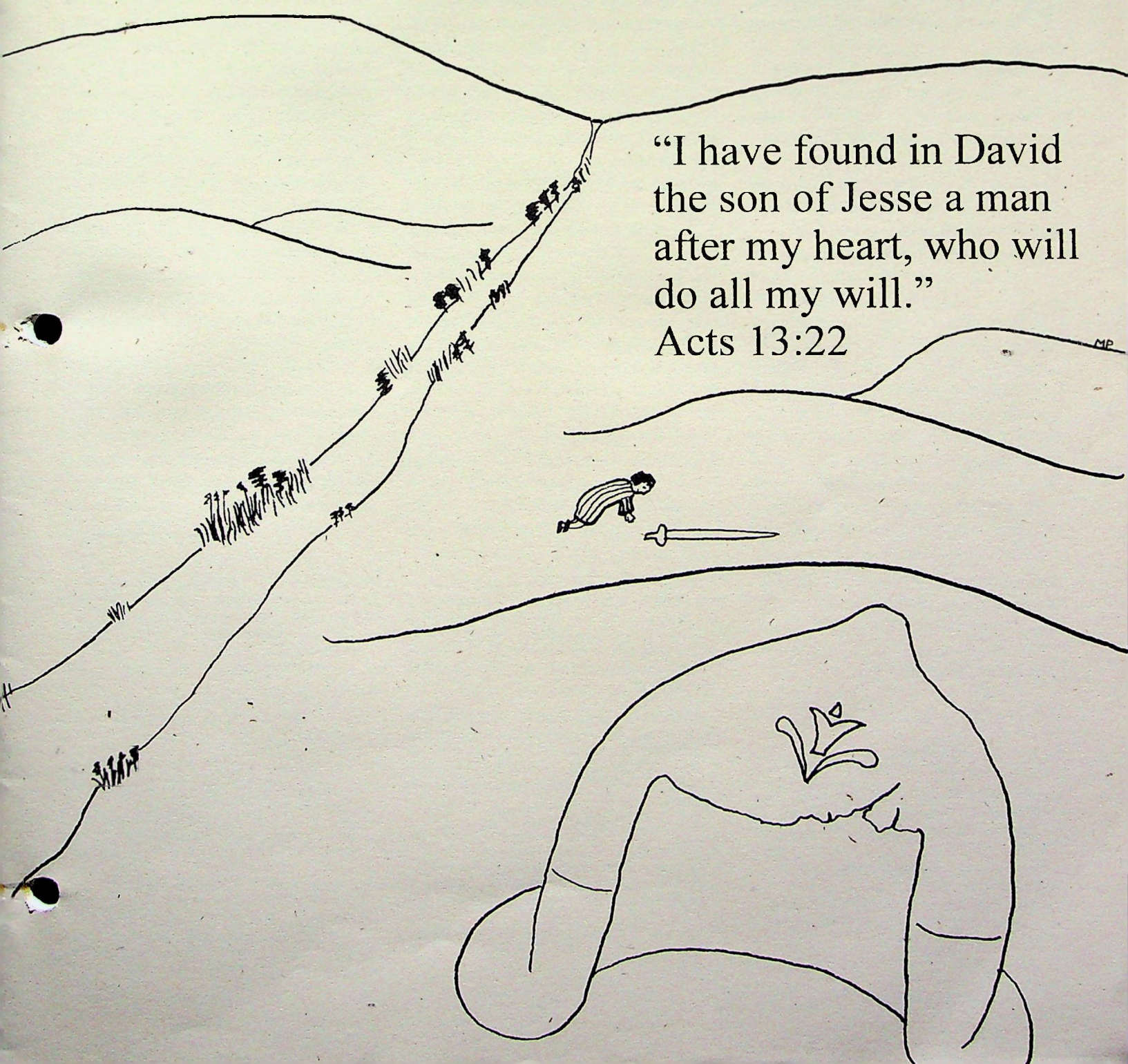


The Restitution Herald

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“I have found in David
the son of Jesse a man
after my heart, who will
do all my will.”
Acts 13:22



Of Shortstops and Kings

Recently my son (and I) learned a valuable lesson about faith and learning to trust our heavenly Father.

We were vacationing at the beach in Florida this summer. One day our family decided to visit the flea market. (Florida flea markets are absolutely wonderful.) There were stalls of vendors with everything from fresh fruits and vegetables (some of the best vine-ripened tomatoes I've ever tasted) to power tools.

The vendor that captured my son's attention was the baseball card guy. I can remember being nine years old and really discovering the joy of baseball, adopting a favorite team and a favorite player. My son had adopted the New York Yankees as his team and a young shortstop named Derek Jeter as his player. As his young eyes soaked in the stacks and stacks of cards and other baseball memorabilia, they landed on a special wooden plaque hanging on the wall. It had rough edges and a kind of unfinished look to it that made it strike me

as highly overpriced at \$5.00. But the thing that caught my son's attention was the card that was mounted on it . . . you guessed it, Derek Jeter. A Derek Jeter baseball card mounted on a rough wooden plaque with his name engraved under the card. I could see my son's eyes light up as he was already picturing how it would look on the wall of his bedroom.

As he began rummaging around in his pockets, seeing if he could scrounge up \$5.00 in tattered ones, quarters and pennies, I asked him what he was planning to do. "I'm gonna buy that Derek Jeter plaque . . . but I don't have quite enough money. Can you lend me the rest?" I think my answer surprised him. His dad's usually pretty soft-hearted, especially when it comes to things like favorite players and baseball cards. I said "no, son." A look of shock and disbelief appeared on his face. He stood there in stunned silence. Finally, when he had reacquired the ability to speak he said, "But dad, it's Derek Jeter . . . I really want that plaque . . . please!" My response

puzzled him as I said, "No, son, you're gonna have to trust me on this one. I think you'll be much happier if you buy something else with your money." He then went through what I can only imagine was a tremendous internal struggle. I imagine he was weighing his desire for the plaque against his experience with me as a loving father whom he has generally found reliable and trustworthy. Finally, we moved on to the next stall.

As we walked around the flea market that afternoon, there were a couple more times when he quizzed me about the "why" of my decision. Each time I smiled and said, "Son, you're just gonna have to trust me on this one."

Six weeks later it was his tenth birthday. The presents came out for the unwrapping. He began to rip through them . . . a Yankees baseball cap . . . a Yankees baseball shirt . . . a baseball glove . . . and one more . . . as he ripped into it his eyes got really big and a huge smile appeared. This was followed

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);

- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

A People Called Out

BY GARY BURNHAM—MCDONOUGH, GA

As I prepared for speaking this General Conference message I wanted to present the text and its application as all positive, but in good conscience I can't do that. I have a heavy heart as I speak on the subject of "A People Called Out."

If we really are a people called out, why don't I see more consistent evidence of that? Why isn't it more reflected in the lives we live individually? Even more, why isn't it reflected in our respect and treatment of each other as God's "called out" ones?

My heart is heavy also as I simply think about the value of preaching. Does preaching really matter? Locally? At a General Conference? Does preaching really challenge us to change our lives in a meaningful, significant way? Will preaching about us being a called out people result in us really living more like a called out people?

Further I wonder, why do we get together regionally and nationally? Does it really make a difference in our lives, especially in how we treat each other? Why doesn't the time we spend together better reveal the truth of our being called out ones?

I here verbalize my thoughts and frustrations to give you a better feel for where I am coming from.

An Intention to Challenge You

In my role as Controller for Atlanta Bible College/Church of General Conference, my performance is reviewed by President David Krogh. I remember some of the thoughts I shared with him during a performance review earlier this year. I said I was not interested — not for me personally,

not for the college/conference corporately — in business as usual. 10, 20, 30, 40 years down the road I want to see healthy change, in attitude and in action — reflecting the reality that as believers we are God's called out people.

In this message I intend to challenge your thinking to some degree, for some of you to a large degree. My fear, however, is that no matter how I express myself, some of you simply won't get it, but will find something wrong with it. I've finally found comfort in the recognition that your reception of this message is your responsibility and God's, not mine.

As you listen, I urge you not to evaluate me personally. In my humanness I'll always fall short. Evaluate if the message is true to Scripture. If it is, you have a responsibility to respond, not to me, but to Scripture.

The Bible Text

The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king." But Samuel said, "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me."

The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate." Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?" Samuel replied, "Yes, in

peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me."

Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD." But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these." So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep." So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one." So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah (1 Samuel 16:1-13, all Scripture from NIV).

Some Significant Problematic Observations

We sometimes use wrong methods of evaluation.

How does God evaluate? According to verse seven of our text, "The LORD does not

look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." That is the criteria God used in calling out David as king. I find it fascinating that not even David's oldest brother knew his heart: "When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, 'Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle'" (1 Samuel 17:28).

Was Eliab angry out of jealousy? Feelings of inferiority? Something else? I don't know. Whatever the reason, Eliab was not looking at David with a godly view. He wasn't interested in the condition of David's heart.

How about you? Do you really know the heart of the one you are evaluating? Or do you use other, faulty criteria? Do you evaluate on the basis of looks, background, race, popularity, or whether or not their views agree with yours?

I know that personally I sometimes rush to evaluate, especially when I remember a person's past performance and don't allow for the possibility that changes have taken place in their life. I forget to try to look into their heart.

How do you evaluate your fellow Church of God members, especially those with whom you have differences? Do you take time to look as deeply as you can into their heart? Do you care about what is in their heart? God does! There are people around you who have the call of God in their lives and you have not recognized it because you look at everything but the heart. You and I have no excuse for not making every effort to evaluate with God's criteria — the condition of the heart.

We sometimes hold back the power of God in another's life.

Look what happened when Samuel recognized God's call in David's life: "So

Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power" (1 Samuel 16:13). Godly power arrived after a godly person recognized the presence of God's call.

Could we be guilty here? Is it possible that we have stifled the work of God in others' lives by not recognizing — with our minds and with our tongues — His call upon them?

Too often I forget the value of encouragement. I wonder who in my life has been held back because I didn't encourage them to see God's call in their life.

Sometimes we in the Church of God encourage each other very well. Far too often, however, we do not. I shudder to think of how many people through the years have never reached the potential of their call of God, at least in part because of the lack of encouragement and support of fellow believers.

You and I have no excuse for not doing everything in our power to recognize the call of God in each other's lives.

We sometimes fall victim to the curse of sameness.

Even though he recognized God's call upon David's life, Saul tried to get David to operate in the same way he did:

Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you." Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine (1 Samuel 17:37b-40).

Saul saw something of God's work in David, but still tried to get David to do it his way.

Must others think, speak and act just like me? If so, what a sad, boring world that would be! This "cookie-cutter" mentality is not godly.

Personally I sometimes fail in this area when I think I'm right (know I'm right?). I still can struggle to appreciate diversity. There really are other (just as correct) ways of thinking, speaking and acting.

Corporately the Church of God struggles mightily in this area. This area may well be the single most dangerous aspect of our corporate mentality! Something you think, say or do is not right simply because you think it, say it or do it! Your interpretation of Scripture, your philosophy of ministry, your plan for voting at this General Conference's business sessions; none of these are right just because you think so! How dare you expect others to measure up to your standard before they are acceptable to you!

We have no excuse for not allowing God to express Himself differently in other people than He does in us.

The key issue in each of the three observations I've made is whether or not you have a closed, one-track mind. If we focus on the wrong things in another's life, we'll never see what we ought to see and what we need to see. If we don't look at and into another's heart, we'll evaluate in error. If we don't look for God's call in another's life, we'll not see it or encourage them in it. If we don't look for God at work in diversity, we'll never see it or appreciate it as diversity rather than error.

I'm extremely serious about the power of these three areas of which I've spoken to bring stifling oppression in the Church of God, and I hope you'll take my words seriously. Yet I'm also extremely serious about the positive aspects of the fact that God has called us out as believers to be His people. I'll briefly touch on three Scripture texts to emphasize the positive — a positive that I pray will grip you in the very depths of your being.

You Are a Called Out Child of God

God has called believers to be His people.

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

God has called you, anointed you, chosen you to represent Him to His world! Wow! Hear it again. God has called you, anointed you, chosen you to represent Him to His world. It’s exciting and scary at the same time. Am I really equipped for that? No, not in your humanness. But, yes, by His Spirit alive in your life, that is exactly what God has equipped you for.

God has designed you for, and calls you to, a special place of service in His plan for His world.

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:10, 11).

God didn’t just call you. He has made a special part, or several special parts, of you just exactly as He needs for you to best serve His world. You are part of God’s plan for reaching His world! When you comprehend this, I mean *really* comprehend this, you will never be able to look at yourself or another believer the same way again!

What’s more, this plan of God is far from some spur of the moment decision on His part.

From the beginning of time God planned how He wanted to use you to serve Him and His world.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

From the beginning of time God planned to call you and to design you to take part in His plan for the world. Once you become a believer, there is nothing more important in all of life than discovering who God made you to be and how He gifted you to serve.

There is a special illustration I heard several years ago that has indelibly imprinted into my heart and mind the truths I’m sharing with you. Close your eyes and imagine you are in a peaceful, quiet place, having a conversation one-on-one with Jesus Christ. It is an open, honest, soul-baring kind of interaction with Him. You listen and think intently as He asks you about your deepest longing for how you want to serve Him and the world. Finally, struggling to put your thoughts into words, you answer sincerely, with heartfelt emotion. Then you ask Him, “Do you understand my desire? Do you know what I’m talking about?” Jesus looks deep into your eyes and answers, “Of course I know. My Father Himself put that desire right there deep within your heart!”

Deep within you, planned in God’s mind before the world began, is God’s special plan for your life in His world. In your own quiet time with God and with Christ, look deeply within your life to discover, and then use, that special gifting that was planned for you before time began — nothing could be more important, nor more fulfilling.

Some Final Thoughts

I’m not naive enough to think one sermon will change the course of our lives, and therefore the course of the Church of God; only God can do that. But I am naive enough (actually I’d like to call it faith) to believe that if enough of us take this message seriously God will work a miracle in our personal lives, and ultimately in the life of the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith.

If you need to more consistently look at others’ hearts, rather than other forms of evaluation, get down on your knees and ask God to perform surgery on your heart, to prepare you to care not about another’s outward appearance, but about their heart.

If you need to verbally recognize God’s work in another’s life, so His power will come more fully upon them, get down on your knees and ask God to give you the strength and courage to speak encouraging words that will free up His power in their life.

If you need to appreciate diversity in thoughts, words and actions in others, get down on your knees and ask God to forgive you for being so full of yourself, and to help you see the wonder of how He works uniquely in others’ lives.

If you’ve never captured in the deepest part of your being that special gift and life call God has placed within you, get down on your knees and petition God with all of your heart to help you see yourself in the incredibly special way He sees you.

I’m convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that if we will do these things, we can see a move of God among us like we’ve never seen before, greater than we’ve even dared to dream about.

I’m committed to surrendering my life to God toward that end. I pray God’s powerful Spirit will prompt you to join me! □

A People of Active Faith

BY PASTOR ALAN CAIN — PELZER, SC

In Acts 13:22 God refers to David as “A man after my heart.” How was David “after God’s heart”? He acted on his faith and didn’t just talk about it! He was a man of faith in action. That’s what we want to be, people of active faith. How do we do that? Hebrews 11:1 teaches that faith isn’t only something hoped for, but also “the conviction of things unseen.” Let me paraphrase: “we need to be convinced of the unseen spiritual reality of who God is, and what He’s capable of.”

That is what made David who he was, when it came to Goliath. The whole army of Israel had heard Goliath’s taunts for 40 days, twice a day, and they were afraid. Yet, David hears it once and is ready to put an end to it... why? What was the difference? David was convinced of who God was *and* was convinced of what God had said and promised. Being convinced, i.e. having faith, he took God at His word and took on the enemy of God. I can’t help but think David recalled these words of God:

Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go (Josh. 1:7-9).

David, knowing this promise, took it at face value, took it in faith, or, as I’ve said, he was convinced that this statement was true and God would “grant success” against the enemies of Israel just as He said He would. Further proof that David believed it and Israel didn’t is that David was “strong and very courageous” (Joshua 1:7), and Israel was “frightened and dismayed” (Josh. 1:9). Compare 1 Samuel 17:11: “When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.” Isn’t it amazing that the exact same words are used? Israel was exactly what God told them not to be. Why? Because they were not convinced that God could do what He promised. Faith is being convinced that He could. David was a man of faith. When we are people of faith we will not only be convinced, but we will act on it because we are convinced!

So David, being convinced of these things, sees things differently. David possesses faith, “the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1), and hears things differently.

With that in mind let’s look at what was being said by Goliath that was being believed by Israel, that David sets straight.

Three deceptions put on Israel by Goliath:

1. Goliath was unbeatable (see 1 Samuel 17:4-7).
2. They were only Saul’s army (1 Samuel 17:8).
3. Goliath was only defying the ranks of Israel (1 Samuel 17:10).

David cleared up all three deceptions quickly. 1. Goliath was an enemy of God, an “uncircumcised Philistine,” and therefore beatable (v. 26). 2. They were the armies of the Living God, not just Saul’s (v. 26). 3. Goliath was defying the Lord of

Hosts, the God of Israel, not just the ranks of Israel (v. 45).

True believers do not believe the half-truths of the world but are convinced by the word of God and hold those truths up against the world’s statements. What Goliath said was not untrue: they were Saul’s army and they were the ranks of Israel, but that is not all they were. They were the armies of the Living God. We are not just Bethel Church of God (the church I pastor); we are not just the General Conference of Churches; although we are both. We are the churches, armies, of the Living God! WE NEED TO ACT LIKE IT IN FAITH! We have the same kind of promises David had to rely and act on. Take a look at these verses:

Matthew 16:18: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”

Rev. 11:15: “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.’”

We win. We prevail. Are you really convinced of that? If you were you wouldn’t just play church like Israel did with Goliath: “He came to the encampment as the army was going forth to the battle line, shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army” (1 Samuel 17:20b, 21). This was the 81st time they did this. They looked like an army, sounded like an army, dressed like an army, but they didn’t fight God’s battle! They played church like we do! We draw up at the battle lines every Sunday shouting the war cry and then run scared when the world stands against us. Let’s knock it off!

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A People of Confession

BY PASTOR JEFF FLETCHER—PONCHATOUOLA, LA

Confession has often been misunderstood and even distorted within Christendom. On one extreme there is the longstanding practice of the penitent making a visit to the confessional and offering a confession of sins to the priest. This was a prerequisite to participating in the holy Eucharist (communion). The priest possessed the authority to absolve people of their sins.

However, generally in the post-reformation churches, and in particular the Church of God, confession isn't given a great deal of attention. I don't recall hearing many, if any, sermons on confession.

So I was surprised but very pleased when, seven months ago, I was asked by David Krogh and the committee to preach this message about "a people of confession." I've been preparing myself for this message ever since. But long before this assignment was given the subject of confession was important to me. In fact, during the past 15 years I've given quite a lot of attention to confession and those issues which relate to reconciliation between ourselves and God, and each other. Really, I can confidently say that God has been preparing me throughout my entire ministerial career to give this message.

So, as this conference got closer, I felt pretty confident that I had a good handle on the subject of confession and what the Bible has to say about it.

But it seems that God had some things up His sleeve that I hadn't quite bargained on. It seems that He wanted me to go beyond my study and book learning and do a little experiential learning about confession and its role in reconciling relationships.

What I mean is this; in the two weeks immediately preceding this conference I

have found myself in the midst of three significant conflicts. Now, I am a person who really hates conflict and who goes to great lengths to avoid it (except for maybe an occasional theological debate). But I suddenly found myself overwhelmed with conflict situations — situations where some form of reconciliation needed to occur.

Let me explain. Two weeks ago I spent a week on staff at a summer youth camp. During the course of the week, some critical incidents occurred which were quite disturbing to me and which were left unresolved at the end of the week. I had to prepare myself for a confrontation; and I was hoping that there was a way out.

When I arrived home with this issue burdening me I discovered that elsewhere, nearly 1000 miles away, I was currently the subject of gossip. It began with someone sharing some confidential information about me, and in the process of spreading it turned to slanderous statements about my character.

Then, to top it all off, I learned that my neighbor, a lawyer, was in the process of suing me. I am in the process of putting up a fence around my yard, and he was claiming that the post holes that I had dug encroached on his property. He was disputing the validity of my survey results, and he was suing me for the cost of a new survey, court costs, damage to tree roots, and attorney fees (did I mention that he is an attorney?).

So here I was, suddenly surrounded by conflict, up to my neck in it with a fellow worker, my brothers in Christ, and my neighbor. "Why Lord? I don't have time to deal with all of these conflicts. I have too much to do to get ready for General Conference. I've got a sermon to finish." But

then it dawned on me. God had provided me with a laboratory to experientially put in to practice the things I'd been learning from the Bible about the necessity of confession in achieving right relationships with God and with other people.

As I began to deal with each situation it became obvious that confession, or its absence, would play a key role in the resolution of each situation. A little later I'll tell you what happened in each situation. First let's listen to what God's word has to say to us.

I believe that God's greatest priority is that we as human persons be in a right relationship both with Him and with other people. I also believe that the Bible teaches that the key problem which most often prevents us from achieving those right relationships with God and others is sin — not just that we commit sin, which of course is always a problem, but what really compounds the problem is that when we *do* sin our universal tendency is to cover up our sin, deny our sin, and try to blame other people for our sinful behavior.

This tendency of ours is not only universal, it is as old as the first people God created. God created the first man and woman to enjoy fellowship and intimacy with Him, and to enjoy a shared intimacy with each other. They were completely open to God and to each other. There were no secrets, no shame, and nothing was hidden. That's why Genesis 2:25 says that they were "naked, and were not ashamed." It was not just that they didn't need to cover up their bodies, but their hearts were laid bare before God and each other. There were no secrets.

But all that changed dramatically after they violated God's commands. Their first act of disobedience began a chain of events

which resulted in a complete breakdown of their relationships with each other.

The real problems began when they tried to cover up what they had done, first by sewing together fig leaves to cover their nakedness, and then by attempting to hide from God. This is our natural tendency as human beings. When we sin we want to cover it up, to try to hide it. I've seen this tendency in my own children. When they do something that they know they shouldn't, they try to cover it up, and when that fails, then they try to hide from me. They either try to hide physically so I won't see them or they try to hide their guilty face from me. What happens when they are no longer able to cover it up or to hide? What do they do then? They look around for someone else, usually a brother or sister, to blame. That is exactly what Adam and Eve did. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent and it cost them the beauty and joy of paradise, fellowship in the presence of God. They were cast out. It cost them a lot, but it would cost God much more. It ultimately cost God the life of His beloved son who would die 4000 years later so that people might have an opportunity to be reconciled to God.

It is the natural human tendency, a symptom of our fallenness, to cover up, deny or blame others for our sins. And so it takes a unique kind of person, a person after God's own heart, to honestly confess their sin before God.

Such a man was King David, truly a man after God's own heart.

We know a lot about David. We know that God anointed him to serve as King of Israel. We know all about his bravery and courage in defeating the giant. But it is in the story of David's weakness, of his utter humanness, and how he dealt with his personal failure, that we truly see why he was a man after God's own heart.

"It was the spring of the year." In the words of that favorite camp song, "What a wondrous time is spring, when all the trees are budding. The birds begin to sing, the flowers start their blooming." But in the ancient Middle East spring was the time of year when kings go out to battle, so it says

in 2 Samuel 11:1. It was the time of year when king David normally led his armies against his enemies. Except that this particular spring, David the king didn't go out to do battle. Instead, he sent his general, Joab, out to lead his people in war, while he, the king, stayed back home enjoying a life of ease at the palace.

What was going on in David's life? He had conquered the giant; he had survived Saul's numerous attempts on his life; he had served valiantly as the leader of Israel's army. He had been anointed king, first over the southern tribes and finally over the northern tribes as well, creating a truly unified kingdom. He had made Jerusalem both the political and the religious capital of the kingdom. He had subdued the Philistines. He had been promised by God that he would be the first in the line of a family dynasty, and that his seed would rule over Israel forever.

In addition, he had all the wives, servants, sons and all the power and luxury he could want. He was probably somewhere between 40 and 50 in age. Even today, this is often a time when a man finds himself at the peak of his career and personal power. It is often a time when men begin to get restless and uncomfortable with their lives and ask "is this all there is?" So in a sense we are looking here at King David's mid-life crisis.

So David didn't go out with his army this time. He stayed home. And one evening David finds himself restless, unable to sleep. So he gets up and walks around on the roof of his palace. Was it to pray? Was it to compose a new song of praise to his God? Was it to survey his beloved city and kingdom? We don't know why David was restless. But we do know that while he is up there walking around, high above the rest of the city, he looks down from atop the palace and sees a beautiful woman taking a bath.

He looks once. That's kind of a natural reaction for a man, to see a beautiful woman and look once, and admire God's wonderful handiwork. Adam took one look at Eve and said "Wow, man!"—woman. The real danger comes when you look not once, but

twice. (Men, you know what that's about. If you're out with your wife and a pretty woman walks by and you glance at her, that's okay, but if you look a second time, your wife's liable to hit you upside the head.)

Well, unfortunately David looked twice. His glance became a stare, and the stare became a snare. Before he even realized what had happened, David the King had lusted after a beautiful woman. As Jesus would later teach us, David had already committed adultery with her in his heart.

So he inquires about her. ("Who is this woman, is she married? If not, maybe I can get her to join my harem of wives. Oh, she's married? Doesn't matter, send for her anyway. Tell her the king wants to see her.") And so she comes. (After all, what woman could say "no" to the most powerful man in all the land?) She comes to him, and David, the anointed King of Israel, that man after God's own heart, the man who defeated giants and armies, the man with many wives of his own, the man who ought to be out there leading his own army, lies down with the wife of a man who is out there in battle, Uriah the Hittite.

And, as often happens in these situations, she becomes pregnant.

David must have thought to himself: "Oh, no! When her husband finds out he may kill her and the child, or if he discovers that I am the father of the child he may want to lead a rebellion against me."

So what does David do? He tries to cover it up. "I'll bring her husband back from the war, supposedly to inquire about the status of the battle. When he comes back I'll send him to his house. He'll sleep with her and, months later, when he returns from battle, he'll believe that the baby is his. What a clever idea."

But there's one problem. Uriah, noble Uriah, cursed noble Uriah refuses to enjoy the pleasures of home and hearth while his general and fellow soldiers are camping out in open fields at war.

So David tries to wine him and dine him. He gets Uriah good and drunk in order to lower his inhibitions and raise his libido

but even then noble Uriah refuses. What a good and decent man. It is a pity, because his decency will cost him his life.

The cover-up becomes more intense. David sends word to General Joab. "Put Uriah on the front lines, where the fighting is fiercest; then pull your men back, and leave him exposed, so that he might die."

This time, David's plan works. David receives word that Uriah is dead. And so Bathsheba mourns for her dead husband seven days, and then David brings her into his home to become his wife, and she gives birth to a son.

Only three people would have known the truth, and one of them is dead, and the other two aren't talking.

But David's heart is talking to him.

"While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me, my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer" (Psalm 32:3-4).

Inside, David is dying; his heart knows of his sin.

I'm reminded of a short story written years later by the poet of the macabre, Edgar Allen Poe.

In the story the narrator, in a fit of insane rage, kills an older man living in his home. Then he buries the body beneath the floorboards. When the police come to investigate the man attempts to cover up his actions, he engages in denial. Read for yourself what happens.

"I took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly so cunningly, that no human eye — not even his — could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out — no stain of any kind — no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. When I had made an end of these labours, it was four o'clock — still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, — for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the

police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises. I smiled, — for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search — search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim. The officers were satisfied. My MANNER had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears; but still they sat, and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definitiveness — until, at length, I found that the noise was NOT within my ears. No doubt I now grew VERY pale; but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased — and what could I do? It was A LOW, DULL, QUICK SOUND — MUCH SUCH A SOUND AS A WATCH MAKES WHEN ENVELOPED IN COTTON. I gasped for breath, and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly, more vehemently but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why WOULD they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men, but the noise steadily increased. O God! what COULD I do? I foamed — I raved — I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and

continually increased. It grew louder — louder — louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! — no, no? They heard! — they suspected! — they KNEW! — they were making a mockery of my horror! — this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! — and now — again — hark! louder! louder! louder! LOUDER! — 'Villains!' I shrieked, 'dissemble no more! I admit the deed! — tear up the planks! — here, here! — it is the beating of his hideous heart!'"

So ends "The Tell-tale Heart."

When King David was at his lowest point, when he was about to break under the weight of guilt, God mercifully, graciously confronted David through the prophet Nathan.

Nathan confronts David through a story about the abuse of power. He tells, what David believes to be a true story about a legal case, but which in reality is a parable, about a rich and powerful man with a large flock of his own sheep who steals a beloved lamb which his poor neighbor has kept as a pet, and kills it and eats it with his friends. David is outraged at the man's atrocious behavior.

It's a funny thing, but I've noticed that those sins of others which cause me the greatest anger are the ones for which I am the most guilty. We see most clearly in others the sins which belong to us. That's probably why Jesus cautions us not to hastily place judgment on others, we need to remove the two by fours from our own eyes before we can see clearly enough to take out the little specks in other people's eyes.

Soon, David's secret is out. The cover-up may have succeeded in fooling everyone else, but it didn't fool God.

John Stott has written "No matter how successful we may be at covering up our sins from ourselves or others, we can't

conceal them from God." Jesus said "Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops" (Luke 12:2-3).

One day, all the secret, unconfessed sins of our heart will be brought to light, if not now, in this age, then surely in judgment at the end of the age. But the longer we carry those sinful, unconfessed secrets, the more they damage our hearts and our relationships with God and others.

But God, in His great love and mercy, did not allow David to continue in the misery of his covered up sin any longer. So when Nathan confronts David, it is really an act of God's grace and mercy. A boil must be lanced before true healing can begin. The toxins must be released from our hearts before we can experience the blessings of forgiveness.

What does David do now that he's been confronted with his sin? What might we expect would happen next? The way the game has been played since the time Adam and Eve invented it the round after the cover up is blame!

"It was Bathsheba's fault. She had no business taking a bath in view of the King's roof. She enticed me on purpose. And I didn't force her to come to my palace. She was free to say 'no!'"

Or perhaps he might have said: "God, it's not my fault. I'm just a normal man and the way you created us we just can't resist that kind of temptation." Then the blame would be laid at God's feet.

That's how the game has always been played. But here is where David is different, and we truly see the stuff that David is made of. Here we see why David really was a man after God's own heart.

David wanted to confess his sin. David needed to confess his sin. So David said, quite clearly, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). Later David set his confession to music. Read the words from Psalm 51:4-6, 17.

There is no hint of blame, no offering of excuses, just a clear and unmistakable confession. Confession means to "say the same thing," to agree. David is in full agreement with God that he has transgressed God's laws, that he has missed the mark.

What a contrast David's confession was when compared to the confession of his predecessor, Saul (1 Samuel 15). When Saul defeated the Amalekites he had been told to destroy them all, every person, every animal. But Saul decided to spare Agag the king, and the best of the animals, to bring them up and have a sacrifice. The Lord became furious with Saul for his disobedience and sent Samuel to confront Saul (much as Nathan later confronted David). Under Samuel's questioning, Saul tried to cover over his sin by claiming he had carried out God's commands. Then Samuel called him on it "Why, then, do I hear the bleating of sheep, Saul?" Saul was like a little boy standing with chocolate all over his hands and face when his dad asks him "did you eat those cookies?" who says "no."

When Saul could cover it up no longer he then tried blame: "It was the people, they did it."

Finally Samuel said "Stop, I've heard enough!"

Saul finally does confess "I sinned against God and you, but it was the people's fault. They told me to do it. I never should have listened to them." (Here is a tragic picture of a weak leader listening to the voice of his followers instead of obeying God, and then blaming the people for his disobedience.) This was Saul's feeble attempt at a confession, but it was not a true confession. It still contained elements of blame. And God wouldn't forgive him.

God doesn't accept half-hearted or partial confessions. God wants a full confession, a broken-hearted contrite one. "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13, NIV).

The difference between Saul's confession and David's is that David fully agreed with God about his sin, he renounced his sin and he received God's mercy.

In response to David's confession Nathan the prophet speaks forth God's word of forgiveness: "Now the Lord has put away your sin." God forgives. His forgiveness does not mean that there would be no consequences to David's sin. The son that was born of that union died. There was much rebellion and death in David's family. Yet David was able to endure the temporal consequences of his sin, because his relationship with God had been restored.

Confession isn't a magic pill that makes everything perfect and o.k. Sometimes we have to live with the negative consequences of our sins, even after we have been forgiven.

Sometimes restitution must be made. When Zaccheus was reconciled to God in meeting Jesus Christ, Zaccheus agreed to pay restitution to those whom he had wronged, and he made a gift to the poor as an act of contrition.

The thief on the cross next to Jesus still had to experience the consequences of his sins and pay for his crimes by dying; however his relationship with God was restored through his faith in Jesus.

Confession doesn't necessarily eliminate problems or consequences, but it heals brokenness and it restores our union with God. (Read Psalm 32:1-2, and Psalm 51:7-12.) When we stop trying to *cover up* our sins, God is able to step in and *cover over* our sins. That's why He sent Jesus, to atone for our sins (read 1 John 1:9-2:2).

What happens once we clearly confess our sin and experience the forgiveness that comes from God covering over our sins? It leads to another confession. Once David had confessed his sins, he was then able to confess his faith.

Once he experienced the restoration of his salvation and a new and right spirit . . . "then" he says "I will teach transgressors your ways. and sinners will return to you . . . my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance . . . my mouth will declare your praise." Psalm 51:13-15.

Confession of sins, leads to forgiveness and restoration, and the result is a confession of faith. Romans 10:9 says "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is

Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Philippians 2 says that "at the name of Jesus Christ every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all."

The first confession, the confession of sins leads naturally into the confession of faith.

So, what about my three conflicts? What have I learned from them in my attempts of putting God's teaching about confession to the test?

In the incident where I had learned that confidential information about me had been shared, gossiped about, distorted and where I was being slandered . . . I tried to obey Jesus' words in Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you, if he listens, you have won your brother." I immediately contacted the individual to confirm that he had said what was said. He said he had, but he didn't believe he had done anything wrong. I told him I was offended by his words, that they were not true and that he had committed the sin of gossip. He tried to deny and then make excuses. So I called two other brothers and asked for their assistance. Later that evening I received a phone call from him where he confessed what he had done and sought my forgiveness. I forgave him and was humbled by his confession. Later I received another call from the one who had originally shared the confidential information with him . . . he also confessed and I forgave him. Two relationships were restored. God is good.

In the instance where I saw a need to offer correction to a brother in Christ . . . I tried to put into practice the words of Paul in Galatians 6. "If any one is detected in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore the brother in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted." This was much more difficult. I really had to search my heart and my motives to determine if they were right and true. Finally, I went to the person and offered a word of correction and restoration. But I had to confess my own sinful attitudes before I was able to focus on the other

person's needs. What I did not know was that God later placed it in the heart of two other individuals to also go and offer similar words of correction. In this case the process is still in progress and I pray it leads to a positive change.

In the final instance, with my neighbor who was suing me, I had been so angry with him, so filled with a heart bent on seeking revenge, that for a few days I was not able to look properly at the situation. But thanks to the loving and wise counsel of a friend I was able to look at my own heart. I discovered that I said things in the initial stages of the conflict that wounded my neighbor. I had been guilty of saying unkind words which further kindled his anger. I had been guilty of ignoring the second great commandment, to love my neighbor as myself. So the Lord laid it on my heart that I had to confess to him.

Here is where it got really rough. I wanted to make excuses. I wanted to justify myself for what I'd said, but then I realized that this would have only been a partial confession, like Saul's. I needed to make a full confession, with no excuses. But then I wanted to put it off. I felt I was so busy getting ready for conference I didn't have time to talk to my neighbor and confess. But I remembered Jesus words in Matthew 5:23 which says to make reconciling with your brother or sister a priority. "Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on your way to court." So I did. I confessed that I had spoken to him out of anger. Then I offered to recheck my holes, and if there was any place that was questionable, I would fill the holes back in. Within moments his anger subsided, and this lawyer, who only days before had been so angry with me that he took out a lawsuit, agreed to drop the lawsuit, and we solved the dispute as neighbors.

God taught me some painful lessons here, and He did it the hard way. But he showed me how, in each case, confession is essential in resolving conflicts and reconciling relationships.

Sometimes we need to be a Nathan, and gently confront someone and give them an opportunity to confess their sins. At other

times we need to be a King David, and stop trying to cover up our sins, and confess our sins, so that God can cover them over and restore his relationship with us.

Is there a relationship in your life that's damaged or broken? Chances are, it's because of a sin somewhere that someone is covering up. We can't experience true intimacy with other people when we're trying to cover up a sin in our lives . . . it just doesn't work.

All around us there are marriages that are falling apart. There are problems in our Churches. There are church members and pastors who won't speak to one another. There are places without real trust, joy, or fellowship. There are places where open sins are tolerated, and no one is willing to try to bring about restoration because it's too difficult. There are also people who are experiencing all kinds of problems and who need to be healed. Some need physical healing, some need emotional healing. I believe that in many instances the root cause of our infirmities is spiritual, just as David suffered physically and emotionally due to the presence of unconfessed sin, so do many in our churches. I believe that's why James instructs us to "confess our sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed." (James 5).

Brothers and sisters, God gave us His word for a reason — it works. If we are willing to obey His word and do what it says, we will experience all of it's benefits. Confession isn't an option for Christians, it's an essential. And we need not wait for a Nathan to come and confront us. We must search our hearts regularly and ask the Lord to reveal our sins, confess and renounce them, and then forget about them.

What about the confession of our faith? If I as an individual am having difficulty motivating myself to share my faith with others, or if my local Church is having difficulty getting the message of the gospel out, or if our Conference as a whole doesn't seem to be getting the job of getting the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ out . . . If we're not being obedient to God and confessing our

(continued on page 15)

A People Who Give Away Christ

BY WILLIAM D. LAWRENCE — PHOENIX, AZ

Our orthopedic surgeon, George, said one day, "It would be a cause of great pain if at the final judgment a good friend came to me and said, 'You mean you knew all this and didn't tell me?' That would really hurt!"

Today, I am speaking serious business. Our outreach and others' responses to that outreach are life and death for individuals and life and death for the General Conference.

There is no purpose or value to the General Conference if we don't follow Jesus' commandments. If our efforts don't lead people to accept Jesus as their personal savior, then all of our efforts are wasted. That's what it is all about!

We can love and teach the truth, and one can know much — even have phenomenal knowledge about God and His Son Jesus — and never personally accept Jesus or worship God. When we first visited Israel, our guide (a Holocaust Jew) knew many scriptures and much about the life of Jesus — yet he was agnostic. We can plant churches, maintain Atlanta Bible College and the General Conference, and even see these thrive, but this is all in vain unless people say to God, "I am a sinner, without recourse, and no matter what I do or how much Bible truth I understand and believe, I'm lost. I accept the death of your son Jesus as the payment for the penalty of my sin."

After lost people make that statement to God, I believe: 1. That they become saints; 2. That they should be tremendously thankful to God and Jesus for their respective sacrifices; 3. That they should want to obey Jesus' commandments — mainly to love; 4. That they should want to learn more about Him; 5. That they should desire the filling of the Holy Spirit He promises; 6.

They will want to respond to His death, burial, and resurrection by being baptized by immersion; 7. That they will look forward to being caught up to meet Jesus as Paul said in First Thessalonians; 8. That they will return with Him as described in Revelation; and 9. They will live in the hope that they will be with Him forever in His Kingdom on His renewed Earth. Praise God for that!!!!

Without that scenario — you may describe it differently than I have, but the basics all have to be there — there is nothing. If a person has not declared that statement to God with confession and repentance, he is lost — doomed to the lake of fire.

In relation to Jesus, people fall into several classifications: 1. Billions of people who don't know because they have never heard — most of them worship idols, false gods, or false leaders. At a recent medical meeting I sat next to an Afghan doctor who, when queried, said there were "no Christians in Afghanistan. We are all Muslims." I'm sure there may be a few Christians, but can you imagine whole nations without Jesus? 2. Those who have heard of Jesus but not in a meaningful context and are therefore neutral. This includes most of the people in North America. 3. A small group who have heard and rejected — several of our personal friends probably fit this description. 4. A medium-sized group — in relation to the six billion there are in the world — who have heard and accepted but are not enjoying a personal relationship with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. This often occurs because they do not want to be disciplined — they want to go their own way. 5. Another small group have heard and accepted and are enjoying a Holy Spirit-filled life. Acts

2:4: "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:14: "Peter and the eleven stood up and preached." And verse 41, "and about three thousand were added to their number that day." Praise God!! That was a day of joy I'm sure. Romans 15:13 says, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

It is Mardy's and my prayer, and the prayer of others, that we in the General Conference can concentrate on outreach to all these groups, but especially today to concentrate on groups 2, 3, and 4. The concept we'd like to introduce you to can be described as thoughts that just touch on the subject of God and or Jesus with our friends, relatives and co-workers. We are convinced that if all of us could dedicate ourselves to this people would be saved and then, with the Holy Spirit in their lives, they could be baptized and embrace the truth which we all believe and which is so logical.

Even though the Bible states several instances of rather rapid presentations and acceptances of the gospel, such as Paul and Silas and the jailer with his family, or Peter with Cornelius and his family, we are going to suggest far less, perhaps simply a mention of God, or Jesus, or maybe just a single truth about them. The name "Jesus" carries power. I was brought to that truth some years ago and, whenever I appropriately can do so, I use the word "Jesus" — more than I say "the Christ" or "the Lord" or whatever. Just "Jesus"! His word or even just His name will not come back void. Just His name, mentioned with reverence and truth, is powerful.

Mardy and I scratched our brains to bring to mind common statements we all

hear from friends, relatives, and co-workers, and prayerfully sought responses which we think will honor God and Jesus and, we pray, pique the interest and/or curiosity of these friends, relatives, and co-workers. We have compiled these statements and responses in a little booklet that you will all receive in the mail. Maybe God will use these brief statements to initiate or re-awaken His call to those we all want to see accept Jesus as their personal Savior. In many instances our statements in the book-

let were put together with the idea that possibly these are the only meaningful statements about Jesus these important people in our lives will ever hear. If you don't do it, who will?

During a General Conference meeting in Indiana 30 years or so ago, I was called to the phone to hear the words "your friend Bill Valle is dead of a sudden heart attack." Bill was born into a Catholic family and trained in Italy as a doctor. He had me as a teacher as he learned OB-GYN and set up

his practice. We were close. To my knowledge, I was the only Christian in his life who could have introduced him to Jesus as his Lord and Savior. I never got around to telling him. I'm afraid he is lost, and I'm still sad that I did not tell him about Jesus.

I challenge everyone in the Church of God to be a people after God's own heart and I exhort everyone to become a people who give away Christ. □

A People of Active Faith (continued from page 6)

Like David did that day, we must use weapons that God has fashioned to do God's work. David rejected the armor of Saul but took a stone from a stream that God had smoothed to a perfect aerodynamic shape, so that David could get the velocity needed to sink it into Goliath's thick skull. So must we get it through our thick skulls that we do not fight fire with fire. We are to use spiritual weapons.

2 Corinthians 10:3, 4 says, "Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments."

Isaiah 54:17 says "No weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper, and you shall confute every tongue that rises

against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, says the LORD."

What we need to know: 1. Things that oppose God are beatable. 2. If you look, sound, dress, train and smell like an army but don't fight the enemy, are you really an army? Playing Christian doesn't count. 3. You are not just a church, or an individual Christian, you are a member of the army of the Living God! When you are "attacked" in any way, whatever is attacking is not just defying you, but defying the Lord of Hosts! 4. Our weapons need to be ones fashioned by God's hand, like prayer, God's Word, worship, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self control . . . to name a few. 5. We *must* act on our convictions or we're losers . . . worse than that, we

aren't victors! Acting in faith doesn't mean that we will come out of "battle" unscathed, but I would rather go out in a blaze of glory fighting a giant for God than live to a ripe old age in lukewarm mediocrity and be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord, with a statement like, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46).

I would rather have this on my tombstone: "Here lies Alan, who died fighting a big old ugly giant for God" than "Here lies Alan; he died."

Let's have faith. Let's be convinced of who God is and of what He has promised in His Word. For if we are *truly* convinced, we will not be afraid to act on it! □

Editorial (continued from page 2)

by a running bear hug that nearly knocked me over. It was what looked like a trophy, with a baseball player holding a bat. The finish was black, marbled and smooth. There was a baseball card mounted on it, a Derek Jeter "Rookie" card, and his name embossed below the picture.

As my ten-year-old boy studied his new prized trophy of his baseball hero, something clicked in his mind. "Now I know why you wouldn't let me buy that plaque at the flea market . . . you had something better waiting for me all along."

What I knew at the flea market, while my son studied a poorly made, overpriced plaque . . . was that I already had something

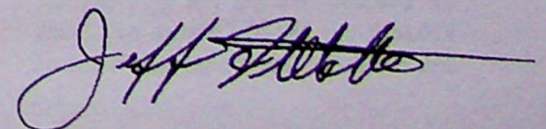
far better waiting for him. All he had to do was be patient and trust me.

That is the essence of faith. God wants us to be in a loving and intimate relationship with Him where we trust Him. Whatever temporal things we may think we want or need now pale in comparison with the glorious blessings of His Kingdom that God has prepared for us. I think that's why Jesus impressed upon us not to run around worrying about all the things we want or need, but instead, to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.

"If you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how

much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?" (Matthew 7:11).

In this issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD we learn some lessons about faith and courage through the life of David, the shepherd king. These messages are adapted from those originally presented at this year's annual General Conference of the Church of God, in Atlanta, GA. I pray that you find in them inspiration to strengthen your faith in your walk with God. □



Becoming a People of Prayer

BY JODI WERHANOWICZ—PHOENIX, AZ

In August, 1994 the Lord put His finger on my prayer life. He convicted me that while I was diligent and disciplined about Bible study, service and personal devotions, I was completely remiss when it came to prayer, especially praying consistently for others. Recognizing my weakness, I began to pray that He would make me a pray-er. He has been nudging me about it ever since. But I must confess, my obedience has been less than enthusiastic. When the Lord really wants to impress something upon me, I get asked to write or speak about it. So I was not at all surprised when I was asked to speak on "People of Prayer" at General Conference this year.

In preparation, I read books, talked about prayer with others, searched the subject out in scripture and prayed. Coincidentally, my close friend, Sally, was also preparing to speak on prayer at a women's retreat. We compared notes. Sally said something very intriguing: "God never says no to His children." What could she mean? I certainly thought I had heard "no" quite a few times.

Sally and her husband have a free counseling ministry, which means they live on faith. They have no income except as the Lord moves others to contribute to their ministry. How could she, who so often does without, make a statement like that? She explained:

The Bible says that the Spirit intercedes for us in prayer because we don't even know how to ask and that God gives us whatever we ask. Once I asked for \$10,000. He did not give me the \$10,000 but He did assure my heart and mind that He would take care of

me. The Lord knew that my heart was crying out for security and peace. He always says yes to what we need, not necessarily to what our flesh seeks.

Jesus' prayer for the disciples in Matthew 6:9-13 seems like a logical place to go for a study on prayer. Why were the disciples asking Him to "teach" them to pray? The Jews were very diligent and religious about prayer in those days. The disciples recognized that Jesus had deep wisdom, by then some may even have suspected that He was the Messiah. What they wanted to know was, "how do we do it right?" They wanted the *rules*, because that was what they had lived with for generations.

