

# The Restitution Herald

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Volume 89, Number 1

October, November • 1999

Are you Y2K ready?

It's time to



Yield  
2  
the King

from the Editor . . .



## What's Happening In Worship?

**I**saiah 6:1-8 is a beautiful passage of scripture. It reminds me of what worship is all about.

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!' Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'"

*Worship is a dialogue between God and His people.*

1. It begins with worship, adoration and praise. The Angels lead a song of worship: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God

of Hosts"—leading Isaiah into His holy, magnificent presence.

2. Having been brought into the presence of almighty God in praise, Isaiah responds with a frank admission of his sinfulness. "Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips." This is his prayer of confession.
3. God answers his prayer of confession, again through His angelic messenger, with a word of forgiveness: "Your guilt is departed, your sin is blotted out." What joy there is to be forgiven of sins and to know that our holy God loves us.
4. Then God speaks a word to Isaiah. What kind of word is it? A call to mission: "Whom shall I send, who will go for us?" There are others who need to hear about God, both His holiness and His mercy and grace. There need to be ambassadors of the gospel.
5. Isaiah responds to the invitation to mission "Here I am, send me." This is how he responds to the call of God to mission. Isaiah has personally experienced the awesome presence of God, he has been confronted by his own sinful condition, and he has acknowledged his sin and been assured that he is forgiven. Having been cleansed of his guilt, he is able to properly hear God speak to him. Then he responds with joyful obedience: "I'll go, father, let me share the good news of your holiness and your mercy."

6. God responds with His commission: Isaiah is ordained by God, commissioned to go forth as His messenger of Good news. He is empowered by having been in God's presence and forgiven of his sins. He is able to go forth in the power and spirit of God to call others into a relationship with God.

This is the movement of worship:

Adoration and Praise — Confession  
& Forgiveness  
Call to Mission — Response  
Commission — Going forth into service

This is a very dynamic flow of call and response. We are in a holy dialogue with God.

All of us who come to worship God can perhaps better understand the dynamics of worship if we bear this in mind. I think this helps me better understand my role as a pastor and worship leader.

I hope this blesses you and helps you in your worship of God. He is truly HOLY, HOLY, HOLY.

May this issue of the Restitution Herald help strengthen your faith as you worship God and serve Him in ministry.

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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# Thanksgiving or Giving Thanks

BY CHARLES BOTTOLFS — HAMMOND, LA

Sometimes it really gets tough to assign religious implications to some holidays. Oh, it's rather simple if one thinks of Easter. But Christmas seems so commercial and we somehow forget its reason for existence. Then something like seeing a nativity scene or hearing the opening strains of Handel's Messiah or looking at a newborn child brings us to the reality of Christ's birth and reminds us of His coming again.

Thanksgiving? Wasn't that invented by the Pilgrims to thank the Indians for all their help during their first year in this new land?

Well, maybe to those who don't research history or study God's word. Yes, even thanksgiving has a tremendous meaning in terms of our relationship with our God and His Son, Jesus Christ. I'm quite sure our Pilgrim fathers were well aware of these implications, thus the first North American Thanksgiving.

In our own minds we see Thanksgiving as one of those four-day weekends, if we are still working. If we are into shopping it's the beginning of the biggest shopping period of the year, getting ready for Christmas. If we are into hunting, it's the beginning days of the prime hunting time.

If you are a pastor or a member of your worship committee, you have been preparing for Advent. These are the greatest moments in the church year. It is when we, like children, let excitement build each week as we watch and wait for the great festival marking Christ's appearance. The pastor

strives to bring us along in the journey to meet Christ in Advent.

If we are children, then Thanksgiving is when we get out of school, eat plenty at Grandma's house, see our long-lost cousins, and generally have a good old time creating stress in our parents' lives in whatever manner we can.

But wait a moment . . . what happened to Thanksgiving, you say. Oh, yes, I was going

*“Give thanks for all that  
God has given you as  
well as remembering  
His mercy . . .  
and worship Him.”*

. . . . .  
to say some wise and wonderful things about Thanksgiving. So, let's get on with it.

Generally we can sum up our thoughts about Thanksgiving in this manner:

1. Thanksgiving is a time when we have an opportunity to bring an offering and recall God's mercy;
2. We reaffirm our loyalty to the God of our salvation;
3. We remember to be grateful in all circumstances; and
4. To partake of the Eucharistic bread of heaven in the terms Jesus expressed in John 6.

## Deuteronomy 26

Our text supports these thoughts and makes us mindful of the reason we love and worship our heavenly Father.

Deuteronomy 26 is most appropriate for Thanksgiving because it established a day of thanksgiving for the Israelites when they entered the Promised Land after wandering in the wilderness. The ceremony is the celebration of the festival of the firstfruits, or the Feast of Weeks. It is one of the three great pilgrimage feasts prescribed in Deuteronomy.

The commands which established the feast are clear.

When you settle in the land I gave . . . take the firstfruits of all the produce of the soil . . . and put them in a basket. Then . . . go to [the temple] and [visit the] priest . . . and give thanks for all that God has given you as well as remembering His mercy in bringing you to the Promised Land and worship Him. You and everyone else in your household . . . rejoice for all the good things the Lord [has given to you and your family.]

Thus we have the basis for Thanksgiving in the Jewish nation as much as 1500 years before Christ. Remember again the elements. Remember the past and God's acts in it. Recall God's mercy. Bring an offering, give thanks, and rejoice. Ancient Israel knew that life itself brings many reasons for giving thanks and praise to God.

**Psalms 100**

Psalms 100 is short and to the point. It is one of the few Psalms which notes its use in its superscription. The occasion for the usage is thought to be the presentation of a "thank offering" — a sacrifice offered when an individual or the community wanted to express its appreciation to God. When these events occurred, the entire animal, except for the gift portions given to the priests, was cooked and eaten by the worshippers in a great "religious barbecue" in the temple courtyard. According to Levitical law, this Thanksgiving feast had to be consumed completely on the day it was presented. This meant that extravagance, even gluttony, was a requirement for the day. Thanksgiving was a joyful celebration.

The psalmist tells us the elements of Thanksgiving are "joyful noise," "gladness," "singing," "thanksgiving," and "praise." The point here is that we cannot and should not limit Thanksgiving to verbal expressions or cognitive communication. When we do, we restrict too greatly its range of meaning and forms of expression.

The motivations for praise and thanksgiving are twofold. The first stresses God as the creator and as the preserver of life. Thus thanksgiving flows from dependent humans to the divine. The second is God's faithfulness in history, remembering God's continuing, recurring love and His faithfulness to man.

**Philippians 4:4-9**

In this text Paul tells the Philippians and us that "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." And he exhorts us to "give thanks in all circumstances." In other texts Paul supports this thought. These include giving thanks for our food (Romans 14:6 and 1 Timothy 4:3), for being delivered from the snares of death (2 Corinthians 1:11), for being called into the Body

of Christ (Colossians 3:15), for all humanity, especially those in positions of rule and authority (1 Timothy 2:1, 2), and for everything God has created (1 Timothy 4:4).

Based on Romans 1:21, one of the sure marks of being a pagan is being unable to give thanks to God. One of the realities of our Christian existence is that the more we experience the abundant grace of God, the more our thanksgiving to God increases. There is a similar correlation between our generosity and our thanksgiving to God. Giving of our means to others "overflows with many thanksgivings to God" (2 Corinthians 9:12). In essence, at the very heart of worship is thanksgiving. Therefore thanksgiving should rank very high in our church and family celebrations.

