

God's Pattern For Christian Living

Bobby Liddell, Editor

1993 Bellview Lectures

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Eighteenth Annual
Bellview Lectures

Pensacola, Florida

May 8-12, 1993

GOD'S PATTERN FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

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DEDICATION



Fred and Rheba Stancliff

In grateful appreciation for the faith, work and fellowship of our brother and sister in Christ, we dedicate this book, containing the lectures delivered in the Eighteenth Annual Bellview Lectures, May 8-12, 1993, Pensacola, Florida, to *Fred and Rheba Stancliff*.

Fred, from Jackson, Michigan, and Rheba, from Eloise, Florida, met at David Lipscomb College during the Summer of 1954, and were married on November 12 of that year. They began their married life as students at the University of Florida in Gainesville from which Fred received his Bachelors degree in Accounting and Rheba received hers in Secondary Education. Four children were born to this union: Sandra Wilkes, Robert Stancliff, Barbara Denham and Cheryl Simoneaux. Fred supported the family as a Certified Public Accountant while Rheba stayed home with the children and obtained a Masters degree in Guidance Counseling.

Over the years, they have always been active in the work of the church. Rheba has been a Bible class teacher and Fred has been a Bible

class teacher, song leader, treasurer, deacon, full-time or fill-in preacher, and elder at various times and places. They helped establish the 39th Avenue congregation in Gainesville. After moving to Tallahassee in 1962, they met with a small group trying to establish a new congregation in that area. In 1963, they moved to West Palm Beach where they worshipped with the 10th Avenue congregation. It was there, while being actively involved with the visitation and personal work program, Fred decided he wanted to preach.

He was interested in attending either the Memphis School of Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee, or the Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas. Rheba was able to find work as a teacher for Lubbock Christian College so the decision was made to move to Texas. They were there from 1969-1971.

After school, they were interested in locating in a mission area of the United States. During the Summer of 1970, they traveled through the Carolinas and into the northeastern part of the country looking at areas where they might work to establish a congregation or help strengthen a small one. In 1971, they moved to Florence, South Carolina to work with the Gregg Avenue Church of Christ for three years.

In 1974, they moved to Orlando, Florida. Fred went back to work for the state of Florida but continued to preach full-time without pay for a struggling congregation in Lockhart. Fred's work brought them to Pensacola in 1977. Rheba taught at Pensacola Junior College while working on a Masters degree in Accounting. Soon, Fred was put to work as an adult Bible class teacher and a part-time teacher for the Bellview Preacher Training School. He served as an elder for the Bellview congregation from 1979 until his moving to Singapore in 1991. In addition to being a faithful elder's wife, Rheba has been a Bible class teacher for the fifth and sixth grades and for a ladies' class which met weekly.

Always active in support of mission work, when the need arose for teachers to go to Singapore to work with Four Seas College, they were ready to go. First, they went for three months in the Fall of 1989. Then, they went back for two years (May, 1991-March, 1993). Fred taught various Bible classes, and Rheba taught English. They were able to do mission work in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand as well. While in Singapore, Fred was asked to teach several classes on the eldership and the Christian home. Rheba was asked by the ladies to teach classes about rearing children and the Christian home.

They have returned to the United States and to Bellview, but the need for people to go and take the gospel throughout the world has been

etched even deeper on their hearts. Our prayer is that they will have many more years to work for the Lord both here and abroad and that this dedication will, to some degree, show our sincere appreciation for them and their faithfulness to the Cause of Christ. (From information submitted by Sandy Wilkes).

Hairston Brantley

Paul Brantley

Bill Gallaher

Elders, Bellview Church of Christ

PREFACE

Should one live the Christian life that he may be pleasing to his Creator; thereby, knowing the abundant blessings which flow from the Father? If so, how shall one do so? Do not ones living as a Christian require some standard; i.e., some pattern that he may, and must follow? If not, how shall one know whether he is living as a Christian or not?

Christian living does not have as its basis man's suppositions, opinions and feelings. It is not delineated by differences in culture, race, language, education, wealth, physical strength, political or social power or any other such situation. Nor is its paradigm ever changing in accordance with the wisdom of men, God has, through the Word, given to man a standard which, if man will follow it, adhering strictly to it, provides man with all he needs to know to live the Christian life in its every aspect. Thus, God reveals to man how to become a Christian—follow the pattern; how to live for Christ daily—follow the pattern; how to worship God acceptably—follow the pattern; how to have right relationships—follow the pattern; and, how to face death without fear and eternity with hope—follow the pattern.

Since the completed revelation of Christ's New Testament, that ideal has not changed. The passing of time has had no effect upon the Divine model. The changes of culture; likewise, do not add to nor take from that original standard. One who desires to live the Christian life today must hear the same message those Christians in the first century heard. He must receive it with the same readiness of mind and gladness of heart as they. He must obey it from the heart; thus, purifying the soul as they did. When he so does, Christ will add him to His church, the church of Christ, as He added those in the first century (Acts 2.47). Continuing steadfastly and growing daily, he must live faithfully having his affections set on things above, not on things on this earth.

That has been God's plan since the beginning of the Christian Age. What man dares to speak for God and say we have to change that plan to meet the needs of modern man as though those needs had changed? No man, regardless of his popularity, eloquence or inflated view of his own mental prowess or "scholarship" shall deviate from, nor teach others to disregard God's pattern with impunity. Thus, we send forth this volume with the hope it shall help men to see the pattern given by God, i.e., "God's Pattern For Christian Living."

To those faithful brethren who have so willingly given of their time to provide us with the excellent manuscripts contained herein, we express our deep and sincere gratitude. We, likewise, commend them for their steadfast stand for the truth and their unflinching proclamation of it. Our prayer is that their efforts may bring forth much fruit for many years to come and that through it all God may be glorified and the kingdom built up.

*Bobby Liddell Director
March 5, 1993*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Jesus Christ—Our Perfect Example	
Roy Deaver	1
God's Word—Setting The Heart To Seek It	
Anthony D. Tarole	9
God's Word—Setting The Heart To Do It	
Carl B. Garner	21
God's Word—Setting The Heart To Teach It	
Paul Vaughn	39
God's Pattern For The Church	
David P. Brown	51
God's Pattern For The Home—Husbands	
Curtis A. Cates	63
God's Pattern For The Home—Wives	
Joe Gilmore	77
God's Pattern For The Home—Parents	
Noah A. Hackworth	85
God's Pattern For The Home—Children	
Glenn Posey	95
To Live Is Christ	
Shan Jackson	105
Choosing A Mate For Life	
Ray W. Peters	117
A Life Of Christ-like Compassion	
Eddie Whitten	125
Positives And Negatives Of Christian Living	
Ira Y. Rice, Jr.	137
Living By Faith	
Garry Barnes	147
Living In View Of Eternity	
Bobby Duncan	159
Living With Respect To Things	
Herold Bigham	173
Living With Respect To Time	
Tommy Alford	187
Living With Respect To Temptation	
Thomas W. Larkin	197

The Peace And Joy Of Christian Living	
Jackie Stearsman	211
Christians Do Good Unto All Men	
Stanley Ryan	225
Have We Forgotten Christian Hospitality?	
Gum Eoff	239
Christians Outlive The World	
Roger Jackson	249
We Count Them Happy Which Endure	
Winfred Clark	263
God’s Faithful Are Forgiven And Forgiving	
Dub McClish	271
How Does The Holy Spirit Influence Christian Living?	
H. A. (Buster) Dobbs	283
Opposing Error In Word And In Deed	
Wayne Coats	295
Growing Stronger In Christ Every Day	
Clifford Newell, Jr.	307
God’s Word—The Pattern	
Bobby Liddell	321

JESUS CHRIST— OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE

Roy Deaver



Graduate of Freed-Hardeman College, Abilene Christian University, National Christian University. Founding President of Fort Worth Christian College and Academy.

Has preached the gospel for 53 years with 35 of those years having been spent in the classroom, training men to preach the gospel. Has taught in Fort Wroth Christian College (Fort Worth, TX), Brown Trail Preacher Training School (Hurst, TX), Tennessee Bible College (Cookeville, TN), Bellview Preacher Training School (Pensacola, FL), and Southwest School of Biblical Studies (Austin, TX).

Debater and Author, Founder, Editor and Publisher of *Biblical Notes* and related publications. On advisory staff of *Firm Foundation*.

Presently devotes full-time to *Biblical Notes* work—writing and publishing in connection with the gospel—plus gospel meetings and lectureships.

INTRODUCTION

In 1 Peter 2:21, Peter explains: “For hereunto were ye called. because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps.”

The context especially involves the need for the Christian to be willing to suffer—even to suffer wrongfully; that is, one must be willing to suffer, to “take it patiently,” even “when ye do well.” Peter says, “This is acceptable to God.” Peter (the Holy Spirit) stresses that, in fact, this in the very kind of suffering which the Lord Himself endured. He “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered,” He “threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” Peter further explains that He Himself “bare our sines in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.”

Though the Lord is our perfect example in the matter of enduring unjust and undeserved suffering, the plain fact in that He is also our

perfect example in every other area of life as well. He lived to show us how to live. This is the one whose name is “Jesus.”

The angel said to Joseph, “and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins” (Mat. 1:21). “The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). But, what is inherently involved in salvation from sin?

Answer: The Lord came to save men: (1) from the *guilt* of sin; (2) from the continual *practice of* sin; and, (3) from the other tragic consequences of sin. I use the word “other” here because the “guilt” is one of the tragic consequences of sin. To make it possible for men to be free from the *guilt* of sin, the Lord shed His blood, without which there could be no remission of sins. What are the other tragic consequences of sin? Answer: Condemnation, death and hopelessness. By the pure gospel, the “law of the Spirit of life,” the Lord delivers from “condemnation” (Rom. 8:1-2). By His own resurrection from the dead, the Lord delivers from the fear and dread of death (cf., John 5:28-29). Note also Hebrews 2:14-15:

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;- and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

He delivered from “hopelessness” by giving us wonderful hope (cf., Rom. 8:24; Heb. 11:1).

But, the completeness of His sacred mission necessarily involves His delivering us from the *continual practice* of sin. Thus, first, the Lord Himself lived to show us how to live. In His life among men He taught and *exemplified* the kind of living that would be required *in His Kingdom, His Church*. Second, He has given to us His Word, His *truth*. Through men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, He has given us the miraculously inspired Word of the Living God. And, third (as I firmly believe), working in, through, by means of, in conjunction with (never separate and apart from) the divine Word there is the “indwelling of,” the “being led by” the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:14; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22).

Thus, the Lord makes it possible for human beings to be free from the “continual practice” of sin. Even faithful children of God will

become guilty of momentary acts of sin—but *they will not live lives of sin!* If we keep on walking in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ “keeps on cleansing us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Obviously, our present study relates directly and especially to the Lord’s saving us from the continual practice of sin. And, particularly, our study relates especially to His being our example. Thus, *JESUS CHRIST—OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE*. He is the perfect, the marvelous demonstration of how God wants us to live. One of the great purposes of the Lord’s life among men was that He, by His life, might show to us: (1) the kind of living which God *requires* of us; and, (2) the kind of living which is possible, in spite of the wickedness of the world—the kind of living which will take us to heaven when this life is over.

THE WORD ITSELF

All who are determined to understand, believe, teach and practice the teachings of the Word of God firmly believe and respect the Bible doctrine of inspiration. The Bible itself teaches that the original words (Hebrew words for the Old Testament and Greek words for the New Testament) were words selected by the Holy Spirit. Obviously, there is great value in studying these words. This type of study involves: (1) ascertaining precisely what the original word was and in; (2) obtaining the lexical definition of that word; (3) consideration of the use of this word in other passages; and, (4) lessons to be learned.

The usual Greek word for the concepts of example, ensample, figure, pattern, fashion is *tupos*, used sixteen times in the Greek New Testament. Paul says, “Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have an for an ensample” (Phi. 3:17). Here, “ensample” in the translation of *tupos*.

However, in 1 Peter 2:21 the word translated “example” is not *tupos*; rather, the word is *hupogrammos*. And, this is the only time that this word occurs in the Greek New Testament. Many years ago, when I first began to ponder this beautiful word I knew that it is made up of two basic ideas: first, the *hupo*, a proposition which means “under,” and, second, *grammos*, which would be related to

grapho, which means “I write.” So, etymologically, the word means: under-writing. It declares that our Lord is our “Underwriting.”

In this connection, I think of the “stencil,” and of the “plate” from which perhaps thousands of copies can be made. I think of those beautiful Palmer letters posted over the chalk board for the benefit of the child in the first grade. I know just how frightened that little six-year old boy can be when he comes to realize that the teacher is saying that, “I must learn to do *that!*”

Research revealed that the little Greek boy likewise had beautiful Greek letters posted around his “classroom.” Likewise, he had something similar to our tablets. His “tablet” was a shallow tray, filled with wax. His “pencil” was similar to our “pencils,” excepting that it had no lead. It was sharpened on one end, the writing end, and with this, he was able to make marks in the wax. The other end was flat. With this, he could rub out the marks and thus make corrections and/or start over.

As indicated above, there is a sense in which an “example” can be frightening. It is scary to the little six-year old boy or girl to realize that, “I am so far, far away from being able to *do that!*” In my study of this word, I was delighted, thrilled, to pick up the notion that the teacher often can eliminate that fright. The teacher would explain: “You do the best you can, and I will take your hand in mine, and I will help you to learn to do better.” Just so, the Lord, our perfect example, our beautiful pattern, explains to us: “You do the best you can to imitate the pattern; and I will take your hand in mine, and I will help you to learn to do better. I will be with you always!” What a beautiful word! What a wonderful thought! The Lord Himself is *our underwriting*, our perfect example.

HE IS PERFECT IN CHARACTER

The word, “character” means “the complex of mental and ethical traits marking a person.” “Character” is the combination of qualities and features that make up and distinguish one pawn or group or thing from another. I heard a little girl say: “Character? That’s what you are.”

In this connection, we have a beautiful reading in Philippians 2:5-11.

Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him. and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Thus, it is written that our Lord: (1) lived as a *servant*; (2) was characterized by *humility*; and, (3) was *obedient* to the Father's will. These qualities likewise must be found in the lives of all who are determined to "follow in his steps."

Our Lord never sought to do His own will, but, rather, the will of His Father who sent Him. In Gethsemane He prayed, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mat 26:39). He Himself said, "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

With regard to His perfect and marvelous character, we note the following; (1) Our Lord never thought a wrong thought. (2) He never spoke a wrong word. (3) He never went to a wrong place. (4) He never performed a wrong act. (5) He never made an unsound argument. (6) He never taught a wrong lesson. (7) He never made an erroneous assumption. (8) He never had the wrong attitude toward any person or any thing. (9) He never was—in any way—disobedient to the Father's will. (10) He never made a false statement. (11) He never falsely accused anybody. (12) He never sought to compromise God's truth. (13) He never failed to uphold the right and to oppose the wrong. (14) He never failed to use His opportunities to serve God by serving others. (15) He never failed to be genuinely loving and caring with regard to the souls of men. (16) The most beautiful, comprehensive, satisfactory biography ever written about Him is contained in five words "who went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

HE WAS PERFECT IN TEACHING

The Lord was always and everywhere the Master Teacher. He was the master explainer, the master respondent, the master controversialist. Socrates taught by asking questions. The Lord also asked ques-

tions, but much more than this. He had the unique ability to teach in such a way as to cause the student to ask the questions. I never call the Lord the “greatest teacher” that ever lived—because when we use the “est,” we get into the area of comparison, and the Lord is not to be compared. He is and ever will be “The Great Teacher,” “The Master Teacher.”

A survey glance at the Lord’s teaching reveals at least the following.

1. He always respected human free-will (cf., John 7:17; Rev. 22:17).
2. His teaching stressed human responsibility and accountability.
3. His teaching emphasized man’s ability to think, to reason, to perceive, to understand, to plan, to purpose, to follow through on that purpose
4. His teaching recognizes man’s need for *evidence*, and he expected the hearer to handle the evidence correctly. He expected the hearer to draw the conclusion demanded by the evidence (cf., John 20:30-31).
5. His teaching related (and relates) to what is *best* for man—what is best individually, socially, temporally, and eternally.
6. His teaching does not set out a single false statement or false proposition.
7. His teaching does not contain a single unsound argument.
8. His teaching holds before man the greatest *challenge*—to do and to be the very best that it is possible for him to do and to be.
9. His teaching holds before man the greatest *hope*.
10. It gives to man the *only satisfactory* standard upon which to make decisions of life (cf., Rom. 12:2).
11. It gives to man the *meaning* of *all* the affairs (questions, problems, sufferings) of this life.
12. It emphasizes the proper (the right and just) relationship of man to man (cf., Mat. 7:12).

13. It upholds everything that is just and right and honorable and pure.
14. It condemns every false way (cf., Psa. 119:104).
15. It stresses the value of every individual.
16. It deals completely (thoroughly) with the problem of sin—its guilt, its practice, and its (other) tragic consequences.
17. It instructs men to take care of themselves—their minds, their souls, their bodies (cf., 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Mark 6:31).
18. While recognizing and respecting the need for and the value of *material* things, the Lord's teaching instructs men to put spiritual things "first" in their lives.
19. It instructs men to be considerate, compassionate, and helpful.
20. It instructs men to be involved in getting the whole gospel to the whole world.

HE IS OUR PERFECT MODEL

The Lord is our Perfect Model in the following areas:

1. In recognizing that there is *absolute truth* and that this absolute truth is *attainable*.
2. In His being willing to *suffer any pain* in order to act in harmony with the truth.
3. In His teaching and practicing love for all men—for those who love you; for those who do not love you; and for those who hate you.
4. In His emphasizing that one's *mission in life* is to do God's will—not any man's will; not one's own will; not any other *human* will.
5. In His teaching us to strive to be perfect—to try to live above sin (cf., Heb. 4:15; Mat 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:16).
6. In His teaching us (by precept and example) to be unselfish and humble (cf., John 13:5-15).
7. In teaching us to be forgiving (cf., Luke 23:34).
8. In teaching us (by precept and example) to be pure in heart (mind) and in deed (cf., Mat. 5:8, 21, 28).
9. In teaching us to be compassionate (cf., Isa. 42:3; Mat. 9:36; 23:37).

10. In upholding the sanctity of marriage and the home (cf., Mat. 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Eph. 5:22-6:4).
11. In helping us to understand the reason for His suffering and dying (cf., John 3:16; Mat. 20:28; Heb. 2:9; 1 The. 5:10).
12. In helping us to understand the need for and value of suffering (cf., Rom. 5:3-5; 8:17; consider also, David, in Psalm 119:67—“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word”).
13. In fighting the devil and in dealing with temptation (of Mat. 4:1-11).
14. In dealing with persecution and false charges (cf., 1 Pet. 1:22-23; John 15:19-20; 2 Tim. 3:12).
15. As the Master Controversialist. Without doubt the Lord was the most masterful controversialist who ever lived. Alexander Campbell said about the Lord. “He unsheathed His sword at the Jordan River, and threw away the scabbard” (*Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. I, “Controversy,” p. 41).

CONCLUSION

Brethren, we have sought to emphasize “The Lord, as Our Perfect Example.” We have stressed that He is our perfect example: (1) In character; (2) in teaching; and, (3) as our model.

May God help us to be like Him. Let us be careful to live as He lived. Let us be careful to live and to teach His teaching. Let us be careful to follow and to imitate Him. Let us strive always—by life, by word, and by pen—to reflect the divine rays of sacred light that emanate from Him. We must be good “reflectors” (cf., 2 Cor. 3:2; Phi. 2:14-15).

May God help us, at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances, to make Him our example.

GOD'S WORD—SETTING THE HEART TO SEEK IT

Anthony D. Tarole



Tony Tarole was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania on July 31, 1963. He was converted out of Roman Catholicism on August 16, 1975. He is married to the former Tricky Arnold and they have five daughters.

Tony is effective in evangelism and has done campaign and mission work in the United States, Canada and Belize, Central America. He has preached for local congregations in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Alabama and Florida. He is currently preaching for the Jupiter-Tequesta Church of Christ in Tequesta, Florida.

INTRODUCTION

I appreciate so much this opportunity to be able to speak at this lectureship, and I would like to thank the elders and Bobby Liddell for this invitation. In this lesson, we will be discussing the importance of preparing the heart to seek God's Word. "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10).

WHAT IS THE BIBLE HEART?

Let us begin by looking at what the Bible has to say about the heart. When we speak of the heart mentioned in the Bible, we are not talking about the physical organ. Some people confuse the physical organ of the body with the Bible heart, but the physical heart is not related at all to the Bible heart. Instead, we are talking about the intellect, emotions, and will.

The Bible heart is that *center within man that reasons*

But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts...And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? (Mark 2:6, 8).

The Bible heart is *that center within man that understands*.

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Mat. 13:15).

The Bible heart is *that center within man that believes*.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

The Bible heart is *that center within man that obeys*. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17).

True, there are some passages where the heart refers to the physical organ.

And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually (Exo. 28:29-30).

“And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot” (2 Kin. 9:24). Now obviously, the “heart” mentioned in these passages refer to the chest area. However, most Bible references that speak of the heart refer to the spiritual.

PREPARE THE HEART

It is possible to go through all of the outward motions that there are in Christianity, and still be lost eternally in hell. For example, some can sit through a worship service and hear a message from God's Word preached and leave with absolutely no benefit at all. Yet, another person can come into the same worship service, hear the same message preached, and leave uplifted and encouraged. What makes the difference? The difference is that some have never prepared their heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. Their heart is not right before

God! Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mat. 6:21). Where is your heart today? You see, I can go through all of the outward motions at a worship service, but if my heart is not right before God, I can leave completely empty. This is the way that mankind, generally speaking, has always gone about it.

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouths, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching- for doctrines the commandments of men (Mat. 15:7-9).

This is so unfortunate because God never intended for man to be lost. God intended for every person to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4). God intended for every person in the world to be able to go to heaven (John 3:16).

THE NEED FOR AN UNDERSTANDING HEART

One of the saddest passages in all of the Word of God is Psalm 14:1, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” Have you ever known anyone to say, “I don’t have to worry because there is no God”? We would call that person an atheist, and rightly so. We seldom, if ever, preach to those who are atheists, but we probably preach more than we are aware to what I would term “Practical atheists.” These are the people that will come to a worship service and hear God’s Word preached every Sunday morning and say, “Yes, I believe there is a God,” and then leave and act as if there were no God. They go out and live all week long the kind of lives that show they do not really believe in God at all. But God knows our hearts (Luke 16:15).

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God (Psa. 14:1-2).

If we had the ability to take every atheist and could have them gaze into hell for just five seconds, I believe they would want to seek God. Why does a man not seek his Creator? David the inspired writer of Psalm 14, put his finger on it in verse 2, when he said we need to understand some things before we seek God. If we looked upon ourselves as just existing by mere accident, just a product of

evolution, then, subconsciously, we would believe that we are no better off than just an animal.

There are many people in our world today who act like animals. Why? Because they do not believe themselves to be someone with an eternal soul, someone with a heart. A dog does not have that heart like man has that heart. The Bible says, “your heart shall live forever” (Psa. 22:26). That is the real you and the real me. Human beings are the only ones that have that kind of heart. With that being true, it is necessary that we understand some things about ourselves and about God before we are going to seek him. David said, “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God” (Psa. 14:2).

There is a crying need today among members of the churches of Christ, to study God's Word to increase our knowledge and understanding of His will. When the average church member is lacking in Bible knowledge, he is setting himself up for disaster. The Bible says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). Notice what the apostle Paul's desire and prayer for Israel was.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:1-3).

We have to understand that we have been created for this purpose, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13). Now, here is some understanding of God's will. What is my duty here upon this earth as a human being? It is to fear God and keep His commandments. Someone says, “That's not everything, is it?” The Bible says it that is the whole—WHOLE, 100% duty that you have here upon this earth. fear God and keep His commandments. That is it?

The materialistic world in which we live says, “Get wealth, power, popularity and pleasure,” so millions seek after these things, but that is not really it at all. We all know of people that live for these things, but deep down on the inside, they are perfectly mis-

erable. Many people are seeking everything but God. “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10). What does that mean? That simply means that Ezra prepared his attitude, feelings, desires and understanding to seek God’s will.

DANGERS OF A DECEPTIVE HEART

Without a proper understanding of God’s Word, the church member is subject to the snares of deceptive error when so taught. “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart (Eph. 4:17-18).

This blindness of the heart is the result of being deceived. If I am lacking in Bible knowledge, then I would not be able to tell when I am being misled into false doctrine. Jesus himself warned: “And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mat. 15:14). Again He warned. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mat. 7:15). Again, Jesus warned.

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many: For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect (Mat. 24:11, 24).

Believing false doctrine, as well as teaching false doctrine, will damn ones soul to hell (1 John 4:1; Tit. 1:9-14).

One of the most prominent false doctrines believed and taught is the doctrine of salvation by faith only. That is the idea that at the very moment one comes to believe in Jesus by accepting Him in the heart as Lord, or it may be worded, at the point one trusts Jesus and receives Him into the heart through prayer, he or she is saved. However, a careful investigation of the Scriptures clearly shows there is no example given to us of one being saved in that way. Of course, the Bible teaches us that faith is essential to salvation (Heb. 11:6), and yes, one must believe in Jesus to be saved (John 3:16; 8:24,

Rom. 10:9), but these Scriptures mention nothing of the necessity of repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9) or baptism, (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Yet, the Bible is abundantly clear that repentance and baptism are just as essential to salvation as faith is. Would anyone who is a truth seeker honestly deny that?

It is unfortunate that millions are being deceived by false teachers into believing the doctrine of salvation by faith only while the Bible says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam. 2:24). “Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (Jam. 2:19). The Bible teaches there is more to being saved than faith only.

Deception is one of the strongest tools of the devil, and it is a serious mistake to think one cannot be deceived. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). Yes, the heart may deceive and be deceived. That is why the scriptures repeatedly warn, “Be Not Deceived!”

GOD'S WORD—NEEDED IN THE HEART

“But the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Samuel, the prophet, had been sent to Bethlehem, to select one of the sons of Jesse to become King of Israel. When he went there, he did not know which of Jesse's sons would be selected. God would point him out. When Samuel saw Eliab, he thought, surely this must be the one God would anoint. But God said, “Look not on his countenance (that is, his appearance), or on the height of his stature (how tall he is); because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth” (1 Sam. 16:7).

The Bible says God does not look at things the way we do. God does not see situations in the way that we see them. God does not see circumstances in the way we see them. God does not look on people in the way we look at people.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,
saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my

ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9).

Notice where man looks, “For man looketh on the outward appearance.” One does not have to go very far in our world today to see the strong emphasis placed upon physical attraction. This is evident from television, movies, magazines, newspapers and on and on we could go. That may be what our world is seeking after. God also is looking for beauty, but he is not looking on the outside, he is looking on the inside God is looking on the heart.

One may be beautiful or handsome and clean on the outside, but God is not looking at that. If we are trying to impress the creatures, then that may impress creatures, but that is not going to impress the Creator. What is going to impress the Creator is whether or not our heart is clean and pure.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (Psa. 119:9-11).

This passage teaches us clearly that in order to keep our hearts clean and pure, we must be living according to God’s Word and seek God with all of our heart. In order to keep our lives free from sinning against God, we must have God’s Word hid within our hearts. Pray continually like David, “O let me not wander from thy commandments.” Yes, it is true, the Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night (Psa. 1:1-2).

If we want to see God, notice what Jesus said about the heart and the condition that we need to have our hearts in. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Mat. 5:8). One reason many in our world today are unhappy, is because they do not have a pure heart. One may try all of their life to find happiness in the heart, but there is only one way to be happy in our heart and that is if our heart is pure. If one has an impure heart and is unwilling to repent and turn their heart around, then they will never be happy. Many people go through life and cannot seem to figure out why they are so

unhappy, but the reason for some is because Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat. 5:8). So many are not pure in heart. The outward appearance may be beautiful or handsome, but sometimes that inside heart condition becomes so sinful. Satan would have one to think, “Just cover up that ugly sinful heart and don’t you even look at it,” God would have one to put that spotlight of investigation of the Word of God on the heart “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). God would have us to: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). God would have us to examine ourselves to see whether we have a pure heart—or a filthy heart. Either I am trying to have pure thoughts or I have dirty thoughts. Either I am trying to have pure thoughts and a pure mind or I have a dirty filthy mind and dirty filthy thoughts.

You see, it is no accident that a person has a pure heart. It is no accident that a person has a pure mind. Do you know why that person has a pure heart and mind? It is because he seeks that (Mat. 6:33). It is because he desires that (1 Pet. 2:2). It is because he hungers and thirsts for that “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mat. 5:6). Recently, we have seen people in other parts of the world experience hunger to the point of death. Most of us have never experienced real hunger, but we do know what it is like to go without a meal and we do not like it at all. When we are hungry, even after missing one meal, all that we think about is food. When we are thirsty, all that we think about is getting something to drink. Jesus said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mat. 5:6). If we are going to truly prepare the heart to seek God’s Word, then we must hunger and thirst after righteousness. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat. 5:8). If we are going truly to prepare the heart to seek God’s Word, then we must have a pure heart. There is no other way upon the face of God’s earth to see God without being pure in heart. The heart means the thoughts, the mind, the intents and the desires. That is what we are talking about.

If our intentions, if our desires, if our motivations are not pure, Jesus said we are not going to see God. “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (Jam. 4:8). The apostle declared that purity of heart means nearness to God. We need to be like David who prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa. 51:10).

Someone may say, “That sounds pretty silly.” Well, it does not matter how it sounds, this is the way to happiness. David tried it both ways. He tried filling his heart and mind with things that should have never entered in. There is no doubt David would have given anything to have taken back some of the things that he did because of his impure heart. But this is put in the Word of God, so that we will not make the mistakes that David made. Occasionally, we will hear someone talk about how sinful they had lived their life and then obeyed the gospel. Many times, some of our young people after hearing that, say, “Yes, and I am going to do the same thing, and then I’ll got my life turned around just like he did, one of these days....” But for every one person that has said and done that, thousands have never gotten around to it yet.

They go so far down that road of sin, they are unwilling to make that trip back to meet God. That is why the Bible warns us,

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:12-13).

Only a few ever come back. You do not sin and get away with it even one time. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked. for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). Sin hardens the heart that much more against the preaching of the gospel. It takes a stronger conviction in the preacher’s message before it will ever motivate one to give their life to God. “Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years” (Heb. 3:8-9).

There have been many times when I have studied with people to become Christians who understood what they needed to do to obey

the gospel. However, they have said, “Well, I intend one of these days to give my life to the Lord, but I’m just not ready yet. I am so involved in sin now, that I cannot let it go.” Jesus said of that person, “Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12). There have been many Christians, I have known, who at one time were so faithful to the Lord, they would have done anything to promote the cause of Christ, but now, for various reasons, they have fallen away and are no longer interested. Jesus said of that person,

They on the rock are they, which, when they hear receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection (Luke 8:13-14).

Now, notice the kind of heart Jesus would want us to have. “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15).

The prescription I recommend to help ourselves, our families, and others to know God’s Word better, is to read our Bibles every day (Rom. 10:17), pray to God every day (1 The. 5:17), attend all the services of the church (Heb. 10:24-27), and learn to teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to as many people as you can (Mark 16:15).

Some will say, “Well, I’m not planning to do anything wrong.” But what will happen if one in not preparing their heart on purpose to seek God? The Bible tells us Rehoboam did evil, and notice carefully why he did evil. “And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord” (2 Chr. 12:14). Why did he do evil? Did he do evil because he prepared his heart to go out and do evil? No, not at all. He simply did evil because he prepared not We heart to seek the Lord. What is this passage teaching us? If we have not already, on purpose, intentionally prepared our heart to seek the Lord, then what is happening to us, without our even realizing it, is the same thing that happened here to Rehoboam. We would be doing evil because of not seeking the Lord. “Therefore to him that knoweth to

do good, and doeth it not, to him it is min” (Jam. 4:17). Since man does not see an God sea, and if we do not prepare the heart to seek the law of the Lord like Ezra did, what automatically is going to happen is that we we going to and up doing evil.

CONCLUSION

You see, a person does not have to go to hall on purpose, that will happen just by being unprepared to meet God. But a person goes to Heaven on purpose. He goes there because just like Ezra, he prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro. 4:23).

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GOD'S WORD—SETTING THE HEART TO DO IT

Carl B. Garner



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Ezra, the priest, scribe and preacher was much like Jesus in many ways. He “had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10). Jesus, among many other things, is said to have been One Who “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), and was so capable and prepared as a teacher even His enemies said, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). It is worthy of note that both of these prepared teachers were also hearty proponents and examples of *doing* the will of the Lord. It was not enough for Ezra to seek the law of the Lord, and even teaching in Israel statutes and judgments was not sufficient. It was also imperative that he do that which he had sought and taught. It was Jesus who said, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21).

If there is a continuing stream of thought throughout the Bible, it is that *preparing* and *seeking* must be accompanied by doing. The

patriarch Abraham is remembered by the Hebrews writer as one who “obeyed...sojourned...offered” (Heb. 11:8-9, 17). The familiar description of Noah’s attitude and action is, “Thus **did** Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so **did** he” (Gen. 6:22; 7:5). Moses spent eighty years preparing himself and his heart to serve God, and another forty years leading his people through miles of desert and years of frustration. Yet, when we think of Moses, we immediately conjure up thoughts (images?) of action, battle, leadership—and *doing* the Lord’s will. Added to these examples are a myriad of imperatives in the New Testament emphasizing the necessity of doing “the will of the Lord.”

Luke 6:46: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

James 1:22: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

1 John 2:17: “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of the Lord abideth for ever.”

Mark 3:35: “For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.”

John 9:31: “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.”

In our study, we shall consider. (1) The Necessity of Preparing the Heart; (2) Having Possession of or Control Over the Heart; (3) The Necessity of Doing the Will of God; and, (4) Applications.

As a preface to these remarks, and focusing for a moment upon Ezra, please give attention to this brief thought. Each task in the Lord’s service demands a heart that is prepared to do that service. However, many seem to be prepared to do one task but not others. As an example, there are multitudes who are manifestly prepared to “teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10), but not at all willing to live in harmony with those statutes. Some are fascinated with some form of “seeking the law of the Lord” as an academic pursuit, but seem to have an equally strong aversion to finding it. They are content with the “search,” but neither the actual discovery nor the practice of God’s revelation. It is this writer’s conviction that each of us must follow the example of Ezra, being ready to

“swallow the whole pill,” if you please, having a willingness to seek, to teach and to do the will of the Lord, limited only by the capability that rests within us. Each of these will demand a little different “set” of the heart, suggesting a need for continuous confirmation and renewal of one’s commitment. Just an Jesus’ demand for us to “ask...seek...knock” on a continuing schedule (Mat 7:7-8), we will need to “gird up the loins of our mind” on a daily basis, realizing we have been redeemed by the “precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13, 18-19).

THE NECESSITY OF PREPARING THE HEART

There is scarcely an area of life in which it is not necessary for one to make up his/her mind before they accomplish any significant task. Some responsibilities appear to be almost impossible to accomplish. Some assignments appear virtually incapable of being fulfilled. That is, they are almost impossible without a heart or mind that has been prepared, or set, for the desired task. Ezra accomplished a great reform movement among those for whom he had a responsibility (Ezra 7-10), and he did so primarily because he “prepared his heart” in order to do it. No doubt, there was a fair amount of preparing to be attributed to his family, seeing he was a direct descendant of Aaron through Eleazar, being greatgrandson to Hilkiah (Ezra 7:1-5). He served as a “ready scribe” (Ezra 7:6), and also an a priest (7:11-12). Whatever the encouragement, instruction or influence from his family, there was a special need for Ezra to “make up his mind” to “seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10). Each individual must “set his heart” for whatever effort he/she seeks to make.

A concept that receives major emphasis in the Bible, but sees only minor comprehension among many, is that which is described by the word “repent.” Simply defined as a *change of mind or heart*, this term is closely associated with this idea of preparing or setting the heart. A person’s mind must be changed as concerning past attitudes and behavior, and set in regard to future activity. Jesus made it clear that bearing good fruit comes when the good seed is planted within “an honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15). According

to Strong, the word “prepared” (“set,” ASV) in Ezra 7:10, is the Hebrew word *kuwn*, meaning to set up, establish, fix or purpose. It is used of one whose “heart is fixed” upon God’s ways (Psa. 57:7; 112:7). Samuel told Israel that idolatry could be put away only when the people “prepare” their hearts unto the Lord (1 Sam. 7:3). The sin offering to God was to be “prepared” or dedicated (Eze. 45:17). Rehoboam is said to have done “evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord” (2 Chr. 12:14). A generation was described as stubborn and rebellious because they “set not their heart aright” (Psa. 78:8). How important is the set of one’s heart!

Since the word “heart” is primarily used to describe “the man’s entire mental and moral activity; the hidden springs of the personal life; man’s inward life; the emotions, the reason and will,” (Vines, p. 207), then we are not surprised to discover that the Bible attributes to the heart all kinds of attitudes and values. Note the various “kinds” of heart described in the Scriptures.

There is an *evil* heart (Heb. 3:12).

There is a *merry* heart (Ecc. 9:7).

There is a *pure* heart (1 Pet. 1:22).

There is a *proud* heart (Pro. 28:25).

There is a *steadfast* heart (1 Cor. 7:37).

There is a *true* heart (Heb. 10:22).

There is an *honest, good* heart (Luke 8:15).

There is a *subtle* heart (Pro. 7:10).

There is a *perfect* heart (Isa. 38:3).

There is a *troubled* heart (John 14:1).

There is a *wicked* heart (Pro. 26:23).

There is a *broken* heart (Psa. 34:18).

There is a *double* heart (Psa. 12:2).

There is a *deceitful* heart (Jer. 14:14).

There is a *hardened* heart (Mark 10:5).

There is a *fixed* heart (Psa. 108:1).

Nearly eight hundred verses in the Bible use the word “heart” to describe this inner man, this intellect and mind of man. We respect David for having a heart admired even by God (1 Sam. 13:14). We observe Jesus as One Who, at the tender age of twelve years, already

had set His heart to be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49). We note the apostle Paul's heart was "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phi. 1:17), and we realize his heart had changed—it was on a different course from that of Acts 9:1 when he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against Christians. From these we learn: (1) God loves one who has a good heart; (2) even at a young age, one's heart may be "set" toward seeking, doing and teaching the will of the Lord; and, (3) one's heart may be changed from one course to another, being "set" toward seeking, doing and teaching the will of the Lord. Obviously this must be a matter of will. One must prepare or set his *own* heart. One must change *her* own heart, Parents, friends, mates and others may teach and encourage, but for a heart to be dedicated to God, to be purposed for God's service, demands that a person, young or old, personally make that choice. How desperately we need men, women, boys and girls who have set their hearts to seek the law of the Lord, to do the will of the Lord and to teach the will of the Lord.

BEING IN CONTROL OF OUR HEART

It is my assignment to discuss the imperative nature of the command to do the will of the Lord (Ezra 7:10; Mat. 7:21). However, as we observe that very few even believe that we *should* do so, much less try, we must seek to comprehend why such is the case. The religious world is filled with those whose concept of being a Christian is spending an occasional hour or two in a church building, putting a tightly-folded dollar bill in the collection plate and telling the preacher they "enjoyed the sermon." We would use terms like lukewarm, or hypocrisy, or half-hearted religion and we would be on the right track. There seems to be little thought directed to whole-hearted service to God. Few seem even to pay lip service to pure religion and giving themselves an a "living sacrifice" to God (Rom. 12:1). If you were to mention "So and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor" (Mat. 19-21), or, "I count all things but low for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phi. 3:8), most would think you were talking about a preacher or some "missionary." But, we can hardly put all the blame on them, for we are living in an age of cheap religion and no-cost ethics. Most

preaching in most churches seems to be designed more for the purpose of soothing our conscience than in pricking it—more toward the end of feeling good than obeying the gospel.

I make these charges, not to be cynical, but to illustrate the obstacles we must overcome. Modern man must be made to know of the need of serving the Lord with the “whole heart,” which demands that we take the control of our hearts away from Satan and the world, and give it back to God. The very principles inherent in the doctrine of repentance reveal to us that humans can control their heart, can change their mind and can have hearts that are devoted to seeking, doing and teaching God’s will. We can, and we must, “set” our hearts, make up our minds to do the will of the Lord, and you can mark it down: we will not do His will until we set our heart in that direction. Thus the need for taking control of our hearts, making them tender and sensitive to His will and then submitting that control to God.

THE NECESSITY OF DOING THE LAW OF THE LORD

In the middle 1960s, a woman who was enrolled in one of my credit classes at Navarro College resisted at some length, and with considerable energy, the premise that Jesus became the “author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him!” (Heb. 5:9). She also resisted my application of Matthew 7:21 and John 14:15 to this subject. The idea of obedience was offensive to her and she insisted that obedience had no connection with redemption. To her, the use of words like “obey the gospel,” and “save yourselves,” smacked of some form of salvation by works of merit and rejection of God’s grace, even though they clearly were biblical principles, directly quoted from the Bible (2 The. 1:8; 1 Tim. 4:16). I was prepared to deal with that controversy as were most all gospel preachers then, having been taught from my youth the foundation precepts of obedience and possessing a living, active faith as demanded by Jesus (Luke 6:46-49; Jam. 2:20).

When I was a student at Abilene Christian College in the 1950s, those of us who preached were shown by our professors and exercised by our fellow-students in ways to meet and give rebuttal to religious error. Booklets such as an “A Ready Answer to Religious

Error,” and “Nichols Pocket Bible Encyclopedia,” were familiar to us and kept handy for quick reference. Unfortunately, many such books are either out of print, unavailable or unknown to students in “our” schools now, regrettably because such action—that of giving rebuttal to error—does not receive the encouragement and instruction that was made available to me and my peers. We now find an attitude which suggests that such religious errors should not divide men today, and that being right in doctrine is at best a peripheral matter. Doing the will of the Lord has not the emphasis in the world as it once did, and in some congregations of the Lord’s church today, an emphasis upon such obedience may well bring charges of legalism, sectarianism., and trying to “earn your way into heaven.” Was Ezra wrong to set his heart to “seek the law of the Lord, and to do it”? Does the change of covenants, from the old to the new, diminish or negate God’s mandate to man to obey God’s commands? No, Ezra was not mistaken, and the abolishing of the law of Moses did not eliminate our need for obedience.

In this section, it will be necessary for us to address the following questions: (1) In there a law of God to which man is amenable?; (2) Does obedience to such a law stand between man and God’s approval?; and, (3) In meeting this law’s conditions, does one diminish God’s grace or detract from His gift?

The answer to these questions should clarify man’s responsibility to God today. When the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of Ezra 7:10, especially the comment about Ezra’s purposing in his heart to “do” the law of the Lord, He touched upon one of the most volatile and controversial subjects in religious history. These questions concerning God’s law and our responsibility to it have divided human beings for centuries. May we carefully and precisely ponder our response.

Is there a law of God to which man is amenable?

Our response to this question is an affirmative one, the evidence that demands such a response to come later. To say that man is accountable to God’s law; however, is not the same as saying that law is the ground or source of our salvation, for such source is God’s love, mercy and grace. Except for the qualities inherent within

God's righteousness and justice, debt does not accumulate on God's part because we obey Him (Luke 17:7-10). Passages such as Romans 6:14, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," cannot be construed to deny the existence or force of any law, for that is presupposed in other verses within that same book, such as 1:15, 4:15, 6:17 and 16:26. It is the most crass form of demagoguery for one to seek to array one part of scripture against another, for such produces neither truth nor enlightenment, but only confusion. What biblical evidence exists that leads us to conclude that a law of God exists for man today?

Scripture specifies that Christians are "under law to Christ." Paul's letter to the church at Corinth states clearly that men and women under the new covenant of Jesus Christ are not "without law to God, but under law to Christ!" (1 Cor. 9:21). Equally significant are those references to the "perfect law of liberty" (Jam. 1:25; 2:12), "the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2), the "law of faith" (Rom. 3:27), and "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

In the January, 1976 issue of *Spiritual Sword*, Maurice Lusk comments on the Greek word for law, *nomos*.

It has but one basic meaning which applies differently in varying contexts, i.e., rules or norms which govern conduct, whether expressed in directives, instructions, commands or principles, *nomos* is designed to be obeyed, it is law. As is true of most Greek words which have been incorporated into the texts of scripture, the term *nomos* gained added meaning as it became a Biblical term. It is used in 197 instances in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *torah*, viz., the Law of God as expressed in Scripture. It yet carried the basic meaning of norms or rules, but in time came to be filled with a beauty that only inspiration can give. In the NT it is seen as the term used to express the embodiment of the revelation of God to man—*nomos*—the Law.

Notice that the word *nomos* describes "rules or norms which govern conduct." What more need to be said about law but that it is a code of conduct. Has God left us without rules that guide us and demand certain behavior? In light of the previous verses of Scripture cited, it is absurd to suggest that man today is under no law.

Scripture also teaches implicitly that man is amenable to certain codes of behavior or conduct. When Jesus chided those who would call Him "Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say," could any one

reasonably claim that no rules or norms exist describing that prescribed code of conduct? In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said that only those who do “the will of my Father which is in heaven,” could enter the kingdom of heaven. Do we not learn from that text that God has given a law (“will”), that man can comprehend that law, and that man must obey or do that law in order to have God’s approval? If we do not learn that from this passage, then words can have no coherent meaning. Added to these are those cited on the first page of this chapter, as well as dozens of others showing the existence of a God-given code of conduct or law governing behavior.

The fact that man continues to be troubled by sin mandates the continued existence of a law to which men are responsible. The word sin, or a derivative, is found over four hundred times in the King James translation of the Bible, over one hundred of those being in the New Testament. Every time we see the word sin in the New Testament, we are being reminded that God has a law for man today, and that man’s violation or disregard of that law is sin. We are reminded in Romans 4:15 that “where no law is, there is no transgression.” Therefore, when John records that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4), and Paul writes “that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12), we are forced either to accept that man is now subject to a law from the mind of God, or deny the clear and rational words of the Holy Spirit as revealed through the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Again referring to the January 1976 issue of *Spiritual Sword*, we submit the lucid thoughts of Roy Deaver on this subject:

Transgression is reckoned and is dealt with according to the law of God under which one lives or has lived. The fact of the existence of transgression means the fact of the existence of God’s law. Is it true that God now commands all men to repent? Is it true that there is now the fact of transgression? Have all (accountable persons) sinned? Does 1 John 1:8-10 teach that all accountable persons have sinned? If there is the fact of “transgression,” and if there is no transgression where there is no law—then it is clear that there is now such a thing as God’s law. But the law of God which is now applicable to all men everywhere in the gospel of Christ. Therefore the gospel of Christ is “law” (pp. 10-11).

We are not under or amenable to the law of Moses (Rom. 3:20; 7:4), but we are under the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). We are not under the law of “sin and death,” but we are under the “law of the Spirit of life” (Rom. 8:2). We are not under a law of works, but we are under “the law of faith” (Rom. 3:27). We are not under a system of law or works, but we are “under law to Christ,” and we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (1 Cor. 9:21; Eph. 2:8-10). We do no injustice, either to law or grace, when we are “obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

Does obedience to such a law stand between man and God's approval?

Having established that God does have a law for man today, we now turn to the question of the necessity of obeying that law. It would seem obvious to this writer that the very existence of a law from God, a law to which man sustains a responsibility, would of itself make subjection and obedience to that law a matter to be assumed. However, as already described, there are those who refuse to concede this point. Passages such as Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5 (“Not of works lest any man should boast”; “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”) are set forth as evidence that any works done by man are works that would negate God's gift to man, and would constitute an attempt on the part of man to bring God into a position of indebtedness to him.

By seeking to “handle aright the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), we are forced to notice that under some circumstances, man's works are separated from his sanctification; whereas under other circumstances works are required for his salvation. The aforementioned passages establish the former consideration, while the following would establish the latter.

First Timothy 4:16: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in **doing this**, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

James 2:24: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” Are these passages to be seen as contradictory to each other? As opposing each other? If not—and the

credibility of scripture is at stake here—then, we must see that different kinds of “works” are under consideration. Since our assignment presupposes the credibility of the scriptures, therefore, we conclude that works of merit are never demanded of man, whereas works of obedience are imperatives for all. Notice how Scripture establishes, the need for doing “the law of the Lord.”

Salvation and the forgiveness of sins demand certain actions on the part of man. In Mark 16:16, it is: “He that believeth and is baptized,” that shall be saved. Eternal salvation is not promised to the disobedient, but to “all them that obey Him” (Heb. 5:9). Early candid for salvation rightly asked such questions as: “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17); “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37); and, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). The response to these questions signify their validity. Jesus told Nicodemus, “Except man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Ananias told Saul of Tarsus that the act of rising and being baptized stood between him and the washing away of his sins (Acts 22:16). The transformation from service to Satan to service to God, and being made “free from sin” resulted from the fact that they “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:16-18). It is those who “obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (2 The. 1:8-9). Solomon’s conclusion in the book of Ecclesiastes is informative: “Fear God, and keep his commandment for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12-13). Only through “obeying the truth” can one be described as having “purified your souls” (I Pet. 1:22). The rulers of the Jews were described as loving “the praise of men more than the praise of God” because, though believing on Jesus, “they did not confess him” (John 12:42-44). John 3:36 crowns these thoughts by declaring, “He that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,” (The ASV reading is preferred here translating *APEITHO* as “obeyeth not.” Rienecker [p. 225] says the word denotes “to be disobedient,” while Vines and Vincent concur. Other

verses using the same term to denote disobedience are Romans 2:8; 10:21; Hebrews 3:17-19; 11:31; 1 Peter 2:8; 3:1; 3:20; 4:17).

In light of these and dozens more, how can it be reasoned that obedience to God's law is not a necessary duty of all men? If inheriting eternal life, forgiveness of sins, entering the kingdom of heaven, purifying the soul and enjoying life in Christ are desired by one, they are all said to be obtainable only by those who obey Christ. Therefore, salvation does demand certain action on the part of man.

**In meeting this law's conditions, does one diminish
God's grace or detract from his gift?**

The beautiful doctrine of God's grace is under fire in our present generation. That attack is from within the Lord's kingdom, whereas such opposition formerly came primarily from the denominations. Charges of legalism, salvation by works, attempting to "work our way to heaven" now come from within as well as without. Yet, the same rebuttal given to the sectarian world through the years is still as effective today.

When Paul wrote to Titus, his "son after the common faith" (Tit. 1:4), he emphasized this glorious doctrine of grace, mentioning it in each chapter. It is this book that informs us of the all-encompassing gift of grace which "bringeth salvation," and its appearing to "all men" (2:11). While elevating this beautiful and unspeakable gift, we are interested to note that Titus was also told of the importance of some binding rules and qualifications for those who served as bishops of the Lord's church (1:5-9). Those same bishops, whose efforts were governed by God's grace, were to stop the mouths of gainsayers by means of "the faithful word" (1:9-11). They were to make sure that only "sound doctrine" be taught, and that those who refused were to be rebuked "sharply" (2:1; 1:13). Titus was instructed that God's grace resulted in teaching that was both positive and negative in nature (2:11-12), that again, those who rejected that doctrine or teaching were to be rebuked "with all authority" (2:15), and should be motivated to be God's "peculiar people zealous of good works" (2:14).

That is the kind of teaching most of us have received for decades—teaching on the grace of God. This is doctrine that allows the Bible

to be its source, describing God's love and mercy, yet also enumerating those conditions that issue from that grace. Paul saw nothing about grace and obedience that was mutually exclusive. God saw no contradiction between our gratitude and appreciation for God's gift and our obedient response to the One who has given the gift. Do we detract from God's gift or His grace by our obedience to His commands? How absurd! Of course we do not and could not negate His gift. To the contrary, "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3), and we show by our obedience the proper love and gratitude for that gift.

To suggest that obedience and grace are in opposition to each other denies plain Bible statements, while also implying that which cannot reasonably be supported. When C. R. Nichol published his little "Pocket Encyclopedia" (ACU Press, 1949), he included on page 99 a response to this question: "Are we saved by grace alone? If we are saved by grace alone, then all men will be saved, and the doctrine of the universalists is right, for 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men'" (Titus 2:11). Nichol's point has been repeated for years, and continues to be a valid conclusion. If it is the case that God's grace has appeared to all men, and that grace brings salvation; and if it is the case that it is only this grace—without any effort on the part of man—that brings man into a saved relationship with God; then, it also must be the case that all men will be saved. However, if we can find either the biblical statement that some *will not be saved*, or the fact that some are *in danger* of not being saved, we must then conclude that something in man's response to God's grace is involved in man's eternal salvation. Such statements are found in Hebrews 6:4-6 ("If they shall fall away...[impossible] to renew them again"), Matthew 7:13-14 ("the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat"), and Luke 13:23-24 ("Are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able"). If it is God's desires alone that are compelling, then, we must be reminded that He is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9), and He would

“have all men to be saved” (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, man’s response to God’s grace bears heavily upon his/her eternal destiny.

Where did we get the idea that a gift precludes all possibility of conditions placed upon the reception of that gift? It cannot be from our contemporary world, for gifts are commonly offered by business establishments based on the condition of some purchase. Looking in my newspaper today, I find you can obtain free pizza, perfume, books, dry-cleaning, eyeglasses, and even free movie tickets or bowling passes, all upon the condition that you make some purchase. All across the state of Texas you can see billboards advertising “Free 72-ounce Steak Dinner” at the Big Texan Steak House on Highway 287 near Amarillo. On that highway, as you get nearer to the restaurant, you receive more and more information, finally being told all of the conditions required for receiving the “free steak dinner” (one person must eat it all within one *hour*). Our contemporary practices are not the source of the view that conditions and a gift are mutually exclusive.

That idea did not come from the Bible. In Exodus 16:15, God told Israel concerning the manna which “the Lord hath given you to eat,” that certain conditions would be required in order to receive the full blessing of that gift. Those conditions are enumerated in the next twenty-one verses, and when some violated those conditions, God said, “How long refuse Ye to keep my commandments and my laws?” (Exo. 16:28). The Levites were given the tithes of Israel as their inheritance (Num. 18), but were required to perform certain duties as their responsibilities within God’s economy, including specific conditions about their own sacrifices. We are all familiar with God’s statement to Joshua, “I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour,” and then proceeds to list about fifteen specific conditions they *had to meet in order to receive* that which God had already given to them (Jos. 1:2-3, 11; 6:2-25). No, God has never said that a gift could have no conditions.

Therefore, the view that the giver of a gift cannot demand or expect any conditions must have its origin within the imagination of man. Even upon investigating the definition of the word “gift,” I

found no such demand. Even in the mind of man there must be some question that this “rule” has any real validity.

APPLICATIONS

We can hardly expect to escape the obvious applications that follow the scriptural conclusions that have been drawn. Everything we read in Scripture compels us toward grateful submissions and obedience to His will. Jesus Himself, the only begotten Son of God, was obedient to God’s commands. John the apostle records Jesus’ “I am the vine” material, and in John 15 we read of Jesus’ submission to His Father. “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (John 15:10). That same trait of obedience is seen in Luke’s account of His childhood years (Luke 2:49-52), and in John 14:31, “But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” See also Hebrews 5:8-9; 10:9; Matthew 26:42; and John 6:38. Yet, we are given Jesus’ life and obedience as a rolemodel and example for our own daily lives. How could any one deny the value and necessity of obedience, yet claim to “follow in His steps,” while living and showing an example of *disobedience*?