In the first two words, "Our Father," Jesus showed them, and us, that there aren't any rules. We just come to the Father. Becoming a people of prayer begins in our hearts. Prayer is about a *relationship* with a loving and very available Father. If you had that kind of access to a powerful figure, say the President, wouldn't you go often to express your concerns and requests? Well, we not only have access to One who is all-powerful but who also sees our hearts and gives us "more than we ask or imagine." He just wants us to come to Him, freely, boldly, eagerly and often. Just as any father would with the child he adores. "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4).

In January of this year I traveled to India and my heart broke. The poverty and hardship are overwhelming. One's first impulse is to try to fix it by throwing money at them. But my friends in organizations like Food for the Hungry, and Harvest International had warned me about aid given poorly. Genuine concern and good intentions don't make up for aid which hurts

more than it helps. And I knew about the Church of God's experience with the problems money had caused in India and elsewhere. So I went with an attitude of caution, asking the Lord what I could do. I felt so helpless because I *did* want to help. The people soon showed me what I could do. It is the same thing that everyone in this room can do; that anyone, no matter how young or old can do.

The people asked for the thing they wanted and needed most... prayer. After I would speak, the people were told they could come up and ask questions. And they did come and formed a single line. They did not ask questions; they weren't there to thank me. Each one of them was there to ask me to pray for them. They weren't just laying a pile of requests in my lap; they wanted me to pray with them and for them, right then and there. The first time this happened I was quite taken aback, but I gradually got used to it, and came to like it. I began to think that I shouldn't really be speaking at all but just show up and pray. They know the power of prayer, they often have nothing else. Man's wretchedness before God is obvious in India; in North America we cover it over with abundance, activity and achievements.

Wonderful things happened in answer to prayer. The first answer I saw was when I taught at a gathering of neighbors in a home. Few people in India have access to transportation. Because they are so poor, churches tend to be small and located in homes. A widow who came that night had long been feeling a call to use her life savings to add a room to the roof of her house for a church. Her son and his family, who lived with her, were unbelievers and opposed to the idea. She wanted me to pray that they would let her build her little

church. The next day, with nothing having been said to him, her son came to her and told her to go ahead with her plan! I wish I had time to tell you all the stories.

I found a book on prayer on top of a pile on a table in a little bookstore in India. It was amazingly relevant, one of God's "co-incidences." The book is called, *You Can Touch the World Through Prayer* and is by an English missionary to India, Wesley L. Duewel. In it he says,

God has given you a way to make your presence count, a way to be a true partner in His kingdom's work, if you really want to be. The average Christian can have a greater influence for God than the average Christian of any previous generation.

This is an exciting time in our history. More believers are living today than at any other time. Christ's church has spread into more areas of the world, praises God each week in more languages, and is witnessing to or is in contact with more people than ever before.

Through the tremendous media of radio, television and literature we have the facilities to speed up God's work beyond anything we have yet known.

We can reach the farthest nations more quickly, we can present the gospel in more languages, and we have the means to recruit and guide prayer for the whole world more efficiently. We can reach our world, if we will. The greatest lack today is not people or funds. The greatest need is prayer. Without increasing the number of Christian workers or their financial support, we could see multiplied results if we would only multiply prayer.

The greatest power available to the children of God is prayer. I do not believe we have to travel to India or Africa or anywhere else to impact the lives of the people there. We can, as Duewel says, touch the world through prayer, right from our own hearts and homes.

We have been talking this week about David and being a people after God's own heart. We hope to be a people who can get into God's heart for others in prayer. We have a wonderful model of prayer in David. As we read the Psalms we see what an intimate relationship he had with our Father! What was it about David that made him such an ardent and effective man of prayer?

A Bible teacher once explained it this way: God offered Solomon, David's son, whatever he wanted. And what did Solomon ask for? He asked for wisdom to guide God's people. This seems like a very noble and righteous request. But why is it that we hear very little of Solomon in the bulk of scripture and so much of David? Jesus is not referred to as the son of Solomon, though He was. Yet He is referred to as the son of David. And while Solomon's request pleased God, He never says of Solomon, as He did of David, "He is a man after my own heart."

I wonder if God might not have given David the same offer as He did Solomon. We don't know, but I believe we do have insight into what David's response would have been and I believe it is the key to being a people after God's own heart. In Psalm 27:4, reading from the Living Bible, David says, "The one thing I want from God, the thing I seek most of all, is the privilege of meditating in His temple, living in His presence every day of my life, delighting in His incomparable perfection and glory." The one thing that David wanted was God Himself. When that truly becomes our heart's desire, then we, too, will become a people after God's own heart, a people of prayer. □

A People of Confession (continued from page 11)

faith... perhaps it's because we have sin in our lives we've been covering up, or making excuses for, or blaming others for... when we need to be confessing.

Remember, Confession of sin leads to forgiveness and restoration of relationship, which leads to Confession of Faith.

It's time for judgment to begin with the household of faith. If we stop covering up

our sinful attitudes and agree with God that they are wrong, then we can stop wasting away like David did and experience the new life and vitality that comes from being cleansed and refreshed and revitalized by God... then our confession of Christ will be filled with God's spirit and His joy, and the people of the world who are in desperate need of confessing their own sins will

have a real chance to come to know the Christ that we love and who died to cover over our sins and make us whole.

Let us be a people after God's own heart, a people like David the king, who stop covering up our sins but rather confess them, without excuse, and who experience the joy of God's forgiveness and are free to confess Christ. □

A People of the Word

BY PAULA KIRKPATRICK — HECTOR, MN

The cold damp weather outside was very different from the atmosphere inside the palace. There, king Jehoiakim, king of Judah, arrayed in his elegant robes, sat comfortably before a crackling fire, enjoying its pervading warmth. As he relaxed contentedly, an official read to him from a scroll. The words it contained were from Jeremiah, written down by his scribe Baruch. To an outsider who might glance into the room, it seemed a peaceful picture.

But, oh, such casual glances can often be deceiving. As Jehudi, the spokesman, continued in his reading, the king's face began to deepen in color, contrasting with the whiteness of his knuckles as he gripped the sides of his throne. His eyes flashed with indignation, and suddenly he swept off his seat, seized a scribe's knife, sliced the scroll in pieces, and threw it all into the blazing fire. He would not listen to these blasphemous words about his rule and his kingdom. How dare the prophet Jeremiah predict doom for his people, and pronounce dire judgment upon him! It was of no matter now. The words were destroyed, the flickering sparks fast turning to cold lifeless ashes. The words, God's words, were gone. They would be no more.

But King Jehoiakim did not understand. God's Word does not die; His words do not disappear with a toss into the fire. The king wanted to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah but the Lord hid them away. And, under the instruction of God, Jeremiah again dictated to Baruch the words contained in the first scroll as well as specific judgments against King Jehoiakim. The Lord decreed that the king of Babylon would certainly

come and destroy the land of Judah, and guaranteed that Jehoiakim's lineage would no longer sit upon the throne of David.

What a twist! By burning the words of the Lord, Jehoiakim destroyed his own legacy. His family was cut off, his country taken captive, but the word of the Lord survived.

Perhaps Isaiah says it best in Isaiah 40:8: "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."

The Bible began as oral literature thousands of years ago, as the blessings, commands, and plans of God were shared from generation to generation. As time passed, God commanded His messengers to write down His words. Moses wrote down the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. Jeremiah, his scribe Baruch, and many prophets of old inscribed the words of God on scrolls of parchment. In fact, the Bible story just recounted contains the only description in the Old Testament concerning the actual mechanics of recording prophetic literature (Jeremiah 36:4).

The words were preserved, and painstakingly copied by hand through much of the Middle Ages, in order to be shared.

The invention of the printing press revolutionized the distribution of God's Word. No longer would the Bible belong only to a handful of people or religious leaders. Everyone could own a copy. That is, everyone with religious freedom.

Down through the ages, people around the globe have been denied access to the Scriptures. Their hunger for God's Word has been great. When restrictions were first lifted in the Soviet Union, the demand

for Bibles during one appeal was 30 million. About that time, the story is told of a taxi driver in Russia who was offered rubles and a Bible for payment by a US citizen. The driver's face broke into a grin, as he said, "Forget the rubles; the Bible will be enough. There is revival in our country today, and everyone must find his own way to God."

Why? Because the Bible is a book unlike all others. It is a divine revelation, a progressive revelation, of God to man.

Henrietta Mears says in her book *What the Bible Is All About*,

The Bible is one book, one history, one story, His story. Behind ten thousand events stands God, the builder of history, the maker of the ages. You can go down into the minutest detail everywhere and see that there is one great purpose moving through the ages, the eternal design of the almighty God to redeem a wrecked and ruined world.

And so God commands us to read His book, study His Word, understand His story. It should be a part of our lives, a part of our growth process in the Lord. Paul's admonition to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-15 stresses this:

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul reminded Timothy that as a child Timothy had heard the Scriptures, and as he grew older he had become convinced of the Scriptures, but that was not the end—he must continue in the Scriptures for the assurance of salvation. Why?

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

Pastor John Railton, commenting on this verse in his November 1997 church newsletter, says this:

We have the scriptures “so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Doesn’t it stand to reason that God’s people will be busy doing God’s work? Can this Scripture be taken any other way? In fact, those of you in leadership positions shouldn’t have to always be searching for someone to serve. You shouldn’t have to be asking people to do things in ministry. You shouldn’t have to talk people into it. We shouldn’t have to feel guilty asking people to do things, knowing they’re busy already.

We are the people of God. He can and does equip us thoroughly. Everyone of us should stand ready to work, volunteering to use our skills, anxious to be asked.

Why? Because as our General Conference theme states, we are a people after God’s own heart, and we are called to grow to spiritual maturity. And it all begins by first becoming a people of the Word. When we study, and know, and live God’s Word, we will naturally become a people of prayer, of faith, of confession, of evangelism, and of worship—the themes that will be addressed in the next few days. But spiritual maturity will always require, as its foundation, the daily sustenance of God’s Word.

The children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. As they were

preparing to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land, Moses began to give them the words of preparation and instruction that God had given him:

All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your forefathers. And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord (Deut. 8:1-3).

Why did God feed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness? They did not know what it was, but they knew it was provided by God. Slowly, day by day, as they gathered it, they came to understand their dependence upon God and His commands.

And so it is with us. The Bible is our manna today. We must learn to live not just with the routine of the world, but by everything that proceeds from the mouth of God, given to us in His book. And just as the Israelites gathered the manna each day, so we must partake of God’s Word daily. They could not save the manna, or it would spoil. If we think we can live in this world with a once a week or less feeding of His Word, we too will spoil and begin to fall away from the will of God. We need His daily sustenance. In fact, the teachings of the Bible should permeate every part of our daily lives.

Three years ago, I was privileged to take part in a community theater production of “Fiddler on the Roof.” Most of you are familiar with the story, set in the small village of Anatevka, Russia in the early 1900s, where the Jews are struggling to

survive. The main character, Tevye, is a “character,” so to speak. Nevertheless, he strives to follow his belief in the Word of God, and let it guide the decisions and struggles that confront him each day. As I said, he *strives*, and if you’re familiar with the story, often he strays. But, the much-used phrase he begins his statements with is “The Good Book says.” Perhaps sometimes, in Tevye’s mind, he could get the Good Book to say any number of things, but the point is, the Word of God was his constant companion and impacted every part of his humble life.

And every part of the Bible should impact our lives as well. The doctrines of the Bible that we believe, accept, and that daily guide us, aren’t complicated. The number one meaning of doctrine in Webster’s dictionary is teachings. Doctrine is, simply put, the teachings of the Bible. If there are individuals who say doctrine is overemphasized, then we are saying that the teachings, *all* the teachings of the Bible, including love, grace, evangelism, are overemphasized. If that is true, what are we basing our lives, our existence on?

We must stand firm on the Word of God. It gives us our foundation; in it we find our reason for living; in it we find our Creator; in it we find our identity.

The identity of the people of Anatevka was found in a little box attached to the door post of the home, a mezuzah by name, that carried the words of God, specifically Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.” Whenever an actor would go in or out of the house, he or she had to remember to touch the box and then kiss his or her hand. It was a ritual of reverence for God’s Word, a ritual of remembering the past, as Deuteronomy 6 instructs, a ritual of longing, of yearning, for the promises of God’s Word to be fulfilled.

Down through the ages, people have experienced this strange sense of longing. David’s Psalms often revealed this feeling within his heart. C.S. Lewis, in his book *The Weight of Glory*, used the word *sehnsucht* to describe this mysterious yearning. He says, “In speaking of this

desire for our own far-off country, which we find in ourselves even now, I feel a certain shyness. I am almost committing an indecency. I am trying to rip open the inconsolable secret in each one of you — the secret which hurts so much that you take revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence.” Artist Wendy Lawton says this yearning is what gives inspiration to her work — “the inconsolable longing that God has hidden within me for a sense of place, a sense of time, and a sense of connectedness.”

I know I have felt this longing. Usually about late summer, early fall, a sense of yearning, a desire to connect, to reach something, somewhere, overtakes me. Until I read the thoughts of others I have quoted here, I felt I was very alone in these feelings.

C. Austin Miles encountered this same sense of yearning, of longing, but he knew where to find the answer, the fulfillment for his longing. C. Austin Miles was the author of the familiar gospel hymn “Dwelling in Beulah Land.” Now, in the Church of God, there are usually two opinions concerning this song. You either love it or, shall I say, dislike it. But I dare to offer another opinion — *my* opinion. I think the song is often misunderstood. When you truly look at the words, listen to the words, you learn that C. Austin Miles was describing a sense of place, a sense of time, a sense of connectedness in the Word of God. Within the Scriptures he found a haven, a higher plain, an answer to his yearning.

Isaiah 62:4 says God shall call restored Zion “Beulah,” because He will delight in her and so this land shall be married. But the beginning of the verse emphasizes that no longer would God’s people be termed

“Forsaken,” or their land “Desolate.” Dwelling in the Beulah land of God’s Word, our deep yearnings are quieted; we no longer feel forsaken, disconnected.

Consider the words of C. Austin Miles:

Far away the noise of strife upon my ear is falling,

Then I know the sins of earth beset on every hand:

Doubt and fear and things of earth in vain to me are calling,

None of these shall move me from Beulah land.

Far below the storm of doubt upon the world is beating,

Sons of men in battle long the enemy withstand:

SAFE AM I WITHIN THE CASTLE OF GOD’S WORD RETREATING,

Nothing then can reach me, ’tis Beulah land.

Let the stormy breezes blow, their cry cannot alarm me:

I am safely sheltered here, protected by God’s hand:

HERE the sun is always shining, here there’s naught can harm me,

I am safe forever in Beulah land

Viewing here the works of God

[Where else do we learn about creation, and the future perfection of the Kingdom?]

I sink in CONTEMPLATION, hearing now his blessed voice, I see the way he planned:

Dwelling in the Spirit here I learn of full salvation

(God’s perfect plan repeated throughout the Bible)

Gladly will I tarry in Beulah land.

“Tarry” is an old-fashioned word. Webster’s says it means linger; stay for a time, especially longer than intended. And why wouldn’t you want to when you’re dwelling in the Word of God?

I work part-time at our public library, and often when a patron brings back a book he or she will say “I didn’t want it to end. I could just lose myself in the story.” How many of us lose ourselves in the Word of God? How many of us have gone beyond the daily K-rations, to find the abundant feast that awaits us? How many of us have found our inconsolable longings answered in the sweet delights of God’s Word?

Psalm 19:10 says the Word of God is “sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.” Israel loved honey, but around Hector, Minnesota we love sugar, (especially because we have sugar beet growers in our congregation). The best sugar I’ve ever tasted was at the Beet Sugar Cooperative Plant, when it was warm, sweet, fresh, and pure. It was addictive. You wanted to taste more and more. That’s the way the Bible should be in our lives.

Man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. By the living Word of a holy God. By our survival guide, our daily manna, in this wilderness we call life.

A humorous quote says “Life is a test; it is only a test. If this were your actual life, you would have been given better instructions.” We do have the instructions, right here in God’s Word. We just need to read them, to live them, to lose ourselves in the beauty and wonder of them.

Psalm 119:14-16 says, “I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Thy precepts, and regard Thy ways. I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word.” □

Worship: Missing Jewel of the Church

BY PASTOR JIM GRAHAM — PHOENIX, AZ

“You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life” (John 5:39, 40).

Worship has been called the “Missing Jewel” of the church. This description evolved from the observation and evaluation of a church that often appears in crisis. We keep asking: “What is missing? What dynamic is absent? What element are we overlooking?”

We have teaching, although often without passion, depth, commitment, priority or relevance. We have fellowship, although it suffers from the time and emotional demands of modern society and the livability of one another. We have tried numerous programs of evangelism, and discipleship, both large group and small.

Perhaps this is just my observation but I believe the real problem is this: we have failed to truly worship. I am not talking about what we do during an hour every Sunday. I am talking about worship, giving worth to God.

Deuteronomy 6:20 is a text that comes after the great Shema of Israel: “The Lord God is the One and Only God.” This Shema was a call to worship God. Later, the question is asked, “How do you teach laws and principles of God?” Israel is told to tell the stories of faith. Truth is revealed in the narratives of the community of faith.

Genesis 13 recounts an important faith story that relates well to worship. Its two main characters are Abraham and Lot. Abraham had left his country, his people and his household with his nephew Lot. By the way, all of this happened when he was already 75 years old! (Shame on you who want to quit working for God too soon.)

Every good story has conflict. In this story conflict erupts over the grazing rights between their herdsmen. It developed because they both had prospered (see vv. 2 and 5). There’s an important lesson here: we always prosper when we follow God’s way.

This problem required a solution. Verse 8 tells us that Abraham sought to preserve “familial shalom,” peace and unity, because they were kinsmen—brothers. How does he accomplish this? Verse 9 says that Abraham gave up his rights. WHY? He gave Lot authority: he submitted to a greater good—peace and unity in the family. We will never have unity until we give value to a greater good—worship.

And now for “The Rest of the Story”: Lot chooses the fertile plains and Abraham ends up with the less fertile lands (v. 10). Lot got Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham got the land of Canaan (v. 12).

From this marvelous story we glean a great truth: Abraham worshipped God. How did Abraham worship? He gave up country, family and wealth (Gen. 12:1). He prospered, was given a new country and family. You cannot out-worship God! He gave up his rights and submitted to God.

Now, let’s look for a moment at the enemies of worship:

#1 Fear. We fear that we lose when we submit. We hurt when we give in. 1 John 4:18 says that “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

#2 Insecurities. A lack of self-esteem results in prejudice towards others, expressions of dissatisfaction with things we cannot change. This translates difficulty into personal deficiencies. It seeks to blame

and thus find relief from growing depression. “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

#3 Power. We want to protect our power and we want to lead and be the authority. “So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty” (Zech. 4:6).

#4 Control. We confuse servanthood and ministry with control and responsibility. “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:20, 21).

But look at how this story turns out: Lot got his wish. He also got all that came with his pouting ways—Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham got the land of Canaan. The very act of giving up rights gave him the promised land. If he would have demanded the best he would have missed out on the best.

There are several lessons for us to learn:

1. God is God, which means His ways are always best.

2. Worship means giving Him value, worth and authority in our lives.

3. Worship will always bring us His blessings.

4. It cannot be passive; it must be active.

Worship is an active expression of faith and we do it all the time.

1. 1998 was the year of the World Cup soccer championships. I find it interesting in that it is a major world event and many of us know very little about it, about the passion and energy that is going into it around the world. It is truly an example of worship.

2. Most of us are unaware that when we willingly extend passion, energy, and resources towards an object, event or concept we are worshiping.

3. We would not call our obsessions with sports, education, homes, jobs, family, vacations, hobbies, etc "worship," but that is what we are doing. We are ascribing worth and value to them; we are worshiping.

Let us begin to worship God. This means that there is not enough room on the top shelf for God and our gods. We have to remove our gods to put God in the place He deserves and demands. It means placing our other gods on the disqualified list.

This is worship in that it requires positive action. We must be like Abraham and willingly give God authority over country, family, possessions. We will see how God will prosper us. It will not happen until we worship, and worship has become a spectator sport at church.

Let me briefly share another story, found in 2 Samuel 6. David saw the glory of God in the return of the Ark. He celebrated the Lord. Notice his self-confidence. He danced before the Lord with all his might, while his disapproving wife, Michal, looked on with contempt. But David didn't care what she or anyone else thought about him while he was worshipping God. That is what happens when you worship. You know who

you are, but more importantly you know God.

"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life." You know what Jesus meant by that? I think He meant that you can know all about God and still not worship God. I believe that the problem I see in most churches is that we teach about God and fail at worshipping God. But you can never worship God and fail to know Him.

Jesus addressed the problem in John 5:39, 40 — "you elevated the Bible above Me and the Bible points everyone toward Me. Worship Me and then you will know Me." □

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Today is the Time to Consider Your
Place with God.



Of Course "Today" is Always a Good
Time For That (Hebrews 4:7)

Tolerance: Is It Always Right?

BY HAZEL CRAMER — BEDFORD HEIGHTS, OH

What is tolerance?

A word finder by Reader's Digest defined it this way:

open-mindedness, permissiveness, magnanimity, lenience, indulgence, sufferance, patience, freedom from bigotry or prejudice, acceptance, forgiving.

Intolerance, of course, is just the opposite. For intolerance the word finder added inflexible, narrow-minded, self-opinionated, uncompromising, dogmatism, bias, unforgiveness, etc.

When should we be tolerant; when should we not?

Racism is intolerance at its very worst. For proof of that we have but to think of the many confrontations between white and black people in our own country. Often both sides are equally prejudiced against the other. In every country of the world, it appears, there is intolerance to some sect, religion, political opinion, government, or ancestry.

How can we be sure that we are correct in what we tolerate, or in what we do not tolerate? Do we possess such a thing as "absolute truth" against which to judge our choices? As far as we humans are concerned, we have none. Only God possesses the attribute of being all-knowing, all-seeing, and all-understanding. Christ has told us to be careful how we judge others; we run the risk of being judged the same way by Christ.

Does that mean that Christians must always tolerate all people and their actions?

Will Rogers is credited with saying "I've never met a man I didn't like." Should Christians try to hold this attitude? Some Christians present a similar idea when they say "we should love the sinner, but hate the sin."

Many kind, loving,
caring people believe it
really doesn't matter
what a person believes.

However, have we become too complacent, tolerating too much extreme wickedness? Isolationism (in the sense of "mind your own business") is often the policy of both nations and individuals. Such attitudes contributed to the deaths of over six million Jews, as well as millions of others, in World War II extermination efforts. Even now there are ethnic wars in many countries which are resulting in the deaths of countless innocents.

Should we tolerate such sins as murder, rape, burglary and adultery? John 8:3-11 recounts the story of a woman taken in adultery. She was brought before Jesus as a test to see if He would judge her. He told her accusers: "He who is without sin cast the first stone." When no one was left,

Jesus told her to go and sin no more. This is tolerance at its highest level. Should we do otherwise?

Is intolerance ever a good thing? The apostle Paul condemned various sins in no uncertain terms. In Ephesians 5:11 Paul says: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." To the Hebrews it was written: "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (12:4).

Are we becoming a nation of "Christian wimps"? Are we afraid to speak out against flagrant, shameless wrong-doers for fear of reprisals; or out of unconcern for others' welfares?

Jesus told us to "turn the other cheek" so to speak, when we ourselves are unfairly persecuted or maligned. Are we also to look the other way when the innocent, needy, and helpless are being tortured and massacred? Are we to be our "brother's keepers"? Scripture seems to uphold that role for believers. But the intolerance portrayed by the acts of Hitler, Hussein, and other world leaders involved with ethnic cleansing and religious discrimination are commonplace. What should we do? Countries rarely welcome the interference of another nation in their internal affairs.

What about intolerance in religion? Jesus stated in John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Many kind, loving, caring people believe it really doesn't matter what a person believes, just as long as one is behaving well, is charitable, moral, etc. Many

exclaim that any religion is "good" if it allows its proponents to be happy, or enables them to be better people. They say "leave them alone!" Matthew 28:19, 20 records Jesus' testimony to "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Remember this admonishment: "be not carried about with different and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing for the heart to be established with grace" (Hebrews 13:9). Also, Paul exclaimed to the Ephesians: "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (4:14).

How do we accomplish that? "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Again, in 3:16, Paul states that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Many church congregations have "mellowed" – they have watered down their distinctive biblical doctrines in an effort to overcome differences of interpretation among the churches.

What is absolute truth? What is true for me may not be true for you. Do God and Christ really care, or are these simply matters for personal perspective? How far should we go in judging one another's faith, or doctrinal beliefs? When my faithful Church of God mother died, I was informed at the casket by the officiating pastor: "You know you'll never see your mother alive in the kingdom." "Why?" I asked. He told me it was because she had left the truth, and attended another church. "And you won't be there either, if you don't repent and return to the truth."

Well, I didn't.

"Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Hebrews 13:32). This is true tolerance at its best!

The generation gap in many churches accounts for considerable intolerance. We old timers mostly like the "old time religion" style of worship. Many young people

love a more modern style, both of preaching and music.

A group called the "Apologetics" is attaining world-wide recognition for their Christian rock-type music and lyrics. Many young people say that they are really getting to know Jesus because of that group.

Billy Graham's son, Franklin, presents a very modernistic evangelistic format which seems to greatly appeal to our youth.

Some mainline churches cater, or defer to the young members of their congregations, ignoring the needs of the older generation. One such church removed all of its stationary pews, replacing them with folding chairs. All carpeting was removed, so that the sanctuary became a basketball court immediately following Sunday services. The attendance of young people grew there by leaps and bounds, but many of the older generation left.

If only we had the mind of Christ, knowing all things! We need to know when to be tolerant, and when not to be. All we can do is pray for guidance to make right decisions and to love one another as Christ has loved us. □

99 Has Begun (editorial, continued from page 2)

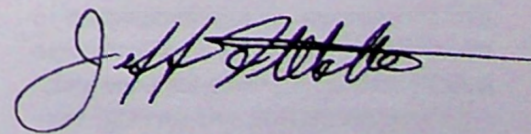
temporary interruption of services or economic problems could really hurt them. She challenges the Church to prepare for ways in which we can offer the love of Christ to those in need during that time. We, as a Church, ought to keep our heads

and allow our faith to help and support others who don't have faith. Y2K could be an opportunity for us to be lights to the world in a very dark time.

I would encourage every one of you to become acquainted with the potential Y2K

problem and think through some ways that you can minister the love of Christ during that time. But I wouldn't put it off too long, because the clock is ticking.

Grace and Peace to You,



Jeffrey Fletcher

THE BIBLE

Repent and Rejoice

BY FLOYD BARNHILL — WENATCHEE, WA

John the Baptist was the first to put out the call; "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near" (Matt. 3:2). If it was "near" 2000 years ago it is much nearer today. What would people today think of a call to "repent"? Today normal folks might question "Why repent? These are the 90s, everything goes!"

What do people think about today? Fun and sports, making money, and gaining position. Largely they think about themselves. What interests people today? Violence, sex and money. The media plays up what people are willing to pay for. It isn't surprising that school boys take guns to school to settle quarrels with classmates.

Dishonesty and deception in the business of advertising are so common that they are considered legitimate practices, and are present in government and law enforcement. With dishonesty, overt and covert, rampant in modern American society it needs to be corrected from all angles. We should not be surprised that our children are confused and resentful. Dishonesty shows contempt for law and order. Our society must change from the top down. From the president to the parent. It is not enough to teach our kids to lie with a straight face, we must return to the golden rule; Do unto others as you would have them do to you.

It is imperative that we citizens be aware that this lawless society is designed to make slaves of us, owing our lives to false gods such as riches, power, fame and pride. All these are selfish, self-serving, self-limited and contrary to harmony in the world community. They lead to futilely killing one another.

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God; that

we may understand what God has freely given us (1 Cor. 2:12). In His creative wisdom our Heavenly Creator gave His children what we might call protective instincts, which are briefly mentioned in Colossians 3:5. "Put to death therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." This shows plainly that our natural desires, carried to excess, lead us to sin (Rom. 8:8, Gal. 6:8). Paul's soliloquy in Romans 7 gives us more understanding of the matter. A careful study of Romans 7 shows us why he wrote, in conclusion "What a wretched man am I! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature, a slave to the law of sin (Rom. 7:24, 25).

Among our natural instincts pride is the least obvious. Thirst or hunger torture the one lacking drink or food. Pride is unlike that. It relates to the individual's self-preservation within its group. Healthy pride desires self respect, social acceptance, normal zeal and ambition, but excessive pride betrays us into conflicts, violence and arrogance. Pride may be the cruelest of Satan's weapons against humanity: pride of race, of family, of riches and possessions, pride of rank, pride of skills, knowledge and strength. Pride of religious belief has been the greatest cause of strife and warfare among God's children.

We need to remember the request made in Romans 13:8: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another; for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law." Jesus said in Matthew 5:17 "Do not think I have

come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

In his sermon on the mount Jesus taught us the attitudes that will prevail in His Kingdom; settle matters quickly with your adversary (Matt. 5:25); Do not let lustful thoughts enter your mind (Matt. 5:27); divorce complicates the adulterous condition, God hates divorce (Mal 2:16); let your yes be yes and your no be no (Matt. 5:37); do not resist an evil person, if someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also (Matt. 5:39); love your enemies and pray for them who persecute you (Matt. 5:44); when you give to the needy let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Matt. 6:3).

From the Lord's prayer we learn love and reverence for our Heavenly Father and then the importance of forgiving one another. We who hope for a home in Christ's Kingdom must learn to have the attitudes in our daily lives that He taught. There will be tranquility because we live that way. That is what Jesus was talking about when He spoke of overcoming the world (John 16:33). "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

From Jesus' messages to the seven churches in Asia it is apparent that we children of hope must overcome our natural weaknesses during this mortal life. It will require great faith to remain faithful in this unbelieving generation.

The power of Satan is so great in today's financial, commercial, government and entertainment worlds that interest in the religious world is easily entirely forgotten. Satan exists — whether in person or

personified in human lust — and we must resist him with all our might. He is the accuser of God's people (Rev. 12:10). Regarding Israel, Jesus said "you belong to your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there was no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

The morality of our citizens has changed so much in the last 50 years that many things considered scandalous then are now so common that we accept them without question. One truth remains; if it was evil in Jesus' day it is still evil today. "God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). "For he that soweth to the flesh shall also of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." We make the choice, corruption or life. No matter how sophisticated we have become, corruption remains corruption and it is evil because it destroys people. It spreads like mold, mildew and dry rot, especially among the most vulnerable — our young people.

The time is very near. We must repent of our worldly ways and standards and accept Christ's attitudes with rejoicing. There is no alternative which a believer in Christ would want to share with those he loves. The media entertains us with the most gruesome of novels and movies, there always has to be a villain and a hero, and always violence. Thus we have the hell that disregard for God's laws leaves us subject to; the soap opera world of broken homes, broken promises, broken lives, unfaithful friends, unfaithful families, and crowded prisons.

We are privileged, yea, we have the liberty to obey Christ's command, choose Life and be glorified with our Master when He returns to receive those who love Him. The worldly will choose worldly ways because they cannot overcome their natural love of pride in their own possessions. "For they loved the praise of men more

than the praise of God" (John 12:43). "Therefore brothers we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live" (Rom. 8:12, 13).

Our Heavenly Father has not forbidden us anything we need; only pride, greed and selfishness, which are stumbling blocks and cause our conflicts. If we need anything we can ask for it. He has promised to give it to us (John 16:24). We need to beware; our wants may indicate a lack of faith or we may want wickedly to use it on our lusts (Wilson's *Diaglott*, and Scofield, James 4:3).

Our church has always contended that Christ will establish the Kingdom of Heaven when He returns to the earth as He promised to do (Acts 1:11; Dan. 7:14; John 14:3; Zech. 14:4). In that Kingdom there will be perfect peace and tranquility because people there will behave with the attitudes Jesus taught. The Old Testament adage still applies: "The Just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4; Heb. 10:38).

As the futility of killing each other becomes obvious, we should understand why Christ forbids us to judge one another, and know why we must judge ourselves. It is through our natural, necessary, senses that Satan works to control the world. But through our own power to control and direct our senses we may defeat his devilish plans to control the world. Jesus is eager to help us defeat Satan's plan, we do so by simply obeying the command of our Lord to love one another. The world cannot understand the Royal Law if it will not believe in Christ's power to save us. The world invariably believes in violent means of settling our differences. Hate, directed by pride and arrogance, easily takes over and peace and good will are forgotten. Jesus Christ could have called twelve legions of angels to defend Himself (Matt 26:53). But He died on the cross rather than shed men's blood.

Christ has promised to save us if we will confess our belief in Him and keep His

command to love one another, thereby affirming our belief. But we must put to death our pride and lust.

We need to recall that there is no division in Christ Jesus. No Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all (Col. 3:11). Our God is not a God of disorder, but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33). Whatever gift or talent you have, God gave it to you. Praise God, not yourself. There are many churches proclaiming Christ's message; all praying the prayer Christ taught us: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Why can't we do His will and love one another? That is all He demanded! With our Master's help we can put our pride and lust to death. Why not ask Him? We need many congregations, but why the divisions? There is no division in Christ Jesus. The accuser of God's people has divided the people into innumerable sects and denominations, all claiming to believe in Jesus Christ.

Christ will be seeking priests and kings to rule with Him in His Kingdom. Worldly priests and kings have worldly minds and hearts, but in Christ's Kingdom of Heaven priests will have holy minds and hearts. Yea! Things will be different there; each will faithfully fill his charge. Justice and mercy will walk hand in hand.

At that time we will sing and shout:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice; let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — or praiseworthy — think about such things (Phil. 4:4-8). □

Quotations are from NIV

THE BIBLE

Have You Heard?

BY JUAN BAIXERAS — MIAMI, FL

Most Christians are under the impression that what they have come to believe and accept as Christianity is the same as what Jesus and the Apostles taught. Unfortunately this is not the case. Greek philosophy disastrously crept into the early church and changed some of the most fundamental and important concepts of the faith.

What happened, in a nutshell, is the following: in the time of Jesus and the Apostles, Greek thought was considered to be the most enlightened way of thinking. Greek was the international language of the Roman world, which is why the New Testament was written in Greek. Platonism was very widespread and very influential in those days. All of a sudden, there came this man called Paul preaching the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and doing incredible miracles in Jesus' name. In his visits to various cities he converted many Greeks and people who had been taught the ways of Greek philosophy their whole lives. These were people who had been pagans for their entire lives up to this point, and now suddenly, they heard Paul's message of the kingdom and believed the truth. They truly accepted the kingdom of God message and Jesus Christ as the Messiah. But time passed, and when the Apostles were no longer around these believers started reading the Hebrew Scriptures with a Greek mind, that is, with a thought process that was influenced by Greek philosophy. Attempting to read Hebrew Scriptures in this way will inevitably lead to the misinterpretation of some of the writings, which is exactly what happened in some key areas.

Anthony Buzzard has a great example of what I am speaking about. He says that if an Englishman says, "I am mad about my flat" he is actually saying that he is happily excited about his apartment, but to an American it means, "I am angry about my flat tire." In this example we are considering two parties who are both speaking English in the same century. Now imagine what can happen when you try to interpret Hebrew writings using Greek philosophy a few centuries later.

I am sure that all of this did not happen by accident, but that Satan had his hands all over this disaster. Since he could not do anything about the message, he changed it, distorting it until it really was not the same message anymore. It is a very well-packaged lie, but it is very shallow. As soon as you read the Bible you can see right past the lies. But Satan is counting on this one thing: that you *do not* read the word of God. This is why it is so important for each of us to know God's word, so that we can avoid being deceived. Many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1). "False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24).

By answering a few of the following questions, you will be able to tell if you have been led astray by false teachings. Believe me, Satan does not want you to hear this message.

What does the Bible say that it takes to have eternal life? 99.999% of people I ask this question will answer by quoting one of the Scriptures in which Jesus says that whoever believes in Him has eternal life,

such as John 3:16. My next question to them is, "believes in Him what?" The reply is always to believe that Jesus died for your sins. This answer is only half correct, and they are missing a very important half. This leaves open the question "what is that other half?" Let me answer that question with another question.

Why did Jesus come into this world? Again, the reply is that Jesus came to die on the cross and pay for our sins. Let us take a look at the reason *Jesus* gives us as to why He came.

"To the other towns I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4:43).

"Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1).

"After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God. This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:14-15).

The kingdom of God is also referred to as the kingdom of heaven, the gospel of the kingdom, the word of God, the gospel, word of the Lord, the mystery of the gospel, the gospel of Christ, the truth, and the word. These are the main titles that are used to refer to the kingdom of God (there are several more which are used less frequently, but these will suffice for this article).

The reason Jesus came was to proclaim the kingdom of God message. When John 3:16 says that "he who believes in him has

eternal life," this is not talking about believing that Jesus died for your sins. Jesus had not yet died at the time of His discussion with Nicodemus. Even His Apostles did not understand about the resurrection until the very end. As Jesus and the Apostles were approaching Jerusalem, Jesus for the third time tried to explain to them why He had to die, and they still did not understand. "But they understood nothing of this; the word remained hidden from them and they failed to comprehend what he said" (Luke 18:34). But way before this episode, Luke talked about Jesus sending the twelve Apostles out to preach the kingdom of God. "And he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (Luke 9:2). Then he sent out the seventy-two to the country to proclaim the kingdom of God, to cure the sick in it and say to them, "The kingdom of God is at hand for you" (Luke 10:9).

Obviously the resurrection of Jesus was not a part of the kingdom of God message which Jesus and the Apostles were proclaiming at that time.

The kingdom of God message is the central theme of the Old and New Testament. When, after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the Apostles for forty days His main instruction was still on the kingdom of God. "He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). This was the main mission of Jesus and the Apostles. Here are some more examples:

Matthew 24:14 (Jesus speaking):

And the gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Acts 8:12:

But once they began to believe Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ and they were baptized.

Acts 19:8 (Paul):

He entered the synagogue, and for three months debated boldly with persuasive arguments about the kingdom of God.

Acts 20:25 (Paul):

But now I know that none of you to whom I preached the kingdom during my travels will ever see my face again.

Acts 28:23 (Paul):

Bearing witness to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the prophets.

Acts 28:31 (Paul):

And without hindrance he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your next question should be: what is the kingdom of God message, and why have I heard almost nothing on it before? The reason you have not heard much about the kingdom of God message is because this is the message that Satan hates the most, because this is the message that saves you.

The kingdom of God message that was given by the Hebrew prophets can be summarized thus: The kingdom of God will be established throughout the world with a rehabilitated Jerusalem as its capital and the Messiah (Jesus, whom God resurrected) as God's agent administering an ideal government. It will be a government of peace and justice, and we, the resurrected saints, will help Jesus in its administration.

This is the message which we must believe in. This is the theme of the entire Bible. The reason for the resurrection was not only to atone for our sins, it was also the proof that Jesus was who He said He was, the Messiah. When Jesus said that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life He was saying that whoever believes that He is the Messiah will have eternal life, not that whoever believes that He died for your sins will have eternal life. The Messiah was supposed to die for our sins, but that is only a part of the kingdom of God message; it is not the whole message. This is how Satan has tried to distort matters,

and, looking at the current situation, he has done a pretty good job of it. If you would like to see the seriousness of the message and how Satan tries to keep you from it, just read the Parable of the Sower: "The seed is the word of God. Those on the path are the ones who have heard, but the devil comes and takes the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:11-12).

Satan will do whatever he can to keep you from this message; this is why most of us are so unfamiliar with it. Don't you think that since this was the central theme of Jesus' and the Apostles' teachings we should be a little more familiar with it? But most of us are not. When you do hear something on it, it is usually distorted and a completely different message from what the prophets talked about. People will say that the kingdom of God is really in your heart or something to that effect. In order to clear up any misunderstandings, let us take a look at all the prophesies of the Messiah and the kingdom of God from Abraham all the way through the New Testament and let you judge for yourself.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Psalms 115:16:

The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man.

Genesis 12:7:

To your seed I will give this land.

Genesis 13:15:

All the land that you see I will give to you and your seed forever.

Psalms 2:7-9:

The LORD said to me, "You are my son; this day I have begotten you. Ask of me and I will give you the nations for an inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession. You shall rule them with an iron rod."

Daniel 7:13-14:

One like a son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven; When he reached the Ancient One and was presented before Him, he received dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of every

language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.

2 Samuel 7:12-14, 16:

And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. It is he who shall build a house for my name. And I will make his royal throne firm forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. . . . Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.

Jeremiah 23:5:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up a righteous shoot of David; As king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land.

Micah 5:1, 3-4:

From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel. . . . He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD, his God. And they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.

Isaiah 9:6:

For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, from David's throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever.

Psalms 89:5, 27-30, 37:

Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations. He shall say of me "You are my father, my God the rock, my savior. And I will make him the first-born, highest of the kings of the earth. Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him, and my covenant with him stands firm. I will make his posterity endure forever."

Psalms 111:4:

He has made known to His people the power of His works, giving them the inheritance of the nations.

Zechariah 9:10:

The warriors bow shall be banished and he shall proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Psalms 110:1-2:

The LORD said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool." The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth from Zion.

Psalms 132:11,14,17-18:

Your own offspring I will set upon your throne. . . . Zion is my resting place forever; in her I will dwell, for I prefer her. In her I will make a horn sprout forth for David; I will place a lamp for my anointed His enemies I will clothe with shame, But upon him my crown shall shine.

Isaiah 2:3-4:

For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many peoples. One nation shall not raise the sword against another.

Psalms 72:11, 17:

All kings shall pay him homage, all nations shall serve him. . . . May his name be blessed forever; as long as the sun his name shall remain. In him all the tribes of the earth be blessed.

Isaiah 65:9, 17:

My chosen ones shall inherit the land. . . . Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Daniel 7:27:

Then the kingship and dominion and majesty of all the kingdoms under the heavens shall be given to the holy people of the Most High Whose kingdom shall be everlasting: all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Psalms 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34:

But those who wait for the LORD shall possess the land. . . . But the meek shall possess the land. . . . But those whom He blesses shall possess the land. . . . The just shall possess the land and dwell in it forever. . . . He will promote you to ownership of the land.

Genesis 12:3:

All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you.

Isaiah 49:6-7:

I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. When kings see you, they shall stand up, and princes shall prostrate themselves.

Isaiah 53:5-6, 8, 11, 12:

But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins. . . . But the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all. . . . Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear. Therefore I will give him his portion among the great. . . . And he shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Luke 1:32-33:

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Luke 22:29-30:

And I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father has conferred one on me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Revelation 20:4-5:

They came to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over.

Revelation 20:6:

They will be priests of God and reign with him for the thousand years.

Revelation 5:10:

You made them a kingdom and priests for our God and they will reign on earth.

2 Timothy 2:12:

If we persevere we shall also reign with him.

Matthew 5:5:

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Matthew 25:31-32:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Revelation 2:26:

To the victor, who keeps to my ways until the end, I will give authority over the nations.

Revelation 3:21:

I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory to sit with my Father on his throne.

1 Corinthians 6:2:

Do you not know that the holy one will judge the world?

Luke 12:32:

For your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.

Matthew 6:10:

Your kingdom come.

The New Testament agrees completely with what the prophets told us in the Old Testament. The angel Gabriel tells Mary exactly why Jesus has come in Luke 1:32. The kingdom is here on earth, with Jesus the Messiah as our king.

The last piece of this puzzle is: If the kingdom of God is here on earth, how does "going to heaven" fit in? The answer is: it doesn't! We are not supposed to go to heaven. Heaven is where God, Jesus (until His Second Coming), and the angels dwell. God made the earth for us.

The concept of going to heaven is another one of those Greek concepts that filtered into early Christianity. The Greeks were the ones who believed that the soul separates from the body after death. This is not what the Bible teaches. We are supposed to be resurrected, like Jesus. Webster's Dictionary defines "resurrect" as "rising from the dead." If your soul is alive in heaven, then you are by no means dead. Another problem with the concept of your soul going to heaven or hell when you die is that judgment happens only after

Jesus returns. How then can a soul go to heaven or hell if it hasn't been judged yet?

Justin Martyr, one of the early Christian theologians, wrote in 150 A.D., "If you meet some who say that their souls go to heaven when they die, do not believe that they are Christians!" He wrote this in order to warn his fellow Christians about a strange new idea which was beginning to creep into Christianity. Well, it is time for you to be the judge again. Here are some examples:

When the Bible talks about being asleep, it means being dead. Read John 11:11-14 if you have any doubts.

John 3:13:

No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man.

Acts 2:29:

My brothers, one can confidently say about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day.

Acts 2:34:

For David did not go up into heaven.

Hebrews 11:13:

All these died in faith. (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah)

Daniel 12:2:

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace.

John 5:28-29:

Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:

For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

Revelation 20:4-5:

They came to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over.

Acts 24:15:

I have the same hope in God as they themselves have that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous.

1 Corinthians 15:17-18:

And if Christ has not been raised your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

1 Corinthians 15:20:

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23:

For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the first fruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ.

John 11:24:

Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day."

2 Peter 3:4:

From the time when our ancestors fell asleep, everything has remained as it was from the beginning of creation.

Psalms 6:5-6:

Return, O LORD, save my life; rescue me because of your kindness, for among the dead no one remembers you.

Ezekiel 18:4:

The soul that sins, it shall die.

Ecclesiastes 9:10:

For there will be no work, nor reason, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the nether world where you are going.

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20:

For the lot of man and of beast is one lot; the one dies as well as the other. Both have the same lifebreath, and man has no advantage over the beast; but all is vanity. Both go to the same place; both were made from the dust, and to the dust they both return.

Psalms 146:4:

When his spirit departs he returns to his earth; on that day his plans perish.

(continued on page 14)

Filling the Emptiness

BY PASTOR EDWARD H. GOIT, SR. — NORTH TONAWANDA, NY

Filling the emptiness in one's heart has been a constant struggle for mankind ever since man's expulsion from the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had a personal relationship with their God and creator in Paradise. But this relationship was severed, and Cherubims and a flaming sword turned every way to keep the tree of life. The emptiness in their lives cried out for reconciliation. Estranged mankind and God must be brought together again.

Beyond all else, Jesus Christ's work was this work of reconciliation. Through the cross we have access by one Spirit to the Father. The lost relationship is restored, which is the very essence of Christianity. Jesus declared to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Jesus demonstrated this by feeding about five thousand men (plus women and children) with a lad's five barley loaves and two small fish. In following events he affirmed, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

While traveling during His ministry, Jesus revealed Himself to a woman of Samaria as the Christ and discussed "living water." He told her, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). The woman answered, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (John 4:15). In a like manner, the multitude said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread" (John 6:34).

Together, let us consider the story and some of the events following the miracle

of feeding five thousand. Jesus provided a feast for a hungry multitude that had listened all day to His teaching and now were hungry and tired. Picture some of these stirring events.

A great multitude followed Jesus. They were witnesses to miracles and the Passover feast was nigh. From a vantage point of high ground, Jesus saw the great crowd coming to Him. Knowing what He would do He tested Philip,

"Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? . . . Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient . . . One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down . . . So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled . . . they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten" (John 6:5b-13).

It is of interest to note that the two small fishes were small pickled sardine-like fish.