*Our inclination to be thankful is anchored in Christ's own experience of gratitude.*

. . . . .

Paul's instruction to his churches to be thankful in everything is reinforced in each of his letters, which open by offering a prayer of thanksgiving as well as expressing thanks on other occasions.

Our inclination to be thankful is anchored in Christ's own experience of gratitude. He gave thanks as we are instructed to do. Thankfulness is Jesus' posture in prayer as it should be ours. Luke 17 relates the story of the ten lepers whom Jesus cleansed. Only one of them, a foreigner, was appreciative enough to return and express thanks. This story points to the importance of expressing thanks in Jesus' teaching concerning the Kingdom of God.

Thanksgiving can be abused. This thought is at the heart of the parable of the

Pharisee and tax collector in Luke 18. Thanksgiving must be more than a hollow cliché of a prayer. It must be the revelation of our inner feelings and our love for our God in its truest form.

In the Philippians text, thanksgiving is the counterpart to anxiety. The anxious heart may well result from our inability to make our requests of God, which are proper expressions of thankful hearts.

Properly understood, thanksgiving excludes the excesses of self, those urges we have for God to satisfy our own needs as if they were the only needs. Thanksgiving, as Paul understood it, is uttered as a response to God's "indefinable gift." It begins when we recognize that God's own giving was an act of consummate self-giving. The most appropriate response is an act in which we see ourselves as recipients of grace and not as petitioners of grace.

**John 6**

John 6 is one of the most profound, multi-faceted, and influential chapters in the New Testament. The portion we focus on here introduces us to Jesus as the bread of heaven. Jesus' feeding of the multitude with the five loaves and two fishes introduces the text. Later that day Jesus and the disciples retired to a more secluded spot and the disciples set sail to the other side of the sea. Jesus later joined them walking on the water and, miraculously as well, the sea calmed and the boat immediately reached the other shore.

Later the crowd, realizing that Jesus had left, took to boats and crossed the sea seeking Him. Upon finding Him the people were puzzled by His movement across the sea, and asked "When did you come here?" Jesus' reply was indeed strange because He immediately takes up where He left the crowd by saying "you really aren't looking for me — you want another meal." Then He said "you must work for food that lasts — the food of eternal life."

*(continued on page 17)*

# A Call to Persevere!

BY PASTOR CHUCK CURRIER — WATERLOO, IA

**O**ur text is Hebrews 10:19-25, reading from the New International Version.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God . . .

This is written to “brothers.” These are fellow-believers, then and now, “who share in the heavenly calling” (Hebrews 3:1) and participate in God’s house which Christ is over (Hebrews 3:6).

The Bible writer has established a set of facts and circumstances in the preceding portions of this letter that pertains to Jesus and our relationship through Him to God. The Son of God is higher than the angels (chapter one). We are advised to pay careful attention to salvation through Jesus who is made like His human brothers; don’t drift away (chapter two). Fix your thoughts on Jesus who has greater honor than Moses (chapter three). There is Rest for God’s people; every effort is needed to enter it. Jesus is the High Priest to help (chapter four).

Warning: Do not fall away. God’s promises are certain (chapters 5 and 6). Contrary to the way of Moses, Jesus’ priesthood was after the order of Melchizedek (chapter seven). The new Covenant with its High Priest in heaven makes the first testament old (chapter eight). The New Testament sacrifice in the blood and body of

Christ supercedes the Old Testament sacrifices (chapters nine and ten).

By the blood and body of Christ, we can confidently enter the Most Holy Place, the curtain of the old temple being torn in two. Jesus now serves as a great priest and we come to God through Him.

*Warning:  
Do not fall away.  
God’s promises  
are certain.*

• • • • •

Therefore there are three exhortations:

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

A sincere heart is necessary, one that is truly genuine, not just apparent. Full assurance of faith indicates a lifelong commitment, day in, day out. A cleansed conscience, one acceptable to God, is accompanied by a washing of our bodies with pure water. As surely as obeying the cleansing procedures of the Old Testament cleansed one before God, outwardly and inwardly, so also does one’s obedience to the faith of the New Testament. “Husbands, love your wives,” Paul wrote, “just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up through the word, and to present her to himself as a



radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25-27, NIV).

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

The hope — a noun. Not a wishy-washy hope, or just any hope, but the Hope, which God in His word has assured. Open the Book and read for yourself what God has revealed for His people to expect — Christ’s second coming, giving of immortality, establishing the Kingdom of God. Such is an anchor of the soul, “firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19).

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

A study of God’s Word will reveal that we ought to love with a godly love, practice  
*(continued on page 10)*

# Satisfaction Guaranteed

BY JIM SCHAULL — MONROE, NC

“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him” (Prov. 30:5). David said (Ps. 12:6) God’s word is as pure as silver tried in a furnace seven times!

“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6). In Revelation 22:18-19, John says “if any man shall add unto these things [i.e. “the words . . . of this book”], God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” Jesus said “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle [NAS — “not the smallest letter or stroke”] shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18). We have two choices — agree with God’s word, or be found a liar (and be erased from the book of life)!

“Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die; remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; . . . Lest I be full and deny thee, and say Who is the LORD [Jehovah]? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” vss. 7-9. How often have we desired to win the lottery — and yet Proverbs says give me not riches “lest I be full” of worldly things and worldly satisfaction “and deny thee [God].” Jesus said “your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matt. 6:8). He also taught us to pray “give us this day our daily bread.”

“There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, yet is not washed from filthiness” (Prov. 30:11-12).

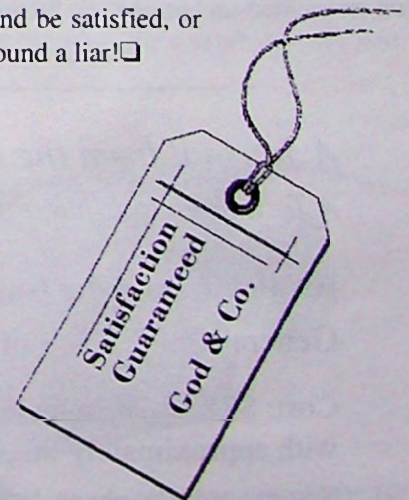
The blood-sucking attitude of the “horseleech” (Prov. 30:15) — gi’me, gi’me — also found in Mark 4:19 (“the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful”) leads us to four things “that are never satisfied” (vss. 15-16). “The grave” is a repeat from Proverbs 27:20 which says “sheol” (the grave) and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. Habakkuk 2:4-5 says the “lifted up” and “proud” are like “death, and cannot be satisfied,” but “the just shall live by his faith.” “The just shall live by his faith” — not on the coattails of someone else’s faith!

In Proverbs 30:18-20, the writer uses four things “too wonderful” (“that leave no trace behind them” — *Barnes’ Notes, The Bible Commentary*) to introduce “an adulterous woman.” This “woman,” which could also include and/or represent the self-righteous, says “I have done no wickedness” — thinking they have left no trace behind them! They, too, like the four previous things, shall not be satisfied, especially on judgment day. James 1:22 says “But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” And 1 John 1:8 says “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

In Proverbs 30:32-33, “the forcing of wrath” (NAS “the churning of anger”) produces strife. This is another example of

something that does not produce satisfaction!