We have all been fascinated with the picture of Jesus as He endured the same temptations we face, “yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). When we shirk our responsibilities, or prefer disobedience over submission, we must be willing to recognize that we are refusing to follow His example for us. What if one asks, “What of those who are ignorant of God’s law for man? Will God not save them in spite of their failure to obey the gospel?” Consider these facts. In Romans 8, we note the concern God had for His own justice. “To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness. that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). The sacrifice of His Son was the price God paid to assure us of His justice and to redeem us from our sins. We can be sure of God’s justice, but the redemption was for that one “which believeth in Jesus.” His justice is furthered by His providing us with His written Word and with the mandate that we take that Word to “all the world” (Mark 16:15). We might also note man’s condition,

upon observing God's creation: "even his sternal power and Godhead; so that they we without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). Man has a responsibility to find those who, with honest and good hearts, are seeking God.

There is, however, another consideration that must not be overlooked. That which separates man from God is sin, not ignorance of God's plan. Ignorance may hinder man's opportunity, but not man's amenability or his accountability for his sin. A lack of knowledge of God's plan can affect the degree of his/her sin and punishment, but not the fact of it.

And that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that know not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required (Luke 12:47-48).

Notice that ignorance does not absolve one of sin, but may lessen the degree of punishment. All men are amenable to God's laws. Associated with this point is one that is addressed by Guy N. Woods (*Questions and Answers*, Vol. I, page 270):

It may be said that the heathen, because they have never had the gospel offered them, are not lost, If no, why did our Lord command us to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15,16)? Does not this clearly establish the need of all nations, and of every intelligent creature in them, to have the gospel, God's power to save? If they need the gospel, they are lost without it. If they are not lost in their present state, without the gospel, it is certain that they become such when they hear and reject it; and if they will be accepted of God in judgment because of their ignorance, would it not be infinitely better to keep it from them, as much as, according to this hypothesis, the gospel would only cause some of them to be lost? Moreover, if they are in a saved state without the gospel, they are far more fortunate than are those peoples who have opportunity to hear it, but some of whom reject it, when it is preached to them. Would not the preaching of the gospel to all such simply become the instrument of their damnation rather than their salvation?

Also, a similar question has been raised. "How can someone obey the good news? It should be enjoyed and appreciated, not obeyed." We are informed by the Holy Spirit that God will take "vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with

everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 The. 1:8-9). It is useless to claim that one “cannot obey the gospel,” as some have suggested. To be certain, this passage assures us not only that we can “obey the gospel,” but that we must. The gospel is a “law of faith” by which we are justified (Rom. 3:27-28), and those same Romans were admonished to show “obedience to the faith” (Rom 1:5), as “a great company of the priests” had already done (Acts 6:7). Peter’s poignant question is, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17). Earlier in that same book Peter had said that they had “purified your souls in obeying the truth,” and had been “born again...by the word of God,” and that this Word of God is “the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pet. 1:22-23, 25). Of course, we may appreciate and relish the good news of the gospel. but that gospel also includes facts to be believed (Mark 1:15) and commands to be obeyed (Rom. 10.16).

CONCLUSION

We have attempted to show that the doing of the Lord’s will is imperative in the lives of us all, and that such obedience will be evidenced when prefaced by each individual’s setting their heart, or making up their mind to do go. Man is under law to Christ even today, and we are promised that salvation is to those who are obedient to that law. Since that gospel, that law of faith is man’s only way of salvation for man today, how urgent we must be in proclaiming it! May we take that responsibility more seriously every day.

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GOD'S WORD—SETTING THE HEART TO TEACH IT

Paul Vaughn



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One of the gravest responsibilities that a Christian could ever take is the teaching of God's Word. God's Word, the Bible, is not just any book, it is the Book of books! It is God's message of salvation to those lost in sin. It is the history of man from the creation of the world. It tells of God's love of righteousness and His hatred of sin. It is the perfect, complete standard in a world of subjectivity. It is the TRUTH! "Sanctify them through thy truth. thy word in truth" (John 17:17).

The Bible is not an amulet or charm that will accomplish its purpose without diligent study. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

The Scriptures must be studied to be understood. Any mishandling of the Word of God carries severe punishment. God has given warning throughout the Bible cautioning against the abuse of His Word. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God *which I command you*" (Deu. 4:2)

“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Pro. 30:6). There can be no additions to God’s Word. “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18). Then can be no subtraction from God’s Word.

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:19).

Ezra prepared himself to teach the Scriptures. “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10). Those who teach today have no less responsibility. A godly teacher can reach precious souls, opening the door to the truth and beauty of the Scriptures. An ungodly teacher can destroy the efforts of sound teachers in a short period of time and wreak havoc in the church. There is a need for teachers like Ezra today who will prepare themselves to know, do, and teach the Word of God.

THE MASTER TEACHER

Jesus, the Son of God, is the Master Teacher. He taught with authority. “For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mat. 7:29). Nicodemus rightly said that Jesus was, “a teacher come from God” (John 3:2).

As a teacher, Jesus was not concerned about a large class, age groups or classrooms. He taught multitudes on a mountain (Mat. 5-7), a Samaritan woman by a well (John 4), and the Jews in the temple (Mat. 21:23). He was a teacher who was interested in people and in bringing them closer to God. He used every opportunity for that purpose.

The Master Teacher believed in teaching. Teaching was the opportunity to touch lives and change attitudes. He was not an entertainer, a baby sitter or a warm body in a classroom. He taught people what they needed most, the Word of God.

Any good teacher will know the subject he teaches. Jesus knew the Scriptures. He quoted Scriptures in refuting the devil (Mat. 4:1-

11). In a discussion with the Sadducees, He pointed out that they did not know the Scriptures. “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Mat. 22:29). Jesus believed in the Old Testament He “used the Scriptures as ‘final authority in matters of faith and conduct. He also regarded the writings themselves as inspired.’”¹ There can be no greater example of the Bible believing teacher than Jesus Christ “To Him the God of the Bible is the living God, and the teaching of the Bible is the teaching of the living God.”²

PURPOSE OF TEACHING

One of the most important prerequisites of a good teacher is having a purpose for teaching. A teacher should have specific aims for what he wants to accomplish. Sadly, many Bible teachers work from Sunday to Sunday without definite goals or aims. Every teacher should have a specific end in view for his students.

An automobile mechanics teacher him a specific goal for his students. He tries to impart knowledge of the automobile. The same is true for the nursing teacher or plumbing teacher. They have a specific goal in mind to accomplish with their teaching.

The Bible teacher has a purpose. Jesus said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mat. 28:19). The supreme goal of every Bible teacher should be the conversion of souls. All are lost in sin until they have obeyed the gospel. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). It in in the teaching of the gospel that God’s power to save is manifested. “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” (Rom. 1:16).

Once the student obeys the gospel, the teaching must not stop. They need to be taught, “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Mat. 28:20). Paul said, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). A Christian cannot successfully engage in a war unless he has the weapons to win. Too often, a sinner is converted to Christ

and turns back unto the world simply because he has not been given the weapons to overcome the temptations of the world.

Jesus had a purpose to His teaching, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He, "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). Everyone is lost in sin until he is taught the gospel and obeys it. It should be the aim of every Christian to teach someone the gospel.

CONVICTIONS

Those who teach God's Word need strong convictions. Every teacher of God's Word must believe in the inspiration of the Bible. It is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God! "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). If a teacher does not have the conviction that the Bible is God's inspired word, he should not be allowed to teach it!

Teachers of God's Word need to emphasize that there were only six literal days of creation (Gen. 1:1-31). They need to emphasize that Moses is the inspired author of the Pentateuch. They must also teach that there was a worldwide flood in the days of Noah (Gen. 6-8). Teachers must emphasize that Jesus was born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Mat. 1:21-23). They must teach that He lived, was killed and arose from the grave (John 19:38-20:29).

Teachers should strengthen belief in God, Jesus, the Bible and the church. Christians need to be fortified and not weakened. Paul said, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11).

We live in perilous times. Teachers with conviction are needed to counteract those who have lost their faith in God's Word.

ENTHUSIASM

This writer has been privileged to study under teachers who were enthusiastic about teaching the Scriptures. It has also been the misfortune of this writer to be in a class where the teacher was indifferent to teaching and was not prepared for the task at hand.

Successful teachers are enthusiastic! Enthusiasm is the factor that will encourage students to be at every Bible class. It is contagious and breeds success. Lukewarmness is unacceptable to God. Christians at Laodicea were lukewarm. Jesus said, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16).

Teachers with enthusiasm look confident. They give the impression that they are prepared and believe in the material that is being taught. On the other hand, a teacher who is not prepared has nothing to be enthusiastic about. He gives that impression that it really does not make any difference what he teaches. Paul said, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col. 3:28). If the teacher is not enthusiastic about God's Word, how can the student be?

CHARACTERISTICS OF GODLY TEACHERS

There are a number of characteristics which distinguish the godly teacher of God's Word from the pessimistic teacher who never gets anything accomplished. The godly teacher will impart knowledge and motivate action. The pessimistic teacher imparts pessimism and defeatism.

Godly teachers are strong in the faith. They believe in the power of God's Word and are not ashamed to teach it, 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" (Rom. 1:16).

A godly teacher is faithful to God's Word. He is not "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). He abides in the doctrine of Christ. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

The teacher who is devoted to God is prepared. He is ready to give an answer to those who inquire. "But sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready always to give an answer to every man

that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15).

A godly teacher in humble. Arrogance and pride should not be a part of those who would teach God's Word. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Pet 5:6).

Love of people should be one of the characteristics of those who teach the Word of God. Love is the motivation behind the plan of salvation. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Love prompts action on the part of teachers to spend the night in Bible study or travel the world in order to teach the Word of life. Love is the motive that enables a teacher to study with those in sin, and tell them that they need to change their lives and be obedient to the commands of God. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). Love for God and fellowman should motivate every Christian to teach the Word of God.

Gentleness is a characteristic that godly teachers should exhibit. Teachers should speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Paul told Timothy to be gentle. “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves” (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

To teach with success, every Christian should develop the characteristics of a godly teacher. He should be strong in the faith, be faithful to God's Word, be prepared, put aside pride and arrogance for humility, love God, Christ and the people who are taught and develop a gentle attitude, one that leads people to obedience.

QUALIFICATIONS

Perhaps it is strange even to suggest that there are qualifications for teachers of God's Word. The only prerequisite to teach the Bible in some congregations is being a member of the church and having a beating heart. This could be one reason for the lack of Bible knowledge among many Christian today.

History teaches that when God's people are ignorant of His Word, they are in danger of falling away and being destroyed.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shall be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (Hoe. 4:6).

“Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst” (Isa. 5:13). When God's people have no knowledge of the Scriptures, apostasy is on the horizon.

The first qualification for one to be a teacher of God's Word is that he be a Christian. How can one teach that which he does not know or has not obeyed? Yet, there are congregations of the Lord's people that will invite a denominational teacher or preacher to speak to them. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). It is the height of disrespect to God and our Savior to have someone as a teacher of God's Word who does not love God or Christ enough to obey His Word!

Secondly, a teacher must love and respect the Word of God. The Scriptures should be pre-eminent in any Bible teacher's class. All will be judged by the Scriptures. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). There are many false doctrines being taught by those who do not respect or love the Bible as God's Word. A few of these are: (1) theistic evolution; (2) there is no pattern to follow in the Bible; (3) miracles are myths, and the list keeps growing as long as there are teachers who do not believe the Bible is God's Word.

Thirdly, teachers should be students of the Bible. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Preparation is the key to successful teaching. It be” with self preparation. Ezra prepared his heart to do and teach. Teachers of God's Word must spend much of their time in study to meet the needs of each student in their classes.

The fourth qualification that teachers of the Word of God need is training. The prerequisite to any successful endeavor is training.

There is not a person in the world who would want a doctor to perform open heart surgery on him if he has never been trained in open heart surgery. Yet, there are thousands of teachers every Sunday morning who operate on human souls who have never had one ounce of training! Bible teachers only have one to two hours a week to teach the most important subject in the world, God's Word. With the short amount of time teachers have each week, they need to be thoroughly trained to use every minute that they have been given. This is one of the reasons parents need to be Bible teachers in the home.

Teaching is a neglected work in many churches of the Lord. Because of this, there are multitudes of functionally illiterate Christians. They have obeyed the gospel, but they have not grown or matured in the faith. When a church has teachers who are not qualified or Christians who do not desire to teach, it is on the road to apostasy and the members are in danger of losing their souls. The Hebrews writer said,

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat (Heb. 5:12).

Sadly, this verse can apply to many Christian today.

WAYS TO ACCOMPLISH THE TASK

That there are a number of ways to accomplish the task of teaching God's Word is quite prevalent in the life of Jesus Christ. He used nature to illustrate His teaching. Jesus was a close observer of the natural world around Him. "Consider the lilies of the field" (Mat. 6:28). He spoke the parable of the fig tree (Luke 21:29-33). He also taught them the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7). These are but a few of the examples of nature He used to illustrate His teaching. The use of materials and visual aids reinforce the lesson being taught. There are many different kinds of audio-visual aids that will help teachers and students. One of the most common is the chalkboard. It can enhance every class. No class should be without one! The use of flannel boards, transparencies, filmstrips, flash cards, models and maps will enable the student, not only to

hear, but also to see. During gospel meetings, this writer likes to use charts on transparencies and make copies available for everyone to take home. The lesson keeps on teaching when a chart is taken home.

The use of the written page is one of the most effective ways to accomplish the task of teaching the Word of God. There are a number of excellent tracts available on different subjects that will aid any Bible student. They range in subjects from first principles on the church to refuting the moral issues in today's society. Below is a list of a few which are available to help any Bible student.

Tracts On The Church

1. What Will You Find In The Church of Christ In Your Community?—By Roy Deaver
2. Identifying The True Church—By Rodney V. Rutherford
3. What To Expect When You Visit The Church of Christ—By Calvin Barber
4. Is The Church of Christ A Denomination?—By V.E. Howard

Tracts On Worship

1. Instrumental Music in Worship—By V.E. Howard
2. The Principle Governing Worship—By Clayton Winters

Tracts On Baptism

1. Bible Baptism—By Perry Cotham
2. Bible Answers To Five Questions On Baptism—By Charles Crouch

Miscellaneous Subjects

1. Have You Counted The Cost If Your Soul Should Be Lost?—By Rodney V. Rutherford
2. The Abuse Of Drugs—By Thomas F. Eaves, Sr.
3. God's Plan of Salvation—By Charles Crouch
4. Homosexuality-Lifestyle or Perversion?—By Wayne Jackson
5. Shall We Have Women Preachers?—By Wayne Jackson
6. The Work Of Women In The Church—By Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

This is not a complete list of tracts that help in teaching the Word of God. These are samples of excellent tracts by sound gospel teachers.

Churches that have lectureships have a great impact in the teaching and strengthening of congregations. Lectureships can be centered around issues which are highly volatile in the brotherhood. When the lectures are put into a book or made available on audio and video tapes, they keep on teaching and strengthening.

Home Bible studies are one of the best ways to accomplish the task of teaching the Word of God. It is a more relaxed setting where the material can be focused on the needs of the individual student. Questions can be asked that may not be asked in a Bible school class. Those who do home Bible studies need to be prepared for questions about what the student is thinking. Home Bible studies are used to convert sinners to Christ, but they **MUST NOT STOP** at the point of conversion. New converts need just as much time in Bible study as they had before they obeyed the gospel. Temptation will come and new Christians need to be anchored in the faith. Paul said, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). To the babe in Christ, all things are now and they need to grow in Christ (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18). Home Bible studies will help in their growth.

There are many teachers who cannot accomplish the best job possible because they do not have the resources available to them. A good church library would be helpful to any teacher. A resource room that is well organized is worth its weight in gold. These things cost money, but most churches can afford a book a month or a packet of resource materials a month. After a few years, one will be surprised with the amount of material that can be available, not only to teachers, but to the whole as well.

CONCLUSION

Ezra set his heart to teach the law of the Lord. Teaching is basic to the imparting of the knowledge of God and His Word. This is how the church grows and every Christian should strive to become a teacher. The rewards of teaching God's Word are tremendous. One

day the faithful teacher will hear “WELL DONE” from the Master Teacher.

ENDNOTES

¹John W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 23.

²*Ibid.*, p. 188.

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GOD'S PATTERN FOR THE CHURCH

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In striving to be understood, we must define the terms found in the title of this chapter. By the word "God," we mean the one Deity who is comprised of three persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19; Eph. 4:4-6). He is the author of both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

By the word "Pattern," and its synonyms, we mean that the New Testament is an infallible static standard whereby God conveys His changeless gospel to mankind (Jude 3). To further define the word "pattern," let us study it as it appears in the New Testament. There are three words in the Greek New Testament that are translated pattern. "Tupos" is the word that is used more in the New Testament than any other. The Holy Spirit employed it some sixteen times. In the King James Version, the translators used eight different English words in translating the sixteen different appearances of "tupos." We shall give the English word and the citation of the text where it is found. Where the ASV (1901) translators have used a different word

to translate "tupos," it shall be given. We shall also do this with the other Greek words.

1. Print (twice used in John 20-25).
2. Figure (Acts 7:43; Rom. 5:14).
3. Fashion (Acts 7:44, ASV uses "figure").
4. Manner (Acts 23:25, ASV uses "form").
5. Form (Rom. 6:17, in a footnote ASV says "or pattern").
6. Example (1 Cor. 10:6, marginal note in KJV says "figures;" 1 Tim. 4:12, ASV uses "ensample").
7. Ensample (1 Cor. 10:11, marginal note in KJV has "or types," ASV uses "examples" and in the footnote, "by way of figure;" Phi. 3:17; 1 The. 1:7; 2 The. 3:9; 1 Pet. 5:3).
8. Pattern (Tit. 2:7, ASV uses "ensample;" Heb. 8:5).

Although we have not enumerated it, there is a compound form of "tupos" which is, "antitupos." It is translated "figure" in the KJV (Heb. 9:24, ASV has "pattern"; 1 Pet. 3:21, ASV uses "true likeness," ASV footnote has as "in the antitype").

The Greek word "hupodeigma" is the second word used some six times by the Holy Spirit.

1. It is translated "Patterns" in only one place (Heb. 9:23, ASV translates it "the copies").
2. Example (John 13:15; Heb. 4:11, 8:6, ASV translates it "a copy"; Jam. 5:10).
3. Ensample (2 Pet. 2:6, ASV uses "example").

"Hupotaposis" is the third original word having to do with a pattern or its equivalent employed by the Holy Spirit.

1. Pattern (1 Tim. 1:16, ASV uses "ensample").
2. Form (2 Tim. 1:13, ASV uses "pattern").

Although this word study could proceed much further, this will suffice to show what I mean by the word "pattern" in the title of this chapter.

By the word "church," we mean the institution that is comprised of all those who have been saved from their sins by the shed blood of Jesus Christ through belief and obedience to His gospel (Mat. 16:18; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 20:28; 2:47; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16; 1:16; 6:3-4, 17-18; 10:17; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21;

Rom. 10:16; 2 The. 1:8). We do not mean by the word “church” that it is one great “invisible body” made up of the different denominations (Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, etc.). Denominational churches are human institutions, bearing no connection with the church revealed in the New Testament. Hence, there are no saved accountable Christians in any denomination.

We therefore, are affirming that the New Testament of Jesus Christ is an inspired pattern, standard, model, rule, norm, law, doctrine and/or blueprint. Said pattern teaches or instructs by direct statements, examples and implication. Such is the manner whereby any language authorizes, instructs or directs anyone. Being a divine pattern, it reveals those unchanging principles characteristic of absolute objective and humanly attainable truth that are necessary to man’s salvation (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:15; Luke 8:11, 15; Mat. 5:6; Psa. 119:172; John 7:17; Eph. 3:3-4; Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). These sacred principles serve to mark out and identify in every age, society and culture the gospel and the church that is of, by and for Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father. Hence, to be led by the divine pattern is to do nothing more or less than that which is authorized by the New Testament of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17). Therefore, Paul could write to Timothy: “And the things that thou best heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

Because certain brethren have “sold out” “to their denominational pals in doctrine and in many cases in practice, we shall be noting their false doctrines as we study the divine pattern relative to the Lord’s church.

THE CHANGELESS BIBLE HAS BROUGHT US THE CHURCH

John 12:48 makes it clear that God has put into mankind’s hands the “standard book” whereby all will be judged. Being an absolute objective standard, it will read and mean the same way and thing on the judgement day as it does now (Rom. 14:10-12; Heb. 9:27). This means on that day, the Bible will teach the same thing it has always taught concerning: how to become a Christian, Christian living, and

all aspects of the Lord's church as it does today (Mat. 24:35; Gal. 1:6-9; Jude 3). We can and must understand what God demands of us (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Tim. 2:15; John 8:31-32; 2 Tim. 2:2; Luke 8:11). Yet, with these plain, frank, salient and candid biblical principles revealed to all who can understand his or her mother tongue, false teachers such as Rubel Shelly and Randy Harris have dogmatically opposed them. In their opposition, they have made some glaring contradictions. Let us notice some of their "backfires."

1. The Bible is the norm...BUT...man's attempts to understand it are "flawed."

2. One cannot understand the truth...BUT...one is grounded by the Bible.

3. "We can understand the divine will adequately" enough to obtain salvation...BUT..."our methods of inquiry and analysis are human...fallible" (Hence, truth cannot be known).

4. It is an arrogant attitude to think that you have the truth to which others must conform...BUT...that is exactly what Shelly and Harris think of their view; and they labor to get others to conform to it.¹

The apostle John wrote to Christians saying, "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:21). The Psalmist wrote.

O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more **understanding** than all my teachers for thy testimonies are my meditation. I **understand** more than the ancients, **because I keep thy precepts**. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for **thou hast taught me**. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! **Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way**. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Psa. 119:97-105).

The inspired writer of Proverbs declared

My, son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding, Yea, **if thou criest after knowledge**, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, If thou **seekest her** as silver, and **searchest** for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou **understand** the fear of the Lord, and find the **knowledge** of God. For **the Lord giveth**

wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding
(Pro. 2:1-6).

Paul declared. “Wherefore **be ye** not unwise, but **understanding what the will of the Lord is**” (Eph. 5:17; also see Eph. 3:3-4; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). Does this sound like man cannot know God’s Word? I think I will take the Holy Spirit inspired men over Shelly, Harris and company.

THE NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN FOR THE CHURCH CONTINUES TO STAND

The New Testament is instructive by the very nature of what it is. By this, I simply mean that it teaches men how to respond to and benefit from God’s love (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim 4:2). It is, therefore, a book of propositional truth. To say that something is “propositional” means the explicit statements of the Bible affirm that something is or is not the case. This is the only way the Bible has anything to say to anyone.

When faithful gospel preachers refer to the Bible as a “pattern” or that there is a “Pattern” for the church or the worship of God, all that is being said is that man is obligated to go to the Bible and, by proper division of the Word of God, determine what God wants done. In view of the biblical fact that God obligates us to do only that which He has authorized; and, that He does not demand of us what we are incapable of doing, it is rather obvious we must learn how and what the Bible authorizes and do it (Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11).

If the Bible is not “propositional,” it is no pattern and, therefore, irrelevant regarding how men should or should not conduct themselves. Hence, if such were the case, no one could question anyone else regarding right or wrong. I submit to the reader that the aforementioned conclusion is exactly the desire of those who oppose the New Testament as a pattern or divine blueprint.

Please note the following blasphemous statements.

1. “We reject a pattern theology...”
2. The Scripture “...certainly does not present an absolute blueprint for building a church.”

3. Such a pattern would stop the "...freedom for our own unique spiritual adventures in Christ, and at the same time, feel the tendency to judge others in theirs..."

4. In no uncertain terms it is asserted that the New Testament is not a "concrete example for the church to model."²

Again, notice how they contradict themselves. Shelly and Co. affirm that the New Testament does not authorize attacks on the church...BUT...that is exactly what they spend their time doing.³

As we study other Scriptures regarding the New Testament pattern for the church, we refer the reader to the comments on the word "pattern" in the introduction.

It is from the New Testament that we learn Jesus promised to build His church and that He fulfilled His promise (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:41-47). Contrary to the popular denominational concept of the church, Paul said there is "one body"; that "many members" make up the one body and it is the church (Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Rather than try to justify division in obligatory matters of the New Testament, the apostle Paul condemns such division (1 Cor. 1:10). He also declared, "walk by the same rule...mind the same thing" (Phi. 3:16). Someone might say the rule Paul directs us to follow is that we are to love God and each other. But, if one loves God he will keep the Lord's commandments (John 14:15). John wrote, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments" (John 5:2). **IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE PERSON WHO HAS THE MOST LOVE FOR GOD IS THE ONE WHO IS THE MOST EXACTING IN KNOWLEDGE OF AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD; *THE SECOND INCARNATION*, etc. NOTWITHSTANDING!**

DOES THE CHURCH ONLY EXIST IN GOD'S MIND?

Rubel Shelly has asserted: "The church has never existed except in the Father's mind."⁴ Is brother Shelly's statement a true one? Absolutely not. The rest of this chapter will deal with the abundant biblical evidence that refutes Shelly's false statement.

The prophet Isaiah foretold that the house of God (family of God) would be established in Jerusalem in the last days (Isa. 2:24). Isaiah's contemporary declared the same (Mic. 4:1-2). Daniel foretold that

God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44).

In Matthew 3:1-2 and Mark 1:15, John the Immerser and Jesus declared that God's kingdom was near. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for the kingdom to come (Mat. 6:9-10). He also promised to build His church (Mat. 16:18). He used the word "church" and "kingdom" interchangeably, applying them equally to the same institution that He promised to build (Mat. 16:18-19). Jesus said His kingdom would come with power in the lifetime of some of those who was with Him while He was alive on the earth (Mark 9:1).

The power that accompanied the coming of the church/ kingdom came upon the apostles of Christ through the medium of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Christ (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). Luke declared that people on that day were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:41,47). The events of Pentecost were in the last days (Acts 2:17-21). These things transpired in the city of Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:12; 2:1-5). Some of the disciples were still alive (Acts 1:15-2:9). Thus, the prophecies of the previous paragraph, as well as others of like nature, were fulfilled.

Paul told Timothy how he should conduct himself in the church, which is God's family (1 Tim. 3:15). He also reminded the church at Colosse they was in the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13-14). How dare Shelly or anyone else declare such a blatant falsehood as that the church exists only in the mind of God? What does Shelly and his company of spiritual friends do with such plain statements of God's Word? May the truth of the aforementioned scriptures as well as others be ignored with impunity?

The New Testament continues to instruct us regarding the church. Paul said there is one body (Eph. 4:4). He said there are many members in one body in Christ (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:20). Is the "one body" the same thing as the church? Yes, it is Paul wrote that Christ is, "head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:22-23; cf., Col. 1:18). In contradistinction to the oneness of the church revealed in the New Testament, Shelly and friends would have us believe any church naming Christ as Savior is acceptable to God.

They constantly teach in such a way as to befriend and fellowship churches which have human' heads, human creeds and human names while attacking those of us who expose them.

These false brethren revel in preaching many different gospels, faiths, baptisms, churches, creeds and rules. In fact, they affirm that the church of Christ is just another denomination.

Note the following erroneous palaver. "We must learn to exhibit unity in Christ. We must find a way to forego rancor and quarreling about our denominational traditions."⁵

The obvious diversity we encounter in the body of Christ frightens us until we realize that unity and uniformity are not equivalent terms....That diversity is frightening only when we are thinking in term of a monolithic institution. In a living organism, there can be unity in diversity. In an inflexible institution, diversity can only be disruptive.⁶

It does not take a Solomon to see that Shelly and Co. are ready to accept just about anyone that would look up, smile at the sky and say, "Lord, Lord." However, the so-called tolerant are many times intolerant and the so-called broadminded are often exceedingly narrow minded. They offer nothing but love and kisses to their denominational friends, but, to folks like me, they have nothing to offer but a sneer and snarl. Brethren, you just have not known love, until you have experienced the hypocritical "love" of those who would loose us from what God in His word has bound on us.

YOU CAN IDENTIFY THE LORD'S, CHURCH

The following list contains a few of the marks of identity of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:18). Faithful churches believe and teach that:

1. there is only one true and living God (Eph. 4:6);
2. man, being created in the image of God, has a nature that is endowed with the faculties that allow him/her to assimilate and rationally examine evidence that is adequate to draw an absolute objective conclusion (make a knowledge claim) (Isa. 1:18; Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19; 24:25; 2 The. 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 3:15; John 8:32; Acts 2:36; 1 John 2:3-5);

3. ...faith is not contrary to knowledge (John 20:27-29; John 6:69, ASV);
4. ...man can and must know that God exists (Rom. 1:19-21; 2 The. 1:8; 1 John 2:13; 4:2, 6);
5. ...man can and must know that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God (Acts 2:36; John 20:30-31);
6. ...on the basis of God's word (testimony, evidence) saving faith (belief) is formed (Rom. 10:17);
7. ...Godly sorrow works the repentance that God demands of men; said repentance evidencing itself in the reformation of one's life (2 Cor. 7:10; Acts 17:30; Mat. 3:8);
8. ...one can and must confess Christ as the Son of God (Mat. 10:32; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37);
9. ...a believing, penitent, confessing person must be baptized (immersed in water, Acts 8:36; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12) into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in order to obtain the remission of sins (Mat. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38);
10. ...persons who are baptized for the remission of sins are at the same time and manner baptized into Christ wherein God has located all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Gal. 3:27; Eph.1:3); hence, the process whereby Jesus adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47);
11. ...there is one body or church (Mat. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:20);
12. it was founded by Christ (Mat. 16:18);
13. Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23);
14. ...the Bible is the church's only rule of faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17);
15. ...God is glorified in the name Christian (1 Pet. 4:16);
16. ...the Lord's church was identified and referred to in the Bible (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2);
17. ...membership in Christ's church is essential to salvation (Eph. 5:23);
18. ...there is but one Gospel that the church is to preach and it is God's only power to save (Mark 16:15; Gal. 1:8-9; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:14);

19. ...everyone is to walk by the same rule if scriptural unity (oneness) is to prevail (Phi. 3:16; John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10);
20. ...division is right when it involves the faithful separating themselves from sinners (1 Cor. 6:17);
21. ...faithful brethren will contend for the faith that has been once for all delivered (Jude 3);
22. ...the New Testament reveals God's will regarding the kind of worship God demands (John 4:24; Acts 20:7, 9; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Eph. 6:18; 1 The. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:8); and,
23. ...the New Testament reveals the organization, work, mission and destiny of the church of Christ (Mat. 17:5; 28:18; 1 Tim. 3:2-7; Tit 1:6-9; Eph. 4:11; Acts 20:28, 35; 1 The. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17, 19; Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 3:8-12; Mark 16:15; 2 Tim. 4:7-8).

A number of other items could be added to the above list. But the items in the list are sufficient to refute the idea that the New Testament is not a pattern for the church of Christ. In summation, we can say with the inspired Peter.

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that in in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

CONCLUSION

If what we have preached and practiced over the years on the above as well as other fundamental matters is wrong, then let Shelly and Co. do more than belittle the above proof text. Let them explain to us what God intended for us to learn from such scriptures. How they will attempt their task we do not know. Why? Because they do not believe in attacking the church. Of course like other hypocrites of another time, "They say and do not."

Shelly and Co. tell us we should look to Jesus in the books of the gospel for our model.⁷ But, Shelly really does not believe or practice

what he teaches. If he did, he would engage in debating like our Lord did. Have Shelly and Co. risen above such bouts of contentiousness? Are they better than our Lord?

Brother J. Porter Wilhite wrote

Dr. Jeff D. Ray, in the Fort Worth, Texas, “Star Telegram” gave three reasons why the church of Christ today is growing faster than others. He said, “They, both preacher and people, do stick to the Bible; (2) They definitely believe something and know what they believe; (3) They defend and boldly seek to propagate their views on every part of the ground.”⁸

None of the above three points are believed or practiced by Shelly and Co. For over ten years (for others, much longer) such apostates as Shelly have done all within their power to oppose the New Testament pattern for Christianity. Many churches occupy the same ground as Shelly and cannot be described by the above three points. In fact, they are ashamed of and opposed to them.

Such change of conduct evidences that many of those making up the church of Christ have lost their love for the truth. With that loss, they have forfeited their conviction. Thereby, they stand opposed to the very gospel that is their only source of salvation. Rather than love the truth that reproves and rebukes them in their sins, they hate and attack it. Such persons are especially malignant toward those who are content to submit to, live by and contend for the New Testament pattern. They are best described in Holy Writ by Jude who wrote of such persons.

These are spots; in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. (Jude 12-13; Also see 2 Pet. 2:10-22).

Brethren, be not dismayed. Men change, but the Bible does not. God’s truth is objective and humanly attainable. Let us, therefore, “Hold fast the form [pattern, ASV] of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13).

ENDNOTES

¹Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris, *The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21st Century Church* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Pub. Co., 1992), pp. XV, 17-19, 81, 110, 187-189, 191.

²Shelly and Harris, pp. 31, 36, 79, 242.

³Shelly and Harris, p. 88.

⁴Stated by Rubel Shelly, Missouri Street Church of Christ, West Memphis, Arkansas, April 20-21, 1990. Curtis A. Cates, "The 'Old Paths' Mentality," *Yokefellow* (September 25, 1990).

⁵Shelly and Harris, p. 201.

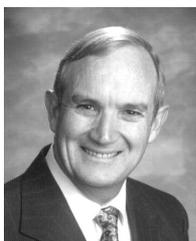
⁶Shelly and Harris, p. 60.

⁷Shelly and Harris, pp. 14, 28-29.

⁸J. Porter Wilhite, *Modern Churches and the Church* (Oklahoma City, OK: Telegram Book Co., 1956), pp. 25-26.

GOD'S PATTERN FOR THE HOME—HUSBANDS

Curtis A. Cates



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He is married to Annette Bingham Cates and they have two children: Curtis A. Jr., and Daniel Frazier.

INTRODUCTION

As never before in this generation, or perhaps in any generation in America (and in the Lord's church), God's pattern is under attack. Especially is this seen relative to His regulations concerning the home, the oldest sacred institution known to man. God's authority in the home goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden, for there He made the original pair male and female (Gen. 1:26-27). As our Maker, God had/has the divine right to govern His creatures, His very offspring. He alone has the ultimate authority in the home.

God wants His offspring to be as happy as they can possibly be. He knows what is in man and thus is keenly aware of what brings true happiness and fulfillment. His divine pattern for the home is designed for that very purpose. When God's instructions are heeded,

we find our greatest joy; when abandoned and neglected, we confront our most dreaded tragedy and misery. The home should be a shelter and shield from the assaults and sorrows of the world, but, a failure in the home can bring our greatest pain.

Every person in the home has his own part in making the home a beautiful, blessed place, a haven of happiness and security. For any member of the family to fail in honoring God's pattern, the whole household is affected, and the intended happiness and peace of the family is marred. Just as surely as the one flower can send its fragrance throughout a room, the influence of one beautiful, generous, loving, sacrificing mate, parent, or child can enrich the happiness of the home. However, for the home to be truly happy, the husband, the wife, and each child must honor God's divine pattern for the home. As a smooth running engine depends upon every part, the beautiful painting upon the combination of each color, and the pleasant musical harmony upon each note, harmony and pleasure in the family depend upon each family member.

In a day of decadence and degeneracy, in a day of promiscuity and compromise, in a day of situation ethics and the new morality, in a day of license and no objective standard, in a day of rebellion and blasphemy, in a day of selfishness and bigotry, in a day of sodomy and living together, in a day of child and adult delinquency, in a day of glorifying Humanistic, atheistic philosophy and theology, the great Bellview church, their splendid elders, and their gifted and beloved evangelist, Bobby Liddell, are to be commended for this outstanding lectureship on the great theme, "God's Pattern for Christian Living." This chapter shall investigate God's sacred pattern for the husband.

MATURITY

God's pattern for the husband requires that he be mature. Marriage is not for children. It is a serious responsibility, and some men and women never gain the maturity necessary to fulfil their responsibilities in marriage. Great and sincere dedication is necessary to make a marriage work. Paul's admonition to the Corinthians is also appropriate for the Christian husband, "quit you [equip yourself] like men [like a mature individual], be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

Very quickly, the new husband realizes that he must depart from childish things and from a child's lack of concern with food, shelter, and clothing. He is now the head of his own household, the one responsible for the welfare of his wife, and of his children when they come along. He must make grown-up decisions and meet grown-up responsibilities. The immature need not apply!

LOVE

God's pattern for the husband requires that he love his wife. Genuine love upon which marriage must be established is not something into which people "fall." Biblical love is taught and learned, "that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children" (Tit. 2:4). One must build the proper environment for love to develop, to blossom, and to grow; and, that environment must continue after marriage!

The husband is commanded, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25). He must love his wife as his own body (Eph. 5:28); to love her is to love himself (Eph. 5:28). This love is to be reciprocated by his wife (Tit. 2:4).

The wife is to be honored by the husband.

Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered (1 Pet. 3:7).

True love uplifts the wife, and keeps itself only to her. The husband who loves his wife as Christ does the church never acts in such way as to leave the impression that he does not love her—nor does he love other women. He never conducts himself in any way leading to an occasion wherein his mate might come to doubt his true and pure love of and loyalty to her.

Solomon, in the Song of Solomon, demonstrated great love of and devotion to the young lady from Shulam (6:13), whom he dated (1:1-3:5) and who became his wife (3:6-5:1). (Later, he became a fool and married additional, foreign wives). Notice how he praised her attractiveness to him (1:9-11); note how he sat her with him at his table in his banqueting house (1:12) and how "his banner over [her]

was love” (2:4). Solomon was wise enough not to ridicule her in public or to talk down to her, he built her up and praised her, even in areas where she felt self-conscious. Whereas she felt unattractive in her appearance, being sunburned (1:5-7), he praised her appearance and assured her that she was special as no other in the kingdom (1:9-11; 4:1-15; 6:4-10). His wife was not the object of his jokes. He did not make light of and embarrass her before others. Such undermines one’s own marriage relationship and decreases the fulfillment, unity, and joy in the marriage.

The wife’s self-worth depends in large measure upon the husband’s encouragement and praise of her. (Wise husbands will not forget it; treat her like the queen of your home, and she will become just that, a queen). Just as a person nourishes his own body, the husband should give his wife the nourishment of praise, expressions of gratitude, and honor.

Does not love itself call for such honor? Did you not treat her with honor, respect, and praise before you married? How can such be diminished after marriage? Is she worthy of less honor, now that she is your wife? Why, the appreciation for ones mate should be felt and demonstrated increasingly through the years.

Love must also include the recognition that marriage is the closest human relationship. This calls for the husband and the wife to be beat friends. With one’s mate, does he share the joys, sorrows, confidences, et al., of life; this is God’s design. “Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life” (Ecc. 9:9). And, one should never forget that he *and his* wife are on the same team...sometimes against the world, it may seem!

PROVIDENCE

God’s pattern for the husband requires that he provide for his wife. This has in every age been the Lord’s requirement. Moses commanded, “If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish” (Exo. 21:10). The husband must make honest gain from honest labor (Rom. 12:17), even at the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3:19), in providing sustenance, clothing, and the duties of marriage for his mate. One not prepared physically, emotionally, intellectually, et al., thus to provide for a family should

not marry. Paul's warning is clear. "But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

The person contemplating marriage must realize that a wife and children have a right to the necessities of life—food, shelter, clothing, etc. He is especially responsible for those things being provided. Unless he is incapacitated by some debilitating illness or by some other unavoidable situation, he is not to attempt to shift this responsibility to others. "Show thyself a man!" (It is understood that the wife, at times and under certain circumstances, needs to work outside the home to assist in providing for the needs of the family).

Many families have been devastated over money matters. Though the standard of living is higher in the United States than in other nations, yet financial problems are often the cause of severe disagreements and strain. A penurious husband and/or a wife who is never satisfied with what she has (or vice versa) can work havoc on a marriage. "But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:6-8). Both must learn to live within their income.

CLEAVE

God's pattern for the husband, His pattern from the beginning, requires that he cleave unto his wife (Mark 10:6; Gen. 1:26-27). "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24; cf., Mat. 19:4-5). The man leaves his parents for his wife—and, he gives up all others to be truly devoted to his wife. He is married to *her*! Many have had their marriages undermined by friction caused by *either or both* sets of parents. Some parents, unfortunately, are responsible for breaking up their children's marriages. We must loose the apron strings when the time comes. Is not preparation for marriage one of the very goals of rearing the children? Then, we should not be overly possessive. The son is to "leave" and "cleave" (Eph. 5:31).

When the husband cleaves to his wife, he is to blend his life to her; they two become one. Note the oneness of Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam. 2:19). It is no longer “my” and “mine”; it is now “ours.” They now will go through life hand in hand.

He will keep himself to only his wife for a lifetime. The universal regulation is, “So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (Mat. 19:6). The person not adhering to this regulation by the Lord shall be called an adulterer (Rom. 7:14); Why? It is because that is what he or she is! (The sole exception to this rule, or pattern, is adultery, in which case the innocent [if the mate is truly innocent] has the right scripturally to remarry). True married love is to endure, as strong as death itself (Song of Sol. 8:6). He who violates God’s regulation in marriage is in God’s eyes a heinous criminal (Job 31:9-12); God “hates putting away” (Mal. 2:16).

We *must* make our marriages work, divorce is not the solution. God’s Word, learned, respected, and heeded is! Those wanting to please God, to go to heaven, and to have happy marriages must. 1. realize that marriage is a lifelong contract—till death do us part; 2. realize that divorce does not solve problems—it compounds the problem (the same problems are most often taken into later “marriages”); 3. never allow the word “divorce” to enter one’s vocabulary there are other solutions; 4. realize that one can learn to love again (in the case where one says, “Well, I just do not love him [or her] any more”)—one learns to love again by remembering and retracing the steps by which he (or she) came to love his (her) mate before and early in the marriage relationship; 5. seek the Lord’s wisdom and guidance through study of His Word and prayer (preferably, with one’s mate), and perhaps through the help of God-respecting, competent brethren who can help—God’s Word is the *greatest* work ever written on marriage (which one would truly expect from Him who made us and who instituted marriage); 6. realize, in the case where only one of the mates is interested in saving the marriage, that *agape* love can bring about a change in one’s husband or wife—“a better world begins with me”; just so does a better marriage begin with me—I change my wife by becoming a better husband (the

principle is seen in 1 John 4:19 KJV, “We love him, because he first loved us”), not by trying directly to change her; and, 7. divorce any other woman (or man) from your mind (if you have become interested/infatuated by that person)—you have *no right* to that person! Solomon observed, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, And obtaineth favor of Jehovah” (Pro. 18:22), but he warned the husband to.

Drink water out of thine own cistern, And running waters out of thine own well. Should thy springs be dispersed abroad, And springs of water in the streets? Lot them be for thyself alone, And not for strangers with thee. Lot thy fountain be blessed; And rejoice in the wife of thy youth. An a loving hind and a Pleasant doe, Lot her breasts satisfy thee at all times; And be thou ravished always with her love. For why shouldest thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, And embrace the bosom of a foreigner? For the ways of man we before the eyes of Jehovah (Pro. 5:15-21).

Dear reader, what does your word mean to you? Do your vows before God to be faithful to your wife mean nothing, when you promised to be faithful to your wife in sickness and in health, et al., as long as the two of -you shall live? Adulterers shall not enter heaven (Rev. 21:8; at al.).

DUE BENEVOLENCE

God’s pattern for the husband requires that “the husband render unto the wife due benevolence” (1 Cor. 7:3-5, KJV). When a couple marries, Paul states, the husband’s body belongs to the wife and the wife’s body to the husband. They are not to withhold themselves one from the other except by *mutual consent for a time* of mourning, sickness, etc., after which time they come back together, “that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” The husband (and the wife) must remember that man was created male and female, with natural am drives, which find scriptural fulfillment only in marriage. It is an important, beautiful, rewarding part of marriage. The neglect of the sexual relationship or the with holding of oneself as “punishment” undermines and can bring disaster to the marriage. The mate who in not fulfilled at home may be tempted to seek fulfillment. elsewhere. Such is adultery (and is condemned by God), but the selfish, unwise, and husband or wife who does not show this “due benevolence

[lover]” is certainly not innocent if the unfulfilled mate finds sexual gratification with another.

Solomon's wife of his youth (who later departed from God's pattern and married foreign wives who further led his heart from God and marital faithfulness) refused to allow Solomon to be with her on one occasion. When Solomon came in late one evening and asked his sisterly love to allow him into the bedroom to be with her, she selfishly or disinterestedly responded, “I have put off my garment; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them” (Song of Sol. 6:2-3). Fortunately, she came to her second thoughts and Solomon handled the problem with wisdom. Countless marriages are destroyed because of neglecting one's sexual responsibility to his mate. The sexual relationship is an intimate, tender, sacred expression of genuine, devoted, mutual, and united love. “Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

The husband (like the wife) must not enter the marriage relationship with a selfish attitude, as did the wife of Solomon. While they were dating (Song of Sol. 1:1-3:5), this young lady of Shulam had a selfish, possessive attitude. “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (2:16). Her major attitude was, what can he do for me? Notice her growth after their marriage (their wedding procession, marriage, and honeymoon are seen in 3:6-5:1); “I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine” (6:3). She is still somewhat selfish and is too possessive in attitude, yet she has now placed the major emphasis upon belonging to her husband. However, note her growth in 7:10; “I am my beloved's; and his desire is toward me”—no longer selfish.

The attitude of the husband should be that he will strive to meet the needs of his mate. When one does this, his wife will reciprocate (and vice versa). (Though there are exceptions, this is the general rule). His attitude must be, what can I do for her—not, what can she do for me. This type spirit pays great dividends. He will shield and comfort her, and he strives to make her happy. She has left mother and father, the securities of the home where she was reared and trained, to go with her husband. She has severed cherished, precious ties of her youth. The wife now looks with faith, confidence, and

trust into the face of the husband into whose hands she has committed her life and welfare. The loving Christian husband will not betray that trust. He will lead them into a life of excitement and joy, not into a life of misery and betrayal. The sacred trust into which he has entered and to which he has pledged himself will be fulfilled; he will seek her greatest good and well being. He will help her to become a noble, beautiful example of precious womanhood. God's man *will* be true to this sacred trust.

TENDER

God's pattern for the husband is that the husband is to be kind and tender to his wife. Having instructed the wives relative to their chaste and becoming behavior, Peter moved to instruct the husbands. "Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge [the husband should make every effort to understand his wife and to learn the "art" of marriage], giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7). And, the Golden Rule certainly applies in marriage (Mat. 7:12; cf., Eph. 4:32). Why is it that very often, we are much more kind to others than to the closest people on earth to us, our mates and our children?

The wise husband does not ridicule or talk down to his wife. He is not sarcastic, nor does he attempt to embarrass or belittle her. Making her the brunt of his joke in public undermines their intimacy when they are alone. Paul gives excellent advice to all of us, including husbands: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings [quarreling]" (Phi. 2:14, KJV); "be tenderly affectioned one to another, in honor preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10); "Love suffereth long, and in kind" (1 Cor. 13:4). (When disagreements do arise, love "fights fair"). Solomon observed, "That which maketh a man to be desired in his kindness" (Pro. 19:22). He is possessed of self-control, patience, and integrity; he is sufficiently self-assured, self-respecting, and strong to be gentle and tender. He refrains from those unkind and angry acts, words, and looks which "cut to the quick"; sharp, bitter words can sting like arrows, penetrating to the depths of the heart, often intentionally causing pain to his devoted companion. If "A righteous man regardeth the life [the feelings of

his heart] of his beast” (Pro. 12:10), certainly the righteous husband honors the feelings of the heart of his wife, those gentle emotions, easily hurt. And, the closer the relations in life, especially in the home, the greater the pain inflicted by bitter, thoughtless, rude, and sharp word or deed. How refreshing and comforting, on the other hand, are thoughtful, tender, encouraging, sympathetic, reassuring words to one’s helpmeet!

Tenderness also includes and necessitates that the husband (or wife) accept his wife as she is. None of us has “sprouted any wings”; none is perfect, including our mates. Husband, when you married your wife, she had imperfections, but your love caused you to overlook them. You emphasized her many positive qualities and de-emphasized the negative ones. “Love covereth a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). Therefore, “be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32).

APPRECIATION

God’s pattern for the husband requires that he appreciate his wife. She deserves to be assured and reassured that she is needed, that she is the only one for him, that she is (out of all the women in the world) very special to him. He needs to demonstrate this to her daily in very thoughtful ways. Oh, how this draws the couple increasingly closer as the years come and go! “A worthy woman who can find? For her price is far above rubies” (Pro. 31:10). “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, And obtaineth favor of Jehovah” (Pro. 18:22); “a prudent wife is from Jehovah” (Pro. 19:14), “the crown of her husband” (Pro. 12:4).

The wise husband will demonstrate his appreciation in many precious and sacrificial ways. He will not forget those seemingly small gestures of kindness. That gift of perfume (as Solomon gave his wife—Song of Sol. 5:5), or flowers, or a new outfit of clothes will *demonstrate* such appreciation. Do not expect your wife to read your mind. Elkanah felt himself “better to thee [Hannah] than ten sons” (1 Sam. 1:8).

LEADERSHIP

God's pattern for the husband requires that he be the proper leader, the head of the wife. As God is the head of Christ, so "the head of the woman is the man" (1 Cor. 11:3). "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). This relationship does not indicate superiority versus inferiority, but a difference in role and in areas of responsibility. Christ is not inferior to God, both the husband and the wife are equal before God, they are one in Christ. The husband must realize, though, that his responsibility involves financial, moral, ethical, and spiritual responsibilities. If he humbles himself before his head, Christ, the woman will not be reticent to submit to his headship, knowing that he will do what is best for her welfare, protection, and growth as well as for the children. The Bible also says, "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear [reverence] of Christ" (Eph. 5:21). The thoughtful husband will not "lord it over" the wife. He is not a dictator or a tyrant! He will carry out his leadership responsibility in love, considering also the wise counsel and wishes of his wife.

The husband must assume his leadership role. Eve was told in the Garden, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). Jehovah said of Abraham, "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice" (Gen. 18:19). Joshua did likewise (Jos. 24:15). To abdicate the husband's responsibility is grievously to sin! It is your fall time job, husband, not to be assumed on an inconsistent basis. "Show thyself a man!" Do not forsake your role as husband and cause your wife to feel she must assume your God-given responsibility!

Assume your responsibility and headship in religious matters. How tragic it is to forsake and disobey the command, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4)! The greatest bond which should exist between husband and wife is their common, mutual love for the Lord. Some husbands love and are devoted to their wives, but they fail their mates here. They want them to serve the Lord and bring up their children in the Lord alone. In the greatest

responsibility of the marriage, he abdicates his responsibility. How tragic, how wrong to treat one's wife! In the deepest area of love, sympathy, and devotion, the wife must go it alone. She must learn of God alone, become a Christian alone, worship, alone, serve the Lord alone, bear the responsibility of rearing the children in the Lord alone, and approach God's throne alone. Extremely sad, if his attitude persists, she will hear God say, "Well done," alone.

How wonderful, dear husband, it would be if you were to unite with her in the Lord! Think of the burdens lightened and the smile brightened, of the enhanced joys of the marriage relationship and the more close-knit union of hearts, of the renewed strength and hope through prayer and the heightened comfort and blessing through God's grace. Think of the new zest and excitement of having a family—husband, wife, and children—traveling hand in hand unto that "land that is fairer than day."

COMMUNICATION

God's pattern for the husband requires that he communicate and share plans with his wife. When my wife (to be) and I were dating, I just could not be with her enough. What about you? With her in Evergreen, Alabama, and me in Montgomery, I would rise at 4:00 a.m. to throw papers, go then to college at Alabama Christian, and work at a service station until after dark. Then, at the close of day, I would go by the post office, write Annette and put it into the mail drop, and return home, waiting in anticipation to the receiving of a letter from her the next day. The weekends were great, for on the Lord's day, I would get to journey to my preaching appointment and to Evergreen to be with Annette. You were like that too, were you not? Question: Why is it that this communication and time spent together often do not persist after we marry? Such failure can work disaster to one's marriage. We are to "walk in love," not allowing even added responsibilities and a busy lifestyle to interfere.

It is not enough not to be bitter toward or to mistreat one's wife. Not to speak and not to spend time together is destructive. One has observed that a garden without weeds is helpful, but a garden full of beautiful, fragrant flowers is beautiful. Marriages flourish and problems dissipate where togetherness and communication persist. The

wife is made happy when she is in the planning of family activities and pursuits; she has much to contribute to those plans and ideas. When he takes her into his deliberations and concerns, she is encouraged and her dignity and self-respect are enhanced. Thereby, he is made stronger for the tasks at hand, fortified for life's challenges. He knows that he has strong backing, a sympathetic ear, and a place of refuge at home. There, he is as a king, and she is queen. She wants to share his joys and triumphs; she enjoys rejoicing also. And, she wants to help bear and shield her husband from the burdens of life; she can cushion him from much of the pain. She wants to be and is the righteous husband's inspiration to accomplish great things. The truism is, "Behind every great man there is a great woman." (Of course, the husband can also be a tremendous inspiration to his wife). Husband, why allow yourself to be crushed (or nearly so) beneath the burdens of life, grievous to be borne, when your loving companion can help you bear up under them? What folly it is! Is your wife a child, too immature to help you face life's difficulties? Did you not vow to love her and to share life with her, "for better or for worse"? Give her the credit she deserves; she is a woman, not a child.

Solomon was wise in these areas. While dating, he longed to be with this young lady. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, that are in the clefts of the rock [she was playing hard to get; as many young ladies]....Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; For sweet in thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song of Sol. 2:13-14). Did this end after they married (5:2-8:14)? He continued to communicate with her, desiring to spend much quality time with her, to look into her eyes and into the depths of her heart and to praise her (7:1-9; et al.). "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, The companions harken for thy voice: Cause me to hear it" (8:13). Of course, his wife continued building the environment for love to continue to blossom and flourish after marriage as she had previously.

CONCLUSION

Husband, give heed to the Lord's instructions for marriage. Be as happy as you can possibly be. Do not deprive yourself of life's

most precious joys in serving the Lord. Refrain from selfishness, and seek the Lord's guidance as you seek to glorify the Lord in your marriage.

ENDNOTES

Some of the ideas on the Song of Solomon are from Ed Wheat, M.D., *Love Life for Every Married Couple* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990).

GOD'S PATTERN FOR THE HOME—WIVES

Joe Gilmore



Joe Gilmore, Jr., has been preaching the gospel for over fifty years and is now working with the church in San Lorenzo, California. He attended Abilene Christian University, East Central State University and San Jose University.

A Creek Indian, he lectures for the Federal Government on Indian Culture and has recently been selected by five of the Indian nations as spokesman and representative to Washington for over four hundred Indian nations. This is an even greater honor than that bestowed on his grandfather who was "Chief of Chiefs" of the Creek Nation.