Jesus spread a feast by the sea of Galilee on a tablecloth of much grass and the many were fed. They ate as much as they wanted and the leftovers, twelve baskets full, were gathered so that there would be no waste.

Not By Bread Alone

When Jesus was tempted of the devil, the tempter said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:3-4).

Hunger is one of a human being's basic drives. Frequently, TV portrays emaciated children with hollow, hungry eyes staring blankly at the viewer. The media doesn't picture spiritually starved people. Nevertheless, there are millions of them just as starved and every bit deserving of food, i.e., spiritual food. This hunger can only be satisfied by Jesus who declared, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35a). He can fill the emptiness in a person's life. He offers the abundant life now and everlasting life in the kingdom of God. He gives joy beyond sorrow, hope beyond disappointment.

John 6:22-59 presents a dialogue between Jesus and the people who followed Him from worldly motives. To a person they were in favor of a Messiah who could provide free meals for the asking. Their life pursuit was materialism and their spiritual existence was a void. Jesus gave warnings against worldliness and discussed working the works of God. These discussions resulted in Jesus' discourse on the bread of life. Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

In the parable of the prodigal son, when the son "came to himself" he determined, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more

(continued on page 17)

The Third Temple (part one)

BY PASTOR JIM MATTISON — PELZER, SC

The first Temple of the Jews for the worship of God was built by Solomon roughly 1000 B.C. (1 Kings 6:1). It was a magnificent structure, but was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar about 400 years later.

The second Temple of the Jews was built by Zerubbabel around 537 B.C. (Ezra 6:13-16) and was reconstructed by Herod starting around 18 B.C. (see John 2:20). It was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70.

The third Temple of the Jews is to be built a few years before the second coming of our Lord from heaven (Matt. 24:15-31). Jesus specifically mentioned this, calling it "the holy place."

The fourth Temple for all people will be built after Jesus is established as King of earth (Ezek. 40-48; Isa. 2:1-4, etc.)

The Third Temple

Both the Old Testament (Dan. 9:27) and the New Testament (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 11:1, 2) affirm that a new Temple will once again occupy the sacred space on Mt. Moriah where Solomon's Temple once stood. This Temple is part of God's end-time program for Israel.

Since the destruction of the second Temple, Jews have been praying for its rebuilding. Orthodox Jews today recite three times daily these words: "May it be Thy will that the Temple will be speedily rebuilt in our own times" (*Israel My Glory*, p. 14).

In 1993, which marked the beginning of the Temple Movement, *Time* magazine reported that a poll showed 18.3% of Israelis thought it was time to rebuild. In 1995 the

mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert, said that most people were not in favor of rebuilding the Temple. But on February 11, 1996, the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement, an Israeli group publicly demonstrating in favor of rebuilding the Temple, had the Gallup Poll organization conduct a poll, and the results showed that now 58.5% of Israelis (mostly younger Israelis) favor the rebuilding.

*The results showed that
[in February 1996]
58.5% of Israelis favor
the rebuilding*

The Protocol for the Temple

The predominant thinking of the religious leaders is that the Torah obligates the Jewish nation to rebuild the Temple whenever it becomes possible to do so (Ex. 25:8) (*Israel My Glory*, p. 14). The feeling is that since the nation gained access to the Temple site in 1967, Israel has sinned in not obeying the divine decree. They believe Israel's national problems have occurred because she has failed to rebuild. When the Palestinian Intifada began in 1967, various Jewish groups felt they could wait no longer and began work to prepare for the day when the Temple could be rebuilt on the Temple Mount. It was then that the Temple Movement was born, with its research on the place, the plans, the priests, and the purification.

The Place for the Temple

Before rebuilding the Temple, it is believed that the exact location of the former two Temples must be identified. Reasons for this are: 1) the site of the Temple was divinely appointed (Gen. 22:2; Ex. 15:17; 2 Sam. 24:18; 1 Chron. 21:18), and 2) it appears that the Holy of Holies of the second Temple was built precisely over the Holy of Holies of Solomon's Temple, which suggests it should also be with the third Temple. There has been a problem locating this place. Hebrew University physicist Asher Kaufmann's research concludes that the Temple was built on the northwestern corner of the platform about 330 feet from the Dome of the Rock. Other Israeli archaeologists believe that the Temple stood exactly where the Dome of the Rock is today, because of certain trenches that are still discernable. Once the Israelis have complete access to the area, it is believed the answer will quickly be known.

The Plans for the Temple

Detailed blueprints for the Third Temple have existed for the past four years, according to Rabbi Chaim, spokesman for the Temple Institute. The main sources for these plans were the Bible, Josephus, and Niddot. Additions have been made to include electricity and other modern improvements that agree with the Halacha (the Law).

Other structures needed for the Temple's function are planned or have already been built. Under the overseership of Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the 70-seat Supreme Court building that housed the

Sanhedrin in Jesus' time has again been constructed. "The legal stipulations that the Sanhedrin will use to govern Israel's relationship to the rebuilt Temple and its services have already been researched and are now in the process of being published (the first volume in 1986) by the Research Center for Jewish Thought, under the direction of Yoel Lerner" (*Israel My Glory*, p. 16).

Preparations for the Temple

The Temple Institute, a group of rabbinical researchers, designers, and craftsmen, under the leadership of Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, have created in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem a "Temple-in-waiting." They have computerized visualizations and blueprints for the new Temple, and the ritually qualified vessels, garments, and lesser items necessary for the restoration of the Temple services.

Among the items in the process of being created or already made are: the apparel for the High Priest (his robe, his golden crown, his jeweled breastplate bearing the names of the tribes of Israel); priestly garments and the *tchelet* (purple dye) for the *tsitsit* (fringe) on the prayer shawl, the eleven incense spices, urns,

ewers, incense pans, forks, shovels, and carts; the gold and silver *mizrak* (vessels used for pouring the sacrificial blood on the altar); the golden laver, flasks, and measuring cups (used in the offerings); vessels for the meal offerings; the lottery boxes for the Day of Atonement; the mortar and pestle and the *kelal* (the stone vessel for grinding and then holding the purifying ashes of the red heifer); the golden lampstand (menorah); oil pitchers for replenishing the lamps; silver trumpets to assemble Israel at the Temple, and the barley altar.

They have made a replica of the Ark of the Covenant, but officials publicly say that they believe the original still exists in a secret chamber under the Temple Mount beneath the site of the Holy of Holies. When Israel has access to this area they expect it to be recovered and take its place in the restored Temple.

Priests for the Temple

Though the genealogical records of most Jews have been lost as the Jews were scattered among the Gentiles, the Levites were forbidden to alter their names. Thus today there are Cohens and Levis, etc. A recent scientific study of male Jews claiming

descent from Aaron shows that they as a group uniquely carry an unnatural variation of the Y chromosome. This distinct DNA is as individual as a fingerprint and links these men together as a separate and identifiable group which can be traced back to an original ancestor (Aaron).

Rabbi Nachman Kahane, head of the Institute for Talmudic Commentaries, maintains a computerized list of all known priestly candidates in Israel. Orthodox organizations are also helping to educate the priesthood. The Yeshiva trains students in the order of priestly service. The Yeshiva is also aggressively attempting to buy various Arab properties near the Temple Mount for the purpose of establishing a "Jewish presence" in preparing for the rebuilding of the Temple.

In our next article we will examine the priests' purification, Temple politics, Temple perspectives, and how the third temple will play an important role in the future prophetic program for Israel and the nations. For believing Bible students, these present efforts to rebuild have special meaning. They are signs that Christ's second coming is near, and they encourage us to live faithful lives as we wait and watch for the "blessed hope." □

Have You Heard? (continued from page 11)

Mark 12:23:

At the resurrection when they arise, whose wife will she be?

Genesis 3:19:

Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; for you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return.

Psalms 115:17:

It is not the dead who praise the LORD.

Job 14:12:

So men lie down and rise not again. Till the heavens are no more, they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep.

The Bible is very clear on the subjects we have briefly covered here. Satan has done everything possible to confuse God's word, but it is very easy to see past the lies if one just takes the time to look. Once you

understand these important points, a lot of the Bible starts to make sense, because it stops contradicting itself. You are no longer trying to force Greek thought into Hebrew writings. Think about it: if you believe that you go to heaven after you die, how would you explain these verses without making a wreck of the Bible?

See you at the resurrection! □

EVANGELISM

Ways We Can Share Our Faith

BY THE EDITOR

When the United States government has an urgent, covert mission with life and death implications — rescuing a kidnapped diplomat, defusing an atomic bomb, undermining a conspiracy to rob Fort Knox of our nation's gold reserves — who does the government call on? The army? No! The CIA or ATF? Hardly! No, when the situation is life or death and calls for brains, not brute force, there is only one solution. When the critical need is for someone to analyze the situation and come up with a creative solution that employs whatever resources are available, the man to call is MacGyver.

MacGyver is one of my all-time favorite characters. He is a thinking man's hero. While Rambo or the Terminator will just come in and shoot everyone in sight, MacGyver is different. MacGyver hates violence, and he refuses to carry a gun. MacGyver is resourceful. He looks around at what is available and uses it. He can turn a handful of oatmeal and some bug spray into an explosive.

MacGyver knows his mission, and he will do everything in his power to achieve it. Once he begins a mission, it never changes. He possesses certain values, or ideals, which are representative of his character. They tell us who he is, and they never change. We might call those values his Message. The man has an unchanging mission and an unchanging message, but his methods are always changing, always adapted to his situation — where he finds himself, and what tools are available. MacGyver uses whatever he can find. He never stops to whine about what he doesn't have: "I wish I had a gun [bomb, lock picks, etc.]" He uses what is at his disposal, and his mind thinks up creative answers.

Most important — MacGyver gets the job done.

MacGyver reminds me of another man. A man who is also a hero of mine. He knew his mission well, and committed his life to that mission. He was a man who was dedicated to a single message, and who took that message with him wherever he went. And as far as the methods that he used to accomplish that mission and communicate that message, this hero of mine was both highly flexible and very creative. He had the uncanny ability to take a situation which was, by all appearances, bad or hopeless, and turn it into an opportunity to achieve his mission.

When he was thrown into prison, he never whined or complained about it. He used that experience as a way of reaching other people in the prison system.

In case you have not already figured it out, I'm speaking about the Apostle Paul. As you think about Paul, I want you to think of him as sort of an Apostolic MacGyver.

Paul's Mission — in simple, basic terms — was to bring together people and God. His was a mission to achieve reconciliation.

On a spiritual level this reconciliation meant that man's relationship with God was being restored. People needed to know that because of Jesus Christ man's war with God was now coming to an end. Ever since Adam first reached out and ate of the forbidden fruit, man and God have been estranged. Now, from time to time God picked up a few friends along the way — Noah, Abraham, Moses, King David — but these were the few exceptions, and even they had many foibles and flaws. But with the com-

ing of Jesus Christ full reconciliation between God and man was not only possible, but it was actually happening.

On a human level Paul also had a mission of reconciliation. His mission was not only to restore men to a right relationship with God, but also to reconcile person to person. Paul was able to see that the rivalry between Jews and Gentiles was not what God wanted at all. Part of Paul's mission was to show his fellow Jews that the Gentiles were also being included in God's plan of salvation. The nearly 2000 year-old wall of division that separated Jews and Gentiles was falling away. Just like the Berlin wall was torn down uniting east and west, the wall of separation between people is being torn down. Through Christ there are now no second-class citizens — there is no longer any Jew or Greek, slave or free man, male or female superiority. All stand before God as equals.

Paul's mission was to bring reconciliation in all human relationships — both with God and with each other. It was his mission in the beginning, and it remained his mission right up to the end. It never changed.

Paul's message — the message Paul preached was the Gospel, plain and simple. It was the same Gospel that Jesus preached. "Repent, the Kingdom is coming." It was the same Gospel that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, when 3000 people were baptized. "Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ coming again." It was the same Gospel that Phillip preached in Samaria — the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. And when the people of Samaria heard the message and believed Phillip, their response was to be baptized.

Paul preached the *kerygma* — the *kerygma* is the message that effects

salvation in the life of those who hear it. It is the proclamation of the mighty acts of God to bring salvation to man. It is the story of God, who loved us so much that He commissioned His only begotten son to live among sinners; teaching, healing, performing signs and wonders, dying and rising and coming again. It is the story of God, who first blessed a man named Abraham by entering into a covenant with him, with a promise of greatness and blessing and land. It is the story of how that promise was extended to all who have the faith of Abraham. It is this story, this message, that must be preached, must be heard, must be believed — and through that believing we are truly able to live. Paul preached that message wherever he went and whenever he could to whomever was willing to listen. It is the message that saves, and it is unchanging. The *kerygma* is about grace — it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Paul not only preached the *kerygma*, but he also taught the *didache* — that is the spiritual and ethical implications of the Gospel. You see, once a person believes the gospel of Jesus Christ and places their faith in Him they have entered into a covenant relationship which gives birth to certain ethical requirements in the life of the believer. The *didache* teaches us how we are to live as a result of becoming Christ's disciple. We are to live as faithful stewards of the blessings which God has given us. We are to make wise use of our time. We are to make wise use of our money, we are to make wise use of our bodies. We are to be careful in the choice of words which we speak. These are the teachings that tell us how to live Godly lives. These things don't "save us," but they tell us how "saved" people are expected to live. These are the works that flow out of salvation (Ephesians 2:10).

It is important that we understand the difference between the *kerygma* and the *didache*. The *kerygma* comes first. Before a person can become a Christian they must hear the gospel. Once they have heard and believed the gospel (Ephesians 5:1-5),

they must learn to live as Christ's disciples. This was Paul's message — and no matter where He went or who He spoke to, this remained His message. It was unchanging.

Paul's Methods — we have seen that Paul never changed either his mission or his message. But what about his methods? Did Paul always use the same methods for reaching people? Absolutely not! Although he was rock solid and unwavering in his mission and message Paul was very creative and flexible when it came to the methods he used to communicate. Paul was a champion at adapting himself to the situation. He used the life situation of his audience to determine the best ways to communicate.

Paul stopped and asked himself:

"Who am I talking to? Are they Jews or Gentiles? Are they men or women? Are they young or old? Are they rich or poor? Are they slaves or free men? Do they worship one God, many gods or no God at all? Do they live in big cities or small towns? Are they married? Do they have children? Are they receptive to hearing the gospel? Are they committed Christians who need some encouragement and training to better serve Christ or are they backslidden and in a state of moral chaos?"

Paul made an assessment of where they were at, and what methods or tools he needed to use in order to bring the gospel to them in a meaningful way.

Paul shares his philosophy in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. He says that he became "all things to all people that by all possible means [he] might be able to save some." He sounds an awful lot like MacGyver to me.

Paul used whatever methods were most appropriate to his situation. For example consider Acts 17:

In the synagogue he spoke to those with a Jewish background and shared the truth of the Messiah.

In jail, he sang hymns of praise to God. It won over his jailer.

In Athens, among the Greeks, he spotted a statue dedicated to an unknown God, and some were won over.

Let's think about us. What can we learn from this Apostolic MacGyver?

Like Paul, we have been given a mission by God: to share the good news of reconciliation between God and man, and person to person. Through Christ, it is possible to be in a right relationship with God and with other people. People need to know that, and we need to tell them. That is our mission as a Church and as individuals — and it will never change.

Like Paul, we have a message to share, the *kerygma* or mighty acts of God to bring salvation to man through Jesus Christ — that is, the Gospel of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is not about what we are supposed to *do* to become acceptable to God, the Gospel is about what God has done for us in Christ. The Gospel is about *grace*. That is the message we are to proclaim — that is the message which saves.

Once people have heard and believed the *kerygma* we go on to disciple them by giving instructions, the *didache*. These are practical instructions. That is our message, and it never changes. It is fixed in stone. It is the message of our age. It was true in the 1st century and it will still be true in the 21st century. There is no other name under heaven by which we are saved.

But just because we hold firm to one mission and one message does not mean we are restricted to one set of methods. Just like Paul we can be flexible and creative in the means that we use to communicate our message. Here is where we can have fun — yes, sharing our faith can be fun!

Every society and every culture is unique. What works in one place may or may not work in another.

In the 1st century, Paul used one method to reach Jews, another to reach Gentiles.

In the early 19th century there was what was called the Great Awakening — men like Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards and Charles Whitfield preached fire and brimstone sermons, and people came to faith in Jesus Christ.

In the late 1960s the Jesus Movement reached out to hippies and those in the counter-culture by using folk songs and coffee houses. And people came to faith in Jesus Christ.

There was a time when Christians went from door to door distributing tracts and telling people about Christ — and people came to faith in Jesus Christ.

In the 1980s there was a strong emphasis on building relationships with non-Christians and earning the right to share faith with them; it was called Friendship Evangelism. And people came to faith in Jesus Christ.

Others saw the Sunday morning worship service as an ideal place to reach the uncommitted; and called it Liturgical Evan-

gelism; and people came to faith in Jesus Christ.

Today some churches are conducting Seeker Services, using contemporary music, drama, and a relaxed preaching style to reach people. Guess what; people are coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

Other churches are practicing Service Evangelism, they are entering their communities and performing acts of service like feeding quarters into parking meters, scrubbing public restrooms, giving out drinks to thirsty travelers and telling folks that God loves them; and people are coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

Is there any one method that is right and correct? We need to use *whatever works*. As long as our mission and our message are not compromised, we are free to use whatever methods work to communicate the saving message of God. We must bear in mind that we are salt and light. Salt doesn't do any good unless it comes into contact

with the food. Light doesn't do any good if it doesn't reflect on the object to be illuminated. We need to do those things which will bring us into contact with people and help them to see God better.

Sharing our faith can be fun and effective if we are willing to become like Paul in being all things to all people, so that by all possible means we might win some. We can be open, creative, flexible — we can be like MacGyver and use whatever resources we have available to get the job done. We must take inventory of our resources and apply them to our goals.

For all of us, let us be sure that we understand when it is mandatory that we remain unwavering — in our message and in our mission — and when it is important for us to be creative and flexible — in our methods.

I can not wait to see what God will do next. Let Him use you to do it. □

Filling the Emptiness (continued from page 12)

worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:17-20). You marvel at the reconciliation of the father and son in the parable yet the same wonderful ending can be for "whosoever will" acknowledge his emptiness and that he is a sinner dead in sin.

If You Would Be Filled

What have you been living for? Money, pleasure, security, happiness or success? These are noble pursuits but they can never give you lasting happiness or security. If you would have your emptiness filled, make yourself available to God. You can discover His purpose for your life. As the Psalmist suggests, "Commit thy way unto

the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psa. 37:5).

Karl Barth defined God as, "the one who loves." Realize God loves you and will accept you just as you are. He can make everything just right. He created you, He loves you. He will give new purpose and strength for life.

How To Be Filled

There is no adventure more exciting than knowing and following His will. To have this relationship with God, adopt Peter's admonition, "Humble yourself 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). Submit your emptiness for His filling. Jesus is the way to God, so surrender your dead, empty self to Jesus Christ. Admit you are a sinner, dead

in your sins, void of any spiritual life, and admit your need to repent. Through baptism you will obey God's way, symbolizing being crucified with Christ, and thus you will be "in Christ." "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

Paul urges, "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18b). This spiritual fullness will fill your emptiness! It is God's promise! Jesus gave the boy in the story of the feeding of the five thousand an opportunity to be a sharer with Him in feeding the hungry. He gives us the same opportunity. As forgiven sinners we are called to share the bread of life, even Jesus. What will you do with Jesus? □

THE BIBLE AND PROPHECY

What's Left After Jesus Comes Back?

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD—BROOKS, GA

“P remillennial” faith teaches that when Jesus comes back the world will enter a new age, the age to come. Jesus referred to this coming era as “that age” (Luke 20:35). Christians must walk “worthy to attain to that age.” This age is the same as the Kingdom of God of the future. Paul speaks in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 of believers walking “in a manner worthy of the God who invites you into His own Kingdom and glory.”

To be invited into the Kingdom is much more than just “being there.” It means supervising the world with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:1-6; 2:26; 3:21; 5:10). But who are we going to administer? Who will be left to administer and govern?

In 2 Peter the Apostle looks forward to the coming of the “day of God” (2 Pet. 3:10). This is the same event as the “promise of his coming” (v. 4). Peter says that the present world is “reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” It is important to note that the fire is for the destruction of ungodly men, but there is more to the destruction than that. Peter says that “the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat and the earth and its works will be burnt up (v. 10). That sounds as if the planet will be destroyed. What then is left for the Christians to administer?

The translation “the earth and its works will be burned up” is very questionable. A much better attested version in the Greek means (as in the NASV margin) “the earth

will be laid bare.” The point is that the evil works of men on earth will be revealed and destroyed. Peter has just spoken of the destruction of the elements (v. 10). In all probability the elements are the wicked spirits which now control the “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). This is the meaning of the word “elements” elsewhere in the NT.

Peter says that Christians are looking forward to “a new heavens and a new earth” in which righteousness dwells. This means that both heaven and earth survive in a renewed form. Hebrews 2:5 speaks of the “inhabited earth of the future” which is destined to be subject to the faithful, not to the angels. Remarkable is the fact that this “inhabited earth of the future” is the subject of the great salvation (Heb. 2:3) which was announced first by Jesus Himself. That, of course, is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, the Christian Gospel.

The new earth which will be administered by the Apostles and the faithful of all ages will have a new government headed by the Messiah and the Twelve ruling over a reconstituted Israel (Luke 22:28-30). A description of this wonderful new period of history can be found in Isaiah 65:17ff. There will be a “new heavens and new earth in which weeping will be a thing of the past” people will live to well over 100 years and nature will be in harmony, corresponding to the new harmony in human society. Houses will be built, but people will outlive their own buildings. This scene implies immortals ruling over mortals. An immortal — Jesus — has already mixed

with mortals. This was when the risen Jesus appeared on earth with the Apostles and as a corporeal person enjoyed breakfast by a lake (Luke 24:39-43).

Zechariah 14 (along with many passages in Isaiah and the “minor” prophets) provides the fullest description of the “new world order” under Christ’s coming government. Nations will continue to exist, and they will be disciplined for disobedience. Obviously the world continues as an organized society. But the Devil will have been arrested and imprisoned (Rev. 20:1-4) and conditions will be improved beyond all recognition. That is the hope for our tortured earth. Isaiah 24-27 provides yet another prophecy of the great destruction which will precede the birth of the new society of the Kingdom of God on earth. Isaiah 24:6 says that after a great shaking (cp. Heb. 12:26-28) only a few men will be left. This means a vast depopulation of the world is going to occur. Many human beings are going to be eliminated. They will have no part in that wonderful world of tomorrow.

Christians are invited to escape that wrath of God by obeying the Gospel as Jesus preached it and living a life of obedience and commitment to the cause of the Gospel. Are we fully devoted to seeing that others hear the Message of the Kingdom, which is an invitation to survive these awful future events and live with Jesus in the Kingdom? What in life has any meaning but the quest for immortality in the Kingdom of God? □

Screening Our Thoughts

BY MARY WHELCHER

In order to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5), we must deal with our thoughts on an individual basis, thought by thought. Notice that the Apostle Paul says we are to take every thought and *make it* obedient to Christ. We are to force each individual thought to be obedient to Christ—the very principle discussed in Philippians 4:8.

When we *make* somebody do something, we are using force to overcome that person’s reluctance. For example, as parents we have all had to make our children obey us, against their will and regardless of their objections. This is exactly the kind of struggle we are in with our thought life. Our individual thoughts are not going to voluntarily submit; we must learn how to take individual thoughts and make them obedient to Christ.

You can start this process by becoming very conscious of every thought you have. Ask God to make you sensitive to your thoughts. Don’t be absent-minded—paying no attention to what you are thinking. Instead, be very thought-conscious. And then be prepared to make each thought obedient.

You are undoubtedly familiar with telephone screening in the business world. When bosses want certain unnecessary or annoying calls screened out, they subject callers to the screening process. This means that all callers first have to talk to a secretary who asks some questions to see if they meet the qualification of someone the boss will talk to.

I strongly urge you to do the same thing with your thoughts. As a thought approaches your mind and tries to make an entry into our head, make that thought go through

the screening process. Think of it like a phone call.

Hello. What is your name, please? And what is the purpose of your call? Are you an acceptable thought? Are you true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable? Oh, so sorry, you are true but you’re not lovely and so this call cannot go through. Good-bye.

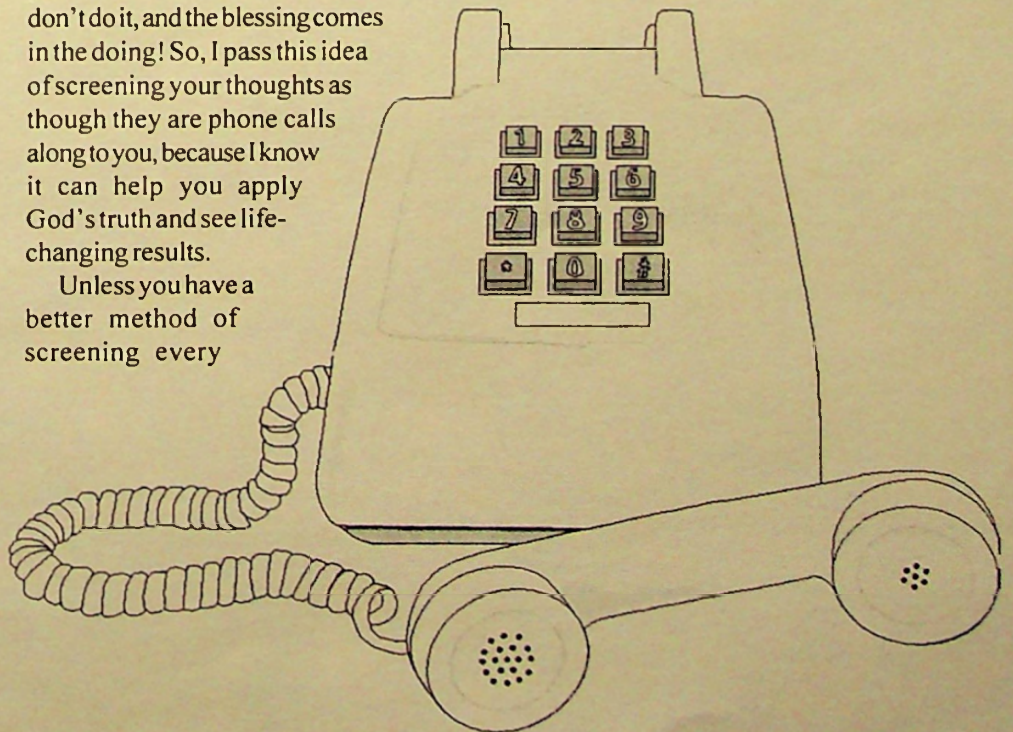
Hello. Are you are pure thought? No, I don’t think so. You are calling to try to get me to do something that is not pure and right; therefore, I cannot talk to you. Good-bye.

I can almost hear some of you giggling or shaking your head as you read those screening examples. How silly, you may be thinking. Well, I am simpleminded, and I’m always looking for ideas and techniques that will help me to put truth into practice. Otherwise, I know it but I don’t do it, and the blessing comes in the doing! So, I pass this idea of screening your thoughts as though they are phone calls along to you, because I know it can help you apply God’s truth and see life-changing results.

Unless you have a better method of screening every

individual thought and making it obedient to Christ, I encourage you to try this screening idea. I promise you, it will come in handy to help you remember to screen your thoughts one by one. We must start cleaning up our thoughts one by one on a daily basis.

Continuing this phone call analogy, you and I cannot control who calls us on the telephone. Likewise, you and I cannot totally control what thoughts try to enter our minds. We have an Enemy bombarding us with wrong thoughts, and we live in a culture full of wrong thinking. In addition, that old nature of ours produces wrong thinking. So we can expect wrong thoughts to dial our number and ring our bell. Answering the phone call is not the problem, but when we continue to talk to that wrong thought after we know its true nature, then



we have crossed the line and allowed sin to enter the picture.

James 4:17 tells us: "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." Sin takes place when we recognize a wrong thought but fail to screen it out; when we are aware of its intrusion, and yet we do nothing to make it leave. That's when we fail, and then we've opened our minds to the garbage that will pollute our thinking.

Let me warn you that this point of decision is usually not easy. You'll find a real struggle going on within you, as you recognize your need to abandon the wrong thought. Your old nature just won't want to do that. Many times I feel that tug like an actual pain inside of me, and the decision to think correctly doesn't come easily. It may be a struggle that lasts a moment or hours or days.

The longer you allow this struggle with a wrong thought to continue, the more likely you are to make the wrong decision. Jesus told us to cut off our hand if it offends us, or pluck out our eye if it offends us (Matt. 5:29-30). Once we see something offensive—once we know that garbage is trying to get into our minds—we need to be prepared for drastic action if necessary, and we need to move as quickly as possible. The longer we wait to make the right decision, the more opportunity we give our enemy to keep tempting us and trying to make us fail.

I hope I've been able to help you see how important it is to keep the garbage of this world out of your mind. Controlling the input into your mind is a key element in bringing your thoughts into line with Philippians 4:8.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.—Philippians 4:8

Excerpt from *What Would Jesus Think?—Let Christ Transform Your Thought Life* by Mary Whelchel, Chariot Victor Publishing. Mary is the founder and host of the radio program "The Christian Working Woman," heard on over 500 stations across the country and internationally. She is also Director of Women's Ministries for The Moody Church in Chicago. She is a frequent speaker at retreats and has authored several books including *If You Only Knew* (Victor), *How to Thrive from 9 to 5* and *The Christian Working Woman*. Used by permission. □

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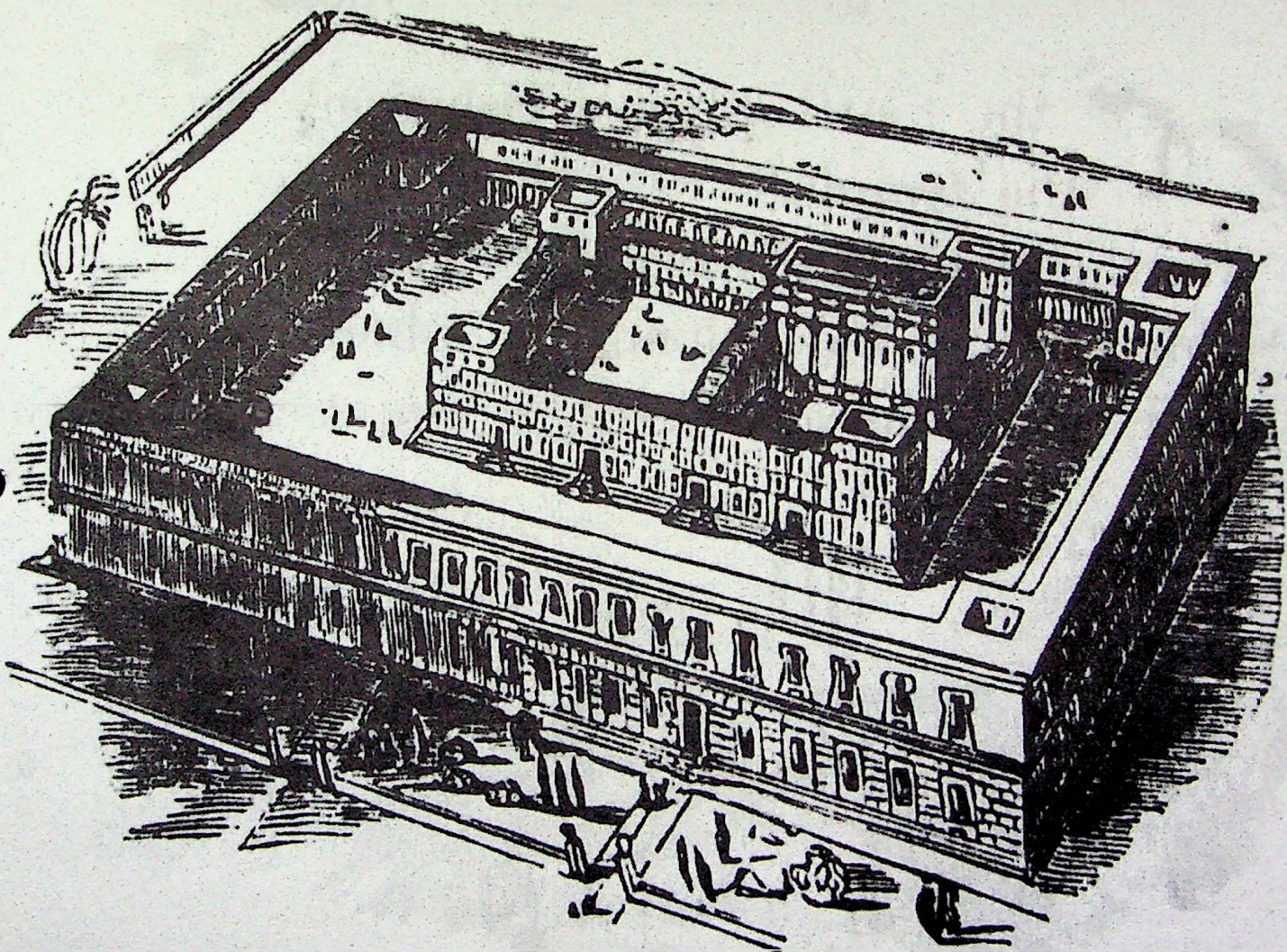
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*In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple
will be established as chief among the mountains.*

Isaiah 2:2



Lessons from the flu

During the past few weeks a very nasty strain of flu has been going through southeastern Louisiana, and it has really gotten a lot of people down. It's affected a number of people within my local Church community. Some people have been down for a couple of weeks with it. Early last week I was speaking with a man from our congregation who had just gotten over having it, he was frustrated at how far behind he now was. I encouraged him not to be too hard on himself and then I made a glib remark: "I think that illness can often be God's way of getting our attention. It's Him telling us "slow down, you're working too hard, take care of yourself, get some rest," etc. I'm not sure if he appreciated my commentary on the possibility that illness can be God's way of speaking to us, but it sounded pretty good to me.

Perhaps you can guess the rest of this story. Less than 24 hours after making this profound statement I was flat on my back, running a fever, every muscle of my body aching and desperately wanting to feel better.

That was nearly a week ago, and I haven't been able to leave my house since. The fever is finally gone, I'm now able to sit up in a chair for longer than five minutes, and I'm almost convinced that I'll live through this. All that's left now is the coughing and fatigue . . . I'm weak and tired. Over the past six days I've had to cancel meetings, miss appointments, ask for lots of help from others, and for the first time in many years of pastoral ministry I was unable to preach Sunday. All because of some tiny, microscopic virus that invaded my body.

This morning, as I began to think about the past few days, it occurred to me that just as I was quick to explore the meaning of illness for one of my church members, I should turn the spotlight onto myself and ask God what He might be saying to me through this. Here are some things that I'm learning from it. Perhaps you'll find something helpful in this.

1. I am utterly dependent upon God. A couple of weeks ago we had a Bible study on our mortality. We discussed what the Bible has to say about human nature and about death. One of the key texts we explored was Genesis 2:7 "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (KJV) or "living being" (NIV). The word that's translated soul or living being is the Hebrew word "*nepes*". It's an interesting word which is used in a number of ways that convey a similar thought — "neediness". In some places it's translated "throat". Picture if you will a nest full of needy baby birds, just hatched, mouths and throats open wide for mother bird to come and feed them. Those birds are utterly dependent upon someone bigger and stronger to come and feed them. They are *nepes*. We too, like those little birds, are *nepes*/needy. We are utterly dependent upon God to provide for our needs.

To me one of the benefits of being sick is to remind me from time to time how needy I really am. You see it's far too easy, when I'm healthy and all is well in the world, to live under the false impression that I'm in charge of my life. "I do the things I do because I am able to do them and because I choose to do them." Not so! I am only able to get up out of bed because God

permits it. I'm only able to work because God permits it. I'm only able to live because God permits it. God is in charge; I am utterly dependent upon Him, I am *nepes*. Adam and Eve had to learn that lesson the hard way, and quite often I do too. Sickness is just a tiny little reminder from God — like a little postcard He sends every so often saying "Hi, just thought I'd send you this little reminder: you are mortal; you are utterly dependent on me. Keep in touch!!"

2. Because God is ultimately in charge, I can relax and trust Him. There's an old expression that says "Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans." Last week I had a calendar full of plans of things I was going to do: Bible studies to lead, people to visit, a sermon to preach, meetings to attend, my children's basketball games to watch, some kitchen repairs to work on, etc. How much of that did I accomplish? Zip, zero, nada! In the first few hours, as I felt the fever coming on and the body aches beginning, I complained to God: "Please God, not now. I can't get sick, I've got too much to do. If I don't do this, take care of that, . . . etc., who will do it?" Of course later, while I was thick in the middle of the worst of the illness, I didn't really care what happened — I was just hoping I'd survive.

I'd like to report on what happened. While I was sick most of the Bible studies and other activities went on, led by others. Some things were canceled or rescheduled. Sunday still came and there was Church (two different people had volunteered to preach). I'm told it was a good service and well attended. My two oldest

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Justification Revisited

BY MARK MATTISON — GRAND RAPIDS, MI

Systematic theologians love to multiply doctrines. Each major doctrine is like a well-oiled engine which can be broken down with precision into various subdoctrines. These can in turn be analyzed, rationalized, explained, and clearly distinguished from one another. Each individual piece is internally consistent with itself and every other; together, they form one watertight whole.

Such is the case with the doctrine of “soteriology” or salvation. Many theologians break this doctrine down into subcategories like justification, regeneration, sanctification, adoption, and just about anything else ending with the suffix “-tion.” This excessive analyzing, it seems to me, has obscured a very simple doctrinal truth. Not only have we been missing the forest for the trees; we’ve been multiplying new categories of trees that don’t even exist. The result has been confusion, division, even conflict.

Justification Defined

I don’t believe it’s possible to distinguish between these various “doctrines” of salvation. Justification, sanctification, adoption — I believe these are simply different Scriptural ways of saying the same thing. I can no longer see the difference between justification and sanctification. The word *hagios* means “holy” or “sanctified”; the word *hagiazō* means “to make holy” or “to sanctify.” The word *dikaios* means “equitable, innocent, just”; *dikaioō* is a difficult verb to translate into English and in fact bears many meanings, ranging from acquittal and forgiveness to actually making just. The various nuances are

slightly different but the point is essentially the same: We who were unholy and guilty have been made holy and innocent.

Is it possible to be unholy and innocent at the same time? That is the position of many who carefully distinguish between justification and sanctification. Systematic theologian Henry Thiessen articulates this view well: “Justification is a declarative act. It is not something wrought in man,

*The surgical knife of
theological precision
cannot justifiably
dissect this doctrine*

but something declared of man. It does not make upright or righteous, but declares righteous.”¹ Some express this by distinguishing between condition and position. Our position before God in Christ is just, even though our true condition may be wretched and utterly unjust: “*simul iustus et peccator*.”

John Wesley rightly pointed out the obvious fallacy in this type of thinking:

Least of all does justification imply, that God is deceived in those whom He justifies; that He thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not; that He accounts them to be otherwise than they are. It does by no means imply, that God judges concerning us contrary to the real nature of things; that He esteems us better than we really

are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteousness. Surely no. The judgement of the all-wise God is always according to truth. Neither can it ever consist with His unerring wisdom, to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more, in this manner, confound me with Christ, than with David or Abraham. Let any man, to whom God hath given understanding weigh this without prejudice; and he cannot but perceive, that such a notion of justification is neither reconcilable to reason nor Scripture.²

Considering these comments, it is little wonder that Wesley reacted so strongly against Martin Luther’s commentary on Galatians³ and that Wesley’s thinking has been compared to Catholicism. For that matter, is Catholicism right about justification after all?

Imputation or Infusion?

In justifying us, does God “infuse” or imbue us with righteousness or does he simply “impute” or credit righteousness to us? Put another way, does God actually make us righteous or simply regard us as righteous? Protestantism affirms the latter, Catholicism the former. As the Council of Trent put it, “Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.”⁴ Protestantism carefully distinguishes between justification and sanctification; Catholicism does not.

Which view is more Scriptural? Consider the following verses.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. . . .

What, then, of the Protestant Reformation? What of Martin Luther's protests? Luther's protests against the abuses of the Church were entirely valid. Attempts to earn merit through acts of penance, the sale of indulgences, the veneration of relics — these practices have no spiritual value and obscure the basic message of the cross. To get at the heart of the issue Luther revamped the doctrine of justification, and the pendulum swung to the other side of the grandfather clock known as "merit."

Christ."⁶ Notice that in both cases, justification is meritorious; it is earned. The historic debate is not *whether* salvation must be merited (earned); it is *how* salvation is merited (earned). Did Jesus do all the work, or do we do some of it ourselves? But is the question itself the wrong question?

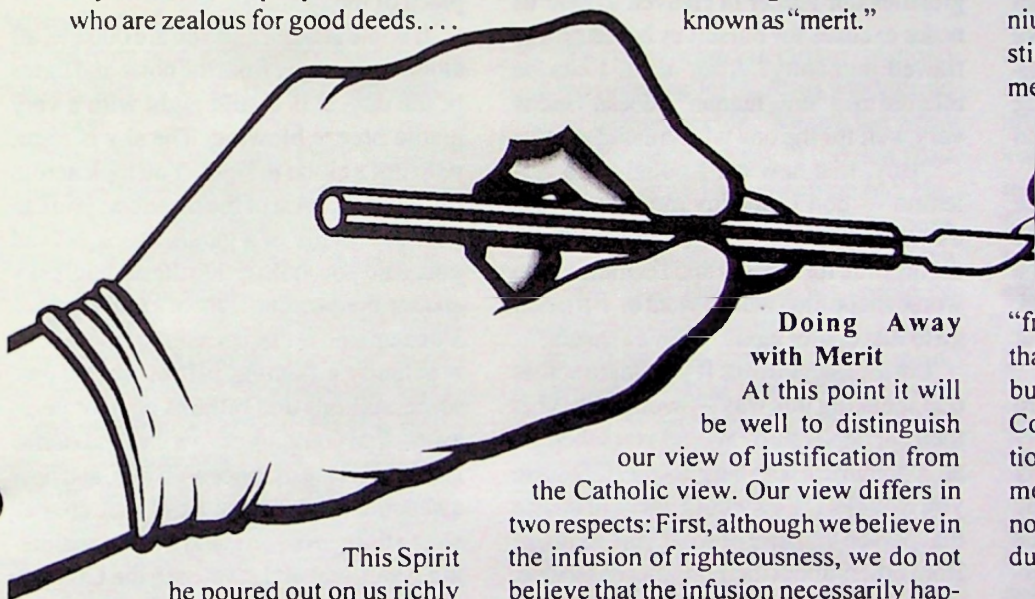
"To One Who Works"

The whole system of "penance" and "merit" is unscriptural. Despite a millennium and-a-half of theologizing, there is still no evidence that God ever expected men and women to earn salvation by living perfect lives, whether in a "covenant of works" or otherwise. The New Testament

consistently portrays eternal life as a "free gift" (Rom. 6:23) and emphasizes that God is not obliged to grant eternal life, but that He chooses to grant eternal life (1 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 1:5; Col. 1:20, 21). Salvation is not a commodity to be purchased by merit: "Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due" (Rom. 4:4, NRSV).

This actually runs contrary to what many Protestant systematic theologies tell us. We are frequently told that we cannot merit eternal life because we failed to do that in Adam, our federal or natural head, whose original sin is imputed to us. For that reason we must rest on the merits of the Second Adam who did earn eternal life by his works. Jesus' merits are imputed to us, and that is the basis of our salvation. Scriptural support for this theory is tenuous at best; it is articulated and defended by a handful of proof-texts and a great deal of philosophizing.

The New Testament may not speak of the imputation of Christ's merits, but does it not speak of the imputation of Christ's righteousness? That language is used in some translations. The word "impute" in various forms is used fifteen times in the King James Version, six times in Romans
(continued on page 13)



This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Tit. 2:11-14, 6, 7, NRSV with text note in 2:13).

Notice the justifying, purifying work of God's grace. Notice the single, seamless doctrine; the surgical knife of theological precision cannot justifiably dissect this doctrine. Going back to Romans and Galatians, I must believe that when God justifies us, He literally renders us just; He really does make us righteous. There is nothing strictly forensic about this act. The angel of the Lord told Joseph that Jesus would "save his people from their sins," not "in their sins" (Matt. 1:21). I believe that Catholicism is correct in "confusing" justification with sanctification.

Doing Away with Merit

At this point it will be well to distinguish our view of justification from the Catholic view. Our view differs in two respects: First, although we believe in the infusion of righteousness, we do not believe that the infusion necessarily happens at baptism; we reject the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Baptism is not a sacrament but a symbol; it is a meaningful ritual which expresses a grand truth, but there is nothing magical about the act in itself (1 Pet. 3:21).

Second, we reject as unscriptural the concept of "merit." This is a Latin idea foreign to the New Testament. It should thus be no surprise that the Catechism of the Catholic Church lists no Scripture verses in its section on merit.

Interestingly, this is the one point on which Catholics and Protestants are totally agreed. Protestant T. C. Hammond writes: "The meritorious ground of justification is . . . the sacrifice of Christ."⁵ Despite his criticism of Catholicism, he is very Catholic on this point. Compare the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Justification has been merited for us by the passion of

Only Human?

BY THE EDITOR

Watching and listening to the recent political wranglings about the President, Congressman Livingston, and politicians in general, I've heard: "You know, if we start holding politicians to such a high standard [regarding marital fidelity and moral integrity], then no one will be able to run for office."

The assumption is that in all of America it would be impossible to find 435 people for Congress who aren't immoral, and a candidate for president who isn't immoral. After all, what should we expect from our leaders — they're ONLY HUMAN!!

How many times have you ever heard yourself or someone else say "I'm only human" or "give him a break, he's only human"? What do we mean when we say that? Well, generally we mean that to be human is intrinsically to be less than perfect, flawed, incomplete, inadequate.

- Humans get tired.
- Humans make mistakes.
- Humans sometimes do some really, really stupid things.
- Humans sometimes say one thing and then turn around and do something else.
- Humans sometimes have trouble being faithful and keeping their commitments.
- Humans frequently hurt each other with their words and their actions.
- Humans disappoint us.

And so, when we say "I'm only human" or "he's only human" we are making an apology for not being . . . well, divine. We're saying — "I'm not God, I can't help my behavior." "It's not my fault, it's this awful Human Nature, this Flesh, this Sin nature deep inside me — that is what's to blame for my behavior. Don't blame me, I'm only human."

I wonder what God thinks when He hears us making excuses for ourselves by refer-

encing our "human nature." Do you think He likes hearing that? Do you think it glorifies our Father in Heaven to hear us make excuses for ourselves based on our flawed humanity? After all, if I can be referred to as "only human" it doesn't speak very well for the one who created me.

"Boy, that new car I bought is a real lemon — don't buy any more cars from that manufacturer." "It's terrible, I went to the hospital for surgery and I came away in worse shape than when I went in. I'll never go to that doctor again — he's a quack."

Let me ask you this: If you heard someone speaking this way — would you visit their car dealership? Would you schedule an appointment with their doctor? Of course you wouldn't. You would not be drawn to that person because of what you've heard from others about their product or service.

So how do you suppose it reflects on God when we dismiss sinful behavior by saying "I'm only human?"

In effect we're saying: "Boy, that guy God over there, I don't know about Him — I don't think He manufactures very good products. No sooner do they come off the assembly line than they start malfunctioning. I don't think I'd trust Him for anything."