TV and radio ads try to lead us to believe that whatever they are selling is the biggest, best, most wonderful and *satisfying* thing available. One verse of Scripture comes to my mind, over and over again, when I think of the word satisfaction. “As for me, . . . I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15, one of David’s prayers). We know, from Acts 2:29, that today “the patriarch David is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.” We know according to Hebrews 11 that David “having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise [including the “better resurrection” mentioned in verse 35]; God having provided some better thing for us, that they [i.e. those like David] without us should not be made perfect.” David will receive the “better resurrection” — and be satisfied — at the second advent of Jesus Christ. Will you, too, obtain a good report, and be satisfied then? Agree with, and live by, God’s word — and be satisfied, or be found a liar! □



# Control

BY PASTOR JIM MATTISON — PELZER, SC

**I**t seems that in each of us there is a desire to control our own lives. I believe this is what Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 means: "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (NAS). The way that seems right to us may or may not be the right way, because we are prone to sin.

The word "yield" is used a number of times in the Word from God. Paul told us to "yield yourselves to God" (Romans 6:13). This whole baptism chapter emphasizes the idea of our giving control of ourselves over to the Almighty. Paul tells us "don't yield yourself to sin" (v. 13). "Don't let sin reign in you" (v. 12). He speaks of each of us "dying" to sin (vv. 6-12), meaning that this desire to have control of ourselves needs to be channeled in the right direction. Let *God* control us. Yield to *God's* leading.

In verse 16 Paul pleads with us to "yield ourselves" to righteousness. The heart or mind is involved in this, according to verse 17. Paul indicates in verse 18 that when we turn things over to God we are then "free," that we yielded our bodies to sinful things;

now by our own voluntary decision we yield our bodies to *God's* way (righteousness).

Does this make sense to you? I think this is what Jesus had in mind when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28-30, KJV). When He says, "Take my yoke upon you" He is saying, "Give control of your life to me. I'm meek and humble and I'll give you peace." Implied is: "I won't

*"Come unto me,  
all ye that labour and  
are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest"*

. . . . .  
use my control of you to oppress you, but to give you relaxation." "You *shall* find rest unto your souls."

When Peter and James and John advise us as to how to live, the dominant theme is this idea of giving complete control of ourselves over to the Almighty God and to

our Messiah Jesus. Peter says to add to your faith the Christian virtues (2 Peter 1:5-11). James says God has begotten us with His way of life (1:19); therefore let His way control you. John says love people because that is *God's* way (1 John 4:7). *God's* way is the best way to go.

Our nature is to love ourselves best. That's why Jesus said, "Love others like you love yourself." But He and John urge us to turn that control over to *God's* way of doing things.

Once again, it is "Let Go and Let God." I have that sign on my study wall right in front of me. Every so often I have to remind myself, "Jim, let go; let God help. Relax and look to Him." This desire to keep control of our own lives is strong. But it's wrong unless channeled in the right direction.

We *must* put ourselves under *God's* guidance if we are to enjoy a peaceful productive life for righteousness and please Him at the same time. *God's* way is the best. He knows this. *We* really need to learn this, too. "Let go and let God." □

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## *A Journal from the Radical Reformation: A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism*

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The *Journal*, currently in its eighth volume, intends to cover as its major concerns issues of God and Jesus, of conditional immortality, and of eschatology. Other issues will be addressed as well. Topics in recent issues have included the influence of paganism on post-apostolic Christianity, and historical and modern looks at the trinity.



# Saved by a Faith That Works

BY KEN COLLINS — CENTREVILLE, VA

**W**hat good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder.

—James 2:14-19, NIV

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching."

—John 14:23-24a, NIV

They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

—Matthew 25:44-46, NIV

## Good Deeds Do Not Save Us

If you send flowers to a woman whom you do not know but choose at random, if you take candy to her apartment at awkward

times, and hang around her desk at work whispering sweet nothings in her ear, you will be arrested as a masher! You'll be puzzled as they cart you away, because her boyfriend does the exact same deeds and she doesn't have *him* arrested. It isn't the deeds of love that count, but love made manifest in deeds. In the same way, just doing good deeds doesn't save us.

Fish in an aquarium cannot go on an expedition to locate their aquarist; neither

*Fish in an aquarium  
cannot go  
on an expedition  
to locate their aquarist*

• • • • •  
can humans in a universe go on an expedition to locate their God. There is no deed that we can do to find Him. We must wait for Him to come to us. If you have ever had an aquarium that needed to be emptied and cleaned out, then you know the frustration of trying to catch the fish in your little net. If they cooperate, they are saved, but if they fight you, they may injure themselves or even jump to their death. Likewise, when God comes to rescue us, we must cooperate in trust and not resist, lest we bring upon ourselves our own demise.

Our deeds cannot save us; in fact, they may push us far away from our goal.

## Good Beliefs Do Not Save Us

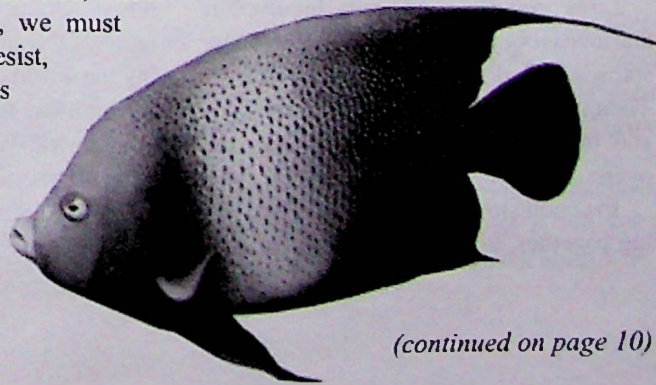
In the story of Peter Pan, the children learned that the power of sheer belief would allow them to fly. Many of us, inspired by that story, adorned ourselves with a bath towel to serve as a cape and jumped from what was for us as children a great height — perhaps from a dining room chair. I daresay that not one of us who tried this as children actually succeeded in flying, though most of us truly believed.

What failed? Did we not believe enough, or did Peter Pan lie to us?

Sorry to break the news to you, but Peter Pan lied. If you believe something with all your heart, and all your might, and all your soul, but it is not true, the most that you can accomplish is self-delusion.

Whatever beliefs you may profess, even if they are true, they do you no good unless you act upon them.

If you constantly tell your wife of your love, but you never remember her birthday or any special occasion, if physical intimacy is strained and awkward; if you always leave her in the lurch when she is counting on you and never lift a finger to help her when she's overburdened, your



(continued on page 10)

loving words will result in accusations of phoniness or even a summons to divorce court. Those who say "Lord, Lord" but do not obey His commandments are cast out, because their profession is false. Thus, our beliefs and verbal affirmations taken by themselves avail us nothing. It is by the fruit we bear that our true character is known.

In the New Testament, how many evil spirits confessed that Jesus was the Son of God? How many of them were saved? How many times did Jesus say, "Because you call me the Son of God, I can see that you are a Christian spirit. I will not cast you out"?

If you confess that Jesus is the Son of God, there ought to be a way to distinguish you from the evil spirits who confess the same thing.

### **We Are Saved by Faith Made Manifest in Deeds**

Faith is not just believing or giving lip service, it is trusting. Trust begets action. If you trust your road map, you will follow it. If you trust a bridge, you will drive over it. If you trust your burglar alarm, you will sleep easily at night. If you trust your boss, you will do the work you are assigned. If

you trust Jesus, you will obey His commandments.