Brother Gilmore is a debater, lecturer, preacher, rancher and oil producer. He and his wife, Joy, have one daughter and one

granddaughter.

The first place woman ever occupied was that of wife. It is the one for which she was created, and the only one in which she can be, in all respects, at her best or worst Marriage is serious business. The wife must view marriage as an indissoluble union with one man involving the birth and education of children, homemaking, and house-keeping. These are not matters of choice but of obligation.

A wife may win the plaudits of the world for her contribution to medical and scientific research, art, poetry, or music, yet if she fails in the home, she is indeed a failure. This kind of failure results in shattering experiences. A successful marriage can be a little bit of heaven on earth if it is in a place of holiness and happiness.

The position of Eve in the first home in Eden was, in some particulars similar to that of every wife. Adam had met his superior in the Creator, his inferiors in the animals, but neither supplied him with the companionship and help of an angel. This is why he was spoken of as being "alone" (Gen. 2:18). In view of man's condition, the Lord said, "I will make him an help meet for him." The word "meet" in this passage means suitable. God then created woman as a suitable companion of man. Paul makes this dear, "For the man is

not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1 Cor. 11:8-9). This does not suggest that the wife is inferior to her husband nor that she is a slave.

Since God made woman especially for man, her value is inestimable. Solomon made this observation, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord” (Pro. 18:22). Also, the same wise man said, “A prudent wife is from the Lord” (Pro. 19:14). God made woman for man. Man, therefore, can have no more valuable asset than a good wife.

The wife must make her contribution toward success in the home. The Bible makes certain requirements of the wife.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE WIFE

The desire of the wife must be to her husband. This is the way it is stated in the Bible, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband” (Gen. 3:16). The wife must not desire to be with another man, whether that other one be single or married. Godly wives want husbands to whom they can commit their very lives.

The wife is commanded to be submissive to her husband. Paul commands, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). This command is repeated, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord” (Col. 3:18). Peter teaches the same lesson, adding the reason for woman’s submission,

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

Peter gives Sarah as an example of the submissive wife,

For aft this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (1 Pet. 3:5-6).

Let it be known that Peter immediately added that husbands are to deal with their wives with tenderness, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as

unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7).

The wife is not inferior, she is only different from man. Woman was taken from the rib or side of man (Gen. 2:22). Someone has said:

God did not take woman from man’s head that she might rule over him, nor yet from man’s feet that he might trample upon her. God took the woman from man’s side that she might be his companion and helper throughout life. From man’s side she was taken, and by man’s side her highest usefulness can be attained, her sweetest joys realized.

Women are equal with men in spiritual privileges, but subordinate to them in public activities.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28).

Unity of privilege does not mean uniformity of practice. Subordination, dependence and difference of nature are the three reasons the Lord assigned for the non-participation of woman in leading public worship (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:13-14). In the early church, women did not preach, pray in mixed company, or teach over men in public.

The husband is the head of the wife. Paul states, “The head of the woman is the man” (1 Cor. 11:3). He further states, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). A home with two heads is a house filled with trouble.

Wives must obey their husbands. This is a Bible requirement. “Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” (1 Pet. 3:6). Taking the word “obey” out of the marriage ceremony does not release a woman from this divine requirement.

A wife must not refuse her husband the “duty” of marriage.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the woman due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto her husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband. and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (1 Cor. 7-2-5).

Again Paul says, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13.4). There must be mutual love and affection in the home.

Wives are to reverence their husbands. “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph. 5:33). This means that the wife must respect and appreciate her husband. This will pay great dividends.

Wives must love their husbands. This love must be mutual. When this good condition exists, children are drawn close together in love. “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children” (Tit. 2:4).

If at all possible, wives should bear children unto their husbands. To Eve, the first wife, God said, “Thou shalt bring forth children” (Gen. 3:16). We also read, “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1 Tim. 5:14). God has not placed a limit as to how many children a couple may have.

Wives are to “guide the house” (1 Tim. 5:14). There is much more to keeping a home than drying dishes, sweeping the floor, and cooking meals. An atmosphere of love, cheerfulness, and true friendliness must be maintained. If wives make it their responsibility to make the home cheerful, bright, tidy, but never stiff; keep its doors open to the husband’s friends and the playmates of children, they will not have occasion to wonder where their husbands and children are.

Wives are to win their husbands by good conversation. Peter speaks to women who have unsaved husbands.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;—But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Pet. 3:1-4).

The expression “obey not the word” refers to obedience to the gospel. The expression “without the word” refers to the word of the wife. The husbands of Christian wives may be won to the gospel

without a word from the wife. The word “conversation” means behavior or manner of life and in so translated in some versions. The Christian wife is to set a proper example before her unbelieving husband. If a wife is to win her husband she must place the church first in her own life. If she lets little excuses keep her away from the services, then the husband knows that her religion is rather shallow or superficial. Through the years, a consistent Christian life will win others to Christ and the church. A godly woman who has convictions and will stand up for them, who genuinely loves the church Christ died to establish, who will not criticize it, its members, and its leaders before her non-Christian husband, who will not miss a single service unless providentially hindered, who reads her Bible every day, who teaches the children how to pray, who manifest patience and understanding through the trials and misfortunes of life, who lives close to God every minute of her life—that kind of woman will be respected by all who know her. “Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her...Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised” (Pro. 31:28-30).

**ESTHER QUALIFIES AS ONE OF THOSE
WOMEN WHO PETER CALLS “HOLY WOMEN”
OF “OLD TIMES” WHO “TRUSTED” IN GOD**

Esther met a challenge and won. She improved her husband. So can Christian women win their husbands.

“ESTHER WON HER HUSBAND”

“And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand” (Est. 5:2).

It is one thing for a woman to find a husband. It is quite another thing to win that husband after he is found. There are lessons that wives today may learn from Esther.

Esther’s husband associated with bad company. He spent much of his time away from his wife. A wicked man by the name of Haman usurped her husband’s time. Ahasuerus neglected his home. Esther told her cousin, Mordecai, “I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days” (4:11). The problem is in many

American homes today; a husband finds his pleasure elsewhere. Esther was determined to do something about this problem.

Esther requested her God-fearing loved ones and Jewish brethren to pray with her. She said, "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day: I also...will fast likewise" (4:16). Behind every wandering husband, there is an *enemy*. Satan is at work. The devil not only wants to break up marriages, but also he wants to destroy the Word of God. Esther's husband was blind to the plot that involved him. His eyes needed to be opened. All of Satan's wiles were employed. Esther needed God's help with this problem. There is power in a united effort. Esther sought others of kindred faith to be touched with her problem. This is the way Esther began to fight the enemy who was binding her husband and threatening her home. This kind of attack brought results. "On that night could not the king sleep" (6:1). The king was troubled. He was reminded of past blessings and a time when God miraculously saved his life. He was reminded of obligations. Esther started to win her husband with a spiritual attack.

Esther decided to take the initiative regardless of the cost or peril to her life. She said, "and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish" (4:16). The initiative belonged to her. Paul said, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). Do something, do not give any ground to the enemy! Haman's wife was the first one to see her husband's knavery and foul spirit were helpless before the determined attack of this good woman. Zeresh said, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast began to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him" (Est. 6:13). Too many good people remain cowed and fearful. Esther took the initiative to save her husband.

Esther used her weapons as a woman to win her husband and destroy her enemy. "Esther put on her royal apparel...and it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight" (5:1-2). Esther made herself *attractive*. Esther was a woman with a plan. She went to work. She made her husband feel he was needed.

Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king...come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him (5:3-4).

Next, she prepared her husband a wonderful meal. Nothing softens up a husband like his favorite dish. This is a tactic known to salesmen. Before Jesus talked to Peter, He fed him. “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15). Esther suggested her husband bring his best friend with him to dinner. She loathed Haman, but did not plan to play into his hands. In this way, the queen met her enemy. By doing something that pleased her husband, the time will come when he will do something to please her. Esther ‘babied’ her husband. She said, “If I have found favor in the eight of the king, and if it please the king” (Est. 5:8). She asked his opinion and made him feel important. By making herself useful and attentive, this woman was winning her husband. Next she played a little coy. The king’s curiosity was aroused. He said, “What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: What is thy request?” (5:6). Thus, tomorrow Esther would inform the king. The king would be kept in suspense until tomorrow. Every man is susceptible to this kind of thing.

Lastly, Esther appealed to her husband for *protection*. The king is ready to do for Esther anything she asks and she says, “If I have found favor in thy sight...lot my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request” (7:3). Her husband is aroused, “Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?” (7:5). This was Haman’s death warrant. Here in the last scene as the Bible records it:

Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face (7:8).

Thus, a God-fearing woman won against overwhelming odds of evil that had her husband badly entrapped.

CONCLUSION

Jeremy Taylor says:

A good wife is heaven's last best gift to man, his angel and minister of graces innumerable, his gem of many virtues, his casket of jewels. Her voice is sweet music; her smile, his brightest day; her kiss, the guardian of his innocence; her arms, the pale of his safety, the balm of his health, and the balsam of his life; her industry, his surest wealth, her economy, his safest steward; her Ups, his faithful counselors; her bosom, the softest pillow of his cares; and her prayers, the ablest advocate of heaven's blessings on his heart.

“Her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her...She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life” (Pro. 31:10-12).

Christian wives are upheld by the Lord as long as they wear the ornament He advises, namely, that of “a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

GOD'S PATTERN FOR THE HOME—PARENTS

Noah A. Hackworth



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INTRODUCTION

God's Pattern For Christian Living is the theme for the Eighteenth Annual Bellview Lectures, and what a tremendous theme it is. It is extremely apropos. Its effectiveness has been felt for the last five days, encompassing more than thirty hours of biblical instruction, which is more than some folio will receive in six months or a year. The current theme was obviously selected on the basis of perceived need, the need to maintain an adherence to the teaching of Scripture (Col. 3:17). The philosophical slogan, "These are the times that try men's souls," has now, more than ever, become a reality. That we are living in perilous times does not admit of doubt (2 Tim. 3:1). Many of our contemporaries are adamant in their proclamation that (1) there is no "pattern" of any kind, for any thing in the Bible; (2) there is no "law" to which appeal can be made for the settlement of religious differences; and, (3) the Bible is not inerrant, and, therefore, cannot meet the needs of up-to-date people. These allegations are obviously false, because there was a "pattern" for the construction of the ark (Gen. 6:14-15), the tabernacle (Exo. 25:8-9; Heb. 8:5), the temple (1 Kin. 5-7), and there is a "pattern" for the church (Mat.

16:18; 1 Cor. 3:10-11; Eph. 2:19-20), as well as a “pattern” for Christian living (Acts 2:42). This particular presentation will deal with “God’s Pattern For The Home—Parents.”

PARENTS AND PARENTHOOD

An Awesome Responsibility. Of all the responsibilities God has ever assigned to man, there is none greater than parenthood. It is unquestionably among the most awesome tasks ever given, because to it is assigned the care and keeping *of* souls which God wants in heaven. As the song says, “A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify; A never dying soul to save, And fit it for the sky.” Parenthood is so tremendously important that it cannot be over-emphasized. It carries with it a number of responsibilities that must be faithfully discharged to the very best of one’s ability. And, at times, even this seems not good enough. Those who are unwilling to accept these duties should steer clear. Those who are at least willing to accept them are a step ahead and have a much better chance for success.

Parenthood Should Be Intentional. To become a parent by accident, or be inducted into parenthood without intent is almost always heartbreaking and more frustrating than can be imagined. Being a parent is not an experiment, it is an experience; one that cannot be undone. The irresponsible, the unsettled and the immature should approach parenthood with extreme caution, never with indifference or light-heartedness.

Training Is A Requirement. Those who do not love children, or say that they know absolutely nothing about the responsibilities of parents should never become parents. Contrary to popular thought, those who have no children are not necessarily the experts. I would have some doubts about seeking financial advice from someone who had declared bankruptcy or asking for marital advice from those whose marriage ended in divorce. Likewise, it would be a little difficult to get sound advice about parenthood from someone who had no children. All parents should teach their children about parental responsibility, and the very best kind of training available is on-the-job training. Children need to see both the heartaches and the joys of parenthood. If they do, perhaps they will be less harsh themselves.

Parents Need Not Be Perfect. There is no such thing as a “perfect parent.” If perfection were a part of parenthood, none of us could qualify. Parents are not perfect, they are human; and many of the things they do will be right, but some will be wrong. Parents sometimes make wrong decisions and act inconsistently, but it is all right for children to see that their parents are not perfect. We learn from our mistakes and our children can learn also. Somewhere the idea originated that parents should never admit their mistakes. This position is not only foolish, it is false. In many cases, the only way parental integrity can be salvaged is to admit mistakes. For a parent to say, “I’m sorry,” to a child may not only save a beautiful relationship, it may go a long way as well in molding and, shaping youthful character. Children need to learn to be forgiving of parents, just as parents have learned to forgive their children. The action is reciprocal.

SOME PARENTS IN THE BIBLE

Adam And Eve. Adam and Eve were not only the first two created beings upon the earth (1 Cor. 15:45), they were also the first parents (Gen. 4:1-2). They were not only the parents of Cain, Abel and Seth (4:1-2, 26), but of many other sons and daughters as well (5:4). The biblical record is silent as to the relationship Adam and Eve had with their sons and daughters. They may have been good parents during the early, formative years of their children. However, at least one of their children suffered from his sinful action when he grew up. He killed his own brother. We are told in the New Testament that hatred was the motive for the killing (1 John 3:12). There is nothing to indicate Cain did not know the difference between right and wrong. Contrary to what I once thought myself (in my early years of ignorance), parents cannot be forever held responsible for what their children do.

Abraham And Sarah. Abraham and Sarah were the parents of Isaac, the child of promise (Gen. 18:10; 21:1-3; Gal. 4:28). Abraham and Hagar were the parents of Ishmael (Gen. 16:15; Gal. 4:22). Abraham and Keturah were the parents of several children (Gen. 25:1-4). Abraham and Sarah were far beyond the age of normal conception when Isaac was born. His birth was miraculous. Abraham

and Sarah, like other parents, found it difficult at first to fully accept what the Lord told them; i.e., that they would have a son. Abraham, “being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead... neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb” (Rom. 4:19). He once had the powers of reproduction in the past, but had lost them through the aging process. The original seems to suggest Sarah never had the power of reproduction. Her womb was dead. When told they would have a son, Abraham and Sarah attempted to “help God” by supposing that Hagar, the handmaid, would be the child-bearer. Abraham and Hagar became the parents of Ishmael, but Isaac, not Ishmael, was to be the seed. Abraham and Sarah, expectant parents as they were, could not be justified in their actions. Not everything parents do, even with the best of intentions, is always right. However, one of the most remarkable things in the life of Abraham as a parent is indicated in Genesis 18:19:

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

The Mother Of Zebedee’s Children. The request of the mother of Zebedee’s children, probably Salome, (cf., Mark 15:40; 16:1) to have her sons occupy a place of prominence in the kingdom of Christ reveals that she was a loving mother who wanted the very best for her children (sons), as most parents do, but she obviously did not understand the nature of the kingdom of Christ. The kind of request she made could not be granted because no such places of honor were available in the heavenly kingdom. But here is a parent, a mother, who loved her sons enough to make this request, She might be condemned for her ignorance, but she must be praised for her love. She reminds me of my own mother who would have desired this kind of thing for me had such been available and possible.

The Man Who Had Two Sons. There is absolutely no way I can leave out the parent of the prodigal son and the elder brother (Luke 15:11-32). This father personifies parenthood in beautiful fashion. He may have been heart-broken at the request of the younger son. As a parent, he would know the dangers his young son would face if he left home under these conditions. Our children do many things

we as parents would not have them do. They make so many mistakes because they will not listen to father or mother. What could this father do to keep this young boy from leaving home? Nothing! He had to let him go. The boy had to be permitted to face reality and learn from it. Young people are many times oblivious to anything but themselves. They are often impulsive and poor decision makers. Nevertheless, the living was divided and the son left for a far country. He soon found out he had acted unwisely. He had made a terrible mistake, but at least he realized failure does not have to be fatal. He went home. What did his father do? He owned him and his son, brought out the bat robe, hugged him, kissed him, killed the fattened calf, put a ring on his son's hand and shoes on his feet and said, "For this my son was dead, and is alive he was lost, and is found" (v. 24). There is nothing than a parent in the home—a parent who will be there when the children are in need.

Timothy's Mother And Grandmother. Lois and Eunice, Timothy's grandmother and mother, were profoundly influential in his life, all through his life (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). Just why is the grandmother's name given before the mother's? There are a number of possible reasons, viz., she was older, more seasoned and experienced, more knowledgeable, etc. But the thing contributed by both is more important to know. These two godly women gave Timothy what all young people need: an unfeigned faith. They instilled in him a faith that would not shrink, though tested by every foe. They taught him the Holy Scriptures and, thus, they led him to salvation. Parents cannot do much more than this. It does not get much better.

PARENTS ARE INSTRUCTORS

Every child born into this world deserves an attractive, warm, friendly, loving classroom where he or she can get a "grip on life." This first classroom is the home. A well-adjusted, knowledgeable, patient, good-natured teacher should be the instructor in this classroom. This teacher should be the parent. This is not always the way it is, but it is always the way God would have it. The young, formative years are the time to teach the important, basic lessons of life. These things include:

Values. The ultimate worth of people and things must first be taught in the home. If they are not taught here, they may never be taught anywhere! Children must learn that people are more important than things. A failure on the part of parents to distinguish between people and things may be the reason why so many young people grow up wanting to accumulate things instead of helping people.

Responsibilities. Parents are the ones to begin teaching responsibilities. Young people are doomed to failure if they have to wait until they enter a “formal classroom!” to learn about responsibility. Children have to be taught they will be held to account for certain things. Every young person needs to be assigned a job at home and be held accountable for it. Parents are going to fail if they do not take the lead. Children do not manage the home, parents do. Who pays the bills and provides the food and shelter has to be established early in life. If these things are not taught by the parent, the children will not go and do likewise. Dependability is of the utmost importance in the development of character. It is heartbreaking to have our children grow up and leave home not being ready to face life.

Discipline. Our children really want to be told what to do and how to act as they are growing up. It is unfortunate to have them think manners are some kind of disease. They have to learn how to take disappointment and face pain and that adversity is part of every person's life. They have to be admonished (Eph. 6:4). To admonish (*nouthesia*) literally means “a putting in mind.” This process involves “training by word whether of encouragement, or, if necessary, by reproof or remonstrance” (Vine). It must be remembered, however, that our children need to be trained not by word only, but also by act.

Appreciation. It fills the hearts of parents with gladness to see their children display appreciation. Thankfulness for who we are and what we have has almost become obsolete in many homes today. Too much is taken for granted. To stop, identify and reflect upon our blessings are among the things sorely needed by us all, and the process is a part of parenthood. Children simply cannot be deprived of the knowledge of appreciation. Appreciation is giving, not just receiving (Col. 3:15). So many children today are unloved. They really

do not know what love is, because they never saw it displayed in the home.

Love. When love becomes replaced by “feuding,” “fussing,” and “fighting” the results will be exactly what we expect them to be—catastrophic. Infants feel love very quickly, and they respond to it. Among our greatest needs is love and some of the most successful people in life are those who were shown love when they were children (1 Cor. 13).

PARENTS AND PROVERBS 22:6

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The orthodox view of this passage is that if the child becomes a Christian as a result of parental teaching, when that child is old he will never depart from the faith. If the child does depart from the faith, then the parent has failed and is to blame for the child’s behavior. It is freely conceded that this could happen. The child may become a Christian while under the direct influence of the parent, then fall away from the faith at a later time and it could be that the parent would have to shoulder the responsibility. But this may not be what this passage is teaching at all. This writer grew up under this kind of teaching, not from my parents, but from the teaching of the more “seasoned” members of the church.

The Bible says we must all give account of ourselves (Rom. 14:12). Our children must act wisely on their own. We as parents cannot always make decisions for them. They must learn to make decisions, and learn to make the right ones, or suffer the consequences. But what does this passage teach? It is more reasonable to think that a child who is trained or brought up according to his natural instincts will continue to follow that for which he is best suited. If a person’s natural talent is more artistic than mechanical, it would probably be a mistake to expect him to become an automobile mechanic. It is affirmed by some that the “training” of this passage involves laying the groundwork of character, the installation of principle. It is also believed that this passage obligates parents to train their children in harmony with their natural disposition and character. If this is done, it is far less likely that the child will abandon his “natural calling.”

PARENTS ARE STEWARDS

A steward is someone who has been placed in charge of the goods of another, and the law of stewardship is expressed by Paul in I Corinthians 4:2: “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” Of all the things that have been entrusted to our care, our children are the most important. God has given our children to us for a certain amount of time, and He expects us to love them, train them, care for them and prepare them to go to heaven. For this tremendous responsibility, parents will have to account to God Almighty. One of the greatest evils that is going to send a multitude to hell is child abuse. Treating children hatefully, depriving them of the things they need, such as food, shelter and clothing and inflicting violence upon them will not go unnoticed on judgment day.

WHAT PARENTS CAN LEAVE BEHIND

In the Apocalypse it is said, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (14:13). This would surely include parents. Parents do not always leave behind what they should. Sometimes, their departure leaves unhappy memories, unfulfilled expectations and promises, disappointment, resentment, anger and even violence. When this is the case, life is rarely ever the same anymore. What they are going to leave their children should be in the minds of all parents, because without fail something will be left behind. However, what is left is really in the hands of fathers and mothers. Because most parents have the power to leave behind whatever they choose, the obvious choice would be to leave the very best. Too many parents, however, concern themselves with quantity rather than quality.

Take Life Seriously. One of the greatest mistakes parents can make is to fail to teach their children to take life seriously. Parents must not be negligent in this responsibility. Our children must be convinced that the young die too. So many of our youth never give any thought whatsoever to death in their teen years. They just assume they will live forever, or that they will have plenty of time later to take things more seriously. They often do, but sometimes they do

not. Death is no respecter of persons. It attacks the young as well as the old.

Make A Life, Not Just A Living. Our children often give too much concern to how much money they will be able to make when they settle down into their life's work. They often do this because this is what they have seen their parents do all their lives. Parents who use up life to make a living seldom have enough time left to make a life. Both are needful, but there is a difference! Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mat. 4:4). A life that is well-balanced includes both "a living," and "a life." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," is making a life, and, "all these things shall be added unto you," is making a living (Mat. 6:33).

Living To Serve. One of the best definitions of Christianity is service. Christians live to serve (Mat. 20:28). Parents will be doing their children a tremendous favor if they give a life of service before their young ones (Mat. 4:10). It is so easy to be selfish, and sometimes selfishness is never overcome. It is much more difficult for children to be unselfish when they are just the opposite in the lives of the parents. Parents who "spend" and allow themselves to "be spent" in the Cause of the Lord will leave behind something more precious than gold (2 Cor. 12:15).

A Good Name. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold!" (Pro. 22:1). Whoever says there is nothing in a name is certainly uninformed. The Wise Man said a good name is more valuable than silver and gold. Sometimes, names do not carry much weight but they ought to, because Peter stressed the importance of names in Acts 4:12, when he connected salvation with the name of Christ. Names are important and a good name is a treasure parents can leave behind. Good parents work diligently to establish a good name—a name their children will be proud to wear, because it stands for reputation.

Heaven As The Ultimate Goal. Life is not worth as much unless some goals are established. Goals are necessary so that we may see where we have been and where we are going. Much precious time can be wasted unless some objectives are developed. Parents play

a tremendous role in the establishment of worthwhile things, and no higher priority can be set, no more important goal can be conceived than setting heaven as the ultimate aim in life.

CONCLUSION

God does indeed have a pattern for all things He has authorized to be done, and His pattern for the home includes parents who are the initial ones to be held responsible for the existence and administration of that wonderful place we call home.

GOD'S PATTERN FOR THE HOME—CHILDREN

Glenn Posey



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INTRODUCTION

There have been volumes written on God's pattern for the home with emphasis on children. However, there might be room for one more brief lesson. God has divinely ordained three institutions: (1) the home; (2) the civil government; and, (3) the New Testament church. This writer has gleaned, from many sources, facts and figures about the condition of the home. It will not be our purpose to review these facts because all accountable beings are well aware of the condition of the home in America, yea, the entire world. But, truth is always served by honest inquiry. God has forever revealed in Holy Writ His plan for the home. We must press toward a full understanding of the Holy Scriptures on God's pattern in this timely and most needed subject.

This writer will forever be grateful to his deceased parents for the way they held up God's plan for the home, although, at the time, I could not see the importance of their being so strict. Their convictions were not weak and unstable, so God's plan for the home was ingrained in my brother's, sisters' and my heart. Surely, the time to instill God's way in the hearts and minds of children is when they

are but infants. Time is too precious for a single hour to be wasted. The apostle Paul said, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16).

It is not in the ability of man, without God’s Word, to direct the affairs of his life in order to please God (Jer. 10-23). Happiness, for the two persons that establish a home, for their offspring and also, the general happiness of a nation depends upon the success of the home. Someone aptly said, “As goes the home, so goes the nation.” When the breakdown in the home is as widespread as it is in our nation today, invariably, everyone suffers, because the home is the foundation stone of any nation.

There are so-called experts, who are free with their advice on every phase of the home. I believe in the Word of God we have guiding principles needed to make the home successful. Family life must be guided by a much more dependable standard than human wisdom.

THE WORLD’S SMALLEST SCHOOL IS THE HOME

The Magna Carta for children in the home is, “My son hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Pro. 1:8). This almost seems like a belated echo because children are ever so dependent upon their parents in the early development of their first concept of God and the value system by which they should be governed the rest of their lives. Solomon also stated, “For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck” (Pro. 1:9).

Knowledge grows out of facts. The little school behind the doors of the home must be so guided that children learn about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible and what in right and wrong early in their lives. Moses, guided by the Holy Spirit, said.

Hear, therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathom hath Promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. How, O Israel: The Lord our God in one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth

up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deu. 6:3-9).

The faith that was in young Timothy's soul, Paul said, "dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy was enrolled in a little school where his teachers were God-fearing souls. His daily spiritual diet was the scriptures. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures" (2 Tim. 3:15). Likewise, the virtuous woman of Proverbs reached her children when they were in her lap. "The words of king Lemuel; the oracle which his mother taught him" (Pro. 31:1 ASV).

The little school in the home can leave in its pupils the greatest heritage available to man, a knowledge of God, Christ and the Bible. No child lives in a spiritual vacuum. His soul will be filled with Christ or Belial, righteousness or unrighteousness, light or darkness (2 Cor. 6:14-15).

God's pattern for the home for children, is for them to get what they need when they need it. There is a philosophy that says that religious choices of a child should be left to the child entirely. Frequently, someone is heard to say that the teaching of religion should be reserved until the child matures and then let the child decide for himself what course he will follow. This philosophy is not only unsound, it is downright ridiculous. The principles that are set through influence are forever etched in the alert mind of the little child. Whether parents read the Bible, or go to worship, and how loyal parents are to their professed faith, make a deep impression that cannot be erased.

RULE VERSUS PRINCIPLE

The apostle Paul stated this principle in the love chapter of the Bible: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11).

My earliest memory of my youth recalls the rules my father had for our family. At that time, some, perhaps most, of them did not make sense to me. For example: my brother and sisters and I were not allowed to sit down at the table for any meal without thoroughly

washing our hands. It was literally nonsense to me not to be allowed to eat our meals with dirty hands. At that early age, we could not see the relationship between cleanliness and good health. Such a rule just took too much time. When I became a man, I continued to wash, even scrub my hands before a meal. I could see that dirty hands could be harmful to my physical body.

A child is governed by rule before he is governed by principle. Even Jesus was “subject” to Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:50). Paul instructed fathers to bring their children up in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). In other words, give them food for the mind. Good seed must be sown in the garden of the mind, because we reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7).

The divine principles that are in the divine rules become a way of life. All of our lives have been influenced by what we have been trained to be (Pro. 22:6). Truth is the “do’s” and “don’ts” of Christianity. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-12).

Why is there so much juvenile delinquency in the world today? Perhaps, because juveniles never did learn to say, “No.” Generally, children become what they are allowed to become. Solomon said, “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Pro. 19:18). The father that sincerely loves his child “chastens him” (Pro. 13:24). The world’s philosophy is, “Give a child what he wants.” God’s wisdom says give him what he needs when he is a child so he will want what he needs when he grows up (Gen. 18:19; Pro. 6:20-23).

THE COMPANY CHILDREN KEEP

A child does not get to choose its parents. Every child desperately needs godly parents. This is God’s pattern for the home (Joe. 24:15). Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33, ASV). Perhaps, it was to teachers that Paul referred in this instance. The earliest teachers in one’s life are parents. The morals in one’s mind are set by the time he hits the street.

Solomon said, “Wisdom crieth without [in the street]; she uttereth her voice in the streets [broad places]” (Pro. 1:20). Here, the young people have left home. They are now on their own. The knowledge of right and wrong are on display as they choose their companions.

Is it any wonder that the Bible warns against marrying sinners? Not only do husbands and wives influence each other, but they become the closest companions to those children that are born into their home. The association or company of sinful parents is bound to affect a child for the remainder of life. Any child that is blessed with godly parents is indeed fortunate. There are so many things a child learns from the association or company of godly parents.

1. To put first things first; such as, God, Christ, the kingdom (church), things that are holy, etc. (Exo. 20; Mat. 22:37-40; 6:33; 7:5; 1 John 5:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:17).

2. To put daily Bible study, reading good books and general studies first. (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:13-14; 1 Cor. 3:1-4). Anyone is a product of what goes into his mind. What we see, hear and read mold and shape our minds. What goes in will display itself in actions.

3. To be careful about the company one keeps (1 Cor. 15:33). Be careful with whom you ran, room, work, date and of course whom you marry (Amos 3:3). The courage to say, “No,” is rooted in the young by godly parents those first few years of one’s life.

4. To be pure in mind, heart and life is worth more than material possessions (Mat. 16:24-26). Joseph lived by the divine principles he learned at home (Gen. 39).

5. Becoming a Christian and living faithfully the Christian life is the most important thing in life (1 John 2:14).

6. Do not try to live the married life out of wedlock (Heb. 13:4-5). All too often, young people are so tempted that it is hard to, “Abstain from every form of evil” (1 The. 5:22, ASV). Fornication and adultery are shameful and sinful situations (Gal. 5:19-21).

CHILDREN ARE THE FRUIT OF THE HOME

The fruit of any tree begins with the seed planted in the ground. God said everything brings forth after its kind (Gen. 1). Jesus said, “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Mat. 7:18). The Psalmist said, “As arrows

are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth” (Psa. 127:4). God has always intended that His Word be planted in the soil of the human heart in order to produce a tree (life) that will bear good fruit (Luke 8:11; Mark 4:14). You can count the seeds that are in an apple, but who can count the apples in one seed. The fruit born from one apple seed might be an hundred, hundred fold, all from one little tiny seed planted in the ground that germinates and grows, and grows into a mighty fruit bearing tree.

The spiritual seed, the Word of God, likewise, when planted in the soil of the human heart takes root and begins to take charge of a life. Paul said, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:17), also, “Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, an ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Col. 2:7).

Sow good seed and-you will reap good fruit. Just envision what God’s pattern for the home would do for the entire world. When the seed of honesty, purity, integrity, respect for authority and love for each other and most of all for God is sown in the tender hearts of the little ones, then and then only will our nation’s highways and streets be safe to travel. Then will there be a generation that know God and all his works (Jud. 2:10).

A father and his young son were visiting a Zoo. While standing and watching the big cats, the son asked his father, “What are those beautiful animals?” The father replied, “Wildcats.” In earnest wonder, the son said, “Why are they called wildcats?” The father replied, “Because their fathers and mothers were wildcats.”

CHILDREN ARE TO OBEY AND HONOR THEIR PARENTS

The parent-child relationship from birth till death is found in the book of Ephesians:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (Eph. 6:1-3).

This thing between birth and death is called life. God intended that every home be built on the idea that children respect, obey and honor

their parents. He said, “for this is right.” That is the right thing to do. Children are to obey and honor their parents because it is commanded by God. Of course, it must be understood that children need and deserve godly parents. Too often that is not the case. Here is why our entire society is crumbling. Satan is working at the tap root, the home.

Paul says there is a practical reason for children obeying and honoring parents, “That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph. 6:3). He said, “which is the first commandment with promise” (Eph. 6:2; cf., Exo. 20:12). Now it is not to be understood that all young children that die are disobedient to their parents. But the general rule is that when children obey and honor their parents, they live longer and better because of certain reasons.

1. They do not have to experiment with life to find out the consequences of sin. “Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many” (Pro. 4:10). Parents should teach their children about sin and its consequences (Rom. 6:23). Solomon further stated, “The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened” (Pro. 10:27). The pleadings of godly parents are not always heeded by their children, but when they are, Christian character is manifested in every walk of life.

2. They see the sanctity of life. Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Life is a precious thing. God has stamped on every soul that has ever lived on this earth, “Life is sacred, handle with care.” Godly parents will not only teach their children how to make a living, but a far greater lesson than this is how to live (Tit. 2:11-12).

3. They am the brevity of life. The Psalmist declared, “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years” (Psa. 90:10). Death and then what? At death, the physical body goes back to the dust from whence it was taken (Gen. 3:19), and the spirit back to God who gave it (Ecc. 12:7). Decisions determine destiny. All opportunities to be saved cease at death, and godly parents know this, so they teach their children how important it is to obey God while they have time and opportunity. In

one sense, life begins at death because the sternal home begins at physical death. When children have parents that teach them to live right so they can die right, they must obey and honor those godly parents.

HEADSHIP AND THE HOME

The inspired apostle Paul gave the order of headship; “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). Authority is inherent in headship. The husband/father is the head of his own family. His wife and children are to be in subjection to his headship. God never intended for the family unit to be ruled over by a co-head. “Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” (1 Pet. 3:6). Note the order of headship given by Paul: God, Christ, man and woman. Of course, children could be added at the bottom of this list (Eph. 6:1).

Where authority is vested in the command, man is bound by its order. Such is 1 Corinthians 11. The head of any institution must have respect for the authority that belongs to that position. Else, anarchy will take over and mob rule will be the order of the day. That is what happened to God's people, the Israelites. The king signified authority, and when there was no king, “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 17:6; 21:25).

CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this brief lesson to call attention to some things pertaining to God's pattern for the home with emphasis on children. The world's smallest school, the home, must be restored to its God ordained purpose. The holy Scriptures are the only blueprint for such an institution. Children deserve to be brought up in a Christian home where Christian principles are taught by word and example. A home is where its head is everything that his wife and children ought to be or ever become. When the head of such an institution is a Christian, he will in most cases be respected by the entire family. Then our entire society will do an about face and it will begin to be safe to walk our streets and drive our highways.

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TO LIVE IS CHRIST

Shan Jackson



Shan was born and reared on the Texas Gulf Coast. He has received degrees in Psychology from Victoria College and in Bible from Abilene Christian College. He began preaching full-time in 1973 and has preached for several congregations in South Texas. Since 1982, he has preached for the church in Palacios, Tom.

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He and his wife, Cynthia, have three children, Brian, Casey and Bo.

PREFACE

When our beloved brother Liddell first corresponded with me about my assignment, he stressed that I would be writing, and later speaking, primarily for young people. He wanted me to show young people the need to be courageous, non-conformist, pure, separate from the world and distinctive in their living. He also wanted me to point out the rewards of true Christianity and to deal with peer pressure and the deceitfulness of sin. And, to present the fact that Christian young people should not feel or act ashamed or left out because they choose to live for Christ and stand for His cause. Finally, he wanted me to assure them that Christian young people are the best young people in the world and to challenge them to be consistent (stedfast) in living for Christ.

However, as I read and reread my assignment, I realized that young Christians and old alike need to consider these sobering observations. All Christians need to be strong and show a strong character. All Christians need to rejoice, not feel ashamed or left out, because of our relationship with the Master. Finally, all Christians should be the best people in the world regardless of age classification or any other classification for that matter. But still, I understand my assignment and I am most thankful for it.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of the world, save the generation of Noah, there has never been a time when young people have faced more pressure than our present generation. Pressure, often undue, about grades, morals, appearance and their future, often clouds their perspective and blurs their understanding. Questions arise everyday that seem to them to be unanswerable. When parents or other adults offer advice and counsel, it sounds like something from a different age or another planet and the young person wonders how such quaint sounding notions could possibly apply to them and their problems. With life swirling in their heads like an out of control merry-go-round, young people seek desperately for something solid to lean on, something firm to grasp. Often words like courage, purity and distinctiveness seem obsolete and non-applicable. Yet, the words of “the Preacher” (Ecc. 1:1) still must be sounded in their ears and make its impression on their hearts. He says: “Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecc. 12:1).

Our Lord’s church is not just for the old. Wonderfully, it is made of people of all ages and from all areas of life. Some are advanced in age, but others are young. Some are mature in their knowledge of truth, but others are babes. However, each part, relative to age, is essential to the body’s well being. As the older pass from the scene, the younger need to be ready and prepared to fill their shoes. But the affluency of our age throws a labyrinth of temptation at their feet and without proper Bible instruction, many fall prey to temptation’s evil advances. The knowledge of God’s word, which would restrain them from evil, is absent in so many. The Psalmist should lead us with these words, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11).

Our young people need to be admonished to begin training now for their service for the Lord. The earlier in life they begin, the more time will be afforded them to study and to practice to be better preachers, elders, teachers and servants in the Master’s vineyard. Young people need to be getting ready now for the awesome responsibilities that await them tomorrow. You see, the future is not a

distant mist. The future is ours for the making. It must be the aim of all Christians to please God. Paul writes: "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him" (2 Cor. 5:9). He also reminds us: "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33, ASV). Solomon writes: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise. but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Pro. 13:20). Young people, yea, all people, need to be true to God even if all others turn away.

LET NO MAN DESPISE THY YOUTH

Every generation has realized special problems confronting their youth. From ancient philosopher to modern day, most adults feel the youth are "going to the dogs." However, not only do young people face problems unique to their age, they also face contempt many times when they try to do some thing constructive. Discouragement, like water from an artesian well, many times comes from those who are older. Such discouragement can also come from peers who view cooperation as capitulation. Paul's word "despise" from 1 Timothy 4:12 means, "contempt felt that is expressed in injurious action." In other words, Paul is saying that a person's age, in this case youthful age, should not be abused by anyone. Examples of faith, regardless of the age of the faithful, serve as an encouragement to the entirety of the church. Therefore, Christians of all ages must make the proper impression in their manner of life and their choice of style. Why? Because only respectful people command the respect of others. In speech, in lifestyle and in love, a young person must be an example fit for Christ Remember, our speech detects what is in our heart (Mat. 12:34). Generally, when we speak with respect and consideration, others reciprocate. Our words should also be "seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6) so as to avoid the pitfalls of shoddy on. We must always "bridle our tongue," otherwise our religion is vain and in vain (Jam. 1:26).

There is simply no way a young person can gain respect without action that is respectable because Christianity is not a feeling but an action (1 Cor. 13). This love is also unlimited to people. God wants his children to love and Jesus said that will prove our faith (John 13:34-35). Proper love develops proper attitude. There is no law that

says a young person cannot have a good attitude (Gal. 5:22-23). Furthermore, Christians are to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), which always carries with it an obligation to be obedient to God’s will (Heb. 11), which also supplies us with victory in life (1 John 5:4). However, attitude is also the key to the moral nature a Christian young person must accomplish. In a moral sense, a young Christian must be pure. But purity is not to be limited only to action because our motives must also be pure. Young people are to see through the eyes of purity (Tit. 1:15). Their conduct must be unspotted (Jam. 1:27) and their garments unstained (for once a garment is stained it is hard to make it as good as new).

TEXT AND CONTEXT

The exact text for this manuscript in Philippians 1:21 where Paul says, “For to me to live is Christ”; however, the entire context would be verses 19-29.

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor; yet what I shall choose I do not know. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

The Christians in Philippi had a very special place in Paul’s heart. He had gone there in response to the Macedonian call for help (Acts 16:9). When he left, he said farewell to a handful of faith-filled converts who would soon face the onset of extreme persecution. As the years crawled by, his thoughts were no doubt taken many times to Lydia and her household, the jailor and his, and the new brethren he

had yet to meet. After mentioning many other things in this personal note, he pens the portion we have just called to your attention. Paul, a writer filled with the Holy Ghost, has many important things to mention to them and to us.

As we all know, there is a natural tendency for human beings to worry. We worry about big things and we worry about small things. Paul's immediate need would fall into the realm of big things, his life. Living or dying—this was on Paul's mind and, as he faithfully admits, if the choice were left to him he was not certain which way he would go. His greatest concern was the exaltation of Christ either in life or death. His constant fear was that in this hour of testing he might do something that would bring shame. No doubt he had heard of Peter's confidence as our Lord was facing Calvary and was concerned in the same light about himself. When the truth is known, no one knows for sure the degree of their faith until their faith is put on the line.

What helped Paul, however, will also help Christians regardless of age or maturity. He states, in Philippians 1:19, that their prayers were of constant help. Paul believed in God and the power of His might. He knew that the God he served would supply his every need. This gave him what it took to be courageous, a non-conformist, pure, separate from the world and distinctive in his living. He recognized the cost but also the rewards of Christian living. He had felt the pressure of life and knew the deceitfulness of sin. He was not now, nor had he ever been since his conversion, ashamed of the gospel he preached or the Saviour he served. His life could be capsuled in his statement of Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." He never felt left out because of this decision; rather, he felt assured in the fold of the Good Shepherd. He was numbered among the best people in the world and was always ready to face the challenge of consistent living for Christ. He was "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). He believed and taught that the prayers of Christians could affect God's usage of power. That God is the Father of us all, thereby caring for our lives, brought him constant encouragement.

Also, in Philippians 1, Paul tells Christians how to exalt Christ in their lives. Something I feel we often confuse is the fact that nothing we do or say will make God more powerful or creative. However, what we do and say will make Him more visible and appealing to the world. This was Paul's desire. He wanted to live in a way that others would see Christ in him and be drawn to Christ with him. No doubt, he knew Christ's words as recorded in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." We must all, young and old alike, live each day in such a way that God is glorified rather than ourselves.

One element is singled out by Paul in Philippians 1:20 that certainly merits mention and that is boldness. He says, "with all boldness...Christ shall be magnified in my body." Having the boldness to take our stand beside the Man of Galilee will always exalt Jesus. Paul, in a time when speaking out for the Lord meant a possible trip to the prison cell (or worse), refused to refrain from proclaiming God's truth. We need such boldness today. In this context, Paul was actually feeling the tug of martyrdom when he said, "to live is Christ, and to die (to face physical death) is gain" (v. 21). His message is that there is no life apart from Christ; that only in Christ is there life. As Jesus said, life more abundant (John 10:10). When Christ is our life, there is no fear of death. This attitude only prevails when we have Christ, not just as a part of lives, but as our life. Galatians 2:20 reminds us that it is Christ that lives in us.

Heaven was so appealing to Paul that he longed for the day he could lay his armor down and find rest for his weariness. He was pressed hard when he had to decide whether to live, and lead more to Christ, or die, and rest from his labors. Keeping in mind his future abode, Paul refused discouragement. He realized his citizenship was not in some physical realm but in heaven itself. Though not with his own ears, he knew Jesus had said, "I go and prepare a place for you" (John 14:3) and that promise spurred him onward. That fact supplied him with comfort and strength.

APPLICATION FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS

With that brief discussion of the text and context of this assignment, let us turn our attention to the making of application. We began our discussion with a mention of the natural tendency toward worry. When the truth is known, we see that young people worry more about less than any other stratum of society. Worrying about big things and worrying about small things is simply a part of youthful life. However, a Christian need not worry about many of the things the non-Christian does. Christians do not worry about death for they am it as simply a part of life. As Paul, Christians should concern themselves with the exalting of Christ Like Paul, we also need to find strength in prayer. Young Christians especially need to realize how powerful God is and how desirous He is to protect and provide for His own. This feeling and knowledge should fill young Christians with courage beyond measure and prove that a non-conformist (non-worldly) demeanor is the only demeanor to possess. A natural product of this realization will be seen in moral purity and a distinctiveness of lifestyle. Young Christians must be proud of who they are and who they serve. They should accept persecution as a part of the Christ-filled life (2 Tim. 3:12) and walk worthy of their calling (Eph. 4:1). Such is not easy but is essential of a soldier of the Lord. Following Christ is not without reward—reward in this life and especially in the life to come.

Young Christians must be ever vigilant and never ashamed of who they are. To be left out by the world is to be welcomed by the Saviour. Truly, young Christians are the beat in the world and stand ready to face any challenge set before them. Armed with the armor of God they become steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in God's work. God loves us and cares for us and this should fill us completely.

Influence is another attribute young Christians need to consider. Because of age and sincerity, young Christians can reach a segment of society that the older Christian cannot. Others seeing Christ living productively in a young person will naturally be drawn to them for further insight. Young Christians should strive to live in a way that others will come to Christ because of them—to follow them as they

follow Christ. We previously mentioned Matthew 5:16, but Jesus prefaced that commission with this: “Ye are the light of the world” (Mat. 5:14). Light is to dispel darkness and also serves as a beacon to guide from the darkness to understanding. Young and old alike must pattern their lives so that God receives glory.

LIFE MORE ABUNDANT

The way Jesus uses the word abundant is in the area of an overflowing of blessings. Jesus promised His children an overflowing of blessings. However, many times in our youthful exuberance we fail to appreciate this fact. The Greeks told about Atlas who bore the weight of the world on his shoulders and some of our young must think they are Atlas. In their attempt to balance the weight of the world, they forget that Jesus promised them an overflowing of blessings. He had previously taught, “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on” (Mat. 6:25). Later in that chapter, he says: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [food, clothing, and shelter] shall be added unto you” (v. 33). Too many times, too many people, and especially the young, simply do not take Jesus at his word.

HIS DESIRE IS TO BLESS

Jesus has a deep desire to bless every Christian who follows his lead. His life and example are tantamount to a Christian life. Shortly before He ascended back to the Father, He made this assuring promise. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mat. 28:20). During Paul’s darkest days, Jesus promised him, “For I am with thee” (Acts 18:10). Young Christians must realize that Christ’s abiding presence will enable them to cope with life’s pressures and support them in life’s challenges on their faith. They must know that life will throw its mightiest punches at them but that they do not have to be broken. A great blessing of God’s truth is that Christ’s care and protection is available to Christians regardless of age.

Another aspect of Christ’s blessings is seen in His desire to grant us pardon. More anxiety is generated through unresolved guilt than possibly any other means. Young people seem especially vulnerable

in this area. Grief over sin serves as a strength-tool for later life but His pardon will wipe our eternal slate completely clean. Here is the sweet message of His gospel, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). David wrote of a time he was drowning in guilt (Psa. 6:6), but he also realized that God could purge him so that he would again be “whiter than snow” (Psa. 51:7). That is what this pardon did for David and will do as well for Christians, young and old alike.

Still another aspect of His blessings is seen in His desire to provide for us ample provisions. Remember, “all things were created by him” (Col. 1:16) and it is Christ that holds “all things by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3). Christ, who has the ability and power to hold our universe in place certainly has the ability and power to hold a young person’s life in place as well. Faith in such power must not be limited. Paul said that God “shall supply all your (our) need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phi. 4:19). He might not give us a new car, a special wardrobe, or things along those lines, but He will supply the things that are needed to find salvation and carry us to heaven. He may not remove the obstacle that lies in our path, but will supply what it takes to remove it for ourselves. He may not remove the temptation but will provide the way of escape.

Another aspect of His blessings is the purpose He builds in our lives. Paul says that regardless of what we say or do, “do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). All Christians, including the young, have a purpose for which to live that is beyond the normal physical things of life. As Christians, we know of another life and another world and do not just live for time, but for eternity. There is to be a purpose to what we say and do and that purpose is Christ. Too many times, young people try to center their lives around material things. Their purpose is seen in the clothing on their backs or the care in their drives; however, even if they have the ability to buy the niceties of life, this is not their purpose. The things we do, the words we speak, the places we go and the associations we have must be filled with Christian purpose.

The final aspect we will mention at this time deals with the peace that Jesus affords His own. As recorded in John 14:27, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Our wicked, sick, sin-filled world cannot, and will not, offer a Christian peace. The wicked are as a troubled sea which cannot rest. Through His prophet, the Lord has said that there is no peace unto the wicked (Isa. 48:22). A Christian who tries to be faithful to God while holding hands with this wicked world is like a two-headed snake. When a morsel is thrown in, the two heads both fight over it. God's word says the wicked are like that. They never find rest. They never find peace. However, Christ is that peace. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. 2:14). He alone can give us peace that surpasses all our feeble understanding. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phi. 4:7).

APPLICATION

Many years ago, a wealthy businessman suffered a complete financial breakdown. His once thriving business was now reduced to an auctioneer's calling. In his discouragement and despair, he suffered a nervous breakdown and was being housed in a sanitarium for the insane. He wondered if, and how, he would ever get his life together again. One night he was in such a dismal state that he convinced himself he would never live to see the morning. He took paper and wrote a few words to his family and friends, anticipating that once asleep he would never awaken. However, he lived through the night and awoke early the following day. Down the hall he heard the sound of people singing. He arose and followed the sound until he opened the door of a small chapel. He sat down in the back and they began to sing again.

Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
 God will take care of you;
 Beneath His wings of love abide,
 God will take care of you.
 No matter what may be the test,
 God will take care of you;

Lean, weary one, upon His breast,
God will take care of you.

Needless to say, this simple song with its divine message became the turning point in this man's life. That very day he sat and listed the blessings God continued to shed upon him. Though bankrupt and penniless, he still had his family, his health and his mind. The more he listed, the more sadness left him so that soon he was discharged to get on with his life. And, though his name was famous prior to that it became even more known later. His name was J. C. Penney.

CONCLUSION

Yes, to live is Christ. We need to be courageous, nonconformists, pure, separate from the world and distinctive in our living. All rewards are temporary unless they are from above. We need never be ashamed of who we are or for whom we stand. Besides that, we are never alone. Through the pen of the Hebrews writer, Jesus says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). His promise rings true today as it did when He commissioned His disciples, "Lo, I am with you alway" (Mat. 28:20).

There has seldom been a time when young people faced the pressures that they are facing today. Parental pressure, peer pressure and pressure from school and work are all about. Yet, the sage message of the long ago remains true, "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth." With this as our strength, we must take our stand. The youth of the church today are not going to the dogs unless we, the adults, lead them there. The zest of youth needs to be put to work in the Lord's vineyard. No man should "despise" the youth simply because of their youth. Rather, they are to be an example in their faith, their courage and their dedication to the Lord's cause. In speech, in lifestyle, and in love, the young must remain an example fit for the Master. It all boils down to attitude.

Young people, echo the words of Paul in your lives everyday, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Always remain "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." You must "let your light shine before men." Remember, you are that "city set on a hill that cannot be hidden." We must all, young and old

allke, live each day in such a way that God is glorified. And may God help us all in this!

How shall the young secure their hearts,
And guard their lives from sin?
Thy word the choicest rules imparts
To keep the conscience clean.
Thy word is everlasting truth,
How pure is every page!
That holy book shall guide our youth,
And well support our age.

CHOOSING A MATE FOR LIFE

Ray W. Peters



Ray was born in Pensacola, Florida, in 1943. He graduated from Escambia High School in 1961 and attended Pensacola Junior College and in 1966 graduated from Valdosta State College in Valdosta, Georgia, with a B.S. degree in History and Education. He is a 1969 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching and has a Masters Degree in Bible from Alabama Christian School of Religion.

He began preaching in 1985, and has preached full-time for congregations in Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, Florida, Arkansas, and Alabama. He has done mission work in Canada, Virgin Islands and is presently engaged in full-time mission work in Southeast Asia and Regia, Latvia.

Ray is married to the former Judy Baker and they have one son, Michael.

There has never been a time in history that this topic needed to be addressed more than now. Many are entering into marriage and have never considered the seriousness of this commitment. It is honorable and right that young people should desire to get married (Heb. 13:4). God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden. Sadly, the selection of a life companion is not always made properly. Generally, it is made in one's youth, when one is developing his or her outlook. Too often, not enough forethought is involved in the selection of a life companion. One's happiness, now and in the hereafter, depends to a very large extent upon the one chosen for a mate.

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

There are some very important things one ought to ask one's self before entering into the marriage union. One needs to consider the social aspect. Are you about equal socially? When one is outgoing and the other is not, problems can arise. While it is true that opposites attract-make sure it is not too opposite! A "hermit" and a "playboy" generally do not make a good couple.

Are you both stern-minded with high ideals? If one has high ideals while the other is loose in conduct, adjustments will be difficult. of course, this question should, notice I said, "should," be an-

swered in a positive way if both are members of the Lord's church, i.e., New Testament Christians. That would also answer the question about religious beliefs. Marriage is difficult enough, but if there is not the common religious commitment, it is doubly tough (Amos 8:3).

What about the age of the partner? If there is a wide variance in age there could be problems.

Has one of you been divorced (Mat. 5:32; 19:9)? You need to make sure that each is eligible to marry, and if one has been divorced, why? What are your mate-to-be's beliefs on marriage, divorce and remarriage?

Is he or she regarded by those who know him or her as being dependable and not given to sly lies?

Have you been dating for awhile, and have you spent enough time to get to know that person?

Are both sets of parents in favor of the marriage? Some parents feel that no one is quite good enough for their child. One needs to realize that when one marries, he or she marries the "whole" family. One may not believe that, but it is true. It is wise to seek the counsel of others before getting married.

It may seem somewhat humorous to say so, but what about his or her physical health? What about the mate's emotional health? Is he or she stable? Do you have about the same warmth of feeling? Is any one of you always in a date of conflict with his or her parents or anyone else? Both need to look at the other's family and consider were their parents divorced?

Is he or she free from jealousy and suspicion? Does each of you have a healthy attitude toward sex? God created man male and female (Mat 19:4). Therefore, God created sex and in and of itself sex is not bad or wrong. Within marriage, sex should be looked upon as wholesome and created by God for man's happiness. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

If both are Christians, then both *should* (emphasis on "should") have good personal habits, but does your mate-to-be have a habit that bothers you? Does he or she smoke? Chew tobacco? Do not

have the idea that, "I will change him or her when we got married." It just does not work that way!

What about children? Are you both in agreement on whether you want to have children? How many and when? These are things that need to be discussed and understood dearly to avoid problem later.

A big question in, "Are you fully persuaded that you are ready to accept the responsibilities of a married life?" It is a big undertaking to enter into the world's oldest institution. It will be addressed here, and later on, that marriage is not for the immature.

The mental and educational compatibility of each must be considered. Most women want their husbands to be superior mentally or at least of equal mentality. Most men want their wives to be equal to them. Also, the strength of wills comes into the picture. Most men feel intimidated by women who are smarter and stronger in volition than they. Most women do not want a man of lower ability, mentality and strength. Many marriages and homes have to be carried by the woman because the man will not or cannot fulfill his part.

WHY AND WHEN SHOULD A COUPLE MARRY?