Are we really justified in calling into question the nature and character of almighty God as a way of excusing our flawed behavior? Is it really such a terrible thing to be HUMAN?

Let's consider the evidence. In the second chapter of Hebrews the writer cites a quotation from the eighth Psalm. In the eighth Psalm — which is attributed to David — the Psalmist sings a hymn of praise to the excellency of God. He says, "O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set

your glory above the heavens." As he continues I want you to imagine yourself in the place of the Psalmist.

It is late at night and you are outside, all alone — far away from the noise and lights of the city. It is a mild night with a very gentle breeze blowing. The sky is clear, with not a cloud in sight. You look across the wide expanse of the meadow; you can hear the trickle of a gentle brook behind you. And you look up into the midnight sky and see the dazzling sight of a million stars. You remember that each one of those stars is actually a flaming ball of atomic gas, some millions and billions of light years away. And you think of how vast and eternal is this universe of space and time, and how awesome must be the hand that created such a thing. As you stand there, considering how great and awesome the God you pray to must really be, and as you look around you at the vast darkness on earth — you start to feel rather small and insignificant when compared to God and the universe.

I'm sure that was what the Psalmist must have been feeling as he went on to write, "When I look at your heavens and the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

In other words, "who are we, tiny little creatures in an infinite universe, that you should care one thing about us? Who are we, little spots on a glass, barely visible under a high-powered lens of a microscope? Who are we, God, that you should pay us a second thought, that you should give us a millisecond of your thought and attention?" "And yet, you have made us a little lower than the angels, and crowned us with glory and honor. You have given us

dominion over the works of your hands, and you have put all things under our feet.”

Did you hear what the Psalmist says there? The almighty and eternal God has crowned us with glory and honor. We have been created in His image. We are bearers of the divine likeness. “And behold, God saw all that he had created and it was ‘very good.’”

Everything that God created was good. The earth, the stars, the grass and trees, the animals of all shapes and sizes — and Adam, the earth creature, and his mate Eve, created from man’s rib — two human beings created by God. Behold, they were very good.

Only human, you say? Only human? What an affront to the nature and creative power of God. We weren’t created “only human.” We were created perfect — bearers of the divine image.

Only human, you say? What about Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Hebrews 2:14 says that He shared our flesh and blood. Jesus shared our flesh and blood. He was fully human, as human as any of us. The problem with the doctrine of the Trinity is not so much that it denies true monotheism, by creating three gods. The real problem with the doctrine of the Trinity is that it denies the full humanity of Jesus Christ.

The simple truth is this: if Jesus is really “fully God” then it is impossible for Him to be man at all. He was only a God masquerading as a man. The belief that Jesus only *appeared* to be a man when He was really God was known in early Christian circles as “docetism.” If this were true then Jesus was in a great masquerade, a hoax. But of course the Bible never teaches this.

Everywhere in the Bible Jesus is seen as what He is, a fully human person. The letter to the Hebrews was written to counteract docetic tendencies present in the early Church by showing that Jesus truly was a flesh and blood human being.

“Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.” It is precisely because Jesus is fully human, like us in

every way, that He is able to overcome the power of evil. If He were a God, masquerading as a human being, then He would not have been able to represent us as both our high priest and sacrifice. But He was human, fully human.

This takes us back to our earlier problem. What does it mean when we say “I’m only human”? Listen to what John and Paula Sanford have to say on this subject in their book *The Transformation of the Inner Man*:

To become human means (at most) to become like Jesus. Jesus was the one fully human person. We use the word wrongly when we say “I did that (bad thing) because I am only human.” No, we did that wrong thing purely because we are inhuman. If we were human we would do as Jesus did! We would be compassionate, warm, open, giving, embracing, and nurturing. Our spirit, perfectly wedded to our body, would rejoice to embrace another, for His sake rather than ours alone. That life of living to bless others would be so natural and fulfilling to us, we would be willing, like Jesus, to suffer loss for the happiness of another.

To become human means (at least) to become capable of empathizing with another. It means to have a functioning spirit which through our bodily senses can commiserate or rejoice with another. It means the ability to hurt empathetically for another; concerning conscience it means to allow ourselves to be hurt in advance lest our brother be hurt. Thus the least indicator of the ability to be human is to have a working conscience. The essence of humanity is told by conscience. When we do not have a functioning spirit, filled with love, we cannot care how our brother feels, nor do we feel bad if we happen to be the ones who have brought him harm. To be inhuman is to be dead to concern for the welfare of our fellow man.

The next time we are tempted to excuse our sinful behavior by saying “I’m only

human” let us not discredit God by blaming Him for our mistakes — let us acknowledge the real truth. “I’m sorry, I was being inhuman.”

Too often Christians have misunderstood what it means to be human. We think that the goal and object of Christianity is to help us to stop being human and become something other than human. This often emerges in Christian circles that set extremely strict or rigid standards of conduct. It is the Gnostic tendency that says spirit is good and flesh is evil. In order to be truly good we must deny our humanness. And so, the ascetic ideal is promoted as the ultimate standard of true humanity. Deny yourself all human longings. Asceticism teaches abstinence from certain types of food — as though to eat meat, or certain types of meat or drink is somehow inherently evil.

Asceticism teaches celibacy, that to be a really holy person — priest, monk, nun — means to be dedicated to a lifetime of asexuality. As though to be sexual was somehow inherently evil.

Jesus was no ascetic. In fact, some of the most vehement criticism that was leveled at Jesus was precisely because He was so human. Jesus ate meat and drank wine, so they called Him a glutton and a drunkard. Jesus associated with people of questionable morality, tax collectors, prostitutes and other sinners, and the religious elite condemned Him for it. While it is true that Jesus remained celibate throughout His life — due primarily to the fact that He knew His mission would involve His death at a young age and it would be unfair to marry a woman knowing that and leave her widowed shortly after. Yet Jesus never demanded that His disciples remain celibate. And Jesus certainly enjoyed the friendship and companionship of women, several of whom were numbered among His disciples and supporters. At a time when men considered themselves far superior to women, Jesus was a friend of women and, again, He was criticized for it.

The Gospels portray Jesus as a man — a fully human, fully functioning, fully alive man. A man of action, a man of principles,

a man of compassion, a man who could laugh with His friends, a man who could cry with others and share with them in their grief. A man who welcomed little children to come and sit on His lap, who was willing to listen to their little stories. They show us Jesus, a man who, when He was taking a stand against injustice, could display anger at the greed of humans who would take advantage of weary pilgrims by profiting from them in the currency exchange inside the holy temple. Jesus, the human, became enraged when He saw His fellow humans treating other humans in a very inhuman way.

The Gospels show us Jesus, a man who made ordinary people feel very comfortable in His presence, and in doing so, helped them discover God.

They show us a man who faced His death with boldness and courage — refusing to barter for His freedom by denying who He was.

They show us a man who at times was afraid of death. He knelt in the Garden, pleading with God that if there was any other way for God's plan to be accomplished, please make it happen. And He later cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Don't kid yourselves — Jesus was afraid of death, just as we are all afraid of death.

Are you afraid of death? Of course you are. All of us are afraid of death. In fact, the writer of Hebrews tells us that the fear of death enslaves us. We are held captive by the fear of death. Most of us try to deny the reality of death. Listen to what writer Tony Campolo has to say about our fear of death:

For most of us psychological survival is possible because we have bought into a lie about our human nature. We have repressed the truth about death and we go on about our daily affairs as though we will live forever. Logically we know that we will die, but the truth that logic affirms nearly always seems unreal. Society undertakes the task of providing sufficient diversion from the truth about existence to keep us from grasping the significance of our mortality.

Each of us is able to say with detached logic: All humans will die. I am a human. I will die. But the truth of the logic does not impinge upon our consciousness. The existential reality with its despairing message is pushed into the subconscious. The "healthy" people of the world are those of us who are deluded into ignoring our mortality.

What sociologist Anthony Campolo wants us to understand is that deep down, in a part of our hearts and minds of which we are largely not consciously aware, we are scared to death of death. So we fill our lives with other things, distractions to cause us to forget that we are human, to keep us from thinking about death. This is especially true on New Year's Eve — as we bid farewell to another year of life. New Year's is a reminder to each of us that we are one year closer to our deaths. As one philosopher has stated: "We drink and dance and make noise on New Year's Eve to drown out the sound of the grass growing over our graves."

The power of religion is that it provides a context in which we can explore the reality of our death and its implications for the way we live. You cannot read the Bible without being confronted by the reality of death. From the death of Abel at the hand of his brother, to the death of the firstborn Egyptians, to the death of Jesus, the Bible confronts us with a constant reminder of the reality of death. People are born, people live, and then people die. This is reality; death is a part of life. We can either spend our lives denying the reality of death and running away from God, or we can face the truth that we will one day die.

Through the death of Jesus, it is possible for us to be set free from the fear of death. The beauty of the Christian faith is the realization that we do not have to apologize for being human — with all of our drives and passions — because that is how God made us.

The Scriptures show us that God created humans, and the creation was good. It was our sinful rebellion that caused God's good gifts to become distorted, damaged,

abused. For 4000 years God worked with human beings and tried to teach them how to become human again. He entered into a covenant with Abraham. He gave them His laws through Moses. He sent them prophets; He gave them priests and kings. But still, people continued in their inhumanity. Then, in the fullness of time, God sent His son — Jesus, the one who would provide a living example, a real-life illustration of what God's original design for humanity was. Jesus is the second Adam, the New Man, the prototypical human being. He is the Pattern.

Through His life, Jesus showed us how we can rise above our inhumanity brought on by our sinful condition, and learn to be fully human — loving, passionate and compassionate, empathetic, nurturing, accepting, non-judgmental, playful, sociable, at times angry when justified — but creatively so — in short, to be a human like Jesus was. Jesus also shows us that it is possible to live with the knowledge that we will die, but be able to face our eternity with our hope centered on God — a God who is also gracious and compassionate, not wanting any to perish, but all to turn to Him and receive His saving love.

You are human. God knows everything about you and God accepts you. God loves you. Through Jesus — the "human face of God" — learn how to shed your sinful inhumanity, and become fully human. I want to challenge you to learn from Jesus how to be human. Let Jesus teach you how to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Let Jesus teach you how to love your neighbor as yourself. Let Jesus teach you how to experience true joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let Jesus show you how — using the spiritual disciplines of solitude, prayer, meditation, submission, fasting, worship, study of Scripture, service — how He used these disciplines to place Himself before God, to make Himself available to the Father, to allow God's grace to fill Him and flow through Him. Let Jesus be your teacher — let Him teach you how to be human. □

Three Worlds

BY PASTOR HOLLIS PARTLOWE— OREGON, IL

WORLD ONE: The World That Then Was
2 Peter 3:6

God created all things in heaven and earth (Gen. 1:2), and then announced that “it was very good” (1:31). However, later He took another bird’s-eye view of His creation as we read in Genesis 6:5, 6: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented [grieved] the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”

Something happened between the “very good” state of affairs and the gross wickedness that God observed here. Man fell into sin. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and plunged the whole human race into sin and death. The sad record is in Genesis 3. Subsequently, men became corrupt, did what was right in their own eyes, and the earth was filled with violence (Gen. 6:11, 12). God judged that world with a universal flood.

Knowledge of this arrangement of things (before the flood) is very limited. Apparently it had not rained up until this time, which may well have contributed to the unbelief of the antediluvians. Imagine the ridicule that Noah must have received when he preached a coming flood, but that unbelievable flood came right on schedule (Gen. 7:23).

Certainly the New Testament supports the Noahic flood and how Noah’s family survived through faith. “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (Heb. 11:7, NIV). By using the phrase “not yet seen,” perhaps the writer is refer-

ring to the fact that no rain or rainbow had ever been seen before the deluge.

Peter reminds us that only eight persons—Noah, his wife, and their three sons and their wives—were saved (1 Pet. 3:20, 21). All others perished. The ark is a type or illustration of Christ. He is to us what the ark was to Noah and his family. Jesus is our passage out of this Age into God’s Kingdom. Had Noah not been obedient and built the ark, or if he had stepped out of it before it rested on dry land, he would not have survived. I have to assume that. Likewise, we must remain in Christ until death or until Jesus comes. God “did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:5, NASB).

It was not always “the world of the ungodly.” It was once the abode of holy beings. In this world God planted the only tree of life. In this world was the only Eden and the only perfect pair of human beings. They had face-to-face fellowship with their Maker, but then sin entered and the sinless world became a sinful world. God’s wrath and judgment fell hard on that generation. “Whereby the world [*kosmos*] that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Pet. 3:6).

The word *kosmos* refers to the inhabitants, since the earth itself was not destroyed in the flood. The same is true in John 3:16. The world (*kosmos*) has reference to humankind. Mankind is the object of God’s love. It is obvious that the earth itself was not destroyed, but the *order of things* that existed before the flood. Scripture says: “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever” (Eccl. 1:4).

If there was no judgment in Noah’s time, we have no reason to believe in judgment at the end time, and the accuracy of the Bible is called in question. The flood assures us of judgment in the past and also in the future. Jesus said, “Just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:26, 27, NASB). They were unaware that judgment was hanging over their heads.

The shape of the ark is not clear from Scripture. It was probably shaped like a box or even a coffin. Noah wasn’t going anywhere. He was only going to float around for a while.

Let’s remember that Jesus is to us what the ark was to Noah and his family. Jesus is our passage out of this ungodly world into His glorious Kingdom.

World Two: The World That Now Is
2 Peter 3:7

World two began after the flood and will extend to the return of Christ. World one passed off the stage and world two came on. Our world is peopled by survivors of world one brought over by way of the ark. While all men descended from Adam, it is equally true that all of us descended from Noah’s three sons.

World two is no better spiritually than world one inasmuch as sin still exists. Paul the apostle tells us that Christ came “to rescue us out of this present age of wickedness” (Gal. 1:4, NEB). We are repeatedly cautioned not to love or focus our lives on this world’s system:

“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).

Jesus taught us that the wide gate and the broad way lead to destruction, and many enter thereby. Then He was quick to add that the small gate and the narrow way lead to life, and few find them — not many, but few (Matt. 7:13, 14, NASB). There are just two highways that one can travel — the broad way and the narrow way. They are going in opposite directions and obviously they lead to quite different destinations. We are all born on the broad way and need to do nothing to be lost — just sit tight and ride the broad way to eternal death. Jesus, our lovely Lord, came into this world to help man avoid the tragedy. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). God be praised! Through Jesus we can find forgiveness of sin, newness of life, and assurance of eternal life in the Age to Come.

Jesus said: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). We, too, can be overcomers through Him, because “He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25, NASB). Our Lord said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Christ’s Kingdom is not according to this world’s system.

“For this world in its present form is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:31, NIV). This world (*kosmos*), this arrangement of things, is already in the process of passing away. Anything or anyone that does not comply with God’s will must sooner or later pass out of existence. This world — world two — is rapidly coming to its well-deserved end. “But the present heavens and earth are sustained by his word and are reserved for fire on the day of judgment,

which is the day of destruction of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7, Lamsa).

Observe the future of this arrangement of events in our world. The final destruction will constitute cleansing of the earth in preparation for the Age to Come. The water was literal in Noah’s day, and the fire that God uses to consume the wickedness of this Age will also be literal.

Just as surely as world one ended in judgment and gave way to world two, so world two will end in judgment and give way to world three. Make no mistake! With the passing of world two will appear world three.

WORLD THREE: The World That Is to Come

2 Peter 3:13

World three begins when Jesus comes and it will never end. Worlds one and two were colored and warped by sin, but thank God that will not be the case in world three. By contrast, “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9; Num. 14:21).

Then Daniel 7:27 will be fulfilled: “Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him” (NASB). What will be our nature then? Jesus said He would give us eternal life in the world (Age) to come (Luke 18:29, 30). Moreover, “The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15, NASB). Yes, Jesus, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (Rev. 5:5) will rule over all nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15). “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13, NIV).

The prophecies run through the darkness of former Ages and reach their climax in the dawn beyond — God’s eternal Kingdom. Jesus called it “the age to come” (Luke 18:30, NIV); Paul called it the world

or Age without end. Revelation 21 and 22 focus on the new heavens and new earth, the eternal Age after the millennium has run its course. We should be especially interested in this period because of the amount of time we’ll spend there and the glory and joy of it all.

By the way, Revelation is the Grand Central Station of Bible prophecy. All the themes of prophetic truth come into this magnificent book. It unfolds the great events of bringing human history to a close. In order to rightly understand Revelation, one needs a working knowledge of all parts of the Bible.

World three is the final, eternal Age. Nothing is prophesied beyond that. It is an Age without sin and filled with light and the glory of God. It is peopled by redeemed survivors brought over from worlds one and two.

The only way one could get from world one to world two was in Noah’s ark. The only way one can get from world two to world three is by Jesus Christ, our ARK OF SALVATION. Have you engaged passage on the ark of salvation? Are you bound for the New Heavens and New Earth? Are you prepared to enter God’s perfect tomorrow?

“God’s tomorrow is a day of gladness,
And its joys shall never fade,
No more weeping, no more sense of sadness,
No more foes to make afraid.

“Gods tomorrow is a day of glory.
We shall wear the crown of life,
Sing thro’ countless years love’s old, old story.
Free for ever from all strife.

—A. H. Ackley □

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Religious Evasion

BY DALLAS WILLARD

A thoughtful examination of local gatherings of Christian believers may reveal that in this teaching [Matthew 6:16] Jesus lays His finger upon a primary cause of their ineffectiveness as schools of eternal living. Truthfully, it seems to be a general law of social/historical development that institutions tend to distort and destroy the central function that brought them into existence. A few years ago Clyde Reid wrote a painfully incisive discussion of how our church activities seem to be structured around evading God. His "law of religious evasion" states, "We structure our churches and maintain them so as to shield us from God and to protect us from genuine religious experience."¹

Along with many other idling observations of church life, he notes,

The adult members of churches today rarely raise serious religious questions for fear of revealing their doubts or being thought of as strange. There is an implicit conspiracy of silence on religious matters in the churches. This conspiracy covers up the fact that the churches do not change lives or influence conduct to any appreciable degree.²

There is very little time and occasion for openness in most of our gatherings because we fear it. We think it may lead to confrontation, anger, and divisiveness. We are not open because we fear what others will think of us and do to us. If we honestly compared the amount of time in church spent thinking about what others think or

might think with the amount of time spent thinking about what God is thinking, we would probably be shocked. Those of us in congregational leadership need to think deeply about this.

Often the "eyeservice" that occurs in present-day church services comes in the

We structure our churches . . . to shield us from God and to protect us from genuine religious experience.

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form of trying to "move" people. "Wasn't that a great service," we often say. But what do we mean? Are we really thinking of how God felt about the service? What is the



correlation between God's view of a great service and the human view? We need to be very careful about this, or the rule, "Truly, they have their reward," may apply to us.

Suppose I am a pastor. If, truly, God did nothing in my church service, or in response to my efforts in ministry, how much would it really matter if the people in attendance still thought and spoke well of things and returned for the next service and brought their friends? I may be tempted to think I have to attract people to hear me but could get by without God.

How can one in a leadership position not be haunted by what the Lord said to his prophet Ezekiel:

Everyone is talking about you all the time. They say, "Come and let's hear what the word is from the Lord." And they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words. but they do not do them. For their mouths talk devotion but their hearts seek wicked gains. Why, you are just like one who sings about love with a beautiful voice and a well-played instrument. They hear what you are saying, but do not do it. (Ezek. 33:31-32)

Whatever our position in life, if our lives and works are to be of the kingdom of God, we must not have human approval as a primary or even major aim. We must lovingly allow people to think whatever they will. We may, if it seems right, occasionally try to help them understand us and appreciate what we are doing. That could be an act of love. But in any case we can only serve them by serving the Lord only. □

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Loving Jesus by Holding Firm to His Precious Gospel

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD—BROOKS, GA

“If you love me, keep my commandments”

There is a right and a wrong way to study the Bible. The search for saving Truth (2 Thess. 2:10) must be conducted within certain guidelines.

Rule number one in Bible study has to do with *context*. One can prove almost anything from the Bible if one takes isolated statements out of context and builds a major doctrine on them. A classic example of this faulty method appears in popular tracts promoting “Jesus.”

In Romans 10:9 Paul said, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

This single verse is supposed to demonstrate that belief in the resurrection of Jesus defines the whole Gospel and is enough to provide salvation for anyone who confesses belief in the risen Jesus.

But wait a moment! Did not Jesus say “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom” (Matt. 7:21)?

We know that Paul did not contradict Jesus. We know also that Paul zealously rejected as perilous any Gospel but the true saving Message (Gal. 1:6-9).

How then shall we harmonize these two passages?

It is all a matter of *context*. When Romans 10:9 is quoted by itself as a summary of the Gospel, Paul is made to say something he did not mean. If we look at the preceding and following verses we will do justice to what Paul really meant. Paul has been talking about being right with God through faith (Rom. 10:6, 7). He explains that this wonderful relationship with God is achieved by having the WORD in our mouth and in our heart (v. 8).

A Berean Bible student will ask: “What was that Message?” Paul describes it as “the WORD which we are preaching” (v. 8). It is obviously the Gospel which he and the other apostles and evangelists preached in common. What Message was that? The book of Acts tells us. Stringing together a number of gospel-defining verses we find this:

For three months Paul reasoned and persuaded them *about the Kingdom of God* . . . As I went about among you proclaiming the *Gospel of the Kingdom* . . . Paul solemnly testified about *the Kingdom of God* and tried to persuade them about Jesus from dawn till dusk . . . Paul welcomed all who came to him and proclaimed *the Gospel of the Kingdom* and taught concerning the Lord Jesus Christ for two years, with all openness, unhindered . . . When they believed Philip preaching *the Gospel of the Kingdom of God* and the Name of Jesus they were getting baptized. (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 30, 31; 8:12.)

Back in Romans 10 we find Paul describing this Kingdom Gospel as a “confession of the Lord Jesus and belief in his resurrection.” The word Kingdom does not appear in that verse. Does that mean that Paul has altered the Gospel? Of course not. Paul, in that one verse, does not catalog all elements of the Gospel. He did not mention in Romans 10:9 the death of Jesus, though he implies it. He did not mention baptism or repentance, but he would have insisted on repentance and baptism. He did not mention the Kingdom, but it is implied in the idea of submission to the Lordship of Jesus. Paul implied the Kingdom in his

conclusion (v. 17), as we shall see. Jesus had commanded, as His first commandment, “Repent and *believe in the Gospel about the Kingdom*” (Mark 1:14, 15; cp. Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:11, 12; 9:60).

Romans 10:9, taken *alone* as sufficient to describe the Gospel, is misleading. Paul did not intend the context of that verse to be omitted. Let us do Paul the honor of following his argument to the end. In verse 14 Paul says: “How can people call on him in whom they have not believed? How can people believe in him whom they have not heard [preaching]?” (Note the correct translation of the NASV, “him whom they have not heard,” not as NIV: “him of whom they have not heard.”)

Paul’s point here is that you must hear Jesus preaching the Gospel in order to be saved. Jesus is now in heaven, but His Gospel continues to be preached through His agents on earth. In Romans 10:15 Paul refers to a wonderful Gospel announcement in Isaiah 52:7: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the Gospel of good things.” In that context in Isaiah (which should of course be consulted, so that Paul’s meaning is clear) the good news is *about the Kingdom of God* (“Your God has become King,” Isa. 52:7).

Finally, Paul’s conclusion should never be divorced from Romans 10:9: “Faith comes from hearing and hearing from Messiah’s Message” (Rom 10:17). There it is! Faith in Christ arises when we hear Christ’s Gospel Message. And what was that: “The Kingdom of God is at hand: Repent and believe in the Gospel” (Mark 1:14, 15; Matt. 4:17, etc.).

The simple truth is this: that “confessing Christ” means believing and speaking the Message as it came from the lips of

Jesus, whether one hears Jesus personally (when He was on earth) or the same Jesus preaching the same Gospel of the Kingdom from heaven through His agents.

The Kingdom of God and the things concerning Jesus provide a full summary of the Gospel (Acts 8:12). Romans 10:9 must not be taken in isolation. Taken out of its immediate context and its wider context in Acts and the Gospels, it will not provide a true and full Gospel.

There is no contradiction between Jesus and Paul. Jesus said that it is insufficient to call Him "Lord, Lord." Paul says that "everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved." Paul agreed with Jesus: calling Jesus Lord means accepting Him as Savior, Lord and Gospel teacher.

The tragedy is that many think they can have salvation by believing in Jesus as Savior alone and by this they mean that belief in His death is sufficient. Jesus protests (Matt. 7:21 ff) that He must be accepted as Lord and Teacher (John 13:13). Above all, Paul and Jesus insist that "faith comes by hearing the Gospel Message of the Messiah" (Rom. 10:17).

To find out more about that wonderful Message of the Kingdom consult Matthew, Mark and Luke. They leave us in no doubt about what the Gospel was and is.

It is highly risky to try to define the Gospel from a single passage taken out of context. The use of Romans 10:9 by itself presents a partial gospel and omits the crucial information given in the climax of Paul's argument (Rom. 10:17). Faith must be built on the Gospel as Jesus — the original Gospel preacher (Heb. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:3) — preached it. If attention is not paid to the conclusion of the argument, Romans 10:17, verse 9 about confessing Jesus as Lord will be disastrously misunderstood.

It is false to say that the Gospel consists of information only about the death and resurrection of Jesus.¹ A popular tract which declares that "Jesus came to do three days work — to die, be buried and rise again" is most confusing. Was Jesus on vacation for the previous three and a half years of Gospel ministry? Certainly not. He came preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom — that was the reason for His whole mission as a preacher (Luke 4:43). Faith

comes by hearing Messiah Jesus' Gospel Message of the Kingdom (Rom. 10:17), the faith which "we are preaching" (Rom. 10:8).

The founding Truths of the Church of God were made public in America some 150 years ago in protest at the "guttled Gospel" of popular evangelicalism. What a tragedy and what a slap in the face for Jesus and the zealous workers for the Kingdom who have preceded us, if we were now to dissolve the Kingdom Gospel into the popular "believe in Jesus" Message so massively propagated. It is time to stand strong for Jesus by standing strong for His precious Gospel — the Gospel about the Kingdom of God. □

¹ Paul did not say this in 1 Cor. 15:1-4. He spoke of the death and resurrection as "things of primary importance." He did not say that the Gospel excluded the Good News of the Kingdom. But modern tracts offering the Gospel invariably make no mention of the Gospel of the Kingdom at all.

Justification Revisited (continued from page 5)

four alone. (More recent translations tend to use the word "reckon.") But does this term bear a forensic sense only? Consider Romans 4:8, a citation of Psalm 32:2: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (KJV). Does this imply that God may "impute" or ascribe sin to an innocent man? Consider the remainder of Psalm 32:2: "and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (NRSV). God does not "impute" or "reckon" as sinful the man who is not sinful. If God "imputes" (ascribes) righteousness to us or "reckons" us as righteous, it is because we are righteous; and if we are righteous, it is because God made us so in Christ through the sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit. "Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous" (1 John 3:7).

There is a Greek word for "impute" that would very well bear the Protestant sense. That word is *ellogeo* and it means "to put on account." It is used in Philemon 18, where Paul writes to Philemon about the slave Onesimus: "If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account." It is also used in Romans 5:13, but every other key verse in this portion of Romans uses the term *logizomai* which means, again, "to reckon."

Conclusion

God freely grants holiness and salvation to those who ask for forgiveness and desire to obey Him. Of course we will not obey Him perfectly; hence the promise of ongoing forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

What is the Scriptural truth about justification? It is very simply that God forgives us of our sins and makes us into better people. □

Notes

¹ Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Inc.), 1949, rev. 1979, p. 275, emphasis mine.

² John Wesley, *Forty-Four Sermons* (London: The Epworth Press), 1944, p. 53.

³ Wesley, Journal, Monday, June 15, 1741, cited in Donald W. Dayton, "Law and Gospel in the Wesleyan Tradition," *Grace Theological Journal*, Fall 1991, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 237.

⁴ Cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguouri, MO: Liguouri Publications), 1994, p. 482.

⁵ T.C. Hammond, *In Understanding Be Men* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press), 1936, rep. 1974, p. 142.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 482.

The Third Temple (part two)

BY PASTOR JIM MATTISON — PELZER, SC

In our first article we noted scriptures alluding to the building of the Third Temple of the Jews shortly before Jesus' return. We noticed also that now there is a plurality among the Jews for the rebuilding of the temple. Many believe it must be done, that Israel has sinned in not doing so, and that that is the reason for Israel's problems. We noticed the actual building site is being closely scrutinized, that blueprints are already made, that the 70-seat Supreme Court Building to house the Sanhedrin has already been constructed, that many items needed for the Temple service have already been made, and that all the Jewish priests carry an unusual Y chromosome, tracing them back to a common ancestor — Aaron. Now let's take notice of certain other preparations.

Purification for Temple Priests

The Rabbis of the Temple Movement realize that all those who would enter the sacred area to perform the holy tasks must first be ritually pure. All Jews have become ceremonially unclean in the Diaspora (dispersion), and this must be reversed by the ashes of the red heifer (Num. 19:1-10).

For the first time in 2000 years, this year a red heifer was born in Israel. Other qualified red heifers have been purchased from Clyde Lott, a Mississippi cattle man. They have been approved by Israeli authorities and are now waiting to be transported to Israel. The leaders of the Temple Institute place a special urgency upon the securing of the red heifer.

Temple Politics

The Israeli-Arab conflict is largely over this issue of rebuilding the Temple. The *Wakf* (Islamic Authority) maintains rigid control over the Temple Mount. It blamed

Israel for starting a fire in the Al Aqsa mosque in 1969 in order to destroy the building and rebuild the Temple. Actually, a fanatic member of a Christian cult was responsible for setting the blaze.

Ever since, the Muslims have assumed that every movement near the area, whether archaeological or religious, has been for the same purpose. This was the reason for the riots in 1982, during the excavation of the subterranean Western Wall, and later when excavations were made to reveal the Herodian Street, and in 1996, when the Hasmonean tunnel was opened. In March 1997 Yasser Arafat was shown in a photograph — widely distributed by the Associated Press — holding up an artist's version of a restored Jewish Temple and telling his people to get ready for the next battle. Similar calls for coming conflict were given over loudspeakers on the Temple Mount by Arabs during each of the preceding riots.

Since 1967, when Israel turned over the jurisdiction of the Islamic holy places on the Temple Mount to *Wakf*, Jews and Christians have been forbidden under the law of Islam to enter the area for religious purposes. On June 27, 1967, the Knesset passed a law protecting the holy places, and had as one of its provisions: "Whoever does anything that is likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the various religions to the places sacred to them or their feelings with regard to those places shall be liable to imprisonment . . . This includes Jews who above all regard the Temple Mount with the utmost reverence and have just fought to recover it." Even after 30 years of Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount, Jews are still not permitted access to the site of the Temple for prayers or any religious act. Last year,

finally, the Israeli Supreme Court did pass a law upholding the right of Jews to pray at the site. (Evidently the Wailing Wall is the boundary for the Temple Mount. As tourists with Bro. Huffer's group in 1973 we were permitted to tour the Temple Mount).

When access to the Temple site is secured, many services long suspended since the Temple's destruction will be reinstated. This would also demand the rebuilding of the Temple (see Ezra 3:2). The Temple Mount Faithful, headed by Gershon Solomon, has attempted to offer a Passover sacrifice near the site of the ancient altar near the Dome of the Rock. The reason this organization thinks this is so important is because of the 1930 statement of Rabbi Tucochinsky that the first Passover sacrifice to be made on the Temple Mount will bring about the coming of Machiach ben David and the rebuilding of the Temple. Though they were denied access to the Mount for this purpose, members of the group cut wheat from the wheat fields for the *Omer Hatnofah* (firstfruits) and symbolically offered it on an altar. Also, the group conducts a water libation ceremony at the Pool of Siloam. They have also attempted to lay a cornerstone for the Third Temple, and don chains and sackcloth and march every year to the site on Tisha B'Av (the day of mourning the destruction of the Second Temple).

Temple Perspectives

All movements by the Orthodox Jews point toward the ultimate fulfillment of the Bible verses showing a rebuilt (Third) Temple. They see the difference between this Third Temple, which is to occupy a prominent place in "the time of Jacob's trouble," or the Tribulation (Jer. 50:7; Dan.

(continued on page 17)

Passing the Baton

(1 Kings 18:36-39; 19:13b-14; 19-21)

BY GREG HASLAM

The end is nigh
Is this the terminal generation?
To listen to many observers — both secular and Christian — you would think so. They point to the many indicators of upheaval and urgent unrest: the earth's dwindling material resources, the ecological damage inflicted by man upon his environment, the sheer scale and global repercussions of the concerns reported in daily news. These events and the ferment in the spiritual and ideological perspectives of mankind all seem to confirm our worst suspicions. This widespread accumulation of alarming data seems not only to endorse the sober predictions voiced, by Jesus and his apostles (see, for example, Matthew 24 and Revelation 8 and 9), they seem also to confirm what some had most feared — namely, that the church is in retreat, evil has triumphed, the Christian cause is all but lost, and the people of God are becoming an increasingly shrinking minority. The church appears besieged and beleaguered. Her only hope is said to lie in death or translation, resurrection or rapture. It doesn't really matter which, so long as it is an escape from the mess. That, at any rate, is what many sincerely believe and hope for.

Interestingly, it is also what the prophet Elijah believed and hoped for. The famous contest on Mount Cannel in which Yahweh's representative had rallied the forces and faith of his nation in the notable "power encounter" with the demonic fertility gods of Canaan, had ended with the utter supremacy of Yahweh being mounted in vivid and indisputable display. That night, 850 prophets of the discredited god Baal and his consort Asherah had all been brought

to the Kishon Valley and persuaded to give blood in much larger amounts than those voluntarily donated earlier in the day (see 1 Kings 18:40 and 18:28). Elijah must surely have expected that the repentance of King Ahab, the renunciation of his demon-worshipping queen Jezebel, and the renewal of the people would all immediately follow. In fact, none of this happened. Instead, the nation just went home and told each other what an excising day it had been. Ahab went home and told Jezebel what a naughty boy Elijah had been and Jezebel went "ballistic" and after telling her gods what a loyal witch she had been, promptly put a contract out on Elijah's life.

Disappointment and Disillusionment

Elijah could not have been more devastated. Alone, afraid, and disillusioned, he fled to the desert and, almost suicidal with disappointment and self-pity, he gave voice to the same convictions and aspirations of many believers today: "I have had enough, Lord . . . Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors . . . I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too" (1 Kings 19:4, 10). It's the same desire for escape, resurrection, or rapture which marks so many sectors of the church today. This is a self-serving response, unworthy of a man with something more than a contract on his life — Elijah had the call of God on his life. He seemed to have forgotten that. His life was in danger and he thought that all was lost.

But Elijah was wrong. This wasn't the end, he wasn't the only one left and God's cause was by no means lost. Instead, God was at pains to point out that while Elijah's exhaustion and mood were to some degree

understandable, in fact he had no business being where he was. "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9) was not so much an inquiry about his location, as a challenge to both his frustration and resignation. God was mildly rebuking his defeatism and despair. The Lord took him to task for the narrowness of his perspective and the smallness of his vision.

Something similar needs to happen to us today. We too need to be told to stop complaining and get on with the work at hand. Immediate escape is not an option. It is better to think long term and to look beyond our own minor (or major) defeats and victories, toward the ongoing and ever-expanding triumph of God in history. God buries His workers but His work goes on.

Elijah had to realize that his ministry was only an episode in a very long-running saga. It would be good if we too had the humility to admit the same. We are part of something that has continuity with the past and also perpetuity in the future. It will end in triumph and not tragedy, and it will be God and not Satan who has the last word.

Passing the baton

Since like Elijah we live in a time of transition, it is important that we learn to handle that transition well. You have probably watched television athletic competitions which include relay races. The key to success in such a race frequently lies in the handover of the baton to the team member who is to run the next leg of the race. It is all too easy to fumble or even to drop that baton. This metaphor highlights both the importance of the team effort and also the vital necessity of a properly executed handover if the race is to be won. Elijah

nearly flunked on both counts. He forgot he was only a part of the team, and that there were other runners also in the race. (He miscalculated the number of his teammates by 6,999.) Worse still, he nearly dropped the baton. God reminded him that there were other people waiting for their chance to run, and more particularly, that Elijah had a successor waiting a few miles ahead of him round a bend in the track — Elisha. Elijah was to pass on the baton of his witness. His job was to make sure that he made the pass as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

We too live with a legacy of the past, we have a job to do now in the present, and we must also look expectantly to the future. You are to act like Elisha as you grasp the baton handed to you from the past, and as you prepare to hand that same baton to your successors. There are no stars in a relay race, unless it is the whole team of winners, in which case everyone is a star. We may be proud to be in a race at all, but we should be humble about our own particular part within it. Church history didn't begin in 1967 when I was converted, nor will it end at next summer's Bible Week or convention. In the great sweep we call history, God has already determined the glorious outcome. But it is a team effort; it doesn't depend entirely upon you or upon me. We are all to play our part, but it is only a part and not the whole.

However, each one of us has something unique to contribute. Elisha, the God-appointed successor of Elijah, did not have the same task or ministry as Elijah. God does something new in each generation. That is why it is not healthy for us to live in the past. We may study history and learn from it, but never live in it. There is no better time for me to be alive than now, and no better place for me to be living than right here, for being alive in this time and this place is God's will for me.

What's in a name?

We see that demonstrated clearly here with Elijah and Elisha. Elijah's name means "God is Yahweh." He was called to affirm that fact within a climate of relativism ("there is no such thing as absolute truth"), pluralism ("all religious insights are equally valid"), and syncretism ("all roads lead to God, so why not amalgamate their complementary perspectives?"). A time, in other words, not dissimilar to our own. Elijah lived to declare Yahweh is God and that *only* Yahweh is God—not Ahab and his consort Jezebel, not the Canaanite deity Baal and his consort Asherah—*only* Yahweh is God and both tribal kings and tribal deities are accountable to him. This is why Elijah's ministry was marked by confrontation and judgement. There were power encounters of devastating effectiveness including blistering drought and

rock-splitting storms—all in order to establish the identity of the Being who really ruled the heavens. Was it Baal or was it Yahweh? Elijah lived up to his name. He established the fact that Yahweh is God. A similar calling rests upon God's prophetic people today. We too live in a time of rampant relativism, pluralism, syncretism, lies, and deception. Is nature our god, or is God the God of nature? Is ecological ruin the worst reckoning mankind can face, or is eschatological ruin a far more certain and fearful prospect? God's people are called to an Elijah ministry of prevailing prayer and powerful preaching to unmask mankind's deceptions today.

Yet we are called to demonstrate not only the fact that God *is*, but also the fact that God *saves*. The name Elisha means "God saves." The church's task is not only to show the world who God is (Elijah), but also that God saves (Elisha). This is the baton we must run with in this generation. We need not only the role of Elijah, but also that of Elisha. This being the case, it is time God's Elisha heard God's call. Are you listening? □

Excerpt from Elisha: *A Sign & a Wonder* by Greg Haslam, Chariot Victor Publishing. Used by Permission.

The Third Temple (part two) (continued from page 14)

9:27; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 11:1, 2) and the Last Temple, or Messiah's Temple, which will appear in the Reign of Messiah (Isa. 2:3, 4; Ezek. 37:26-28; 40-48; Micah 4:1, 2; Haggai 2:7-9; Zech. 6:12-15; 14:2, 16-21).

These Temples (Third, and Fourth) will play an important role in the future pro-

phetic program for Israel and the nations. For believing Bible students these present efforts to rebuild have special meaning—signs that Christ's second coming is near—and it encourages us to live faithful lives as we wait and watch for the coming of Christ and the Kingdom of God to be established here on earth. □

(Much of the information for this article has been taken from *Israel My Glory*, a bimonthly magazine (\$12.95 per year) published by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc. 1179 Almonesson Road, Deptford Township, Westville, New Jersey 08093. This particular edition is Vol. 55, No. 6, Dec.-Jan. 1997-1998).

Expanding Pro-Life (part one)

A personal journey in what it means to be Pro-Life

BY PASTOR JIM GRAHAM — PHOENIX, AZ

For this article to be fully appreciated, I must share the struggle that I have experienced over what it means to be pro-life. I have been confronted with situations in pastoral ministry that have challenged and caused me to question my personal faith system on what it means to have an affirmative action or argument for life. I found that a sound Biblical pro-life position is much more complex than the references that I had simplistically used to support it. The sanctity of life platitudes that had been put on paper and stuck to car bumpers had done very little to instill it within the belief systems of our society. I discovered affirming life to be far more than the single issue that I had addressed on Sanctity of Life Sundays.

I will be telling stories. They are my stories. Stories of people and events that have changed my life and expanded my view of what it means to be pro-life. These stories will be weighed against the personal convictions of my heritage, my experience, church history, and the testimony of scripture. There are stories of abortion and the lives of women who had abortions. I also found that there were stories in the battlefields, death chambers and soup kitchens. All expanded and enriched my pro-life views. My hope is that, in this process, I have arrived at a sound Biblical view of life and will be better equipped to present the Good News of the Christ who came full of grace and truth (John 1:14). It is Good News that presents a pro-life theology flowing from the very heart of the indwelling Christ. It is more than just being filled with right doctrine

and boldness in telling others what is right and wrong, but rather loving Christ enough to reveal His love to those who have become the least of these. "Whatever you did for one of the least of these you did for me" Matthew 25:40.

The Victims of Abortion

I was working at a hospice when I was asked if I would be willing to counsel one

*I discovered affirming
life to be far more
than the single issue I
had addressed on
Sanctity of Life Sundays.*

of our employees. She and her husband had been trying to conceive for a number of years with no success. This had led them to a fertility clinic and subsequent treatments. She had just been told that she was pregnant. Their joy turned to concern when the doctor mentioned the number of fetuses. She was carrying four babies. The doctors ran a number of tests and advised the young anxious couple that the chances for the survival of the babies would significantly increase if they would "harvest" one of the quads. One of our secretaries felt that I should be the one to counsel the couple. I was immediately filled with anxiety. I am pro-life and therefore against abortion. But here, in the hopes and fears of a barren couple, was a dilemma. What if I shared with them my personal conviction that God

was opposed to abortion, for any reason? And what if they followed my counsel and all of their unborn children were lost? What were the implications of my view as a clergyman upon the lives of this young couple? My anxiety remained a silent personal struggle for the young mother did not seek my counsel. They decided to sacrifice one baby for the sake of the other three. Recently I saw the mother and her three healthy children at a store. I smiled as I observed the antics of the typical two year-olds and then I thought of the one who was absent. If I was feeling sorrow thinking about the quad who would never be born, what were the mother and father thinking? Could they ever experience *shalom* again? While I was not called upon to give advice, this dilemma challenged me to evaluate what it means to be pro-life. Can we simply state that abortion is murder and not consider the other victims? Just what does it mean to be a Christian who believes in the sanctity of life?

Dr. Vincent Collins of Northwestern University stated that a "saline abortion causes the fetus to feel the same agony as an adult who has suffered burns over 80 percent of his body." This makes it easy for me to abhor abortion. Who can read this and justify the infliction of this type of pain upon the unborn? According to the Christian Political Awareness Group, there have been 35-40 million babies killed since the Roe v. Wade decision. These numbers overwhelm me. As I think with the mind of Christ and feel with His heart, I am challenged to see even more victims. Are not the mothers who struggled with the abortion decision victims? Are there emotional

and spiritual consequences when freedom to choose violates scripture? Are not those consequences magnified when they see no other choice? "No one wants an abortion as she wants an ice-cream cone or a Porsche. She wants an abortion as an animal, caught in a trap, wants to gnaw off its own leg. Abortion is a tragic attempt to escape a desperate situation by an act of violence and self-loss." Abortion not only takes the life of the unborn but also devastates the life of the one who chooses abortion. Some in the Christian community are compelled to carry placards in front of clinics that condemn the act as murder. Others have gone so far as to chain themselves to the doors of the clinics and go to jail while screaming that abortion is murder to staff and client who enter. Still others, so incensed that an insidious crime is taking place, become vigilantes for Jesus. These unbalanced and misdirected zealots strap on the weapons of this world and resort to murder in order to stop the killing. All this has prompted me to side with Andy Rooney who once stated that while he is pro-life, he is "embarrassed to be seen with them."

Does the Christ, who loves the sinner and hates the sin, have any words of hope? Frederic Matthewes-Green, in her book *Real Choices*, tells of sitting down with women who have had abortions and listening to their stories. One story, told by a woman in Chicago, is especially moving.

After the second one I attempted suicide. For all of them I asked for just local anesthetic; I wanted to make sure I felt the pain. I didn't care if it was clean, didn't care if I died on the table. I never went to follow-ups, and the antibiotics they gave me I threw in the toilet. I was just spiraling down in so many ways. There was no religion for me. If anything, I had a "God'll get you" attitude. After the first abortion I said to Paul, "There is no God."

The loss of life in this quote is as obvious as it is overwhelming. Life emanates from the Creator. The psalmist sings of being created and knit together in his mother's womb (139:13). The theme of these verses is the Lord. He is the creator of life and sovereign over the process of creation. Verse 15 speaks of God weaving together or embroidering humans. What a marvelous picture of God seeing to every detail in the creating of life. Abortion is about the intentional taking of life. Listening to the aborting mothers' stories impressed upon me that abortion had violated the tapestry of their lives as well. Matthewes-Green writes that a woman who chooses abortion is violated and her life devastated. "Disrupting it by thrusting tools deep into her body is as obscene as pouring dirty motor oil into a mountain lake — it violates women more deeply than rape, a more hideous violation because it brings grisly death into the very house of life." Do we in the community of Christ, where the risen Christ dwells, have any good news for all the victims of abortion? Does not the "least of these" include the mother as well as the unborn? As Job analyzed his treatment of slaves who made complaints against him by concluding — "Did not He who made me in the womb make him, And the same one fashion us in the womb?" (31:5). We must mourn the mothers who choose abortion. Did not the God who made the baby in the womb also make the mother? Does the God who loves the baby, the victim, also love the victimizer? While one has violence inflicted upon them and the other's violence may be of their own doing — are they not both in need of the love and compassion of God? "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35 NASV).

The body of Christ must begin to understand that the establishment of law will not make the world understand the heart of God for the life He has created. But showing the love of Christ will. John Ortberg

calls upon the church to show love when he writes,

"All men will know that you are my disciples," Jesus said, not "if you promote my agenda" but "if you love one another." A watching world will be persuaded not when our values are promoted but when they are incarnated. As the wars rage on and the church enters the fray, may we remember that Christ's call is not an invitation to be on the right side; it is an invitation to become the right person.

A pro-life position must be firmly established in the scriptures (truth) and balanced by the Spirit of God (grace). Our message is one of love as well as justice, truth as well as compassion. "Christians are people who believe that any compassion that is not formed by the truthful worship of the true God cannot help being accursed. Christians must challenge the misbegotten compassion of this world. This is not going to be easy." But, it can be done!

What would happen if churches started addressing abortion from this broader perspective? Where instead of building edifices that are used once a week, resources were made available for the counseling, care and support for all of abortion's victims. What if members of the body would truly hold all things in common and open their homes to women who see no other alternative? What would happen if Christians seriously addressed the problem of unwanted children? What would happen if the body of Christ would love in such a way that the world could not argue with the Good News of God's grace and truth? There needs to be compassion expressed to those who are now suffering guilt and lostness because of abortion. We need to reveal a God who is *hesed*, steadfast in His love. We need to love, reconcile and forgive. □

(To be completed in our next issue.)