But most of us do not live ideal lives, so here is a more realistic example of faith in action — the type of faith that most of us have:

If your wife is the constant butt of your often sarcastic wit and you never tell her that you love her, but you always remember every special occasion, and every day in some way she is moved by your thoughtful touches, then she will get all choked up as she tells her friends, "He has trouble expressing himself, and sometimes he really throws me for a loop, but he is very loving and thoughtful, and I love him very dearly." As Jesus says, the son who says he won't do what his father commands, but goes out and actually does it despite what he said, truly loves his father and is counted as obedient. It is by our relationship of trust that we are saved.

It isn't the deeds of faith that save us, but faith made manifest in deeds.

We are saved not by a spiritual transaction, nor by mouthing magic incantations, nor by doing magic deeds. No deed, oral, mental, or physical, has the power to save us.

We are saved because we have a loving, trusting relationship with God. In all relationships, there is room for us to gripe and doubt. Jeremiah griped and Thomas doubted, and yet they were saved. If we love God and recognize Him as God, we will strive to obey His will and we will love the things that He loves. Just as a small child emulates the adults he loves, we will emulate Him. If we claim a loving, trusting relationship on the basis of oral professions without any practical consequence in our lives, then we are liars. If we copy the outward appearance of a Christian life without the inner reality, then we are deluded.

Neither perfect affirmation nor perfect obedience is required for salvation. What is required is a dynamic relationship founded on dedication, love, and trust and manifest in deeds. Then Jesus has a vehicle to forgive us for our little unorthodoxies and our sins.

Do not squint your eyes and say, "I believe, I believe, I really, *really* believe." Instead, open your eyes and live your faith. □

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## A Call to Persevere (continued from page 6)

brotherly love, extend our love to our neighbors and the world. But the true test is to love our enemies, to be good to the unlikeable.

Love produces good deeds. Involved in that love is obeying Jesus' commandments, spreading God's Word and doing His will. Though these efforts may be met with pain and opposition and unfairness, we may overcome through God and His love.

In conclusion, "let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of

doing, but let us encourage one another." Attend regular worship meetings, Bible studies, prayer meetings, small group meetings, personal opportunities to encourage others. Should this encroach on us too much? Of course not! Rather we are allowing the world to encroach on us too much, taking away the time needful for worship and service. We all need the encouraging, the strengthening, the supporting from each other, mutually shared.

"— and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Believers are to live as if the dawning of the Day of Christ's Returning is just beyond the horizon. Reenergize, persevere, confidently drawing near to God. And continue more faithfully and spiritually day by day to fulfill our personal responsibilities and godly obligations till the end of time as we know it. □

# The Seed – The Gospel Message

BY THE EDITOR

**O**ur world is in desperate need of transformation. We are living in a violent, self-centered society. We are on the verge of self-destruction. And yet, there are hundreds of thousands of churches all around us.

Why aren't we being more productive, more fruitful?

I invite you to consider the following biblical texts which challenge us to understand what it takes for us to become more fruitful: Acts 8:9-17; 1 Peter 1:13-25; Mark 4:3-9, 13-20.

It starts with having the right seed — the Gospel — that is taken out of its sack and spread — evangelism — and responded to by those who are prepared to hear and respond to the word — fruit.

Take a look at the process and see where you are and how well you are doing.

## First Text: Acts 8:9-17

Jesus' commission to the Church, as recorded in Acts 1:8, says that we are to "be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth."

Samaria was the region to the north of Judea that had been at one time part of the northern kingdom of Israel. Samaria fell to the Assyrian Empire in 721 BC and from that time on had contained people who were a mixture of Jewish and other races. They were considered to be half-breeds by their Jewish neighbors to the south. For the followers of Jesus to bring the Gospel of Jesus to Samaria would have been the first great test in fulfilling the great commission.

The disciples of Jesus did not go to Samaria willingly, but rather as a result of

persecution (see Acts 8:1). Philip was not one of the twelve apostles, but was one of the men appointed to minister to the needs of widows in the Church (see Acts 6:1-6). Philip ended up in Samaria where he began to "proclaim Christ" (Acts 8:5).

There was another man preaching in Samaria: his name was Simon (traditionally known as Simon Magus meaning "the Magician"). Simon was preaching about himself and how great a man he was. He had

*"The presence of  
the future."*

*The kingdom of God is*

*"now and not yet."*

• • • • •  
many followers who were mesmerized by his acts of magic and trickery.

Philip performed many signs and miracles, but the thing that really captured the hearts of the people of Samaria was his preaching. Philip "preached the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). The people responded to Philip's preaching by believing the message and being baptized.

The message of the Kingdom of God that Philip preached was consistent with the preaching of Jesus: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (Luke 4:43) and also "The time has come, the Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15).

The message that Jesus preached was the coming of the Kingdom of God. The message that Philip preached was the name of Jesus and the coming Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God has been variously defined as the "reign of God" or the "realm of God." The reign of God would be the fact of His rule: the realm of God would be the place where God rules. Jesus sums it up well in the Lord's prayer: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." The Kingdom of God is the time and place where God's will is done here on earth; it is that time and place where God alone is sovereign, where God alone is worshipped, where God alone is . . . God.

Some speak of the Kingdom of God as being a future reality, something that we are waiting to happen at the end of human history when Christ returns. Others speak about the Kingdom of God as though it were a present-day reality wherever God's people, the Church, are empowered to rule over the affairs of man. But I think the Kingdom is best described by George Elden Ladd, who calls the Kingdom "the presence of the future." The kingdom of God is "now and not yet."

It is the responsibility of God's people to begin now to live out the ethical requirements of the Kingdom of God, as spelled out in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7). We are citizens of the Kingdom of God and we are governed by the King. However, we also recognize that Jesus' prayer "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is a hope that has yet to be realized. God's will is not yet done by everyone on earth, nor shall it be until



Christ once and for all deals with the problem of sin and death. But in the meantime, Christians must begin living out the reality of the Kingdom now, as we await the fulfillment of that blessed hope with the return of Christ.

**Second Text: 1 Peter 1:13-25**

Jesus told Nicodemus "No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3).

This begs the question "how does one go about being 'born again'?"

The Apostle Peter answers this question in 1 Peter 1:23, 25: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God . . . And this is the word that was preached to you."

The process of becoming "born again" or experiencing "rebirth" is a spiritual transformation that begins when one hears the proclamation of the Word of God. The preaching of God's word is here likened to a farmer planting seeds in the ground. The message of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed, even as a seed must first be sown into the ground before it can begin to grow.

In order for physical birth to occur the "seed" of the man must first be planted in the womb, or no birth can take place. In the same way, for one to be born again, the "seed" of the gospel must be planted in the womb of our hearts.

It is the responsibility of the preacher/teacher/Christian witness to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ. What happens next becomes the responsibility of the listener.

**Gospel Text: Mark 4:3-9; 13-20**

In Romans 10:17 Paul writes "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

The message, the gospel, is the seed. The seed does no good simply sitting in a bag on a shelf. In order for it to produce growth it must be taken out of the bag and spread around on the ground.

Jesus tells a story that illustrates this point. A farmer scatters his seed on the ground. What happens to the seed after it leaves his hand? That all depends on where the seed lands.

Some lands on the hard trodden path. The path is so hard, there is nowhere for the seed to go . . . so it simply sits there until the birds come along and eat it.

Some lands on rocky soil where it immediately puts down roots . . . but the ground is too shallow to sustain life, and soon the sun scorches and kills it.