The subject of maturity is the first thing to be considered; that is, when a couple is fairly mature mentally, physically and emotionally. Of course the question is, "How do you judge when one is mature?" One may be a college graduate, so mature intellectually, and an adult physically, but be ten years old emotionally. If one is not mature emotionally, one cannot meet the responsibilities of marriage. This determination can only be made by a long enough engagement (or an it used to be called "courtship").

It is difficult to set an age an to when one can and should get married. While some may be immature in the emotional state at thirty years, some who are eighteen years old may be mature. All things being equal, it is best to be mature in years also. Too many who have been married at a young age say, "We were too young and should have waited." It is best to have finished college and decided on a career and to have some financial foundation before engaging in marriage. Many in America do not view it that way, but that in the way of the Chinese in Singapore.

Naturally, the bottom line is that a couple ought to get married because they love one another. One of the greatest love stories in the Bible is that of Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29:20). Jacob served seven years for Rachel but the record says, “they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.” If a couple, eligible to marry, are happy in each other’s presence and enjoy the company of one another they should get married. If the engagement has been an unhappy one; that is, if a couple fusses and fights during courtship, be sure it will not get better after marriage! It should go without saying, but it is critical that the couple be “good friends.” That may seem strange to state that, but too many who are married are not friends to their spouses.

SOME WRONG REASONS FOR MARRIAGE

One should not marry merely for beauty and good looks. Of course one is attracted because of the beauty, it is naive to say otherwise, but just to marry on that basis is wrong and not wise. Too many marriages have failed because there was just the physical attraction. Plus, old age will eventually erase the physical beauty. The intangible things or the inward beauty should be the basis for marriage. The emotional, intellectual, and most importantly, the spiritual components will be the glue that will keep a marriage intact as the years roll on and on.

One should not marry for money and material possessions. The apostle Paul warns, “the love of money is the root of all evil” and not to “trust in uncertain riches” (1 Tim. 6:5-17).

One should not marry for pity. There may be some person who has been unfortunate in life and because one feels sorry for that person and wants to help is no reason to marry that person. This scenario has been played too many times.

To flee from poverty is also not a basis for marriage. Just to better one’s lot in life and to be snatched from the jaws of destitution is not a cause for matrimony.

An escape from a bad home life is not a reason for marriage. This is a most popular wrong reason for marriage. This is the old proverb, “Jumping from the frying pan into the fire” demonstrated!

One should not marry just because, an Paul put it, the couple “cannot contain” (1 Cor. 7:9). The apostle Paul was not excluding love (cf., Eph. 5:25) and all the intangibles that were mentioned early on, but rather including them and then saying, “It is better to marry than to burn.” Therefore, do not marry just because one has a biological urge!

One should not marry a person because his or her friends play “cupid.” Just because the friends think that a couple ought to marry and that they are “ideal” does not make it so. Some have got caught up in such a situation and have married, just because neither of them could say, “No.”

One should not marry because of a “forced marriage.” If a couple does not abstain from sex and she gets pregnant, this is not a reason to get married if there is not love and the other intangibles that have been discussed. Too many have ruined their lives by being immoral. and then thinking they have to get married. Usually, these marriages do not last and the child loses a home. The couple will marry again and will be living in adultery.

One should be careful not to marry someone on the “rebound.” By this is meant, if one has recently been involved in a relationship, a close relationship, and that is ended, it is best not to marry the next one with whom one has a close relationship. This is not always the case but from my experience in too many instances of which I am aware, it is the case. The reason this happens is, one feels so empty and lonely, and if one is in the late twenties or near thirty, one becomes desperate. So, another way of phrasing this “don’t,” is, “Don’t marry because one is desperate.”

SOME REASONS WHY MARRIAGES ARE UNHAPPY

Getting married very quickly, or a “hasty marriage” usually ends in unhappiness. This emphasizes what was said earlier on, to have a lengthy engagement or courtship.

Marrying for the wrong motives will bring tragedy. Just because of money, to escape a bad home, and the other things that have been mentioned are wrong motives. If these are the reasons, they will bring woe.

Mixed marriages often lead to unhappiness. A mixed marriage of one who is a member of the Lord's church and one who is not, can bring misery. The position is not taken that marrying a non-member is a sin, but it is very unwise.

Although it does not apply directly to marriage, 2 Corinthians 6:14 says: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." There is a principle here that would apply in any situation. Again, it is not sinful to marry one of a different race or culture, but there are many problems that can be created. Some have had a happy marriage who have married one of a different race or culture, but the percentages are very low that this will happen.

Extravagance will lead to unhappiness in marriage. If either of the partners is a "spendthrift" and spends more than is brought home, there will be a calamity. Sometimes, it may be both partners. Then, it definitely will bring unhappiness. When a couple first gets married there must be careful attention to handling money. Each may be used to living apart and earning and spending money on self, but now there is a joint concern. A budget is almost imperative at first.

The pleasure craze will lead to unhappiness. There is nothing wrong in having fun, but couples always going out just to have fun and not setting up a happy home, will find their home life unstable. Solomon addressed the idea that "pleasure" was the "highest good," the summum bonum, of life: "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and behold, this also is vanity" (Ecc. 2:1).

Selfishness on the part of either partner will bring unhappiness. If either is not considerate of the other, they violate many passages of Scripture (cf., Mat. 7:12; Phi. 2:4) and there will be problems.

Not putting the Lord, the church and spiritual things first will lead to misery. Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat. 6:33). Attending the church services together, studying together and being dedicated to serving the Lord together will bring happiness. Both must be willing to sacrifice for the cause of Christ. Many marriages would have been terminated if it were not for the

“Common bond” of being dedicated to the Lord. It is not enough just to be “nominal” Christians. Both husband and wife must be united in the decision to “serve the Master.”

LOVE ALONE CANNOT SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS

A couple may truly love one another but if precautions are not taken, even love will not see them through. The following is a list, and again there may be some “re-emphasis” on things stated earlier, but it is very important.

Don’t marry in a hurry. Take time to get to know one another well under all circumstances, not just on dates.

Solve all of your differences before marriage, not afterward. Premarital discussion with a preacher or a marriage counselor can be of benefit to avoid some trouble spots which could wreck your marriage.

The idea of, “If you are meant for each other and you are in love, then all else will work out,” is the Hollywood mentality and is not the real world. The only kind of real lasting love is the Christian love, which involves honor, truth, forgiveness and respect toward your partner.

The immature emotional factor also contributes to marriages having problems. This problem is seemingly more prominent among males. Too many men are too immature to take on the responsibility of a wife and a family.

The failure to create the “our” attitude rather than the “my” attitude will create difficulties. One must be willing to share with the partner.

Many times families are so busy it is difficult to spend time together. It is especially important in the earlier years of marriage to spend “quantity” time as well as “quality” time together. That is not to say it is not important throughout the marriage, but if it is not possible to spend as much time, make the most of the time you have together.

It is a good idea to look at your finances before marriage and set up a budget. In this day and time of an unstable economy it is difficult to live “within” one’s income. A mistake that really creates problems is to have “continued” support from the parents. Cut the

“umbilical” cord quickly. It is emphasized in the Scriptures, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2.24; cf., Mat. 19-5; Eph. 5:31). It is best to “leave” the financial support and make it on your own.

It cannot be emphasized enough that a couple be “united” in Christ to be in the Lord’s church and to be “active” in working for the Lord.

A correct understanding of the sexual relationship is very important. A failure to understand properly that God ordained put His blessing on this physical relationship (Heb. 13:4) will create unhappiness. A study of all the passages in this regard would be helpful, but especially a close study of 1 Corinthians 7.

A marriage that will survive is one that “grows.” A couple cannot live together twenty, twenty-five or thirty years without giving and taking, and learning together.

This, by no means, is an exhaustive study of this subject matter, but it is my hope and prayer it is helpful. These are things that have been learned through thirty years of marriage and twenty-six years of preaching and counseling couples on marriage.

Marry one who has been pure and chaste in the engagement or courtship, and one with whom you have kept yourself pure. Marry one whom you can trust. The bottom line is, “You be a Christian mate and marry a Christian mate.”

A LIFE OF CHRIST-LIKE COMPASSION

Eddie Whitten



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Eddie now preaches for the Northeast Church of Christ in Hurst, Texas. He is Co-owner and President of the *Firm Foundation* and works as Business Manager of the magazine. He and his late wife are the parents of three daughters, nine granddaughters

and one great-granddaughter.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of the life of Jesus Christ is one of love and compassion for man. From the beginning of His human existence, He demonstrated love, mercy and compassion for His earthly companions (Mat. 9:36). Even though He existed in the flesh and was human in every aspect of mortal existence, He still was aware of His heavenly origin, power and responsibility (John 6:38). As one reads the unfolding message of the gospel accounts, he is repeatedly exposed to the gentle, helpful, uplifting and sympathetic character of the carpenter's son from Nazareth. His message was one of benefaction—doing good for others (Acts 10:38). His purpose was the salvation of the everlasting part of man, his soul (Luke 19:10). His method was one of education through preaching, teaching and example (Mat. 28:19-20).

Compassion is often equated with love. Compassion is an expression of love. It is a reflection of the response demanded by love. Without love, there can be no compassionate reaction on the part of one to another. *Websters New World Dictionary* defines “compassion” as: “To feel sorrow for the sufferings or trouble of another or others, accompanied by an urge to help; deep sympathy; pity.” The

thrust of the many definitions for love is: “A strong attraction on the part of one for another.” The contrast between the two words is best seen in the objects involved. Compassion generates interest in others. Love involves interest in satisfying self in some way. It is a grand gesture to bring happiness to another from a heart of compassion, but it is still greatly satisfying to one’s self to do so (love). Therefore we “love” to be “compassionate” to those who need our help.

In this study, it will be our purpose to show the compassion Christ demonstrated in His intercourse with history and how Christians must be compassionate. It is our hope that reviewing His perfect example will spur us on to a higher goal in the way we think as we interact with others in this life.

COMPASSION HELPS DEVELOP PROPER ATTITUDES

Forgiveness. In Matthew 18, Jesus teaches Peter concerning forgiveness. He responds to Peter’s question, “how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?” by saying, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Mat. 18:21-22). Only with a deep sense of pity, or mercy, could one entertain the idea of forgiving another who has committed sins against him repeatedly. Such an attitude does not come from the influence of our society. It can only come from the principles taught in God’s word and by the life of Jesus, His Son. This is illustrated in the next several verses of Matthew 18.

The parable Jesus relates in Matthew 18:23-35, is vital to the attitude we must have with respect to forgiveness. A king was to make an accounting with his servants. One servant was found to owe the king ten thousand talents (a talent was 750 ounces of silver). This was an enormous debt far beyond his ability to pay. The king commanded the man and his family to be sold to pay the debt. The servant fell down and besought him to be patient with him and he would pay him. Verse 27 says the king was moved with compassion and forgave him the debt. He went beyond the patience the servant had requested. He wrote the debt off as if it had been paid in full.

In contrast to the king's compassion, the servant had one who owed him a very small amount. He demanded his fellowservant to pay his debt, which he could not. The fellowservant besought him to have patience with him just as he had pled with the king, but the wicked servant would not. He caused him to be cast into prison until his debt could be paid. The servant, who had been forgiven his debt to the king, had an unforgiving attitude. When the king learned of this wickedness, he reminded him of his forgiven debt and delivered him to the "tormentors" until his huge debt could be paid.

Jesus turns this parable into a principle in verse 35. He makes this forgiving attitude of the king an obligation upon His followers. God has given His Son as a living sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, a debt so huge no mortal being is capable of repayment. This sacrifice was given because His love—love so amazing, so Divine—is so great that His grace is extended to every one who will accept it. Mankind would be hopelessly and helplessly lost without God's grace. Jesus taught that we must be forgiving.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy*. But I say unto you, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans no? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect* (Mat. 5:43-48).

The apostle Paul also taught the disciples to be forgiving as he stated:

Dearly beloved, *avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good* (Rom. 12:19-21).

For the Christian to exemplify the Christ-like life, he must demonstrate a forgiving attitude and this can come only through a compassionate heart.

Physical provisions. Compassion compels us to step in when help is needed. Jesus was moved with compassion on the multitude and healed their sick (Mat. 14:14). He called His disciples, and said, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat. and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way” (Mat. 15:32; cf., Mark 8:2). He saw the multitude as a wandering mass, floundering in a sea of confusion without a guide to safety. “And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they as sheep not having a shepherd. and he began to teach them many things” (Mark 6:34).

The example Jesus set for us makes it incumbent upon us that we do what we can to relieve the suffering (in whatever form it may occur) of our fellow man. He did not limit His healing to only those who followed Him, but to all who needed it. It may be that today’s Christian may fall short in this regard. Surely, we are quick to rally to the side of our friends when danger looms and tragedy strikes. No bond is greater than that residing in the bosom of Christian brethren. The Christian must also rally to the need of the brotherhood of man. Jesus healed the Jew and the Gentile. His goodness transcended the bounds of race. The gospel, hence the character of the advocate, in for, “all ye that labor and are heavy laden” (Mat. 11:28).

We must note at this point the proper emphasis to be made in regard to the physical provisions for man. It is not the intent, in providing the physical needs of those in want (or desire), to circumvent the focus of our relationship with God. We worship God by submitting our wills to His will and serving Him as the only true and living God. Doing good to our neighbor comes second *to* our first priority—doing God’s will.

Discipline. Some have forgotten, evidently, that discipline is an expression of love stemming from a compassionate heart. No joy comes from inflicting punishment upon wrong doing. The joy comes from the wrong-doer’s repenting and returning to that which is right. There are many Christians who think that to impose restrictions, or consequences, upon a person is a negative action arising from human judgment; thus, out of the realm of the love of Christ. The

opposite is true. Jesus, the epitome of compassion, demonstrated on several occasions wrath upon those who would desecrate the holiness of God's house, or defame His cause.

And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise (John 2:13-16).

He summed up His wrath upon the scribes and Pharisees after His blistering rebuke in Matthew 23, saying

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chicken & under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (Mat. 23:37-39).

The Hebrews writer reminded us of the motivation and purpose of discipline:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you an unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? (Heb. 12:5-7).

Chastening, or discipline, is an act of love on the part of one who cares for (has compassion for) the soul of another. Paul's stern rebuke of the Corinthian brethren (1 Cor. 5), for tolerating fornication, is rewarded in the repentance of the sinner in 2 Corinthians 2. Paul's command to withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly (2 The. 3:6) was for the purpose of making the erring brother ashamed (2 The. 3:14).

Judgment must be exercised on the part of one brother toward another if he is to conform with his obligation to "judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

COMPASSION HELPS DEVELOP STABILITY

Action. Companion demands action. We may be sympathetic toward someone in their plight and express concern, yet not "become

involved,” but compassion compels responsive action. Pew packers, those who occupy the pews on Sunday but are not to be seen in any activity involving the church the rest of the week, do not understand the importance and significance of this aspect of compassion. Their lack of involvement in the activities of the church produces insecurity and instability. If one does not pray, he will forget how to pray. If one does not give liberally and cheerfully, he will not know the joy of this “grace” (2 Cor. 8:6) nor of God’s love for his liberality (2 Cor. 9:7). If one does not help those in need, he will be reluctant to participate in any benevolent activity. If one does not exercise his senses to “discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14), he will not be able to stand against error, for he will neither know nor care when error rears its ugly head.

Those, however, who do participate in activities; who become involved in good works; who take a leading part in worship; who are busy doing good for others; and, who visit the sick and shut-ins, realize a spiritual stability that is woefully missing in the non-participant. The more one does, the more he wants to do. In many cases, it is not a matter of disinterest, but a consuming fear of failure; fear of the unknown or unfamiliar, that keeps one from doing his best. Instability!

A pilot never flew a plane until he flew it the first time. A preacher never preached a sermon until he preached his first one. A doctor never performed an operation until he performed his first one. A baby never walked until he took his first step. Neither has one involved himself in doing good for others because of his compassion for them until he is compelled to do so by his compassion. Once the “first time” has been accomplished, the door is open to further opportunities which, in turn, lead to other times of involvement. Soon, the unfamiliar has become familiar, the unknown is no more and the instability is past

Action, activity, has always been necessary for performance. Practice is a vital ingredient to success. James stated

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of

man he was. But whose looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (Jam. 1:22-26).

It is an accepted fact that joy comes from accomplishment. Compassion for others compels involvement. Involvement results in doing, and doing produces confidence. Confidence is the fountain from whence flows emotional, mental and spiritual stability.

Fulfillment. The greatest words a man can hear are “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mat 25:21). When this life is done and the judgment comes (Heb. 9:27), there is nothing more man can do. If he has lived “according to Christ Jesus” (Rom. 15:5), he will have nothing to fear. Such joy and consolation is beyond comprehension to the finite mind of man. The closest man can come to that ultimate joy is in the knowledge of having helped another in a time of need. Much of our lives we spent in providing for our own. But, when a brother or sister, or a wayfaring man, cries out for help, compassion should grip our hands and hearts to respond to their plea. Nothing is said about how the “good Samaritan” of Luke 10 felt. The Lord used him as an example of a “neighbor,” but nothing is said of the fulfillment he felt as a result of having done a righteous deed.

The great judgment scene depicted in Matthew 25:31-46, tells us of the nature of compassion. He lists such things as feeding the hungry and thirsty, showing hospitality to the needy, benevolence to those in need of clothing and tending to the sick and those in prison. For those who extended mercy, pity and compassion upon the unfortunate, Jesus says the King will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat. 25:34). The fulfillment of life is experienced in the same manner when we know we have been instrumental in making someone else feel loved, cared for and worthwhile. Attention to a person needing attention can, and does, lend to the comfort and stability of both the attendant and the attendee!

COMPASSION HELPS DEVELOP PERCEPTION

Work. So many members of the church are known to lament, “I would like to do more, but I don’t know what to do.” Statements such as this come from those who have not let themselves become involved in the work of the church. There is much to do. Jesus encouraged, “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35), and, “Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest (Mat. 9:37-38).

The desire to work in the Lord’s kingdom is due, in large part, to a compelling compassion for the souls of all men who are lost. Paul counted himself a debtor to preach the gospel to the church in Rome. The strength of the kingdom lies in the hands of those who are moved with compassion upon the multitudes as Jesus was in Mark 6:34. Only through the work of its members will the church be able to reach the masses with the saving gospel. Until that happens, the world will continue to enter eternity only to be consigned to a devil’s hell.

It is hard work to try to teach the lost. It meets with opposition and ridicule. It generates insulting jeers and rude rejection by many. Yet, there are hosts of generous, receptive souls awaiting the arrival of you and me to teach them how to be saved to an eternity of bliss and peace in heaven with God. It can be easily understood that an overwhelming compassion for the lost is necessary to perform the work so vital. Jesus charged His disciples with an everlasting principle regarding work He add of himself, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day. the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). That same urgency is laid upon each Christian as he the eternal destiny of the lost.

Wisdom. Perception (observance plus understanding) comes from repetition. The more one observes something, the more he understands it. The more he understands it, the greater his appreciation, or perception, becomes. He may perceive the evil of a practice, or he may perceive the good. He is able to weigh all the facts with

the wisdom derived from his perception in order to make a proper judgment His judgment becomes a result of his perception. The apostle Paul made just such a judgment He said,

Ye man of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him I dock" unto you (Acts 17:22-23).

Paul proceeded to preach unto the Athenians the Deity of God with the confirming proof of the resurrection of Jesus. Paul had a great compassion for the people of Athens who were worshipping idols. A companion for lost souls should cause every Christian to look into the hearts of men to see what influence is guiding them When the knowledge of the Word of God is our guide, we will be able to on clearly (perceive) the forces of evil and, with the wisdom which is from above, be able to combat them.

COMPASSION HELPS DEVELOP SERENITY

Confidence. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," Paul add in Philippians 4:13. What did Paul mean by that statement? He did not mean that anyone, Christian included, could defy the laws of nature with abandon and not suffer the consequences. He did mean that with the confidence obtained from the compassion of Christ toward man, and the reflection of Christ's compassion in man's attitude toward his fellow man, nothing could dismay or disappoint to the extent of departing from the faith. All that is important in this life is available to me because Christ made it that way. Jesus overcame the power of Satan in His resurrection from the dead. Through the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary's brow, my sins are cleansed. My soul stands pure and white before the throne of God! My future is sure as long as I remain faithful to His word. I can rejoice with hope for a final rest that is beyond human description. Nothing, be it the best Satan can do, can take me out of the Saviour's hand (John 10:27-29). What serenity is mine that I can live in a land of evil and know that I can live righteously because of the compassion of my Lord. More is the joy in knowing that I can have a part in other's confidence because of my compassion for their souls.

James said, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam. 4:7). He also said, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (Jam. 4:8). The closer we are to God, the less we have to fear from Satan. “God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). The lack of fear is the strength of confidence.

Conviction. Paul asks a rhetorical question in Romans 8:36,

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted an sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor. depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

He also wrote to his son in the gospel, Timothy

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 Tim. 1:12).

Compassion is the quality of life that formulates conscience reaction. Our conscience recoils at the notice of wrong-doing, or neglect of that we should do. We call it sins of commission and sins of omission. When a compassionate heart is convinced of the rightness of a situation, we proceed with gladness. Conviction of the truth of God’s Word is dependent upon our knowledge of His Word. Our knowledge of God’s Word is produced by our study of the Bible. Our study of the Bible is motivated by our desire to be saved ourselves and by our compassion for the souls of others. Hence, compassion helps develop confidence in what we are doing and the conviction that what we are doing is right in the sight of God.

CONCLUSION

Our Lord Jesus Christ was compassionate in His life on the earth. He, “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross” (Phi. 2:8). He died on the cruel cross because of His deep compassion for the souls of men. He died to pay the cost of salvation for all who would, themselves, become compassionate

toward others. He demonstrated His compassion for His friends at the grave of Lazarus. He knew He would raise him from the dead, but He wept (John 11:35) out of compassion for the grief of Mary and the other friends with her (John 11:33).

In our study, we have noticed that compassion helps develop (1) proper attitudes, (2) stability, (3) perception, and (4) serenity. Without compassion in our hearts for others, we cannot live a Christ-like life. If we are not able to live a Christ-like life, we cannot live with Christ in eternity. The question comes: Is the cost of rejecting the gospel too high? Is the reward for harsh, unloving, self-centered conduct worth the loss of our souls? These questions will have to be answered, they cannot be set aside by choice. We will answer either yes, or no. Let us pray that our hearts can be touched by the Rose of Sharon and give ourselves, in compassion, to His will and to His work.

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POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

Ira Y. Rice, Jr.



Born August 3, 1917, at Franklin, Texas, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., is the son of Ira Y. Rice, Sr., and the former Eula Edna Davis. Baptized at the age of twelve by A. R. Holton, at Norman, Oklahoma, Rice began preaching while yet a boy. In 1932, after ministries at Noble and Paul's Valley, Oklahoma; Edcouch and Mercedes, Texas; Paso Robles, San Rafael, Richmond and Son Francisco, California; and, Seattle, Washington, he went, in 1955, to plant the churches of Christ in Singapore, Malaysia and Southeast Asia where he spent several years in mission work.

Having now been preaching for over sixty years, Rice is the Editor of two monthly periodicals, *Contending For The Faith* and *The Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter*. He is also the author of several books. He is a co-founder and President of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, in Singapore, and has served as Chairman of its Board of Directors since 1968. He has been a missionary to the Far East under the oversight of the elders of the Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida, since 1978. He has preached the gospel in over sixty countries around the world and recently helped to establish the church of Christ in Latvia.

Of all the enigmas that have arisen to frustrate the preaching of the gospel in this closing third of the twentieth century, surely none has been more vexing than the contention of some that it must be “all positive” and “no negative.” It reminds me much of that song that became so popular either during or just after World War II, which said, “Accentuate the positive; Eliminate the negative; And don’t mess with Mr. In Between....” If the idea was to encourage a victorious, rather than a defeatist, attitude in war time, such a song might indeed have its place. However, if intended to supplant God’s pattern for Christian living, as taught in the Bible, such contentions could hardly be farther from the truth.

Absolutely nothing in the natural realm would lend credence to such a position. Take, for instance, the law of procreation. What if all the people in the world were male—or, for that matter, all female. How long would it take for the human race to die out? Just one generation!

What if your mechanic decided that your battery should be “all positive” with “no negative”? You could engage the ignition from now on; but your car would never start. It takes the negative AND the positive in both cases.

Even the ancient Taoists among the Chinese understood this. They thought of life as a combination of the “yin” and the “Yang,” like two tear-drops intertwined. In their philosophical concept, the “yin” was the female and the “Yang,” the male. One could not long exist without the other.

Modern physicists tell us: “For every action there must be an equal and opposition reaction.”

Even so, when we come to the Word of God, would it not be passing strange if everything taught therein tamed out to be “all positive and “no negative”?”

TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY

When confronted with such seeming paradoxes, rather than just wrangling or arguing over a matter, characteristically, Jesus would cite a passage of Scripture—and that would settle it. Remember when the Sadducees tried trapping him about the woman who married seven brothers, asking, “Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her” (Mat. 22:28). How did Jesus answer? “Ye do err, not knowing the SCRIPTURES nor the power of God” (Mat. 22:29).

Knowing that the Sadducees denied the resurrection, Jesus went on to say:

For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not READ that which was SPOKEN unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine (Mat. 22:30-33).

When Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by the devil, how did He answer each of the temptations? “It is *written*...It is *written*...It is *written*....”

What made the Scriptures so strong is that they were and are the Word of God (Heb. 4:12). Jesus Himself said, “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

When Philip joined the Ethiopian eunuch in the chariot, what was the eunuch dome Philip heard him **READING** the prophet Isaiah. The place of the Scripture which he **READ** is quoted (see Acts 8:82-33). When the eunuch asked if the Prophet was speaking of himself or some other man, what did Philip do? Verse 35 records, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same **SCRIPTURE**, and **PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS.**”

In Acts 17:2, we read that, when he came to Thessalonica: “Paul, **AS HIS MANNER WAS**, went in unto them; and three Sabbath days **REASONED** with them out of the **SCRIPTURES.**” When some of the Jews would not accept the Scriptures, they sought to kill him, resulting in his and Silas’s going on over to Berea, where they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Verse 11 says, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **SEARCHED** the **SCRIPTURES** daily, whether those things were so.

When Apollos, “an eloquent man, and mighty in the **SCRIPTURES,**” came to Ephesus, knowing only the baptism of John, Aquila and Priscilla, “took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:24ff.). Afterward, did Apollos discontinue preaching from the Scriptures? Not at all. Verse 28 says, “For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the **SCRIPTURES** that Jesus was Christ.”

Romans 16:25-26 makes manifest that it is, “by the **SCRIPTURES** of the prophets, according to the **COMMANDMENT OF THE EVER LASTING GOD**” that “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” is to be “made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

Therefore, as Isaiah, the prophet, put it in Isaiah 8:20, “**TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY** if they speak not **ACCORDING TO THIS WORD**, it is because there is **NO LIGHT IN THEM.**”

POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

The first example of Christian teaching that it is NOT “all positive” is found in Luke 2:41ff, when at the age of twelve, Jesus accompanied Joseph and His mother to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. On their way back, they missed Him, turning back to Jerusalem seeking Him. After three days, they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. His mother said unto Him, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” Rather than a “positive” answer, Jesus’ response was negative in tone, in that He said, “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”

When, at the age of thirty, Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized of John, John was preaching, concerning Jesus:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand. and he will thoroughly purge his floor [negative], and gather his wheat into the garner [positive]; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire [negative] (Mat. 3:11-12).

Immediately thereafter, when being tempted of the devil, some of Jesus’ responses were positive; others negative. When the devil tempted Jesus to command that “these stones be made bread,” Jesus answered, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone [negative], but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” [positive]” (Mat. 4:1-4) When the devil took Him into the holy city and sat Him on a pinnacle of the temple, saying unto Him,

If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone (Mat. 4:5-6),

Jesus’ response was all negative. “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Mat. 4:7). Finally, when the devil took Jesus up into an exceeding high mountain, showing Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, saying, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me,” once

again, Jesus's response was negative as well as positive, saying, "Get thee hence, Satan [negative]: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve [positive]" (Mat 4:9-10). (NOTE: That this mixture of both positive and negative responses was pleasing unto God is evident from the very next verse: "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" [Mat. 4:11].)

In John 2:13-16, we read of Jesus' first cleansing of the temple. When He went up to Jerusalem and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves and the changers of money sitting, He made a scourge of small cords (Mat. 4:13-15). With that scourge, He drove them all out of the temple, including the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables [negative] (Mat. 4:15). He said unto them that sold doves, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise [negative]" (Mat. 4:16).

In discussing with his disciples at the Well of Sychar, in Samaria (John 4), Jesus said, "Say not ye [negative], There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest?"; and, "behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest [positive]" (Mat. 4:35).

Many have pointed to Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" as recorded in Matthew 5-7, as an example of "all positive" and "no negative." Truly, much of it is positive; but a closer look shows even here His use of the negative right along with the positive. Reminding His listeners that it was said by them of "old time," "Thou shalt not kill," He continued

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment [negative]: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council [negative]: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire [negative]. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him [positive] (Mat. 5:21-25).

Jesus' teaching on adultery (Mat. 5:27-30).

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery [negative]: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart [positive]. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell [all negative].

Jesus on divorce and remarriage (Mat. 5:31-32).

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement [positive]. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery [negative].

Jesus on oaths (Mat. 5:33-37).

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself [negative], but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths [positive]: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black [all negative]. But let your communication be, Yea, yea [positive]; Nay, nay [negative]: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Jesus on avenging ourselves (Mat 5:38-42).

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth [negative]: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away [all positive].

Jesus on loving our enemies (Mat. 5:43-48).

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

publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect [all positive].

Jesus' teaching on almsgiving (Mat. 6:14).

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seem of them otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men [negative]. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth [negative]: that thine alms may be in secret. and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly [positive].

Jesus' teaching on prayer (Mat 6:5-13).

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are [negative]: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly [positive]. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking [negative]. Be not ye therefore like unto them [negative]: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. [Mostly positive, but part negative.]

Jesus teaches forgiveness (Mat 6:14-15). "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you [positive]: But if ye forgive not man their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses [negative]."

Jesus' teaching on fasting (Mat 6:16-18).

Moreover when ye took be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast [negative]. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly [positive].

Treasures in heaven (Mat 6:19-21).

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal [negative]: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also [positive].

God and Mammon (Mat. 6:24). “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [part negative, part positive].”

Care and anxiety (Mat. 6:25-34).

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on [negative]...But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you [positive].

Judging (Mat. 7:1-5). “Judge not, that ye be not judged [negative]...Thou hypocrite [negative], first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye [positive].”

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you [all negative]” (Mat 7:6).

Conditions of prayer (Mat. 7:7). “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you [positive].”

The golden rule (Mat. 7:12). “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this in the law and the prophets [positive].”

Strait gate and narrow way (Mat. 7-13-14).

Enter ye in at the strait gate [positive]: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat [negative]: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it [both positive and negative].

False prophets (Mat. 7:15). “Beware of false prophets [negative], which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves [negative].”

Knowing a tree by its fruits (Mat. 7:16-20).

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit [positive]; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit [negative]. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire [negative]. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Workers of iniquity will be denied (Mat. 7.21-28).

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven [negative]; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven [positive]. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never know you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [negative].

The two foundations (Mat. 7:24-27).

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blow, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock [positive]. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blow, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it [negative].

[NOTE: Even so, as we find example after example of Jesus' teaching as well as that of His apostles whom He Himself chose and personally trained, we see that it was not "all positive" and "no negative" but a balance of both.]

THE LION AND THE LAMB

Instead of artificially trying to reason out just what our attitude in Christian living should be—whether all positive, all negative, or some of both—it would do us all good to study Jesus' own advice in these matters. In Matthew 10:24-25, 34-39, He said.

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord...Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than

me in not worthy of me and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, in not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall loss it and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

If, therefore, we are to be like Jesus as our Master and Lord, was He all positive and no negative? From the many examples already cited, He was both. On the positive side, the Bible likens Him to a Lamb. When John saw Jesus coming unto him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In His Lamb-like qualities, He could say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour...and I will give you rest," "Suffer little children...to come unto me: for of such in the kingdom of heaven," or, to the woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (Mat. 11:28; 19:14; John 8:11).

However, on the negative side, the Bible also likens Jesus to a lion. In fact, in Revelation 5:5, He is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." In His lion-like qualities, He could excoriate those hypocritical scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, with words almost too painful to contemplate. In warning the Gentiles that they must continue to be faithful (see Rom. 11:13-24), the apostle Paul summed it up by saying, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God. on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22). Let us therefore, not try to make our Christian living all positive, but correctly evaluate the sort of God with whom we have to do and govern our lives accordingly.

LIVING BY FAITH

Garry Barnes



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LIVING BY FAITH

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not now” (Heb. 11:1). Faith is a firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing. The main elements in faith in its relation to God, as distinct from faith in man, are especially brought out in the use of the noun (*pistis*) and the corresponding verb (*pisteuo*). They are: (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgment of God’s revelation of truth (2 The. 2:11-12); (2) a personal surrender to Him (John 1:12); and, (3) a conduct inspired by such a surrender (2 Cor. 5:7). Faith in: (1) a belief and trust in and loyalty to God, (2) a belief in the traditional doctrines of religion; (3) a firm belief in something for which there is no visual proof; and, (4) complete confidence.

A WALK BY FAITH

In 2 Corinthians 5:7, the great man of faith, the apostle Paul, in the midst of a discussion of the struggles of this life and the expectations of that eternal abode with God states: “For we walk by faith, not by might” Four times in the Holy Scriptures we are told. “The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). There is no escape from the truth that a happy successful Christian life is a walk of faith.

From its very beginning, this life in Christ is based on faith. When we consider the definitions of faith given at the beginning of this lesson, we know this to be true. We have not seen God, but we believe that He exists because of physical evidence and the truths about Him recorded in the Scriptures. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). We did not walk with Christ as He taught in Galilee, or see the many miracles that He did, but we believe Him to be the Son of God, because of things written.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

Paul, in his inspired book of faith, Romans, has much to say concerning our life of faith in Christ. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2). Later, in Romans 10:17, he stated. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Our conviction, that when we obey the Lord in baptism we have the forgiveness of our sins, is a result of our faith and trust in God to keep His promises.

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sine of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sine and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses (Col. 2:11-13).

We cannot see, feel or taste the blood of Christ as it cleanses us from our past sins, except by the faith that we have in Christ an God’s Son, and in God as one who loves us and is faithful and true. From this humble, but glorious beginning, our life of faith grows. That same faith and complete trust in God must continue to lead us in living the Christian life as we march toward that eternal home of the soul.

The life of one walking by faith in a very distinct life, Faith enables one to join with Paul in 2 Timothy 1:12 to say: "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." Faith enables us to face the temptations of life, and not only to face these temptations, but to overcome them. "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But lot patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jam. 1:34). Also, the apostle Paul said it is by, "taking the shield of faith," that we are able to, "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16). The Christian life of faith is different in that one does not ever have to wonder what they should do or how they should live. These facts are once and for all time settled by their faith in God, for God's Word is their only source of instruction. Our answer in that of Simon Peter in John 6:68: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." If faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and it does, then it is to God's Word in faith we must turn to find God's answer to any of life's questions and trials.

A LIFE OF TRUST

Why should we live a life of faith? It is a life of trust in the Creator of the universe, the giver of all life and the final Judge of all mankind. Jesus, in Matthew 6:19-34, teaches this life of faith in God. This life of faith enables one to place the proper propriety on things as we live on earth. It causes one to realize that eternal things are far more important than physical things. Thus, we lay up treasures in heaven. Faith opens our eyes to see and understand that God cares for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, and that He will care for no if we will only trust in Him. Only by faith can one practice the exhortation of Matthew 6:83: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Paul demonstrates, in his life, this trust, as stated in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The life of faith is a CHRIST-CENTERED life. His sacrifice on the cross is the center of our trust. His example is the center of our pattern of life. His word is the center of our study and service; and His resurrection is the center of our hope. There is a song entitled “Living By Faith,” written by James Wells and R. E. Winsett, that very beautifully expresses the characteristics of a life of faith in Christ.

I care not today what the morrow may bring. If shadow or sunshine or rain,
 The Lord I know ruleth over everything, and all of my worry is vain.
 Tho' tempests may blow and the storm-clouds arise, Obscuring the brightness of life,
 I'm never alarmed of the overcast skies, The Master looks on at the strife.
 I know that He safely Will carry me thru, No matter what evils betide,
 Why should I then care tho' the tempest may blow, if Jesus walks close to my side.
 Our Lord will return in His glory someday, Our troubles will then all be oer.
 The Master so gently will lead us away, Beyond that blest heavenly shore.
 REFRAIN: Living by faith in Jesus above, Trusting, confiding in His great love;
 From all harm safe in His sheltering arm. I'm living by faith and feel no alarm.

This song so beautifully expresses the faith and trust we should have in God. This trust should be such a natural part of our life that we would so live and follow Jesus without a second thought. This faith and trust that we should have in God and Jesus His Son, as our Savior, can be illustrated in the two following ways. First, the story was told several years ago, of a plane flight in which the plane went through an electrical storm and one of the plane's engines caught fire. The plane continued to experience other mechanical problems and to be tossed about in the storm. All those on the plane were terrified with fright—all except one little girl about five years old. She sat quietly in her seat. When asked why she was not afraid, she calmly replied, “My father is the pilot of the plane, everything will be okay.”

Second, every day on the highway we cross any number of bridges as we drive from place to place and we never stop to give them a second thought. Why? Because we have faith in those who built those bridges to have made them safe for our travel. When we have a genuine faith and trust in God, we will be like that little girl when the trials of life come our way. We can travel down the pathway of life just as easily as we drive down the highway.

BIBLE EXAMPLES OF FAITH

It is easy to see how one must live by faith when we explore the examples of faith given to us in God's Word. Hebrews 11 in the Bible's greatest collection of those who lived by faith. By studying this chapter, we can learn a very useful lesson on faith. We must go back to chapter ten to get the setting for the examples of faith given in chapter eleven. Chapter ten is a beautiful summary of the "proofs" the author has given in the first nine chapters that Christ is indeed worthy of our faith. The author has proven Christ to be worthy of our faith and obedience by showing Him as: (1) God's present spokesman to mankind (2) greater than the angels; (3) greater than the law-giver, Moses; (4) greater than the Old Testament priesthood of Aaron; (5) the giver of a new and better covenant; and, (6) the minister of the true tabernacle. Upon these proofs, the author, in chapter ten, exhorts us to: "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," and, "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works."

Having given these exhortations, the author warns against our sinning, "willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth." He then speaks of the need of patience, that having done the will of God, we might receive the promise. He then closes the tenth chapter with the assurance that they are not of those who draw back unto perdition, but that they were of them that believe to the saving of the soul. Now let us spend a few minutes considering the lessons of faith that we can learn from the Old Testament examples of faith given in chapter eleven.

Remember, it is from the background of chapter ten that chapter eleven is given as an example of those who believed (had faith) to the saving of their souls. This is the faith by which we must live to the saving of our souls. It is a faith that will make us to know that God is the Creator of this world and all things therein, and that all is well because He is a God who cares (Heb. 11:1-3). What a joy and comfort it is to know God is the Creator and that all is in His hands; that order in the universe will always exist. This faith will give one the testimony that he pleases God. We see this example of

faith in Abel and his sacrifice and in the life of Enoch (Heb. 11:4-6). By faith, we offer our sacrifice, and by faith we can rest assured that it is pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5-9). Only by faith can we know that we are pleasing God in our walk upon this earth. And, by faith, we know that God will take us home to be with Him, even as He took Enoch, while yet he lived.

This faith enables one in life to walk where he cannot see (Heb. 11:7-21). In these verses, we have the examples of building an ark and of Abraham leaving his homeland of Ur of the Chaldees to go into a land which God would show to him. This type of faith, in our lives, will enable us to reach out in our service in the Lord's kingdom (that requires trust) and to do things of which we cannot know or see the end result. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Noah had never seen rain, and Abraham had no idea where God would lead him. This faith will lead us to try work we never have done, or take a job in some different location of the country not really knowing the strength of the Lord's cause in the area.

Faith makes us aware that here on earth we are but strangers and pilgrims (Heb. 11:13-16). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelt in the land of Canaan which God gave to them, but they were looking, "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10); and they desired, "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. 11:16). Faith, in our lives, will cause us also to realize that our life here is but a preparing ground for that eternal home with God. It will help us to realize that our time here is but short, in relation to that abode after death. It will make us to realize that the spiritual things of life are far more important than the material things. Only by faith, do we understand the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:11. Listen through the ear of faith to the words of 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1.

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are own are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Oh, for the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

This faith will enable one to stand any test of our trust in God that comes our way. Consider Abraham and his faith in God to be willing to offer the only heir to God's promise upon an altar in sacrifice to God. I am sure that most of us today would have at least tried to argue with God, but not Abraham. Listen to the reasoning of Abraham's faith. "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:19). This faith is a **MUST** in our practice of Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, Luke 9:23-24 and Romans 12:1-2. What else will motivate one to leave a life of sin, give up perhaps a very profitable lifestyle, leave old friends and begin a totally new life? What else will enable us to say, "NO," to the temptations of the devil that come our way daily?

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith (1 John 5:3-4).

We see this faith in the words of the apostle Peter.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, an a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (1 Pet. 5:6-9).

In association with the above point, faith enables one to make the right choices (Heb. 11:23-27). In these verses, we have the example of the faith of Moses. We see Moses as he exhibited his faith in choosing to serve God and lead His people over all the wealth and power of Egypt that could have been his. Moses knew who his people were and that these were the people of God. Moses through faith was able to see a greater reward than the throne of Egypt. He endured because by faith he could see a greater judge than the king of Egypt. By faith, he was able to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea on dry land. At the Red Sea, with the Egyptian army closing in on them, Moses would instruct the Israelites to, "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you today" (Exo. 14:13).

What an example of faith Moses is to us. With this faith, we can see past the glitter, glamour and sparkle of the world and its momentary pleasures of sin, to the eternal reward of the Christian life—heaven. Faith will enable us to suffer whatever trials and pay whatever price must be paid to be faithful to Christ and His church. This is the faith that enables us to know and trust God’s promises to be true, to know one day there will be a judgment and a reward for those who have lived in faith, that will surely be worth it all (Heb. 10:22-23; 1 Pet. 4:17-19; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jam. 1:12; 1 Cor. 15:58). When we have this type of faith, we can understand Jesus’ statement in John 6:29, when He says; “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” This faith enables us to make the right choice between good and evil. Faith enables us to stand and be faithful, as these examples of old. We, like them, can subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises. out of weakness be made strong, wax valiant in the spiritual battle of God’s cause and withstand mocking and scourgings. We, like these of old, can obtain a good report through faith, while here not yet having received the promises (Heb 11:32-40). How parallel this is to the exhortation of Paul to those at Corinth.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:55-58).

The faith of those of old will enable us to accomplish what others fail (Heb. 11:23-29). We, like Moon and others, can overcome seemingly unconquerable obstacles and remove seemingly unmovable hindrances in our march toward that “city not made with hands,” “by faith ye stand” (2 Cor. 1:24). When we stop and consider the difference between those who work and accomplish much for Christ today, and those who do not accomplish anything, the difference is faith! Faith will make one realize he is not in this battle between good and evil alone. We understand that God and Christ are with us (Heb. 13:5-6; Mat. 28:20). This is the faith of Paul in

Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

THE FAITH

When we talk about faith (belief, trust) in God, we readily realize that this faith comes only from “The Faith.” The word “faith” is used many times in the Scriptures as a noun. This usage of the word “faith” denotes the, “system of teaching or doctrine of Christ taught within the New Testament” Listen to the apostle Paul in Roman 10-6-8.

But the which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? [that is to bring Christ down from above], Or, who shall descend into the deep? [that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead]. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart- that is, the word of faith, which we preach.

Faith (belief, trust) in God and Christ comes from the “word of faith” (Rom. 10:17). Acts 16:5 speaks of the churches being “established in the faith.” In 2 Corinthians 16:13, we are exhorted to, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” In Colossians 1:21-23, Paul says Christ has reconciled them in the body of his flesh to present them holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: if they continued, “in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” Paul wrote to Timothy and spoke of him as his son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2); and of those who were, “reprobate concerning the faith” (2 Tim. 3:8); and of those who had, “erred from the faith” (1 Tim. 6:10). Jude exhorts that we, “should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Our faith then, can only be grounded in the right person when it is produced by the hearing of God’s Word—“The Faith.”

Only by this faith, can one be justified in the sight of God. One could never be justified by the deeds of the Old Law. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28). “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11). When we study God’s Word, we find the faith that saves (justifies) is a living faith, an active faith (Mark 16:16; Rom. 3-6;

Heb 11; Jam. 2). We must also live by faith, because no man can save himself. One can never live completely free from sin (Rom. 3:10, 23) or do enough good deeds to atone for the sins that he has committed (Rom. 5:5-11; 6:23). While we cannot see, feel or hear the physical person of Jesus, His blood, the forgiveness of sin and heaven, yet we have a calm assurance of these things, we must walk by faith (Acts 28:18; 15:9; Rom. 5:1; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 10:22-23).

As faith is obtained by the hearing of the Word of God and is sustained by our continued hearing of the Word, it can also become weak or vain and be erred from (Mat. 6:30; 1 Tim. 6:10; Jam. 2:14-26). Our faith can be overthrown by false teaching (2 Tim. 2:18) and denied (Rev. 2:13). The entire book of Hebrews is written to the end that we might not depart from God in unbelief. In Hebrews 3:11-14, the writer warns that we should take heed, lest there be in any of us, "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

Paul writes of the possibility of believing in vain (1 Cor. 15:1-2) and of those who were weak in the faith (Rom. 14:1). In writing concerning Abraham's faith, Paul says he was not weak in faith, but rather he was strong in the faith, giving glory to God (Rom. 4:19-20). Jesus spoke of those of His disciples who were weak in the faith (Mat. 6:30). Therefore, we see the need to heed Paul's exhortation to those in the church at Corinth. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5). When we consider all the ways our faith, or lack of it, affects our daily lives in God's service, it is wise to heed Paul's warning, as given to the Corinthians, on a regular basis.

Our faith affects our attendance at the services of the church. Our faith affects our prayers in daily living. Without a strong faith, we will not, "come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15-16). Our faith in Him affects God's own response to our prayers (Jam. 1:5-7; Mat. 21:22; 1 John 5:14-15).

Our faith affects our ability to trust God and seek first the kingdom and His righteousness (Mat. 6:19-34; Heb. 13:5-6). It affects our confidence, our ability to do all things in the Lord's

kingdom (Phi. 4:13; Gal. 2:20). Our faith affects our service to others (Jam. 1:21-27; 2:14-26; 1 John 3:16-24). It affects our prayers for the sick (Jam. 5:15-16). Our faith affects our giving of our income to the Lord's cause (Mat. 6:19-34; 2 Cor. 8-9). It affects; therefore, the very way we hear and respond to all of God's commandments. This is the message of Jesus in Matthew 3, 4 and 10. Listen carefully to what the inspired writer says about the nation of Israel.

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them: But the word preached did not profit them, NOT BEING MIXED WITH FAITH, in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest. Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world (Heb. 4:1-3, emphasis mine).

Therefore, let us be careful to be certain that the word preached to us be found to be both in "the faith" and mixed with faith. If, in our examining of ourselves, we find our faith becoming weak and dying, let us quickly take the steps to strengthen our faith. If, in examining ourselves, we find that we have erred from "the faith" in belief and practice, let us repent and return to a faithful following of God's revealed will. Let us seek to prevent such departures from the faith by practicing 2 Peter 1:1-11.

I would close this study on faith with the words of exhortation to the churches of Galatia.

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth (Gal. 5:5-7).

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith (Gal. 3:11).

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LIVING IN VIEW OF ETERNITY

Bobby Duncan



Bobby was born in Jacksonville, Alabama, May 9, 1934, and was baptized by Joe S. Hyde in 1945. He began preaching in Jacksonville in 1951. He attended Freed-Hardeman College, Jacksonville State, Birmingham Southern and Alabama Christian School of Religion, B.A., M.A.

He has done local evangelistic work on a full time basis with only three churches: Munford, Alabama (1956-1958); Sixth Avenue in Jasper, Alabama (1976-1983); and, Adamsville, Alabama (1958-1976 and 1983-Present).

Bobby has conducted daily radio programs in Talladega, Birmingham, and Jasper, Alabama, and daily television programs in Jasper and Birmingham. He edited *Words of Truth* for over seven years and now edits *Vigil*, a monthly publication begun by himself and the Adamsville church in 1973. He is a frequent speaker in meetings and lectureships and is the author of *The Elders Which Are Among You*, several booklets and hundreds of published articles.

He is married to the former Lois Ann Elliott of Carbon Hill, Alabama and they have two children: Mrs. Raymond E. (Jill) Wallace and Robert Timothy Duncan.

It is a genuine joy to be back in Pensacola attending the Bellview Lectures. I personally appreciate the invitation to speak on this occasion, though I feel inadequate to deal with the subject which has been assigned. In fact, the gospel itself is so marvelously great that I know I shall never be able to preach it as it deserves to be preached; my feeble efforts will never be able to do it justice. This is especially true in connection with the subject I will be discussing, "Living in View of Eternity."

As a text, I have chosen Isaiah 57:15, which says.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that in of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

This is the only verse in the Bible that uses the word eternity.

Brother Willard Collins, in a lecture on this subject at Abilene Christian College in 1968 said:

Eternity and despair are two words in the Bible which man may never really comprehend in this world. History teaches that when a well-known statesman was on his deathbed several years ago, and his trusted physician, when pressed to tell him the truth, assured him that he had but a few hours to live, that this man called for his card. The statesman handed his own card to the doctor and asked him to write on it the word "Despair." The doctor wrote the word and returned the card to the dying man, who looked at it silently and thoughtfully a few minutes, then handed it back with the statement, "Sir, you, have not the remotest conception of the meaning of the word 'despair.'"

Brother Collins then remarked. "It is also very difficult for mortal man to comprehend the real meaning of the word 'eternity.'" I would emphasize that it is not difficult for us to understand what the Bible teaches about eternity. Our difficulty is in comprehending eternity itself and the things related to it, such as Heaven and Hell.

As we contemplate eternity, there are several facts which, if we will remember, will help us live so as to be prepared for eternity. Keeping these facts in mind is actually what we mean when we speak of "Living in View of Eternity." What are these facts?

Fact number 1: Man will hve again after this earthly life is over. Any number of passages confirm this fact. Jesus said:

But an touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Mat. 22:31-32).

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had ended their earthly pilgrimage many years before God spoke these words. But Jesus said these words are an affirmation of the fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dill living.

At the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared unto Peter, James, and John (Mat. 17:1-3). Their earthly existence had ended many centuries before, but they continued to live on.

Luke 16:19-31 pictures two men who had lived on this earth. Both of them died, and yet both of them continued to live on.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 tells what happens when the time comes for one to leave his earthly existence: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The poet expressed the sentiments of every Bible believer when he wrote:

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
 Life is but an empty dream!
 For the soul is dead that slumbers,
 And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life in earnest!
 And the grave is not its good;
 Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
 Was not spoken of the soul.²

Man will continue to live on after his earthly existence has come to an end.

Factnumber 2: It is certain that none of us will live on this earth forever. Job said. “Man that in born of a woman in of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not” (Job 14:1-2). Joshua said. “And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth” (Jos. 23:14). David said: “I go the way of all the earth” (1 Kin. 2:2). The writer of Hebrews said: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). The psalmist said. “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psa. 90:10). Little as we like to think about it, death is the common lot of the human race. Methuselah lived nine hundred sixty-nine years on this earth, but his biography ends with the words, “and he died” (Gen. 5:27).

We know, of course, that those who are living on this earth when Jesus comes in His glory will not die. Paul wrote:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed! (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

Some will not die, but the result will be the same; they will leave this earth and receive their eternal reward.

Some think they will live on this earth forever. But the truth is, when Jesus comes again this earth is going to be burned up. Peter said:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall

melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up? (2 Pet. 3:10).

The words burned up are translated from the same Greek word found in Matthew 3:12: “But he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Nobody is going to live on this earth after Jesus comes, for this earth will not be here; it will have been burned up.

Factnumber 3. We may leave this earthly life at any time, without a moment’s notice, and when we leave we will never return. This underscores the fact that we should live every day so as to be prepared when that time comes. How unfortunate and how foolish it is to that many make plans to live but fail to make any plans for dying. James 4:13-15 says:

Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what in your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

A man may kiss his wife goodbye when he leaves for his job in the morning, and he may tell her what time he plans to be back, but he can never know for sure that he is not kissing her goodbye for the last time. A parent may drop a child off at school in the morning with the intention of picking him up again in the afternoon, but he can never know with certainty that he will ever see that child alive again, or that that child will ever see him alive again.

Our Lord, in Luke 12:16-20, told about a rich farmer who made provisions for many years of life:

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

Our Lord then added: “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

Suppose it were to be the case that today were your last day on this earth. Would you be ready for eternity? The fact is that today may be the last for any one of us or for all of us. There are times when one knows the exact hour when he will leave this world. I refer to those who have been sentenced to die for their crimes, and the day and hour of their execution has been set. Even then, they may die before that hour comes. There are times when one may know that death can be reasonably expected within a certain few days or even hours. I refer to those who are terminally ill, or whose bodies have grown so weak and infirm that they cannot last much longer on this earth. But thousands upon thousands of people died last year who were making plans to live, and who thought they would be living for years to come. The truth is, all of us must one day leave this world. The time will not be very long for any of us, and for some it will be quite soon.

Fact number 4: We will be judged for eternity by the way we have lived while here on this earth. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). In Matthew 26:31-46, there is painted for us by the Lord a clear picture of the final judgment day.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world....Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels....And these shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal.

All these passages show that the judgment day is a real day. Its purpose is not to put us on trial to determine whether we are guilty

or innocent, lost or saved, righteous or wicked. God already knows while we are living on earth whether we are righteous or wicked. Peter said: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12). This shows God knows while we are living whether we are righteous or evil; otherwise He could not know whether to hear our prayers or turn His face against us. If He knows what condition one is in while he is living, then He knows what condition he is in at the time of his death. That does not have to be decided on the day of judgment. Then what is the purpose of the judgment day? It is the day on which our Lord will pronounce the final condemnation upon the wicked and disobedient, and on which He will announce the reward of Heaven to those who have been obedient to Him. It will be a day on which the justice of God in saving the righteous and condemning the wicked will be made crystal clear. In Matthew 12:41, Jesus said. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." He said also in the next verse: "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it. for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." The word *condemn* is translated from a word which means, according to Thayer, "by one's good example to render another's wickedness the more evident and censurable." Jesus says that, in the judgment, the men of Nineveh who repented at the preaching of Jonah will serve to highlight the wickedness of those who would not even repent at the preaching of Christ Himself. He says that the queen of Sheba's coming a great distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon will serve on judgment day to highlight the wickedness of those who neglect to hear even the Son of God.

It makes me tremble to realize that, on the great Judgment day, I will be standing in the presence of those whose devotion, whose sacrifices, whose marvelous service cause my own pitiful efforts to pale in comparison. "Are you ready for that day to come?"