Lessons from the flu (editorial, continued from page 2)

sons played their games and both of their teams won (despite the fact that their father wasn't in the stands cheering them on and keeping an eye on the referees). The sun came up every morning and rested every night. In other words, God was able to go on running the world without my help. It's good to be reminded from time to time that God is in charge. He was running things for a long time before I came along, and no doubt will continue to do so long after I'm only a memory. So I can relax and trust Him a little bit more.

Perhaps that's why God designed the Sabbath in the first place. He built in the

cycle of nature and time the need for His *nepes*/needy ones to stop running things, rest and retool, and recognize that God really can run things when we're not. While it's true that the "law" of the Sabbath no longer applies, we would do well to incorporate the spiritual principles of Sabbath into the regular rhythm of our lives. (Because if we don't intentionally take time out for rest and reflection, God will come up with His own way of creating Sabbath time in our lives, as I now well know.)

3. Because we are whole creatures we need to remember to minister to whole persons.

When God created man He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul/being/*nepes*. Here is a formula for life: body + breath = living soul. People aren't physical bodies which house immortal souls—we are living souls, fully dependent upon God for life. We were created to have a bodily existence. The Greek/Gnostic dualistic worldview that makes a sharp distinction between body and soul as separate elements with an independent existence has been largely rejected by 20th century science and theology. The Hebrew concept of man's unity, his wholeness, is nearly everywhere (except within some religious groups) accepted as true.

Because of this we recognize that God cares about the whole person, not just some ethereal part called the soul. Jesus died to save the whole person. As Christians, we are called to minister to whole

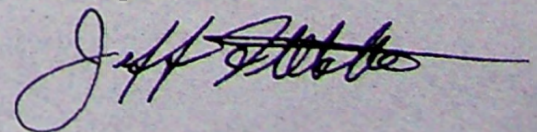
persons. We are to care for people's physical wellbeing. Do they have enough food, clothing, shelter and medical care? How about their mental and emotional wellbeing—are they being educated, supported, loved? Also there is their spiritual wellbeing, their relationships with God and with their fellow human beings. That's why Jesus calls upon His followers to care for the needs of the whole person in Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus is not pleased with His followers who do not care for whole persons—who do not visit the sick and imprisoned, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless and feed the hungry.

Too often, I have wrongly believed that our job as Christians is mainly to reach people's minds, to convince them of the truth of the Gospel. As important as that is we must remember that it's hard for people to hear what we're saying about God's love when they are sick, or starving. Mere words will not suffice, we must be willing to minister to the whole person. That's why I believe in the Church we ought to be involved with many kinds of ministry to whole persons—whether it is building houses with Habitat for Humanity, or ministering to the dying in hospice care, or helping with adult literacy programs or soup kitchens. Jesus wants us to put the Gospel into action and minister to whole persons.

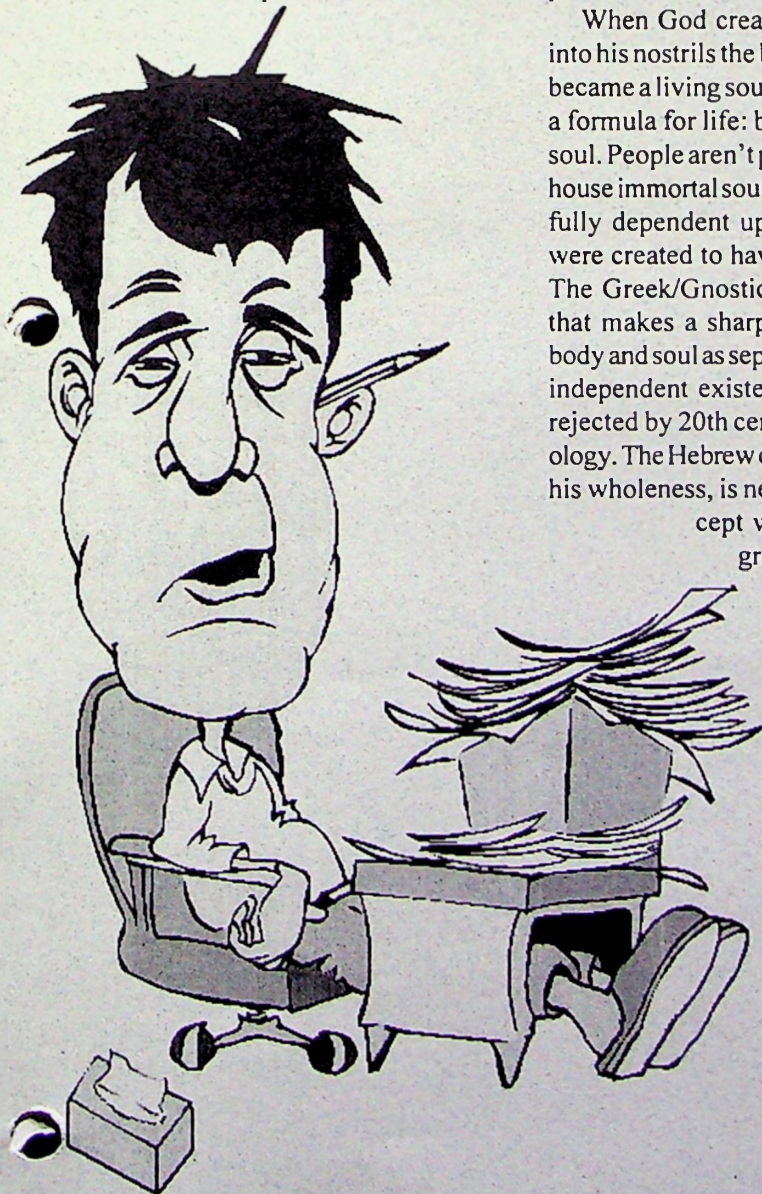
Well, those are some things God has taught me through my week of the flu. I hope something in there will help or challenge you. If so, then I guess it was worth it.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the HERALD. It is a joy to serve you. Write to me with your comments, ideas and articles. We accept unsolicited manuscripts all the time, so if you've got something you think is worth sharing, please send it in.

Blessings in Christ,



Jeff Fletcher



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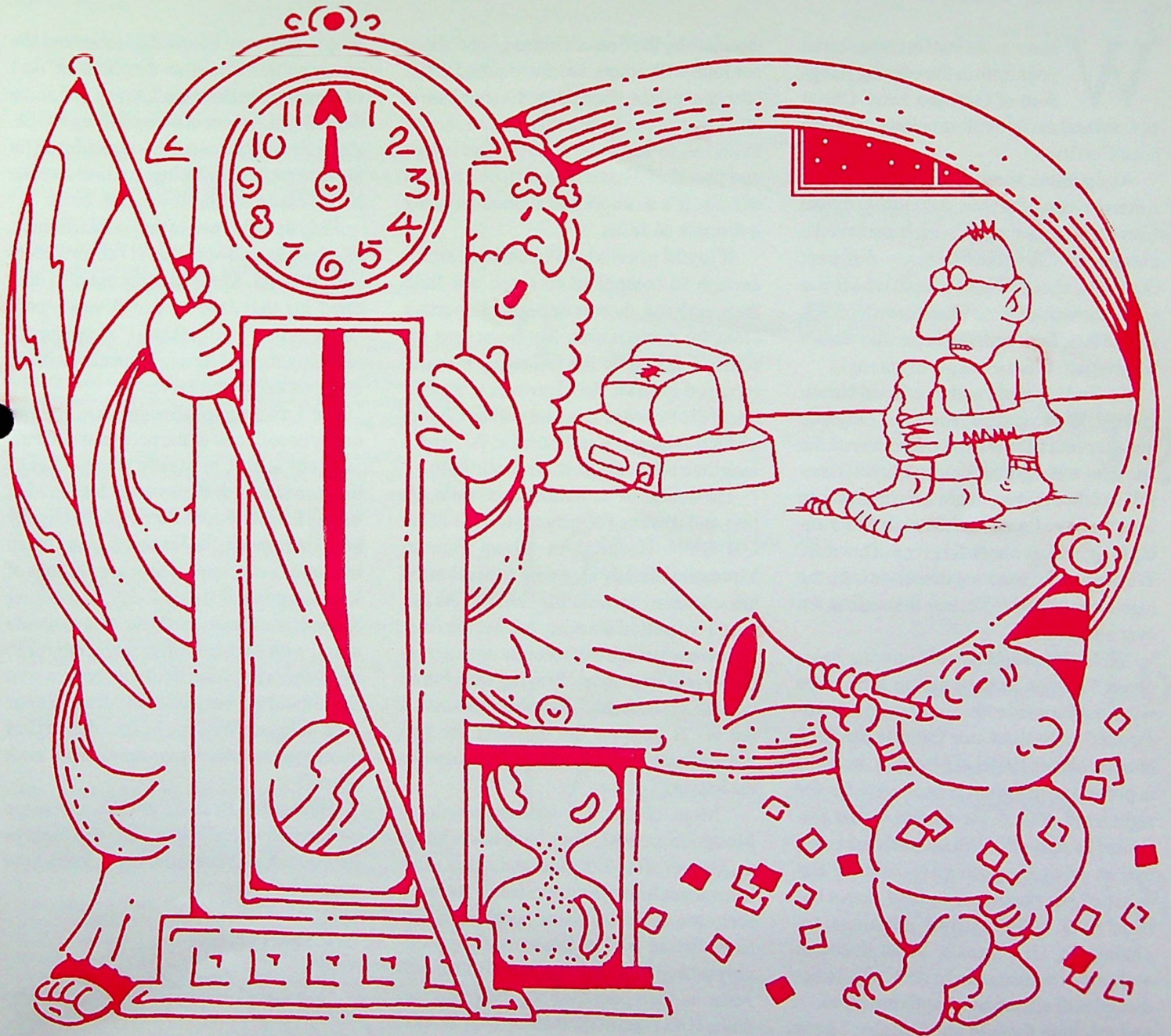
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The Restitution Herald

Volume 88, Number 4

April, May • 1999





Sharing your faith

When was the last time you shared your faith in the coming Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ as Lord and savior with someone who was not a Christian?

As you think about that question for just a minute, consider this. According to one Christian organization which surveyed a number of Christians in many different churches, about 95% of people who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ have NEVER shared their faith with someone who wasn't a Christian. What a staggering thought.

As God's people we have Good News: Gospel. We have discovered our only true hope for real life. We have discovered the one who willingly took our sins upon Himself and died that we might have a chance to live; we have found the Messiah, the coming king; we have been forgiven of our sins. We ought to be shouting this news from the highest housetops. Yet less than one in ten ever shares it.

Well, if the sheer joy of knowing Jesus doesn't inspire us to share our faith, then we should consider this — Jesus has commanded us to share our faith. In the final chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, as Jesus is preparing to depart planet earth for the right hand of God, He asserts to His disciples His authority. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Because of His obedience to God, Jesus has been given authority over all things, including us, His Church. What does our authority command us to do? "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you." We have been given a

mandate by the Son of God to go and share our faith with others, we are required to tell other people the good news. Evangelism is NOT an optional extra that we can choose to add on to our faith. Evangelism is part and parcel of what it means to be a person of faith, it's an important element of being a disciple of Jesus.

If joyful gratitude or obedience aren't enough to compel us to share our faith then, perhaps, there is one other important element: compassion. My heart was recently touched by the following e-mail I received from Dr. Bill Lawrence, a member of the Board of Directors of the Church of God who lives in Phoenix, AZ and a longtime advocate of sharing our faith.

He writes: "I'm writing this while sitting and waiting for surgery to start in the OB-GYN Hospital in Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia. Mardy is across town sharing her testimony at the Bible College. As I sit here I've pulled from my pocket the little yellow card which we were sent upon agreeing to join in prayer 'Praying the church into the 21st century'. Number four on that list is 'A passion for reaching the lost through outreach efforts and a vision for the harvest.'

"Most of the 2.3 million people in Mongolia are lost. They have never heard the Gospel of the Kingdom and all but a few have never heard the name Jesus. As far as scripture indicates these people are destined for the lake of fire since they probably will not have the opportunity to accept Jesus as their sacrifice for their sins and make Him Lord of their lives. Mardy and I have found them to be a kind and gentle

people and very hospitable to us and the others on this Christian doctor team. As I sit here and see them walking up and down the halls, in and out of the operating rooms, along the streets outside I'm saddened by the thought of them being cast into the lake of fire described in Revelation 20:15.

"My thoughts turn to the people (friends, relatives and co-workers) I rub shoulders with at home. Many of them are also destined for that lake of fire. I again pray "number four" on that list — "A passion for reaching the lost through outreach efforts and a vision for the harvest."

Dr. Lawrence challenges us to open up our eyes and look at the people around us. Without Jesus Christ they are lost. Let us learn to see with the eyes of Jesus, who, when He looked upon the people of His day had compassion, for He saw them as sheep in need of a shepherd. There are millions of lost sheep in our world today, wandering around aimlessly, with no one to guide them, with no one to offer them hope or to show them the way. Will you be one who risks opening your mouth and sharing your faith in Jesus? Will you be one of the 5% of churchgoers who share the Gospel with others?

Here at THE RESTITUTION HERALD we are committed to providing you with tools to help you share your faith. Let us know how we can help you.

Grace and Peace,

Jeff Fletcher

The Restitution Herald

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- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8).
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5).
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16).
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17, PSA. 146:4).
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3).
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28).
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54).
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8).
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32).
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3).
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21)
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Surviving the Y2K Panic

BY TIMOTHY LAMER

While President Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous statement about the Great Depression, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself," doesn't fit as an analysis for the Y2K computer bug, it may be coming close. Disruptions from the bug undoubtedly will occur — even the National Basketball Association, citing Y2K fears, last week was considering calling off games scheduled for next New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, and Jan. 2, 2000 — but public panic regarding Y2K could make the situation worse.

The Y2K bug is the problem of computers, programmed only to read the last two digits of each year, reading "00" to mean 1900 rather than 2000, and then failing. Some people are predicting chaos, with food distribution networks, utilities, banks, and governments ceasing to function. These folks, many of them Christians, are heading for the hills and stocking up on food and ammo.

But as far as technological disruptions go experts say the bug will feast mostly on foreign cuisine. In testimony to the Senate last month,

the Gartner Group's Lou Marcoccio said, "Our infrastructure and banks should be in very good shape, and our government is one of the very few that is very far ahead of all other governments in the world in addressing this problem."

Other countries are starting to make progress. For example, Gartner, an information technology consulting firm, recently upgraded Japan's readiness status. But as Christian Financial Concepts

The bug's biggest effect on the U.S. economy could be indirect.

president Larry Burkett, a leading voice on Y2K matters, points out, the new rating says that instead of 50 percent of Japanese systems being non-compliant, "only" a third are. Mr. Burkett believes that by the time the clock strikes midnight on Jan. 1, a

fourth of Japanese systems will remain non-compliant.

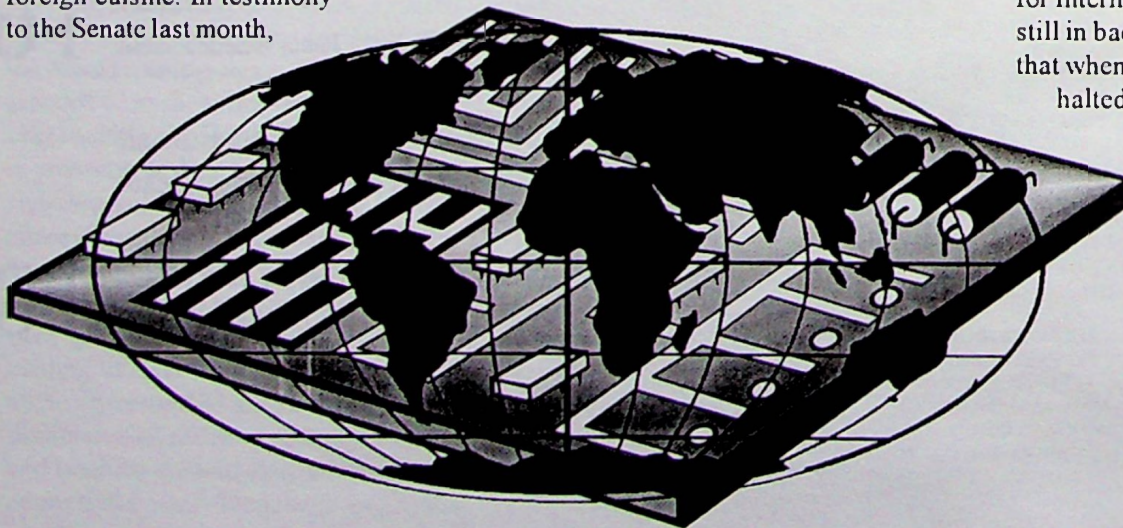
This means that the bug's biggest effect on the U.S. economy could be indirect. Despite a current high-flying U.S. economy in the face of downturns all over the globe, Mr. Burkett argues that America can't remain forever immune to other countries' woes. If Y2K hurts Japan and other key trading partners, it will at some point harm the United States as well.

And the cost of Y2K repairs also is beginning to become a big issue. The latest report on Y2K from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) increased the estimate for fixing the government's most important computers by \$400 million, to \$6.8 billion. Most analysts expect that to go up again.

The OMB report said that 80 percent of the government's 6,399 most important computers have been repaired or replaced, or never were vulnerable. But the Department of Transportation, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Agency for International Development (AID) are still in bad shape. (A wag might point out that when work at some of these agencies

halted briefly during the government shutdowns of 1995-1996, few people outside the agencies noticed.) Repair work at AID slowed after a computer failed while testing what officials believed had already been fixed.

While none of this is good, apocalyptic scenarios likely



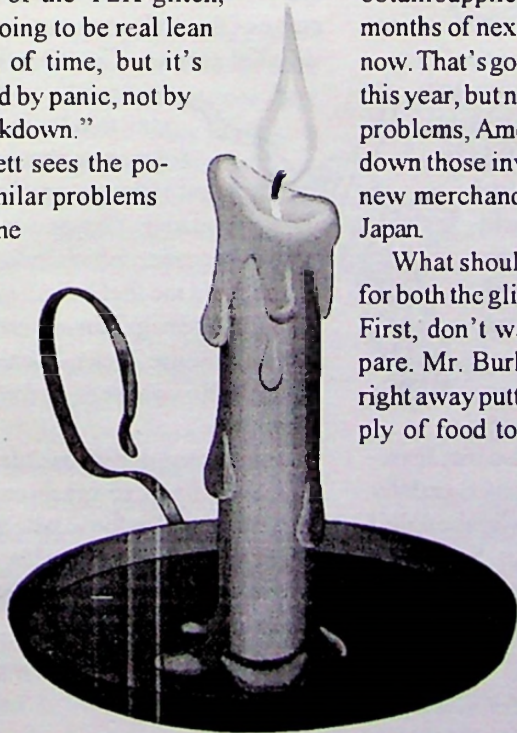
are overblown, says Mr. Burkett: "In large part, what's going to happen in the United States is not going to be life-threatening. It's going to be very discomfoting, very irritating" — with power and telephone service becoming sporadic for a time, and air and train traffic reduced for a few months — "but nothing life-threatening."

The Gartner Group agrees. "Withdrawing funds from banks or liquidating investments is not warranted," the firm says in a Y2K report. Most enterprises "will address mission-critical systems so that 90 percent of the systems that do fail will be corrected within three days." Advising against a "bomb shelter" mentality, the report argues that "preparing for the new millennium should be much like preparing for a storm that will last less than a week."

But what happens if all of this storm preparation takes place at the same time all over the country? This is Mr. Burkett's biggest concern. He thinks people may strip grocery stores of all their food in late December, in anticipation of problems. Then, if shipments of food to the stores are delayed for a week or two because of the Y2K glitch, "things are going to be real lean for a period of time, but it's mostly caused by panic, not by a system breakdown."

Mr. Burkett sees the potential for similar problems at banks and the stock market.

People might try to get



some of their money out of banks and out of stocks in late December, creating log-jams and perhaps even the need for bank holidays, in which banks close to keep people from withdrawing their money. But, again, this would be a problem caused by reaction to Y2K, not by the computer bug itself.

Fears about Y2K effects overseas could further exacerbate those problems. For instance, no one knows which fourth of the computers in Japan will be noncompliant, and American companies that do business there might decide not to take any chances.

*Turn off, for example,
the central power
to your home and
try to live normally
for a few days.*

Mr. Burkett reports that some companies already are counting on being unable to obtain supplies from Japan in the first few months of next year, they are stocking up now. That's good for the Japanese economy this year, but next year, even without Y2K problems, American companies will draw down those inventories instead of buying new merchandise. That will further hurt Japan.

What should Americans do to prepare for both the glitch and its attendant panic? First, don't wait until December to prepare. Mr. Burkett advises people to start right away putting together a month's supply of food to have on hand, as well as

water, and to make provision to light and heat their houses, especially if they live in a cold climate. "That does not cost a lot," he says. "For about \$500-\$600 any family that can afford it can be Y2K-buffered to some degree." He also advises people to go into January with a month's worth of cash, in case credit cards don't work or the government declares bank holidays.

In addition, Joseph Project 2000 (www.josephproject2000.org), a group formed to help Christians prepare for the effects of the bug, has assembled a list of ways for individuals to prepare for possible Y2K disruptions. Among its suggestions: "Schedule a 'Y2K weekend.' Turn off, for example, the central power to your home and try to live normally for a few days. This may bring up previously unnoticed things that you need to plan for in advance." The group also suggests obtaining paper copies of all important documents, in case lost information must be verified.

For the church, Mr. Burkett sees Y2K as a witnessing opportunity. He says churches should store up some basic items for people in need, such as food, blankets, and lights. "What a great opportunity for the church to become the beacon to people during this period of time, to people who never thought about entering a church," he says.

Mr. Burkett also compares life in America with that in most parts of the world, and then offers this perspective: "In our worst situation, it will not be as bad as they live with every day. If you went to Russia today, they are living Y2K every day of their lives." □

First appeared in *World Magazine*, April 3, 1999 issue, used by permission.

“I Was In Prison”?

BY BRIAN BORMES—MORROW, GA

I want to get people interested in reaching the lost. With the Prison Ministry, one deals with people who have had some problems and some hard times in their past. I want to explain how the Prison Ministry at Atlanta Bible College was started and hopefully give others the enthusiasm to start a program to reach the lost.

I was very excited about the opportunity to minister to and fellowship with the inmates. As the time grew closer to go, I became a little uneasy about the whole situation. I did not know what to expect. The simple fact was that I was going into a jail to help someone in studying the Bible and in worshipping God. I knew that all of us were going to be okay, because God would be there with us and work through us.

I spoke with Chaplain Stan Owens for about ten minutes by phone and I felt great about our conversation. I realized that this outreach to women who were incarcerated was going to be exciting. Chaplain Owens also called and talked with Joe Martin and gave him some more information on dates, places, times and how many people are able to attend each of the services.

My expectations of what the jail would be like were from scenes of the prison movies that I have seen. I always imagined prison to be a place only for the hardened criminals and that there would be security guards all over the place. Many of my stereotypical ideas of prison were changed once we arrived.

After meeting Chaplain Owens, I saw what a good man he was. He was very

knowledgeable about Scripture. During Chaplain Owens's message, I was enthralled with what he had to say. He had a strong and loud voice that had to cover the noise that the inmates were making. From hearing him speak I could tell the heart he has for preaching to those who are without Christ. With so many inmates coming and going they needed to be fed, and Chaplain Owens was eager to feed.

*They needed to be fed,
and Chaplain Owens
was eager to feed.*

The women appreciated Chaplain Owens. It was amazing to see them praising God and listening to the Chaplain. Some of the ladies even shared a song with the group. Any of the women in the prison who wanted their own Bible were given a New International Version of the Bible. They could request one from the Chaplain by filling out a form. He would make sure that they received one.

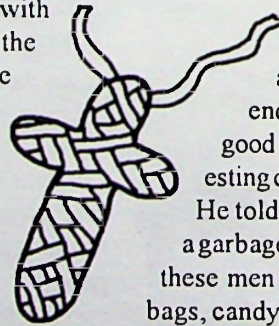
At the end of the service we all stood up and greeted one another. One person that I greeted was Jennifer, who was to sing at another service later on that night. So I asked her why she didn't come up front and sing with us. She said in a shy and timid voice, "I can't sing that well." As I was talking to Jennifer, another

lady came up to me and asked me if I would give her a hug. I didn't see any harm in it, so I did. Later, I heard the Chaplain say, "No, I don't HUG any of the women here." He explained to me later that he wanted to avoid the possibility of showing favoritism.

At the men's jail, or detention center, in Lovejoy, Georgia, the number of inmates is between 850 and 900. The jail is divided into three sections called pods. Each pod contains six numbered-off sections. The average stay in the jail is 30 days, with many of the men staying in until their bond is posted. Many of the inmates that are in the detention center have problems with drugs and alcohol.

The services that the men's jail holds are totally voluntary in attendance, and many of the male inmates do not go to the worship service. The ones that do come seem to be very excited. A man that I met named Richard was one such man. At the end of the service, he sang a very good song. He was wearing an interesting cross, which I asked him about. He told me that he had made it out of a garbage bag. To make creative things, these men use socks, T-shirts, garbage bags, candy wrappers, and whatever else they can get.

I hope everyone who reads this can find it in their heart to reach out to the lost around us, and to those who are in prison. We always need to remember Jesus' words in Matthew 25:36: "I was in prison, and you came to visit me." □



Fasting in the Bible

BY PASTOR JIM MATTISON — PELZER, SC

“When you fast” — Jesus

Jesus foreknew that we would want to fast as we made our petitions to God (Matt. 6:16-18; 9:14-15). Paul, who fasted often, encouraged us to fast (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27; 1 Cor. 7:5, KJV). The fastings of many holy people in the Bible are told to us. Fasting is associated with very earnest prayer.

The words “fast” and “fasting” occur 59 times in the King James. Fasting means doing without food. Sometimes it is involuntary, when no food is present, as in the case of Moses (twice: Deut. 9:9,18; Ex. 34:28), Elijah (1 Kings 19:8), and Jesus (Matt. 4:1-2; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-2). Paul also evidently fasted many times because of a lack of food (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

The longest fasts in the Bible appear to have been forty days. Some were for only one day (2 Sam. 3:35). Sometimes they were for seven days (1 Sam. 31:13; 1 Chron. 10:12). Daniel fasted for three weeks (Dan. 9:2-3). Most fasts in the Bible were voluntary, that is, various people fasted because they wanted to, for some special reason.

Because of Grief

David fasted and prayed for his dying son (2 Sam. 12:16). He also fasted after hearing of the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:12; so did the people of Jebesh-Gilead, 1 Sam. 31:11-13). David fasted when Abner was murdered (2 Sam. 3:35). Perhaps we can put King Darius in this category, he passed the night fasting because of anxiety about Daniel being in the lions’ den (Dan. 6:14-23).

In Times of Peril

Ezra proclaimed a fast for Israel, asking for God’s protection as they traveled from Babylon to Israel (Ezra 8:21-23). Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah when they had no might against three enemy armies, asking God for help (2 Chron. 20:1-28). The King of Nineveh, believing Jonah’s pronouncement of doom,



proclaimed a fast; he and his people, even the animals, covered with sackcloth to seek God’s favor and their deliverance (Jonah 3:4-10). (This could also be classified under the next category.) Esther asked her people to fast with her three days and nights before she went in before the King (Esther 4:16). Note: Fasting denoted humility before God. Paul’s companions aboard ship, fearing for their lives, did not eat for two weeks (Acts 27:1-37).

Because of Sorrow for Sin

This is one of the main reasons in the Bible for fasting.

All Israel gathered at Mizpeh in Samuel’s day, fasting, and praying, “We have sinned against the LORD” (1 Sam. 7:1-6). In Nehemiah’s day, when the people had returned to Israel, and God’s Law was read to

them, they fasted in sackcloth, confessing their sins (Neh. 9:1-3). Another reason Moses fasted forty days and nights was because of Israel’s sins (Deut. 9:18; see Ex. 32:30-32). Daniel, with prayer and fasting, confessed the sins of his people to God, asking for God’s mercy because of His great name (Dan. 9:1-20). Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7:5, advises abstaining from marital privileges for a time, “that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer.”

Ordination of Ministers

Fasting and praying, the Antioch prophets and teachers sent forth Barnabas and Saul for mission work (Acts 13:2-3). The apostles, with fasting and prayer, ordained elders in every church they planted (Acts 14:23).

Fasting was Customary, Habitual

The disciples of John and the Pharisees fasted regularly (Matt. 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 18:12). Anna departed not from the temple, but “served God with fastings and prayers night and day” (Luke 2:37). Cornelius, because his fasting and praying caught God’s eye, was rewarded with being the first Gentile received into the family of God in Peter’s day (Acts 10:1-48, especially 30). One of the things Paul did in approving himself to God was to fast (2 Cor. 6:5). Jesus approved of fasting (Matt. 6:16-18; 9:14-15), and expected that we would want to fast.

Unacceptable Fasts

A hypocritical fast is displeasing to God. In Isaiah 58:1-7 God rebuked His people for such fasting without the right

motive and attitude. Israel was saying in effect, "We fast, and You do not see; we have afflicted ourselves and You pay no attention." God showed them then that they did not have hearts that were right before Him. He told them, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out of thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him? and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" God was indicating that by doing these things Israel would be more acceptable to Him than by hypocritical fasting.

Jesus rebuked the self-righteous Pharisee who boasted about his goodness, his

fasting twice a week, and honored the sinner who confessed his sin (Lk. 18:9-14).

In speaking about Israel, God told Jeremiah, "Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer a burnt offering . . . I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence" (Jer. 14:11-12).

Why Should We Want to Fast?

Are we so ashamed of our sins that we want to fast and pray and seek God's forgiveness in great humility? Do we have some very heavy burden we wish God to take away from us? Is a loved one near death? Are we so earnest for a loved one to be converted that we would fast and pray? Is

our fasting a regular thing, like several in the Bible? Some people fast once a week unto the Lord, and because of these reasons.

We do have burdens that need lifting. We do have many sins. We do want to come closer to God. There may be other reasons we want to fast as we pray. As we mentioned, fasting denotes our humility and also our earnestness. If our hearts are right with God when we fast and pray, He will hear and answer us as He sees best for all concerned. Are we willing to abide by those terms? Do you want to fast as you pray? If so, do it unto the Lord with an honest heart, or it will not count (Matt. 6:16-18). □

Life: A Burden or a Blessing?

BY TRACY SAVAGE — ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

If your heart is weary, the heaviness of life leaves you gasping for the spirit and you have sighed-out that life is more of a burden to you than a blessing, then, "cast all of your cares onto Him, for He cares for you!" This is the first step towards freedom. Allow Jesus to free you from life and from yourself. Once free, live life with passion and it will be pleasurable!

Passion brings pleasure. Passion keeps the blood pumping and gets the adrenaline flowing. Passion drives us forward and gives us a desire for more. When we involve our heart, the deed no longer is a

burden, but a blessing. Maybe this is why Paul wrote to the Ephesians: obey with A SINCERITY OF HEART, do the will of God FROM YOUR HEART, serve WHOLEHEARTEDLY. Wholeheartedly! He was speaking to slaves. We are free! How much easier this should be for a free man than a slave!

As with everything in life, involving our hearts is a choice. Living life wholeheartedly is a choice. Living life passionately is a choice. We can grudgingly obey or serve, or we can desire pleasure and obey and serve with passion, wholeheartedly. Not only will life be more of a blessing, but if

we don't become weary in doing good and if we do not give up, we will reap a rich harvest at the proper time, in His time.

The secret to being a better athlete is PASSION. The secret to success in the world is PASSION. The secret to life being a blessing is also PASSION. It is a desire of the heart with which you are not willing to part. It is not giving up, because you believe in and are trusting in Him and His passion for you. He is a blessing, not a burden.

Life: a blessing or a burden? The CHOICE is yours. □

Expanding Pro-Life (part two)

A personal journey in what it means to be Pro-Life

BY PASTOR JIM GRAHAM — PHOENIX, AZ

The Victims of War

Recently a South Vietnamese officer, whose face is indelibly etched in my memory, died. He had gone on from the scene that had brought him notoriety to live a normal life. I can't help but think that he was haunted by his past, for I surely was. He was seen on television and in newsprint around the world. He was the South Vietnamese officer who, after interrogating a North Vietnamese sympathizer, became judge, jury, and executioner. He pulled out his pistol and shot his enemy. I will forever recall the grimace on the young man's face as a bullet ripped through his skull.

My father was a young man during World War II. He volunteered and served his country in Europe, collecting two battle stars before the end of the war. I was raised in a patriotic environment and was proud of the fact that my father had served his country. I was taught to love my country and respect the flag. As the Vietnam war raised protests from America's youth, I started to question the previously unquestioned belief that it was our duty as American citizens to fight to protect our nation. When I entered the ministry, this was placed on the back burner. I felt removed from the issue. But, as I struggled to come to a sound pro-life theology, I realized abortion was not the only area in which I felt tension. Was my view of war a Christ-centered pro-life view? A number of years later, I attended a youth workers' convention where Tony Campolo was speaking. He asked the question "Can you see Jesus, looking down a bomb sight, pushing a button, and dropping

a bomb on the very people He died for?" I mentally discounted this as being irrelevant to the issue. Of course He wouldn't drop a bomb. He had said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9). But, if Jesus would

*"Can you see Jesus,
looking down a bomb
sight, pushing a button,
and dropping a bomb
on the very people
He died for?"*

... ..
not drop a bomb, what would He expect of those who are asked to be like-minded? Does Jesus expect His words to be taken seriously, if not literally? Jesus said:

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6:27-31).

Did He really expect us to do what He asked? Dietrich Bonhoeffer seems to insist that we take this call literally: "Jesus

knows only one possibility: simple surrender and obedience, not interpreting the Sermon on the Mount or applying it, but doing it and obeying it. That is the only way to hear his word. But again he does not mean that it is to be discussed as an ideal, he really means us to get on with it." This is a radical call to obedience that seems to radiate from the words of Christ within the context of the Sermon on the Mount. "Why do you address me as Lord and refuse to do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

A powerful argument for applying a pro-life view to the issue of war comes from early church history where "There is no evidence of a single Christian soldier after New Testament times until around A.D. 170." The Romans did not have universal conscription and so there was no pressure on Christians to serve in the military. This started to change as the lines between church and state blurred. Soldiers were converted to Christianity and some felt that you could be a good citizen of Rome and a citizen of Heaven while serving in the military. Origen dealt with this by quoting Matthew 26:52: "For all who draw the sword will die by the sword." He explained that "one must be wary because warfare and the vindication of our rights might lead believers to 'take out the sword,' and no such occasion is allowed by this evangelical teaching." If we who romantically look at the early church as the ideal would follow their example, we would not kill our enemies. This soon changed as the church compromised its stand on obeying the words of Christ. Augustine, seeking to harmonize Christian values and the

participation in war, developed the just war theory. He said, "War should be fought to restore peace and to obtain justice. It must always be under the direction of the legitimate ruler and be motivated by Christian love." The Crusades exemplify this marriage of love and a just war. In fact the Crusades may be the event which settled the issue once and for all. The church and state became inseparable. Weapons were blessed and knights ordained before battles. Christ's words asking believers to love enemies, turn cheeks and do good were lost as violence and holiness became one. An anonymous observer recorded this description as the crusaders captured the city of Jerusalem:

Entering the city our pilgrims pursued and killed Saracens up to the temple of Solomon, in which they had assembled and where they gave battle to us furiously for the whole day so that their blood flowed throughout the whole temple. Finally, having overcome the pagans, our knights seized a great number of men and women, and they killed whom they wished and whom they wished to [they] let live. Soon the crusaders ran throughout the city, seizing gold, silver, horses, mules, and houses full of all kinds of goods. Then rejoicing and weeping from extreme joy our men went to worship at the sepulchre of our Savior Jesus and thus fulfilled their pledge to Him.

Reading this reminds me of the king in the musical *Pippen* who declared that he would convert the pagans to Christianity, even if he "had to kill all of them." This does not appear to be remotely similar to the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. We may be in the world but, as Paul encourages us, "we do not wage war as the world does" and "the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world" (2 Cor. 10:3, 4). Paul challenges us to understand our "other worldliness." "In view of God's mercy" we offer our bodies as "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship." And in doing

so we no longer "conform to the pattern of this world" but are "transformed by the renewing of our mind" (Rom. 12:1, 2). He applies this to the treatment of enemies when he expresses Christocentric admonitions: "Bless those who persecute you," "Do not repay anyone evil for evil," "If your enemy is hungry, feed him," and "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:14, 17, 20, 21).

While this may seem simple enough, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and many others accepted the use of violence and war. During the Second World War, the Bishop of London, in the name of Christ, made this incredible statement:

Kill Germans — kill them not for the sake of killing, but for the sake of saving the world. Kill good as well as bad; kill young people as well as old; kill those who have shown kindness to our wounded as well as those fiends who crucified the Canadian Sergeant. . . . As I have said a thousand times, I look upon it as a war for purity, I look upon everyone who dies in it as a martyr.

E. L. Bosworth, Dean of Oberlin College, while not as extreme, is even more confusing as he explains the conflict in this manner:

The Christian soldier in friendship wounds the enemy. In friendship he kills the enemy. In friendship he receives the wound of the enemy. He keeps his friendly heart while the enemy is killing him. His heart never consigns the enemy to hell. He never hates. After he has wounded the enemy, he hurries to his side at the earliest possible moment with all the friendly ministrations possible.

Can we really obey the call of Christ to love our enemies by wounding and killing them? If so, can we apply this same logic to other commands? Prevarication can be justified by crossing our fingers. We no longer have to forgive if we smile while holding a grudge. Maybe, as has recently been wit-

nessed in this country, we can justify adultery by redefining what constitutes a sex act.

"Brothers in Christ obey His word; they do not doubt or question, but keep His commandments of peace. They are not ashamed, in defiance of the world, even to speak of eternal peace. They cannot take up arms against Christ himself — yet this is what they do if they take up arms against one another!"

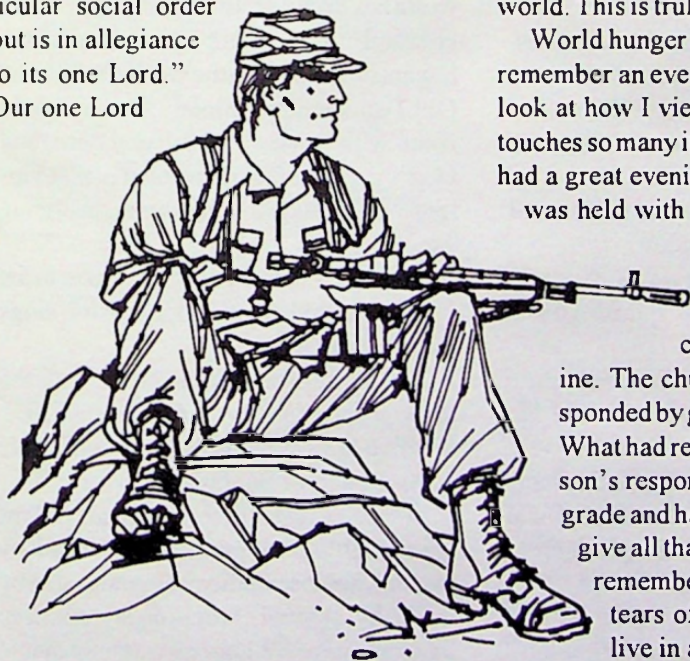
A more viable pro-life theology is to take the commands of Christ literally, to obey and show our enemies that we love them enough to lay down our lives for them.

Other Victims

I sat in front of the television and was overwhelmed by the bizarre anger that I saw on the screen. A man was about to be executed. He had committed a heinous crime worthy of death. This had been the verdict of the judicial system. And there the followers of Christ stood, holding God's word on placards calling for eye and tooth. They were rejoicing that God's will was about to be done. When word came that the offending mutant was dead, the Christians cheered. The advocates for abolishing the death penalty were the ones crying. Something is wrong when the ones with the gloating hearts are the followers of the one who wept over Jerusalem for her people's sin and unbelief. Another irony is that they were probably against abortion and pro-life. Stanley Hauerwas asks us to see that "the Christian approach is not one of deciding when life has begun, but hoping that it has." If we apply this to all issues, how can we not mourn the loss of life when it is brought to a close — whether by the abortionist's tool, the devastating arms of military force or lethal injection by the state?

Israel was commanded to practice the death penalty. Murder was to be punished by death (Num. 35:16-21). The murderer could not pay a fine (ransom) or redeem himself in any other way. He was to be put to death (Num. 35:31). This carries over

into the New Testament as the state is seen as a friend of the righteous and those who do good. But if you do wrong, "He does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Rom. 13:3, 4). The difference between Israel as a nation and the church as a global, transnational and transcultural kingdom must be recognized. Myron S. Augsburger makes this point when he says: "The Christian can only encourage the government to be the government and to let the church be the church. We ask the government to be secular and to let the church be free to do its work in society. The church enriches society by the many things it brings to it, and in its respect for government it does not subordinate itself to any particular social order but is in allegiance to its one Lord." Our one Lord



has asked us to "be merciful" just as our "Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). This means that while the state has the right to punish the wrongdoer with death, we are the ones who must be concerned with bringing that person to Christ and revealing to him God's grace and forgiveness. To obey Christ is to be an advocate for life. This calls us to visit the prisoner, treat him with kindness, and seek his reconciliation with our God (Heb. 13:3).

I remember reading with awe the story of a pastor who forgave the murderer of his daughter. Years passed and the young man, loved and forgiven, was to be married. The forgiving father and pastor graciously performed the ceremony. Only when we focus upon Christ, loving Him and obeying Him, can we declare this type of love to the world. This is truly a pro-life view!

World hunger is also a pro-life issue. I remember an event that challenged me to look at how I viewed the starvation that touches so many in our world. We had just had a great evening at church. A concert was held with some good music for a

good cause. Money was being raised to relieve the suffering caused by a terrible famine. The church that I pastored responded by giving over \$30,000.00. What had really touched me was my son's response. He was in the third grade and had decided on his own to give all that he had in his savings. I remember looking at him with tears of pride in my eyes. We live in a country with an abundant supply of food. This becomes a pro-life issue when, according to the Hunger Project, thirteen to eighteen million of our fellow human beings die needlessly of chronic, persistent hunger every year.

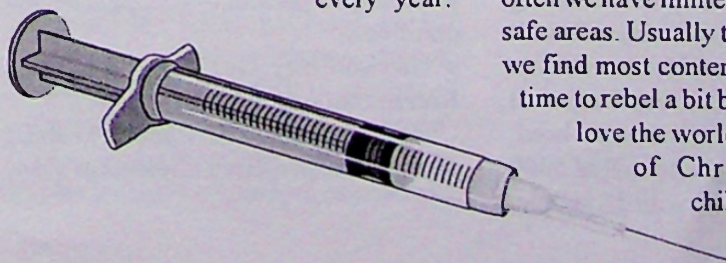
Twenty four thousand people die of hunger-related causes every day! If we are outraged over the number of children killed by abortion, concerned by the death and devastation caused by war, and embarrassed by the callousness of some towards the death penalty, we must have a heart for the starving people of our world. Deuteronomy 15:11 tells us that "There will always be poor people in the land" and that God commands us to "be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land." The world possesses the technical and financial ability to end this tragedy. What it needs is the heart and conscience to reach out in love. We are called to feed the spiritual hunger and the physical hunger. Matthew 25:35, 40 combines the two in the action of feeding the least of these. When we reach out to them, we are feeding Christ. A pro-life theology is one that is not indifferent to the suffering and death of a child every four seconds because they do not have enough to eat.

Conclusion

We are called to be salt and light in the world. I can only see this accomplished by a radical obedience to Christ. I believe that this is what He has called us to do.

"Crusades and inquisitions have nothing to do with Christ. War, torture, and persecution have nothing to do with Christ. Arrogance and revenge have nothing to do with Christ. When he gave his one recorded sermon, the first words out of Jesus' mouth were, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' Not the arrogant. And as he was dying he asked that his murderers be forgiven."

Thomas Jefferson once stated that "A little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government." Perhaps this could be applied to the church. All too often we have limited being pro-life to the safe areas. Usually they are the areas that we find most contemptible. Perhaps it is time to rebel a bit by calling believers to love the world, and in the example of Christ, to die for its children. □



Fear No Evil

BY THE EDITOR

“**F**or it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God’s approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls” (1 Peter 2:19-25).

In the year I graduated from high school, a student at Lake Braddock Secondary School, in Burke, VA where I had attended, came to school one day with a rifle, walked into the office, and demanded to see his girlfriend. They had recently broken up and he had come to take her back, by force if necessary.

The interesting thing is that no one batted an eyelash when he walked through the halls of the school with the gun in his hand because, by coincidence, the drama department was in the middle of rehearsing “Oklahoma” so there were toy rifles all over the school, as props. The secretary in the office thought this guy was joking, until he fired a shot in the ceiling over her head. Thus began a siege at the school of 5000 students which ended up with 12 people,

including the principal, Dr. John Alwood, taken hostage. The siege ended 24 hours later with no loss of life, when the young man surrendered.

At the time, this was big news. Of course, today, it would be considered a minor incident in contrast to the spate of school violence that surrounds us: Pearl, MS; Paducah, KY; Springfield, WA; Jonesboro, AK; and the latest (as of this writing Littleton, CO).

Naturally, we begin to ask some questions: Why all the violence? Who is to blame? Parents... the NRA... Hollywood... video game manufacturers? Society? What can be done to stop it?

Of course, this is only one segment of the violence our nation faces.

- Drug violence and gang warfare.
- Domestic violence — spouse abuse, child abuse.
- Last year only one block from my house a man shot his estranged wife and her boyfriend.
- In a case that has gone to the Supreme Court, Patsy Byers was shot in our local gas station by a couple of young kids reenacting a scene from *Natural Born Killers*.
- And, of course, we find ourselves as a nation having entered a war in Kosovo. Has the world become a more violent place today than it once was?

What can we do as Christians to stem the tide of violence? How should we respond to the evil in our midst?

- Stock up on personal weapons to defend ourselves?
- Garrison ourselves away like David Koresh and the Branch Davidians?

And how should we respond to abuse and injustice perpetrated against us in any

number of ways, whether they be physical, verbal, or financial?

I want us to wrestle a bit with what God’s word has to say to us about violence, and how we, as God’s people, are expected to respond to it.

What the Scriptures Say

First of all, violence is nothing new. Ever since Cain killed his brother Abel the world has been a pretty violent place. There is simply no way for us to escape the impact of violence in the world. In fact, the Old Testament is a bloody, violent book, filled with stories of death and gore, and God’s people often responded to that violence in what we find some surprising ways:

- The entire army of Pharaoh drowns in the Red Sea and Miriam, Moses’ sister, sings a song about it.
- Samson kills a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey, and sings about it.
- Elijah the great and godly prophet kills 450 prophets of Baal with a sword.

It was an age filled with some violent laws: adultery was punishable by death by stoning, homosexuality was punishable by death by stoning, rebellion by children against parental authority was punishable by death by stoning. In the same tradition of violence, David killed the giant, Goliath, and became a great hero. He returned victorious, and the people sang “Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” This is David, who played the harp and composed Psalms of praise to the Lord, David who danced in the street as an act of worship to God, this is the same David who as general and later as king was Israel’s greatest warrior. He would sing “the Lord

is my shepherd," He would sing "Though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil . . . , for thou art with me."