Other seed lands among thorns that choke out the life.

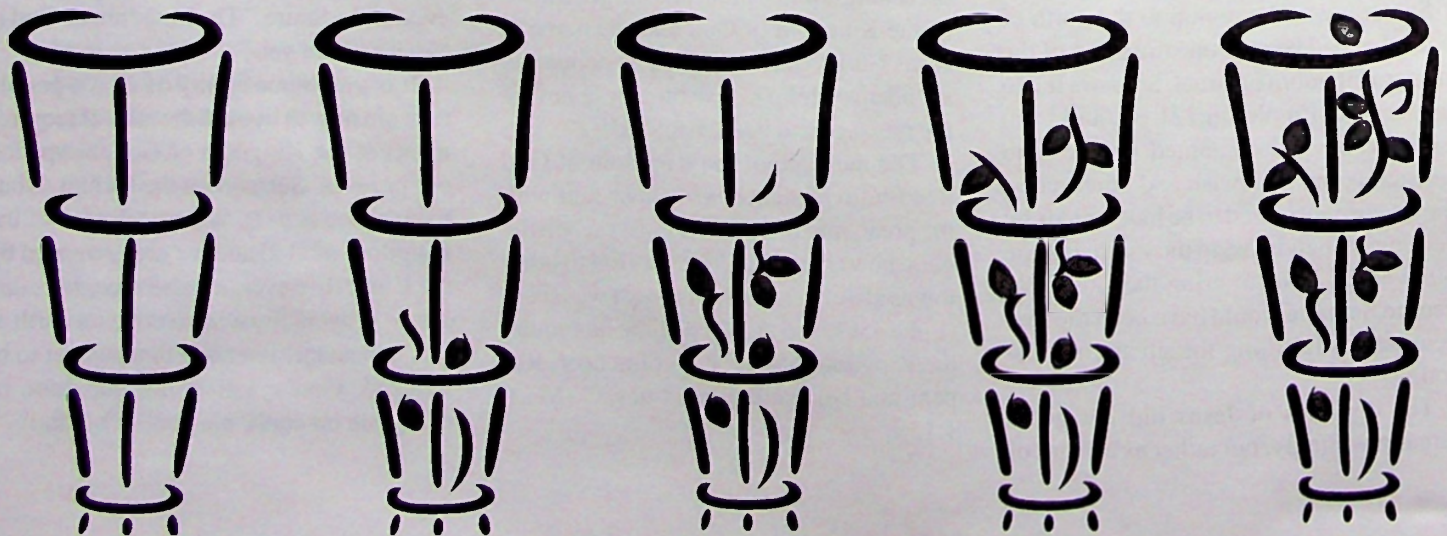
And finally, some seed lands in rich, healthy soil, where it sends its roots down deep into the earth giving it life and it grows and produces a great crop.

Some people refer to this parable as the "parable of the sower" or "parable of the seeds" . . . but it's neither. It's really a parable about different types of soil.

Some people are like the path — they are hard-hearted. The message of the gospel can be preached to them, but it lands on a hard, unreceptive heart and has nowhere to go. It gets snatched away and will bear no fruit.

Some people are like the rocky soil. They are shallow. They might hear the gospel and immediately get excited about

*(continued on page 15)*



# Begin the Day with Prayer

BY E. M. BOUNDS

**I**ought to pray before seeing any one. Often when I sleep long, or meet with others early, it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system. It is unscriptural. Christ arose before day and went into a solitary place. David says: "Early will I seek thee"; "Thou shalt early hear my voice." Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness, and I can do no good to those who come to seek from me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. Then when in secret prayer the soul is often out of tune, I feel it is far better to begin with God—to see his face first, to get my soul near him before it is near another. — Robert Murray McChesney

The men who have done the most for God in this world have been early on their knees. He who fritters away the early morning, its opportunity and freshness, in other pursuits than seeking God will make poor headway seeking him the rest of the day. If God is not first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, he will be in the last place the remainder of the day.

Behind this early rising and early praying is the ardent desire which presses us into this pursuit after God. Morning listlessness is the index to a listless heart. The heart which is behindhand in seeking God in the morning has lost its relish for God. David's heart was ardent after God. He hungered and thirsted after God, and so he

sought God early, before daylight. The bed and sleep could not chain his soul in its eagerness after God. Christ longed for communion with God; and so, rising a great while before day, He would go out into the mountain to pray. The disciples, when fully awake and ashamed of their indulgence, would know where to find Him. We might

*We might go through the list of men who have mightily impressed the world for God, and we would find them early after God.*

. . . . .  
go through the list of men who have mightily impressed the world for God, and we would find them early after God.

A desire for God which cannot break the chains of sleep is a weak thing and will do but little good for God after it has indulged itself fully. The desire for God that keeps so far behind the devil and the world at the beginning of the day will never catch up.

It is not simply the getting up that puts men to the front and makes them captain generals in God's hosts, but it is the ardent desire which stirs and breaks all self-indulgent chains. But the getting up gives vent,

increase, and strength to the desire. If they had lain in bed and indulged themselves, the desire would have been quenched. The desire aroused them and put them on the stretch for God, and this heeding and acting on the call gave their faith its grasp on God and gave to their hearts the sweetest and fullest revelation of God, and this strength of faith and fullness of revelation made them saints by eminence, and the halo of their sainthood has come down to us, and we have entered on the enjoyment of their conquests. But we take our fill in enjoyment, and not in productions. We build their tombs and write their epitaphs, but are careful not to follow their examples.

We need a generation of [believers] who seek God and seek Him early, who give the freshness and dew of effort to God, and secure in return the freshness and fullness of His power that He may be as the dew to them, full of gladness and strength, through all the heat and labor of the day. Our laziness after God is our crying sin. The children of this world are far wiser than we. They are at it early and late. We do not seek God with ardor and diligence. No man gets God who does not follow hard after Him, and no soul follows hard after God who is not after Him in early morn.

This article is an excerpt from *Power through Prayer*, and is in the public domain.

# Resurrection vs. Idolatry

BY PASTOR DON WARD — RAYMORE, MO

**E**ver wonder how, in the past, Israel could seek help from an idol? God tried to educate them.

“Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? . . . Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Come to life!’ He says, ‘Wake up.’ But God says, ‘there is no breath in it.’” (Hab. 2:18, 19). It doesn’t breathe; therefore it is not alive.



We marvel at such ignorance, yet a large segment of modern Christianity seeks help from that which is just as dead. They seek guidance from people who, though once alive, have died. What’s the difference? What’s the difference between that and idolatry?

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:3-4, KJV).

“But man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more” (Job 14:10, NIV).

“He breathes his last.” He is just as dead as the “dumb idol” (Hab. 2:18, KJV). And just as dumb. “Dumb” here means speechless, as in deaf and dumb.

People still try to attribute life to that which has “no breath in it.” God still tries to

educate people. Not much has changed. Then it was called idolatry.

Historically man has found it difficult to believe that death renders a man, well, dead. “Oh, that’s terrible,” they say. Yes, death is pretty bad. It is the result of sin (Rom. 5:12).

Terrible! Yes and no.

I believe in the resurrection, do you? “He breathes his last and is no more.” No more, that is, *until*. Until the resurrection.

“If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then remember me! If a man dies, will he live again? You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made.” (Job 14:13-15).

Job believed he would “live again.” Later. At the appointed time. That’s resurrection.