Factnumber 5. Eternity is long. It is in this connection that I find myself incapable of full comprehension. How long is eternity? There is no way to measure it, for there is no place to begin measuring, and there is no place to end. If a person is sick, and is told he must spend ten days in the hospital, when he has been there one day, he can say, "I now have only nine more days to stay, and then I will be going home." If a young person goes off to college for four years, when one year is completed he can say, "I now have just three more years to go, and I will be finished." If a criminal is sentenced to serve a full ten years in the penitentiary, when he has served one year he can say, "I now have only nine more years to serve, and I will be set free." But eternity is not like that. One verse of the song, "Amazing Grace," says:

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

Brother T. B. Larimore illustrated the endlessness of eternity by saying:

We may number the leaves of all the trees of all the earth through all the ages and multiply that number by the number of blades of grass that have grown on the earth since the earth was made, then multiply that by the grains of sand upon the earth, and multiply that by the number of drops of water in existence; then let each unit in that final inexpressible product represent ten thousand ages, and all the time represented by that wonderful combination of units, each unit representing ten thousand ages, is inexpressibly small in comparison with eternity, and may be deducted from eternity millions and billions and billions of times and eternity would still be the same awful, boundless, fathomless, inexpressible thing it was before.³

Factnumber 6: There are two, and only two, destinies in eternity. All of us are bound for one or the other, and we can choose whether we go to Heaven or Hell. But our choice must be made while we live here on earth. That choice should not be difficult at all. Unfortunately, the great majority have made the wrong choice for one reason or another.

Time will not permit a full discussion of either Heaven or Hell. But if it did, and if I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, I still would not be able to do justice to the bliss of Heaven

or to the horrors of Hell. But, we will take a moment to observe some of the things the Bible teaches about Heaven and Hell. Notice with me first some of the horrors of Hell, and then we will look briefly at some of the wonderful things the Bible says about Heaven.

The first horror of Hell we will notice is the horror of darkness. Your Bible says: “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (2 Pet. 2:4). Then in verse 17, of the same chapter, Peter said: “These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever.” Jude described the wicked and their fate by saying they are: “Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom in reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13).

Our hearts go out to those who are totally blind. We say their lives are spent in total darkness, but such is not really the case, for those around them can see. Think how much worse off the blind would be if nobody could see. Can you imagine what it would be like tonight if every light in Pensacola should suddenly go out—every street light and every car light included? We cannot see our hands in front of our faces. We are in total darkness. There is no moon and no stars to give any light. We sit down and wait for the day, but the day does not come. We are in total darkness forever. Think of the chaos and confusion that would reign if all of us were forever locked into a world of total darkness.

A second horror of Hell is the fiery torment to be suffered by those who go there. In the New Testament there are about thirty references to Hell as a place of fire. Some of these verses mention both fire and brimstone, and some of them refer to Hell as a “lake of fire.” One passage (Rev. 14:11) refers to “the smoke of their torment.” But not one of these references uses the expression “like fire,” or “as by fire,” or “like as of fire.” The only conclusion we can draw without being untrue to the text is that Hell is a place of burning fire. No wonder the rich man who was there cried and said. “Father Abraham, have mercy on me...for I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:24). Imagine, if you can, the mound of millions and

billions of people who are screaming in the flames of Hell and begging for mercy.

That brings us to a third horror of Hell, that is, the fact that in Hell there is no mercy and no hope of mercy. The rich man to whom we have just made reference begged for mercy, but he had already sinned away the day of God's mercy, and no mercy was given. The Greek word translated "mercy" is defined by Thayer as, "kindness or good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them." It is said that a mother came to Napoleon to plead for the life of her son, who had been condemned to die. Napoleon told her that justice demanded the death of her son. "But sire," she said, "I do not plead for justice. I plead for mercy."

Napoleon told her. "Your son does not deserve mercy."

"True," admitted the mother, "but it would not be mercy if he deserved it."

"Well then," said Napoleon, "I will have mercy."

God said the same thing with reference to the human race many years ago. He has a desire to relieve those who are miserable and afflicted because of their sins, and he extends kindness and good will to them. But those who reject that mercy while they live here upon this earth will beg and plead for mercy in Hell, but no mercy will be available there.

A fourth horror of Hell has to do with the matter of having influenced others to be lost in Hell. Romans 14:7 says: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." The rich man of Luke 16 was suffering in the knowledge that he had not exercised the proper influence on his own brethren and consequently they were headed for that awful place. The maddest thing is that those we influence the most are usually those we love the most. Can you imagine being in Hell, and hearing one of your children screaming in agony, and realizing that that son or daughter could have, and likely would have, avoided this terrible fate if you had only done your duty as a parent, instead of saying: "What I do is my own business, and nobody else's"? No wonder Jesus said: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).

If time permitted, we could talk also about the horror of Hell's repulsive population, the horror of memory and the horror of hopelessness. But we must move on.

In connection with that other dwelling place in eternity, the one we call Heaven, I will not take the time to talk at length about the gates of pearl, the walls of jasper, the street of gold, or the crystal-clear river. These certainly enhance the marvelous beauty of that city. I will mention the fact that Heaven will be a place where there will be no sorrow, no pain, no sickness, no death, no sad farewells. Think what this will mean to the inhabitants of that beautiful city. Think what it would mean to us right here on earth if it were possible for it to be so. But I want to mention another wonderful thing that makes Heaven more and more appealing as the years roll by, that is, the fellowship with God's faithful in every age. I want to meet Abraham. To me, he is the greatest person ever to walk on the face of the earth, with the exception of the Lord himself. I want to talk with Elijah, and with Jeremiah. I want to at down with the apostles, especially with Paul. But I also look forward to meeting some of the pioneers of the Restoration Movement—the Campbell's, Barton W. Stone, John T. Johnson, "Raccoon" John Smith and others. And there are some who came along later, and yet who passed from the scene before I had the opportunity of meeting them or hearing them preach—men such as Moses E. Lard, Tolbert Fanning, J. W. McGarvey, and T. B. Larimore. Then, there are some great and good men I have had the privilege of knowing and at whose feet I have sat, who are now in Heaven, and whom I hope to be with again some day—H. A. Dixon, B. C. Goodpasture, Gus Nichols, and more recently, Franklin Camp.

But I confess to you that there are some others now in Heaven whom I long to see even more than these. I believe John Duncan is there. He made it possible for me to be born into this world. And then he worked hard from early morning until night year after year to make it possible for us children to have food to eat, clothing to wear, and a roof over our heads. When I graduated from high school, he borrowed money to send me to Freed-Hardeman College. He paid the money back by working extra jobs late into the night

after his regular work day was over. I do not guess I ever really told him how much I appreciate his love for me as a son and especially the sacrifices he made to make it possible for me to get started as a preacher of the gospel.

I have a mother in Heaven. Without her prayers, her godly life and her guiding influence, I likely would not be a Christian today, much less a preacher of the gospel. Many times I overheard her as she prayed for me saying, “God, bless him, and keep him, and help him to be a good boy.” Where would I be tonight without her love, her prayers and the sacrifices she made for my welfare? I want to go to Heaven so I can see Mother and Daddy again in that beautiful place.

Many years ago, I was able to persuade the loveliest girl in Walker County, Alabama, to become my wife. She has been, and continues to be, the joy of my life. We are now in our thirty-ninth year of marriage. God has blessed us with two children, a girl and a boy, and two beautiful grandchildren, a boy and a girl. In them, are wrapped up our hopes and aspirations for the future. I know the time will come—and it cannot be very long—when I must say goodbye to these dearest on earth to me. But it does not have to be goodbye forever. Heaven is a place where we can be together for eternity.

You may have the street of gold, the gates of pearl, and the walls of jasper if you wish. Heaven will be Heaven for me because of the dear loved ones I can be with over there. When J. C. McQuiddy died, T. B. Larimore delivered a discourse at his funeral. In that discourse he said:

Long am in the days of childhood and youth, when I worked for Mr. McDonough from Monday morning till Saturday night, I always went home—a mile and a quarter away—after dark Saturday night My way lay along the riverside—up the river, on the right bank. On one side were tall mountains that cast their shadows over the river every bright day. On the other side of the road was the river, and, as I walked along, I could hear it rippling over shallow places and murmuring against the bank. At one place a deep ravine cut across the road, and down in that ravine it was always dark as I passed along going home. I was timid and afraid. My sweet little mother knew I was timid, and, notwithstanding she was timid, too, she always came to the edge of the ravine nearest home to meet me. As I approached that dark place, she would hear me and call softly: “Is that you, my son?” Then all my fears were

gone. We would meet in the ravine and go home together happy, no longer afraid or timid. I sometimes wonder if, when I come to cross the valley of death, I shall hear my mother's voice on the other side as she waits for me to come. I know she will be there if she can.⁴

Have you made your choice for eternity? Really, it seems such an easy choice. On the one hand, there is eternal punishment; on the other, there is eternal bliss. On the one, there is pain and agony, weeping and gnashing of teeth; on the other, no pain, no sickness, no tears, no sadness. On the one hand, there is a lake that bums with fire and brimstone; on the other, there in joy and gladness forever more. How can one possibly make the wrong choice? And yet to fail to choose is to choose eternity in Hell.

I am thankful God has placed it within our power to go to Heaven, and to avoid Hell. And I am thankful the way to Heaven has been made plain. Obedience to His gospel involves faith, repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins. One who is a child of God, but has become unfaithful, must be restored by repenting of his unfaithfulness, confessing it, and praying for God's pardon.

I will close by reading a poem you have heard many times, but which serves to illustrate that God can take the man or woman whose life has been battered and torn by sin, and change that life, and make that person fit for heaven.

Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
 Thought it scarcely worth his while
 To waste much time on the old violin,
 But he held it up with a smile.
 "What am I bidden, good folks?" he said;
 "Who'll start the bidding for me?"
 "A dollar." "A dollar." Then, "Two!"
 "Two dollars! and who'll make it three?"
 "Three dollars, once, Three dollars, twice!
 Going for three?" But no!
 From the room far back, an old gray haired man
 Came forward and picked up the bow.
 Then wiping the dust from the old violin
 And tightening the loom strings,
 He played a melody, pure and sweet
 As the caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer
 In a voice that was quiet and low
 Said, "What am I bid for the old violin?"
 And he hold it up with the bow.

"A thousand dollars! and who'll make it two?
 Two thousand! and who'll make it three?
 Three thousand. once! Three thousand, twice!
 And...Going...and Gone!" said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,
 "We do not quite understand
 What changed its worth?" Swift came the reply,
 "The touch of the master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
 Who is battered and scarred with sin,
 Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
 Much like the old violin.

A men of pottage, a glass of wine,
 A game,—He travels on.
 He's going once! He's going twice!
 He's going-and almost gone!

But the Master comes! and the foolish crowd
 Never can quite understand
 The worth of a soul, and the change that's wrought
 By the touch of the Masters hand!

—Author unknown

If there is something you need to do to become prepared for eternity, we urge you to do it now.

ENDNOTES

¹J. D. Thomas, Editor, *Crowning Fifty Years* (Abilene Christian College, 1968), p. 185.

²Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *A Psalm of Life*, stanzas 1 and 2 (1939).

³Mrs. T. B. Larimore, *Life, Letters and Sermons of T. A. Larimore* (The Gospel Advocate Company, 1981), p. 406.

⁴T. B. Larimore, "Discourse Delivered at the Funeral of J. C. McQuiddy," (*Gospel Advocate*, Vol. LXVI, No. 37, Sept. 11, 1924), pp. 874-875.

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LIVING WITH RESPECT TO THINGS

Harold Bigham



Harold was born August 10, 1960, in Anniston, Alabama, to Frank and Mary Lou Bigham. He is married to the former Rita Faye Holladay of DeFuniak Springs, Florida, and they have two children: Aaron Ross and Ashley Brooke.

He is a graduate of the Bellview Preacher Training School in Pensacola, Florida, and of Beville State Community College in Fayette, Alabama. Harold began full-time preaching in 1984 and has preached in North Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama. He is presently serving the White's Chapel Church of Christ in Eldridge, Alabama. Harold's twin brother, Howell, is also a gospel preacher.

God expects humanity to possess the correct attitude toward things of this life. He created man and provided for him all things richly to enjoy. With these attendant blessings, God has given man a pattern to follow in regard to keeping the right perspective with respect to things. The assignment for this lecture involves our living with reaped to things.

RESOURCES OF THINGS

All that we have comes from God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam. 1:17). "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mat. 5:45). Notice Matthew recorded that God is the owner of the sun by the phrase "his sun." Likewise He is the owner of the clouds. Always should we be grateful for the good gifts that God has showered down upon us. The beautiful sunshine, needed rainfall, shelter, food and clothing are good gifts from the all-giving God. God also has

given no the perfect; gifts of Jesus, the Bible and the church (the divine side is always perfect).

As one reviews the creation account in Genesis, he has to be impressed about the omnipotent and benevolent God (Gen. 1). God is the owner of everything! Job recorded, “Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine” (Job 41:11). The Psalmist declared, “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1). Therefore, God is the owner of humanity! “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20). David recognized the allgiving God as he stated, “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee” (1 Chr. 29:14). David further stated concerning God, “For every beast of the felled is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine” (Psa. 50:10-11). Haggai stated, “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts” (Hag. 2:8). Brethren, we need urgently to understand that God is the owner of all things and that He is rich in His goodness and mercy to allow us to use them for a certain period of time. “Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psa. 100:3). “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24).

God put Adam in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. Therefore, the first man was employed to work and toil. For his work, Adam was allowed to eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden (with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). Today, God expects us to gain rightfully the substances of this life. Paul stated, “If any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 The. 3:10). God has authorized four methods of rightfully gaining things in this life:

1. Labor. Working to earn a living is honorable in the sight of God. Our employment might consist of being a president of a large

corporation or being a post-hole digger. It may be from the highest of the pinnacle to the lowest of the scale. God is pleased with both with the condition that all work is honest and that we give an hour's work for an hour's pay. "Let him that stole steal no more. but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good!" (Eph. 4:28). Work is honorable to God, but stealing is dishonorable to God. In Genesis 3:19, God stated, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." God gave us His employment plan! We are to work to support our families and ourselves as we live on the earth. Paul stated, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). God looks down with disgust toward the lazy and slothful (Mat. 25:26-30). So whether our work falls into the category of mental or physical, we are to labor!

2. Exchange. This method involves the buying and selling of goods and services to a customer. A commodity or service is purchased by the customer for a sum of money agreed upon by all. Lydia was a seller of purple (Acts 16:14).

3. Loan. This is the method of borrowing money with the principle and interest coming due on a set payment schedule. When one purchases a house, automobile, or furniture usually it is on a time schedule. In rebuking the one talent man, Jesus, made mention of "usury" (Mat. 25:27).

4. Love. A good or service may be given as a gift without any expectation of receiving something in return. Gifts of love may be given as one makes out a will to leave his possessions to his loved ones, friends, the church or education. Gifts may be given to strengthen a cause or to relieve the oppressed. Jesus exclaimed, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Joseph of Arimathea displayed this method when he provided for Jesus his own tomb (Mat. 27:59-60).

RESPONSIBILITIES TO THINGS

God wants every Christian to be a good steward of His merchandise. A steward is a person who takes care of something that belongs to another. He has been placed in control of something and in there-

fore responsible for the wellbeing of it. Paul stated, “Let a man so account of us, an of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:1-2). Jesus stated, “Who then in that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” (Luke 12:42). Money in and of itself is neither good nor bad. It is how we view and use money in regard to things that determines its honor! The gospel must be spread but it takes money to carry out this command (Mat. 28:18-20). The beautiful church buildings that we meet in week by week were financed by money. Likewise, money has been used as an instrument of spreading sin and heartache across the nations of this world! Its honor is always determined by us. “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall” (Pro. 11:28). “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat, 6:24).

“For the love of money in the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have. erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10). Paul stressed that money is not the sin but rather the sin is found in the “love” of money. In this same verse, Paul speaks of those that “coveted after” money. Jesus stated, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Mat. 6:19). Jesus later taught, “Children, how hard in it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:24-25). Brethren, if we place our confidence and trust in riches rather than in God then we are in danger! Beware!

REACTIONS TO THINGS

We can have two reactions with respect to the things of this life. We can either have a good reaction to things or an evil reaction to things. Agur made a wise statement when he said,

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:
Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor

riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lost I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of ray God in vain (Pro. 30:7-9).

Agur was not stating that a rich man or a poor man is evil and sinful. However, he states the potential possibilities that a rich man would be filled with pride and decide that he no longer is in need of God, therefore he would ask, “Who in the Lord?” A poor man would be faced with the temptation of stealing and cursing God for his lack of food. Agur states that he desires neither extreme but rather he desires only to be content. How do you react to the things of this life? Is it like Paul when he said,

Not that I speak in respect of want. for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be fall and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need (Phi. 4:11-12).

The Hebrews penman wrote, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such thing as ye have for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). In delivering the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught,

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air. for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the Hold, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to in cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow- for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day in the evil thereof (Mat. 6:25-34).

Jesus therefore taught that we are not to put undue concern on the things of this life to the neglect of the soul. If we put God and the

church first in our lives, then the necessities of life will be provided unto us. Let us notice some evil reactions to things and also some good reactions to things as revealed in the Bible.

Evil Reactions

1. The rich young ruler.

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother. and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions (Mat. 19:16-22).

The rich young man had great possessions, but his reaction to such was not good. He went away sorrowful and would not obey the Lord's command to give his possessions to the poor. The Lord, who knows all, knew the heart of this young man (John 2:25)

2. The rich man in torment.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented...And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:19-31).

The rich man had "good things" but he allowed them to become his master in life rather than using them in helping others who were

not as fortunate as he. Instead of Lazarus' desiring the table crumbs, the rich man should have told Lazarus, "Pull up a chair and eat with me." Torment is the eternal home of the rich man and others who allow things of this life to control them! Lazarus had little in this life but much in the life hereafter. "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right" (Pro. 16:8). "In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked in trouble" (Pro. 15:6). "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing. there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches" (Pro. 13:7). "Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich" (Pro. 28:6).

3. The rich fool.

And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And He spake a parable unto them, saying. The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:15-21).

The rich fool was condemned because of his egotistical attitude and for his evil reaction to the things of this life! Are we like him in that we are hoarding up treasures upon earth and neglecting the important things of this life? Do we eat, drink and make merry and forget about God, the church and our fellowman?

4. Judas Iscariot. He was one of the twelve and was in charge of the treasury. Before his infamous act, Judas revealed his greed and evil disposition about the things of this life. After Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with a pound of costly spikenard, Judas asked, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" (John 12:5). John records the true intent of Judas' question as he wrote, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:6).

5. Ananias and Sapphira. The Jerusalem church rose to the occasion of assisting the needy as those who had land and houses, “sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4:34-35). Ananias and Sapphira were members of this church and they also sold “a possession” which was “land” (Acts 5:1, 8). This couple “agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord” (Acts 5:9). Their sin involved lying and covetousness (Acts 5:3). Their reaction to the things of this life was strikingly different from that of their brethren in the Jerusalem church. They died because of their sin and great fear came upon the church.

6. Balaam. This prophet “loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Pet. 2:15-16). Through his counsel, he caused the children of Israel, “to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor” (Num. 31:16; 25:1-3). After Balak rebuked Balaam for not placing a curse upon Israel, greed and pride filled his heart (Num. 24:10-11). He invented a plan so that Israel would sin by committing fornication and idolatry and God in return would curse His people, thus allowing Balaam to receive his “great honour.” Twenty-four thousand of the children of Israel died in the plague upon that occasion (Num. 25:9). Balaam was rewarded for his crime! His punishment was death by the sword (Num. 31:8). Balaam is noted as an example of greed, idolatry and fornication in the Bible (Rev. 2:14; Jude 11; 2 Pet. 2:15-16).

7. Those who gain treasure by fraud. James records,

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall ad your flesh as it was firs. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your Aside, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth (Jam. 5:1-4).

Those who gain things by fraudulent methods are condemned by God and their riches will testify against them!

“Will a man rob God?” (Mal. 3:8). Many will commit robbery and yet will do so without a gun! They will commit robbery with

their attitude of covetousness. Paul stated, "Covetousness...is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). The children of Israel committed robbery as Malachi penned, "Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye we cursed with a curses for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (Mal. 3:8-9). Let us take a selfexamination of our reaction to things of this life (2 Cor. 13:5).

1. Do I have a reputation as being sacrificial in my giving (2 Cor. 8:1-5)?

2 Do I spend more on recreation (ie., football games, hunting, fishing, movies, etc.) than I do on God (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7)?

3. When a person in justified need seeks financial assistance, do I try to help (1 John 3:17)?

4. Do I realize that my treasures are to be in the depository of heaven rather than on earth (Mat. 6:19-20)?

Did you pan the test 100%?

Good Reactions

1. Abraham was, "very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" yet he was faithful to God (Gen 13:2; James 2:23). He did not allow his riches to blind his eyes but, rather. "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

2. Job was afflicted with loss of health, wealth, family and friends yet he would not curse God and die (Job 2:9-10). Job realized: "we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). When trials come upon us, let us never let them lead us away from God! When a stumbling block is put in front of us, let us use it as a stepping stone! After Job passed the test, God blessed Job, "twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses" (Job 42:12).

3. Barnabas. The son of consolation had some land and he sold it to relieve the poverty of those in need. He "brought the money, and laid it at the apostles feet" (Acts 4:36-37).

4. The poor widow. On one occasion, our Lord,

sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living (Mark 12:41-44).

What is our reaction to things? Is it like this poor widow who gave because she wanted to? God loves a cheerful giver! (2 Cor. 9:7).

5. The churches of Macedonia. Notice the tremendous example of these brethren and may we emulate them. Their attitude toward things of this life was excellent! Paul states:

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the church” of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the rich” of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying no with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had began, so he would also finish in you the same grace also (2 Cor. 8:1-6).

Paul gave to the church at Corinth (as well as to us) the example of the liberality of the churches of Macedonia. They gave even under persecution and affliction (2 Cor. 8:2). They considered giving to be joyful (2 Cor. 8:2). They gave beyond their power and ability to give (2 Cor. 8:3). They were willing givers (2 Cor. 8:3). They encouraged Paul to accept their gift (2 Cor. 8:4). They were able to give this way because they first gave themselves (2 Cor. 8:5)! Brethren, the churches of Macedonia’s economic condition is described as being in “deep poverty” (2 Cor. 8:2). It is usually the norm that those with “little” will give more in comparison to those with “much.”

REWARDS IN RESPECT TO THINGS

God desired the Israelites to test Him!

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I

will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:10).

God issued a challenge unto these people and we today need to understand that God Is, “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). Jesus said,

Give, and it shall be given you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again (Luke 6:38).

Peter wondered about the idea of sacrifice and said, “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” (Mat. 19:27). Jesus answered,

Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life (Mat. 19:28-29).

Christ said that we will be blessed an “hundredfold” in this life (Mark 10-30) and receive eternal life in the afterwhile. What greater reward could be given than this! “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with now wine” (Pro. 3:9-10). If we have the right attitude toward the things of this life, God will shower down upon us more blessings than we can even imagine!

REMAINING THOUGHTS

“The rich and poor meet together the Lord in the maker of them all” (Pro. 22:2). Naturally, in the church there will be people of all walks of life. There will be the rich, the middle class and the poor. There will be Christians of different skin color and nationalities. In Christ, we are all one (Gal. 3:28). There must not be any discrimination against anyone! James states:

For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and

are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? (Jam. 2:2-6).

May we never be guilty of making a difference in people because of money, possessions or race. Let us not discriminate against the poor, middle-class or the rich! The determining factor of a man's character is realized in the conclusion that the things of this world will pass away but the soul of man endures forever.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness (2 Pet. 3:10-11).

“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?” (Mat. 16:26).

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Our greatest possession is our soul! All things of this life fade away into relative insignificance when we consider the seriousness of going to heaven! “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Tim. 6:7).

Let us live righteously with respect to the things of this life so that we may be rewarded the greater blessing of life eternal (2 Tim. 4:8).

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LIVING WITH RESPECT TO TIME

Tommy Alford



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INTRODUCTION

The ways of unregenerate men are often not the ways of God, nonetheless, even they realize the importance of time. Consequently, many have written concerning the importance, brevity, waste and wine use of it. While much of what man has written in reference to time is true and helpful; yet, his emphasis is often placed upon the physical affairs of this life. True wisdom comes from God. By studying His holy Scriptures, we can learn some lessons concerning time that will be beneficial to our spiritual life and well-being as well as to our handling of the mundane affairs of life. God is eternal and infinite and not limited by time as we know it; but, that does not mean He is ignorant or unperceptive of the limits of time He has placed upon human beings. Rather, God Himself teaches us to be good stewards with our time. Let us then look at some of God's words as they relate to various statements that can be made concerning our time.

GOD HAS A PATTERN FOR THE WISE USE OF OUR TIME

We must endeavor not to waste time. Our life is made up of time. When we waste time, we waste our life. The proverbs of Solomon

speak of the sluggards, the sleepers, those who waste time and, therefore, are in want.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man (Pro. 6:6-11).

Proverbs 13:4: “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.”

We must do all we can today, for we know not what will occur on the morrow. Jesus said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work” (John 9-4). The Spirit by James says:

Go to now, ye that say, Today or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that (Jam. 4:13-15).

Two Corinthians 6:2 emphasizes the importance of today in reference to salvation: “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” The rich farmer of Luke 12 thought that he had many years left. He said, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” But notice what God tells him: “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided” (Luke 11:19-20).

Notice what Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 has to say about time.

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted, A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together, a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

These eight verses tell of a time for various categories, but do not tell when that time is. This wisdom must be found by rightly dividing other Scriptures.

The above Scriptures, then, help make up part of the pattern God has given us. We see that we should not waste our time. Neither should we act as though we live into tomorrow. There is time enough to do many things, and therein certainly time enough to do the things that God requires of us.

OUR TIME IS LIMITED, BUT THERE ENOUGH TO DO GOD'S WILL

Our God, "knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psa. 108:14). Therefore, He does not require more of us than we are able to perform. Through the lips and pen of Micah, God told His people what He required of them "He hath shewed dies, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8).

Such principles continue today in New Testament times and we have enough time to develop them in our life. Jesus tells us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mat. 11:28-30). However, the Lord also said, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" (John 11:9). Therefore, there is time enough to do the things of God as well as the things of man. As a matter of fact, man can accomplish quite a bit in a relatively short amount of time. During the time of Nehemiah, the Israelites rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem in only fifty-two days; this is even more remarkable since because of their enemies "everyone with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon" (Neh. 6:15; 4:17). Why were they able to do this? The Bible says, "for the people had a mind to work" (Neh. 4:6).

We have enough time to: (1) learn of our heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus; (2) to believe in Jesus and to be led unto repentance by the goodness of God; (3) to confess our faith in Christ as did

Peter, Nathanael, Martha, the Ethiopian eunuch and as have multitudes; (4) to be baptized for the remission of our sins just like those of Acts 2; (5) to seek the kingdom of God first in our lives; (6) to love our neighbor as ourselves and therefore to be willing to take the gospel of Christ to him; and, (7) to eschew evil, do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Yes, our time is limited, but there is enough time to please God and bring glory to His name; we just need to use our time efficiently.

WE OFTEN FAIL TO USE OUR TIME EFFICIENTLY AND WISELY

Worry robs much time from some people. It robs them so that they cannot use their time efficiently. Fear of the future and the unknown, financial woes, physical safety and fears brought on by sickness are a few things that cause people to worry. The answer to this woe is a strong trust and faith in our Creator. We need to remember that God's people are precious to Him. Jesus said, "Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7). David said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his need begging bread" (Psa. 37:25). We should not be full of care, but, rather, pray and be thankful for what God has already given us. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phi. 4:6).

Christians should also learn to be content. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). Why worry when God tells us that He cares for us? "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:6-7). Worry is a waste of our time. God takes care of other creatures, He will surely take care of us whom He made in His own image.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air. for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them Are ye not much better

than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take no thought for the morrow for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Mat. 6:25-34).

Self-Pity like worry is a condition of the heart that wastes our time as well as causing mental and physical harm. It may be brought on because of the loss of our health, our sight, our hearing, or the use of our limbs. At such times we may feel that everybody else has it better than we do. We may feel that nobody cares and that nobody loves us or would even miss us if we were dead. Such ones are being eaten alive with their own self-pity and are feeling sorry for themselves. This type of condition is not good and can lead to much harm—even suicide. Also, it is rarely the case that nobody cares or loves us. Many are willing to help the handicapped and people will praise a person who girds up his loins and does his very best to meet and overcome the obstacles of life, The Bible says, “For every man shall bear his own burden” (Gal. 6:5). Self-pity is childish and injurious. It should be looked upon as a waste of time and, therefore, be avoided.

Love Of Pleasure causes some to stumble. Their mind becomes so set upon recreation that they have no time for God and His Word; moreover, they often are not very productive in secular labor and responsibilities either. This is a trap, a thornbush that must be avoided; also, this love can lead to the love of the world against which we are warned. Paul, by the Holy Spirit, warned of perilous times that would come in which, men would be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). Jesus illustrated four types of hearts in His parable of the soils. In the parable, the seed of the sower fell among thorns which, “sprang up with it, and choked it.”

Jesus explains that the seed is the Word of God, “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:7, 14). We must remember that a child of God has been sanctified and, therefore, must not love this world.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but in of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

While recreation is good and has its place; nevertheless, an inordinate affection toward it causes much harm and in an inefficient use of our time.

Works Of Evil, no doubt, are the most inefficient use of our time and earn the worst possible wages. “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Evil works not only harm the sinner and those he influences but also bring about a wasted life. What a tragedy never to know and serve the infinite God, but rather to be a slave to the devil and exist for eternity in the hell that was prepared for him. In Hebrews 11, it is add that Moses refused the pleasures of sin for a season. He had his eye set on a better reward.

Procrastination is the intentional and habitual putting off of some task that is required of us, for which, we have not adequate reason or excuse. Procrastination may result in the task never being completed or such a late completion that several untoward effects result. Let us notice some common causes of procrastination. Not-knowing how to deal with a task is one cause. A lot of times, people put off something because they do not know how to handle it. In such cases, it may be helpful to employ the scientific method. State the problem clearly. A well-stated problem often yields much of the solution. Collect data. This involves research, asking of advise and compiling of the facts. The more effort expanded in this step, the easier the next step. Form a hypothesis; in other words, from your data you draw up a plan of action to tackle the problem. Test the

hypothesis. All that is left is to put your plan into effect to see if it solves the problem.

Laziness is another cause of procrastination. The obvious cure is repentance in mind and action. Busyness, the counterpart of laziness is yet another cause. A person has to learn his limitations. We should not take more on ourselves than we are able to handle. Sometimes we have to say no! Dislike of the responsibility may require some introspection. Why do you dislike it? Why did you accept it? Is the problem greater than your capabilities? Apathy is a serious attitude problem. The attitude must be changed.

POSSIBLE RESULTS OF PUTTING OFF OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL

How it may affect us. We may only have this opportunity to learn the truth and obey it. There may not be a second chance. If we put off obedience, we may become hardened through and in the ways of the world. The Hebrews writer exhorts: “Harden not your hearts... But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:8, 13). This hardness may cause one not to understand or appreciate the goodness of God that leads to repentance. Notice how the Scriptures chide such hardness of heart.

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds (Rom. 2:4-6).

It is much better to obey while we are young and the head is tender: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecc. 12:1). Time may run out on the procrastinator. We may think we still have plenty of time, but we should remember the outcome of the foolish farmer (Luke 12).

How it may affect our family. Any organization can be at its best if its members are unified. The family is an institution of God, and it is God’s will for the family to be united in Him. However, if you are not a child of God, then your spouse is in a quandary; for, he or

she must put God first. Nonetheless, the spouse, because of love for you, also wants to please and serve you. Children, on the other hand, are not born with a belief in God. They must be taught. If you have put off obeying the gospel, you may very well play the devil's advocate in hindering your children from obeying the gospel. The influence of an unbelieving parent may cancel much of the good influence of the believing parent. You may, in later life, become a Christian, which is wonderful; but, your children are more difficult to convert after they are grown. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God is love. Those that become His children are to grow in the love of God. Consequently, each Christian should want to help as many other people come to the knowledge of the truth as they can. This knowledge leads to salvation in the obedient believer. But, if we put off obedience to God, we jeopardize our soul and also rob the potential for good that we might do in the Kingdom of Christ. Therefore, one's reluctance to obey the gospel affects himself, his family, his friends, the church and the world. One person's obedience or disobedience can affect many people. It might also be added that a lazy and apathetic Christian wastes his time and hinders the same group of people that are mentioned above.

MOVING THROUGH TIME

Eternity confines not itself on a physical plane; therefore, it was never to be that man live eternally as man or to live eternally on earth. There is a time limit and we are slowly (yet quickly) moving through time. If we live a normal life, we pass through certain stages in life. First we pass through our youth. This is our beginning, our formative time. It is a time of growth, and a time of learning. It is a time when habits we learned and opinions are formed. For many, it is a time of recklessness, of little thought for the future and a feeling of invincibility. That is why it is so important that a child receive instruction in righteousness and chastisement so that the quantity and magnitude of his mistakes might be limited. The child should begin to seek God and he should remember his Creator in the days of his youth. Blessed and happy is the child that is reared by faithful Christians.

All too soon, an adult stands where a child once stood. Childish things must be put away, for the responsibilities of life are soon to rest on his shoulders. At this time, many, or most decide to marry. He or she very much needs the guidance and wisdom of God's Scriptures to help in selecting a mate. Many do not make use of this knowledge and choose poorly or are themselves a poor choice. Christians should marry Christians, and how wonderful it would be if all were Christians! But whether they are Christians or not, children are sure to come. They are a blessing, a gift from God, and we have them in our care but for a short while. If they are not taught right from wrong and brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, then they can become a curse instead of a blessing—to their parents, to themselves and to society in general. Parenting, therefore is not a simple task, but it can be a blessed one if the parents use the Bible as their textbook. If we are permitted, we next move through time to old age. The Bible says, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Pro. 16:31). The wisdom and experience gained through a lifetime have helped many to do their greatest work during this period. With many, the body begins to worn out, but the aged Christian remembers the promise of his Lord and awaits his spiritual body. If a Christian has led a faithful life, what a joy it is to know that his labor in the Kingdom is not in vain. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

CONCLUSION

Friends and brethren, you and I must respect time. It in what our life is made of. God has a pattern for the wise use of time and it is recorded in the Holy Bible. Our time is not so limited that there is not enough to do as God requires of us. We just need to use our time efficiently throughout each stage of our life. Notice what is recorded for us in Psalm 90:10-12.

The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it in soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so in thy wrath. So

teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

As the Scripture says then, let us apply our hearts unto wisdom.

LIVING WITH RESPECT TO TEMPTATION

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“For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain” (1 The. 3:5). An Paul explained his reasoning for sending Timothy to the church in Thessalonica, he disclosed the only way a Christian can live with respect to temptation. As we contemplate this verse, notice that Paul has no doubt concerning the possibility of temptation. Paul was distressed because he knew what the tempter could do to these young Christians. He had given warning to the Ephesian church when he said, “Neither give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27). He acknowledged the need for concern to the church at Corinth that Satan could “got an advantage of us” and reminded them that we know his devices (2 Cor. 2:11). James refers to temptation as a fact of life when he said, “My brethren, count it all joy *when ye fall into divers temptations*” (Jam. 1:2).

Recognizing that temptation can and will come, we must know how to live with respect to it. Notice in 1 Thessalonians 3:5, Paul’s concern is to know their faith. Here is the answer to the problem of

temptation. When temptation comes, only a strong, Bible-based faith can overcome. Paul wanted to know whether their faith was strong enough to withstand Satan, and he was not disappointed, for when Timothy returned to Paul from Thessalonica, he brought good news of their “faith and charity” (1 The. 3:6). We should not be surprised this was the case, in light of what we know of these brethren. Paul commended the Thessalonians’ reception of his preaching on the Word of God and not just the words of men (1 The. 2:13). They had taken the Word into their hearts and lives so that their faith to God-ward was spread abroad in every place (1 The. 1:8). The Thessalonian Christians had cultivated a strong, Bible-based faith.

If we are to overcome temptation in our lives, we too must cultivate a strong, Bible-based faith. We must be as the psalmist, who hid God’s Word in his heart, that he might not sin against Him (Psa. 119:11). And yet, the mere knowledge of Scripture will not enable us to overcome temptation. One can know what the Bible says without doing what the Bible says (Jam. 1:22). Knowledge must be translated into faith. This fact is best illustrated in the way Jesus dealt with temptation (Mat. 4:1-10). As with every other aspect of life, our Lord serves as the best example of how to live with respect to temptation, for He did so perfectly. In our study, let us see how to live with respect to temptation by examining the way in which Jesus did so as recorded in Matthew 4:1-10.

Before looking at the temptations separately, notice two similarities in each answer that Jesus gave to Satan. In the first place, Jesus began each answer with the words, “It is written” (Mat 4:4, 7, 10). We need to understand that the Bible will defeat Satan every time. This is why Satan works quickly to remove the Word whenever possible (cf., Luke 8:12). Jesus gave the right answer. He appealed to the only authoritative source in the face of temptation. The doctrines of men will never work against the temptations of Satan, for they originate with him (cf., 1 Tim. 4:1). He who responds, “My preacher says...,” is looking to the wrong source, but he who gives a “Thus saith the Lord,” cannot be wrong. For generations, we have affirmed the motto, “Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the

Bible is silent.” When facing temptation, this must be our watchword.

Note further concerning this phrase, that literally, Jesus said, “It has been written and stands written.” By this usage, Jesus indicates He is referring to an eternal principle. The principle to which He appealed in order to silence the temptation of Satan was true when it was written by Moses, it was true when Jesus stated it, it is true today, and it will be true until the end. Truly, “the word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:26).

A second similarity in the answers of Jesus is that all three came from the book of Deuteronomy. Surely, it is not just coincidental His answers come from just this one book. Recall that the book of Deuteronomy is comprised of a series of sermons delivered by Moses to the children of those who came out of Egypt. In these sermons, Moses dealt with the problem that kept their parents out of the land of promise. Herein lies the reason Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy.

Israel’s problem is identified in Deuteronomy 1:27: “And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the Lord hated us, He hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.” Question: Would you willingly serve someone if you thought that person hated you? Because of this false belief on the part of the first generation, Moses emphasizes to the second generation the love of God for man and the response man should have to God’s love. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy because it told of God’s love for Him and how He should respond to the love. If every Christian loved God as the Bible teaches, our problem in the church would vanish.

With these thoughts as a background, let us learn from Jesus how to live in rased to temptation. From Matthew 4:1-10, we see that Jesus was able to overcome temptation because of His *awareness* of God’s love, His *assurance* of God’s love, and His *allegiance* to the God who loved Him.

AWARENESS OF GOD’S LOVE

Satan’s first temptation came through an appeal to the bodily appetites: “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread” (Mat. 4:3). In much the same way, he appealed to Eve

in the garden, for Moses tells us, “the woman saw that the tree was good for food” (Gen. 3:6). Many of Satan’s temptations still come through this same avenue today. John spoke of the avenue of the flesh when he cautioned his readers:

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

Notice, it is after Jesus had fasted for a period of forty days and nights that Satan appealed to His bodily appetite and His hunger. Here, we gain some insight into how Satan works. He seeks to attack man at his weakest point. This is why in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus warned Peter, James and John to, “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38). Satan attacked Peter’s weakness and Peter succumbed to the temptation and denied the Lord three times (Mark 14:72). Years later, Peter issued much the same warning to saints scattered throughout Asia Minor:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Though we will have weaknesses, we can overcome temptation through such things as soberness, vigilance, and steadfastness in the faith. There is no doubt that Jesus was physically weakened following His forty day fast, yet He was able to overcome the temptation of Satan by these same qualities of faith.

Even though Satan’s temptation appealed to bodily appetites, much more was involved. It was certainly not sinful for Jesus to eat bread, nor was it the more act of turning stones to bread that would have been sinful. Notice the way Satan began his first appeal: “*If thou be the Son of God*” (Mat. 4:3). Satan’s attempt was to plant seeds of doubt in the mind of Jesus concerning God’s love. It was as if he asked, “if you sustain this special relationship to God, that is, being His Son, then why are you suffering?” Again, this same approach can be seen in his temptation of Eve in the garden. After Satan had asked whether God had forbidden them to eat of every

tree in the garden, Eve responded that they could eat of every tree except “the tree which is in the midst of the garden” (i.e., the tree of knowledge of good and evil), and if they ate of it, they would die. Now notice Satan’s response. “Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be an gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4-5). Just as he would later do in his temptation of Jesus, Satan questioned God’s love. He, in essence, accused God of denying Adam and Eve the fruit of this tree even though it would be good for them.

This is exactly the difficulty posed in the problem of evil. One part of that argument states that God cannot be all loving and allow suffering to exist. Many times Christians fall victim to this ploy of Satan. The question, “How could God let this happen to me?” really awe, “If God loved me, I would not be suffering.” If Jesus had thought this way, He would have turned stones to bread and ceased to be our sinless Saviour. But the strong, Bible-based faith of Jesus enabled Him to see through this device of Satan and overcome the temptation.

Jesus responded, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat. 4:4). In this answer, Jesus tells Satan that God’s love for man is not only seen in physical provisions, but through the guidance He provided through the Word. This is a quotation of Deuteronomy 8:3. In this passage, Moses emphasized to Israel that God has a reason behind allowing His people to suffer. A look at the context of this vow will be helpful. In verse one, Moses stresses that possession of the land of Canaan depends upon faithfulness to God’s commandments. In verse two, they are reminded that God humbled them in the wilderness in order to know whether they would keep His commandments. In verse three, Moses gave an example:

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

In this context, the meaning is crystal clear. God allows suffering to come that we might learn to trust in Him. God could have fed

Israel with the best food imaginable. He could have done the same for Jesus, during the forty days in the wilderness, but by allowing suffering to come, He gave opportunity for trust to be developed. We may never completely understand why we suffer. Think, for example, of Job, who never knew the reason his trials befell him. When suffering comes, we do know that we, like Job, should trust in God. Remember His words: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).

God allowed suffering to come to Israel because He wanted them to trust Him before they entered the battles for the land of Canaan. Imagine what would have happened if Israel had not trusted in God when they came to the city of Jericho. God’s orders were to march around the city for seven days, blow trumpets and shout! Not much of a military strategy, but to those who trusted God, it was sufficient, Imagine if Jesus had failed to trust in God during His earthly life, but He understood that even though suffering was His lot, that did not diminish the love of His Father, and because of this awareness, He was able to overcome the temptation of Satan.

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S LOVE

In the second temptation, Satan moved from the physical to the spiritual, from the outward to the inward.

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone (Mat. 4:5-6).

Notice two phrases in this temptation. In the first place, he repeats the phrase, “If thou be the Son of God.” Satan attempted to counter Jesus’ first answer by charging, “If God really loves you, let Him prove it.” Secondly, Satan said, “For it is written.” Satan also quoted Scripture, and by doing so, challenged Jesus to prove He really does walk by faith.

Satan used Psalm 91:11-12 in this particular situation to claim that if God loves you, you can do anything and God will take care of you, but this usage involves two major problems. First, he appealed to a perversion of the Scriptures, and secondly, he called for God’s love to be put to the test. In His answer, Jesus exposed the

falsehood and distortion in Satan's ploy in our examination of this second temptation, let us begin by looking at the context of Psalm 91:11-12. These two verses are not the only ones in this Psalm that speak of God's protection. Verses 3-13 give various ways in which God protects the one under consideration. To whom does God offer this security? Notice the description given to this one. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High" (Psa. 91:1). He says of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust" (Psa. 91:2). "Because he hath ad his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name" (Psa. 91:14). The one to whom God promises such security in that one who trusts in Him and who is obedient to His will.

Be assured that, without doubt, Psalm 91:11-12 is true. The problem is not the veracity of the Scripture, but the way in which Satan used it. His is a perversion of the Word of God. In fact, Satan is the great perverter of God's Word. Go all the way back to the garden, and you see Satan twisting God's Word. In his conversation with Eve, Satan repeats almost word for word what God had said, but with one major exception—he adds the word "not." It may appear to be a minor change, but it carries with it major consequences. No doubt, Satan is the author of the twisting of the Scriptures which were written by Paul that Peter speaks of in 2 Peter 3:16:

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Jesus' answer to this temptation reveals the problem in Satan's use of Psalm 91:11-12. Notice that Jesus begins this answer by saying, "It is written again" (Mat. 4:7). That is to say, "Here is a passage in addition to Psalm 91:11-12." Our Lord did not pit Scripture against Scripture. Rather, he pointed out that Satan's interpretation of Psalm 91:11-12 does not harmonize with the rest of the Bible.

Here is a fundamental principle in the interpretation of the Scriptures—does the harmonize with the rest of the Bible? In light of the fact that Jesus tested an interpretation of the Scriptures by it, this is a reliable method to test our interpretations. Satan interpreted this passage to mean Jesus could throw Himself from the temple and

God would make sure His angels would protect Him. Jesus tested that interpretation and found it would not harmonize with Deuteronomy 6:16, which says, “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God.” We need to follow this example when we seek the interpretation of a passage of Scripture, and ask ourselves, “What does the rest of the Bible say?”

The resistance Jesus offered to this temptation of Satan demonstrates it is not necessary to put God’s love to the test. In this, you see the assurance Jesus had of the love of His Father. He is like that one of Psalm 91 who dwells in the secret place of the most High—He places His trust in God. In fact, the very passage Satan appealed to in an attempt to induce Jesus to sin, is in a book the theme of which is, “Trust in God.” An understanding of Psalm 91 produces a profound trust in God on the part of the reader.

Most of us have smoke detectors in our homes in case of fire. If the house catches on fire, the smoke detector sounds an alarm, and we are able to flee from danger, but we do not trust those smoke detectors implicitly. In fact, they are not designed to be trusted implicitly. Most have a small test button that can be depressed to determine whether the detector is working properly. We are encouraged to regularly test the device to make sure everything is working properly. The love of God needs no “test button.” Jesus made it clear that the love of God is one thing of which He could be certain. Paul possessed this same confidence and wrote in the last part of Romans 8:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (vv. 38-39).

This assurance is important to our overcoming temptation, for if we are convinced of God’s love, then the temptation to sin loses some of its appeal. If I am convinced God loves me, I will be assured that whatever he has commanded is for my own good. Moses asked those Israelites who were preparing to enter the land of Canaan:

And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to

serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? (Deu. 10:12-13).

God never gives commands just for the sake of commanding, or to show His power over man. Therefore, if a certain attitude or practice is forbidden, it is because that would be harmful to us. If on the other hand, God commands that we do a certain thing, or think a certain way, it is because that would be good and beneficial to us. In this same vein, John wrote, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

ALLEGIANCE TO GOD—OUR LOVE FOR HIM

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (vv. 8-9).

The first thing that stands out in the third temptation is that Satan does not begin with the words, “If thou be the Son of God.” In his first two temptations of Jesus, Satan questioned God’s love for His people, but Jesus removed all doubt concerning that love. Now he challenges Jesus’ love for God. Satan offered a choice—the world if you will love and worship me.

It is here that we so often face the battle with Satan. This was at the heart of the accusation of Satan against Job. God asked Satan to consider His servant Job, and Satan responded:

Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face (Job 1:9-11).

Satan questioned the genuineness of Job’s love for God. He claimed Job served God only because of the physical benefits he received. Of course, the genuineness of Job’s love for God was vindicated by his faithfulness in the midst of trials, but you and I still face this same accusation. We undergo temptations and trials that will demonstrate whether our professed love for God is genuine. The allegiance of a genuine love for God will withstand the onslaught and the accusations of Satan, but a feigned love will be exposed for what it is.

Notice, how the temptations progressed from the outward temptation of the desire of the flesh, to the inward test of dependence upon God, and finally to the genuineness of devotion to God. Sooner or later, we come face to face with the question, "Is my love for and devotion to God genuine?"

Jesus' answer is unequivocal "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Mat. 4:10). Again, the context of this passage in Deuteronomy will assist us in understanding why Jesus quoted this particular verse. Deuteronomy 6 emphasized that Jehovah, and He alone, is God. For this reason, Israel is commanded to love Him with all of the heart, soul and might (Deu. 6:5). They are warned not to forget it was God who brought them into the land of promise (Deu. 6:10). They are told to fear and serve Him instead of going after other gods (Deu. 6:13-14). They are reminded that their God is a jealous God. Failure to do these things would result in their destruction (Deu. 6:15).

Notice, Satan does not ask Jesus to renounce God in order to worship him. In fact Satan would have been pleased with a fifty-fifty split in the allegiance of Jesus. In his answer, notice Jesus uses the word *only*. When you read Deuteronomy 6:13, you do not see this word, but our examination of the context makes it clear this in the meaning. Satan could not expect Jesus to worship God and Satan, for God demands our total allegiance. Any attempt to divide loyalty between God and anything else is to become disloyal to God.

Yet, man seeks to do that very thing and still claim to be faithful to God. We try to love God a little and the world a little. So, Christians will bypass the worship of God with His saints to engage in some worldly pleasure. Christians will justify some questionable activity just because they want to engage in it, all the while claiming to love God and be devoted to Him. Yet, Jesus warned in the sermon on the mount, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat. 6:24).

Far too many look at such actions on the part of Christians as a small matter. After all, these people are not adulterers and murder-

ers, right? They are not like those people who hate God, are they? The Bible says otherwise, James' piercing accusation should strike home to the worldly Christian: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world in the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Certainly, God does not look at sin as a "big" and "little." He considers worldliness in His children to be serious indeed.

How then can we overcome when we face similar temptations? Satan offered Jesus "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Mat. 4:8), but because His allegiance was to God, Jesus realized He was not here for personal glory and prestige. He knew He was here to glorify the heavenly Father. He knew He had a mission on this earth and He would not be sidetracked. He told the Jews who opposed Him: "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him" (John 7:18). Jesus devoted His life to glorifying God, and was successful, for on the night prior to His crucifixion, He prayed to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17-4).

Even His apostles did not always understand the mission of our Lord. After Peter had made the good confession of the deity of Christ:

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee, But he turned, and said unto Peter, Got thee behind me, Satan. thou art an offence unto me for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men (Mat. 16:21-23).

For Jesus to glorify His Father, and therefore, successfully carry out His mission, He would have to suffer and die, He recognized this for what it was; i.e., Satan was using Peter to try to sidetrack Him and keep Him from glorifying God. Jesus was willing to pay the price to maintain His allegiance to God.

For us to overcome this avenue of temptation, we must realize, as Christians, we too have a mission on this earth. We, like Jesus, are here to glorify God. Paul said, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 5:16). Through our faithful service to God in the church, we will glorify Him. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

When we are devoted to God and unwilling to be sidetracked from our mission to glorify Him, we will refuse the temptations hurled at us. When discussing how to overcome temptation, we usually emphasize such things as prayer, Bible study and companionship with faithful people because we realize these things will help protect the Christian. But if, through a strong, Bible-based faith, we are aware and assured of God's love for us and if our allegiance to Him is firm and unyielding, such things as prayer, Bible study and companionship with faithful brethren will most definitely be a part of our lives. Look at the place prayer, God's Word and God's people had in the life of Jesus. You would not expect otherwise. This is because of the very things we have seen in this study. His awareness of and assurance of God's love for Him, led Jesus to live and conduct Himself as He did.

The same must be true with us today. Paul said,

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

Paul's awareness of and assurance in the love of Christ, gave him no choice but to render his life in sacrificial service to his Lord. His faithful allegiance to God was based upon his recognition of God's love for him. For this cause, Paul could say,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

He further called upon all Christians to do the same: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which in your reasonable service’ (Rom. 12:1). Notice the motivation for such service “by the mercies of God.” Paul bases his appeal for faithful allegiance upon the love of God bestowed in Christ.

CONCLUSION

Following Jesus’ answer to this third temptation, the Bible says: “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him” (Mat. 4:11). James said, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam. 4:7). After giving the warning that the devil is seeking whom he may devour, Peter told how to resist him: “Whom resist stedfast **in the faith**” (1 Pet. 5:9). The example of Jesus shows what can be done with a strong faith. Though he is pictured as a “roaring lion” (1 Pet. 5:8), Satan can be put to flight with the words, “It is written.” Please notice it is not just the act of quoting the Bible that caused Satan to flee. Jesus did not just quote Scripture, He lived it. When He quoted these verses to Satan, He was saying, “I will not live by your words. This is what I live by: ‘It is written.’”

Today, we need Christians who will live in the same way. We need to be people who will turn Satan to flight by the strength of our faith. As in days gone by, we need again to be known as “Bible-totin,’ Bible-quotin’” people. Not just “totin’” the Bible in our hands, but laying up the Word in our hearts, and not just quoting it with our lips, but living it in our lives. To do so takes diligent Bible study, dependence upon God and devotion to His will. This is seen in the saints in the book of Revelation. John speaks of them as being victorious over the dragon, who is identified as, “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world!” (Rev. 12:9). Notice how this victory in won: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. 12:11). Because of the love of God and the blood of the Lamb, we can be victorious over that old adversary of all that is right and good if we, like they, will so devote ourselves to God that it can be said of us, “And they

loved not their lives unto the death.” May God help us all to live in this way with respect to temptations.

THE PEACE AND JOY OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

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INTRODUCTION

God intended for His creature, man, to be at peace by enjoying the greatest relationship possible—the informed and rational fellowship of a creature with his Creator. In the Bible, the story of man is the story of peace shattered by man’s sin and of the God of peace who does all He can to restore peace.

THE PEACE OF GOD

God is the God of peace. Peace is a part of His eternal nature. The following passages give expression to this truth: “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen” (Rom. 15:33). “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Rom. 16:20). “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do. and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phi. 4:9). “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole

spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 The. 5:23). “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20).

The God of peace is in perfect peace and harmony with Himself. It can be said of Him that “Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa. 85:10). His scheme of redemption is perfect in its desired result—to restore to peace the Creator with the creature. Is it any wonder the coming Messiah would be The Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6)? At the very time of God’s purpose to create man, He also determined to provide the ultimate sacrifice that redemption might be realized (Eph. 1:3-12).

PEACE BROKEN AND CHAOS REIGNING

God demands that we face our broken relationship with Him. In the Bible, we come to this sober reality in the third chapter of Genesis. In the first two chapters, man is at peace with God and himself. He is favored by his Maker with a help meet for him, and they are living in perfect harm (peace) and serving their God.

We see the terrible consequences of broken harmony when peace has been shattered by sin in the first family. The first reaction is shame and loss of self-respect. They are ashamed to face their Creator because they know, in the depth of their being, peace has been destroyed. Every sinner who has not destroyed the conscience knows this terrible feeling. The thought of being out of harmony with the Creator brings pain to the soul.

The second picture of shattered peace is that of turmoil within the family. The man that had loved and cherished his companion now turns the accusing finger toward her, seeking to exonerate himself.

The third picture is one of the just and loving God removing them from the tree of life that they not be forever in this state of separation (Gen. 3:22-24). Clothing them to cover their embarrassing nakedness, explaining His actions toward them, and promising a Redeemer to restore the peace that is broken, God removes them from Eden.