Perhaps more than anyone else, David the shepherd king represents the violence and bloodshed that were a part of being the people of God in the Old Testament.

So then, we come to a marked contrast when we begin reading the New Testament. There we encounter David's greatest descendant, heir to David's throne as king of Israel, Messiah, shepherd, Jesus comes to us as a new kind of Shepherd King. Not as a shepherd who sheds the blood of others to protect the sheep, but rather, as one who allows His own blood to be shed for the sheep.

John 10:11 says — "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Jesus models for us what a good shepherd does.

- His disciples undergo a power struggle to see who among them will be the greatest, most powerful, most influential.
- Jesus puts a towel around His waist and washes their feet.
- When a village in Samaria refused to receive Jesus, some of His disciples (James and John) wanted to command fire to come down on the village.
- Jesus rebuked them, and later told a story in which He made a Samaritan the hero.
- When they came to arrest Jesus, Peter reached for his sword and struck one who came to take Jesus away (slicing off the man's ear).
- Jesus healed the man, told Peter to put away his sword, and warned that those who live by the sword also die by the sword.
- As they beat Jesus, scourged Jesus, gambled for His clothes, ripped His beard out, insulted Him, spit on Him, shoved a crown of thorns on His head

and mocked Him, and then crucified Him between two thieves,

- Jesus, who could have called down 10,000 angels to rescue Him said "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing."

In Jesus we see a total transformation of world view . . . a complete paradigm shift in what it means to be a person of God.

Old Paradigm—Love your family and friends and neighbors. Hate your enemies.

New Paradigm—Love your enemies, pray for those who hurt you.

Old Paradigm—

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

New Paradigm—

Turn the other cheek.

•
Old Paradigm—An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

New Paradigm—Turn the other cheek.

Old Paradigm—This woman is a sinner; let's stone her.

New Paradigm—I don't condemn you, go and don't sin again, you have a chance to start over again.

Old Paradigm—Self preservation—protect yourself from your enemies at all costs.

New Paradigm—"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."

This is what salvation is all about. Salvation isn't just about experiencing eternal life someday, when Jesus comes again. Salvation is about becoming a new kind of person, it's about being a follower of Jesus. It's about being a disciple, a student of Jesus, both in His life and His teachings.

Jesus said, "if any one wishes to come after me let him/her take up their cross and

follow me." Dietrich Bonhoeffer reinterpreted those words for us in this way: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

Being a follower of Jesus means that we have been empowered by God, through the indwelling of the Spirit of God in our lives, to begin living an entirely new quality of life. It means we've entered into a new era. It means we begin following a new paradigm for living.

Becoming a Christian doesn't usher us into a new world, one that has no violence, where everyone treats us well and things go our way. The world that we live in as Christians is still filled with violence and death. The difference isn't what happens in the world, the difference is what happens inside of us who are living in this world.

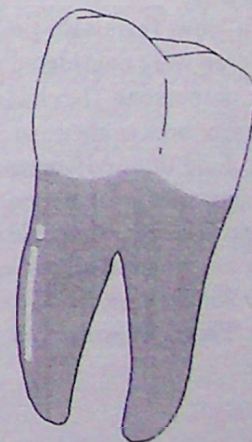
Becoming a follower of Jesus means that we put to death the old worldview that lived in us, filled with hatred, violence and revenge, and we enter into a new worldview which is guided by the spirit of God and follows the example of Jesus Christ.

Applying the Teachings of Christ to our lives

The letters of the New Testament provide us with applications of how this can come about.

Mutual submission: Eph 5:21 — Stop worrying about who is in charge, who has more power in your relationships, submit to each other. Husbands love your wives like the good shepherd loves the sheep, and

(continued on next page)



lays down his life for her. Wives, submit to your husbands as we in the Church are to submit to Jesus Christ as Lord. Children honor your parents as you are to honor the Lord. Parents, train your children, do not exasperate them, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves weren't taught to run away, they were taught to respectfully submit to their masters, even if it means they are suffering wrongfully.

"But that's unjust. People should not have to put up with injustice." Right! Jesus also should not have had to put up with injustice, but He did. "When they hurled insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23).

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." Peter says, "To this you were called, to suffer for doing good." You've heard the expression: "No good deed goes unpunished." "But that's not fair!!!" we want to shout.

True! Life's not fair! Now, we all agree on this — GET OVER IT! "You mean Jesus expects us not to try to get revenge when we are abused? That's crazy!! It'll never work!!"

Note: I personally don't believe that this means that a woman who is being abused by her husband is obligated to stay there and keep suffering abuse. Nor do I believe that a child who is being abused by parents must suffer. Society does provide means for protecting oneself against abuse, escape, go to a shelter for battered wives, seek help.

In New Testament times women and children were considered personal property, not persons. They had no rights. Jesus affirmed both women and children as persons. Paul affirmed women and children as persons with the right to be treated as such. Therefore in situations where family members are treating others as non-persons, they should seek help from the community. This is for protection, not for retaliation.

The Temptation to Retaliation:

There are lots of ways we as adults are tempted to retaliate when we have been wrongfully attacked:

Physical retaliation:

When his wife tried to walk out of a marriage counseling session at their church, a Texas man pulled out a gun and shot her. The woman, in turn, pulled a gun out of her purse and fired back. At least the minister didn't open fire with an assault rifle.

However, "Kentucky Gov. Paul E. Patton signed an amendment to the state's weapons law that allows priests and ministers to carry guns in church. The original 1996 measure permitting Kentuckians to carry concealed weapons deliberately excluded the clergy, but ministers from rural churches lobbied legislators for the amendment, arguing that if they couldn't carry guns beneath their robes, armed robbers might come after their collection money." — cited by "Stranger Than Fiction."

Verbal retaliation; curses, slander, gossip:

When someone attacks us verbally, it's tempting to lash back and destroy them with our words. The letter of James cautions us that the tongue is dangerous and needs to be controlled.

Financial retaliation:

Lawsuits, hit them in the pocketbook! Ouch!!

What should we do, then? 1 Peter 3:8-12: we should be willing to suffer for doing good.

"But how does this happen? How do you eliminate violence, and replace it with something new and nonviolent?" First you pray, then you practice, then you put it to work in the community.

1. You pray — as is said in the Lord's Prayer — that God's will be done, "on earth as it is in heaven." Nonviolence is not part of an earthly political agenda; it is at the

heart of God's heavenly kingdom order; it is at the core of a new reality that we disciples are called to use as the basis for our earthly lives. According to Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon of Duke Divinity School, discipleship is extended training in letting go of the ways of the world, and "in relying on God's definition of the direction and meaning of the world — that is, the kingdom of God" (*Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989], 88-89). As disciples, we are to pray that we can let go of our violent vestigial traits, and discover new traits that are in line with the kingdom of God.

2. "You practice nonviolence wherever you can: at home, at work, in the community, at church. You practice it in whatever way you can: with children, spouses, store clerks, co-workers and the person sitting next to you in the pew." "Repeated practice is one of the most basic principles of most spiritual and meditative paths," writes Richard Carlson, Ph.D. "In other words, whatever you practice most is what you will become. If you are in the habit of being uptight whenever life isn't quite right, repeatedly reacting to criticism by defending yourself, insisting on being right, allowing your thinking to snowball in response to adversity, or acting like life is an emergency, then, unfortunately, your life will be a reflection of this type of practice.

"Likewise, however, you can choose to bring forth in yourself qualities of compassion, patience, kindness, humility and peace again, through what you practice. I guess it's safe to say that practice makes perfect" (Richard Carlson, "Remember that You Become What You Practice Most," *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff and It's All Small Stuff* [New York: Hyperion, 1997], 171). You become a nonviolent person most successfully by practice, by practicing nonviolence wherever you can, in whatever way you can, as often as you can.

3. You put it to work in the community. "Once in a while," reflects James P. Wind

(continued on page 17)

When I've Lost My Way

BY ROB FROST

My family knows that I'm always losing things—my car keys, my diary, and even my check book! Whenever I cry, "Has anyone seen my . . . ?" my wife replies, "When did you last see it?" I must retrace my steps and go back to when I last saw it.

At times when my mission has been going wrong, when the work has been difficult, the results negligible or when I feel I've failed, I know there's only one way ahead: I must retrace my steps to the One who sent me.

One morning, I walked past Whitby Abbey and down the hundred and ninety-nine steps to the old town below. Everything was still — it was too early for tourists! The narrow streets were empty and deserted save for the clatter of a distant milk truck. I paused to look in the tiny shop windows. I was in no hurry; the morning was mine.

I ambled down the cobbled streets; it felt good to be alive. As I crossed the harbor bridge I paused to look out to sea. In the distance there was a line of small fishing boats chugging out of the morning mist toward me. Seagulls wheeled above them, hoping for a share of the catch. It was a beautiful sight.

It was one of those timeless mornings: no pressure, no rush, no impending deadlines. The air of calm and stillness enveloped me. I was aware that Jesus was with me. I drank in the sights and sounds of that peaceful morning scene, and praised Him for His goodness.

Within a few minutes the boats were moored alongside the quay and the fish market was a hive of activity. A squeaky

crane was hauling crates of dripping fish from the decks of the laden boats, and there was a noisy babble of conversation all around.

I saw a larger boat moored beside the quay. As I moved closer I noticed a group of fishermen bending low over their nets. Slowly they dragged the huge trawl-net across the deck. Whenever they found a tear they took some orange twine and repaired it. As I stood and watched, my mind raced back to another group of fishermen by the waterside long ago.

"Peter, do you love Me?"

There were a hundred and one things which Jesus could have talked about. There was the work of evangelism, the mission of the church, and the future of the kingdom for a start! But Jesus knew that He only had to get one thing straight.

Love had to be the starting point. Peter had to get this sorted before the breathtaking story of Acts could unfold. If this was right then everything else would fall into place.

But what a question! Hadn't Peter given enough by leaving everything behind to follow Jesus? Hadn't he risked enough by staking his reputation on a wandering teacher? Hadn't he done enough, this Peter the rock, on whom the church would be built?

No. Peter's denial before the cock's crow had to be faced. His unfaithfulness had to be dealt with. All the sacrifices and all the good deeds didn't mean anything unless he could look Jesus in the eye and say, "I love You."

"Peter, do you love Me more than these?"

The boat, the fish, the tackle. The business, the livelihood, the culture of the Galilean fishermen. The camaraderie of the crew, the good times on the lake. The family, the friends, the faithful crew. The safe, ordered life passed on down the generations of Galilean fishermen. Did he really love Jesus more than these?

Peter's love for Jesus couldn't be a divided love. It had to be a love which outweighed every human consideration; a love which Jesus warned might demand the ultimate sacrifice . . . a love without compromise.

Three times the question came; three times the answer given — without hesitation, confident, assured. And so the work could begin: "Feed My sheep."

This is the love which lies at the heart of the Christian life. Christian lifestyle begins with a self-denial relationship which declares, "Jesus, I love You."

Today retrace your steps to Jesus, past all the complex difficulties and dilemmas of your life. Past all the broken promises and ruins of your discipleship. Past all the failures of the years. Go back to Jesus, and tell Him that you love Him. □

Excerpt from Living Waters for Your Parched Prayers, by Rob Frost, Chariot Victor Publishing. Rob Frost is an evangelist in Great Britain and the leader of Seed Teams, an evangelistic program in Great Britain, France, Poland, and Estonia. He also takes over 500 people on Share Jesus Missions each year. Used by permission.

The Creation

BY JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

And God stepped out on space,
And He looked around and said,
"I'm lonely —
I'll make me a world."

And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said, "That's good!"

Then God reached out and took the light in
His hands,
And God rolled the light around in His
hands,
Until He made the sun;
And He set that sun a-blazing in the heav-
ens.
And the light that was left from making the
sun
God gathered up in a shining ball
And flung against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and
stars.

Then down between
The darkness and the light
He hurled the world;
And God said, "That's good!"

Then God Himself stepped down —
And the sun was on His right hand,
And the moon was on His left;
The stars were clustered about His head,

And the earth was under His feet.
And God walked, and where He trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.

Then He stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the
world
And He spat out the seven seas;
He batted His eyes, and the lightnings
flashed;
He clapped His hands, and the thunders
rolled;
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine-tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms:
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of
the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around His shoulder.

Then God raised His arm and He waved His
hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And He said, "Bring forth! Bring forth!"
And quicker than God could drop His hand,
Fishes and fowls
And beast and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings,
And God said, "That's good!"

Then God walked around
And God looked around
On all that He had made.
He looked at His sun,
And He looked at His moon,
And He looked at His little stars;
He looked on His world
With all its living things,
And God said, "I'm lonely still."

Then God sat down
On the side of a hill where He could think;
By a deep, wide river He sat down;
With His head in His hands,
God thought and thought,
Till He thought, "I'll make me a man!"

Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled Him down;
And there the great God Almighty,
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner
of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of His
hand —

This Great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till He shaped it in His own image;

Then into it He blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen. □

The Heartbreak of Children Leaving your Example

ADAPTED BY PASTOR REX CAIN FROM MATERIAL BY PASTOR JOHN RAILTON

Have you ever wondered why some children grow up to reject God even though they've been raised in a Christian home? Why teens show no regard for values taught them by Christian parents?

This same tragedy happened in Scripture. Eli was a devoted priest but failed to save his own sons who became immoral, profane and wicked. He raised Samuel to be godly, but couldn't pass his values along to his own sons. But more disturbing, Samuel, one of the greatest men in the Bible, witnessed Eli's mistakes and yet he proceeded to lose his children too!

The lesson is clear. God will not save our accountable children as a reward for our own devotion. Christianity is not

inherited by the next generation. We who are parents will have to make a conscious effort, and then some, if we are to pass our Christian values on to our children.

I appreciate Jim Dobson's pamphlet, "A Checklist For Spiritual Training": In it he suggests six scriptural principles which he believes all Christian parents should consciously teach and reinforce.

✓ Mark 12:30, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Jesus said this is the *greatest* commandment.

✓ Mark 12:31, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

✓ Psalm 143:10, "Teach me to do your will for you are my God."

✓ Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

✓ Galatians 5:22, 23, "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control."

✓ Luke 14:11, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

We accomplish this by practicing Deuteronomy 6:6-9. □

Fear No Evil (continued from page 14)

of the Alban Institute, "a church or synagogue becomes a visible front line in the battle against violence. The burning of a number of black churches in the past few years is one recent example. But the reality is that every day, every congregation in this country and around the world is on the front line in the battle against deep-seated human hatred and violence. As we worship, meet, share meals, teach children, and perform all the other activities that create congregations, we encounter the deep resentments, angers, fears and hostilities that can cumulatively lead to the kinds of eruptions that leave our schoolyards, highways, governmental buildings and homes blood-stained and grief-filled. We will never know

how much difference our congregational life together has made for good or ill in this awful contest. But we must know that we are on the front line, that we are not and cannot be bystanders in the battle against violence. We must constantly ask how we can deal more faithfully and effectively with these powerful forces" (James P. Wind, "On the Front Lines against Violence," CONGREGATIONS: *The Alban Journal*, September-October 1998, 3). "Nonviolence can be a powerful force in the healing of our world, if we put it to work in the community around us." (*Homiletics*, March/April 1993, Vol. 11, No. 2)

Jesus is our Shepherd. . . . Jesus is the one who walks with us as we walk through

the valley of the shadow. Jesus is the one who is journeying with us as we encounter evil in this world.

Jesus the shepherd is the one who laid down His life for us.

Jesus the shepherd is our example . . . let us follow in His footsteps in learning how to deal with evil. Let us, the Church be salt and light in this world. Let us begin in our families, in our Church, in our community to practice nonviolence. Let us pray that, like a mustard seed, which begins small, but becomes large, our efforts at nonviolence will result in a less violent culture, let us follow the shepherd and be obedient, till Jesus comes again. □

Going to Church is Good for Your Health

BY DR. WILLIAM BACKUS

For many years medical and psychological researchers largely avoided studying the impact of religious faith and spiritual well-being on physical health. Textbooks never even referred to the few studies that were available. Today, revolutionary thinking in this area is just beginning to affect us — because doctors have discovered that the spiritual life does have a proven influence on health and healing.

Recently many studies have revealed the positive impact of spiritual reality on physical illness. Researchers have found, for instance, that cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disorders, many forms of cancer, and hypertension are not as common among religious people as they are among people with little or no faith. True, some of the positive results in these studies are traceable to the disciplined lifestyles of believers. Yet the beliefs of the faithful are the source of self-discipline and healthful habits. And constructive inner-life habits, such as forgiveness and generosity, are proving to have healthful benefits as well.

When we begin to receive new beliefs and positive support, we improve the conditions that foster health. Both positive beliefs and supportive brothers and sisters can be found in some churches. So we should expect people who go to church and who believe and practice the good news heard there to have better health than those who do not.

As noted earlier, careful research demonstrates that people who attend church

regularly have less cardiovascular disease, less pulmonary emphysema, less cirrhosis of the liver, less abnormal cervical cell formation, and lower blood pressure than people who do not go to church often. Similar benefits have been shown to result from prayer and increased faith. That is because attention to spiritual truth changes our thinking, and we realize we have hope and divine love and assistance from outside the realm of fallen nature.

In other words, the health benefits of Christian faith and practice are tangible and measurable. New life and new realities are open to us.

When you and I come into fellowship with [God] through the new birth and faith in Jesus Christ, we receive many powerful new “facts of life.” One of the great new facts is that we are no longer alone. Rather, we have fellowship with the Father and with Jesus himself as well as with our spiritual brothers and sisters. This can make a difference in our health, because when social contact is increased and loneliness is reduced the immune system seems to grow stronger and health and longevity get a boost. Apparently it is important to know we are not isolated and “all by ourselves.” Even more vital, the support of other people helps us to hang on to the positives and believe the truth. When social contact is increased the immune system appears to strengthen. Even having a dog or cat for company seems to improve health in some individuals. That is because companionship — even that of an animal, can help us believe we are not abandoned to ourselves.

Knowing that others care for and support us is essential to health.

A study of stress at the University of Chicago highlighted the fact that among business executives exposed to stressful situations, those who stayed healthy — those who experimenters called “hardy executives” — were people who believed they were in control and that the stressful event was a positive challenge. And what helped them to believe this and react in this way were friends or relatives who supported them, and the effect was major.

Executives who did not have positive beliefs and supportive fellowship had more than nine chances in ten of becoming severely ill in the near future while the first group had less than one chance in ten of developing severe sickness any time soon. The major impact determining illness or health for these people was in their minds. What they told themselves about their circumstances made the difference.

Yes, the content of your [mind] really can change things. A limited, self-centered, and materialistic view of life does not embrace the truth. There is a wealth of help and possibility outside our own small world — the realm inhabited by a God of truth who cares about us and our circumstances. □

From *The Healing Power of a Christian Mind*, by Dr. William Backus. Copyright 1996, Bethany House Publications, Minneapolis, MN. Used by permission.

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Grace is Not Cheap

BY PASTOR DON WARD — RAYMORE, MO

Grace is not cheap. No one knows that better than God Himself, unless it is Jesus.

In order for God's favor to rest on us and His forgiveness to remove every guilt, He had to do something quite awful. He had to sacrifice the only one who was qualified as a sin offering. Jesus is "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36). There is absolutely no one else and so there is absolutely no other faith.

Some act as if God should serve up salvation cafeteria style to suit the many and varied tastes. For anyone who has given any serious thought to the subject it would be callous indeed to imagine that God has not done enough. If we are cavalier now

about our salvation and nonchalant about the Word of God we will, at some future gray judgment hour, become very focused.

The present culture sends its message loud and clear. "Don't say anything I don't want to hear or I'll get offended and stomp out. So there." (Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things . . . Isaiah 30:10).

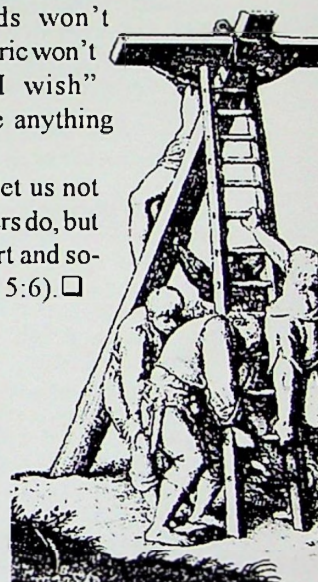
Many are intimidated. But what about God?

It's as though if no one says what needs to be said, and we all just say that everything is okay, then everything will be okay.

Some want peace of mind at any price. The price can be very high.

There will come a time when words won't work. Rhetoric won't redeem. "I wish" won't make anything come true.

So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober (1 Thes. 5:6). □



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Volume 88, Number 5

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Jesus, at Lazarus' tomb (John 11).

A MESSAGE

from the Editor . . .



Investing in Future Leaders

I just returned from spending the week at Arkansas' BYF Youth Camp. 120 campers and counselors from Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas and Virginia spent a week studying from the book of Acts and learning about "LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE" of the Holy Spirit. What a spiritually uplifting week it was studying and fellowshiping, breaking bread and praying together.

We were challenged by Dr. Joe Martin (congratulations Joe on receiving your Doctorate in Ministry). What really impressed me about Joe was not only his powerful sermons and wonderful stories (losing his breath while under the influence of Peanut), which really connected with the young people, but even more his willingness to serve (moving pews and carrying crosses).

Brother Paul Moore of Gatesville, Texas really ministered to me by introducing some wonderful songs of praise and worship in Hebrew. He also taught several of us a celebratory Hebrew dance which the Israeli's danced for three days at their 50th anniversary. It was a joy

dancing and celebrating. I think we in the Church of God need to learn to dance more. Just as King David "danced before the Lord with all his might" we need to be unafraid to move our bodies in worship and celebration.

It was a pleasure to teach a class on Acts and have several of the students quoting the verses from memory. Our strong Bible Quizzing program under the direction of brother Tom New is encouraging young people to plant God's word in their heart.

I was really refreshed and encouraged by being in the presence of so many young people who are learning to live under the influence of God. I am very optimistic about the future of the Church of God. The Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith has a wonderful message to offer the world and we have some fantastic leaders and up and coming leaders. Travis Ramsey, who led our praise and worship did a wonderful job of bringing us into the presence of God and he challenged us to give ourselves wholeheartedly to God. It's great to see a new generation rising up to take the

challenge of their faith and commitment to God.

I feel very blessed to be a member of the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith. I realize that, sizewise, when compared to the mainline denominations we are very insignificant, but in God's eyes we are anything but insignificant. We have a great deal to offer the world, and I hope and pray that within our local churches you will invest heavily in teaching and training the next generation to carry the mantle of truth on well into the next millennium. We need to challenge young people to "Save yourself from this corrupt generation!" Let us all come under the influence of the Holy Spirit and let our lights shine and be His witnesses . . . "unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

God be with us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Fletcher".

Pastor Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor

The Restitution Herald

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- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Lord, Why Didn't You Come Sooner?

BY THE EDITOR

What if you were at a pool and your child/grandchild/friend was drowning? You yelled to the lifeguard for help, but he just sat there waiting, not responding until the child was unconscious and had stopped breathing, and then finally he jumped in and gave the child CPR. How would you feel about that lifeguard?

What if your house was burning, so you called 911 and asked for the fire department to come quickly? They show up three hours later, when all that remains is a smoldering pile of charred rubble. How would you feel about the fire department?

What if you were sick in bed and needed medicine? You call your friend to go to the store and get you some medicine, and your friend never comes until after it's too late. How do you feel about that?

What if a family member was in the hospital, badly ill, and you called the pastor

and asked him to come and pray — but he didn't come for several days, until after the person died; how would you feel about the pastor?

What if you had a problem and prayed urgently to God for help, but the help you wanted didn't come when you wanted it, the Lord came too late . . . how would you feel about God?

*They show up
three hours later,
when all that remains
is a smoldering pile
of charred rubble.*

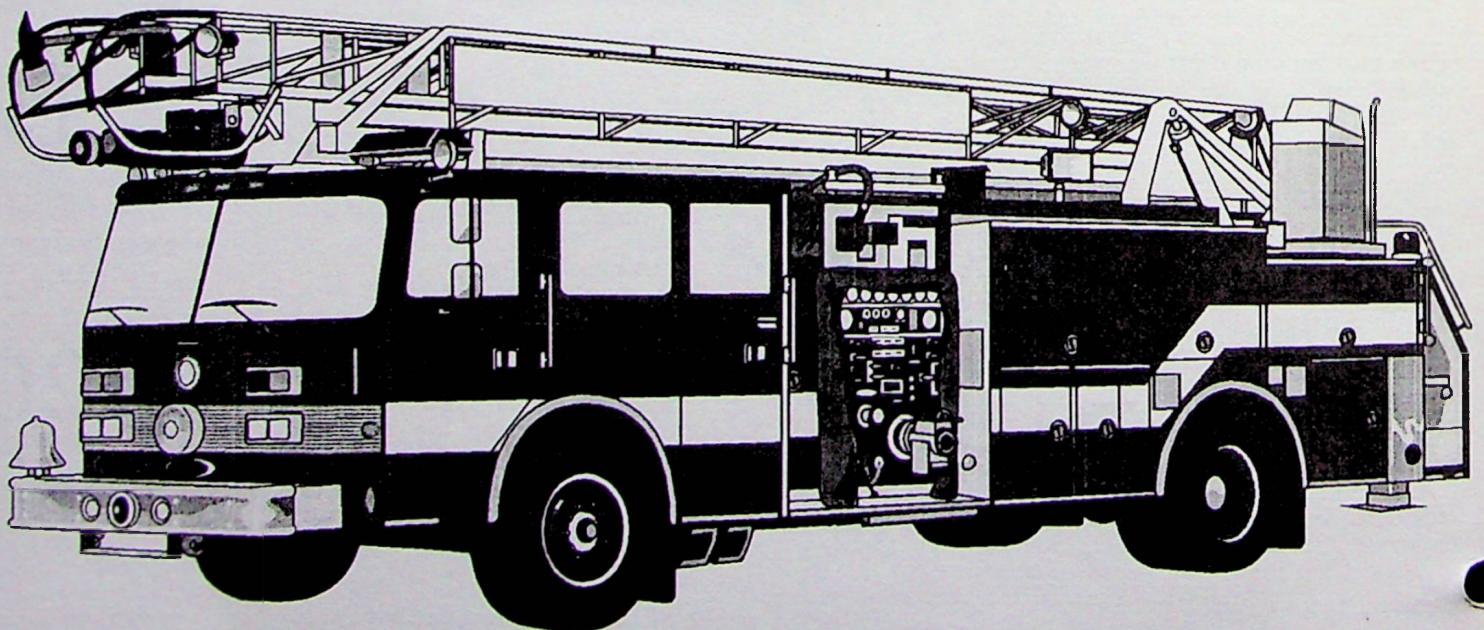
Most people of faith, who believe in God and in the power of prayer, have had experiences where they have sought God's

help, His intervention, His deliverance, but had to wrestle with disappointment when God seemed to do nothing, or did something only after it was too late. Why does this happen? What do we do when it happens? Get angry? Blame God? Lose our faith?

If this has ever happened to you and you've wondered why, and what to do, then you need to continue reading. If this has never happened to you, read on anyway, because chances are good that someday it will and you'll need to be ready when it does.

The Gospel of John, chapter eleven, gives us a story about the Lord appearing to come too late and some reasons why.

Jesus received an urgent message that His friend Lazarus was in need. Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, were among Jesus' closest friends. They provided Him with His home away from home. Mary was the one who sat at Jesus' feet and



listened to Him preach while Martha fretted in the kitchen getting the meal ready. Mary was the one who washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.

They had seen and heard about Jesus' many miracles and healings, about the man born blind who was healed, and the leper who was healed. They naturally assumed that Jesus would want to know about His good friend Lazarus' illness, so that He could do something about it. (Even today it is often implicitly understood in relationships that when you do someone a favor they *owe* you . . . it was time for them to call in a favor from Jesus.)

No doubt they expected Jesus to drop everything and come to His friend's sickbed. Expectations; how often do troubles happen in our relationships when we have unmet expectations?

Surprise! Jesus waited several days to respond. He didn't meet their expectations. Finally, He told His disciples that He was going to go and wake Lazarus up (not a wise thing to do, when someone is sick you give them rest, you don't wake them up). But Jesus was talking about waking him from the sleep of death. The disciples couldn't understand. It seemed risky, Lazarus' home in Bethany was only a few miles from Jerusalem where Jesus was a wanted man. Many of the Jews there wanted Him dead, so it was a big risk for Jesus to go there.

When Jesus arrived at Bethany Lazarus was already dead. He found Martha grieving — "Jesus, you came too late . . . Lord, why didn't you come sooner?" They talked about the future resurrection. Notice, there is no hint here of Lazarus being in God's presence in heaven, he was asleep in the grave, awaiting the resurrection.

Jesus said that He possessed God's resurrection power "I am the resurrection and the life," He is God's agent of life and resurrection.

Then Mary came out, she had basically the same reaction to Jesus as her sister — "Lord, why didn't you come sooner?"

Jesus wept. He empathized with their suffering. He was not calloused or indifferent. It's important for us to see that the reason for delaying His coming was not because He didn't care about their grief. So He wept for them. He also wept for their lack of faith in Him. Their trust was weak.

Isn't that the way it often is with us? We say we trust God and we trust Jesus, until something happens that we don't understand or like, then our trust really gets put to the test.

Finally the reason for the delay becomes apparent. It's not about Lazarus, or Martha, or Mary. It's not about how important they were or were not to Jesus. It's all about giving God honor and glory (John 11:4 says "It is for God's glory"). Lazarus'

*It all boils down
to our expectations:
Does God exist to
serve us . . . or do we
exist to serve God?*

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death was used by Jesus as a way of giving glory to God in a demonstration of God's resurrection power!

How can we apply the lesson of this story to our own situations? We need to realize at the outset that God doesn't always answer our requests for deliverance and help according to our timing.

Israel was in Egypt for 430 years before God sent Moses to free them. They spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness before entering the promised land. They spent 70 years in captivity to the Babylonians before they were allowed to return to their homeland and rebuild their city and temple. They spent nearly 1900 years scattered throughout the world without a homeland before Israel was reestablished as a nation in 1948.

As Christians, we have been waiting for nearly 2000 years for Jesus to come back. In Revelation 22:20 Jesus assures us, "Surely I am coming soon." Yet it's easy for us to ask the same question that Lazarus' sisters asked: "Lord, why didn't you come sooner?"

"Before my spouse died."

"Before I lost my job."

"Before I got old and started falling to pieces."

"Before my parents divorced."

"Before I had to take that test in school."

"Lord, what took you so long, why didn't you come sooner?"

We must remember that God chooses to respond at such a time and manner as will bring glory to Him and is best for all of humanity. 2 Peter 3:8-9 says: "Do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

We must recognize that we were created to give glory to God, not to be served by Him. In Isaiah 43:5-7 God is speaking about humans and He refers to us as those "Whom I created for My Glory." We're created to glorify God, not the other way around. In Ephesians 1:3-6 the Apostle Paul refers to "the praise of His glorious grace."

It all boils down to our expectations: Does God exist to serve us . . . or do we exist to serve God? How we answer that question will make all the difference.

How many people during the past 2000 years have heard the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and had their faith strengthened by it? How much glory has God received through that one event? Do you suppose Lazarus would mind? Would he have a problem knowing that Jesus waited two days to come to him, in order to

(continued on page 6)

give God glory and lead countless millions to faith in Him? *I don't think so.*

Are you willing to submit your whole life to God, trusting that whatever may happen, God will be glorified?

Are you willing to sacrifice your career, your security, your home, your life for the sake of giving glory to God?

Are you willing to trust, not just when all is going well, or when it makes sense, or when God is doing what you want Him to do for you, but trust in the mess and uncertainty that is much of life? Trust when things aren't going well. Trust when God isn't responding to your demands, or on

your timetable. Are you willing to trust then? Are you willing to let God use your life as a way to bring glory to Him and to bring others to faith in Him? Let us live and, if it be God's will, even die that God may be glorified! □

A Report on Persecution Against our Brothers and Sisters in Christ

BY WERNER BARTL

Greetings from Austria, just a short story to help you understand why we help refugees in Austria:

In Ankara, Turkey, Nasser paid a smuggler \$4,500 to take himself and his two daughters (Sarah, 14, and Suzan, 9) to Europe. However, the smuggler took the money and left Turkey. After that they returned to Istanbul in Turkey, penniless.

They began to attend some Christian meetings with Iranians. The leader of this group had to flee because he was informed about a plot to harm him. Iranian agents also threatened others. He could escape to

Europe but was denied asylum. The decisions seemed to be based on economic and political interests of the European country. They were planning to send him back.

Converting from Islam to another religion carries severe penalties in Iran, including death. Nasser went into cardiac arrest as the police took him and his two daughters to the airport to turn him over to Iranian officials who were to return him to Iran where punishment awaited him. Nasser had to flee from Iran after his wife reported him to the local Komiteh (that is the Iranian name) for his non-political activities and because he had attended a church several times. Nasser's blood pressure was

falling, his pulse weakening. They defibrillated him. He went into complete cardiac arrest. The family has now fled to another European country!

We have many stories like that one. We can't do a lot, but we want to help. Thanks for your prayer and caring with us. I believe they have a "right" to hear the Gospel of the Kingdom and to return to their home country and declare Jesus as the Messiah and the coming Kingdom. A few people can change the world with the power of the truth of the one and only living God. These people are at our front door. Let's reach them together. It can be done! □



Remembering the Brave in Heart

BY CHARLES W. COLSON

It was a test all of us would hope to pass, but none of us really wants to take. A masked gunman points his weapon at a Christian and asks "Do you believe in God?" She knows that if she says "yes," she'll pay with her life. But unfaithfulness to her Lord is unthinkable.

So, with what would be her last words, she calmly answers "yes, I believe in God."

What makes this story remarkable is that the gunman was no communist thug, nor was the martyr a Chinese pastor. As you may have guessed, the event I'm describing took place in Littleton, Colorado.

As the *Washington Post* reported, the two students who shot 13 people, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, did not choose their victims at random—they were acting out of a kaleidoscope of ugly prejudices.

Media coverage has centered on the killers' hostility toward racial minorities and athletes, but there was another group the pair hated every bit as much, if not more: Christians. And, there were plenty of them to hate at Columbine High School. According to some accounts eight Christians—four Evangelicals and four Catholics—were killed.

Among them was Cassie Bernal. And it was Cassie who made the dramatic decision I've just described—fitting for a person whose favorite movie was *Braveheart*, in which the hero dies a martyr's death.

Cassie was a 17-year-old junior with long blond hair, hair she wanted to cut off and have made into wigs for cancer patients who had lost their hair through chemotherapy. She was active in her youth group

at Westpool's Community Church and was known for carrying a Bible to school.

Cassie was in the school library reading her Bible when the two young killers burst in. According to witnesses, one of the killers pointed his gun at Cassie and asked, "Do you believe in God?" Cassie paused and then answered, "Yes, I believe in God."

*A masked gunman
points his weapon*



at a Christian and asks

"Do you believe in God?"

"Why?" the gunman asked. Cassie did not have a chance to respond; the gunman had already shot her dead.

As her classmate Mickie Cain told Larry King on CNN, "She completely stood up for God. When the killers asked her if there was anyone who had faith in Christ, she spoke up and they shot her for it."

Cassie's martyrdom was even more remarkable when you consider that just a few years ago she had dabbled in the occult, including witchcraft. She had embraced

the same darkness and nihilism that drove her killers to such despicable acts. But two years ago, Cassie dedicated her life to Christ, and turned her life around. Her friend, Craig Moon, called her a "light for Christ."

Well, this "light for Christ" became a rare American martyr of the 20th Century.

According to the *Boston Globe*, on the night of her death Cassie's brother Chris found a poem Cassie had written just two days prior to her death. It read:

"Now I have given up on everything else I have found it to be the only way
To really know Christ and to experience
The mighty power that brought Him back to life again, and to find
Out what it means to suffer and to
Die with him.
So, whatever it takes I will be one who lives
in the fresh
Newness of life of those who are
Alive from the dead."

The best way all of us can honor Cassie's memory is to embrace that same courageous commitment to our faith. For the families of these young martyrs, I can only offer deep personal sympathy and the hope that they might take strength from the words Jesus spoke to the woman who honored Him by pouring ointment on His head. "Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (Matthew 26:13).

"Well done, good and faithful servant. Now enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:23). □

Entering the Kingdom — Be Born Again

BY ALLON MAXWELL

“**U**nless one is born anew, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God” — unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot *enter* the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5).

Nicodemus came to Jesus a puzzled man. As a “teacher in Israel” he must have known all those Old Testament prophecies about the Kingdom. He knew that the prophecies foretold the miracles that he saw Jesus performing. And he certainly knew that the teaching he heard from Jesus could only be from God. He was on the threshold of believing. But he had not yet understood the most important element of all.

Of course we *must* know about the prophecies. We need those in order to truly believe that Jesus is who He claims to be. And we *must* know what Jesus taught in the four Gospels. Otherwise we will not know what to believe in order to be saved. But it is not enough to merely hear and pay lip service to the words. It is not enough to see the miracles. And it was certainly not enough, Jesus told Nicodemus, to be born physically as a Jew.

There is no real Good News about the Kingdom of God for any of us, until it becomes an individual personal *hope*. And that hope can become a reality only *after* we are “born again.”

To be “born again” describes a *spiritual* experience. It tells us that we must leave

our old life behind and begin a *new life*. In another place it is described as a spiritual “death” to an old way of life and a spiritual “resurrection” to a new life. In another, it is described as a “new creation.” And in yet another, it is described as a “translation” from one kingdom to another. It is even described as having “Eternal Life.” Paul



goes so far as to say that “The *only* thing that counts is new creation” (Gal 6:15 NEB)!

Of course all of that is encompassed in the meaning of the first and most important word in the Gospel — repent! Without repentance the news is all bad! Repentance is the element of the message of the Kingdom which turns it from *bad news* to *good news*, and offers hope for the future.

However, this remarkable statement by Jesus contains two other key words, the meanings of which are inevitably missed by those who neither *see* nor *hear*! We are not talking now about the words “born again,” we are talking about something that becomes possible only *after* a person is born again.

The other two important words are “see” and “enter.” When we repent of our sins, and are born again of water and spirit (both are essential elements of the new birth) our eyes are opened to *see* the Kingdom of God. We can begin to “see” past the material world, into a new spiritual dimension where God is at work in ways which are neither seen nor understood by carnal men with carnal minds and carnal appetites. And when we can thus “see” the Kingdom, we are also enabled to *enter* now, and *live* now, in that new spiritual dimension where Jesus has been made Lord of all. That is what gives reality to our hope of a future inheritance in the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Have we truly *seen*? Do we know beyond question, without presumption, but in meekness and humility, with a broken spirit and a contrite heart, that we have *entered*? How wonderful is the *good news* which offers us the means of both *seeing* and *entering* the Kingdom of God. □

Manage Your Minutes

BY BOBB BIEHL

When things seem overwhelming, make a list of all the things you've got to do, put them in order of importance, and start at the top.

It's my guess that every single person in the world has thought, "I'll never get caught up . . . It's hopeless . . . I'm so far behind, I don't know where to begin!" We all know that overwhelmed feeling of having so many things to do we don't even know where to start!

Make a List

When you begin to feel buried by all the things you need to do, ask yourself, "What do I have to do by the end of today? By the end of the week? By the end of the month?" Put a time limit on the things you need to accomplish.

Let your mind dump onto a piece of paper all the things you feel pressured to accomplish in the near future, and form a list. Making a list of things to do is about as sensible to me as making a grocery list when going to the market. When items are listed on a sheet of paper, you don't forget anything, you can organize what you need to do, and you have the satisfaction of crossing off each item as it is accomplished. Begin to see lists as friends, not enemies.

In Order of Importance

If your list is long, you may feel overwhelmed and not know where to begin. That's when you make a second list! Ask yourself, "If I could only do one thing, which one would I do?" That thing becomes number one on your new list. Then ask, "If

I got number one done and could only do one other thing, what would I do?" That becomes number two . . . and so on. This little bit of extra planning is valuable because it makes sure you're getting the highest done first.

Start at the Top

Start at the top of your list whenever possible, but there may be occasional exceptions. Sometimes you may feel too discouraged, overwhelmed, or fatigued to tackle the number one task—especially if it is a big one. You may want to start with a couple of easy items and check them off to feel like you're making progress. Just do something! If you keep "chipping away" at the list and checking off items, sooner or later they are all done!

For my senior year of college I transferred from Bethel (a small Christian college with about 500 students) to Michigan State University (with a campus of 35,000). The first day I was absolutely overwhelmed! I soon had thousands of pages to read, stringent course requirements to meet, and more than I thought I would ever be able to handle. I remember thinking, "I'm going to have this overwhelmed feeling hundreds of times in my life. How do I deal with it?" That's how I discovered the value of making lists.

Three years later I completed my Bachelors and then my Masters at Michigan State. Since then I've faced a lot of overwhelming times, but I've never forgotten the feeling of relief that came from simply making a list and starting somewhere!

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What are all the things you need to do?
2. What is the order of importance of those things?
3. What are the top three things you could do in the next seven days?

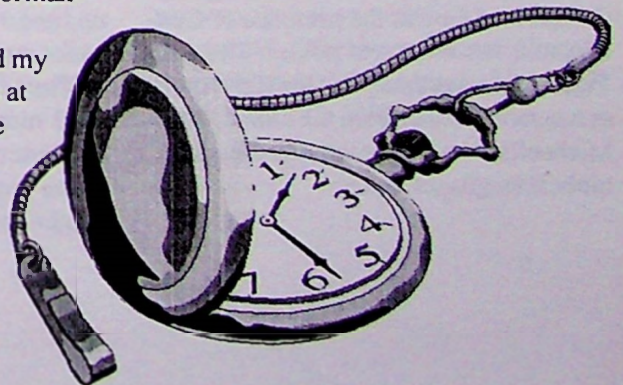
ACTION POINT

Get a piece of paper and a pencil. Write out all the things you need to do—call Jami, talk to Joli, write Evida, finish studying for my English test, take my geometry test, and so forth.

If you make the list and do one thing at a time, you won't feel nearly as overwhelmed.

"Keep on keeping on," and sooner or later you will be done! □

Excerpted from *The On My Own Handbook* by Bobb Biehl, Chariot Victor Publishing. Bobb Biehl is president of Masterplanning Group International, a consulting organization, and he serves on several boards. His principles have worked for business presidents, senior pastors, and executive directors. Bobb and his wife, Cheryl live in Orlando, Florida. Used by permission.



The Spirit of the Holy One

BY JUAN BAIXERAS—MIAMI, FL

The purpose of this article is to try and understand what the Bible refers to as “*the Holy Spirit*.” We will be looking at three different possibilities.

1. Is it the third person in a triune God who at the same time is a separate being called “*God the Holy Spirit*?”
2. Is it just God’s power, an energy that God uses for His purposes?
3. Or, is it God’s presence, which is of course inseparable from God’s power.

Let us first examine concept number one.

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

This idea comes out of belief in the doctrine of the Trinity. Here we will not be concerned with all the arguments of why the trinity is not a biblical teaching of Jesus nor the Apostles. We will however address the major arguments of this idea in relation to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament, yet the Hebrews never envisioned the Spirit of God as a separate being who is part of a triune God. They always (and still do) thought of the Spirit of God as the presence of God Himself, His mind and power. The Old Testament never thought of the Holy Spirit as a person distinct from the Father. J. D. Michaelis, who is an eminent professor of biblical languages, states:

“It cannot be proved, out of the whole number of passages in the Old Testament in which the Holy Spirit is mentioned, that it is a distinct person in the Godhead.”

Remember that the New Testament cannot contradict the Old Testament. There

*If there was one
biblical individual
praying to the Holy
Spirit, then you would
see me doing the same.*

...
was no exchange of Gods. It is the same God throughout the Bible.

In many Bible translations people have tried to make the Holy Spirit a person by translating the “Paraclete” as “him” instead of “it,” as in John 14:15-17. It should be “it.” People have translated it as “him” for theological reasons. The Roman Catholic (and very trinitarian) New American Bible, among others, translates the Paraclete correctly as “it.” The NAB also has an excellent footnote on John 14:17: “The Greek word for ‘spirit’ is neuter, and the Greek text and manuscript variants fluctuate between masculine and neuter pronouns.”

The idea of the Holy Spirit being the third member of a triune God was the outcome of the Council of Constantinople in the year 381 AD. This is about three hundred and forty five years after the death

of Christ. Before this council nobody ever thought of the Holy Spirit as the third member of a triune God called “God the Holy Spirit.” If we use the Bible as our guide (which we always should) we will find that nobody in the Bible thought this way of the Holy Spirit either. Nobody in the Bible ever prays to it, nobody ever talks to it, none of the New Testament writers ever send greetings from the Holy Spirit. This is definitely different from some of today’s Trinitarian preachers such as the well-known Benny Hinn, who tells us to pray and talk to the Holy Spirit. Are we to believe that Benny Hinn knows something that Jesus and the Apostles did not? When we as Christians stop using the Bible as our guide we run the risk of following false teachings. If there was one biblical individual praying to the Holy Spirit, then you would see me doing the same. But there isn’t. Theologians decided that Jesus was God in the year 325 AD at the Council of Nicaea. But even when they decided that Jesus was God in 325 AD they did not include the Holy Spirit in this formula until fifty-six years later in 381 AD. One must ask, why not? If this was a central concept of Christianity from the beginning (as Trinitarians claim), then why was the Holy Spirit not included in the formula until 381 AD? The reason is because it was not a teaching of Christianity from the beginning. It was an idea which was developed by men who were educated in Greek philosophies. Men such as Origen and Tertullian, to name a couple, tried to interpret the Old and New Testaments within the framework

of their Greek philosophical beliefs. This idea came out of the great city of Alexandria and started to gain popularity around 250 AD. It came to the forefront in 325 AD at the council of Nicaea. But it was a developing idea, which is why "godship" for the Holy Spirit was not included or considered in the Council of Nicaea.

Tertullian writing around the year 200 AD to a friend of his named Praxeas, stated:

"The majority of believers, are *startled* at the Dispensation (of the Three in One) . . . They are constantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods . . . While the Greeks actually *refuse* to understand the oikonomia, or Dispensation (of the Three in One)." Chap. III. v. 1.

This is an incredible statement. Tertullian himself states that the majority of believers are startled when he tells them of the dispensation of the three in one. Why are believers startled at this teaching if it is supposed to be the core of Christianity from the beginning? Because it was not! This is why they are startled. The Greeks (Greek Christians) refused to accept this idea at all and accused him of worshipping two and three gods. Why would they refuse to accept their own Christian doctrine of the Trinity? Because it was not part of Christianity until the year 381 AD. It stands to reason that if the doctrine of the Trinity had been the status quo from the beginning of Christianity, then the majority of believers — no, all the believers — should have been well acquainted with this concept. But they were not. They accused Tertullian of worshipping two and three gods. This doctrine was something new, it was not the established belief of Christianity as you can see. It was starting to work itself out, but it was not in the majority, in fact, it was very much in the minority. The Bible provides us with an excellent example, it states in Acts 19:1-3:

"While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came down to Ephesus where he found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They answered him, 'We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' He said, 'How were you baptized?' They replied, 'With the baptism of John.'"