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake” (Dan. 12:2). That’s resurrection.

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out” (John 5:28-29a).

That’s resurrection.

Not now but later.

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” (1 Cor. 15:22-23).

When God says to that which is lifeless, “Come to life!” it will come to life. When God says to that which is dead, “Wake up!” it will “awake.” When God attributes life to that which has “no breath in it,” it will breathe. Then the dead will live and do all that only the powers of life afford.

“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD” (Psalm 150:6).

Is death terrible? Terrible, yes, if you have no resurrection in your future. Resurrection is coming. Be sure you have your ticket. □



# Y2K? Check Your Spiritual Stocks

BY ALLON MAXWELL — AUSTRALIA

**T**he combined spending of governments and private corporations in pursuit of solutions for the Y2K “Millennium Bug” is many *billions* of dollars. It is almost impossible to estimate the human cost of the physical effort involved.

But if the world’s nations are to protect their economies, and preserve our culture, the money and the man-hours *must* be spent.

Seldom has the exact time of any other event in history been so predictable. For the “Millennium Bug” there is an absolutely certain date beyond which corrective action to prevent many of the predicted disasters will no longer be possible.

The day of judgement represents a far more serious potential threat to our national and personal futures than Y2K can ever be.

What would happen at the national level if our politicians were as convinced of the certainty of Armageddon, or the return of Jesus, as they are of Y2K?

What would happen if *we* knew their exact dates and times with the same certainty as we know it for the threatened Y2K computer crisis?

And what would some of us do, if we became as convinced of our need to make better preparations than we currently have?

Of course we don’t know either the precise day or hour. But *these* events are

just as certain as Y2K! For each of us they are no further away than the end of this present life.

The good news is that, just at present, more than enough resources to *guarantee* survival are *freely* available!

But it is just as certain as Y2K that there will also be a time after which the door of opportunity will be shut!

And if we are to survive into the Age beyond the Resurrection and Judgement, it will take *far more* time and attention and dedication to finding the solutions than most are willing to invest!

Tell everyone you know to check their stocks of “oil” *now* (Matthew 25:1-13)! □

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## The Seed — The Gospel Message *(continued from page 12)*

it, but they are so shallow that they never get beyond the initial experience, and when they lose the first wave of excitement, the seed of the gospel in them dies, for it has nowhere to go.

Some people are like the thorny soil. They hear the word, but they are too interested in the things of this life. They’re too busy making a living, trying to get ahead, and there’s little time or energy to devote to the gospel, and so they are unfruitful.

And some are like the rich, deep, fruitful soil. They hear the gospel, it takes root and they become productive. They do something with the gospel. They share their faith with others, they pollinate others with the same seed that they’ve heard . . . and the message of the kingdom grows and spreads.

Which kind of soil are you?

Here are some questions for you to think about. Perhaps you would like to

discuss this article in your Sunday School class or even your church board meeting. Use these questions as a basis for making an evaluation:

- Do you think most of the people who attend your church have an adequate understanding of the basic message of the gospel? If not, what suggestions would you offer that could help better teach this to our people?

- How effective is your church at proclaiming the gospel (scattering the seed) to the people of your community *outside* of your church? What can you do as a church to broadcast the message to a wider audience? How important is it that you do this?

- If you are clearly proclaiming the gospel message and some (even most) people in your community fail to respond

and bear fruit, who bears the majority of that responsibility, you or they? What can you do to break hard places, rocky places and bush-hog thorny places?

Soul-searching questions to ask yourself:

- Is the word of God taking root in your heart? How can you tell? Ask yourself “Am I bearing fruit for God?”

- If the answer is “no” then ask yourself “why?”

- Is my heart hardened to the word of God?

- Am I too shallow?

- Am I letting other things choke out God’s word in my life?

- What steps will you begin taking this week toward becoming a more fruitful Christian? □

# Malawi/Mozambique 1999

BY PASTOR JIM MATTISON — PELZER, SC

**T**eam members were Joe and Rebekah Martin, Jim Mattison, Travis Hamilton, Paul Madonia, and Jim Cramer. Dates were August 2-16. African travel was by rented ten-passenger minivan with driver. (Sometimes there were 21 inside, plus 18 bags of luggage. Quite crowded).

Although among the poorest of the African nations, the people of Malawi and Mozambique are happy and contented with the good creation God has given them. All kinds of vegetation are everywhere for their use. The soil is fertile and they grow almost all their food. The gospel of the Kingdom and the love of Jesus mean everything to these people. It thrills them when we tell them God has invited them to be kings and queens in His coming righteous Kingdom on earth.

They are an emotional people and as we worship in singing praises, they sway back and forth to the rhythm of drums and many times clap their hands in a very orderly way. When we share with them the wonderful words of God they listen intently and take notes on tablets we have given them. The three-times-a-day services last from two to three hours each, depending on how many messages are given. We shared the main teachings of the Bible: the great doctrines, the living of the Christian life, the necessity of living by God's laws. In his preaching Joe preached a marvelous sermon on the love of God. Each of the young men helped in the preaching and was well received by the people.

Our main focus again this time was to share the great Bible teachings with the pastors and their wives so they could share them with the people. There were many others who attended also. On the closing day of the second conference, nineteen people were baptized by Pastor Rabson Namaona in the large and deep Ruo River (no crocodiles in this river).

In services, the women sit on our left, the men on our right, as in Bible times. The

*She said, "We are  
happy. That is why we  
dance and sing."*

. . . . .

fields of each family surround each village. In every service there is a time of prayer for all, with each one uttering his own prayer to God, all at the same time. The whole service of worship is conducted in order and good taste. Their enthusiasm excels ours in America. They are certainly not ashamed of the Lord Jesus and His wonderful Kingdom message. Their songs of worship all honor and praise God, Jesus, and God's coming Kingdom. Many of their songs reflect their love for messiah Jesus: Jesus, I am here for you; I am a soldier for Jesus; no one can be the same as Jesus; we can search the world over and never find one like Him. When you are in trouble you need to come to Jesus, please come to

Him, and dozens more. Many times they make up a song about something important, such as the conquering of death by Jesus: Come and see, Jesus is alive; the battle is over; Jesus has conquered death.

They like to share the joy of their faith with others. One day about 15 women were all singing and swaying in a moving circle. I asked Margaret afterwards what they were doing. She said, "We are happy. That is why we dance and sing." Another day Rebekah taught the women cleanliness and nutrition and answered some personal questions they had.

Our young men purified all our water without complaining (a large job) and we really appreciated this. They were also helpful with our luggage, and in singing songs with the ever-present children. Rebekah took a small gas stove that proved to be a great blessing. We also had along snack crackers, granola bars, raisins, oatmeal, and candy. Many of our meals consisted of these. We also bought food.

As mentioned before we shared in two main conferences, one at Fabiano Bango's church in Mozambique and one at headquarters' church in Milonde, Malawi. We had services in several churches on our way to the Mozambique conference. The walls of two new churches were up, but the roofs had not yet been put on. The people make their own brick. The life of a building is limited, due to termites and torrential rains that wash the mud mortar from between the brick causing the walls to fall.

There are 35 churches in Mozambique and 18 churches in Malawi, making a total  
*(continued on page 19)*



# What's Money Got to Do with It?

## The (Generous) Sheep and the (Greedy) Goats

(Adapted from Matthew 25:31-40)

BY LARRY BURKETT AND RICK OSBORNE

**W**hen the Son of Man comes in His glory with all the angels He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the (generous) sheep on His right and the (greedy) goats on His left.