The fourth picture that comes to mind in that of a family at war with itself. One brother is at odds with his Maker over the subject of worship. This results in disharmony in the family, culminating in murder. How we need to embrace the truth expressed by the Psalmist, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119:165). There is: "glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile" (Rom. 2:10).

That disharmony exemplified in the first family is duplicated in society. It will eventually result in a purging flood to restore peace to the planet. Through Cain, we trace the disintegration of the peaceful relationship between the Creator and the created (Gen. 4:16-25). In Both, we have traced those who sought peace with their Creator (Gen. 4:26-5:32). When the sons of God married the daughters of men, we have the merging of the two lines that results in corrupting the race again. This forces God to purge the race at the flood (Gen. 6). At the flood, no peace with his Maker was sought by man. His every thought and intention was evil continually (Gen. 6:5). The only exception to this unbecoming picture is the house of Noah.

Terms of peace were revealed to Noah and he responded, to the saving of his house and the race. Had God not acted as He did would there have been a Prince of Peace? Would subsequent generations have seen the family of Noah give in to sin? Noah found favor with God, he did all that God commanded him; he acted by faith; and, he had peace with God (Gen. 6; Heb. 11:7).

The Bible moves the history of man forward from the days of Noah. The problem remains. Those out of harmony with God continue their downward journey, manifested at the Tower of Babel. God intervenes by making it impossible for them to communicate and disperses them throughout the world. Yet, man is seen to continue stubbornly resisting his Maker's will.

The Bible unfolds the story of man and his disrupted peace with his Maker. The story could become monotonous were it not so serious. God calls Abraham to continue the plan to restore peace between Himself and His creature man. Abraham and Sarah were, in

most ways, good people, but in them we see again the problem that plagues our age. Man often chooses the course of least resistance for the moment, learning later that he has disrupted the peace and harmony between himself and God. When the peace and harmony between man and his Maker is upset, it also means trouble to those that are nearest to those involved.

When the peace between God and Abraham is broken due to the lie he and Sarah told relative to their marriage, it brought agonizing frustration to them and others. Not until the truth is obeyed and peace restored do their lives enjoy a portion of the harmony and well-being God intended.

Seeking to assist God, they destroy the peace again, bringing untold pain to themselves and the lives of all involved. The fruits of this shattered peace are known by most of the world even in our day. Is not the deep-seated bitterness between Arab and Jew a daffy concern for the civilized world?

In Egypt, the oppressed nation cries out to God and Moses is sent to bring them from bondage. Any study of the nation of Israel will entail a study of the many ways man may disrupt the peace and tranquility of individual, family and nations. When the nation obeys and is at peace with God, blessings abound. When the peace between God and the nation is broken, the society disintegrates. When she becomes like those around her, peace is broken and problems abound. In this, the nation of Israel experiences the same problems as did the first family in the garden. Both had great potential and failed. The peace broken had to be mended by the painful process of reproof and rebuke, at times with the oppression from her neighbors as a painful reminder of the lost peace with her God by shameful departures.

Two events further show how Israel broke the peace with God and suffered the consequences. They asked for a king like the nations about them. They were permitted by God to have their wish. In the history of this foolish pursuit, we may learn a valuable lesson. In our freedom, God will permit us to have some things that are not good in order to teach us a lesson. Departing from Him brings burdens and oppression until, like the prodigal son, we come to

ourselves and realize that the only true happiness (peace) is with our Father and His will.

David was determined to have the temple. It was never God's desire to have such but He permitted it. It became an object of selfish pride and idolatry until God brought the Babylonians to destroy it. That which could have been the basis of peace and harmony was corrupted and was subsequently removed by God. Many reject the peace of God to have peace with their fellowman. In the matter of religion and morals, it is God's way and peace, or man's way and catastrophe. Read Stephen's sermon and have these lessons again riveted into the mind (Acts 7). Peace and joy in the nation of Israel existed only for brief periods of time. The potential for greatness was seldom realized because harmony with her God was broken.

PEACE ENVISIONED AND PROPOSED

Due to the disastrous consequences of sin and the loss of well-being to mankind, God, in the words of the prophets, revealed His plans to send the Prince of Peace that the remedy for disparity might become reality. The prophets beat the drum for a return to peace with God in order to stave off disaster. Only a small remnant listened. The masses were disciplined or removed, and the God of Peace moved on with His plans for peace (Gal. 4:4).

While the true prophets made known the terms of genuine peace, the false prophets preached a false hope. "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14).

There are many who would propose peace and offer "forums" designed to tell us how to have peace with ourselves and with the religious world about us. Let us not forget there are times when peace is not permitted. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22). "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:21). We cannot have peace with God when we are in league with those with whom God is at war! "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the lard" (Pro. 17:15).

G. Campbell Morgan, a preacher, states the truth when he says: “To make peace with wrong, or to consent to be silent in the presence of the things that are wrong, is to destroy peace” (*The Westminster Pulpit V*, p. 22). Many do not believe this truth. The Bible shows this statement is biblically accurate.

Every peace movement that has not had God directing it has led to pain and sorrow. Without peace with God, there can be no joy. To feign joy while ignoring the God-given terms of peace is spiritual insanity.

ANGELS ANNOUNCE THE ARRIVAL OF THE PRINCE OF PEACE

The following words need to be carefully considered: “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased” (Luke 2:14, ASV). This is the message of that host of heavenly beings that announced the coming of the Prince of Peace. The promise should be carefully pondered. It is not a peace without duty. It is not peace unconditionally. The peace under consideration is a high and holy vocation. It is a peace that can be realized only by a certain group: “peace among men in whom he is well pleased.” God has not changed; God cannot change. Man has changed and man must return to God if he is to realize this peace.

PLATFORM FOR PEACE

It is important for us to know the terms upon which peace is to be realized. These are revealed by God. They are not man-made.

1. Divine Government

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder. and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). There is no peace without government. Without law to specify the terms of peace, there can be no peace. Without government to enforce the peace, there will be only chaos. If man would comply with this government, there could be peace. To the extent that this government is ignored, there will be corruption, confusion and the loss of peace, well-being, and joy.

In the vision of the prophets, we see the grand potential for peace to humanity under this government.

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people and they shall beat their swords into Plowshares, and their spears, into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob. come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord (Isa. 2:1-5; cf., Mic. 4:1-3).

Under the government of the Prince of Peace, there is to be the destruction of those bitter attitudes and actions that perpetuate turmoil and chaos among men.

Under this government, there is perfect wisdom, justice, mercy and direction. This government is above the individual, the class, the race and national barriers. This government has its ultimate end in the well-being of all; thus, peace with accompanying joy. When men truly have in their minds to glorify God In the highest, then there will be peace and joy among them. Remove divine government and this lofty goal is unattainable.

2. Love the Peace of God

The peace we are considering is contingent upon the very character of the parties involved. Peace must be loved. We are taught to love both truth and peace (Zec. 8:19). We must prefer peace above our own comforts or will. The peace of God is an item that must become a part of our character. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phi. 4:7). "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15). When harmony with God is our love, then our hearts and minds will be kept secure. When we love peace, then the peace of God will rule our hearts as it should. When our minds and hearts are what they should be, peace and joy will be realized.

3. Pursue this Peace

We are not to think that peace will find us; we must be busily engaged in pursuing it. “Let him eschew evil, and do good, let him seek peace, and ensue it” (1 Pet. 3:11). “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it” (Psa. 34:14).

The wisdom directing us must be that which is from above. It is first purity, then peace. Some would reverse this order and think they can have peace by compromising purity. God will not permit it.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace (Jam. 3:17-18).

Establishing the right relationship with our God will result in peace. When peace is real, joy abounds.

4. Follow Peace

Peace must be under the government of God, loved and pursued, and it must also be followed when found and established. We may learn from the Bible that peace once realized may be also lost—lost because those enjoying it took things for granted or ignored their responsibilities. “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).

Peace not only must be followed but there is a distinctive environment in which it is to be realized. It is not a peace with artificial people. It is peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. What a difference this would have made to men of old. Will we profit from their failures (Rom. 15:4)?

5. Follow Things Which Make for this Peace

Most rational persons know there are attitudes and actions that make for peace and others that do not. The government of the Prince of Peace demands that His subjects follow that which makes for peace (Rom. 14:19). We must know that pleasing God is first. When this is done, peace will be automatic. When we please God, then peace will result among truth-loving and truth-seeking people. It is not possible to be at peace with some. God forbids it. This is why the Prince of Peace could speak of not bringing peace but a sword.

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Mat 10-34).

6. Live in this Peace

When people am our lives, they should am a solution for peaceful living. Do they? What may people learn from us about peace? Do we have anything different to offer than does the world? If we follow the Prince of Peace, we do. “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2 Cor. 13:11). “And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves” (1 The. 5:13).

Not only in this demanded of us by God, but when we follow His ways there are blessings that come. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Pro. 16:7). Our God is able to overrule in the affairs of men and to make intended evil result in eventual blessings for us (Rom. 8:28; Acts 2:22-24).

7. Becoming Peacemakers

Not only are we to love and pursue peace, but we must put forth an effort to establish peace. The Prince of Peace took the initiative. He put forth a program by which peace may be realized between God and man. In the Ephesian letter, Paul describes this process.

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he in our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of am contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one now man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And came and preached peace to you which won afar off, and to them that were nigh (Eph. 2:18-17).

Note that peace has been made possible. Peace in possible between God and man. By the same process, there may be peace among men.

The Prince of Peace calls upon His followers to walk in His steps and to be peacemakers. “Blessed are the for they shall be called the children of God” (Mat. 5:9). On our part, we must make every effort to be at peace with others while realizing that such may not be

permitted by them. “If it be possible, an much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18).

8. Called To Enjoy Peace

One of the comforts afforded by the Prince of Peace is to know there can be peace within and peace with God while the objective of the enemies is otherwise. Paul, in addressing questions from the Corinthians concerning domestic issues, writes: “But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace” (1 Cor. 7:15). Having a mate that departs does not in and of itself provide grounds for a second companion. When a departing companion becomes guilty of fornication, it would. However, the point I wish to make here is that God has provided peace to the abused. That party may have peace of soul, knowing that the Prince of Peace has a platform that includes those painful circumstances that are all too common today. The Prince of Peace said we can be of good cheer and enjoy peace, knowing that in the world we have trouble but in Him there is peace abounding (John 16:33; 14:27; 20:19, 21, 26).

SELF-DISCIPLINE LEADS TO PEACE AND JOY

Living as the Bible demands requires continued vigilance (1 Pet. 5:8). Paul said this was a daily task if he were to keep his body serving his higher nature (1 Cor. 9:27). The faithful never reach a point in this life that care should not be given to what they speak and how they live (Jam. 3:1-12). Much sorrow and pain have resulted from the improper use of the tongue.

Joy and peace come from proper attitudes and actions. People have nursed ill will toward others, leading to murder. Such actions and attitudes are the root of much sorrow. Christ directs us to make peace, if at all possible, or we lose in this life and in the world to come (Mat. 5:21-26).

Human sexuality has the potential to bless life and produce genuine joy and peace when under the direction of the Christ. Remove the Law of God from this relationship and great sadness will follow. It will not end in this life but may determine our joy or sorrow in eternity. In view of this, Jesus directs us to make whatever

adjustments necessary to bring this side of our existence under His control. His words are as follows:

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cost it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cost it from thee for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into bell (Mat. 5:29-30).

Men must understand their natures. Some do not understand the roll of appetite and desire and have created greater havoc by misdirecting their feelings. God has not demanded that we eliminate desire. He does not will that we kill emotion. There are religious philosophies that would direct us to cultivate a spirit of indifference; i.e., become stoic personalities. Any philosophy that must deny a basic part of our being can not bring Biblical peace and joy.

Peace and joy are above the mere will of men. We can not will ourselves happy and at peace. In the depth of our being there is a conscience. It is given us by God and it is the judicial branch of our relationship between ourselves and God. It ponders the peace and joy between body and spirit of the individual. It also sits in judgment upon our relationships between ourselves and others. When peace is destroyed by any of the parties involved, the absence of joy will be exemplified. In view of this, we must do all we can to make sure our priorities are proper. God must be first. We can have peace of mind when we know that our relationship with God is what it should be. We can have great conflict in this world of sin and rebellion and still realize joy and peace when we are confident we are obeying God's will (John 16:33).

THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED DISTURBS THE PEACE AND JOY OF SOME

In the Psalms, there are meditations relative to the difficulties of life that lead to unrest and sadness of soul. It is not easy to suffer for righteousness' sake. When we do, we must guard against resentment and depreciation of our position during the crisis. Psalms 37 and 73 are reflections of such conflicts of soul. Psalm 37 alerts us to the danger of fretting that leads to apprehension about our plight and the goodness and justice of God. Such circumstances demand strong

faith and perseverance by the child of God. In the Psalm, we are admonished to trust in the Lord and to do good (Psa. 37:3). We are shown the ultimate end of the wicked in order to direct us to proper thoughts and desires (Psa. 37:2, 9-10, 20). The righteous are to delight in the Lord, rest in Him and commit their cause to Him (Psa. 37:4-5). Contentment is required of the faithful. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Psa. 37:16). Great lessons are there if we will study them "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psa. 37:35-37).

CONCLUSION

God is the source of goodness, lasting peace and joy. When men of the Bible submitted their lives to His way, the road was not always easy but it could be traveled with peace of mind and joy to the soul.

There is an unbroken line of chaos and sorrow that the Bible records for our learning that was, and is, the plight of all that would seek superficial peace in order to avoid some momentary sadness.

The first human family provides us with ample illustrations of the truths under consideration as does the Nation of Israel. Given the teaching of the Bible, God intended for man to find peace and joy in serving Him. God also proposed sorrow and pain in the lives of men that they might turn again to the source of true peace and joy.

There are no difficulties so severe that we should doubt God or even consider unfaithfulness as a course of action. The joys that await are not worthy to be compared to the momentary suffering we may be called upon to endure (Rom. 8:18). We may know that all things work together for good to those who abide in the ways of the Lord (Rom. 8:28).

God's prescription for peace involves at least the following: (1) Divine government; (2) The love of peace authorized by this government; (3) Pursuing this peace and following it; (4) Following things which make for peace; (5) Living in peace; (6) Being

peacemakers; and (7) Being called to peace and assured of its reality.

The peace and joy of Christian living can be ours with self discipline. There will be circumstances in life that are unavoidable and will test our commitment to Him and the truth. We must be loyal subjects. Whenever and wherever improper thoughts and actions surface, they will destroy the pence and joy God intended for us. When we commit our lives to Him and the cause for which He died, there can be peace and joy to the soul. O the riches of His grace and the peace and joy it gives to troubled souls.

The issue before us is simple. There are but two possibilities. It is expressed by Paul in these words:

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, sternal life But unto them that an contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey ighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and aim of the Gentile But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile For there is no rasped of persons with God (Rom. 2:7-11).

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CHRISTIANS DO GOOD UNTO ALL MEN

Stanley Ryan



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He has done local work in Cleveland and Nesbit, Mississippi; Liberty in Jasper, Alabama, and now works with the Jay congregation in Jay, Florida.

I appreciate the invitation extended by the Bellview elders and brother Bobby Liddell to speak on the lectureship this year. The theme chosen is greatly needed and should serve as a challenge to every member of the Lord's church to live daily by following the example of Jesus. There is a pattern for Christian living revealed in the word of God. We are to do good unto all men.

Christians are always to do right; thus, do good to all men. This Christ-likeness must be taught, understood and become an implemented part of our lives. Some would refrain from the word "good" because God is the essence of absolute goodness (Mat. 19:17; Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19). Though we cannot claim perfection in this area, God does expect effort on our part to imitate His goodness. Several Greek words indicate this. First, *AGATHOS* describes that which, being good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect. In a moral sense, Jesus (Mat. 20:15); "the good and faithful servant" (Mat. 25:21-23; Luke 19-17); Joseph, a counsellor, a good man, and just (Luke 23:50); and, Barnabas, for he was a good man (Acts 11:24), exemplify "good." The aged women were to be "chaste, keepers at home, good" (Mat. 2:5). In a general sense, all who follow

the teaching of Jesus, “do good to them that hate you...he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good” (Mat. 5:44-48). “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things” (Mat. 12:35).

Second, *AGATHON* describes that which is good, morally honourable, pleasing to God; therefore, beneficial. We are to prove what is good (Rom. 12:2), to cleave to the good (Rom. 12:9), to do good (Rom. 13:3; Gal. 6:10), to work good (Rom. 2:10; Eph. 4:28; 6:8), follow the good (1 The. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:13) and overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21).

Third, *KALOS* describes that which is ethically good, right, noble and honourable. A Christian is to be zealously affected always in good things Gal. 4:18), well reported of for good works (1 Tim. 5:10, 25), rich in good works (Tit. 2:7), zealous of good works (Tit. 2, 14), careful to maintain good works (Tit. 3:8, 14), provide honest (good) things (2 Cor. 8:21), not be weary in well doing (Gal. 6:9), provoke one another to love and good works (Heb. 10:24), and others should glorify God because of the Christian’s good works (1 Pet. 2:12; Mat. 5:16).

God expects us to render service unto Him and unto our fellow man; thus, to do good and to be good. This is, of course, according to the talent and opportunities provided (Gal. 6:10).

OUR MORAL OBLIGATION TO DO GOOD

It may seem strange that some today deny an obligation to do good to all men. However, Jesus faced this attitude and refuted it in Matthew 5:38-48, 22:36-40; Luke 6:27-36, and 10:25-37. Jesus showed that God’s Word dealt with the heart, the attitude and the motives that underlie external behavior.

The Old Testament background exposes this error of the Jews and those today who deny an obligation to do good to all men. First, look at Exodus 22:21, “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” God was concerned about Israel’s treatment of foreigners. Second, look at Exodus 23:4, “If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.” God obligated Israel to show kindness and courtesy even to one’s enemy. Third, in Deuter-

onomy 15:1-11, emphasis is given to the heart. God then warns them not to harden the heart, “Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart,” and, “thine heart shall not be grieved.” God was concerned with the heart, attitude and motive behind their behavior. Fourth, in Leviticus 19:9-18, Israel was required to leave the corners of the field for the poor and the stranger. They were not to hate their brother in their heart. They were to love their neighbor as themselves. Again, God establishes the pure motive of love as the reason for fair and just consideration of one’s fellow man. God does not endorse, sanction, or promote hatred of people out of personal bias. God is no respecter of persons.

Jesus makes clear that the Mosaic instruction to “love thy neighbor” meant that the child of God was to seek the welfare of everybody—including His enemies. Jesus taught through the “Good Samaritan,” that our neighbor is anyone, regardless of race, who is in need of our assistance (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus deliberately selects a Samaritan—mortal enemy of the Jew—as the “hero” to show that loving ones neighbor included one’s enemies. God’s children are to treat the wicked antagonist with love, respect, and kindness. This attitude and personal conduct in an imitation of the essence of God (He is good), and of Jesus Christ God bestows physical blessings (i.e., sunshine and rain), even to those who do not desire them. God is kind even to the unfaithful and evil (Luke 6.35).

Those who refuse to do good to all men are no better than the publicans who find it easy to love those who love them (Mat. 5:46). Those who salute their brethren only are again on the plans of the publican or Gentiles (v. 47). Jesus challenges us to be perfect, mature, lacking nothing, full and undivided and to display the heart with conduct of Christian love for all (Mat. 22:37-40).

MOTIVES TO DOING GOOD

To serve others out of pure and honest motives requires cultivation of the heart and a faith response to the will of God (Eph. 6:6; 1 The. 3:5; Heb. 10:22; Jam. 4:8; Rom. 8:6; Pro. 4:23; Luke 8:15; Mat. 5:8; 15:9; Rom. 6:16-18, 10:10). Many Bible principles furnish motivation to do good to all men.

1. Love for God and our fellow man (Mat. 22:37-39).

2. Submission to God's Word (Jam. 1:22; Gal. 6:10).
3. Desire to be an example (Mat. 5:16).
4. Admit we are debtors and stewards of the gospel (Rom. 1:14; 15:26; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 12:42; 1 Cor. 4:1; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10).
5. Trust in the providential care of God (Mat. 6:24-30).
6. Purpose to lay up treasures in heaven (Mat. 6:19-20).
7. We are to be our brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9; Gal. 6:1; Jam. 5:19-20).
8. Allow Christ to live in us (Gal. 2:20; Mat. 7:15-18).
9. Our desire to practice pure religion (Jam. 1:27).
10. Our desire to do good (Jam. 4:13-17).
11. To unite faith and works (Jam. 2:1-26).
12. Contentment is found in godliness (1 Tim. 6:6-10).
13. To fulfill our purpose (Ecc. 12:13; Eph. 5:3; Heb. 18:5).
14. To glorify God (1 Cor. 10,81; Mat. 5:16).
15. To show compassion (1 Pet. 3:8).
16. To love in deed and truth (1 John 8:18).
17. From a willing mind (2 Cor. 8:1-12).
18. God loveth a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9-7).
19. In recognition of prosperity from God (1 Cor. 16:2).
20. Sowing bountifully that we might reap (2 Cor. 9:6).
21. To be great in the kingdom is to be a servant (Mat. 23:11).]
22. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

DOING GOOD TO THE POOR AND OTHERS

Helping the poor is a special concern to the child of God. Webster defines poor as: "lacking material possessions...poverty...less than adequate, meager" (*Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 915). There have always been the poor and always will be (Mat. 26:11). Thus, we have a continuing obligation to be benevolent, to show charity and to help the low fortunate (Gal. 2:10; 6:10; Jam. 1:27).

Our Christian responsibilities go far beyond those who lack material things. We must recognize our need to express love and to serve the lonely and bereaved (Rom. 12:15), the discouraged and depressed, the shut-in and the sick, those temporarily recuperating

and those terminally ill (Mat. 25). We must serve those in need at home, hospitals, and even those in prison or other institutions as we have opportunity (Gal. 6:10). We must be aware of the need of the elderly and the young (Tit. 2). We are to bear one another's burdens as we loan upon the everlasting arms (Gal. 6:1-5). We are to carry the gospel to the sin sick (Mat. 9-12-13; Mark 16:15-16). We must realize not only our need to be served, but our need to serve others (Mat. 23:11). Jesus holds us personally accountable to show love and to serve our fellow man (Mat. 25:31-34).

OLD TESTAMENT PROVISIONS-DOING GOOD

God's Word instructed Israel to have a benevolent system wherein the stranger, widows, fatherless, and the poor would be provided for and their needs met. One way was by the right to glean in another's field. The "corners" of the field were not to be reaped, nor were all the grapes of the vineyard to be gathered, nor was the olive tree to be beaten a second time. The stranger, fatherless; and widows were allowed to gather what remained. If the sheave was left in the field the owner was not to return for it but leave it for the needy (Lev. 19:9-10; Deu. 24:19-21). The book of Ruth illustrates the gleaning by widows.

During the sabbatical years, the poor, servants, and the strangers were to have their portion (Exo. 23:11; Lev. 25:6) of the volunteer crops.

Every jubile, the land returned to the original owners allowing each tribe or family to start over again (Lev. 25:25-30).

God forbade usury and loan without interest were required (Lev. 25:35, 37; Exo. 22:25-27; Deu. 15:7-8; 24:10-13).

Hebrews who were slaves were to be freed, in the sabbatical and jubile years and on redemption at other times (Deu. 15:12-15; Lev. 25:39-54).

Portions of the tithes were to be shared by the poor after the Levites (Deu. 14:28; 26:12-13). This provided for strangers, fatherless, and widows as well as the Levites.

The poor, servants, Levites, strangers, fatherless, and widows were to be invited and provided for in the feast of the tabernacles and feast of weeks (Deu. 16:11, 14; Neh. 8:10).

The law also required daily payment for work done (Lev. 19:13). All of these provisions gave human rights to the disadvantaged and made provisions for the needy. These provisions required one to be accountable individually to do good and also required a collective responsibility to all the needy to become partaken of the collected tithes after the needs of the Levites were met.

SCRIPTURAL MANDATES

God has always demanded that His people be a friend to the poor, the stranger, the needy, the fatherless, the widows, the oppressed, and the weak. Notice these passages: Exodus 22:22-24,

Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows and your children fatherless.

Deuteronomy 15:11, "For the poor shall never cease out of the land. therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." Psalms 9:18, "For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever." Proverbs 29:7, "The righteous considereth the cause of the poor." Proverbs 28:27, "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse." Proverbs 31:9, 20, "Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy...she stretcheth out her hand to the poor, yea, she reacheth forth her hand to the needy." Psalms 40:17, "But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me, thou art my helper and my deliverer." Psalms 41:1, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Psalms 82:3-4, "Defend the poor and the fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy...rid them out of the hand of the wicked." Psalms 146:9, "The Lord preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow."

Isaiah 10:1-2,

Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; To turn aside the needy from judgement, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that the widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!

Jeremiah 7:6, “If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow and shed not innocent blood...Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land.” Zechariah 7:10, “And oppress not the widow, nor the father less, the stranger, nor the poor, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.” Matthew 10:42, “And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple...he shall in no wise lose his reward.” Mark 14:7, “For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good.” Matthew 25:35-36,

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me I was sick, and ye visited me I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Acts 20:35 (ASV), “In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than receive.” Acts 2:45, “And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” Acts 11:29-30, “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” Galatians 6:10, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Ephesians 4:28, “Let him that stole steal no more but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” First Timothy 5:16, “If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.” First John 3:17-18,

But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Romans 15:27, “It has pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.”

First Corinthians 16:2, “Upon the first day of the week let every-one of you lay by him in store, an God hath prospered him, that

there be no gatherings when I come.” Matthew 7:12, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” James 1:27, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Galatian 2:10, “Only they would that we should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do.” Many other passages could be sighted, but this should be sufficient to help us understand God expects us to be mindful of and to help the needy.

JESUS WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD

A brief review of the gospel of Mark shows the concern of Jesus for the needs of man both physically and spiritually. He cast out the unclean spirits (Mark 1:23-25), healed Simon’s wife’s mother (Mark 1:30), healed the sick (Mark 1:34), cleansed the leper (Mark 1:40), removed the palsy (Mark 2:12), restored the withered hand (Mark 3:5), cast out legion (Mark 5:13), healed the woman who touched his garment (Mark 5:27-30), raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead (Mark 5:41-42), fed five thousand (Mark 6:44), cured the Syrophenician’s daughter (Mark 7:30), healed the deaf man (Mark 7:35), fed four thousand (Mark 8:9), healed the blind man (Mark 8:25), cast out the dumb spirit (Mark 9:17), told the rich young ruler to sell his goods and give to the poor (Mark 10:21), healed blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46), cleansed the temple (Mark 11:15), commended the poor widow for giving (Mark 12:44), was anointed by a woman (Mark 14:8), was crucified and resurrected to bring salvation (Mark 15:16), gave the commission (Mark 16:15-16), and worked with the Apostles confirming the word with signs following (Mark 16:20).

The record of the earthly walk of Jesus can be traced by the good He did as He obeyed the will of God and ministered to the needs of His fellow man (Mat. 20:28). Jesus set an example of service that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21; 3:14-15; Mark 9:35; Heb. 5:8-9). He taught humility in service by washing the disciples’ feet (John 13). He taught sharing our blessings physically: if we have two costs, give one to him that hath not (Luke 3:11). Jesus taught

respect for our fellow man by using the Samaritan as an example of “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:28-37). Many doses to Jesus came under His influence and stand out in our minds for service they rendered. Mary and Martha did good by offering the hospitality of their home. Mary is known for anointing the Lord with ointment and wiping His feet with her hair (John 11:2). Wherever the gospel is preached, people are reminded of the “breaking of the alabaster box” and anoint of Jesus (Mark 14:3-8). The Apostles stand out as servants like the Master who served unto death having done much good. Great men like Barnabas are remembered for their sacrificial giving and their humble life of service in carrying the gospel. Great women like Dorcas stand out for the good they did and the love others had for them (Acts 9:36).

CAN THE CHURCH GO GOOD?

Great congregations are known for the good they do. The Jerusalem church is known for the way it cared for its needy and organized to care for the Grecian widows (Acts 2:41-45; 4:34-37; 6:1ff). The church at Antioch stands out for the relief to help those in Judaea (Acts 11:27-30). The churches of Macedonia and Achaia stand out as Gentile congregations willing to help the poor of Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26-28, 2 Cor. 8:1-6). The churches of Galatia and the congregation at Corinth were challenged to sacrificial giving by the example of the churches of Macedonia who gave out of deep poverty (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8-9). When a church does a good work, individual action is collectively discharged and the Lord receives the glory (Acts 2:41-45; 4:34-37). Barnabas was an individual who sold land and brought the money to the Apostles for distribution unto the needy. This appears to be the way most Christians preferred to carry out their benevolent activities; that is, through the church rather than on a completely solo bask (Acts 4:34-37).

Thus, we can see that individuals do not shirk their Christian duty through collective or congregational action. It seems, to be a gross error, therefore, for one to contend that some individual action cannot be collectively discharged. In a practical way, we all recognize that individual Christian action is a grace to be practiced as the situation requires. If the need requires more than individuals can do,

then congregational distribution becomes necessary (Acts 11:28-30; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

WE MUST CARE FOR OUR OWN WHEN POSSIBLE

Under normal circumstances, parents and families are to care for their own (Eph. 6:1-4; 2 Cor. 12-14; 1 Tim. 5:1-16; Mark 7:10-14). However, in some situations they are unable to do so (Acts 2-4) because they need relief themselves (Acts 11:28-30) so, the church may relieve their needs. In some cases, death of a mate or of parents leaves one alone and in need of the assistance of the church (1 Tim. 5:16; Jam. 1:27; Gal. 6:10). We have an example in Acts 6:1-8 where the church selected men to relieve the needs of the Grecian widows. Also, in 1 Timothy 5:1-6 we see that the family has an obligation to care for its own, but this care can become a church responsibility if the qualifying circumstances exist for a “widow indeed.” Orphaned children can come under the care of the church if family care has broken down. Individual foster care or the collective care of an orphanage often requires congregational care because it is more than an individual can provide. Thus, in a collective congregational way we can “visit the fatherless and widows” (Jam. 1:27; 1 Tim. 5; Gal. 6:10). God has obligated us to relieve the needs of others, but has not defined the *HOW* in detail.

CONGREGATIONAL COOPERATION

Congregations can and should cooperate in doing good as the situation may require. All congregational cooperation must start with individuals who realize a need and feel a moral obligation to relieve that need. Individual and collective cooperation was required in sending relief to the elders by Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:28-30). This was exactly what was “ordered” by the Lord to be done by the churches of Galatia and the brethren at Corinth (1 Cor. 16:14; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 2:10; 6:10). When individual Christians gave into the treasury of the church, a collective gift was sent by the church to those in need. These congregations were cooperating in doing good. The church of the first century did good and the church today can do good in a cooperative, congregational distributive manner.

CHURCHES CAN HELP MEMBERS AND NONMEMBERS

Most are agreed on the principles of helping our own, but some get cranky about helping nonmembers. The apostle Paul informed the Corinthians that their collective distribution “supplieth the want of the saints [members]...your liberal distribution unto them [saints], and unto all men [others, nonmembers]” (2 Cor. 9:12-13). Paul also encouraged the Galatians to “do good unto all men (nonmembers) and especially unto them which are of the household of faith [members]” (Gal. 6:10). “All men” is in contrast to those in “the household of faith.” The church can help nonmembers such as the spouse of a deceased member or the orphans left by the tragic death of a believer as well as other nonmembers not so close.

Christians need to be ready to do good when tornadoes, hurricanes, first violent crimes, famine, disease, and war take their toll leaving people in great need. Christians should step forth as individuals and a congregation to help the believer and nonbeliever. On judgment day, we will answer (Mat. 25:31-46), thus, let us, as individuals, do good. As believers, let us give to support our individual collective distributive responsibility through the church in evangelism and benevolence (Mark 16:15-16; Gal. 6:10; Jam. 1:27).

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE FAIL TO DO GOOD?

By failing to do good, we endanger our relationship with God and with our fellowman and we hurt ourselves. Notice a short list of failures. (1) Adam and Eve failed by partaking of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3). (2) Cain failed in his worship and in his relationship with Abel (Gen. 4). (3) Lot failed by pitching his tent toward Sodom (Gen. 13:12). (4) Joseph’s brothers failed by selling him into slavery (Gen. 37). (5) Israel failed by worshipping the golden calf (Exo. 32). (6) Achan failed by coveting material things (Jos. 7). (7) King Saul failed by sparing the Amalekites and Agag (1 Sam. 15). (8) David failed by being immoral with Bathsheba and murdering Uriah (2 Sam. 11). (9) Solomon failed to be wise in immorality and idolatry (1 Kings 11). (10) Israel failed by neglecting and abusing the poor and fatherless (Isa. 1:23; 10:2). (11) Judah and Israel failed because of injustice and greed (Amos 2:6; 8-6). (12) The shepherds

of Israel failed by not caring for the diseased, sick, broken, and lost (Eze. 34:25). (13) Malachi rebuked those who oppressed the hiring, widows, fatherless, and turned aside the stranger (Mal. 3:5). (14) The scribes and pharisees failed by upholding human traditions above the Word of God (Mat 15). (15) The Jerusalem church failed by neglecting the Grecian widows (Acts 6). (16) Those on the left hand on Judgment Day failed to care for those in need (Mat. 25). (17) Many do good only to those who love them, their friends, but fail to help others (Mat. 5:43-48). These examples should show that our failures can be prevented or at least corrected by submitting to God's will and serving our fellowman.

ARE WE DOING GOOD OR MAKING EXCUSES?

As an individual, do I look for areas to serve? Am I looking for opportunities? Do I create opportunities because I desire to serve God and my fellowman? How often do I ask the question "Can I help you?" Vines says opportunity is, "a fixed, definite period, a time, season." Our opportunity to serve is now. There will be no second chance after this life do not wait, serve today. We must desire to serve and be alert to the needs of those around us. A boy scout looks for daily opportunities to serve. Should not a Christian also be ready? Many opportunities present themselves to us in our daily walk of life. To a Christian, it should be so natural that it surprises us that the Lord takes notice, "When did we do that, Lord?" (Mat. 25:31-46). Those who make excuses will ask, "When did we fail to do good?" Must the sick visit us at home? Must the welfare office call us or should we check on the needs of widows? Should the State notify us of orphans or should we seek them out? When a home burns, do we get the hint? When death occurs in our neighborhood, does it dawn on us that the bereaved need comfort? Knowing there is famine, tornadoes, hurricanes, war, starvation, record lay offs, and drug abuse, does it alarm us that so many opportunities are ignored?

Jesus saw fields white unto harvest, but few laborers. How do you see the fields of evangelism and benevolence? Must the needy starve and go without clothes while we splurge on our luxuries? Read Matthew 25 in view of the judgment. Brethren, we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we will carry nothing out.

Let us be good stewards of our time, talents and financial resources to do good in view of the judgment. The key words are “go” seeking opportunities and be “ready” to every good work. It is sad that so many make excuses and idly sit back or pass on by without compassion like the “good Samaritan.”

OUR BUDGET AND DOING GOOD

How should our budget reflect our care for those in need? First, by recognizing my individual obligation to do good. I cannot say that others can take care of those for whom I am equally responsible. I should designate a portion of my income to do good. In most congregations, a yearly budget will be presented with due consideration to evangelistic and benevolent obligations. I should do my part in meeting those proposed financial needs. Also canned goods, pantry items, and clothing are usually kept on hand to assist the needy. I may not have much money, but I have the same amount of time that others have. I can give of my time in doing good, “visiting” (Jam. 1:27), delivering goods, and providing trans When special needs arise, I can dig a lift deeper to help my neighbor (Luke 10:30-37). When we first give ourselves unto the Lord, meeting the needs of others will come easy.

When Christians do good unto all men, the members! and nonmembers’ needs will be met. The lost will have the gospel preached unto them, the erring will know of our desire to restore them and the needy will know of our love. Let us do good as the salt of the earth and the light of the world that God may receive all the glory. Then, Heaven will be our home eternally.

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HAVE WE FORGOTTEN CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY?

Guss Eoff



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There is a word in our vocabulary about which we know very little. In fact, it has almost become nonexistent in our practice. The word, for our consideration, is hospitality. What do we mean by hospitable? Webster tells us it means, "Receiving and entertaining strangers or guests generously and kindly. Proceeding from or suggestive of kindness and generosity to guests or strangers." The word hospitality, according to Webster, means, "Hospitable treatment, reception, or disposition."

One of the greatest Bible examples of hospitality is recorded in Genesis 18:1-8.

And Jehovah appeared unto him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, My lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: for now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and strengthen ye your heart; after that ye shall pass on: forasmuch as ye are come to your servant. And they said, go do,

as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal. knead it, and make cakes. And Abraham ran unto the herd and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto the servant and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them: and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

WHY WAS ABRAHAM SO HOSPITABLE?

Why was Abraham so hospitable to these three men? Did he know they were heavenly beings? Surely he did not know they were spiritual guests. The angels did not appear in angelic glory, but in human likeness. One of these Angelic Beings had pre-eminence. He is referred to as Jehovah, God, Deity. It is believed this was Jesus, or that this Angelic Spiritual Being was God manifested in human form and that He was accompanied by two Angelic Beings. The Pre-eminent One stayed with Abraham when the other two Angelic Beings went to Sodom. But who they were is another subject. The reason for mentioning this occasion is to show the hospitality of Abraham. What motivated him to extend such receptive treatment? It is highly doubtful that Abraham recognized these Angelic Beings! Why did he run to meet them? Why did he bow himself to the earth in humility and say

My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee. from thy servant, let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and strengthen ye your heart; after that ye shall pass on: forasmuch as ye are come to your servant (Gen. 18:3-5).

Could this have been the habitual treatment of strangers by people of that day? We certainly find such examples elsewhere in the Book of Genesis. Notice Genesis 23:7 and 33:6-7.

What hospitality was given by Abraham! We should hope for a little water and a morsel of bread. The cakes Sarah made and the tender calf, along with milk and butter—what a feast! We may never know why such a cordial welcome was given to these men, but it certainly gives us an example of hospitality!

GOD DEMANDED HOSPITALITY!

In the Book of Leviticus, God gave laws to govern the action of his people. There can be no doubt that Jehovah was greatly con-

cerned with the treatment of strangers among His chosen people, Notice the instructions:

And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not do him wrong. The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt: I am Jehovah your God (Lev. 19:33-34).

Yea! What a wonderful place this world would be if men would only obey God's teaching. Yea, even in the church. The way strangers we treated in different places in the world is truly shameful. To see how strangers are treated when they visit our services in some places is unbelievable. I have been a visitor, a stranger, to some of our congregations, and I will tell you I will never go back. In California, I was a visitor for services on Sunday morning in a large congregation. My mother was in the hospital and I was going to see her. I stopped for morning worship, along with my wife, my son and daughter-in-law. One little old lady spoke to me as she passed out of the foyer. She did not speak to my family. We stood there trying to get attention and to be friendly. People crowded past us and never even looked. Others were so busy talking to each other, we could not get in a word of greeting. The preacher went out the side door and no one talked to us. We left talking about how wonderful we felt and how happy we would be to get to attend there again. You have got to be kidding! Thank God, I did not have to depend on hospitality to worship my God.

If we have ever been a sojourner in a foreign land, we know how it feels to be a stranger. Jehovah told His people "And a sojourner shalt thou not oppress: for ye know the heart of a sojourner, seeing ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Exo. 23:9). Our God demanded that strangers should be treated as home-born. Jehovah required that His people love strangers as themselves. The "Royal Law" of Leviticus 18:18 was enjoined on Israel: "But thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This same hospitality, that was given by Abraham, was extended by Lot in the city of Sodom.

And the two angels came to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face to the earth, and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night,

and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the abed all night. And he urged them greatly; and they tamed in unto him, and entered into his house, and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat (Gen. 19:1-3).

So, it appears this was customary hospitality among people of those days. This same treatment was given by the old man of Gibeah to the stranger and his concubine as recorded in Judges 19.

What about New Testament teaching of hospitality? Our Lord Jesus Christ gives us alarming instructions on the importance of being hospitable. According to the picture of the judgment in Matthew 25, everything depended on how we dealt with our fellow man. To those who inherited the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, Jesus said. "For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me?" (Mat. 25:35-36). These righteous ones asked the Lord, "When did we see thee in such conditions and ministered to thee?" Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me" (Mat. 25:40).

To the cursed, Jesus said. "For I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not" (Mat. 25:42-43).

The wicked likewise asked, "Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" (Mat. 25:44).

Our Saviour answered: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of theme lewd, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into sternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life" (Mat. 25:45-46).

How important can these things be? The answer in, the difference between HEAVEN and HELL! It seems that the words "receiving" and " are threaded through out the above mentioned passages. "Kindness" and "generosity" to strangers and guests fits very well in the judgment scene.

The apostle Paul lists some outstanding characteristics of a Christian in the twelfth chapter of Romans. Two of the things listed are: “communicating to the necessities of the saints; given to hospitality” (Rom. 12:13). There can be no doubt as to the importance of hospitality in the Christian’s life. It is essential for one qualifying as a bishop in the church. “Given to hospitality,” is listed in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8. One of the qualifications for a widow, before she could be enrolled for support, was that she, “hath used hospitality to strangers” (1 Tim. 5:10).

Peter, the great apostle, tells Christians several things that they should do. They were to have, “fervent in your love among yourselves,” and, “using hospitality one to another without murmuring” (1 Pet. 4:8-9).

Hospitality is to be practiced among Christians. It is vital! It is interesting to notice what the writer of the book of Hebrews has to say concerning being hospitable. “Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). This law was enjoined by the Law of Moses. Notice Leviticus 19:84 and Deuteronomy 10:18-19. No doubt, the author of this book knew that these brethren understood the duty of Christians. Here, he admonishes them to put into practice God’s teaching concerning hospitality. To love strangers, to feed and clothe them and to furnish a place to stay was not only taught by Moses, but also by New Testament writers.

The Hebrews writer also points out another very interesting thing. He says, “For thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). This, no doubt, has reference to Abraham and Lot, as we have noticed elsewhere. It is possible that angels have been entertained at other times that are not recorded in God’s Word.

Guests may be messengers sent for our own special benefit. They, no doubt, will not be angelic beings, but they may be sent in God’s providence to work for our good. Regardless, strangers can give us an opportunity to show the world the love that we have in Christ Jesus. We are to do good to all men, and especially to them that are of the household of faith. Let us never forget the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:42: “And whosoever shall give to drink unto

one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I may unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

THE NECESSITY OF HOSPITALITY

Why was it so important to extend hospitality in Bible times? We are told, that in the ancient days, there was not an abundance of inns or hotels as we have now. Even in the early days of this country, there were not so many places to stay. I can remember my grandparents telling about traveling with a wagon pulled by mules. It was slow traveling and a great distance between towns. Farmers would invite them to spend the night. The farmer would feed the mules. He would furnish a place to day, to clean up and to sleep. Food was provided in abundance. Many lasting friends were made this way. It was customary to entertain strangers and the strangers would join in and help the farmer with chores.

DO WE NEED TO PRACTICE HOSPITALITY TODAY?

We hear, “Times have changed. We don’t need it now. We have too many motels and hotels—too many inns today. Besides that, we have many organizations to take care of people in need. Too, you never know about people, they may rob you or rape your wife. They may steal things from you.” An example is that of brother J. C. Clifford in Redding, California, in 1945. A man called him on the church phone and told him that he was desperate. He was traveling to Oregon to work in the harvest. He had car problems and it took all the money he had. He and his family had no place to stay or food to eat and he had his wife and five children. It was about ten at night. The church was having money problems also. So, brother Clifford invited the man to spend the night at his house. This good preacher had two sons of his own, but their bed was given to the man and his wife. The children all slept on pallets on the floor. Sister Clifford prepared food for the whole family. All of them took baths and J. C. Clifford gave the man five dollars, of his own money, to buy gasoline the next day. All were very tired and went into a sound sleep.

When brother Clifford got up at 6:30 A.M., he went to the kitchen to put on the coffee pot. As he went by the children sleeping on the floor, he saw that only his boys were still in bed. He figured

that the other children had gone into the bedroom with their parents. He put on the coffee pot and went to the front porch to get the morning paper. To his surprise, the man's car was gone. He thought someone may have stolen the car, so he went in and knocked on the bedroom door. There was no answer, so he opened the door only to find the room empty of his guests. The beds were stripped, including a new electric blanket. The radio, the clock, and several other things, that could be picked up quickly, were gone. This good hearted hospitable preacher could not believe what this family had done. What a way to repay kindness!

This has happened many times. People have become afraid to help people because of the danger of being robbed, or worse. There are many in our society that are professional bums. They are too lazy to work so they sponge off of hard working honest people. For example, churches are constantly hit by such moochers. They go from city to city, state to state, begging and receiving money from different churches. It has become dangerous to take people into our homes. People have been robbed, raped, and even murdered, while trying to be good Samaritans.

Are these illustrations used as excuses for not being hospitable? Could it be that we no longer have mercy? Can we be classed as the Priest and the Levite? Does being hospitable to strangers mean that we have to take people into our homes? If so, what about the case of the Samaritan? He did what he could to bind up the wounds of the man that fell among robbers. Then the good Samaritan carried this man to the inn and took care of him. He left the next day, but paid the inn keeper to continue to care for the man. He said, "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee" (Luke 10:35). The key to this Bible example of hospitality is found in the word "compassion." It is the motivating spirit of love that causes us to render assistance, regardless of the method or procedure we use in showing hospitality.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO BE HOSPITABLE

A person does not have to be homeless, or in physical need, for us to be hospitable to them! We can make friends with strangers,

then, invite them to our homes for a meal or a get, together. This is the way we have made friends and converted many people.

In Hong Kong, I met a man named Chan But Fan. He was downtown, upon a ladder forty or forty-five feet up in the air, painting a sign. I watched him for quite a while before he looked down and saw me. I yelled up to him in Cantonese, "Very pretty. I like it very much." He climbed down and began to talk to me in the Cantonese language. I told him that I could only speak a little Chinese. He then told me he could only speak a little English. He told me to wait a minute. He ran into a shop and returned with a Chinese man that spoke English fairly well. This man interpreted for us. He wanted to know if I was an American and what I was doing in Hong Kong. After about thirty minutes, I invited him to come visit me. I told him to bring his wife and our interpreter would help us to talk. I told him we would have dinner. I did not know, at the time, that you just did not do things that way in Hong Kong. Being an ignorant American, and trying to be friendly, it made no difference. Chan But Fan accepted the invitation. We had Southern fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy. I did not know that he did not like chicken. Nevertheless, the hospitality started a friendship that ended in the conversion of this one time secret service agent for Chang Chi Shek. That friendliness and hospitality led me to baptizing about thirty-five people. Chan But Fan knew thousands of people.

Laline and I were influenced to become Christians, at least in part, by the friendliness of the members of the small congregation in Maywood, California. The preacher, our father in the gospel, J. F. Tipton, took us under his wing. He and sister Tipton invited us into their home for a meal. Then, we visited several times and, finally, we were converted.

Brother and sister Felton Gregg adopted us as their spiritual children. They took us home with them every Sunday. They fed us and looked after us. They helped us to grow spiritually. We may not have remained faithful if it had not been for them.

While preaching in Victoria, Texas, during a Sunday morning worship service, a visitor appeared. He was an older gentleman. He looked very distinguished with his snow white hair. I was teaching

the Bible class and this man spoke up several times and made comments. He quoted the Greek text and gave the meaning of several points in the lesson. I was scared to death! This man could quote Greek as fast as I could read the text in English. I went back and introduced myself to him. He told me that he was W. E. McGihagin and was on vacation and stopped to visit us.

That morning I preached a sermon on Hell. When services were over McGihagin came to me and said, "That is the best sermon on 'Hell' that I have heard in over thirty years, and I have heard a lot of sermons. I am a Baptist preacher." Then he asked if he could come and study with me the next day. I told him that he was welcome, but I was going to be painting a chart. He was there at 8:30 A.M. We talked and I painted. At noon, I invited him to have lunch with me. We talked until about 5:00 P.M., and I asked him to stay for dinner. After dinner, we talked about Scripture until almost 9:00 P.M. He called his wife and told her he would be late. He asked if he could come back the next morning. He ate lunch and dinner on Tuesday and the same thing Wednesday, and he stayed for mid-week services. This Baptist preacher asked if he could bring his wife and visit on Thursday. She was a nurse, but had the day off. They stayed and ate lunch and dinner and did not leave until almost midnight. This preacher's wife was a great Bible student. I found out that W. E. McGihagin had his Doctor's Degree from the Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He had a Degree in Bible and Greek. His wife also had her Doctor's Degree. What discussions we had! We had a great time together. I baptized Mc. and his wife the next Lord's Day. He was faithful in preaching the Truth until he died of a heart attack.

WHAT DO WE MISS WHEN WE FAIL TO BE HOSPITABLE?

When my wife and I became Christians, over fifty years ago, members of the church were very hospitable. It seems as though every Sunday we were invited to someone's house. The members enjoyed great fellowship! The ladies prepared meals on Saturday night or Sunday morning. Strangers were always invited home to eat Sunday dinner. Members had other members over to eat on Sunday.

We knew each other better and we did not seem to have so many problems among ourselves. Christians miss so much when they are not hospitable to each other. We never seem to really know our own brethren. We miss so many opportunities to convert strangers when we fail to be hospitable. Where is the love and compassion that should move us to be friendly and win souls?

How can we show more hospitality? First of all, we need to pray that God will fill our hearts with love for each other, love for strangers and love for those in need of physical and spiritual help. Then, we need to plan to be more hospitable. Invite friends and neighbors to our homes. Do not turn on the television. Do not plan Sunday meals at the restaurant. It costs too much, it is too crowded, it is not like home cooking and the homelike atmosphere is not there. Let us open our eyes to be able to see that, no doubt, some of us have “*FORGOTTEN CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY*.”

CHRISTIANS OUTLIVE THE WORLD

Roger Jackson



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The Lord's people cannot allow the world to outlive them. Too much is at stake for them to conduct themselves in a low than excellent manner. The world has a morality. It may not be very good, but if it is better than that of a Christian, something is wrong. The world has many religions, but none of them should make a man better than the religion of the Son of God. The world has homes, but no man on the home should make it better than a Christian's home, since his is governed by the Bible. This world is filled with people who have deep convictions about religion, politics, social disorders and racial problems. Their convictions run so deep that they hazard their lives for their cause, but no man should ever have convictions that are deeper than those of a child of God. Christians cannot allow the world to outlive them.

A DIFFERENCE THAT CAN BE SEEN

God demands a difference that can be seen. In 1 Corinthians 5:1, we are told that the church at Corinth was practicing a morality (immorality) that had not been so much mentioned among the heathen. They were living below the standard of the world! They were practicing something that was below the dignity of a common pagan. What were they doing but allowing the world to outlive them?

In the past they had committed such sins as fornication, idolatry, adultery, male feminism, homosexuality, theft, covetousness, drunkenness and extortion, but now they had been washed from these sins and set apart for God's use (1 Cor. 6:9-11). The world accepts all of these sins, but brethren had better remember that God does not. He demands that we live better than this.

The world has rejected the religion of the Son and has substituted different ones that reflect the preference of men. When people examine the church of the Lord, they had better see something different. Our Lord expected His disciples to live, serve and worship on a higher plain than the religious people of His day. He said, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 5:20). Rather than making a "transition" so that the line between the church of the Lord and the churches of men cannot be the Lord's church should, and must, stand head and shoulders above them. Not only must we oppose evil, but shun the very appearance of it (1 The. 5:22). We do not need to become like the social clubs around us, but "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16).

FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS TOOK THE OBLIGATION SERIOUSLY

The first century brethren took the obligation to live above the world seriously. While there were failures, the truth of the matter is that they did a very good job. When the high council of the Jews threatened the Apostles with harm if they taught any more in the name of Christ, it did not so much as slow them down. They took a beating and left the council rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ (Acts 5:29, 41). Stephen demonstrated true commitment when he gladly suffered death for the gospel's sake (Acts 7:51-60). Someone needed to remind him, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." However, Stephen was not in the fly catching business, he was fishing for men. He was not playing games and promoting a multiple ministries pro-

gram. His message towered above the little social garbage of the day and saved men's souls.

When the Apostles were accused and convicted of being Christians, they were imprisoned. Herod killed James, the brother of John and proceeded to take Peter into custody (Acts 12:14). At times like these, the Lord's demand that His people confess Him to be the Son of God (Mat. 10:32-33) took real courage. We have a brand of pulpiteer among us who would not be convicted if they were arrested for being gospel preachers. They will not preach an unpopular gospel. They take polls of the people to find out what they will applaud and cheer and that in what these charlatans are going to preach.

Saul the persecutor was pursuing and incarcerating men and women for nothing more than being Christians (Acts 22:4) when he was converted. He said he went into their houses and into their assemblies to get them. How would you react if your wife or son were abducted in the middle of the night and led off to jail for being a Christian? We read about these things, but we do not realize that these were real people and real persecutions. They took to heart what Jesus had obligated them to do and the way He had told them to live.

They were able to face imprisonment and death because they knew what they had seen and heard was right. Their attitude was not one of despair, but of victory under any circumstance. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phi. 1:21). They did not believe they could lose at all. No derelict, dishonest or discouraged man will live that way. No man who has the shadow of a shade of a doubt about the cause for which he lives will live like that. They took the Lord's command seriously.

It was this attitude of commitment unto death that led the church into the forest of persecution the likes of which it has never since known. There never has been, nor had there ever been, a cause for which more men gave more than this thing called Christianity. They were willing to die because they strove for something more important than life. Of these martyrs it is said, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11).

Not only did these Christians outlive the world, but they left for us an example. Surely if they could outlive the world under such hostile conditions, we can do so under relatively peaceful conditions. Christ will always expect Christians to outlive the world in every age whether the conditions are favorable or unfavorable.

OUTLIVE IN THEIR MORALITY

The morality of this country has been in a downward spiral for a long time, but it may not have hit the bottom yet. We may already be beyond (or below) Romans 1:27,

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

On every hand, we are being pressured to accept homosexuality as just another life style. Homosexuals have come out of the closet and paraded in our streets. Legislation is pending in congress to give them equal rights just like “other” minorities. If passed, this legislation will force employers to hire homosexuals, and what will the church do when the government finds out that we do not employ them? What will the brethren do then?

Thanks to this country’s covetousness, we now have a president who has vowed to champion the rights of “gays.” Moreover, he has promised in his campaign to cure AIDS! Cure it? He promotes it! He throws the ones most guilty of spreading AIDS in our faces and demands that we employ them and accept them and then bemoans the AIDS epidemic. There never has been a more hypocritical immoral high official. The majority of good people in this country have demonstrated their disgust with “gays” in “gay bashings.” I do not endorse violence, however, what else can we expect when the immoral men who are in control shove them into the faces of people who detest them? God said it is an abomination to Him; i.e., makes Him sick (Lev. 20:13). And yet, I know of one preacher who, in pursuit of a master’s degree in religion, wrote a paper defending homosexuality as an inborn trait. Is that outliving the world? On what basis could a church with a man like that in the pulpit appeal to lost men as being different from the world?