These were disciples in Christ. People who already believed in Jesus as the Messiah and the future coming of His kingdom. Yet they had been baptized without even knowing about the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is actually "God the Holy Spirit," and the doctrine of the Trinity is the core of Christianity, would it not be reasonable to conclude that in order to be considered a believer and be baptized, one would have to be familiar with and have an understanding of this idea. Yet these disciples did not. Why not? Because there was no such thing as "God the Holy Spirit." This phrase does not appear once in the whole Bible. It is a product of men. Let us review two of the most often quoted verses which are used to defend this concept of "God the Holy Spirit."

"Baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" Matthew 28:19. The New American Bible says: "This is perhaps the clearest expression in the New Testament of Trinitarian belief."

In a few seconds you will see how preposterous this statement really is. This verse has absolutely nothing Trinitarian about it. It is about Jesus sending the apostles out to proclaim the gospel to the nations. First, a few definitions according to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*:

Baptize — The phrase in Matthew 28:19, "baptizing them into the name" would indicate that the baptized person was closely bound to, or became property of, the one into whose name he was "baptized."

Name — Represents the authority, character. Expressing attributes. In acknowledgment or confession of.

This verse has nothing to do with water baptizing. With these definitions we can safely paraphrase this verse as follows: "Go out into the world and introduce [or bring] them into the knowledge of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit"

Which is exactly what they did. The Apostles went out into the Gentile world and brought them the knowledge of who the only God is, who the Messiah is, and about the gifts of the Holy Spirit which they were going to receive. But as you can see, this has nothing to do with the three being one. Human tradition has made this a Trinitarian verse.

There is also a very strong position held by many scholars that this verse was not part of the original text of Matthew's Gospel, as Eusebius, a third century Christian apologist, quoted the text in a shorter form: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in my name" rather than the form which now appears in the gospel. One commentator writes,

"There is much probability in the conjecture that it is the original text of the gospel, and that in the second century the longer clause supplanted the shorter 'baptizing them in my name.' An insertion of this kind, derived from liturgical use, would have rapidly been adopted by copyist and translators" (*The International Critical Commentary*, by Willoughby C. Allen, Volume 26, pp. 307-308).

This position has strong Biblical support by the fact that the Apostles at no recorded instance baptize using the formula of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" as Jesus supposedly commanded them to do. They always baptize "In the name of Jesus Christ." Also the parallel passage in Mark 16:15-18 does not mention in any way this trine formula, and the Gospel of Mark is believed to be written before Matthew.

2 Corinthians 13:13, or 14, depending on the translation, states: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." The New American Bible says of this verse, "This final verse is one of the clearest Trinitarian passages in the New Testament." If this is one of the clearest Trinitarian passages, imagine what the others must be like. Just because you mention God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in the same sentence does not make them the same being. Luke 9:28 says: "About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray." If we hold to the same logic that is being applied to 2 Corinthians 13:13, then Jesus, Peter, John, and James are the same being. This is the extent of this argument. I honestly look at this verse and I do not see anything that implies that they are three in one. Do you? What this verse means is exactly what it says, that the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is how God communicates and relates to us. Even if we say that they are three distinct persons, it still does not imply that they are the same being. Look at it objectively and not the way human tradition dictates it must be looked at. The other few verses that are used for the same purpose are identical in structure. All they do is mention God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the same paragraph. Puzzling? Yes. Biblical proof of the Trinity? No.

In the end it really boils down to, who are we supposed to believe, Jesus and the Apostles, or the men of the Council of Nicaea and Constantinople? For me the choice is an easy one. The Bible is very clear about what it thinks of the doctrines of men. "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts, you disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition," Mark 7:7-8.

THE POWER OF GOD

The second idea is that the Holy Spirit is just the power of God. An energy which God uses to do His will. Some who hold this view will compare it to the "Force" in Star Wars. I think that this idea is a result of seeing through the false teaching of the trinity and then going to the other extreme. I do not think that the Holy Spirit is just an energy because in the New Testament it makes decisions, tells people where to go and where not to go, and also teaches us. These are not things that just raw power can do. These things require a mind. The mind of God. Let us look at some verses which will show us that the Holy Spirit is much more than just the power of God.

"Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart so that you lied to the Holy Spirit. . . . You have lied not to human beings, but to God," Acts 5:3, 5. Here we learn that to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God. It does not make sense to think that one can lie to an energy or raw power.

"As Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'There are three men here looking for you. So get up, go downstairs, and accompany them without hesitation, because I have sent them,' Acts 10:19-20. In these verses the Spirit is giving instructions to Peter. An energy cannot give instructions. It also states, "I have sent them." Who sent them? God.

"It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities," Acts 15:28. This verse is about the decision that was made at the

council of Jerusalem concerning the Gentiles. The Spirit was actually responsible for the decision. An energy cannot make decisions, God can.

"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Oh that today you would hear his voice, harden not your hearts as at the rebellion in the day of testing in the desert, where your ancestors tested and tried me and saw my works for forty years. Because of this I was provoked with this generation and I said, 'They have always been of an erring heart, and they do not know my ways,'" Hebrews 3:7. As far as I know, energy cannot speak. This verse starts with the Holy Spirit speaking, which is in actuality God speaking of the ancestors who rebelled against His ways in the desert.

"The Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying: 'This is the covenant I will establish with the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them upon their minds,' he also says, 'Their sin and their evil doing I will remember no more,'" Hebrews 10:15-17. Again we see the Holy Spirit speaking, which is in effect God. The covenant was established by God, not an energy or raw power. It is God who will remember sin no more.

"For no prophecy ever came through human will; but rather human beings moved by the Holy Spirit spoke under the influence of God," 2 Peter 1:21. This verse states plainly that if you speak under the influence of the Holy Spirit you are speaking under the influence of God. Energy or power cannot influence you to prophecy.

"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them,'" Acts 13:2. Energy cannot give instructions or set apart people. God can.

"What will happen to me there I do not know, except that in one city after another the Holy Spirit has been warning me that imprisonment and hardships await me,"

Acts 20:22-23. Raw power cannot warn individuals. It cannot foresee the future. God, on the other hand, can.

"Thus says the Holy Spirit: 'This is the way the Jews will bind the owner of this belt in Jerusalem,'" Acts 21:11. Again, energy cannot foresee the future and speak of it. Only God can.

"I do not lie, my conscience joins with the Holy Spirit in bearing me witness that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart," Romans 9:1. How can energy know that Paul has great anguish in his heart? Nor can power be a witness.

"Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When they take you before synagogues and before rulers and authorities, do not worry about what you are to say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say," Luke 12:10-12. This is an excellent example. Why would it be an unforgivable sin to blaspheme against an energy or raw power, yet it is forgivable to blaspheme the Son of Man? Is energy above the Son of Man? Of course not. Who is the only one who is above Jesus the Messiah? God. Blasphemy against God has always been a sin. By examining these verses we can see that the Holy Spirit is not just an energy or raw power, but the actual presence of God.

THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF GOD

If it is not the third member of a triune God, nor just the power of God, what is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is God, but it is not a separate entity yet still an equal member of a triune God. It is simply the presence and power of God Himself. The Holy Spirit is how God extends His presence and power to His creation. Psalm 139:7 states: "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" God's presence comes to us as His Spirit. This is what it means to have fellowship with the Spirit of God. It means to have

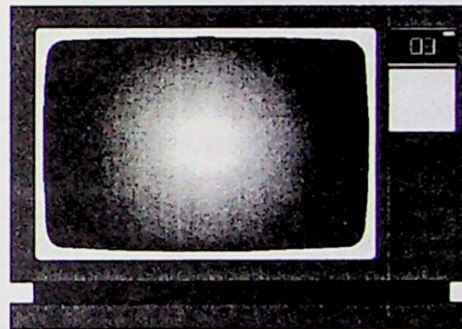
fellowship with God. So why not just say "God" in all instances instead of "Holy Spirit"? In order to answer that question we must first understand what "spirit" means.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words defines the Hebrew word "spirit" as:

1. breath of life. 2. mind set, of one's mind or thinking.

The Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as God's Spirit or the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit (the mind) of the Holy One. When

Imagine that I have the power of telepathy.



I could send my friend a thought for him to turn on the TV.

the Holy Spirit comes upon us, in actuality it is the mind (Spirit) of God coming upon us. This is why it can foresee the future and give instructions. 1 Corinthians 2:11 states: "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit (mind) within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God," (the mind of God).

The mind of God is the essence of God. It is God. Through God's mind comes His thoughts which are expressed as His word which is His will. The power of God comes from God's will, the reason is because whatever God wills happens. Let us look at

creation for an example of this. In Genesis 1:2-3 it says: "And the Spirit of God moving gently on the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

God's mind (Spirit) swept over the waters. God's mind produced the thoughts of creation which God expressed as a word by saying, "Let there be light." At God's word (His will) His power went into action and the heavens and earth were created.

2 Peter 3:5: "that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water."

Revelation 4:11: "for you created all things, by your will they came into being."

As you can see, word and will are interchangeable. God's word represents His thoughts, which are His will. Sirach 37:16 (a book only in the Catholic Bible) provides us with an excellent example of this thought: "A word is the source of every deed; a thought, of every act." Your thoughts are the source of your actions, a word (your will) is your thoughts expressed.

This is the reason why the Bible states that the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit came to an individual instead of just saying God. In a sense it is almost identical. God's thoughts are God, but it is not God physically. It is His mind. Let me use an analogy in order to explain this a little easier.

Let us imagine that I have the power of telepathy (of communicating my thoughts). I am in Miami and my friend is in New York. I could send my friend a thought for him to turn on the TV and watch the news. He could in effect say that the mind of Juan came to him and told him to turn on the TV, which in effect is me. But it would not be correct for him to say that Juan was here and told me to turn on the TV because I physically was not there. This is the reason for the difference in language.

The Holy Spirit is also considered to be the power of God. Through God's will

(continued on page 16)

The Fizzie Principle: One Guideline for Finding God's Will

BY JOHN MACARTHUR, JR.

As believers — people in God's family — if we do not know God's will, what are we? Uninformed? No. Searching? No. We are stupid.

"That's pretty rough," you say. "The Bible doesn't talk like that."

Oh? Try this. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Can you think of another word for unwise? I'll give you a hint; it starts with "s."

OK, maybe stupid is a little stronger, a bit more vivid. But it's certainly the same idea.

Furthermore, the preceding verse tells us we have to get on with it; we don't have much time. We are to be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (v. 16).

You say, "But I am looking for God's will. Maybe I am stupid, but can I help that?"

Yes, you can help it. If you had no choice to be stupid about God's will, the Bible would not command you to be "not unwise." The way to be not unwise is covered in the very next verse. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (v. 18).

First, if you want to know God's will, you must be saved. Second, you must be Spirit-filled. That is the teaching of the Word of God.

Many Christians say, "I don't understand why God hasn't revealed whom I am to marry." Others say, "Why doesn't He show me what job I should take, what business deal I should enter into, what I ought to purchase, whether I ought to move to another home, or what I ought to do about

some specific problem? Why doesn't God do something for me and show me His will?" And all the time these people are not even Spirit-filled, which is clearly revealed as His will. Why should God show a person something if he is not even fulfilling that which God has already clearly stated as His will?

What does it mean to be Spirit-filled? Let me give you a short theology lesson. We will call it theology of the Spirit-filled life. When you were saved, the moment you received Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit came to live within you. There is no Christian who does not possess the Holy Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9 cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; 12:12-13). Yet it is amazing how many Christians think they do not have the Holy Spirit.

I have sat in church and heard sincere people pray, "O, God, send Your Spirit," and have thought to myself, "No, it is here, it is here!" I have heard people pray, "God, give me more of Your Spirit," as if it came in doses.

The Holy Spirit lives within you. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" (1 Cor. 6:19). So many times we ask for what we already have! We pray for the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is already here.

Have you ever analyzed your prayers? You pray, "God, give me more love for so-and-so." The Bible says the "love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom. 5:5). You say, "God, I need more grace." God says that the grace He has already given you is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9). You cry, "O Lord,

I need more strength." The Bible says you "can do all things through Christ" who strengthens you (Phil. 4:13). "O God, guide me," you say. And He is thinking, "I'm trying. Why don't you follow?" "God, I need power," you cry. In fact, you have had power since the Holy Spirit came upon you (Acts 1:8).

Complete in Him

When will Christians realize that they have everything? Paul wrote, "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). You do not lack anything. But so many emaciated Christians go around and say, "Well, I just don't have the power to do this or that."

The Apostle Paul said to the Colossians, "And ye are complete in Him" (Col. 2:10). Complete! What are you looking for? What are you asking for? James told you what to ask for — "wisdom" (James 1:5) — and that is the sense to know what you already have and not ask for it! By the same token, we do not need to ask for the Spirit; it is in us already.

Since we have the Spirit, we also have power, for Jesus said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8, NASB). The word for power in the Greek is *dunamis*, from which we got our word "dynamite." You are literally walking dynamite.

You may say, "Oh, yeah? I'm not sure; I think I'm a dud. I not only don't explode; I don't even fizzle too loudly."

But you are dynamite. The power is all there. What is so often not there is the

release of that power. It is one thing to possess the Spirit; it is something else to be filled with the Spirit.

A Fizzie is a small tablet used to make a soft drink; it's sort of a flavored Alka-Seltzer. Put it in a glass of water and its flavor is released throughout the water. This concentrated, compact power pill is no good as long as it sits on the bottom of the glass. It has to release its energy to fill the glass, and then it turns the water into something new. If it is a grape Fizzie, you get a glass of grape drink. The flavor of the tablet determines the flavor of the water.

In a measure, that pictures how the Spirit of God operates in a human life. It is in the Christian all the time as a compact, concentrated, powerful force of divine energy. The question is, has it ever been able to release that power, to fill your life so that you can become what it is? A Christian not yielded to the Spirit does not manifest the Christ-life. The Spirit of God has to permeate a life if that life is to radiate God. We cannot do anything apart from being filled with the Spirit.

I have a glove. If I say to the glove, "Play the piano," what does the glove do? Nothing. The glove cannot play the piano. But if I put my hand in the glove and play the piano, what happens? Music! If I put my hand in a glove the glove moves. The glove does not get pious and say, "Oh, hand, show me the way to go." It does not say anything; it just goes. Spirit-filled people do not stumble and mumble around trying to find out what God wants. They just go!

People often ask, "How do I know my spiritual gift?" The best way is to live a Spirit-filled life, see what God does through you, look back in retrospect and say, "Oh that's what I do when God has control of me. Apparently, that is my gift." There is no need to get analytical. The whole point is that we need the Spirit of God to be released in our lives. This is simply a matter of decisions. When you get up in the morning, you decide what you are going to wear. Next you decide what you are going to eat for breakfast. And so it goes through the

day — one decision after another. The Spirit-filled life is yielding every decision to the control of the Spirit.

Filled with the Word

What is the Spirit-filled life? It is being saturated with the things of Christ, with His Word, His person. You might say, "Well, you know I'd like that. I'd like to be saturated with Christ. How do I do that?" The only way is to study the book that discloses all He is! You say, "I tried reading the Bible, but I didn't get anything."

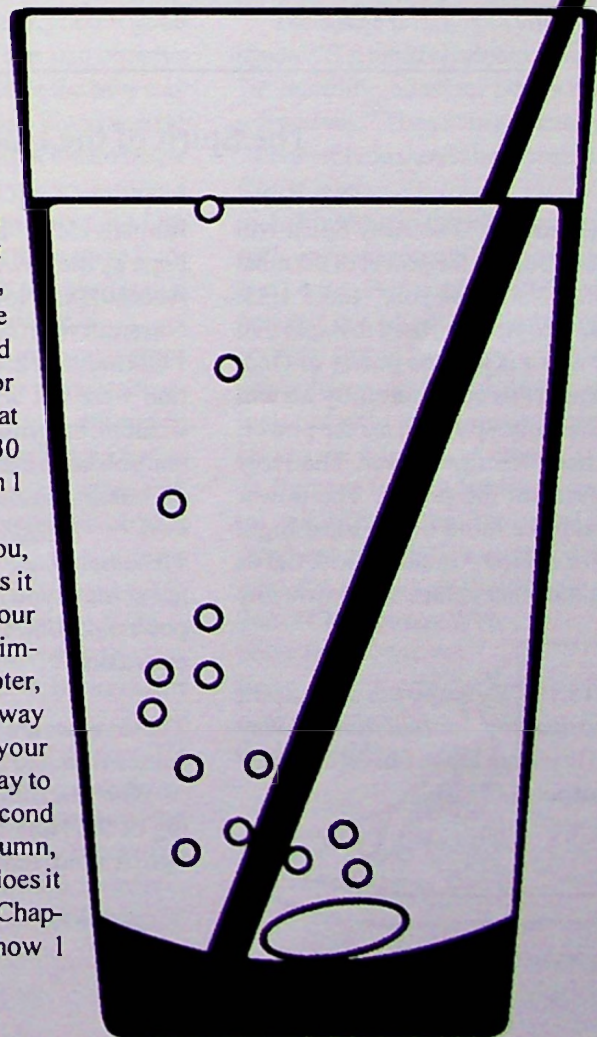
Let me share how I study the Bible, and how the Bible has come alive to me. I began in 1 John. One day I sat down and read all five chapters straight through. It took me 20 minutes. Reading one book straight through was terrific. (The books of the Bible weren't written as an assortment of good little individual verses. They were written with flow and context.)

The next day, I sat down and read 1 John straight through again. The third day, I sat down and read 1 John straight through. The fourth day, straight through again. The fifth day, I sat down and read it again. I did this for 30 days. Do you know what happened at the end of 30 days? I knew what was in 1 John.

Someone says to you, "Where in the Bible does it talk about confessing our sins?" You see a mental image of 1 John, first chapter, right-hand column, half-way down (depending on your Bible). "Where does it say to love not the world?" Second chapter, right-hand column, half-way down. Where does it talk about sin unto death? Chapter 5, last page. You know 1 John!

Next, I went to the Gospel of John. I divided the Gospel of John into three sections of seven chapters each. I read the first seven chapters for 30 days, the next seven for the next 30 days, and the last seven for 30 days. In 90 days, I had read the entire Gospel of John 30 times. Where does it talk about the Good Shepherd? Chapter 10, right-hand column, starts in the middle, goes down, flip the page, go on down. Where does it talk about the vine and the branches? Chapter 15. Where does it talk about Jesus' friends? Chapter 15, over in the next column and a little farther down. Where does it talk about Jesus' arrest in the garden? John 18. The restoration of Peter? John 21. The woman at the well? John 4.

(continued on page 16)



The Fizzie Principle *(continued from page 15)*

You might say, "My, are you smart!" No, I am not smart. I read it 30 times. Even I can get it then! Isaiah said to learn "precept upon precept, line upon line, . . . here a little, and there a little" (see Isa. 28:10-13). Then you have hidden it in your heart. After a while you are no longer a concordance cripple!

Planned Neglect

The more you study the Word of God, the more it saturates your mind and life. Someone is reported to have asked a concert violinist in New York's Carnegie Hall how she became so skilled. She said that it

was by "planned neglect." She planned to neglect everything that was not related to her goal.

Some less important things in your life could stand some planned neglect so that you might give yourself to studying the Word of God. Do you know what would happen? The more you would study the Word of God, the more your mind would be saturated with it. It will be no problem then for you to think of Christ. You won't be able to stop thinking of Him.

To be Spirit-filled is to live a Christ-conscious life, and there is no short cut to

that. You can't go and get yourself super-dedicated to live a Christ-conscious life. The only way you can be saturated with the thoughts of Christ is to saturate yourself with the Book that is all about Him. And this is God's will, that you not only be saved but that you also be Spirit-filled. □

Excerpt from *Found: God's Will* by John MacArthur, Jr., Chariot Victor Publishing. Dr. John MacArthur, Jr. is pastor of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California. Used by permission.

The Spirit of the Holy One *(continued from page 13)*

comes His power. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you," Luke 1:35. This verse is sometimes used to imply that the Holy Spirit is just the power of God. But if we read this verse carefully we will see that the Holy Spirit *wields* the power, it is not itself the raw power. The Holy Spirit possesses the power. The power comes from the mind of the most high, God. Spirit of God = mind of God. Let us look at some other verses to confirm this idea.

Romans 15:19: "By the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum I have finished preaching the gospel of Christ."

Romans 15:13: "So that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 10:38: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5: "And my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God."

1 Thessalonians 1:5: "For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction."

These verses are very clear that the power comes from the Spirit (mind) of God.

When the Bible speaks of "The indwelling of the Holy Spirit," it is God's Holy Spirit (mind) renewing your mind. This is

why our way of thinking changes when we receive the Holy Spirit. Through God's mind comes His power.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, the Holy Spirit is the mind of the Holy One, God. It is how He communicates with us. It is His presence that brings with it His power. It is not a separate being from God, yet being God, anymore than our minds are separate from us. It is the way in which God guides us and teaches us, through His mind. The mind (Spirit) of God is the greatest teacher of all. It taught our Lord Jesus the Christ. Through God's mind His plan for our salvation is revealed to us in His message of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus the Christ. God bless you, and see you at the resurrection! □

If I Were In Your Shoes . . .

BY BARBARA PEIL

Recently in a class I teach, a student was giving a presentation on how to communicate successfully with a variety of personalities. I settled in, anticipating the predictable course of the talk. I wasn't complacent long though — his first line really woke me up.

"Everyone, please take off your shoes." What?

"... and pass them to the person to your left." *What?!?*

My immediate thought was "No way!" Please understand, I had put these shoes on at six o'clock this morning, nearly 15 hours earlier, and they probably . . . well, stunk.

But in the spirit of cooperation, I gingerly handed my size six and a half navy blue pumps to the student on my left, my eyes full of apologies and my self-respect wondering if I was jeopardizing my teaching authority with stinky shoes.

Then, to my surprise, from my right came a pair of mountain climbing boots looking to be around size 52, triple E width. Jim's eyes mirrored my same hesitation. An initial whiff made me suspect he had donned his shoes early that morning, too and then perhaps had climbed the Matterhorn in them that day, as well.

"Now," instructed the student, "put their shoes on."

We all froze. In double hor-

ror we glanced to our left at our own shoes and then at the shoes in our hands. Timidly, I point my toes and sunk into the Alpine brown boots with red strapped laces. Uncomfortable humidity wafted up through my toes; the rough leather uppers, a new sensation against my hose. Jim looked over with puppy eyes.

"My feet kinda sweat . . . sorry," he said as he wedged his toes into his classmate's Cinderella-like slippers.

"Now that you're in their shoes," directed the student presenter, "take a good look at the shoes. What can you observe about their owner? Consider the best way to communicate with them. If you need to present an idea to them, what would be the best way to do it? Should you write them a memo, or talk with them about it? Use logic or emotion? Warm them up to it, or quickly jump in? Go for the big picture first, or summarize the benefits?"

Obviously, not all these conclusions can be reached by looking at their shoes, but slowly, wiggling my toes around in Jim's lofty boots, I was much more aware of the man who sat to my right. What was the best way for me to communicate with Jim? What were his needs? And perhaps more importantly, what were the needs in his life that God could use me to fill?

"I don't have a clue," I thought. My toes no longer felt uncomfortable, but my heart did.

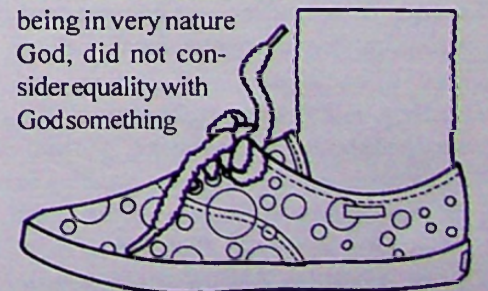
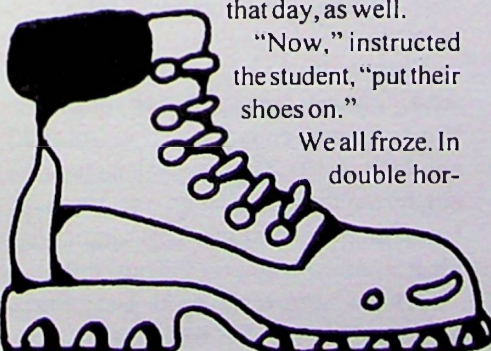
Jim was always a pleasant student. He did his work, asked thoughtful questions, projected reasonable expectations and demands. But what about him? What did I know about him? I thought hard. In order to get a Christian education, he commutes 90

miles one way. And he has a thoughtful wife (I saw his brown-bag dinners!). He's a foreman at an industrial plant and a leader in his church.

I looked at the big man beside me with new eyes. Here was a man to whom I was totally committed to teach, whom now I was moved to serve and to love as a brother in Christ. What is the best way I can communicate with you, Jim? How can I best serve your needs? How can God use me in your life to accomplish His will?

The adage is old, "put yourself in their shoes." The biblical principal is even older, "in humility, consider others better than yourselves." The example is eternal. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

In his letter to the Philippians, flooded with encouragement for practical Christian Living, Paul urges the Philippians, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). Because Paul understood how unnatural and difficult that command is, he offered Jesus Christ's example as the standard: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something



(continued on page 19)

Future Events

BY PASTOR JIM MATTISON — PELZER, SC

The outline of Jesus in Matthew 24 teaches us many things. Among them Jesus speaks of a “beginning of sorrows” period, evil abounding, and the world-wide preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Then the scene switches to the very end time.

It is this writer’s opinion that we are living in the beginning of sorrows period, the evil period, and the Kingdom preaching period. We are living in this period of time. Aren’t there wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes going on all over the world? And evil abounding – when has the earth seen such violence since the days of Noah? The preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God in all the world – it’s going on. I have had the privilege, with Anthony Buzard, of carrying that message to Africa, where it has borne fruit. Also, through his short-wave radio programs on Focus on the Kingdom, many responses are coming from Africa particularly, people writing of their appreciation of this eye-opening truth. We remember the Kingdom of God was Jesus’ main teaching. And we know that the way into that coming Kingdom on earth is through accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

These are exciting times. We are living in **THE TIME OF THE END**. Jesus will soon come! Whether we are living or dead at that time does not matter, for all shall be saved who believe.

Then Jesus in Matthew 24 comes to the very end scene. “When you see,” He said, *the abomination of desolation* standing in the holy place, or Temple of the Jews (which will be rebuilt), then there will be Great Tribulation. And if that tribulation is

not shortened, no one will remain alive. But for the elect’s sake (the children of God) those days will be shortened.

Daniel speaks of this abomination bringing desolation in Daniel 9:24-27; Daniel 11:31; and Daniel 12:11. He begins by saying seventy weeks are determined upon Israel and Jerusalem, that at the end of that time their sin will be ended, reconciliation will come, everlasting righteousness will be brought in, prophecy will be sealed, and the most Holy will be anointed. Obviously, these things are yet future.

At the end of sixty-nine weeks, Messiah was to be “cut off,” or killed. This clearly

*His coming will be as
visible as lightning.*

.
refers to Jesus’ death on the cross. But another “week,” the seventieth, a week of years, seven years, is left sometime after Christ’s death. Did it immediately follow the sixty-nine? We think not, from the fact that Israel’s reconciliation awaits their seeing their Messiah at His coming with the prints in His hands, and their repentance for killing Him (Zech. 13:6).

Daniel, in chapter nine, mentioned that this seventieth week would be divided into two parts, three and a half years in each. A “prince” is to make a covenant for the whole week of seven years, but in the middle of that period he will cause the Jewish sacrifices to stop, and cause the time of “desolations” to begin by something abominable (to the Jews). This writer

wonders if this abomination is not the setting up of the image of the beast in the newly built temple of the Jews.

When Jesus spoke of this coming “abomination of desolation” of which Daniel spoke, He shows it to be the *cause* of the Great Tribulation. We notice His “when” and “then.” *When* the abomination of desolation is standing in the holy place (what is the Jewish holy place but the Temple?) *then* shall be great tribulation such as the world has never seen. We refer to this three-and-a-half year time as the Great Tribulation, *great* because the world has never experienced the like of it before. Jesus said, in Matthew 24, that false christs and false prophets would rise, showing great miracles, and would deceive many. Then He warned us that if any said He was in a secret place, to not believe it. His coming will be as visible as lightning.

His outline is this: immediately after the Great Tribulation is over the signs in the heavens will occur: the sun and moon dark, stars fall, heavenly powers shaken. This ought to get men’s attention.

Christ’s sign will then appear in heaven, and after that, all the nations of the earth will mourn as they see with their own eyes Christ coming in the clouds with power and great glory.

Then the trumpet sounds and Jesus will send the angels out to gather His elect ones (Christians are called “elect” in Col. 3:12 and 2 Pet. 1:10). This also will include the elect from the Old Testament: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, etc. This “gathering” clearly refers to the first resurrection.

This is supported by 1 Corinthians 15:51, where the first resurrection trumpet is called the *last* trump. It is again

mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, which shows Christ descending with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, at which time the dead in Christ will be raised, and those Christians who are still alive at that time, will both be caught up together to meet Christ in the air. Revelation 11:15-18 says that this resurrection time will be at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. To this writer, it is plain that this last trumpet at Christ's coming is the first resurrection trumpet, the time when all the elect ones will be raised from the dead and gathered together.

Daniel agrees that the resurrection of the faithful will be following the "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Dan.

12:1, 2). It is *at that time* "thy people" (the Jews) shall be delivered, and many that sleep in the dust (including the faithful Gentile Christians, the church) shall awake — to eternal life. The second or last resurrection is also shown here — to shame and everlasting contempt.

Jesus gives us the order of the end, then: beginning of sorrows, evil abounding, Kingdom preached, then the abomination of desolation in the holy place which triggers the Great Tribulation, after which the sun will be darkened, the sign of Christ appears, Christ appears in power and glory, and sounds the trumpet for the gathering of His people — resurrection.

It is true there are 3 ½ and 7 year periods, but they refer to the 3 ½ years of

(supposed) peace for Israel, followed by 3 ½ years of great tribulation *immediately before* the coming of Christ in power and glory. The first resurrection (to immortality) plainly occurs *after* the great tribulation has ended.

With this outline of Jesus to help us understand, we won't be surprised by terrible times ahead, even death to many, but we will continue to watch for the coming of our Lord. He is coming for those who watch for Him, to reward them with life and rulership in His Kingdom. This is why Jesus came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom — to give hope of a glorious eternity to the humble and repentant. How great will be the Kingdom! It is something we do not want to miss. □

If I Were in Your Shoes (continued from page 13)

to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:5-8). In His passion to provide a means of salvation, Jesus looked to the interests of others — first to His Fathers' will and then to our need, our desperate sinfulness. His obedience answered them both.

Now, let's try to this lesson within our world. Everyone take off your shoes and pass them to the left (just kidding!). But think of it — what if we did? What would we discover if we held our family's or church members' or co-workers' shoes in our hands and, with servants' hearts, we examined the details of their lives?

Let's start at the place where our lives focus: our homes. Instead of tripping over someone's shoes left on the stairs, why not carry them to their bedroom and, while you hold their shoes in your hand, think about

where your loved one walks in those shoes. What are the pressures they face there? What support or encouragement can you give them there? This works equally well for husbands, teenagers, wives, and children.

How about at church or in the community? With whom do you regularly interact? How can you model Christ's humility as you serve them? A kind word or gesture? A sacrificial service or time, money, or effort? Perhaps just a thoughtful consideration in a decision or action will transform the way to see them.

At work, who sits to your right, or to your left? How can you better serve them in their job function? How can you best communicate to them their value and your appreciation of the contribution they make to your life; your department, and your workplace? Why not target someone in your division with whom you rarely work, someone whose desk you pass daily, or someone who always has a smile for you

(or perhaps someone who doesn't). "Examine their shoes," so to speak, and in so doing, you can't help but also examine your own attitude.

Just to warn you though, rarely will your service feel like "a fit." At first, it will feel quite unnatural (since we naturally only consider ourselves and our needs). But keep at it; some attitudes just need to be "broken in." And if it is your honor to receive service and appreciation, do so with the same attitude.

Christian fellowship and unity mean more than just cooperating in conflict. In greater measure, they mean being "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Phil. 2:2), and that means cooperating with God at work in our lives and through our lives in finding proactive, positive ways to serve each other.

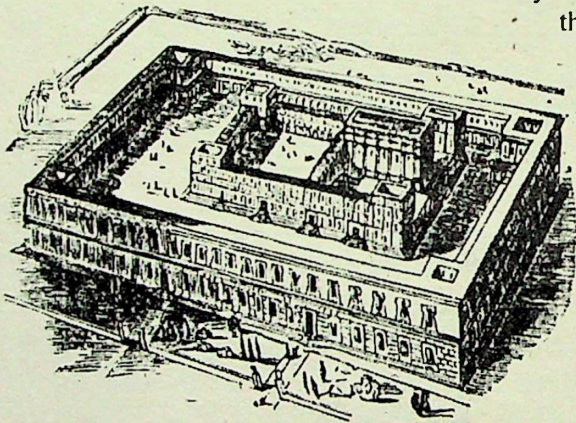
So, take a look at your neighbor shoes today. Remember, it's not about fashion. Rather, it's a choice of attitude. □

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Will You Leave Me Too?

BY PASTOR DON WARD—RAYMORE, MO

Many of the crowd became offended in Jesus and left following Him. He asked His disciples, "Do you want to leave me too?" But they said, "to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:67-68).
Not much of an option.



I don't know if Jesus had the best youth program or the best choir. He did speak in a beautiful building, the temple. But the disciples felt there was one rather important thing going for Jesus. He had the words of eternal life. He spoke the truth.

However, speaking the truth is not always the best drawing card. Paul cautioned that a time could come when people would not be that interested in biblical truth. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound (healthy, wholesome) doctrine. Instead, to suit

their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

Even then Paul once asked the Galatians, "Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?" Galatians 4:16.

Christian faith can be very challenging. It holds out the real hope of eternal life and resurrection from the dead. It's not just a feel-good religion although feeling good is part of its many benefits.

Testing is bound to come. How easily can we be offended in Jesus, in the words of eternal life? □

Taken from the bulletin of Countryside Bible Church, Peculiar, Missouri.

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The Restitution Herald

Volume 88, Number 6

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**Send more workers into the fields,
for they are white unto harvest.**



Take Care, and God Bless

I greatly appreciated the week I spent at the General Conference of the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith. What an excellent week of spiritual refreshment and encouragement. I came away from the conference feeling very positive about the future of the Church of God. Of course, Jesus Himself taught us that the Church will be victorious . . . "On this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). That gives us great reason to be optimistic. Not that we are so great in and of ourselves, but that our Lord is great and He is faithful.

I was overjoyed to hear testimonies of what God is doing in our midst. Brother Dale Ramsey from Virginia shared with us the benefits of fasting, not only physical, but also spiritual. Dale will be writing about his experiences in an upcoming *RESTITUTION HERALD*, so keep a look out. Brother Anthony Buzzard shared some wonderful testimonies of what the Radio Ministry "Focus on the Kingdom" is doing. One of his listeners was so inspired by the truth of God's word that they made a contribution of \$650,000 to that ministry. To me, this is proof that if we are faithful to God in proclaiming His word, He will provide the resources, at the proper time, to carry out His message "unto the uttermost parts of the earth." We need to greatly expand the vision of our local churches and conferences, let us not be limited by what we can see, but let us see through the eyes of faith.

In addition to Brother Dale Ramsey, I noticed several other brothers in ministry who were looking very fit and healthy. Several ministers have disciplined themselves and their eating habits and have made

themselves better able physically to do the work of the Lord. I think it's important for all of us in the church to take seriously our obligation to properly care for our bodies, which are the temple of God.

Recently, the following came to me via the pastors' e-mail list. It provides some excellent advice to all Christian workers on how to care for themselves in order to keep them better equipped to do the work of ministry. These are applicable if you are a pastor, Sunday School teacher, deacon, elder, administrator, missionary, evangelist or any other servant of Jesus. (If you aren't currently serving Jesus in some way . . . get busy!)

"Take Care of Yourself!" by David Ehline,
Director of Partners in Caring

- * Spend 30-60 minutes a day attending to your spiritual well-being.
- * Don't take yourself too seriously.
- * Take more time off for yourself and family.
- * Laugh and smile a lot.
- * Spend 30-60 minutes a day attending to your physical well-being.
- * Live life so that others will have no doubt that you believe what you preach and teach.
- * Talk to a spiritual guide/friend regularly.
- * Give lots of encouragement to every pastor and church worker with whom you come in contact.
- * Take a day each month or each quarter to go on a retreat of silence and solitude.
- * Be a part of a pastor/church worker spiritual support group.

- * Don't sweat the small stuff.
- * Don't criticize other pastors/church workers.
- * Limit meetings to a maximum of 90 minutes.
- * Go to all your kids' ball games, plays and concerts.
- * Don't beat yourself up for more than five minutes after you've messed up.
- * Accept God's grace and forgiveness, and start over again.
- * Confess your specific sins rather than your general sinful nature.
- * Don't blame yourself when members don't come to church, or they go to another church.
- * Rejoice in people's resistance.
- * Invite a guest preacher to your church, at least quarterly, on Sundays when you're *not* away.
- * Love God, love others, love yourself!

This issue of *THE RESTITUTION HERALD* is dedicated to helping you be encouraged and to grow physically and spiritually in the Lord.

May God continue to bless the Church of God.

Grace and Peace,

Jeffrey Fletcher

The Restitution Herald

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17, PSA 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21)
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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The Day of Judgment: Matthew 12:36

BY JAMES MATTISON — PELZER, SC

When Jesus was here the first time, He said, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). But when He comes the second time, He will judge the world (2 Tim. 4:1).

The Judgment Day

Jesus spoke of "the day of judgment" (Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24). Peter said that this second "heavens and earth which are now" is "reserved for fire against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (1 Peter 3:7). Paul said, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). Isaiah mentioned this long before, that the time was coming when (God) will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity (Isa. 13:9-13).

The Word of God is the criterion on which God's judgment is based (John 12:48). If we respond in faith and obedience, we will be saved. If we follow evil, we will be destroyed.

Christ the Judge

Although the Lord God Almighty, Jehovah, is behind the judgment, He has appointed His Son, Jesus Christ, to be Judge of the earth. "The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). This is emphasized in Acts 10:42 and 17:31. Peter brought this out to Cornelius and Paul taught this at Mars Hill.

In Revelation 20:12 in the King James Version of the Bible, it sounds like the dead, small and great, stand before God to be judged. God is the One in charge of the judgment, but Jesus will be the One on the

judgment throne. Jesus explained the purpose for this in John 5:23: "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."

Three Parts to Judgment

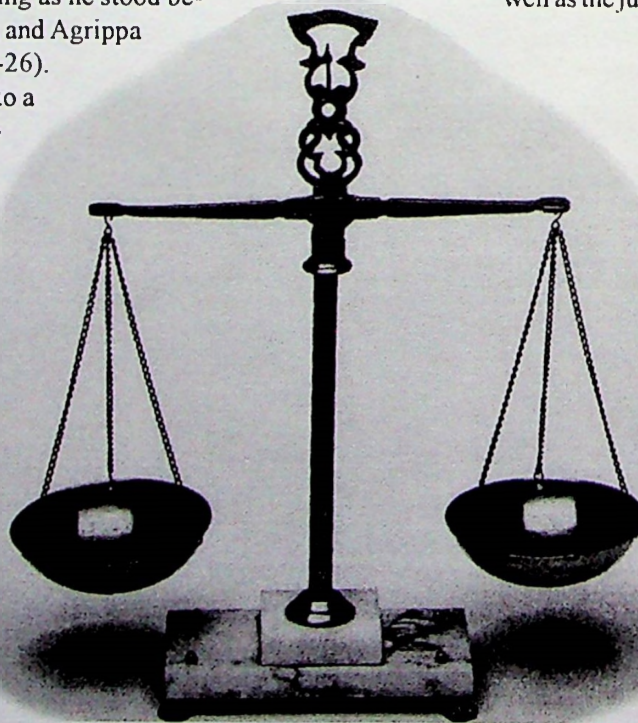
Judgment is composed of three parts for both the redeemed and the guilty. First is the presenting of and examining of the

The Word of God is the
criterion on which God's
judgment is based

Evidence. Here we see the accusation and any defense. Paul is a good example of this accusing and examining as he stood before Felix and Festus, and Agrippa and Bernice (Acts 24-26).

Second is coming to a Decision. Is he innocent or guilty? For the Christian, God's decision is made when one is truly converted to Christ and the Gospel of the Kingdom and becomes obedient to God's way of life for us. Jesus plainly taught this: "He who hears my word, and believes in

him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24). At true conversion, the Christian does not actually receive eternal life then, only the promise of it (1 John 2:25). Yet he, at that time, has passed from a condemned state to a pardoned state. He will not be cast into the lake of fire in the future, if he remains faithful. Concerning those who continue to do evil, we see their evidence is examined in front of them at the great white throne judgment by what is written in the books, although back in their lifetimes their own lives showed they chose the evil way, and were, therefore, condemned to die in the lake of fire (John 3:18; Matt. 7:13, 14; Rev 20:15). So their judgment, as well as the judgment



of the righteous, is sealed at death. When we die, God knows whether we will have eternal life or eternal death. We have presented Him with that evidence by the way we live this mortal life.

Part Three: the carrying out of the sentence, giving of Eternal Life, or Eternal Death. Jude called this "executing" the judgment (Jude 15). This is the time Jesus will give Eternal Life to His own — at His coming and the resurrection and the change (2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-54). This will be at the beginning of the millennium. It is at the end of this time span that the wicked will be cast in to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

Two Resurrections

There will be two resurrections for this purpose. There is a "first" resurrection, and there is another (Rev. 20:6, 5, 12). The First Resurrection is one to Eternal Salvation in the Kingdom of God. Jesus called it "the resurrection of life" (John 5:29). There will be, therefore, a resurrection to life, and a resurrection to judgment, as Jesus said, and they will be separated by a time span called "a thousand years" in Revelation 20. During that time Christ and His saints will be kings and priests, ruling over the earth, subduing all enemies, teaching the remnants of the nations left after Armageddon, the Word of God (Isa. 2:2-4; Zech. 14:16) establishing the righteous and peaceful Kingdom of God over the whole earth.

Saints Judged Now

All people are being judged now with the first and second parts of judgment. Our lives are giving the evidence and God is setting the sentence: either Life or Death. If this second part — the decision — is not being made today, how could one rise IMMORTAL when Jesus comes? When one believes the Gospel of the Kingdom of

God and the things concerning Christ, repents, is baptized, and lives the holy life, he is already judged as worthy of eternal life. That's why he comes back to life in the first resurrection.

Peter said it this way: "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:7).

Paul put it like this: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after (1 Tim. 5:24).

*The time is come that
judgment must begin at
the house of God.*

.....
If our sins are confessed to God now (beforehand), they are dealt with now. We are forgiven. But if our sins wait to be confessed at the great white throne judgment, it will be too late then for us to be saved.

Saints Not to Judge Now, but Later

Jesus plainly told us to "judge not" (Matt. 7:1), or, condemn not, anyone now. This is the day when salvation is being offered (2 Cor. 6:2). Jesus came not to condemn. We should not, either.

The time is coming when "the saints shall judge the world" (1 Cor. 6:2). Psalm 149:5-9 foretold this day, when "the saints" will execute upon them (the wicked) the judgment written: this honor have all his saints." Other passages on this are Rev-

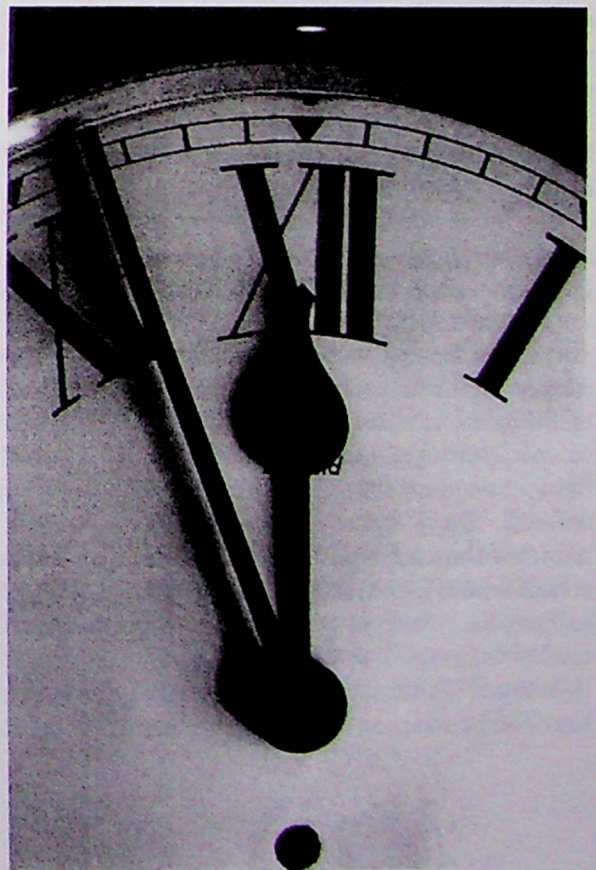
elation 2:26-27; Jude 14-15, and Malachi 4:3.

We are to Judge Ourselves

Our work today is not to condemn the other person for his sins, but to look at our own. Paul gave us a great truth when he said, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged: (1 Cor. 11:31). He said also, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

We judge ourselves by God's Word, by what He has said. If we believe His gospel and are obedient to it, we are found faithful. If we do not believe it and do not live by it, we are found wanting. May this not be our lot. Paul told the Jews at Perga that seeing they refused to hear the gospel, they judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life (Acts 13:46).

Do you want to live forever in a perfect Kingdom? I do. We must make every effort to know and do the will of God, and we can do it, with the help of Jesus our Lord. □



Don't Despise Your Birthright

BY THE EDITOR

This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them. The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling

his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright (Gen. 25:19-34, NIV).

"He was brought up in the monarchical tradition and hedged about with the divinity that surrounded it. He was worshipped at home and overseas throughout his youth on a scale now unbelievable. He could do as he wished, and was built up as a demi-god even among the deprived as someone who was concerned about them who asked only for their devotion."

*"He could do as he wished,
and was built up
as a demi-god
even among the deprived"*

Who is this describing? King Edward VIII. Edward ascended to the throne as King of England, head of the richest family in the world, in January, 1936 following the death of his father. However, Edward was in love with a young American woman who had been previously married and divorced twice. The Church of England did not look highly upon monarchs marrying divorcees and the people of England did not approve of their king pursuing marriage to a common woman with no nobility or titles. So Edward had a decision to make. He could end his relationship with Wallis Simpson and continue on as king, and be,

perhaps, one of the most popular kings in the history of England; he could push the matter and perhaps create a constitutional crisis that might have risked the future of the British monarchy; or he could marry Wallis Simpson and abdicate his throne. By doing that he would be choosing to lay aside his right as the oldest son of the king to all of the land, wealth and power that went with being the King of England.

Edward VIII, Queen Elizabeth the Second's uncle, chose to abdicate his throne. He stepped down as king, gave up his title, his birthright, in exchange for Wallis Simpson.

This is certainly not the last time something like this has happened. For, as all of us in America know, our own head of state, President Clinton, was impeached over the lies and deceit surrounding his affair with a White House intern. Clinton risked losing the most powerful office in the world over an illicit office romance with a woman half his age.