Then the King will say to those (generous sheep) on His right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat." (It was tough, I know, but you gave to that halfway house when you had barely enough for your own family. And you shared your groceries with your brother's family when they fell on hard times.)

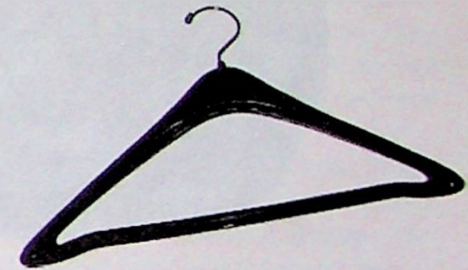
"I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink." (Remember the time your family was on a vacation and you saw that man pass out from heat and dehydration? You and your family put your vacation on hold for an afternoon while you got some water down his throat and took him to the hospital. You almost passed

out from the heat yourself. Your family will never forget it.)

"I was a stranger and you invited me in." (That was the classic — the time you taught your kids to be careful how they treat strangers. "It could be an angel," you said. You're still not sure, are you? That lady, Evelyn, was walking down your street in a blizzard. She wasn't dressed well for it,

"I tell you the truth,  
whatever you did  
for one of the least of  
these brothers of mine,  
you did for me."

• • • • •  
either. The kids still talk about how you had your boots and coat on in less than 30 seconds after your youngest said, "Daddy, that lady fell down." You had her inside in minutes and your wife got her some warm clothes and a blanket while the kids made her hot cocoa. What started out for that lady as car trouble on the wrong night turned into an opportunity for your family to share My love. She's here with Me, waiting to see you.)



"I needed clothes and you clothed me." (Now this one was just one of many you don't know about. You recall the commitment you and your entire family made to give your clothes to the shelter? You always made sure they were clean and in good repair when you dropped them off. Well, I was able to use that. I prompted you to make that commitment just after a woman prayed. She was a single mom with kids, the same boy and girl mix as yours, but one year younger. She asked Me to provide her children with clothing as they grew up. She wept every time she went to the thrift store and the perfect clothing for her and her kids was there. Her entire family and several others are here as a result to that testimony of answered prayer.)

"I was sick and you looked after me." (This one was simple for you but so effective. You gave out of each paycheck to the

*(continued on page 18)*





company benevolence fund. It paid the medical bills of anyone in the company not covered by the medical plan who encountered an emergency. And, of course, that time your uncle was in the hospital for three months: No one else in the family had much to do with him, but you and your family sacrificed to go and visit him twice a week. You know, of course, that he died in the hospital. But you weren't absolutely sure if he prayed the prayer you talked to him about. Yes, he did. He's also here, waiting to see you.)

"I was in prison and you came to visit me." (You remember that man who overheard you and your wife talking about God in the restaurant and came over to introduce himself? You answered his questions, prayed with him, and continued to meet with him while he awaited trial. He wasn't My son when he committed

the crime, but he was when you helped him to realize he was valued by Me. You visited him in prison and helped him lead others to Me. He's here too.)

Then the righteous (generous sheep) will answer Him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing

clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? (None of those people you mentioned were you, were they?)

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" (How you have spent and used your resources has demonstrated how you felt about Me.) "Come, you who are blessed by my Father." (Oh, you'll be pleased to know that your children, who were with you on these and other occasions, followed your example. They are counted with the sheep too.)

In His teaching and parables — whether the rich young ruler, the lost son, the widow's mite, the sheep and the goats, or many others — Jesus taught that what we do with our money and our possessions is a direct reflection of what is in our hearts. Our checkbooks are like thermometers, measuring the heat of our love and commitment to God and His principles. □

Excerpt from *Financial Parenting* by Larry Burkett and Rick Osborne. Used by permission.



## Malawi/Mozambique 1999 *(continued from page 16)*

of 53. Since our visit in 1996 several new churches have been added. These pastors and Margaret are very zealous. There are revivals going on all the time and many being baptized into Christ. Margaret Sakala is the coordinator of this African work. She herself is a powerful speaker and teacher. She knows the Bible teachings well. She has converted a number of the pastors and has started several churches. In her work she travels to the different churches and also has planning meetings at her house.

Because Margaret's voice gave out last time because of much translating, we prayed that God would send us translators from our people, men who knew the truth. He sent two: Pastor Doubt Chiwaya, a new pastor, and Clement Nkhoma, a school teacher.

One of the most heart-wrenching experiences was to see a crippled member, Richard, crawling on hands and knees to and from every service. He lived about three-quarters of a mile from the church. I marvelled at his faith and determination.

The river where baptisms take place is another three-quarters of a mile beyond the church.

Everyone walks. We have bought some bicycles for Margaret and some pastors to help them in their work. Also some of these pastors accompany her on her journeys upon our advice. Margaret travels long distances on her bicycle, such as 85 miles to Mozambique, and 140 miles on a recent trip to the southern churches.

Travis, Jim, and Paul were invaluable on this trip. Rebekah did most of the cooking for us and kept track of all expenditures. She, along with Joe, made a video of the entire trip. Joe did the bargaining with the van owner and did a lot of good preaching. My main contribution was preaching.

Our God was with us all the way, even in dangerous Mozambique. As we slept in the church in Mozambique, we were surrounded by the people and two guards patrolled the church all night, one with a machete, the other with a club. We felt very safe. When hecklers at Milonde, Malawi woke us at night, Pastor Mijeri slept across

our door. These hecklers also caused us to cancel the last two night services to avoid violence. God helped us solve every problem. Even my health improved greatly on this trip. I found that when we lacked sleep and were weak, God supplied extra strength.

With our God's help we accomplished our mission. He was glorified, Jesus was lifted up, and God's Word was preached. Our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Africa is a very, very close one. They have developed confidence in us, and we have come to respect them highly and have learned much from them.

Please pray with us for this work. These are all Abrahamic Faith people, who obviously know Jesus' favorite message (the Kingdom of God) in and out and love it. This is a large work. These African brothers and sisters of ours need our encouragement and love. Their lives are very hard. Their faith means so much to them. Jesus is so real to them. These pastors work so hard and are converting so many, helping fulfill Matthew 24:14. May God continue to bless and keep them all. □

---

## Thanksgiving or Giving Thanks *(continued from page 5)*

The crowd viewed Jesus much like Moses, a prophet and leader who through God provided the necessities of life. Jesus on the other hand was (and is) teaching that we must seek the bread which sustains *eternal* life — not just life. To earn that bread, Jesus says, we must work for it, because God requires it. What God requires of us in terms of work is to "believe in the one whom He has sent." This is an interesting definition of work, isn't it? By Jesus beginning to direct the crowd's

thoughts away from physical needs and more toward their (and our) spiritual needs, we see more clearly the work that we must be about.

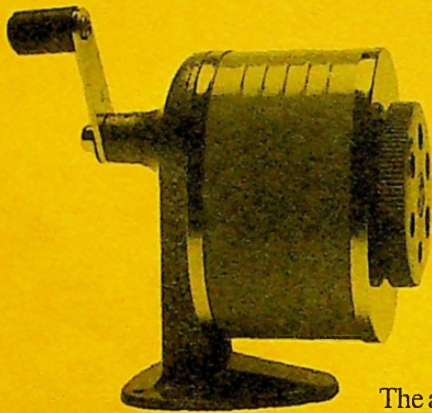
Jesus is clearly describing Himself as the bread of heaven that we must feed on to gain life eternal. The Eucharist symbol of bread — the body of Christ broken for us — is the clearest picture of this thought that we have. The work for us is in learning more and more about Him and being thankful for Him and the gift of life eternal.