We now have a national organization, the NEA, (National Education Association) that is promoting hiring homosexuals in our public school systems. Moreover, they insist that children, yours and mine, be counseled by homosexuals. Teachers would be required to teach that single sex parents be pictured in text books as normal. When Christians have a chance to oppose this gutter morality, like Garland Elkins did on national television, they are scorned and booed. Then a so-called gospel preacher, who is supposed to be a Christian, calls him a donkey (actually worse, but we want to keep this material on a higher plain). We should rise up in righteous indignation and spiritual disgust at such abominations. The world will not, but we are talking about outliving the world.

This country experienced a murder every 48 seconds in 1976, and that is the best statistic I could find. Think how much worse it must be over fifteen years later. We have an ACLU organization that champions the cause of every rapist, murderer and pervert you can find behind bars in the local jail, but says nothing about the rights of the victims.

When Vice-president Quayle condemned the sorry morality Hollywood promotes in the case of Murphy Brown, the perverts raised their voices an one to shame him. I am thankful that he did not back down, but we must outlive Mr. Quayle, for he is not a Christian. Are we taking a stand against a couples' living together without the benefit of marriage? It is so acceptable (?) in the world that the guilty have no hesitation to speak openly about it. The Bible refers to the situation as "whoremongers and adulterers" in Hebrews 13:4. We ought not to be ashamed to call a situation what God calls it. It is not a "life style," it is sin. Christians must outlive the world by not only living better than that, but also by condemning such sin in others.

There was a time when we were told that the cure to all of the unhappiness in marriages and homes was easy divorce. If a couple was in an unhappy relationship, the thing to do was not to demand that they stay in that relationship, but allow them to get out of it and form another one. And so they did—form another unhappy relationship, and then another and another. The devastation of divorce did

not make a one of them happy to my knowledge, but produced single parent families and a mountain of misery. Why not go back to God's way? His Son said,

Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mat. 19:4-6).

Many churches cater to this group with the "ministry" to the once married or "singles again." While this is not an indictment of every effort to render assistance to the divorced, the truth of the matter is that many such programs are designed to get divorced people together so that they can marry each other even if that results in unscriptural unions. This, along with error from the pulpit and the conference room of the elders, given God speed to adulterers and brow bents every faithful servant of God into submission because they are "old fogies" and negative. This is no better than the world. It is a submission to the world in fact, but the faithful child of God is bound to outlive the world. If this nation is ever to have a high esteem for marriage and a basis for right morality, the church will have to give it to it. Such a task cannot be done by living like the world, but by showing the world that we can do better than that. We will be better for it in this life and in the life to come.

IN THE PRACTICE OF PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION

In James 1:27 pure and undefiled religion is defined as, "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." In His sermon on the mount Jesus said,

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

perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Mat 5:43-48).

It is almost inconceivable that there exists among God's people those who believe unbelievers cannot be helped out of the church treasury. Such people are not outliving the world in their practice of pure and undefiled religion so far as concerns benevolence by the church. They say, "brethren only," while the Lord has said, "Not brethren only." It is just as clearly false doctrine as Luther's "faith only," when the Lord said through James, "Not by faith only" (Jam. 2:24). And how much different is this practice than that of the Masons? A Mason will help a Mason. A Masonic Lodge will help a Mason. You brethren who say "brethren only," tell us how you are outliving the Masons? How about The Salvation Army? Some of my brethren ring the little bells at Christmas time so they can help little children. The only salvation army I am a part of is the army of the Lord, but we are not beating them by much, if any. Most places are willing to spend big bucks on things that make them more comfortable at "church," and make themselves believe the cash layout was for the advancement of the kingdom. The truth is that needy people get some crumbs from the table of plenty while we pad our pews, warm and cool our bodies and exercise our muscles "to the glory of God." Most places would have a rebellion on their hands if the suggestion were ever made that something of real value be given to the poor, unless there were some visible benefit for the local church. One church in Nashville refused to allow some of its many members to go three or four miles away into a heavily populated new subdivision and start a new congregation, stating, "We will lose some of our members if we do that." Brethren we had better get out of our selfish self-serving sinfulness or we are all going to hell. The world does better than that. Our nation can send millions of tons of food to Africa, but the Lord's church is still arguing over whether or not the unbaptized can be helped or if it is scriptural to cooperate in doing it. Why argue about the way to do something that we are not doing anyway? The world is beating us in benevolence and that is not outliving the world.

We had better plan to outlive the protestant denominations as well. They are in the world too, and a part of it. Their appeal is a social appeal. When they say, "Join the church of your choice," they mean look around and see which one "ministers to your needs" best and go there. Since none of them claim salvation is found in them, the social appeal is all they have left. Now we are in competition with them on that level in places where their spirituality has gone flat and their preacher has surrendered. If it is social goodness and pure entertainment we are competing with, you can forget it. We never have been able to keep up with the sects and we never will be. Outliving them means a quality life, not a social contest. The Y.M.C.A. can compete with the best of them, but brother, the Lord's church has something the Y.M.C.A. knows nothing about, and in places where they don't have it, the world is outliving them.

The world is not looking for very much religion. It will tolerate a little, but if it gets anywhere near what they had in the first century, the world will get enough in one sip. The liberal churches are trying to give the world that little sip and they have succeeded remarkably. Careful not to give them more than they can swallow, they preach a "plus nothing" religion. That sounds like music to the world's ear (2 Tim. 4:34). For many decades, they have preached faith—plus nothing, grace—plus nothing and sincerity—plus nothing. The world has its ears tuned to anyone who will tell them what they do not have to do to be saved. It is a coward's gospel and a traitor's theme (Gal. 1:6-9). "Work" is a four letter word to "plus nothing" religionists. What about Philippians 2:12, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"? There is no way to set that apart from the practice of the world. How does one gauge nothing? If it is better than the world, just how would you know it? If it "exceeds" any religion you can name, how would you know it? If it is all grace on God's part, how could we be expected to exceed anyone's righteousness (Mat. 5:20)? If grace "plus nothing" saves us, ANY RIGHTEOUSNESS at all would be too much. Why not just be pure Calvinists and be done with it? Or perhaps these "plus nothing" people can solve Calvin's riddle of how to keep people attending and paying the big bucks for the big salaries while being

taught that their salvation is assured without it? It will empty every pew in the liberal camp if they ever stop to think for themselves for one minute.

That brings up another religion the world loves, and that is “me too” religion. A scholar quacks and all the little ducklings quack, “Me too.” A renegade out in left field attacks the church (attacking the church is the major requirement for scholarship today) and some “Johnny come lately” looking for a name and a big church quacks, “Me too.” There is not an original thought between any dozen of them. They parrot the old German ultra liberalism of a century gone by and think they are new thinkers. Instead of being intellectuals, they are ignoramuses, and if they were not, they would be aware of such men’s work as J. W. McGarvey, who answered these pseudo intellectuals a century ago They are reckless with the Bible (2 Pet. 3:16), reckless with the words of great men of the past, and reckless about their attacks on the Lord’s church, the only church they ever criticize. It is obvious that they are trying to please the world and give them some religion, but not much. When God’s people preach the pure gospel to the world, they tell them what they **MUST DO** to be saved (Acts 16:30-82). On the other hand, the world has told the protestant denominations how little they will put up with in the way of requirements and the denominations have long preached that little, and no more. This is exactly where the liberals are today. They are no better than the world and if they were required to give one reason why people should be a member of their “church of Christ” instead of a sect, I doubt that one in ten could or would even try. That is not outliving the world because it offers nothing better than the generally religious world. The Lord’s gospel is in the Lord’s church, the vessels that make up His church (2 Cor. 4:7), and no sectarian knows it. If he did, he would not be a sectarian (Rom. 1:16). Brother, that is a difference we can all appreciate.

IN THEIR SOCIAL LIVES

Sin comes with a price tag, and it is a high one. It also comes wrapped up in a neat package like a Christmas present. Inside, the price tag has been removed. Make no mistake about it, those who follow the ways of this world will pay a price even in life. Take a

look at the three most popular ways of living; alcoholic beverage consumption, fornication and just plain rough and tough living.

The Bible warns us what will happen if we imbibe alcoholic beverages in Proverbs 23:29-35:

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter per verse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou may, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not, when shall I awake? I will seek it yet it yet again.

This graphic picture of a drunk holds little promise of pleasure. It is a description of pain, sorrow, fighting, stupidity, physical injury, fornication, sickness and addiction. The world thinks drinking is a socially acceptable practice. No Christian will have anything to do with it. It is used as an excuse for murder, rape, theft and every criminal activity imaginable.

More people are thinking twice about fornication these days, but AIDS has scarcely slowed it down. We hear a lot of talk about “safe sex” these days. The Bible gave the only “safe sex” practice nearly two thousand years ago: “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, [and AIDS] let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2). Christians cannot join many social efforts to eliminate AIDS because they do not have abstinence as a possible solution. In the 1950s, Ed Sullivan would not show Elvis Presley’s lower body as he performed on stage because it violated the social morality of the day, but what do you suppose he would show today if he were still in business? We have, indeed, come a long way, but Christians must live better than that.

It is “cool” to be a macho man. That in what people call them now. In a day gone by, they were “red necks,” “wild men,” “good ol’ boys” and “tough necks.” Then they turned into “thugs.” They were the people who chose to fight, curse, chow and spit, dip and spit and smoke and choke. It in disgusting to see young men in the

Lord's church on the same road. All of this in the name of being a man! Is it not a pity that ignorance is not painful?

The world loves these three sinful ways of life. They think it strange that Christians will not run with them in these excesses (1 Pet. 4:4). Some of them do! That is why so many congregations are not impressing the world and converting sinners. We need a good dose of reality.

Nothing has ruined more homes and more lives than alcohol. The statistics prove it to be true. The young man or woman who wants to have a good home free from divorce and nurtured in peace and comfort can forget it if alcohol has a place in it. Sickness and disease stalk every person who chooses to imbibe the poison. The bars of prison will be a part of the future of a large percentage of drinkers who would have never imagined they would be capable of doing anything so serious as to send them there. Others will die on the highway in a tangled mass of steel, blood and liquor. Can you imagine a Christian in any such situation? If we do not want to die that way, we had better not live that way.

Immorality causes diseases that affect the quality and length of life of the guilty and the innocent. Just one act can cause a fatal disease five or ten years afterward. Plans for happiness in a home of our own can go down the drain in a moment's time. Shame will stalk the fornicator in the night and disturb his sleep, and it is all guaranteed, not just a possibility.

The rough neck who thinks he must chow, dip and smoke had better get ready for lung cancer, lip cancer, jaw cancer and a painful death, because one out of every four will die of the dreaded disease. I have watched men waste away to no more than 90 pounds, have everything they can spare cut out of their throats (including their tongues), lose their minds and turn yellow all over before they die. All of this because of tobacco. Every time I see a young man chewing, dipping or puffing I know he is an ignoramus at best. But he has to be a "macho man" and macho men use tobacco! Lord, forgive us of our idiots we have not been able to convert!

Rough necks tend to be sick, beat up, penniless, homeless, divorced and married to an old girl as rough as they are, who gives

them a house full of kids just as mean as both of them. They are the ones who think that hell is here on earth and the whole world is just one big pain. However, this is the life! This is “gusto.” This is the world, and Christians had better learn it is the pits.

In spite of these warnings, the evidence shows that more and more of our young men in the church are choosing to travel this miserable road. They start out with mischief and pranks. They think it is funny and that it impresses their friends when they disrupt classes in church and school. They find little ways to irritate their parents, agitate the preacher and frustrate their teachers. Then, they turn to delinquency. Now they find out that they can be rewarded for meanness. Most of the reward is in the esteem of their peers, but it does not stop there. Stealing, they, soon learn, is easier than working. By now, the whole world hi against them anyway (so they think) and all they ever get in a hassle. They irritate the law, agitate the church and frustrate the Lord. Then they move on to the big league. Their passions and appetites are insatiable (2 Pet. 2:14). They cannot cease from sin. They irritate everybody, agitate society and frustrate themselves.

Sinners learn before long that sin is not smart. Last week, I heard about some youths in another city who passed by a house and fired several shots at random into it. They had no good reason. A lady was seriously injured. An investigating policeman said, “What good did it do them? It did not put money into their pockets. All it is good for is a cell in prison, because that is where they are headed some day.” How right he was! “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Pro. 14:34). Sin in shameful and no Christian should ever be shamed out of condemning it. All of us must live above this kind of life, and God demands it.

IN THE WAY THEY COME TO DIE

Those who live the way the world does come to a bitter end. They may live as if God does not matter and the possibility of life after death is a myth, but facing death has a sobering effect. Worldly people have poor funerals. I have found four reasons why this is true. (1) Death is a mystery. We fear the unknown and neither saint nor sinner knows by empirical evidence what is on the other side.

(2) Worldly people dread leaving what they have accumulated here as well as their family and friends. (3) Those who are of the world have placed all they have in it. When the world is gone, for they must leave it, everything is lost. (4) While most people scoff at the idea of being prepared to die and a few think living it up to the hilt is the only preparation they need, most face a cold grave with, “What if?”

Christians face death with many uncertainties, but they die much better than the world. (1) Faith lifts the veil on the mystery for a Christian. Paul said,

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:19-21).

We still do not have empirical knowledge, and so a measure of the unknown exists, but our fears disappear in proportion to our faith in the resurrection. (2) Faith heals the sorrow of a Christian in losing a loved one, for Paul said, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 The. 4:13). Christians hurt just as others when death comes, but it is not “as others.” They die better. (3) Faith turns a loss into gain. We give up one world, which we used properly, to gain another. We grieve no more for the loss of this world than we would grieve over the exchange of money for a pearl of great price or a treasure hid in a field. In a word picture of that very exchange John wrote, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. 12:11). (4) Faith means we are prepared. This preparation is what the Lord had in mind when He said, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whomever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25-26)? Now we know that the world is lost John said that the whole world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19). If a man does not live by faith, he will not die very well. The saddest funerals I have ever attended or in which I have ever had a part, were not those of unbelievers, but those of believers who left the church. Of them the

Lord warned, “And that servant, which know his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes” (Luke 12:47). So, Solomon said the conclusion of the whole matter, or the bottom fine, is to obey God out of fear (respect). Given the consequences of a life spent in riot it is truly the case that those who live by faith receive a hundred fold here and eternal life in the after while.

CONCLUSION

It takes a lot of strong convictions to outlive the world. Evidence of that fact may be adduced from the many lives of those among us who have surrendered. There was a time when the world could not beat the convictions out of God’s people (Acts 5:40). There was a time when the world could not burn the convictions out of God’s people (Dan. 3). There was a time when the world could not bribe the convictions of God’s people (Heb. 11:24-26). And there was a time when no amount of worldly education could shame the convictions out of God’s people (2 Tim. 4:10).

Quitting was not even a consideration for the people of God at one time. They faced trials and death with courage. They knew they would win and said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi. 4:13). They knew God cared for them, and that He had said so when He had Peter to write, “Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7). They knew they belonged to God and their faithfulness to Him gave them boldness to say, “If God be for us, who can be against us” (Rom. 8:31). They knew others would quit if they quit. They were constantly reminded, “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself” (Rom. 14:7). They lived right, died right and took an many with them as they could. May it ever be so among us.

WE COUNT THEM HAPPY WHICH ENDURE

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The title is taken from a quotation in the book of James (5:11). It is set in the context of difficulty. There is no doubt as to the fact that many were undergoing major difficulties. It was not easy for these to live as they ought to live, but it has never been easy to do the will of God in the midst of an ungodly world. We are apt to think sometimes that our situation is so unique that no other people have been called upon to face the pressures and difficulties we have to face. This passage from the book of James will show us that such is not the case. There have been, and will continue to be, men and women who have to overcome obstacles that stand in the way.

James has addressed the matter of trials already in this epistle. He does not try to avoid the topic any more than our Lord. In fact, you will find that Jesus would often tell His disciples what they would have to face. One does not read very far into the sermon on the mountain before he comes face to face with the difficulties they would have to face. Listen to what He had to say.

Blessed are they, which are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs in the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you,

and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake (Mat. 5: 10-11).

He goes on to say, “for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Mat. 5:12). You will notice that in these three verses, our Lord would use the word for “persecution” three times. He knew that His disciples would be belittled, they would be beaten, and they would be placed in bondage, but in no case does Jesus endorse the idea that such afflictions would allow them an excuse to give up, give in, or give over to the forces of evil. You will also find, at a later date, that Jesus would go on to say that some would kill them (John 16:2). This is the kind of teaching you will have in the book of James. He will talk about affliction and trials. He will talk about the pressures and perils his brethren would have to face. Look at some of the instances in which he will discuss such. “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (Jam. 1:2). He will later say, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (Jam. 1:12). He would urge them to take for example the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord (Jam. 5:10). So, we can see that neither Jesus or James would try to avoid the fact that difficulties, accompany the efforts to do the will of God.

We propose to develop this topic in the following manner. We will look first at the examples set forth in the passage. We will look next at the endurance of those who are to be taken as examples. Then, we propose to look at our estimate of them. This would seem to be the logical way to approach the matter as it is laid out before us in the Bible.

OUR EXAMPLES

This is surely seen in the term, “them.” It is said, “We count them happy.” What is the antecedent to the pronoun? In this case, it would be the prophets of the preceding verse. Here he says, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience” (Jam. 5:10). So, the examples we are to use would be those men who have spoken the word of the Lord and have had to pay a price for doing so. These are

seen as people who had a great deal to endure but at the “me time they were faithful to the task that belonged to them

This is surely similar to the method employed by our Lord. Listen to what He had to say,

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Mat. 5:11-12).

Jesus used the example of the prophets. Such would assume the acceptance of the Old Testament record.

This is the same sort of approach that was used by the writer of the Hebrews letter. He wrote to people who faced great difficulty. He would use one case after another to inspire these people to be faithful. Take, for example, the case of Moses. Notice, “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). He would go on to say that time would fail him to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, David and the prophets. These are seen as people who had to endure a number of very difficult things (Heb. 11:32-39).

Besides all of this, one could surely see Jesus as an example of one who endured trials and difficulties. Is this not what the Hebrews writer referred to when he said, “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself” (Heb. 12:3)? He had just spoken of the fact that He “endured the cross” (Heb. 12:2). So, the endurance of our Lord surely becomes an example to us.

One can add to this list a number of instances in the New Testament; i.e., such men as Stephen. He was one who faced a storm of opposition (Acts 7).

THEIR ENDURANCE

James does not discount the fact that they “endured.” He used the word, “endure” (Jam. 5:11), but what does this mean? What does the writer have in mind? W. E. Vines says of this word. “to abide under, to bear up courageously [under suffering].” This word is sometimes translated “patient” If you will notice the context of James’ usage of the word “endure,” you will see that he will use the word “patience” in speaking of Job. Notice that he said, “Ye have heard of the

patience of Job” (Jam. 5:11). You will also find that patience and endurance are allied together. The Hebrews writer described the life of Abraham in this way: “And so, after he had patiently endured” (Heb. 6:15). When all things have been considered, you will find that this means more than just putting up with a matter in a passive state. It means one will show that one is steadfast in his faith while suffering those things that make it more difficult to do the will of God. The picture would be of those who held on to their faith in spite of the opposition to such. They did not give in to the opposition and antagonism of their day.

We would do well to stop and take a look at what they endured. We can surely see some of the things our Lord endured. Surely this would be an example for us. What do we find many of these Old and New Testament worthies facing? When we see what these endured and how they reacted, we will learn some valuable lessons.

Take a look at some things our Lord endured. Did He not face derogatory criticism? Were men always complimentary of Him? Did they not say; “Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber” (Mat. 11:19)? Would you think of this as a compliment? There were some who accused Him of being in league with the devil (Mat. 12:24). You will also find the Hebrews writer saying:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the crow, despising the shame, and in set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself (Heb. 12:2-3).

One could go on and on enumerating the things our Lord encountered. None of these were easy, but our Lord was not exempt from suffering and difficulty. This is one of the lessons that He often kept before the disciples. He wanted them to know that if He faced such a storm of opposition, they could expect the same.

But why would Jesus have to suffer the things which He did? Why would any of the children of God have to face these ordeals of life? You will often see from the reasons given by the Lord or an inspired writer. This is the reason He would say: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18). Jesus would go on to tell them why the world would hate them, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye

are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:19). So, these would know what to expect from the world and they would also know why such would come upon them. They need not be surprised to find that which was difficult facing them. As long as they sought to do the will of God, they could expect the same thing Jesus had to face. They would certainly know why they would have to endure these things.

The apostle Peter was a man who faced some of the things that one is called upon to endure as a child of God. We know that he confronted some great difficulty prior to writing his first epistle. He said, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Pet. 4:12). Peter knew what it was to face difficulty and he could tell you why much of this would occur. That is the reason that he will emphasize the fact: “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet. 4:16). Peter and the other apostles had suffered as Christians. If you will look at one instance in his life, you will see such to be the case. There was a time when they were preaching the gospel in the city of Jerusalem. They were confronted by religious rulers in the city. They were told, “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18). These men refused to bow to this dictate. You know that this later caused them to be placed in prison (Acts 5:18). They were later released but then taken again and brought before the council. After much discussion, you will find that these good men were beaten and released. There was absolutely no doubt about why they were being mistreated. It was because they were God’s children and it was because they preached the Word of the Lord, but these men had no other choice. They had been told by the Lord to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:16). They had also been told by the angel that released them from prison to “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:20). So, their duty was clear. They would know why they were suffering. It is against this kind of background that Peter would know that those to whom he wrote would also have to face the same sort of thing.

Do we not know why Moses faced the ordeals of his life? Listen to what the Hebrews writer has to say about this matter. He tells us that it was: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:24-25). He would take the reproach that came with such a choice and endure as seeing him who is invisible (Heb. 11:27). Now, why would he have to endure the difficulties that came with this choice? The answer to that would seem very simple. When he cast his lot with the people of God, he also shared their fate. He placed himself on the other side from those who were idolaters in the land of Egypt. When he did this, he must accept the hurts and hardships that come with such a choice. We know that the Hebrews writer had no difficulty in assigning the reason why he would suffer. The Hebrews writer could tell you, exactly why he faced the reproach of Christ, why he faced the wrath of the king, and why he would have to suffer affliction. It would be because of the unpopular choice he made.

Take the cases of suffering you find listed in the life of Paul. You will find him referring to these time and again. You will remember that long list of things he faced when he wrote to his Corinthian brethren. He would remind them that he suffered:

stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep (2 Cor. 11:23-25).

This does not exhaust the list by any means but it will tell us that this good man had to suffer a number of things. But we stop to ask the question, “Why?” What is the answer? Paul could see Satan behind some of his suffering, he could see some of the agents of Satan involved, he would tell you that some came upon him because of false brethren. Surely, the opposition of the Judaizing teachers would not go without notice. These people were the prime cause of his being jailed for the later part of his life. Yes, Paul knew a great deal about the why of his suffering but he would never surrender.

Jesus told His disciples of the reasons why they would have to suffer. Go back to the sermon He preached while on the mountain.

There you will find Him saying, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Mat. 5:10). The reason for the suffering is clearly spelled out. It is because they will follow the path of righteousness, but this should not come as a surprise to them for they surely had biblical precedence for such. Take, for example, the case of Daniel in far off Babylon. There is absolutely no question but that Daniel wanted to do the right thing. You will recall the presidents and princes were jealous of Daniel and said: “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God” (Dan. 6:5). These men knew that Daniel would do what God ordained that he should do. They know he was committed to a course of righteousness. It is at that point that they would seek to make it difficult for Daniel to pray. Thus, the decree that none could make a petition to any except the king for thirty days (Dan. 6:7). In spite of the decree, it is said:

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime (Dan. 6:10).

You know the rest of the story. He was cast into the den of lions (Dan. 6:16). Why does he have to spend that night in the lion’s den? Was this not for righteousness’ sake? Was this not because he would not waver from the righteous principles that governed his life?

OUR ESTIMATE OF THEM

We come now to reflect upon those who have endured a great trial of affliction. How do we estimate them? James would remind us that “We count them happy which endure” (Jam. 5:11). That sounds like a contradiction. How can we see one suffer and at the same time consider this to be a blessed or happy event? We know that many folks have had difficulty seeing any good that can come out of difficulty. We have a graphic case of this in the Old Testament. The psalmist shows us a man who had difficulty seeing any good in being a child of God when the righteous would have to suffer and then those who were not His children seemed to have no problems at all. He says, “They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men” (Psa. 73:5). It is at that point that one would find it hard

to say, “We count them happy,” but we need to note that this phrase is not talking about the fact that we count them happy because they suffer.

What this is saying is—we count them happy because they endure the suffering and are still faithful as the children of God. These are the blessed people.

We would not think for a moment that James would tell us to think Job should be happy just because he suffered (Jam. 5:11), but we surely count him blessed because of the fact that he endured the suffering and did not give up. We are thankful that we can read the last chapter of Job and see the end of the matter. When we come to the last chapter of this book, we find him praying for his friends and God accepted him (Job 42:9). God gave him twice as much as he had before the ordeal of chapter one began. Yes, the struggle had been long and he had endured hardships and heartaches. But we count him blessed because he, was steadfast to the end.

When we look at all the perils, privations, and problems through which Paul passed, we would not say he looked as if he was a man who was blessed. But, when we come to read the final chapter of his life, we can indeed say, “We would count him as blessed.” Remember the letter that he writes to Timothy. He in coming to the close of a very eventful and trouble filled life. He has faced numerous difficulties. Some of his associates have left him. Demas was one who did not endure (2 Tim. 4:10), but Paul came to the end saying.

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

We count them happy which have endured. Paul would have to be in that number. He is writing this letter from a dungeon and talking about going home to be with the Lord. If that sort of man is not blessed, I would fail to see who would be such a man. Yes, we can say, “We count them happy which endure.” This would be true in Paul’s case and in a number of others.

GOD'S FAITHFUL ARE FORGIVEN AND FORGIVING

Dub McClish



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INTRODUCTION

If asked to list ten of the most desirable and admirable human traits, likely even hardened sinners would list a willingness to forgive near the top. It is without dispute a mark of maturity and compassion at every level of society, including the home, the business world, the neighborhood, among nations, and certainly, in the church. It is one of three kindred traits that are far too seldom seen: giving, thanksgiving and forgiving. Usually, where one is found the others are not far removed.

There are two principal words in the Greek Now Testament that are translated “forgive” in the ASV. (1) *Aphemi*, meaning literally to send away or to cancel a debt, and figuratively, to cancel the guilt and punishment due because of sin. Jesus used this word in addressing the man in Capernaum, who was crippled with palsy: “Son, be of good cheer; thy sine are forgiven” (Mat. 9:2). (2) *Charizomai*, meaning literally to bestow a gift or favor. It is used in reference to God’s forgiveness of us: “And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumci-

sion of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses" (Col. 2:13). It is also used to refer to the forgiveness that we should have for each other. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). We may summarize these definitions by saying forgiveness means that we cease trying to punish our offender because we have cancelled his or her guilt toward us. This is a gift we give to him or her.

GOD LEADS THE WAY IN FORGIVENESS

"We love, because he first loved us," John wrote (1 John 4:19). I understand John to be saying God teaches us how to love others (both God and men) by His own generous love manifested toward us (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; et al.). We would not know the meaning of love apart from God's demonstration of it. His ultimate and incomprehensible love must ever be the standard by which all love is measured. So it is with forgiveness. We would not know the real meaning of forgiveness were it not for God's demonstration of it to sinful mankind.

This involves the *desire* to forgive, which relates to a merciful and gracious attitude toward rebellious men. This can be seen in the hint of hope in God's words to the serpent just outside of Eden: "He [the seed of woman] shall bruise thy head" (Gen. 3:15). When God promised Abram, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18), He was referring to His plan of forgiveness to be offered mankind through His Son, the Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). "Remission of sins" (i.e., forgiveness of sins [Acts 2:38]) is "the promise" of God to which Peter referred on Pentecost: "For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him" (Acts 2:39). It is in my judgment that this reaches all the way back to God's promise to Abram to blow all the nations through his seed.

There is not only the desire, but the *readiness* of God to forgive. This trait of God has ever been recognized by His faithful servants. Moses proclaimed of God and to God, upon the making of the second set of done tablets in Sinai, "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exo. 34:6-7). Nehemiah said of God, "But thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lov-

ingkindness” (Neh. 9:17). David extolled God, saying, “For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness unto all them that call upon thee” (Psa. 86:5).

God’s desire and willingness to forgive resulted in His plan for our forgiveness. Men, separated from God by sin (Isa. 59:1-2), could do nothing to effect their own forgiveness. There was not enough treasure in all the world to buy it, None could be good enough to earn it. They had no means whereby they could place God under obligation to grant it. Yet, men deserved to die and were under the condemnation of death without it (Rom. 6:23; 8:2). God sent His Son into the world to die in the place of sinful men, offering His spotless and pure blood for them and in their stead (Heb. 9:11-14, 26). A function of the new covenant which Jeremiah prophesied and which Christ ratified with His blood was that God would “be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more” (Heb. 8:12).

Is God’s forgiveness bestowed unconditionally and automatically upon sinful men because of Christ’s atoning death? If so, all men will be forgiven and saved at last in spite of what they believe and how they live; in fact, in spite of themselves. If so, the atheist who blasphemes God with his dying breath has the same everlasting spiritual hope as the most devoted believer. This is the philosophy of Universalism. It is manifestly false on several grounds, but only one is sufficient to expose it: it is contrary to the teaching of Scripture! Many will be lost, compared to only a few who will be saved and not even all believers will be saved (Mat. 7:13-14; 21-23). The entire gist of Scripture contradicts the philosophy of Universalism.

If men are not saved universally, then what distinguishes between those whom God will forgive and those whom He will not? Is He capricious, forgiving one and not forgiving another on some sort of impulse? The Scriptures answer with a strong negative: “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34; cf., Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Col. 3:25; et al.). If forgiveness/salvation is not universal and God is not capricious, we are left with but one conclusion: forgiveness of God is *conditional*. That is, there are certain conditions upon which God freely and graciously justifies men. Those who comply with His conditions are pardoned and counted innocent as though they had not sinned; those who fail to comply with His conditions will not (and cannot) be pardoned and will be eternally lost.

Forgiveness of the sinner who has never become God's child is granted upon the fulfillment of various conditions, according to the New Testament. One must believe with the heart and confess that faith with the mouth in order to be saved/forgiven (Rom. 10:10). However, the people in Jerusalem were told by the apostles on Pentecost to "repent...and be immersed...unto the remission" of their sins (Acts 2:38). In these two passages, the apostles in Jerusalem did not give one set of conditions while Paul gave another. Correct exegesis combines them to learn God's plan for man's forgiveness of "alien" sins. A grave, yea, a soul-damning, mistake is made by those who isolate only one or two of the Christ-given conditions for forgiveness and ignore the rest. It is manifest from these two passages and borne out in numerous others that God requires men to: (1) believe in His Son and the saving efficacy of His blood; (2) repent of (i.e., change his mind and his behavior concerning) his sins; (3) verbally confess his faith in the crucified, resurrected Christ; and, (4) be baptized in water for the forgiveness of his sins. God promises to forgive those who follow this Divinelyrevealed and ordained prescription, not on their merits or actions, but upon the merits of the blood of Christ, poured out on their behalf. At the same time and upon the same conditions one is: (1) spiritually born into the family of God (John 3:5) because he has become a child of God; and, (2) is added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:41,47), God's people who have been called out of the world by the gospel (2 The. 2:14). Those who refuse or neglect these conditions remain in their sins which will separate them from God eternally (2 The. 1:8-9).

However, one does not become sinlessly perfect, strive as he may for this goal, upon becoming a child of God. In fact, to claim sinlessness is to be guilty of the sin of lying (1 John 1:8-10). Therefore, as children of God, we stand in need of God's forgiveness from time to time. God, in His grace, has made provision for our forgiveness also. We must repent of and confess our sins and pray that God will forgive us (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9), upon which, He has promised to do so.

There is no greater joy that one could have than to know that the Creator and Ruler of the universe whom we have offended has forgiven us. It is not meaningless or merely incidental writing when we read that the pentecostians, "gladly received his word" (Acts 2:41, KJV), and that the Ethiopian, "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39), and the

jailor in Philippi, “rejoiced greatly” upon their obedience to the gospel plan of salvation (Acts 16:34).

It is a “blessed assurance” that we can be forgiven of God and that when we comply with His conditions of forgiveness, He bestows His gracious forgiveness upon us. Several statements of Scripture provide the basis of this assurance.

1. God loved us so much He gave His only begotten Son to save those who believe (John 3:16). He will not let the blood of His Son be wasted by failing in His promise to the faithful.

2. Concerning His promises and our redemption at last, Paul declared, “God is faithful” (1 Cor. 1:9).

3. Paul wrote. “Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:11-12).

4 God will not forget our work and the love which we show toward His name (Heb. 6:10).

5. God has “sworn with an oath” that we may “lay hold of the hope set before us” and in this (as in all things) “it is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18).

6. Paul exhorted. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23).

Although God has given us every assurance in His Word that He forgives when we comply with His will, sometimes men and women still are reluctant to forgive themselves. While we should not be easier on ourselves than God is, neither should we be harder on ourselves than He is. There is no reason whatsoever to allow a sin which has been repented of and cleansed by the blood of Christ to continue to haunt one with guilt. Paul is a great teacher here. He obviously never completely forgot his sinful behavior of persecuting Christians; even years after he obeyed the gospel he referred to himself as the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). However, he did not drown himself in feelings of guilt and remain preoccupied with those events, as terrible as they were. It is possible that he had such things at least partly in mind when he wrote that he forgot “the things which are behind” as he pressed on “toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi. 3:13-14). He knew that he had done what God commanded in order to be forgiven and he forgave himself. Thus he was able to

apply all of his energies to the present and the future, rather than futilely worrying about the past. We see a similar pattern in David.

THE FORGIVEN MUST FORGIVE

Forgiveness is not only a beautiful and admirable trait, it is an obligatory trait for Christians. There are several reasons why we must practice forgiveness of others.

1. Christ commanded it: "And whosoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one" (Mark 11:25a).

2. In order to continue to be forgiven of God. In the last part of Mark 11:25, after telling us to forgive others, the Lord said, "that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." The pictures of full forgiveness and failure to forgive are placed side by side in stark contrast in the parable of the unmerciful servant (Mat. 18:24-36). First, a king forgave one of his servants an amount that he could never hope to pay, upon his plea for mercy. The servant then found a man who owed him an insignificant sum and who begged for pity of him as he had begged of the king. However, the forgiven man proved himself an unforgiving man and has his debtor thrown into prison. When servants of the king reported these things to him, the king called the man he had forgiven and severely chastised him for showing no mercy so soon after receiving much mercy. He then reinstated his huge debt and delivered him to be tormented till he should pay it. The Christ then tells us God will do as the king in the parable if we, who have been forgiven so much, refuse to forgive others. The same truth is taught at the conclusion of the Lord's model prayer (Mat. 6:14-15). Someone has well said: "When we refuse to forgive we destroy the bridge over which we must pass in order to be forgiven."

3. We have been forgiven. First, as Christians, we have been forgiven by God. Paul argues from this very basis that we must forgive each other. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). Not only have all of us been forgiven of God, but all of us have been forgiven by others from time to time. All of us have committed blunders, sinned against others, and have stood in need of forgiveness which we have received.

4. The "Golden Rule" demands it. We all want others to be ready to forgive us when we stumble, offend, or sin in some way. This, therefore, is the way we should behave toward others, because Jesus

taught “All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them” (Mat. 7:12).

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT FORGIVENESS

How Often Are We to Forgive Each Other?

If someone sins against me, repents and asks for and receives forgiveness, repeats the sin, and asks for forgiveness again, how many times should I forgive him? Peter once asked this question and suggested what he must have thought to be a generous answer “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?” (Mat. 18:21). The Lord’s answer must have startled Peter “I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven” (Mat. 18:22). It is rather obvious that He did not mean four hundred ninety times was to be the literal limit and after that we could refuse to forgive. Rather, He was teaching we should not keep count, but that we should keep on forgiving.

In a similar passage the Lord teaches: “And if he [thy brother] sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:4). The lesson should be clear beyond misunderstanding: we are not to be sparing or stingy with our forgiveness. Night or day, as long as we live, we must stand ready to forgive.

Must or Can We Forgive If the Offender Refuses to Repent?

God’s example of forgiveness answers, “No.” God’s Word constantly urges men in both the Old and the New Testaments to repent so that they may be forgiven. God sent His prophets to Israel and Judah generation after generation and the theme of them all was repentance. When they steadfastly refused and mistreated God’s prophets, He finally brought destruction upon both of those nations of His people. I am not aware of a single case in all of the Bible where God ever promised or extended forgiveness apart from repentance (which in its fullness includes recognition and confession of the sin, regretting the sin, doing all one can to correct the wrong done, and ceasing the practice of it). Men have always had only two alternatives: Repent or perish (Luke 13:3)! (This is not to imply that repentance is the only condition of forgiveness in every circumstance, but it is simply to illustrate that at the very least repentance has always been required by

Him). God does not forgive unconditionally, as we have already emphasized, and forgiveness has always required man's repentance. Paul told the Athenians, "He [God] commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30).

The teaching of our Lord also answers, "No." Jesus said, "If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if **he repent**, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and **seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent**, thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3-4). Twice in this passage Jesus emphasizes our duty to forgive offenders, but also, twice He emphasizes that our forgiveness is dependent upon the repentance of the offender.

There are those who have suggested that Christ implied God bestowed forgiveness upon His impenitent crucifiers when He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). However, this could not be so for at least three reasons. (1) It places Christ in the position of asking His Father to contradict His immutable will which requires repentance of the sinner. (2) It places Christ in the position of contradicting Himself (Luke 13:3; 17:3-4). (3) It makes the apostles' words on Pentecost to the crucifiers of Christ superfluous at best and ridiculous at worst. Clearly, the apostles were addressing those responsible for the Lord's crucifixion (Acts 2:22-23). They were told by the twelve, "Repent ye, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). If God instantaneously granted the Lord's prayer on the cross for the forgiveness of these people short of repentance, then they did not need to repent because they had already received the remission of sins some fifty days before! The fact that they were told to repent and be baptized in order to receive forgiveness on Pentecost is positive proof that they were not immediately forgiven when Jesus prayed for their forgiveness. What we are to understand from Jesus' prayer on the cross, therefore, is that His crucifiers would be granted the opportunity to repent so that they could be forgiven, which in exactly what Pentecost provided. We are to understand the dying prayer of Stephen in the same way (Acts 7:60). At least one among those who encouraged his death (Saul of Tarsus) would subsequently hear and obey the gospel and have his sins washed away in the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16).

It is manifestly impossible for God to forgive those who sin against Him before they repent. Surely, none would argue that mere men must do that which God cannot do!

How Are We to Treat an Offender Who Will Not Repent?

How does God treat impenitent sinners? He is longsuffering, so much so that He delays the sending of His Son in the desire that none should perish, but that all should repent (2 Pet. 3:9). He goes on blessing even those who curse Him with blessings of His physical universe: “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust” (Mat. 5:45). God extends kindness and goodness in an effort to bring men to repentance (Rom. 2:4). It is evident that God goes on doing good to His enemies, those who are sinning against Him, in hopes that their hearts may be softened and that they will repent. Jesus evinced the same spirit through His trials so that Peter could write of Him, “When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not” (1 Pet. 2:23). Even on the cross, as already discussed, He did not curse His crucifiers, but He prayed for them, seeking their good. God and His Son are ever seeking and hoping for repentance in men so that they can extend forgiveness.

We are likewise taught to love our enemies, to pray for our persecutors, and to bless those who curse us that we may be like our Heavenly Father (Mat. 5:44; Luke 6:27-28). The response of our fleshly lusts to those who offend us is usually far short of this. Our reaction is often one of revenge, of seeking to inflict injury for injury, or, at the very least, we want to stop speaking to the offender. However, such treatment of those who sin against us is not after the example of our Father in Heaven and His Son. It is not our place to avenge ourselves of wrong done against us (Rom. 12:17, 19-20). With Paul, being reviled, we are to bless rather than revile in return (1 Cor. 4:12). It is one of the most difficult of all things for us to do, and it is far easier to preach it than to practice it; but we are to exercise a benevolent and helpful spirit toward those who sin against us, standing always ready to forgive when repentance has been manifested.

How Should We Forgive When Penitence Is Forthcoming?

Again, God is our example. How does He forgive? How is His forgiveness described? David wrote, “As far as the east is from the west So far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psa. 103:12). Peter

told the people in Jerusalem: "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). God completely forgives, forgives fully from the heart, nurturing no malice, holding no grudge that is quick to recall the wrong done and to seek vengeance for it. Likewise, when someone has sought our forgiveness upon due and genuine repentance, we must grant it fully and freely, just as we beseech God to forgive us when we sin.

Sometimes we hear the expression, "When God forgives, He forgets," and this is used to indicate how God forgives and therefore how we should forgive. While there is a measure of truth in this statement, it is not altogether true in my judgment. True, Jeremiah said that the new covenant God would give would be characterized by the following from God. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (Jer. 31:34). However, the lack of remembrance here relates directly to the release from guilt once possessed by the sinner rather than to literal forgetfulness of the sinful act itself. Nathan told David concerning his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, "Jehovah also hath put away thy sin" (2 Sam. 12:13). However, several years later, in the reign of David's grandson Abijam, God had still not utterly forgotten those sinful acts of David. He had the writer of 1 Kings remind the reader of David's sin pertaining to Uriah (1 Kin. 15:5). Obviously, the sin had been forgiven by God, but not completely forgotten. While Peter's denials of Christ were forgiven, years afterward the writers of the gospel accounts were inspired to record them, showing that God had not erased those sad events from His memory.

Some people have been led to believe that unless they erase every memory of a wrong done to them they have not forgiven it. However, even God does not utterly forget the deed itself when He forgives. The significance of forgiveness is not in whether or not we remember a wrong done for which the doer has repented, but whether or not we give the gift of cancelling the guilt of the doer and cease to hold the feeling that he must be punished for his offense.

BLESSINGS OF FORGIVENESS

As in all other things God requires of us, there are blessings in practicing forgiveness. (1) We have already noticed that we are able to receive forgiveness of God only if we are willing to extend forgiveness to others. (2) Another blessing we receive when we forgive is the

release of negative emotions and attitudes that can poison our souls. Such things as bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, railing, and malice possess the heart of one who is unwilling to forgive (Eph. 4:31-32); (3) It is a blessing to the offender when he knows that he has been genuinely forgiven. None of us enjoys living under a cloud of guilt and blame, whether from God or men. (4) If all brethren would practice what God's Word teaches on forgiveness, it would restore or prevent the division of countless homes and congregations and would restore harmony and peace to countless others that have been sundered.

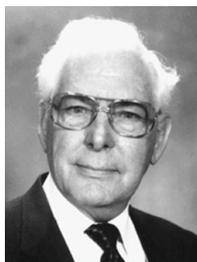
CONCLUSION

News reports are full of tragedies every day that never would have occurred had men and women possessed a willingness to forgive. Even this very day, it is safe to announce that murders will be committed, crimes against property will be perpetrated, homes will be broken up, friend ships will be severed, and churches will be divided, all for lack of the practice of forgiveness. There are wonderful examples of the spirit of forgiveness in such men as Joseph toward his brothers and of David toward Saul. However, the greatest example of all will forever remain the forgiveness God extends to our sin-cursed world through His Only Begotten Son.

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HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT INFLUENCE CHRISTIAN LIVING?

H. A. (Buster) Dobbs



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Buster is a debater and writer. He is Editor of the *Firm Foundation* and is giving full-time to speaking at lectureships, gospel meetings, writing and working with congregations that have special needs (problems).

The purpose of this study is to describe what the Bible says about how the Holy Spirit works in the life of the child of God today. As background, we must set out some preliminary observations.

The Holy Spirit is God. God is all-knowing, everywhere present, all-powerful, and limitless in every characteristic. One passage that shows plainly the deity of the Holy Spirit is found in the book of Acts. In the early Jerusalem church were brother Ananias and his wife, sister Sapphira. Many members of the church sold what they owned and gave the money to support the programs and plans of the church. Ananias and Sapphira, seeing this, sold a property and secretly agreed between them to keep part of the money for their personal pleasure. They gave the balance to the church, pretending to be giving the total proceeds to the church. They were caught in their deception. The apostle Simon Peter said to Ananias, "Why hath

Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?” (Acts 5:3). Peter rebuked Ananias for his unnecessary trickery and said. “Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:4). The matter is clear. When Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, he lied to God. Consequently, the Holy Spirit is God. No other conclusion is possible. Three beings inhabit eternity and possess the God nature—Jehovah, Jesus, and the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, The Holy Spirit is limitless. He is holy. He is spirit. He knows everything. He is infinitely able. He participates in the God nature in the same way Jehovah and Jesus have the God essence.

Another introductory consideration is that the Holy Spirit acts in different ways and different manner. He dealt with the apostles in one manner, with certain first century disciples in another manner, and with all the saved in a third manner. We may think of this as different manifestations of the Spirit.

The apostles of Jesus were baptized with the Holy Spirit (Mat. 3:11; Acts 1:5). Each apostle of Jesus received all of the supernatural gifts the Spirit bestowed on the followers of Jesus. Paul mentions nine spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10). The apostles were the only ones in the early church to display in their lives all nine gifts of the Spirit. Paul says the signs of an apostle were evident in his work at Corinth (2 Cor. 12:12). He describes these signs as “wonders and mighty works.” They were peculiar to the apostles, or they could not have been the “signs of an apostle.”

The apostles had the power to impart to other saved people a miraculous gift of the Spirit. This could only be done by an apostle laying his hands on the person who was to receive the gift (Acts 8:18). The person so endowed would receive one spiritual gift listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-12. He had only one gift, while the apostles had all nine gifts. He could not pass a supernatural gift of the Spirit to others, but the apostles could do so. Those who received the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were required to work together to bring confirmed instruction to the people in the absence of an apostle and the written Word (1 Cor. 12:12-29). Only a few first century saints received these special spiritual gifts. Paul’s rhetorical questions in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30 document this.

The first century was the age of miracles and therefore the time for the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. When the New Covenant was fully revealed and confirmed, the miraculous ceased and the providential and ordinary continued. If supernatural gifts of the Spirit continued, then revelation would be progressive. There would be no such thing as the “once for all delivered” faith (Jude 3).

The purpose of the miraculous display of the Holy Spirit was to impart and ratify saving truth (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 14:6). Today we have a certified gospel. We are instructed in the conditions of salvation by the revealed Word. That same Word edifies us. Today, we have neither apostles, nor people with supernatural gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of the tongues. Having served their purpose, the miraculous spiritual gifts were suspended. The written Word of God guides us today.

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT INFLUENCE CHRISTIAN LIVING?

The Holy Spirit lives in the child of God. “Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?” (1 Cor. 6:19). The fact the Holy Spirit is in the physical body of the saint is indisputable. No one denies that the Spirit is in the body of the believer. Question: “How does the Holy Spirit live in the body of the redeemed?” It is not a question of: “Does” the Spirit dwell in the saved? It is a question of: “How” does it occur?

The answer to the question is found in two parallel passages of Scripture, Paul tells the disciples to “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). He then says what the Spirit-filled-person should do: “speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).

In a parallel verse, Paul tells the disciple to, “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). He then describes what the word-filled-person should do: “in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God” (Col. 3:16).

One verse explains the other. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” is the same as “be filled with the Spirit.” It follows that

when the Word of Christ dwells in the believer he is “filled with the Spirit.” This explains how the Spirit is in the saint.

James admonishes us to, “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21). Jesus told of a sower scattering seed on various types of ground—hard, rocky, thorny, and good. He explained: “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). The different soils represent the way men hear God’s Word when it is scattered. The soils picture the differing conditions of human hearts. Good ground hearers are, “such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). They hear the Word. They hold it fast. They bring forth fruit. To be a good ground hearer one must hear, hold, and do. Hearing the Word and not holding and doing it is vain. Hearing and holding the Word but not doing it is of no value. The Word becomes an implanted Word when we receive it, cherish it, and obey it.

The revealed Word is the tool or medium by which the Spirit accomplishes His work among men. He dealt with the apostles and some supernaturally-endowed first century saints by speaking the Word to them directly, except in some miracles of healing or ruin. The Spirit lives in the believer today indirectly—through the written Word. The difference is that in one case the Word was spoken immediately to the person affected, and in the other case the written Word came immediately to the saved. In either case the Word is the agent. The Holy Spirit did not live directly in the apostles, nor does He live directly in us.

Still, for the Spirit to effect the changes he wants, we must be receptive to his instruction. If we hear, but do not hold and obey the Word, no change is produced. If we hear and hold the Word, but fail to submit to it, there is no conversion. Transformation happens when we hear, hold and obey the Word. This is how it becomes in us an implanted Word, which can save our souls. When the Word of Christ dwells in us richly, we are filled with the Spirit. The Spirit dwells in us through the Word.

Inspired Scripture makes the man of God complete.

Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That

the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

If the Bible reproves, corrects, instructs in righteousness, and makes us complete before God, what is left for the Holy Spirit to do apart from the Word? What is left for Jehovah and Jesus to do for no apart from the Word?

The gospel is God's saving power (Rom. 1:16). Everything God does to us, for us, and with us concerning our salvation, is done through His saving power

We come to faith by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17).

We are begotten through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15).

We are quickened by God's Word (Psa. 119:50).

We are born by the Word (1 Pet. 1:23).

We are saved by the Word (Jam. 1:21).

We are purified by the Word (1 Pet. 1:22).

We are sanctified by the Word (John 17:17).

We are to allow the Word to dwell in us richly (Col. 8:16).

We are comforted by the Word (1 The. 4:18).

We are raised from the tomb by the Word (John 5:29).

We are blameless before God by the Word (Acts 20:32).

We are made complete (perfect) in the night of God by the Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Word of God is sufficient and alone-sufficient to make us what God would have us to be. We do not need any extrabiblical influence to make us right in the might of God.

The Holy Spirit revealed the truth of the gospel and confirmed the message by signs and miracles. What the Word does for us, the Holy Spirit does for us because the Word is the agency of the Spirit. God's revealed Word tells us what kind of character we must have, what kind of work we must do, and what kind of attitude we must display. The Word encourages by the promise of heaven. Its threat of hell motivates us to think right and live right.

"The fruit of the Spirit in love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Spirit causes us to love God above all, and our fellow man as we love ourselves. He does this by telling us to exhibit such love in our lives. He commands it! Jesus said,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets (Mat. 22:37-40).

The Holy Spirit caused Matthew the publican to record in writing what Jesus commanded. The Spirit is responsible for giving us this information. Love is an explicit command of God.

Joy in a requirement of the gospel. We rejoice because of obeying a command (Phi. 4:4). Peace comes when we are reconciled to God. Obeying the Word reconciles us to God. The fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control is borne in our lives by the power of the Word rooted like a seed in the heart—“the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21).

The Holy Spirit is in the child of God, but not directly, immediately, and miraculously. He is in the child of God by means of the revealed Word. The Spirit dwells in the saint representatively.

The Scripture is specific in saying that both Jesus and Jehovah live in the redeemed. “Even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor. 6:16). Paul prayed, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:17). How do Jehovah and Jesus dwell in us? Is it a direct, immediate, literal dwelling? Do Jehovah and Jesus live in the physical bodies of the saved? If yes, and the Holy Spirit also is literally in our physical bodies, then “the fullness of the Godhead dwells in us bodily.”

If all three members of God are in the physical bodies of Christians, then we should fall down before each other and worship deity in us. I could even worship God in me.

Some are quick to explain that Jehovah is not actually in the body of the child of God. Jehovah, we are soberly told, is in us representatively. Paul wrote, “in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). Jehovah, we are

told, does not dwell in us immediately but through the Spirit. Jesus dwells in us through faith (Eph. 3:17). Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Jesus dwells in us figuratively—through faith that comes by the revealed Word.

The people who insist that Jehovah and Jesus live in us by medium also say the Comforter is in us really, truly, actually, immediately, directly, supernaturally, inexplicably, mysteriously, and incomprehensibly. We ask, How does God the Spirit live in us? Some answer, “We don’t know, but he does. We don’t know how our human spirit lives in us, but we believe the spirit is there and gives us life.” So, the answer is: The Holy Spirit lives in us incomprehensibly. We are in the dark on this question. The how of the Spirits dwelling in us is shrouded in mystery and wrapped up in an enigma. Then, we should go slow and keep our mouths shut.

The Bible makes it clear that the Holy Spirit lives in the child of God through the Word of God. Then, the manner of the indwelling is understandable and we can talk about it. The more we know and do the Word of God, the more spiritual we are. The more we are governed by the counsel of the Lord through his revealed will, the more the inward man—the spirit self—is vigorous and powerful. The key is the gospel, which is the power of God to save.

Our spiritual diet should be the unvarnished Word. Jesus said, “It is the spirit that giveth life, the flesh profiteth nothing. the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life” (John 6:63). When we obey that simple message from heaven, we exercise our spirits in godliness and that is profitable for all things (1 Tim. 4:8).

Some say the Holy Spirit lives in the believer personally and enlightens his mind to understand the Bible and empowers him to obey it. Such claims are excessive and wrong. There is no passage in the New Testament teaching this enlightenment and empowerment theory.

The Bible does say that if a person is sensual or covetous or worldly, he will not understand the teaching of Christ “Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged” (1 Cor. 2:14). If our interest in centered exclu-

sively in earthy things, then the things of heaven will have no appeal to us. The Bible will be a plague and a bane. We will not read it with profit. The man who lives for this world only will regard things revealed by the Spirit to be foolishness. He cannot know them.

To gain anything from Bible study one must be intelligent, rational, and discriminating of eternal things (spiritual). Paul is not saying that the Holy Spirit inside the body of a person enables him to understand the words of the Bible. If this were the situation, the gospel could never be profitably taught to an unsaved person.

If true, then Calvinism is right—the sinner cannot know or understand anything about the Bible until the Holy Spirit comes directly into his life and enlightens his eyes. If the Calvinist is right, the great commission is wrong. Jesus told us to go preach the gospel to every creature, but if the creature cannot understand the message until God sends to him an “experience of grace,” then all the preaching in the world will not help him, and the gospel has no power to save him.

If the Holy Spirit indwelling the child of God empowers him to obey its teaching, then his obedience must be flawless. If the Holy Spirit in the body of the believer enlightens his eyes to understand God’s Word, then his understanding must be absolute. He is right and cannot be wrong, which is a kind of inspiration. If the Holy Spirit in him, gives the saved person power to keep the commands, then his obedience must be perfect. Both his understanding and obedience must be exact. He is an oracle of God and cannot be lost. If this does not square with the teaching of the Bible concerning: (1) the need to study (2 Tim. 2:15); and, (2) the possibility of falling away from Christ (Heb. 6:4-6), then the theory must be wrong.

Some say the Holy Spirit will override the mind of man and cause him to act in an unexpected way, but in a way that pleases God. The idea is that, “when God is encountered,” man receives “empowering grace” (*The Second Incarnation*, by Shelly and Harris, pp. 128-129). “The church must be open to the invigorating presence of the Spirit’s fresh breezes” (*The Second Incarnation*, p. 132).

