662-283-1192 or send your E-Mail to
Choate@WorldEvangelism.org
Website: WorldEvangelism.org

Dear Brethren:

❒ I want to subscribe to the quarterly magazine, **The Voice of Truth International.** Enclosed is my check for $12.00 for four issues, or $20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume ____. ***My address is given below.***

❒ I want to order the complete set of volumes in print (52 issues) for the reduced price of *$2.00 per copy.* ***My address is given below.***

❒ Please send special prices for WBS teachers and their students.

❒ I want to MAKE A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION of **The Voice of Truth International.** Enclosed is my check for $12.00 for four issues, or $20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume ____. ***The address is given below.***

❒ I want to send $25.00 per month (or a multiple), for a box of 35 copies (or multiples) of each issue of the magazine as they are printed. Churches are also urged to use boxes in this way. Or you may send one payment of $300.00 per year for four issues. This will help us to send more cpoies to the mission fields.

❒ We want to give $_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.

❒ As a congregation we want to help print and circulate 100,000 copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

(Return this form in an envelope, along with your check, to the following address, stating your wishes.)

The Voice of Truth International
Box 11218
Springfield, MO 65808
Att. Byron Nichols

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ZIP _____

Answers to Puzzles

Verse Search (from page 23)

1. Abraham.
2. Yes.
3. Genesis 15:6.
4. "Credited" is an accounting term. God looked upon Abraham as being righteous, even though he was not perfect based upon his own works.
5. Wages is something you earn, and a gift is something given to you. In this case salvation is something given to us by God, not something we earn.
6. Our faith in Christ.
7. No. Our faith must move us to be obedient.
8. That He justifies those who believe on Him, not those who would try to earn their salvation through works.
9. David.
10. Psalm 32:1,2.
11. That they had been forgiven by God's gracious mercy.
12. His obedient children.
13. That neither faith nor works excludes the other; obedient faith brings us into God's grace.

Bible Find

(from page 51)

For further information, please contact:

"the churches of Christ salute you ..." (Romans 16:16)

Millions of souls around the world today earnestly endeavor to practice pure, unadulterated New Testament Christianity. One might say that they practice non-denominational or pre-denominational Christianity! Strictly speaking, they are neither Catholics nor Protestants! These Christians are just Christians!

Collectively, they have been baptized by one Spirit into one spiritual body or church. Several descriptive terms for that one church appear in the pages of the New Testament: "church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2), "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16), "house of God" (1 Timothy 3:15)' "the church" or "kingdom" (Matthew 16:18,19; Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13), etc.

These millions of souls worship God today exactly the way Christians in the first century worshipped God. Therefore, their worship each Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10) consists of preaching the Word of God and partaking of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), freewill giving according to one's purpose and prosperity (2 Corinthians 9:7), singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), and prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15).

Since these Christians rely solely on the New Testament for their authority in religion, they recognize local congregational organization with biblically qualified elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) to lead them (Acts 14:23; 20:28). They also appoint biblically qualified deacons to serve them (1 Timothy 3:8-13), ministers to proclaim the Word of God (Romans 10:13-15; 2 Timothy 4:1), and train teachers to edify them (Hebrews 5:11-14).

Likewise, these Christians look to the New Testament for instruction in Christian living (Romans 12:1,2) and Christian service (Mark 16:15,16; Titus 3:1). The autonomous congregations fellowship each other, based on their mutual respect for and abiding in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11; 1 John 1:3). Individually, they refer to themselves as Christians (Acts 11:26) and collectively as "churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). We invite you to visit the assembly of the church of Christ in your community, and to study God's word and obey it.