No, King George's abdication was not the last time someone gave away or risked giving away something of incredible value, in exchange for something of lesser, more short-term value, and it certainly wasn't the first time, either.

Genesis 25 tells the story of Esau, another great son of promise, another son with an incredible birthright, who valued what he had so little that he was willing to give it away in exchange for a hot meal.

God gave us His word to instruct and warn us. We need to listen, and listen carefully, to the tragic tale of Esau, for in it we find a dire warning to Christians

today. There are many children of God today who risk their birthright in exchange for something of far lesser value. Esau and Jacob were the brothers of promise. God had entered into a covenant with Abram in which He promised him land, many offspring, and that he would be a blessing to all the earth. (Gen. 13:14-17). The covenant was continued through his son Isaac. Abraham earnestly prayed and sought God's will in providing a wife for Isaac. God provided Rebekah as a suitable wife. Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac; it was his birthright (see Gen. 25:5).

Isaac and Rebekah eagerly sought children of their own, to continue the covenant. Rebekah was unable to have children. They prayed earnestly to God (25:21). God answered their prayers and they were blessed with twins.

Even in the womb the boys jostled for supremacy as to who would be the first-born, "who would have the birthright?" Just exactly what was the significance of the birthright? According to Deuteronomy 21:17, "the firstborn [receives] a double share of all the father has. That son is the first sign of [the father's] strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him." The first-born son receives a double share in the family corporation; the firstborn has controlling interest in the company, he becomes the C.E.O. Think about this: What if Bill Gates (founder of Microsoft and the richest man in the world) had two sons and he retired, or died and left Microsoft to his sons? Let's say Gates owned 99 billion in stock. Ninety-nine divided by 3 is 33 billion (not factoring in inheritance tax). Son "A" would inherit 2 shares, or 66 billion. Son "B" would inherit 1 share, or 33 billion. Son "A" would become the controlling partner; he would run the family business.

Now, think about this: If you were destined to inherit two thirds of Microsoft, what would you trade it for? The presi-

dency of the United States? Would you choose power over money?

What about a hot bowl of soup? Would you trade 66 billion for a bowl of soup? Think about it: you're really, really, really hungry—in fact, you're starving—would you do it?

I think most people's initial response would be "no way!!"

Esau Sells His Birthright

The twins in Rebekah's womb were born. The first baby comes out looking rosy and red, so they call him Esau. The second one comes out grabbing onto his older twin's heels, so they call him Jacob, which means "usurper."

Jacob came out second, but he always wanted to be first. Esau was his father's son and he learned to do manly stuff like hunting and fishing. He was a rugged outdoorsman. He was the oldest, so it was his right to take over the family business when his daddy died (or retired). Jacob was more of a Momma's boy. He stayed at home, learning more domestic stuff. (Kind of your typical odd couple — Felix and Oscar.)

Esau went out on a hunting trip, and came home starving. Jacob had been cooking up a nice pot of lentil soup. But Jacob was cooking up more than just soup; he was cooking up a plan to do a hostile takeover of the company.

Esau was so hungry, so focused on satisfying his short-term wants, that he sold out his birthright, his right to inherit the majority of the family's lands, flocks, herds, servants, everything — for a bowl of soup. More than that he demonstrated his utter disregard for his place as the heir of Abraham's covenant.

It wasn't just the stuff Esau gave away, he gave away his status as the primary heir to the covenant. He demonstrated his contempt for the valuable gift that Abraham had left his home and come to the land God

showed him — the valuable gift that Abraham had died believing in, the valuable gift that Isaac sought to preserve by praying for God's best choice as a mate, the valuable gift for which Isaac had prayed earnestly for a son to pass it on to. And now, that son, that heir to the covenant, traded his future inheritance, untold blessings for his children and children's children — he cared so little for it, that he traded it all for a bowl of soup. AND SO, ESAU DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

Applying This Lesson to our Lives

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3).

Peter writes: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23).

According to Jesus' parable of the sower, the seed by which we are born again is "the word of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:19). It is the Gospel, the good news of the Kingdom of God and Jesus the Messiah, God's son, who died on the cross, was raised from the dead and is coming again to earth to establish the government of God over all the earth.

If we hear that message, believe that message, turn from our sins to God and are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, then we have been born again by that imperishable seed.

Having been born again through faith and baptism into Jesus Christ we now become children of God, heirs to the promises of Abraham (read Galatians 3:26-29).

Do you know what that means?

If you are a Christian, if you've been born again through the Gospel, if you've become an heir to the promise of Abraham, you are now a child of God. And if God is to be King you are an heir to the Kingdom.

"Abraham and his offspring were promised that he would be heir of the world"

(Rom. 4:13). "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). "For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures in the field are mine" (Ps. 50:10, 11). "The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord" (Hag. 2:8). God owns everything; it all belongs to Him. In Psalm 2:8 God says to His Messiah: "Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession."

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul writes: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints."

What I am trying to tell you is that if you are a baptized believer in Jesus Christ, you are a child of God, you've been reborn, you have a birthright. Your birthright is greater than that of Edward the VIII. He was only destined to inherit rulership over the British Empire, but you are going to inherit the earth.

Your birthright is greater than that of any descendants of Bill Gates. They would only be destined to inherit a few hundred billion dollars worth of Microsoft stock, but God, your father, owns EVERYTHING and He's going to give it to you and to me. For we are now His children.

King Edward VIII gave away his birthright to be the King of England, for a woman of questionable character, to satisfy his short-term goals. Today, it sounds romantic and maybe it seemed romantic to him in 1936 when he abdicated his throne, but I wonder if it seemed so romantic in 1972 when he died, childless, having traded away his and his family's birthright. Was it worth it?

Esau gave away his birthright in exchange for a bowl of soup. And the kicker is, a few hours later he was hungry again,

but the birthright was gone forever. Was it worth it?

In the medieval story of Faust, he sells his soul to Mephistopheles (who was really the devil) in exchange for the love of Helen of Troy, who was supposed to have been the most beautiful woman in the world. Was it worth it?

Jesus asked the question: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his own soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

Sometimes Christians, born again believers, people who have trusted Jesus

*"I'm too busy to pray,
I'm too busy to read and
meditate on God's word"*

Christ and have been baptized, people who are children of God and destined to inherit the earth, trade away their birthrights for short-term gains.

Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

Jesus said in the parable of the sower: "As for the seed that was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing."

The cares of the world: "I'm too busy to pray, I'm too busy to read and meditate on God's word, I'm too busy to come to church, I'm too busy to serve, there's too much going on in my life," or "I just don't

feel like doing it," or "church is boring," or "it's just too hard to try living a Christian life, I give up."

If your job gets in the way of your commitment to God, then you've despised your birthright. If a desire to live a certain lifestyle gets in the way of your commitment to God, then you've despised your birthright.

If your love for sensual pleasure, or entertainment, or fame, or riches and worldly success, or peace and quiet, or anything else in all the world gets in the way of your commitment to God, then you've despised your birthright.

Brothers and sisters, I appeal to you, I beg you, I urge you. Don't be like Esau, who despised his birthright. Don't be so shortsighted that you trade your future joys and blessings for short-term satisfaction.

Don't trade the glories of the Kingdom of God for the pleasures of sin for a short season.

When Satan said to Jesus, "I will give you all the kingdoms of the world NOW if you will bow down and worship me," Jesus said, "Get lost, Devil." Jesus chose to go to the cross and trust God to raise Him up, rather than grab the short-term easy gains that the "god of this age" offers.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb. 12:2-3).

You wouldn't trade 66 billion in Microsoft stock for a baloney sandwich.

You wouldn't trade your birthright for a bowl of lentil soup unless you considered it worthless.

Don't trade your inheritance with God for ANYTHING. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness." □

Thou Shalt Love

BY DAVID W. DYER — LEOMINSTER, MA

Love bespeaks commitment. If we say that we love someone but are unwilling to make any kind of commitment to them, what we say is false. What we actually mean when we say that we love someone without this commitment is merely that we desire them, that they appeal to us or that we want something from them. Love on the other hand — true love — involves a total commitment to another person.

This fact is well illustrated for us by the institution of marriage. In God's sight a marriage between a man and woman involves the making of a binding covenant (Mal. 2:14). Without this covenant, intimate relationships between men and women are forbidden and are considered to be sin. The only difference between fornication and the marriage act is that marriage includes a life commitment. It is God's plan that before two individuals take so much from each other and share themselves with each other intimately, they must make a commitment — a deep, lifelong, bottom-of-the-heart commitment — to one another. This means that they agree to love one another, to stick with one another through thick and thin and to serve one another in all situations. The marriage covenant is meant to be completely binding as long as both parties live. Without such a commitment what we have is not real love at all but simply selfish desire.

So we have clearly elucidated for us here the fact that when God through His holy word speaks to us about the subject of

love, He is not simply speaking about warm, cozy feelings but about something which involves a commitment on our part to someone. Covenant is the underpinning of true love.

COMMANDMENT NUMBER ONE

With this understanding we will now examine a well-known verse. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind, and all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). Here we find God's

If we are to fulfill this directive, it will not be enough for us just to have warm feelings towards God.

clear commandment. As we have been seeing, if we are to fulfill this directive, it will not be enough for us just to have warm feelings towards God. It will not be sufficient merely to have a desire for Him, to appreciate things about Him, or even to enjoy His presence occasionally. What God is demanding of us here is a total, unreserved commitment of all that we are, everything we have and all the energy we possess, to Himself. This verse speaks of a complete commitment to God. It means that we are going to love Him, serve Him, obey Him and in general do everything we

can to please Him. It also means that we realize that this is a binding, lifelong commitment.

Now the conclusion of all the foregoing statements is this: If you do not have such a commitment of your entire life to God, if your relationship with Him is simply based upon feelings, if you are a part-time Christian and you only do God's will when the mood strikes you, then you are living in sin! Your life is not pleasing to God. Furthermore, you are in desperate need of a thorough, heartfelt repentance.

This evil condition of the heart can be exposed by a simple test. What are your other commitments which take precedence over your allegiance to God? Does your job take priority? How about your family, friends, recreational activities, hobbies or simply your own pleasure? When your commitment to other pursuits exceeds your covenant to God, you are living in spiritual adultery. You are sinning against God. If you drop Him to pursue other things you are in the same situation as an unfaithful wife who cheats on her husband. When your commitment to God falls short of the biblical standard of "ALL" then you are living in sin and are in need of repentance.

Stop for a moment and analyze your life. Be completely honest with yourself. What other things infringe upon your duty towards God? What is it that keeps you away from so many church meetings? Why don't you spend more time in Bible reading and prayer? Why is it that the needs of those around you go unnoticed? Why does

the salvation of the unbelieving world command so little of your attention? The answer no doubt lies in the fact that you, either consciously or unconsciously, have commitments to other things which are taking first place in your life. If you are in this situation, you are a sinner in need of repentance.

God's admonition to love Him with all of our being is not simply a helpful suggestion. He did not speak this to us with the intention that we could take it or leave it. When God uttered these words, He was issuing a serious, unalterable commandment. Therefore if we ignore it we will suffer the consequences. While God is tremendously long-suffering and will never break His covenant of love with us, He is also extremely jealous (Ex. 34:14). Very often He will allow us to have trouble with the very things which we love more than Him. Family problems, financial pressures and many other such items just might be the hand of God upon your life. As long as you refuse to let go of your self-love in these areas and put God first, you will no doubt continue to have difficulties. It would not be loving of God to let you continue going your own way.

If all this makes you uncomfortable it is probably because it is striking close to home. How we, God's people, need to be told the truth! This is His commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" with every fiber of your being (Deut. 6:5). We are to put Him absolutely first in everything. He is to be first in our desires, first in our minds, first in every aspect of our lives. If we are to be Christians having any kind of credible walk with the Lord, this instruction must be thoroughly obeyed. There is no provision made in the Scriptures for any other kind of believer. All of us are to hear this commandment and practice it.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

As you probably already realize, the second commandment is similar to the first. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:31). In this matter also, if we are to be real Christians, we have no option but to obey. This commandment too involves a commitment — not a partial concern or passing interest — but a total, unreserved commitment of ourselves to our neighbor.

This verse, although it certainly does apply to everyone, has a very special application in our relationship with other Christians. If we are to be right with God we must have a heartfelt, complete, lifelong commitment to other men and women who are believers in Jesus Christ. We are members of the same body. We have all been bought with the same precious blood. We have been brought by God into a relationship with others which we are commanded to cultivate. Every part of a human body has an integral life commitment and life relationship with the others. Without this the body could not function properly. The same is true of the body of Christ on the earth today. We are instructed to have a commitment to other Christians in which we have determined that we will serve them unconditionally.

If we have this genuine love for the other members of Christ's body, our relationship with them will be as follows: We will seek their good above our own (both financially and spiritually), we will spend time praying for their needs, we will diligently search for ways in which we can help them (both practically and spiritually), we will spend time with them (this means seeing them more than once or twice a week in church meetings), we will make every attempt to encourage them and look for opportunities to build them up — in short we will cultivate a body relationship with them which will allow God the oppor-

tunity to minister to them through us. Additionally this implies that we will say nothing — absolutely nothing — about them which would cause anyone else to think less of them or in any way diminish their love for them.

As it is with the first commandment, so it is with the second. If you do not have this kind of commitment to other members of the body of Christ, you are living in sin. You have missed God's purposes and you are disobeying the word of God. If you find that there are other things in your life that crowd out this commitment to one another, this is living proof that your Christianity is not what it should be. If your commitment to other things (again jobs, entertainment, family, friends, etc. all could be suspect) is greater than your commitment to other believers, then your love relationships are wrong. You are loving yourself more than your neighbor.

Each one of us must come to grips with these considerations and allow God to effect a thorough repentance in our hearts so that we can get our priorities straight according to the Scriptures. Our love for God and then our love for one another should be first and foremost in our lives. If it is not, then we are living in sin and we desperately need repentance. Nothing could be as plain and simple. When we break God's commandments, we are sinning and sin requires repentance. Our response to this should not just be tears and feelings of remorse but a determination to seek God until our lives are changed and we are conformed to His will.

What we are talking about here is a love for other people — a commitment to others — that is going to change your life. It is going to alter your priorities. It is going to necessitate putting others first and "self" last. It is going to put demands upon your time and energies that will interfere with your own plans and pleasures. It is going to

make you uncomfortable. It is probably going to seem both scary and confining. However, these difficulties will only last until you realize through experience that God's blessing is upon this way. You are going to find God while you serve others — as you gird on the towel and minister to their needs — in a way that you have never experienced Him before. You are going to discover what the word "blessing" really means.

A PROPER CHURCH EXPERIENCE

Such love is the substance of the true church. It is an essential ingredient. Without it, genuine "church" ceases to exist. It is all too possible to have a religious organization which is full of "good" Christians, wonderful programs and crowded meetings — something which everyone would call a "church" — that is almost completely devoid of the real thing. How commonly believers relate to each other only superficially and sporadically. As we have been seeing, when a body is functioning normally, its members are intimately associated with each other. If this commitment breaks down, the life drains away. This same rule also applies to the church. To the extent that believers have a life covenant with one another, they actually express the body of Christ. Conversely, to the degree that Christians fail in this area, they cease to be the church in any practical way. While it is true that all God's children are part of the Church, if our experience of that fact is missing, we are living in spiritual poverty. What a tragedy it is that so much of what passes for Christianity has strayed so far from God's priorities!

The true expression of Christ's church which we have been describing is the only proper environment for spiritual growth. While believers can and should grow individually, it is when all the members of the body are functioning in a love relationship with each other that the most spiritual progress can be made. In this situation all

the needs of everyone, especially new converts, can be met satisfactorily. Just as a family which is full of love is the best place to raise a child, so the church which practices commitment to one another is the ideal environment in which believers can grow to maturity. Imagine for a moment the effect this sort of thing would have upon your walk with the Lord and also upon those with whom you are acquainted. It could not take long before real progress became evident.

This is not a "pie-in-the-sky" suggestion. It is God's revealed intention for His church to function in precisely this way! These things are stated plainly throughout the whole New Testament. If our experience is anything less than this, we should fall on our faces before God and plead with Him to change us and those around us so that we can fulfill His will. There is no doubt that this is God's plan. There can be no mistaking the fact that this is exactly what Christ desires. How then can we proceed on without experiencing it? How can we continue to claim to be real Christians, imagine that we have an intimate relationship with the Lord or suppose that we are having any meaningful church experience while breaking this commandment? The answer must be that we cannot.

I am not suggesting that we can practically enjoy this kind of relationship with every other Christian in the world. However there should be some, those whom God has pointed out to you, with whom and to whom He wants you to have a total commitment. Just as bricks in the wall of a building are most intimately associated with the ones immediately around them, so it is in the Christian life. Our commitment to a few should be complete and experienced practically. Our commitment to those whose lives are more distant from ours will of necessity be somewhat less experiential. Nevertheless, it should still exist and should manifest itself whenever the opportunity arises. This fact is clearly

demonstrated by the New Testament's teaching on showing hospitality to strangers (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2).

OTHER COMMITMENTS

Please notice here that I am not speaking about commitment to a church, religious organization or group. The Bible nowhere teaches this sort of commitment. In fact, it protests against it (1 Cor. 1:12,13). I am also not speaking here about commitment to leaders, to those "over you," or to some kind of hierarchical arrangement which some Christians advocate. Neither am I urging a slavish allegiance to some doctrinal position. Such commitments, either to organizations, leaders or teachings are powerless to produce the result that God desires. It is all too easy for Christians to be "good church members," to be loyal to some ministry or to be faithful to a particular revelation and still possess very little of this kind of love. A cursory examination of the situation in present-day Christendom should serve to graphically illustrate this point.

The great danger of these other commitments is that they are often substituted for the true love covenant about which we have been speaking. An example of this occurs when people think that because they have made a commitment to a certain church group, perhaps by "joining" or signing a membership agreement, that this is the extent of their obligation. In reality, their responsibility to God and to other believers is not even touched by this kind of activity. The commitment which we are discussing here is much, much deeper than this. The results which can be achieved with "group," leadership or doctrinal commitments and the "unity" which is brought about in this way is unfortunately outward and artificial. While these involve a devotion to "things," God's way is commitment to people. Only that which results from a total love covenant one with another is either real or scriptural. Furthermore, it is

only this kind of commitment that God commands.

A further difficulty which these extrabiblical commitments raises is that of divisiveness. This sin occurs when people's love for each other is affected by their group allegiances. How common this problem is today, yet nothing could be more destructive and contrary to real love. Understandably, the Scriptures soundly condemn such activity (1 Cor. 3:3ff). When we are in a proper covenant relationship with other people, the fulfillment of secondary responsibilities related to particular meetings, ministries or scriptural truths will follow in due course. These things should be taken care of quite naturally when our primary love relationships with God and others are in order. I believe the desperate need of the hour is to bring God's people into a realization of what the Bible says their commitment really ought to be. All other things, including commitments to church meetings, leaders or doctrines, must be secondary or we sin.

THE CHURCH REVOLUTIONIZED

Truly this is the great lack in the Christian Church today — brotherly love. If all believers had this deep commitment to one another, a love which involves a life covenant to serve all other Christians, regardless of their opinions, backgrounds or creeds, present-day Christianity would be revolutionized. Many people today speak about unity among the churches in the body of Jesus Christ. But with such efforts the big question always is: How is such a thing going to come about? Should we just shake hands over our doctrinal fences? Should we produce some kind of worldwide organization in which we can exhibit an appearance of oneness while still maintaining our separations? Or should we get off in still another corner, rally around still another doctrinal position which will "guarantee" unity and insist that all others come and

join us? I think not. I believe the only hope we have for real unity is brotherly love. The only chance believers have to arrive at the place where God manifestly wants us to be, is to have a thorough repentance concerning these things and to begin to "love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22).

A TESTIMONY TO UNBELIEVERS

Not only would love revolutionize the church, but it would also have a tremendous impact on unbelievers. The testimony of Christianity would be sent forth with such power that it would be irresistible. Jesus said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). It is our love that will convince the world. It is the fact that we have been so delivered from self and sin — the things which separate us today — which will persuade unbelievers that Jesus Christ is real. Love is the evidence of true salvation (1 John 3:14).

If our hearts are right with God and with one another we will also love unbelievers. God certainly does. As is clearly seen from the parable of the good Samaritan, the word "neighbor" includes everyone. Jesus instructed us to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). But what gospel do we have to preach if we don't have love? We may have doctrine to teach or a form of religion to propagate. We may be trying to straighten out others' thinking. But unless the love of God is truly "shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom. 5:5), unless it has wrought an eternal change within us which is seeable, we have no real chance to reach the unsaved millions for Christ.

Brothers and sisters, please take heed to this message. This is not an inconsequential consideration. This is not a side issue. This is perhaps the most crucial problem facing the church today! Do we love as He loved? Do we have the kind of

life commitment to Him and to others which the Scriptures so clearly exhort us to have? Are we willing to lay down our lives for each other or for Him — literally (1 John 3:16)? Do we have more than good feelings for, or an appreciation of, other Christians and the world around us? In short, do we really have the love that God has commanded us to have?

If we do not have this sort of love in our Christianity, then what we are doing is hollow, empty and a sham. If this variety of love is lacking, we have only a superficial religion and are involved in obvious hypocrisy. May God have mercy upon us! May He shine His light into us, exposing our hearts concerning these things, so that He could bring us to a thorough, heartrending, ground-clearing repentance that would open the way for the love of God to be perfected in us.

SOME SIMPLE STEPS

Naturally after reading this message many people will ask such questions as: "How can all this come about?" or "Where can we go to find a group which is practicing these things?" The answer is that it must begin with YOU. Don't wait for others to do it first. Don't delay until you find a church or "fellowship" which "has it right." Start where you are and begin to practice these things yourself. While this might sound quite difficult, I believe it can be accomplished by following these simple steps.

Firstly, we must clearly understand that this love is not something which we can find within ourselves. It only comes from God. The Scriptures are clear — "God is love." He has a deep, irreversible love for His people and for all mankind. When we come to Him and open our heart fully, He will fill us with the love that is necessary to fulfill His commands.

Next, it will be necessary to make a decision — a conscious, deliberate, firm

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Faith Healing

BY KENNETH W. COLLINS — Centreville, VA

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, Who touched me?"

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.

When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.

"Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat (Mark 5:21-43, NIV).

(The English-speaking reader loses a distinction that is present in the Greek original of this passage. The writer calls Jesus a rabbi, a Hebrew word that does indeed mean teacher, but was used as an occupational title. There is only one rea-

son why the writer did not use the ordinary Greek word for teacher; he wanted to let us know that Jesus was functioning here as an accredited rabbi.)

When we pray for healing, who must have faith?

If you have been to many healing services, as I have, you will find that some are showy and tasteless (like the ones you see on television) and others are earnest and deeply moving (like the ones you find in local churches). What most of them seem to have in common is the idea that the sick person has to have faith in order to get well. This is especially emphasized by the flamboyant "healers," because it is a ready explanation for any of their failures.

However, in the healing stories of Jesus, as in the two healings presented here, it is the faith of the person asking for healing that matters. In the case of the woman, the person requesting healing and the person being healed were the same person, but in the case of Jairus' daughter, the person being healed was unconscious, unable to have faith or even to know that efforts were being made to heal her.

As James 5:15 says, the prayer of faith will heal the sick. It does not say that prayer will raise the sick who have faith. In the case of Jairus' daughter, it is obvious that the sick person did not have faith, was not a Christian, and did not even know what was going on. It was the faith of Jairus, in requesting healing, that precipitated her healing.

Which of these stories is parallel to a modern faith healing? Clearly not the one of the woman who touched Jesus clothing, because we would be placing the faith

healer in Jesus' role and we would be attributing divine powers to a mortal human! Very few faith healers actually claim to have special powers, only the power to effectually request healing. This places the faith healer in the role of Jairus, who earnestly and in faith requests the healing of another. Of course, the showier faith healers would rather not think about this, because it makes them responsible for their failures. (It follows then that if the healing didn't work, the faith healer is the one with the insufficient faith.)

Jesus has the power to heal the sick, but faith healers only have the power to effectually request His healing. That is to say, in a modern faith-healing context, the faith healer is in the role of Jairus, who asks healing from Jesus, and the sick person is in the role of Jairus' daughter. Therefore, when the sick person approaches the healer for healing, it is the healer, who prays for healing, who must have faith. The only requirement imposed upon the sick person is to be sick.

The one who prays must have faith. Therefore, if your faith is exhausted, ask someone whose faith is strong to pray for you. This is probably why we are told in the New Testament to bear each other's burdens and to pray for each other.

Now another question: if we have faith and pray, but the sick person does not immediately rise up whole and hale, what is

wrong? We've just determined that the sick person has no obligation to have faith; after all, they're sick and they might even be unconscious or clinically dead. We who ask for healing must have faith. Can we therefore conclude that we did not have faith?

Well, that depends. Is God obligated to His creatures to answer all prayers with Yes? Is God no more than a cosmic Coke machine, who must dispense what we want when we put in the proper amount? Or does our God have His own will, His own plan, and His own wisdom, which may transcend

*If your son asks
for a fish, would you
give him a snake?*

ours? Personally, I am more comfortable with the idea that God would override any requests I make, if He deems them not in my best interest. What if I ask for something that will cause me great damage, mistakenly believing, in faith, that I need

it? Would it not attribute great cruelty and maliciousness to God if we supposed that He were obligated by some scriptural contract to give me what I ask for, no matter what?

Jesus said, if your son asks for a fish, would you give him a snake? And I ask, if you ask for a snake, supposing it to be a good thing, do you think God will give it to you? I certainly hope not! What if healing at a later date would do more good? What if prolonging the person's life would place their soul in greater danger? What if the illness, if prolonged, will lead to fruitful introspection and a new spiritual awareness? What if quick healing will go to everybody's heads and thereby have a negative spiritual value?

If there is healing in response to prayer, we know that it was God's will to heal, but if there was no healing in response to prayer, the answer isn't simple.

We have to give God credit for being smarter and wiser than we are, and we must acknowledge that we cannot always immediately apprehend His designs. Instead of grumbling, like so many Hebrews in the wilderness, at the momentary discomfort caused by an apparent glitch, we must sit

and ponder eternal things.

How immature to pound our fist upon the table like so many spoiled children and demand what we ask for and demand it now! If such children have a loving Father, they will be denied many things until they learn maturity.

We must in all things seek His will and submit to it. □

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Faith in Action

BY DALE H. SWARTZ—LITCHFIELD, MN

It is so easy for a preacher to talk about faith and encourage his people to put their trust in God, but it's sometimes a different thing when he *really* puts it into practice in his own life. This was the experience I had in the fall of 1998.

I'd been the pastor of the Brush Creek Church for ten years and my ministry had been going pretty well. I probably had become comfortable in my routine and I felt like I had the world by the tail. But in my eleventh year, I felt uncomfortable. In some areas, conflict began to arise with my ministry. At that point, I began to wonder if maybe I had accomplished everything God wanted me to do in my present location and He now wanted me to move somewhere else.

As I look back on that conflict, I can see that God was at work. He had something different in mind for me, but I was comfortable with life the way it was and was not listening. God had to use this conflict in order to get my attention. It was not easy at the time, but now I am able to see things in a different way. In the same way, Joseph did not understand God's plan when he was sitting at the bottom of the pit and when he was sold into slavery; but years later when he was second in command to Pharaoh in Egypt, he could see how God had been at work to get him where he needed to be. In Genesis 50:20, Joseph said that what his brother had done in evil, God worked for good to save the people of his day.

Now, let me catch you up on what God has been doing in our lives.

I need to back up to a point three years ago. At that time, the church in Litchfield, MN had just lost their pastor (around Janu-

ary 1996), and they called me to consider coming there. I really didn't give it much thought and told them I was not interested. Around October of last year (1998), I began feeling that maybe it was time for me to move. I felt God might have something different in store for me. The Board of Directors had received a letter from Litchfield which was a plea for *anything* we, as a conference, could do to help. The Board prayed over that letter for about 20-30 minutes, asking God to move in that situation and raise up someone to go. About a week after I got home from that Board meeting, the church in Litchfield called me and asked if I'd be interested in coming up there to pastor their church. I looked up and said, "God, I didn't know that the person we were praying for was the one whose face I shave every morning. Anyway, Cheryl and I went up, preached for them, toured the area, prayed about the decision and decided to go. I then announced my resignation from Brush Creek on January 10, 1999. We also decided not to live in the parsonage, but to try and acquire our own home. So when Cheryl began packing, she was packing knowing there was no house yet at the other end.

In March I made the first of several trips to Litchfield in order to do some supply preaching for my new prospective congregation. Going up there also gave me the opportunity to look around for a house that would be suitable for us. On March 6, I went up and spent a whole afternoon with a realtor looking at houses. He showed me quite a few. Some were in the next town west of Litchfield, where he said I could get the same type of home as in Litchfield,

but for close to \$15,000 less. The dollar savings was tempting, but I said, "I really believe I need to live *in* Litchfield because that is where the church building is, that is where many of the people are, and I feel God wants me living in the community where I will be working; so if we can't find anything right now, God will provide the right house at the right time — in His time."

Now let me back up for a moment. Three years earlier, around the time the former pastor left, a man named Carl Gustafson was in very poor health. He had a good friend named Willard Wood. Willard attends the Litchfield Church of God; his daughter is Gaye Wood and his son Mark is the treasurer of the church and a prominent lawyer in town. Since Carl was in poor health, he told his wife, "After I'm gone, if you need anything done to or with the house, you contact Willard and he'll take care of it for you." So after Carl's death, Ruby, Carl's widow, contacted Willard and Willard has been taking care of little things around the house ever since.

This past October, around the time I began thinking it was time to move, Ruby Gustafson became ill, entered the local hospital, and subsequently was transferred to the local nursing home in Litchfield. Willard continued to take care of the house.

We looked at homes on March 6, and then visited again on Palm Sunday. Cheryl and I planned to stay for five days in order to locate some type of a house. The day before Cheryl and I left for Minnesota, Gaye Wood e-mailed me and said, "When you get here, Dad and I have a house you

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need to see — and it's not on the market yet." When we got there we looked at the house and fell in love with it. It was a lot smaller than what we've been used to, but it would be sufficient for the two of us. When we drove into the driveway, Cheryl said, "this looks like home." Since then we have worked toward acquiring the house. We now have acquired financing and the closing was set for Wednesday, July 7 at 10:00 a.m. Therefore, Cheryl and I planned to leave on July 5th and arrive in Litchfield on the evening of July 6th to be ready for the closing.

Now, the rest of the story. Ruby has a son, Charles, who lives in California and who is selling the house for her. To us, he has seemed to drag his feet in taking care of any of the details regarding the house. I mean, even as late as July 1st, everything Ruby owned was still in the house. This was a concern to us because the house was going to need a little work on the inside before we move in and Charles was still in California.

So, on Sunday night, June 27th, I telephoned Charles. I was concerned about all the contents still in the house and wanted to know when he planned to go to Minnesota

and take care of the "stuff." I introduced myself as the prospective buyer of his mother's home and Charles was pleased to hear from me. I told him the date that had been set for the closing and then I asked when he thought he might be going up there to take care of his mother's belongings. Charles told me he had a plane reservation and would be landing in Minneapolis *on the evening of July 6th*. God had planned it so we would both be there at the same time. I then asked him what he thought he might do with the contents of the house. He said that he really didn't know, he would probably have to have a sale or something, but he was not looking forward to it because of the time and distance from California. He said he only wanted a few mementos of his mother's. He would probably just have to get rid of the rest of the stuff. At that, I said, "We've been discussing an idea that maybe you'd like to consider. If you can look over the contents of the house and we can agree on a reasonable dollar value for the stuff, we'll just take everything off your hands, except for those few mementos, and you can walk away from the whole thing." *He loved the idea.*

We then made plans to meet together on Wednesday afternoon.

Back in May, when I made a trip to preach at Litchfield, I stopped in for a visit with Willard Wood. During our conversation he said, "I don't know why Carl ever picked me to take care of the house for Ruby." When he said that, I thought of the biblical story of Esther. When Esther had been made Queen and the Jews were being threatened with annihilation, Esther's uncle, Mordecai, said: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13-14, NAS). I told Willard, "Three years ago when Carl chose you to take care of the house, God knew about this very day when Cheryl and I would be coming to Litchfield and would be needing a house. Carl chose you back then because God was preparing this house for us — for a time such as this." IS GOD GREAT, OR WHAT???

Thou Shalt Love (continued from page 12)

decision — to commit yourself to others. Such love does not often come spontaneously. You will probably not be drawn into these relationships by your feelings. In fact your natural reactions to others will probably keep you from it. Therefore you must resolve from the very beginning not to let anything turn you from this way. Although such a commitment will no doubt have to be renewed again and again and will deepen tremendously over time, it is the only place to begin.

While your commitment can and should apply to everyone, only reciprocated love is deeply satisfying. Therefore, secondly, it will eventually be important to find a few like-minded individuals who are willing to join with you in these things. As you ask Him in prayer, God will lead you to them. No doubt it will take some time to establish intimate relationships with others. It will also involve some sacrifice, patience and possibly tears. Nevertheless, nothing is quite so gratifying as fellowship with

people who live in real unity with each other (Ps. 133:1).

Lastly, once such relationships begin to be established don't keep it to yourself. Start reaching out to others with the love of God and teaching them these truths. This is a message that the world needs to hear! God will undoubtedly bless your efforts and you will begin to bring forth fruit abundantly. □

Do Not Eat the Bread of Idleness

BY SUE BECKER

"I, the Lord, will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you" (Ps. 32:8)

Since reading this verse from Psalm 32 some months ago, I can see that with His eye upon me, God has led me to the truths of His ways through information He has brought into my path. I want to say with no apologies, I do not claim to be a nutritional expert. I am a wife and a mother who has sought to "look well to the ways of her household" (Prov. 31:27). In my seeking I believe God has shown me a more nutritional way of feeding my family. We can read many books by "nutrition experts" but we usually find ourselves more confused than enlightened, as even the experts do not agree and "their eyes" are certainly not upon us.

What a blessing to know that the eye of the One who created us is on us and this very One who created us created the whole universe. This very God caused the earth to bring forth the vegetation He knew would best nourish and benefit our bodies, and He gave to man "every plant yielding seed and every tree with seed in its fruit to have for food" (Gen. 1:29). After the flood of Noah's day, His provision for man included "every moving thing that lives" (Gen. 9:3) as well as the green vegetables and plants. I trust God completely in His provisions to know what foods will best nourish our bodies. Man, however, has altered His provisions first for the sake of convenience and now greed.

Look with me for a moment at the example of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Since they had nothing to eat, God lovingly provided them with manna from

heaven. It was to be gathered daily. Some tried to gather tomorrow's portion today. But God says six days you shall work and one day shall you rest. On every day but the Sabbath, God caused the manna that was gathered for tomorrow to get worms in it. The manna had to be gathered every day before the sun came up. I'm sure if some enterprising Israelite could have discovered a way to keep the manna from spoiling, to allow it to be stored for several days, he would have had a very marketable prod-

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uct, especially to those who were simply too lazy or too busy doing other things to get their food every day. This is exactly what we see if we look more closely at the foods offered in the grocery store today and how they got there.

Prior to the 1900s most flour was milled locally and the bread baked at home. God designed the wheat kernel, as well as other grains, to perfectly store the nutrients within. Once broken open, as in milling, the nutrients immediately begin to oxidize. Within about 72 hours, 90% of over 30 nutrients are virtually gone due to oxidation. Also, since the germ oil causes the flour to turn rancid very quickly, only

enough grain was ground fresh each day to meet the needs of the community. This meant that just about every family was "gathering" their manna daily. However, in the 1920s new technology allowed enterprising millers to separate the wheat components. By removing the germ, germ oil, and the bran, the remaining white flour could be stored indefinitely. This began to eliminate the need for local milling and people began to relinquish their own responsibility of preparing their bread daily.

Lucrative markets were also found for the nutritious "by-products" of this new milling process. The bran and wheat germ were sold as high protein food supplements for cattle. Local mills soon went out of business as the large roller mills produced huge volumes of long-lasting white flour.

This appeared to be a great advance in technology. In just a short time, however, cases of beriberi and pellagra began to drastically increase. Both of these diseases are the result of vitamin B deficiencies and health officials traced the problem to the new white flour. The new milling process strips the B vitamins as well as about 24 other nutrients from the wheat kernels.

Health officials urged mills to return to producing whole wheat flour again but they did not want to lose their very profitable market of selling the germ and bran as cattle feed. Instead, millers chose to "enrich" the white flour by replacing 4 vitamins for the 25-30 nutrients that are removed. This solved the problem of beriberi and pellagra; however, we are now plagued with many diseases that are directly related to our consumption of white

flour (appendicitis, diverticular disease, hiatal hernia, heart disease, diabetes, obesity and more!).

Knowing this information, we were convinced to purchase an in-home grain mill and to begin making all of our own bread from fresh milled grains. The health benefits were immediate. We felt more energetic, constipation was totally relieved for me and our cravings for sugar were greatly reduced. This enabled us to virtually eliminate white sugar from our home; consequently we have seen much less sickness.

Needless to say we became excited about our new-found energy and health as well as the fact that the bread is absolutely delicious! As others became interested in our bread we were encouraged to begin a business to teach others the truths we were learning. Thus The Bread Beckers came to be just prior to the presidential election of 1992. We became distributors of the Magic Mill III Plus and other appliances and accessories that allow healthier eating. We were excited about our new business and the new direction our lives seemed to be taking. We are encouraging God's people to purchase a grain mill and store wheat (if possible) since dry grains are storable and quite nutritious (life-sustaining). Processed foods and flour are neither storable or life-sustaining.

We must prepare, however, as God directs and not be lead by fear. Our hope is in the Lord and not in our strength or our storehouses. We hope that our preparations might be used to feed many during the hard times that may be coming. What began as just a business, by God's grace has become so much more. For us it has become a mission, a ministry, and a calling.

As we have now been literally "thrust into the harvest fields" my heart has been "moved with compassion" much like Jesus' in Matthew 9:35-38 when He saw the multitudes that were sick. We have now met literally "multitudes" of people with all kinds of diseases. These are common dis-

eases, most of which could be avoided with a proper diet, of which bread, "real bread" is the key.

The testimonies of others' improved health began to come to us. Late one afternoon an elated friend called. She had just come from the doctor. Her cholesterol had dropped 85 points in one month! This was significant to her since her last doctor had given her no hope of lowering her



cholesterol. She had been trying for years to no avail. In her own words she said to me, "It's the bread. I know it's the bread. I have not changed any other part of my diet. At every meal I always eat some of your bread no matter what else I have to eat."

This testimony encouraged me to want to know more. Why could this bread, "real bread" be so effective? With a degree in Food Science I have some understanding of biochemistry and microbiology. As I began to study biochemically the nutritional value of "real bread" I was both amazed and in awe of our Almighty God. I have great sorrow for those who study health and nutrition without a knowledge of God our maker, for to do so causes one to worship the created instead of the cre-

ator. I could now see why the sifting of the fiber and nutrients from the flour has directly or indirectly caused many of the common diseases that now plague the western world.

High cholesterol is indeed a common problem. Lecithin is a key nutrient in the metabolism of fats and is found in any unrefined food with oil. Yet the refining process of the food industry destroys the lecithin. Fresh milled wheat contains lecithin as well as B6, inositol, and choline, all essential nutrients for lecithin production.

Grain fiber helps to remove fat from the walls of the colon. Fiber also promotes fresh bile production. Bile is made by the liver out of cholesterol. A high fiber diet causes the liver to not recycle bile. If not recycled, the liver will draw from our stored cholesterol to produce fresh bile salts.

This was all very enlightening to me as I could see that the key nutrients for keeping cholesterol levels in check were in our bread, real bread. Praise be to God for His infinite wisdom. I also discovered much concerning such problems as obesity, diabetes, cancer, appendicitis, and constipation.

Thirty-five percent of cancer is caused by diet. Since our diets can be changed, much of the cancer in this country could be avoided with an improved diet. Fiber keeps our colons thoroughly cleansed, thus eliminating the possibility of infection and toxin build up. Grain fibers are known also to actually leach carcinogens from our systems. Wheat and most grains may absorb up to 20% while grain sorghum has been found to absorb as much as 50%!

Diabetes is another common disease in our country, now affecting many children as well as adults. There are many factors related to the causes of diabetes but diet is certainly critical. As Americans eat their sugar-filled meals and snacks which are devoid of fiber, their blood sugar levels rise rapidly. To keep the blood sugar levels in check the pancreas is stimulated to pro-

duce insulin. Since the blood sugar level has risen so quickly an abundance of insulin is produced bringing the blood sugar level down too low too quickly. To counter balance this problem another hormone, glucagon, is produced to bring the blood sugar levels back up to normal. By this time, however, Americans have had their mid-morning coffee break and doughnut or some other mid-meal sugary snack and blood sugar levels soar again. Insulin is again produced in abundance, bringing blood sugar levels dangerously low, thus stimulating glucagon production again to bring levels back to normal. This war goes on all day everyday with the American diet, much like the war we experience between our flesh and our spirit. Eventually the pancreas wears out and insulin production is stopped, resulting in the common problem of diabetes. Diets rich in fiber absorb sugars, causing them to come into our bloodstream much more slowly. This reduces the problem of the rapid rise and fall in blood sugar levels, thus eliminating the stress put on the pancreas.

Obesity is so common in America that many people visiting our country for the first time are shocked at how fat we are. The foods we eat are so stripped of fiber and nutrients that we are neither filled nor satisfied. Complex carbohydrates, especially unrefined grains, satisfy the appetite long before we overeat because they come with fiber, a low-calorie belly filler. Also, carbohydrates or starches are low in fat and up to a third of the calories are excreted undigested! We must be careful though of man's imitations. There are many diet products out there designed by man claiming to help you lose weight by filling you up. The loss of weight, however, is either only temporary or mostly in the wallet! I have found nothing as effective or economical as God's perfect provision, whole unrefined grain.

I believe all this brings us to a very important question God would have us ask ourselves. Isaiah 55:2 says "why do ye spend money on that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfieth not?" Our willingness to be free of the responsibility of preparing our bread daily has now put the control of what we feed our families into the hands of huge food companies with one goal in mind — MONEY. As we shop for our food we get to choose from what someone with only profit in mind is offering.

What can we do now? "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat,

Who could be idle with children, home schooling, laundry, a husband, and a home business?

but you do not have enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe yourselves, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways" (Haggai 1:5-7). We as women must consider our ways and how we have fared. There are actually many "holes in our bags" where we have lost control. I wish to focus on one that I think is key. I call it the Bread of Idleness.

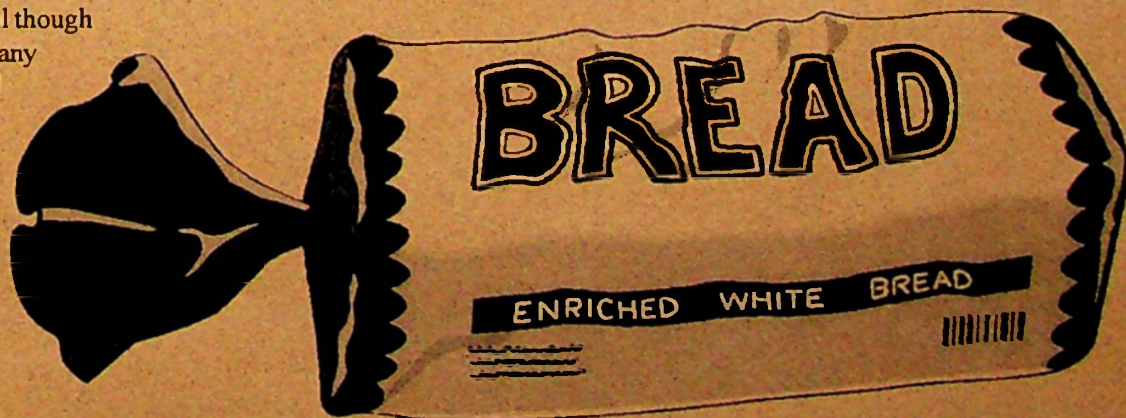
"She looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness" (Prov. 31:27).

Upon first reading that verse I almost laughed. Who could be idle with children, home schooling, laundry, a husband, and a home business? The list could go on and I can honestly say I don't think there is ever an idle moment in our house — or is there? A further study of this verse was truly enlightening and opened my heart to some new truths.

The words "looketh well" come from a Hebrew word meaning "to lean forward," "to peer into the distance" or "to observe, to wait." "Ways" means "a walk, or a step" and "household" means "family" with its roots coming from a word meaning "to build." "To build" called to mind a familiar verse from Proverbs. "Every wise woman buildeth her house but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands" (Prov. 14:1).

This wise woman who builds her house does so by looking ahead to see what lasting effect today's activities may have on her future and the future of her family. As she peers into the distance she is considering the future outcome for her children. She trains them accordingly. She does not worry about tomorrow but certainly plans her steps as she observes and waits on the Lord's direction.

Considering the foolish woman of Proverbs 14 caused me to wonder what makes one foolish. I know that God's word says that foolishness is bound in the heart of a



Do Not Eat the Bread of Idleness *(continued from page 19)*

child. Considering the behavior of my own children shed great light on the answer to this question. Basically children's one desire is for the "pleasure of the moment." All their decisions, actions or reactions, and thoughts are based on obtaining this "pleasure." They cannot really think about "tomorrow" or future consequences. They want what they want and they want it now!

The foolish woman, for the pleasure of the moment, is tearing down her house with her own hands. The wise woman of Proverbs 31 does not eat the bread of idleness but this foolish woman consumes it. The word "idle" means "to lean idle, having no value, use, or significance." The root word "idle" means "to burn or shine" either in the sense of "only apparent" or "burned out." "Bread" is "food, especially grain for making it." Another word for idleness is indolence. Indolence means "disliking or avoiding work."

We cannot afford to be indolent any longer. We must carefully consider the activities in our lives. Are they pleasures of the moment that can masquerade as any worthwhile cause? We must honestly ask

ourselves, do we merely have the appearance of being very busy? Are we "burned out" because much of what we do (or don't do) is for the pleasure of the moment (either mine or someone else's) and has no real value or significance? Can we look at our day's accomplishments and say as God did, "It is good"? Are we tempted to work on the seventh day because we are not satisfied with our week's work?

Can we see that women have relinquished much of the homeward responsibilities and that the milling of grains and baking of bread was left to others because it freed women (and men) up to do other things? These "other things" unfortunately have taken us more and more out of the home. The food products in the stores are there because we want fast and easy. "We just don't have time to cook anymore."

I am here to tell you, however, that the food we eat is the "bread" of our own idleness. For the pleasures of the moment we now have sickness in our land in giant proportions. God has not sent these judgments on us; rather we have brought them

on ourselves by altering His provisions designed to perfectly nourish our bodies. Many of the foods we now eat for convenience are literally making us sick because they are devoid of the fiber and the nutrients that are essential to our health. Yet, vital life-giving whole foods are available. The purchase of our grain mill opened the door to the availability of these whole life-giving foods.

There is a health care crisis in this land, but who is to blame? While doctors, lawyers, insurance companies, and the government have all played their part, the truth of the matter is — WE are to blame. We are a sick and unhealthy people. As we turn to doctors and medicine, weight loss clinics and diets we are often left "bewildered — harassed and distressed and dejected and helpless — like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36, AMP). Our health does not depend, however on doctors and medicine but on how we live our lives!

God has lovingly provided what we need. Are we willing to "gather"? ☐

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