“When the Spirit of God is present, it will not always be possible to determine the atmosphere in advance. Leaders may intend and prepare

for a service of one sort, and God may bring about another and to his glory...We dare to offer a few suggestions about areas crying out for creative and Spirit, guided attention" (*The Second Incarnation*, p. 135).

If this view of how the Holy Spirit acts in the lives of Christians today is correct, we may as well throw the Bible away. Just wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon us and blow his fresh breezes in our face. The Spirit will overrule and give directions separate and apart from Bible teaching. Since the Spirit will produce, "raucous behavior...dancing and shouting...hubbub...celebration...spontaneity...jubilation...applause and cheering" (*The Second Incarnation*, pp. 132-140), then forget Paul's stern command to let worship be done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). Then, too, what is the meaning of the statement, "when the Spirit of God is present"? Is He not always present? Does He come and go? How does He make His presence known? Where is any of this taught in the Bible?

The authors of *The Second Incarnation* started out saying that they know the person of the Holy Spirit was in them personally, but he wasn't doing anything. They have progressed to the outlandish position that the Holy Spirit gives direction today not only apart from the Word of God, but contrary to that Word. Here is the danger! Let us note it carefully!

There are those, of course, who still say the Holy Spirit is in them directly, but does nothing of which they can be aware. Still, there is the tendency to have the Spirit do something. And that runs the risk of thinking the Holy Spirit takes over the life of a pawn and gives him directions different from the instructions in the written word. This, obviously, denies the teaching of the inspired Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

The Holy Spirit reveals and confirms the very will of God. This in His function. He did this in the first century. Today He protects and preserves the Word. The Bible tells us that the revealed Word of God is indestructible. It is living and powerful.

For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

The Word of God endures.

For, All flesh is as grass, And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: But the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you (1 Pet. 1:24-25).

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne and books were opened. and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 20:12).

If the promises of the Bible concerning its durability are to be kept, there must be a divine Providence that assures the unaltered Word of God will be available to every generation. Since the Holy Spirit is the person in the Godhead who reveals and confirms truth, it is reasonable to suppose He safeguards the Bible. Were the Bible inconsequential in showing us how to be saved and in instructing us in matters of godliness, there would be no need to keep it pure. We may as well lay it on the shelf and look to the direct and immediate guidance of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit uses the revealed Word to assure us of a future reward. Paul tells us that in Christ we have

heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,-in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:13-14).

Paul is not saying that the Holy Spirit living directly in the physical body of the saved is a pledge of our inheritance. If the Holy Spirit living inside you is the earnest of an ultimate reward, then eternal salvation is absolutely assured, and cannot fail. Otherwise the Holy Spirit is feeble and unable to accomplish what he has committed to do. The word translated "earnest" means, "an earnest, i.e., money which in purchases is given as a pledge that the full amount will subsequently be paid" (Thayer, p. 75). If the Holy Spirit is the down payment on a future reward, then the reward cannot fail or the pledge was inadequate to its purpose.

If the Holy Spirit indwelling the Christian is the foretaste of glory, but if the Holy Spirit does nothing the Christian can know about, then the everlasting reward will be multiplied nothingness.

The promise is: (1) you have heard the Word of truth, which is the gospel of salvation, and (2) you believed and obeyed what you

heard, and (3) you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of final inheritance. What is the seal? What is the earnest?

The seal and the earnest are conditioned on hearing and obeying the Word of truth. When we believe God and do what He requires of us, then the salvation is sure. If the Word of God is not implanted—rooted in the heart, there is neither seal nor earnest. It harks back to the teaching that the Holy Spirit in conversion and edification works only through the Word of truth.

God's Word is our assurance of salvation. Our proof of pardon is the New Covenant. It is unfailing. If we trust and obey it, we can be absolutely sure of the eternal inheritance. If we do not hear and obey the gospel, we are without promise and hope. The key is the revealed Word of God—the Word of truth—the gospel of our salvation.

Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil (Heb. 6:17-19).

We have two immutable things—God's holy Word and God's solemn oath. God cannot lie. Therefore, the faithful can be sure of heaven. God's sworn Word assures the godly of future blessings. That is the seal and the earnest of our salvation. We can depend on what God says to us in His revealed Word. We have that Word as an "anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and stedfast."

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OPPOSING ERROR IN WORD AND IN DEED

Wayne Coats



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He met Elaine Wright while both were students at Freed-Hardeman. After a few years of courtship, they married. Their home has been blessed with four children. Wayne and Elaine now reside in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, where they own and operate Mt. Juliet Funeral Home, Mt. Juliet Memorial Gardens and Mt. Juliet Pet Cemetery.

Wayne is the author of numerous books and is active in writing and preaching and teaching at the local level and in meetings and lectures across the brotherhood.

INTRODUCTION

It should not be necessary to argue the existence of error, albeit there can be no such thing so truth or error if the definitions of some people are to be accepted. We propose to show that error is real, it is destructive, it is damning and it must be opposed with the proper attitude of heart. No person can possibly follow Christ and refuse to combat error.

WE MUST BE AWARE THAT ERROR EXISTS

Some might assert that all men are aware of the existence of religious error but such is hardly the case. If we accept the definitions, fluid and open-ended assertions made by the modernists, evolutionists, agnostics and liberals among us, there is no possible way for truth or error to exist.

There was a time when our brethren believed the Bible. Matters could be resolved thereby when situations were brought into focus an either black or white, light or darkness, truth or error, yes or no, right or wrong. Some have arrived at the position wherein matters

are neither black or white, but everything is interpreted as liberals desire and the result is a dull gray. Liberals need not feel compelled to say yes or no, but they can say, "Yo," which is not yes or no, but maybe, perhaps, or it might be. It is indeed pathetic to hear brethren proclaim that whatever the Bible taught in another generation is no longer appropriate for our time. The Scriptures must be interpreted and made relevant to our needs, they say. Furthermore, we hear tell of those who declare that many of the interpretations of older brethren were mere tradition and we now have a more perfect understanding. What difference does it make whether anyone reads or understands the Bible, if we cannot be sure what is eternal truth? One might as well mad the Koran.

Is everything relative? Is there no absolute truth? An there no eternal verities? Let the liberal minded brother so affirm, but watch him curse and cavort about being truthful when the bank teller cheats, lies and embezzles the deposits of the learned brother. In monetary matters, I suppose all my brethren will be sticklers for truth an opposed to lying, especially when their funds are being pilfered.

How many dollars can a bank teller rake off before said teller becomes dishonest? How many tales, myths and legends must be told before said teller is adjudicated to be dishonest? Is there really a point of error?

Imagine some modernist rushing to get on board a jet plane, only to find out that he was an hour late because a ticket salesman gave the wrong time for the departure of the plane. Can there be such a thing as error? Can the pharmacist put a small amount of rat poison in the baby's medicine? Would this be an error? At what point do liberals want truth?

I cannot comprehend any realm wherein men can be so reckless, inconsistent, contradictory and ridiculous an in the realm of religion. If we thought and behaved in various other realms an liberals do in the religious realm, we would be looked upon as stark naked fools. I have an idea that such is the opinion of many thinkers as they behold the shifting, shuffling, tip-toeing, unsure and uncertain stance

of religious quacks, profiteering charlatans and white-washed liberal hypocrites who desire to be godlets.

Did Eve believe a lie or did she act according to truth? Were she and Adam in error or did they even exist? Of course, it depends upon which brotherly scholar one might hear. Did a global flood actually occur during the days of Noah and did only eight persons escape? It depends upon which disciple of Bultman is in the pulpit or Bible class.

If there is a God in heaven, and there is, then we must accept Him as the God of truth. It is worse than silly to walk upon the podium in a church building with a Bible in hand and began to palaver that we cannot be sure about what God has written. Must we be skeptics?

THERE IS A RIGHT WAY

Moses wrote, "All his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deu. 32-4). The psalmist declared, "For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth" (Psa. 33:4). Again, he wrote, "For thy mercy in great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds" (Psa. 57:10). Also, he declared, "For the Lord in good, his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psa. 100:5). Isaiah wrote, "thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isa. 25:1). Jeremiah said, "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth" (Jer. 5:3). Daniel declared, "But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth" (Dan. 10:21). It was Jesus who said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Our Lord declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth. thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Paul affirmed, "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things" (Rom. 2:2).

I would not relish the idea of becoming a religious fool by declaring that a stated body of truth does not exist. It in the sheerest kind of foolishness to contend that truth is ever changing like the wind and we cannot be certain that we can know what truth is. How much wisdom does it take to assert that we can be certain that we

cannot be certain? Can we know that we cannot know and that we cannot tell when we are in darkness or in the light?

THERE IS LIGHT AND DARKNESS

If we are to be pacifists regarding error, then darkness might be as beneficial as light. Can we be sure so as to distinguish between them? Are there actually some people who are walking in darkness and others who are walking in the light? Are there two conditions clearly distinguishable so that one can know that which is light as opposed to that which is darkness? I suppose a totally blind person could not discern the difference. The totally dishonest person would not admit the difference. The totally ignorant person would not know the difference and some of our liberals would not make an admission either way.

It is an obvious truth that light and darkness are opposites and most folks know they are opposed to each other. When a bright light is burning, darkness is dispelled. Our Lord came into the world to bring light and to overcome darkness. He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). He stated, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). Again, we read,

Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light (John 12:35-36).

The inspired Paul declared how Jesus appeared to him and sent him to the Gentiles,

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:18).

To the Ephesians, Paul wrote, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). To the Philippians, Paul declared, "ye shine as lights in the world" (Phi. 2:15). To other brethren, Paul said, "Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 The. 5:5). Peter wrote, "that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvel-

ous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). John stated, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

In spite of the truth contained in the foregoing passages, men will brazenly assert that the church has never been right and the very best that we can see is a flawed church, only ideal in the mind of God. Such blasphemy is a blatant repudiation of every passage presented above. Baseless assumptions provide grist for those who will dare to take issue with God Almighty.

Can it be that Jesus was not right when he claimed to be the light of the world? Is it true that those who follow Christ shall not walk in darkness? Jesus said He was the light of the world. Was He never right? The brethren in the early church were children of light. Were they also never right? Is it impossible to follow Christ? For those who try to follow Christ, will they have the light of life, or will they walk amid the gloom and the shadows? Did Jesus tell a lie, and did Paul repeat it, when the affirmation was made that Paul was to be sent to the Gentiles to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light? Were those Gentiles who were converted by Paul unable to tell darkness from light? Were their spiritual eyes in an eclipse? Were those people really turned from the power of Satan unto God? Did those brethren merely make a feeble twist instead of a turn? When Paul preached to the Gentiles and they received forgiveness of sins, were they not ever right? When those people enjoyed an inheritance among them which are sanctified, what else did they need in order to be right with God?

When modernists such as Rubel Shelly and others assert that the church has never been right, do such guessing games make any sense at all in view of the passages mentioned above? Were the Ephesians truly the light of the Lord? Were the Philippians shining as lights in the world? Were the Thessalonians all the children of light? Had those to whom Peter wrote, in fact and in act been, “called...out of darkness into his marvelous light”? Maybe some little godlet would like to tell us about that marvelous light and how inept, insufficient, flawed and failing it is. We can walk with John in that marvelous light even as God is in the light, but we cannot be

right, because the liberal element will not have it so. How on earth can liberals come to be so brilliant regarding the Bible?

If and when we accept the ipse-dixit of the modernists and liberals, we lose all footing for a foundation which will enable us to differentiate between right and wrong. What is right? Who knows but what that which was light and right for the church in the first century might not be right and light for baby boomers in the nineties. We are being told that as culture changes, so must the church, and that in order for the church to change, there must be some changing of the Bible. That poses no real problem for popes, prelates and pastors who have little if any regard for the Bible. Rubel Shelly and other modernists are declaring that the church needs to change, that it must change. They glibly assert that the church has never been right. If that is the case, then the church has always been wrong. Would someone please tell us how false teachers and perverters of the truth can know that they know that the church has never been right? These peddlers of error would have to know that there was some pattern of right, in order to prattle that something has never been right. It would be stupid of me to state that something is not right, if there in no standard, pattern or rule of right.

THERE IS RIGHT AND WRONG

When Rubel claims that the church has never been right, what sort of measure does he use? He would have to know something about that which is right. He would be forced to admit that there really is that which is absolutely right, but with his vacillating views, there cannot be any absolute right. Contradiction of contradictions! Of course, Rubel assumes to know the mind of God in its ideal proportions and with such great understanding he can instruct all of us who are still seekers.

It is patently false that truth is ever illusive and always beyond the reach of those of us who are mortals. One would get the impression that certain of our modern divines have a monopoly on what is right, but right changes from day to day and from person to person among liberals. By the truth, we can know what is right and follow it God help us when we tag along with the liberal pied pipers.

It was Samuel who declared, “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and right way” (1 Sam. 12:23). The psalmist wrote, “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right” (Psa. 119:75). Hosea declared, “for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them” (Hos. 14:9). When Peter and John were forbidden to teach in the name of Jesus, they elected to do that which was right in God’s sight (Acts 4:19). When Simon the sorcerer sought to buy the gift of the Spirit with money, Peter declared that the mazes heart was not right in the sight of God (Acts 8:21). When Elymas the sorcerer withstood the truth, Paul said, “wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” (Acts 13:10). Peter spoke of those who had, “forsaken the right way and we gone astray” (2 Pet. 2:15). All it takes to see the clear and truth as taught in the preceding Scriptures is a reasonable amount of common sense coupled with an honest heart. Try to imagine the arrogance and bigotry of a man who has listened to a few puny and will contradict the words of the Holy Spirit many times over.

Let’s listen for a brief second while Shelly, et.al., attempt to tell us that we have not restored the church of the first century. Hear those fellows as they belittle the church of Christ. Harken as they declaim how deficient, flawed and failing the church of Christ is. Remember that we are being told that the church has never been right. Please study the Bible verses given above and see if God really did set forth that which is RIGHT. How can people forsake the right way if there is no right way? Peter affirms that some, “are gone astray.” Where did they go and how did they go if they were already astray? If the church has always been weak and woefully deficient, then it would have always been out of the right way and astray.

How could Elymas pervert the right way of the Lord, as charged by Paul, if there were no right way? If there were a way that was right, surely someone has sense enough to walk in it.

After Simon the sorcerer hied to buy the power of the Spirit his heart was not right. Was it right before he erred in that matter? Was Simon never right? Was it right for Peter and John to hearken to

God instead of the council? Is it right for us to listen to the Lord instead of to the liberals? We must obey God rather than men.

It is a terrible system when God Almighty sets forth a right way and a right law, yet we have brethren who will actually assert that we cannot keep it. Must we ever be wrong?

We read about a great persecution which came upon the early church which was at Jerusalem, “and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1). These men were set in the church (1 Cor. 12:28). They were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). They received the Holy Ghost and were witnesses of the Lord (Acts 1:8). How many books authored by fools does one need to read in order to accuse those apostles who were in Jerusalem? They comprised the church. Let some worm in the dust try to indict those who were chosen of the Lord. Who will lay a charge against those courageous and inspired apostles? So, the church was never right? If that be so, then the Holy Spirit was not right as He guided and directed those great men who gave their lives in following the master.

WINDS OF CHANGE AND LIBERAL BUBBLES

There is a mind-set, a stance, a unanimity of thought among certain liberal brethren in the Nashville, Tennessee, area which would turn us aside from that which is right. This loose and reckless way of thinking is not limited to Nashville or any other specific area, but indeed there is a crescendo of voices clamoring for change. Change to them does not mean putting down a new carpet or hiring a minister of the parking lot. These church changers are occupying the same place as those thieves who desecrated the temple and were driven therefrom by our Lord (Mat. 21:12-14).

Amazing and revealing is the statement of Mac Lynn who is chairman of the Graduate Bible Department at Lipscomb. Mac says,

There’s a good breeze blowing across the brotherhood these days that is calling for more attention to a holistic view of scripture which cannot only enrich a church, but can provide a dynamic in worship that you may have never seen before.

That breeze is the same stale, putrid, hot air that has been blowing among other liberals. For example, Max Lucado said, “There are

fresh winds blowing in the church of Christ” Lynn Anderson chirped, “God is renewing us and changing us. Fresh winds are blowing.” Mike Cope wrote, “I believe that the winds of change we feel are gusts of spiritual renewal.” Randy Mayeux stated, “This is an era of great change in churches of Christ.” Jim Hackney said, “Our brotherhood is headed in such an encouraging direction right now.” What a breeze! A better breeze would be for one to be down wind from open sepulchres which contain dead men’s bones and all uncleanness (Mat. 23:27).

Brother Chairman Lynn states, “One’s view of scripture is going to affect in a very strong way, what is going to happen in worship.” He says, “If one looks at the Bible as a legal code, one tends to search for the right form.” This statement was made with reference to worship. Maybe brother Lynn would like to tell us if there is any right form of worship. What would it be? If there is a right form of worship, how can we determine what it is? What is the source? In case there is no right form of worship, (and I strongly suspicion that is the Lynn reference) then why cannot every man do that which is right in his own eyes?

Brother Mac does not like the legal code view. He avers, “The legal code view tends to mean the correct view is by a cappella.” If we eliminate the “legal code view” then with, it will go a cappella. Please tell me why not? Brother Lynn thinks we have not considered Ephesians 5:19 from a holistic view. We have been wrong in our interpretation of the verse. We are supposed to see the Ephesians coming out of immorality and grow evil, and after their conversion they just began to express their joy by singing. This silly notion leaves no divine mandate for singing whatsoever.

Another Lipscomb leader is Carl McKelvey who recently expressed the same views as Lynn with respect to Ephesians 5:19. Brother Carl thinks we have been wrong about the passage. He informs us that he has thrown away several materials and is taking a new look at Bible study. He thinks we have been studying the Bible over the years just to get up sermons. He can speak for himself but God forbid that he should cram everyone else into his liberal bag. Thousands of Bible class teachers have made careful textual studies with

no thought of preaching a sermon. We respectfully plead with and implore Vice-President McKelvey to give us the benefit of his new and brilliant method of Bible study and relate one, single solitary item of truth that he discovered which hundreds of brethren have not already known. I fear brother Carl's speeches are but gestures to conform to the views of church changers, while taking a few side swipes at faithful brethren.

Since brother Carl knows how we have been studying the Bible in such a wrongful way, he can now tell us how to do a perfect job as we study. He knows that we have been studying the Bible just to get up sermons. The fellow could have spared himself from making such an inexcusable blunder. May I ask what is wrong in studying the Bible in preparation for preaching? If we are not to study the Bible in order to preach, pray tell me what we should study? We do have a mandate to preach the gospel (Mat. 28:18-20). Can we preach the gospel without studying the gospel? We are commanded to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2). How shall we preach the Word if we do not study the Word? When some little upstart babbles that we have not really understood what we have read from the Word of God, it is an insult to the intelligence of that great host of faithful gospel preachers, who have faithfully studied, memorized and preached the Word.

Who do you know in all of your acquaintances who might just study the Bible in order to get up sermons? I am positive that brother McKelvey would do a much better job of sermonizing if he would study the Bible instead of listening to the liberal element.

Since our brother has been doing some serious thinking he has learned that older brethren have misinterpreted Ephesians 5:19. Since he now knows what the passage teaches, we will try to find out just exactly what a great number of us have been overlooking. We shall see what we shall see.

One of the most bizarre and ridiculous positions to come out of Nashville involves the presentations made by Steve Flatt, Jack Reese and Lindsey Garmon relative to spiritual gifts. Brother Flatt set forth his views in a sermon at Madison. Brethren Reese and Garmon presented their ideas at the 1992 Jubilee. 'Tis hard to see

how three men could be so totally blind, so completely opinionated and so far out from the truth. For example, brother Flatt preached that he had come up with sixteen spiritual gifts. I know not where he learned to count or what rule he uses. Every Bible student worth his salt knows there were nine spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. It is incredible how some men can become wise above that which is written (1 Cor. 4:6).

Brother Flatt really shows his lack of Bible knowledge when he informs us that spiritual gifts are talents, skills and abilities. With this, Reese and Garmon both agree. The blatant absurdity of the theories of these men is seen in that spiritual gifts were to cease, which they deny. There is not anything clearer in all the Bible. When did, “they shall cease,” come to mean, “they shall continue”? Spiritual gifts were to give way to a more excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31; 13:8-10). Since brother Flatt has found sixteen spiritual gifts and since spiritual gifts are talents, skills and abilities, am I wrong in deducing that there should be as many spiritual gifts as there are talents, skills and abilities?

If it is agreed that spiritual gifts are talents, skills and abilities, then any atheist, infidel or false teacher could lay claim to spiritual gifts. They do have some skills. Who then is qualified or competent to explain what is or is not a spiritual gift? Who will be able to discern if one or all possess such gifts? What happens when one person who claims to have a gift disputes another who lays claim to the same gift? Do not say that it does not happen, for among the sects, it happens all the time. Our brethren are not one whit behind the cultic groups in these matters.

And how shall we oppose error? There is no standard other than that revealed in the Bible. There is no better example than that of Christ and the apostles. Who can read the four gospels and not be deeply impressed with how Jesus met the false teachers of His time? Have we forgotten how Jesus rebuffed Satan by saying, “It is written” (Mat. 4:4)?

When we read the encounters of our Lord with the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests and elders, we can know exactly how Jesus met the errors of his time. Never for one moment did he

compromise the truth. Jesus could be exceedingly kind and compassionate toward those who were honestly mistaken but he could turn all his anger against dishonest hypocrites. We read in Matthew 23 where Jesus referred to the religious leaders some seven times as hypocrites. His most cutting language was reserved for those actors.

When Paul wrote to the brethren in Galatia, he said they were foolish (Gal. 3:1). Their terrible mistake was allowing themselves to be bewitched by false teachers. They were without excuse.

We recall the painful death of Stephen who was stoned because he dared to stand for truth and oppose error. Although the mob killed Stephen, “they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:10). We must be firm, faithful and fearless as we teach the truth and there is ever the responsibility to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). This must be our purpose and pattern, if we would be followers of the Master.

GROWING STRONGER IN CHRIST EVERY DAY

Clifford Newell, Jr.



Clifford was born and reared in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. He attended the Memphis School of Preaching, Alabama Christian School of Religion (B.A. and M.A.), Kentucky State University (M.P.A.) and presently is completing his doctorate in Biblical Studies. Since 1986, he has taught religious courses at colleges and universities. His preaching has involved radio and television programs, lectureships and mission trips to Scotland. He is married to the former Diane Elaine King and they have two children, Jay Elaine and Clifford III. He has been preaching for over eighteen years and currently is working with the Pine Street Church of Christ in Bay Minette, Alabama.

It is truly a pleasure to be invited to participate in the 1993 Bellview lectures. Appreciation is extended to the Bellview elders, the congregation, and to brother Bobby Liddell for this effort.

INTRODUCTION

The lectureship theme, *God's Pattern For Christian Living* is very appropriate. We will give our attention to "Growing Stronger In Christ Every Day." It is altogether fitting that we, the people of God, should be concerned about our daily growth in Christ. Basically, when people know to do better, they will. Therefore, the pressing need is for instruction concerning these matters. The beloved historian and physician Luke wrote, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Christ, the Master Teacher, is presented to mankind with emphasis upon His fourfold growth. Jesus grew mentally, physically, spiritually and socially. H. Leo Boles commented,

This verse covers the eighteen years of silence in the life of Jesus; these years intervened between His visit to Jerusalem and the beginning of His public ministry. During this time His mental powers were constantly enlarging and strengthening; His physical growth was uninterrupted by sickness or disease...In favor with God and men

means that He grew in divine favor, that every step of His development was pleasing to God.¹

Thus, Jesus showed us the way, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21).

GROWING STRONGER IN CHRIST EVERY DAY INVOLVES PRAYER

We are impressed that under the Mosaic Economy incense was offered to God daily. Listen to Moses,

And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall bum incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations (Exo. 30:7-8).

This is significant because incense was but a type of prayer according to John,

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints (Rev. 5:8; 8:3).

With daffy needs, means daily prayer to the studious saint. As Paul stated to the Philippians, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phi. 4:6). Jesus taught His disciples to pray thusly, “Give us this day our daily bread,” or, “Give us day by day our daily bread,” (Mat. 6:11 and Luke 11:3, respectively). You will remember that these statements were made by Christ in what is called the “Model Prayer.” Jesus, “was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). Hence, Jesus taught them, “When ye pray” (Luke 11:2). David, the second king of the “United Kingdom” era was a man who petitioned Jehovah God on a daily basis. Listen carefully, “Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud. and he shall hear my voice,” and, “Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: Lord, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee” (Psa. 55:17 and 88:9, respectively). Good people, if men of character needed to call upon God in prayer for strength, for sustenance and

for wisdom, how much more should we pray for these vital elements as well as for personal daily growth?

GROWING STRONGER IN CHRIST EVERY DAY INVOLVES DAILY STUDY

The New Testament writer James affirmed, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam. 1:17). Certainly, the benevolence of our great God is evidenced in a multitude of ways, and not the least of these is the gift of His divine Word, the Bible. The peerless Paul said,

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 whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him (Col. 3:16-17).

This passage points to the beginning place for real Bible study-hungry minds. Notice the nature of the admonition: “Let the word of Christ.” While this statement is in the form of an exhortation, it shows that there must be a hungering for truth on the part of the Bible student. There must be an ardent craving for His truth and righteousness, as is suggested by our Lord’s statement in the “Sermon on the Mount,” “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they SHALL BE FILLED” (Mat. 5:6). Our great need today is not for more classes, but for more people that are eager to know the Bible. Little worthwhile knowledge of the Bible is obtained unless there is an inner longing to know more which leads to individual study. Hungry people do not have to be prodded to come to the table to eat and they do not have to be spoon-fed when they get to the table. Spiritually, hungry minds become fall minds!

GROWING STRONGER IN CHRIST EVERY DAY INVOLVES DAILY SEEKING

Matthew recorded,

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you (Mat. 6:32-33).

The truth in, all men we seekers. They always have been seekers, and they always will be seekers. To seek or not to seek, that is not the question. The vital question for every Christian is: What to seek? Isaiah encouraged his people to, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isa. 55:6). To seek the Lord is to inquire after Him and His will with care and concern. It has always been God's will that man seek after Him to the end of finding and serving Him. Luke said, "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). The real significance of this verse indicates a time limit; for though He may call today, the door may be shut tomorrow. The Bible states it this way,

When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are (Luke 13:25).

The case is, therefore, that we should seek now! The daily seeking is encouraged while He is here or at hand, for He can withdraw Himself so that He cannot be found. "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them" (Hos. 5:6).

Matthew enjoined upon all to be seekers of the kingdom of heaven (Mat. 6:33). This wonderful passage in the "Sermon on the Mount" contains wisdom, consolation and peace. It sets forth briefly and concisely the philosophy of the Christian way of life: a way of simplicity, trust and of spiritual aspiration. However, Jesus cautions His disciples not to be anxious about the material and physical necessities of life. At least three times, Jesus repeated the exhortation, "Be not anxious." Anxiety ends in fretful care and leads to the distress of mind, fear and worry. Consider, first, Jesus declares that anxiety is unnecessary (Mat. 6:25, ASV). Then, He states that anxiety is unworthy of the servants of the kingdom (Mat. 6:31, ASV). And, finally, Jesus says that anxiety is unfruitful (Mat. 6:34, ASV). The climax of Christ's exhortation is, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat. 6:33). As Christians, we are enjoined to seek the spiritual values of the kingdom as the primary goal of life. These

values are of supreme worth and should come first in all of our seeking, planning and working, day by day.

GROWING STRONGER IN CHRIST EVERY DAY INVOLVES THE COOPERATION OF GOD AND MAN

It is the case that God and man have worked and cooperated together on many instances and for many different reasons. For example, in regards to the Bible, one may ask, “Is it wholly the work of man?” or, “Is it wholly the work of God?” The truth is, man could not have written it if he wanted to for its contents are far beyond the reach and grasp of human authorship. It condemns many of the practices which men, by nature, hold dear. The Bible is not wholly the work of God in that God did not write (except the original draft of the Ten Commandments) with His omnipotent finger. Liken carefully,

Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Hence, the Bible is a product of the cooperative work of God and man.

Further, consider the case of salvation from sin. Does man save himself? Or, is it solely an act of God? (“It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation”—Rubel Shelly) The truth of the matter is, it takes both “Grace” and “Faith” to save. In Ephesians, Paul sets forth both sides of salvation, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). Ephesians 2 is perhaps the biblical cornerstone of salvation, for herein is the apostolic affirmation that we are saved by grace through faith Grace is God’s part; this is the divine side of salvation. Faith is man’s part; this is the human aspect of salvation. While some will contribute salvation solely as an act of God, the Sacred Scriptures attribute salvation as the cooperative work of God and man.

Let us consider an example of the cooperative work of God and man in the way we live. Simon Peter wrote, “According as His di-

vine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). On man’s part, there is no occasion for alarm, for all things pertaining to life and godliness have been granted us. This verse is a clear affirmation of the sufficiency of God’s revelation to man, as well as, an unmistakable assurance that every need of every kind will be supplied.

In our consideration of the cooperative work of God and man, listen carefully. The peerless Paul affirmed,

I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me- and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

The case is the Christian has been crucified (perfect tense in Greek) which means a past action with continuing or existing results. The fact that Christ lives in us does not mean that Paul’s individuality was extinguished or absorbed. Christ was living in Paul to the extent that Paul lived as Christ would have him to live. It was representatively; i.e., by or through faith (Eph. 3:17). It was, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Hence, cooperation exists when we are obedient to His will in our daily walk in Christ.

GROWING STRONGER IN CHRIST EVERY DAY INVOLVES THE REALIZATION OF OUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The faithful saint is one who is motivated by self-discipline. Webster says, “a rule or system, of rules governing conduct or activity.” Self-discipline involves the subordination of self to Christ. He is a follower of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). He keeps himself pure (1 Tim. 5:22). He lifts up holy hands (1 Tim. 2:8). He gives attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13). He takes heed unto himself, and unto the doctrine and continues in them: “for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). Hence, a Christian is a learner and a follower of Christ. This is his strength.

The faithful saint realizes and acknowledges that he has weaknesses. The beloved John wrote,

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we he, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:6-10).

The exhortation to add the Christian graces as found in 2 Peter 1, implies that we are to recognize this need and supply it.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love" (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

By "virtue" is meant the qualities that make a good soldier, since the word derives from the Greek name for Mars, the mythological god of war. It relates to valor or courage, especially. Without the courage to stand for one's convictions, he cannot long remain a Christian or a good soldier.

By "knowledge" is meant literally, knowledge upon knowledge or thorough knowledge. It is an approving knowledge and a knowledge that amounts to intimacy with God and Christ. It is through this thorough knowledge that we can avoid being, "carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14).

By "temperance" (self-control) is meant inward strength, might, dominion; hence, inward strength, strength of the inward man over the outward man, used particularly of selfrestraint, of control over one's passions and desires, especially of sensual appetites.

By "patience" is meant to remain under, or to persevere under misfortune and trials and to hold fast to one's faith in Christ come what may; steadfastness, persistence—never giving up.

By "godliness" is meant to fear, to revere, to worship; hence, the spirit of worshipping well; having proper regard for God, His Word, and all things sacred.

By "brotherly kindness" is meant friendship, affection, fondness of brother, hence, brotherly love, brotherly affection, fondness of brethren in Christ Jesus.

By “love” (charity) is meant active goodwill, benevolence, concern, an outgoingness toward others because of what we are rather than what they are, that causes us to do what is proper and right toward each. This is the love that is said to be “the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3: 14).

Another weakness we have that is to be strengthened in recorded by Peter, two chapters later “But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18). Basically, to grow in the grace of the Lord is to grow in His favor or approval and admiration. We accomplish this by standing for Him and by walking in Him and by growing in knowledge of Him. There is no place to stop in this process. We never reach the point beyond which there is nothing more to learn or no more improvement to make. Hence, we are to keep on growing!

GROWING STRONGER IN CHRIST EVERY DAY INVOLVES OVERCOMING HINDRANCES THAT RETARD GROWTH

It is a known fact that our attitude toward the Bible will to a great degree determine or reflect our growth in spiritual matters. It is basic and fundamental for one to have a healthy respect for Jehovah God and His Word. Therefore, we cannot afford to allow the following to influence us. New Hermeneutics Approach—This is an ever increasing movement to reject New Testament pattern doctrine. According to J. E. Choate:

What in the “hidden agenda” of the new hermeneutic? The answer lies in considerations already reached without regard for the rules of exegesis and rules governing hermeneutics. The agenda is to re-define the role of women in the church and have marriage and divorce left to subjective judgment; instrumental music is a nonissue; grace only; the non-essentiality of baptism; open fellowship with all professing Christians; the abandonment of any concept of Bible patterns; and even bizarre rituals accommodated in the worship.²

It seems that some have come to the realization that there is no proof for their liberal dunking, therefore, they either re-define their terms or argue from the silence of the Scriptures. This attitude is reflected

both in the pulpit as well as in the pew! It only hinders and retards the growth process.

Another hindrance in that some are not content with the church and, therefore, are prepared to make changes. James Woodroof said, "We...have become enamored by the written Word to the point of becoming oblivious to the Living Word."³ This is nothing more than saying, "Yes," to Jesus and a big resounding, "No," to His plan/church. Friends, without the written Word, what knowledge would man possess? In fact, how would one ever know God, Christ or the Holy Spirit? You see, this cry being made for change will lead us to the plain of Ono!

Jesus declared in John, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Paul, while speaking to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, said, "And now, brethren, I command you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20-32). Jude, the servant of Christ, wrote,

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

It seems to this writer, that if these disenchanting folks displayed the same zeal in contending for the faith as they do for their liberal program, there would be daily growth!

Another hindrance that prevents Christians from being strong is the practice of studying all about the Bible, but never studying the biblical text itself. Could it be that this is why many of our brethren do not have The Power To See It Through? Hear the apostle Paul, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia" (2 Tim. 4:10). Demas, certainly started his journey well (Phm. 24), but what a poor ending! This writer is convinced that the pressing need of the hour calls for an of the biblical text. The sacred Scriptures state:

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. **And when** he had fasted forty days and forty night@, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread...Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down...Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All theme things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Mat. 4:1-9).

After each temptation, Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy which caused the devil to leave Him (Deu. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13). So is the case with us, when we know the Scriptures and apply them it will cause the devil to flee from us.

EXAMPLES OF GROWING STRONGER IN CHRIST EVERY DAY

One of the great needs of today is a vision of the possibilities of the soul and how to attain those possibilities. Too many of us are satisfied without growth, blind to what we may become and ignorant of the means of growth.

The character of the apostle Peter in both interesting an well as challenging. The average Christian can warm up to Peter; whereas, only the indepth full-grown Christian can feel at ease with the apostle Peter. He traveled both the high roads and the low roads of life. Peter's growth begins by being selected as a disciple of Christ (John 1:40-42). According to Luke, Jesus called him and others to, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke 5:10), and Peter forsook all and followed Him. Peter stands up with the eleven (apostles) in Acts 2, when the supposition was that these men are drunk. From his answer in verse 14 to the close of the chapter Peter delivered the first gospel sermon with all of its attending blessings. In the first twelve chapters of Acts, the emphasis is upon Peter and his work. The growth of Peter cannot be complete without a brief synopsis of his writings. Peter's first epistle has been styled, "The Epistle of Hope in the Midst of Suffering." The apostle had emphasized the matter of suffering as follows: (1) He reminded his readers of the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 1:11; 2:21, 23; 5:1); (2) He held up Christ as an example of how the saints should endure suf-

fering (1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1-2); (3) He admonished the Christians to expect suffering (1 Pet. 4:12); (4) He further admonished the Christians to bear suffering patiently, and not to be troubled with it (1 Pet. 2:23; 3:9, 14); (6) He admonished the Christians to rejoice in their sufferings, and to remember that brethren elsewhere were suffering the same thing (1 Pet. 4:18; 5:9); (6) He pointed out the value of suffering (1 Pet. 1:6-7; 2:19-20, 3:14; 4:14); and, (7) He warned the Christians against their suffering as evil doors (1 Pet. 2:20; 4:15). Thus, Peter's first epistle turns on suffering and the apostle had learned the hard way how that those who would live godly shall suffer persecutions. He had come to be like his Master.

Peter's second epistle addresses the rise of false teachers and their erroneous doctrines. The false teachers were, no doubt, from the same school as those Paul identified in his epistle to the Colossians. Peter wrote to warn the brethren of those fake teachers and he emphasized that the real safeguard against them was knowledge. True knowledge is the key that opens doors. Dr. Holland wrote:

- (1) Knowledge is the key that opens the door of escape from the pollutions of the world, (2) Knowledge is the key that opens the door of grace; (3) Knowledge is the key that opens the door of peace; and, (4) Knowledge is the key by which the future is opened.⁴

Good people, knowledge of God's Word is a safeguard for the church today!

The character of John Mark is one which demonstrates daily growth and maturity. It is believed that Mark was born some ten to fifteen years after Jesus and Saul. His place of birth was near the Garden of Gethsemane in the Kidron Valley. He is called John Mark because his Hebrew name was John and his Roman surname was Mark. According to Paul, Mark was related to Barnabas, "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him)" (Col. 4:10).

The first character scene of John Mark is presented to us in Acts 19 and 13. Paul, Barnabas and John Mark were selected to be missionaries in Asia Minor. When they arrived in Perga, John Mark departed from them, returning to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). There is

no way to tell if Mark was: (1) merely homesick, (2) upset by the ascendancy of Paul over Barnabas, (3) intimidated by the scope of Paul's plans for world evangelism, (4) discouraged by the trials and hardships of missionary life, or, (5) afraid of contracting malaria. Whatever the reason(s), we know he stopped short his missionary tour.

Paul and Barnabas finished their tour and returned to Jerusalem. When they determined to make their second journey, a sharp contention arose between Paul and Barnabas over the selection of John Mark by Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). This incident resulted in two teams of missionaries being sent; as Paul chose Silas and journeyed through Syria and Cilicia; whereas, Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed to Cyprus.

Through the years, John Mark had proved himself so Paul calls for him (2 Tim. 4:11). This demonstrates that John Mark determined to grow, and grow he did! Some twenty years after his departure from that first missionary journey, John Mark takes up the task he abandoned at Perga in Pamphylia. In Mark's gospel, we meet the man who failed and tried again, the man who, by a friend's help, rebuilt a testimony, and left that testimony in a deathless book. According to tradition, John Mark died not long after Peter's death. May God give us more John Marks!

CONCLUSION

Friends, it has been our purpose to set forth the place of prayer, study, seeking, the cooperation of God and man, strengths and weaknesses, hindrances, and examples of GROWING STRONGER IN CHRIST EVERY DAY. The Master Teacher showed us the way, now it is up to us to follow His steps.

EACH DAY BRINGS A CHANCE TO DO BETTER!

How often we wish for another chance
 To make a fresh beginning,
 A chance to blot out our mistakes
 And change the failure to winning.
 And it does not take a special time
 To make a brand new start,
 It only taken a deep desire
 To try with all our heart.

To live a little better
And to always be forgiving,
And to add a little “sunshine”
To the world in which we’re living.

So never give up in despair
And think that you are through,
For there’s always a tomorrow
And a chance to start anew

ENDNOTES

¹H. Leo Boles, *The Gospel According To Luke* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1972), p. 73.

²J. E. Choate, *The Hidden Agenda of the New Hermeneutic* (Houston, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing Co., July 1992), p. 8.

³James S. Woodroof, *The Church in Transition* (Searcy, AR: Bible House, 1990). p. 29.

⁴Thomas H. Holland, *The Key Of Knowledge* (Henderson, TN: Holland Publications, 1973), pp. 8-11.

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GOD'S WORD—THE PATTERN

Bobby Liddell



Bobby Liddell, native of Birmingham Alabama, left Methodism in obedience to the gospel in 1972. He has studied at Walker College, University of Alabama in Birmingham, Memphis School of Preaching and Southern Christian University.

He has done local evangelistic work in Alabama and Florida, now working with the Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida. His work includes radio, television, meetings and lectures in several states and Southeast Asia. In 1991, he labored with several others seeking to establish the first church of Christ in Latvia in the city of Riga.

Editor of *Defender*, *Beacon*, Bellview Lectures books (1989-1993), staff writer for *Firm Foundation*, past Assistant Editor of *The Christian Sentinel*, contributing author to other publications. Director of the Annual Bellview Lectures.

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INTRODUCTION

In this book of the Eighteenth Annual Bellview Lectures conducted at the building of the Bellview Church of Christ Pensacola, Florida, on May 8-12, 1993, we have sought to show from the Scriptures, *God's Pattern For Christian Living*. Twenty-seven faithful, capable and dedicated men thus far have presented lessons from God's Holy Word dealing with God's rule for our lives. They and we have done so, in this annual work encouraged and overseen by the Bellview bishops and supported by the brethren at Bellview and each congregation from which these men came, with the hope men will submit to God's will and follow His plan in their daily walk. Our united aim is to save souls and to glorify God. In the process, we seek our own salvation and to make full proof of our ministry.

We strive to reach, with the Truth, those in Christ who have been besieged with the errors of liberalism, one of which is the false assertion, "There is no pattern." We do so knowing God's Word, the pattern, brings hope, not despair, clarity, not confusion; direction, not deviation; rejoicing, not rejection; and, ultimately, Heaven, not Hell. We know good brethren and formerly sound and peaceful con-

gregations have been troubled by those who, from their wicked imagination, have begun to proclaim, "There is no pattern!" We freely admit these false teachers have been very successful in gaining followers; but that is to their condemnation, not commendation. If they continue in their downwardly spiraling digression, both they and those who follow them shall lose their souls. Thus, we speak out with great clarity and urgency to bring men back to Christ and back to God's pattern for Christian living.

As with those in Christ, we seek to reach those yet outside of Christ to bring them to an understanding of what God would have them to know, believe, be and do. God's Word is our guide. Love is our motivation. Those who love: (1) God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit; (2) God's Word, the Truth; (3) God's family, the church; (4) the souls of their fellowmen; and, (5) their own souls, are thus motivated to reach the lost. To our brethren whose self-proclaimed "love" rejects us as "unloving," we sincerely and carefully inquire, "How much love does one manifest when he allows one to be lost in sin while pretending he is saved or to help them to be lost by perverting God's Word?"

In a world of multitudes of different "faiths" and "churches," confusion on the part of the general populace is apparent. They need to hear the Truth, the whole Truth. They need to hear it from men who believe it with all their heart and who will proclaim it forcefully and lovingly, without fear or favor. They need to see the example of those who claim to live for Christ truly doing so for hypocrisy is one of the greatest hindrances to evangelism. Those outside of Christ need to see God's pattern put into practice in the church of Christ, in Christian homes and in Christian lives.

There is one and only one authorized standard for man's conduct. From that only can man learn what God would have him to know. Contrary to the fanciful notions of vision claimers, God does not speak to man through visions today. Notwithstanding the claims of those who say the Holy Spirit speaks to them and leads them separate and apart from the written Word, whispering instructions to them "laying" things on their hearts, no man since the close of the first century has heard one syllable from God in that fashion. Dis-

regarding the contemporary professions of pseudo-prophets, and casting aside the wisdom of men, their creeds and doctrines, commandments and disciplines, imaginations, deceptions, and misguided opinions, and the cries of their untrained consciences and hardened hearts, let us all open our hearts to the inspired written revelation from God, the Bible. Therein, He proclaims His pattern. Thereby, He speaks to man today, specifically through the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

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

In grateful obedience to Him from whom all blessings flow, we seek to faithfully echo His proclamation—with neither addition, subtraction, substitution nor modification. As the old saying goes, “We speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent. We call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways.” To do otherwise would be infinitely foolish, not a sign of true “scholarship.”

Paul, by inspiration, wrote to Timothy.

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall tam away their ears from the truth, and shall be tamed unto fables (2 Tim. 4:14).

Thus, we gladly preach God’s Word, upholding truth in love and opposing error without fear. We state unequivocally, “There is a pattern!” We preach the amenability of all men to the New Testament of Christ under which we live and by which we shall be judged at the last day. Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Knowing we shall be judged by His Word, should we not live by it? If we must

live by it, does that not demand a standard of living, Christian living? Surely, it does.

WHAT IS GOD'S WORD?

When we speak of "God's Word," we mean the sixty-six books (Genesis through Revelation) composed of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament (Genesis through Malachi) and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament (Matthew through Revelation) revealed from God and recorded by inspired men; that is, the Bible.

Forty different men, over a period of about sixteen hundred years, were involved in the inspired writing of God's Word. From Moses to John, these men lived in various places and at different times. Most of them never saw each other. Hence, they did not have the opportunity to confer with those inspired penmen who lived hundreds of years before or after them. In addition, the Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. In view of all these obstacles, they could not possibly, through their own wisdom and canning, have concocted the magnificently marvelous production which is the Bible.

In spite of all the seeming barriers to such, there is a wondrous unity, obviously of Divine origin, within its sixty-six books, one thousand one hundred and eighty-nine chapters and thirty-one thousand verses, impossible for the finite abilities of even the finest minds of all man's generations. There in a common and discernible thread from Genesis to Revelation—redemption for fallen man through Jesus Christ God has presented that wonderful story of love in His Word. He has provided man with a book without contradictions, not based on the accumulation of myths and legends, and independent of redactors' supposed compilations and improvements. God's Word is not a fraudulent falsification perpetrated by devilish deceit, but the beautiful and pure Truth from the Almighty Creator of man.

Since the Gutenberg Bible of 1456, well over two billion Bibles have been printed. The Bible has been translated into every major language and dialect and most minor ones. It has been and continues to be the best seller of all time. Its distribution has changed nations and history, but, most importantly, its reception has changed the

hearts of millions, resulting in their salvation. The application of God's teaching through His Word (in spite of its being applied sporadically and inconsistently by them) has uplifted governments and swayed the policies of entire countries for the better, thus, benefiting its citizens. Were men to resolve to live under its precepts, allowing God's Word to define national policy, what a difference would be forthcoming! "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Pro. 14:34).

Directly, and indirectly, God's Word has profited mankind. Who, in their right mind, would want to live in a country, state, county or community where the influence of God's Word was not felt and which was populated by those who had absolutely no regard for God and His Word? "As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried. he is a buckler to all those that trust in him" (Psa. 18:30).

Over two thousand times, Scripture states it is God's Word, the Word of the Lord, etc. Notice these passages.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 The. 2:13).

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 4:11).

It is not true, as some contend, that "the Bible contains the Word of God." Rudolf Bultmann and his disciples (some of whom are even preaching his doctrines in the Lord's church) would reject the miraculous events of the New Testament; thus, "demythologizing" it that they might uncover the "real message" of the gospel. The Bible does not just "contain" the Word of God. It is the Word of God. Neither is it true, as existentialists contend, that "the Bible becomes the Word of God." Truth is not dependent upon verification by existence (existentialism) nor is truth subjective, but objective (and absolute).

God, through the Spirit, gave His Word. David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). To Israel, God's Word came: "Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets:

yet would they not give ear, therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands” (Neh. 9:30). “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13).

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

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Ten times in the very first chapter of the Bible, inspiration recorded these words: “And God said” (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28-29).

God’s Word is Truth, absolute and knowable. To the Father, Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Men say, “We cannot know truth.” They contend truth is not absolute and may be different depending upon cultural and other changes. To the Jews, Christ stated, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Friends, God’s Word is not “almost” truth, nor is it “mostly” truth. It is Truth! Listen to this passage: “Thy word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever” (Psa. 119:160). It is not the case that “some” of God’s Word is Truth, but the “sum” of God’s Word is Truth. “The sum of thy word is truth; and every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth forever” (Psa. 119:160, ASV).

God’s Word is right. “For the word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done in truth” (Psa. 33:4).

God’s Word is righteousness. “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness” (Psa. 119:172).

God’s Word is powerful. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Psa. 33:6).

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he

had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3).

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

God's Word is praiseworthy. "In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me" (Psa. 56:4). "In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word" (Psa. 56:10).

God's Word brings deliverance. "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Psa. 107:20).

God's Word fortifies. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa. 119:11).

God's Word is indestructible. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psa. 119:89). "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40:8). "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Psa. 119:160). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mat. 24:35).

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Pet. 1:24-25).

Following is one of my favorite poems which expresses the indestructibility of the Bible.

The Bible And The Anvil

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring a vesper chime;
When looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beatings years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I
"To we" and better all theme hammers so?"
"Just one." said he; then said with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And no, I thought, the anvil of God's word
For ages skeptic's blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone!

by John Clifford

God's Word is incorruptible. "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

God's Word gives direction. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). "Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psa. 119:133).

God's Word is the final all-sufficient revelation from God.

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

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3). "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psa. 19:7). "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

God's Word is pure. "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it" (Psa. 119:140). "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him" (Pro. 30:5).

God's Word purifies. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, am that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22).

God's Word in for all men. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Isa. 1:2). "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord" (Jer. 22:29).

HOW SHALL WE KNOW GOD'S WORD?

Paul Johnson authored the following.

Would I Study My Bible If...?

William McPherson had a charge of dynamite go off in his face. He lost his eyes and hands and the feeling in parts of his face. He realized how much the Bible meant to him and he greatly needed its strength.

He could not read it in Braille because of his artificial hands. He tried to place his lips on the dots, but they were numb. The metal left his lips and tongue bleeding and very sore, but he prayed to God to help him continue to learn just one letter of the alphabet. In the sixty-five years that followed, he read the Bible through four times with his tongue.

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

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

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

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

How many "if's" keep you from studying the Bible? Is this matter of no importance to you at all? If it is, then do something about it. That McPherson fellow—I guess his example will haunt me the rest of my life.

ARE WE WELLING TO FOLLOW GOD'S PATTERN?

From somewhere, man shall take direction. He shall either direct himself or follow the direction of another. That man cannot successfully direct his steps not only is obvious from experience, but also has been plainly stated by God's Word. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro. 14:12). "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Seeing we cannot, without great harm to ourselves, direct our steps; that is, our lives, should we not follow God's direction?

The only way God directs one's steps is through His Word (Psa. 119:105, 130). "Order my steps [make firm or establish] in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psa. 119:133). He certainly does not direct through the doctrines of men.

“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9). “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33).

Some say we are to follow Christ and not be concerned about what is written. The objection that we are to follow the Man (Christ) and not the plan is without defense. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). How are those steps revealed? Both the Man and the Plan are revealed in God's Word. How would we know the truth about Jesus and His example were it not for His New Testament? We must admit there is no other way but God's way as revealed through His Word (John 14:6). That being the case, we must be willing to allow God's pattern to be our guide.

To do so, we must put aside pride and presumption. We must humble ourselves to walk in God's way. Sadly, too many are too proud to submit their will to God's. They cannot truly say, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam. 4:6-7). We must never be too proud to seek God's direction. It seems some of those in the vanguard of the no pattern movement have been so acclaimed for their knowledge, eloquence and “scholarship” they have begun to believe they are above submission to God's will.

Consider these humble souls who pleadingly sought God's direction. Those who heard the Gospel on Pentecost: “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The Ethiopian eunuch.

And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him (Acts 8:30-31).

Saul on the Damascus Road. “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him,

Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”(Acts 9:6). The Philippian jailor. “And brought them out, and said, Sire, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

Were they willing to follow God’s pattern? Definitely so, for that is the way they sought! They did not think God’s Word was unnecessary or insufficient. They did not think it was clouded by their human frailty to discern the Truth when it was presented to them. They did not question whether it meant the same then as it did or would at some other time in some other culture. They were willing, ready and desperately anxious for God’s Word to direct them in every step in their walk of life. The only “transition” of which they were concerned was their transition from: (1) being lost to being saved, (2) being outside of Christ to being in Christ, (3) being out of fellowship with God to having fellowship with God, (4) having their sine charged to them to having remission of sins, and, (5) facing torment in Hell to fulfilling their hope in Heaven.

Neither were they seeking to obey some selected parts and reject other of God’s commandments. What man dare decide one commandment of God is important, and should be kept, while another is not, and may be disregarded with impunity. “All thy commandments are faithful” (Psa. 119:86). “Thou art near, O Lord, and all thy commandments are truth” (Psa. 119:151). “Thy word in true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever” (Psa. 119:160). “My tongue shall speak of thy word. for all thy commandments are righteousness” (Psa. 119:172).

These noble seekers of Divine guidance were not concerned someone might curl their lip and sneer at them while calling them a “legalist” because they obeyed God’s Law. Some of our own brethren speak of those who would hold to God’s pattern as: “little dying churches,” whose preachers are “knuckleheads,” and, much worse. Prejudiced men who rejected Christ called Jesus a winebibber and a glutton and one who cast out devils by the power of the Devil, but their calling him those things did not make Him so nor did it intimidate Him to alter His way. Those who love God will obey Him, doing His commandments, regardless of what men think or say. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John

14:15). John, the apostle, by inspiration, penned. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). Again, Jesus said: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46), and, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21).

That God's Word is His law, who can deny? “O how love I thy law! it in my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97). “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a door of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (Jam. 1:25). “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (Jam. 2:8). “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (Jam. 2:12). “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4).

Neither did these who sought God's rule have to wait for some uninspired man to push God off His throne that he might then tell them what God meant to say or should have said, explain away what God did say, redefine God's Word according to the “cultural changes” of the day and a “new hermeneutics,” or parrot the misguided infidelity of some dead German theologian who, if he followed his own teaching, has, by now, had considerable time in torment to reconsider his theology and to pray someone to be sent back to warn those who have swallowed his soul-damning doctrines.

WHY WOULD ANY SAY “THERE IS NO PATTERN”?

The words and deeds of those who say, “There is no pattern,” are generally consistent with those of “liberal” brethren; that is, those who would loose where God has bound. Supplanting God's will with their own will is a key. Their doctrine of “There is no pattern,” seems to accommodate their desire to do what is right in their own eyes. Regrettably, the picture of disobedience from Old Testament

times speaks too well of such actions: “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 17:6; cf., 21:25).

Such men would declare, “There in no pattern,” then go about to establish their pattern as the standard. They must restructure the guidelines to restructure the church. They have failed to defend their doctrines in debate; thus, they turn to ridicule, intimidation and alliances with denominationalists. They would burn the Holy Book on the altar of pseudo-scholarship to keep their crowds, pad their pockets, maintain their popularity and prestige and hide their lack of honesty and courage. From the ringleaders to the pitiable parrots and hapless hangers-on, they call for change (transition) to accomplish their devilish devices and depend on the ignorance (of what the Bible says) of those whom they dupe to follow them. If they practiced medicine, they could successfully be charged with malpractice.

We can know Truth. God has given us the pattern for Christian living which includes His Will concerning our remission of sins, growth in Christ, work and worship in His church, relationships with others, and preparation for Heaven. That pattern is found in His Word.

The Bible

This old book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its histories we true, its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding and its decisions we immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.

It is a traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the sailors compass, the soldier’s sword and the Christian’s charter. Here, Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened and the gates of Hell are disclosed.

Christ is the grand Subject, our good its design and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be open in judgment and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor and condemns all who trifle with its holy contents.

Author unknown