Thus we have in Thanksgiving an expression of gratitude and love for all of the gifts our heavenly Father has given us. Recalling His mercy in our lives, affirming our loyalty to Him for His gift of salvation, celebrating our gratefulness for life in all of its circumstances and partaking of the bread of heaven — the key to life eternal. □

*Charles is a member of the Church of God Board of Directors.*

# The Prayer of a Twelve-year-old

Now I set me down in school,  
Where praying is against the rule.  
For this great nation under God  
Finds mention of Him very odd.  
If Scripture now the class recites  
It violates the Bill of Rights.



Anytime my head I bow  
Becomes a federal matter now.  
The law is specific;  
the law is precise.  
Praying out loud is no longer nice.

Praying aloud in a public hall  
Upsets those who believe  
in nothing at all.  
In silence alone we can meditate  
And if God should get the credit  
— great!



They are bringing their guns;  
I don't dare bring my Bible,  
To do so might make me liable.  
So now, O Lord, this plea I make;  
Should I be shot in school,  
My soul please take.

The above was written by a twelve-year-old girl in Boston, MA.  
Submitted by Pastor Rex Cain — Bedford, OH

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# The Restitution Herald

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*Announcing the year 2000*

# A MESSAGE from the Editor . . .



## Winter is here.

Winter is here. It is a time of year that many love. Holidays, snow, skiing, building snowmen (if you live up north, that is — for me down here in Louisiana snow is a distant memory). Everyone is supposed to be happy and jolly this time of year. Yet, for many, winter can be a sad time. Some call it “Winter Blues” or “S.A.D. — Seasonal Affective Disorder.” But whatever it is called, it is a form of depression. Some people really struggle through the winter months. Everyone else is (or seems) to be happy . . . everyone except them.

This winter I’ve encountered a number of people in my ministry who’ve been struggling with depression. Members of my church congregation, clergy colleagues in my community, even family members have been having a tough time.

Depression is something that is tough for a lot of people to talk about. Some feel it’s a sign of weakness, so they prefer not to make it known. Others just know that they feel bad and are not sure why, and they’re not sure where to turn for help. Maybe you’re feeling depressed and you aren’t sure what to do. Or maybe you suspect someone close to you is depressed, and you aren’t sure what to do. I thought it might be helpful for you if I shared just a bit about depression.

Depression is not a sign of weakness and it is nothing to be ashamed of. Depression simply *is*. According to Dr. Archibald Hart, depression has one or more of the following symptoms associated with it:

confused thinking, inability to reason or make decisions, slowed speech, loss of interest in work or hobbies, inertia, fear of losing one’s mind, flogging oneself with guilt and self-reproach, thoughts of death and death wishes, feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy, inability to concentrate, loss of appetite or a marked increase in appetite, feeling of total futility, inability to sleep or oversleeping, stomach discomfort.

Hart says that “sometimes the depression hits like a bolt of lightning. Sometimes it creeps up like a cat stalking a bird — slowly and insidiously. Often the sufferers can give no clear reason why they feel the way they do. They certainly cannot shake off the feelings. The depression may last a few days or it may last for years.”

It’s important for us to understand that being a Christian doesn’t make a person immune from depression. Very spiritual and godly persons sometimes experience depression. Consider the prophet Elijah. There was no more godly person on earth in his day than the prophet Elijah. He steadfastly stood against the forces of evil and wickedness within Israel’s leadership. God sustained him for 3 1/2 years. He prayed for it to stop raining, and it stopped, he prayed for it to rain, and it rained. He prayed and fire came down from heaven. There’s no question that Elijah was a faithful servant who trusted the Lord. Yet we’re told that after Queen Jezebel called for his death Elijah ran into the wilderness and became so depressed that he was ready to die. In the depths of his misery and despair

God sent an angel to minister to Elijah, giving him food and water and rest. Then Elijah was again able to hear the voice of God until he stopped despairing and came to realize that he was not alone, that there were 7000 others who had not bowed to Baal.

If the prophet Elijah was subject to depression, how could we think that we are immune? There is no shame in depression, in fact shame only fuels the feelings of despair and alienation already present. As God’s people we are called to help bear the burdens of others.

There are many causes of depression. Some of them are physical, some emotional, some spiritual, and some a combination of factors. Sometimes depression can be overcome by a change of diet, additional rest, a change of scenery, or a supportive friend who will listen. Sometimes depression is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain and may require medication, that is why a person who suspects he or she may be suffering from clinical depression should see a physician. There are a number of excellent medications that can help in severe cases of depression.

Sometimes depression is the result of problems in our thinking. Many of us carry around in our minds irrational ideas. In his book *Pastoral Care of Depression* Binford Gilbert lists several irrational ideas:

1. The idea that it is a dire necessity for an adult human being to be loved or approved by virtually every significant other person in his community.

(continued on page 5)

# 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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# Jesus' Exasperating Ethics

BY KEN COLLINS

One of the biggest drawbacks to being a Christian is that Jesus has this exasperating habit of turning simple situations in life into serious moral dilemmas. For example, I once heard about a group of men who were driving to a wedding when they saw a helpless motorist tinkering with her engine by the side of the road. One of the men in the car said he recognized right away what was wrong, and he was sure that he could have helped, but they didn't stop because they didn't want to get their fancy usher outfits messed up. Anyway, they might have been late for the wedding. They weren't comfortable even with their own excuse, and because of the eerie parallel with the story of the Good Samaritan (in which religious people passed up a stranger in distress by the side of the road in order to avoid ritual impurity) they weren't sure they did the right thing. Incidents like that make you squirm in your seat when you think about them, and if they are discussed in Sunday School, the class runs overtime.

However, when you stand back and look at these dilemmas from a distance, the picture looks right. We should expect masters to be greater than their servants, parents more mature than their children, and teachers wiser than their students. If Jesus were just another man, I suppose it would be easy for us to reduce His ethical teachings to a formula. But as it stands, we find His teachings somehow compelling and perplexing at the same time—just the way servants react to a master, children to a parent, and students to a teacher. So perhaps our moral discomfort—and the discomfort of generations before us—is direct evidence that Jesus is more than just a humble field preacher from Galilee.

Today we read:

... if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

—Matthew 5:23-24, NIV

To the modern Christian, this passage conjures up an image of a person rising from

*We find His teachings  
somehow compelling  
and perplexing at the  
same time.*

the congregation, walking to the front of the church, and laying a large check on the communion table. However, while that picture certainly embodies the spirit of the situation, its details are wrong. At the time that Jesus said these words, there were no churches, there were no communion tables, and there were no checking accounts. At that time, the Temple still stood, and the Jewish sacrifices were going on. The picture we should have in mind when we read this passage is of a Jew bringing (say) pigeons to the Temple, as in Luke 2:21-24, where Mary and Joseph are depicted as offering a sacrifice at the Temple upon the occasion of Jesus' birth.

Whichever picture we may have in mind when we read this passage, we can be certain that Jesus was not concerned with

pigeons or bank drafts. He was concerned with the relationship between ethics and spirituality. We see here an embodiment of a principle revealed by prophets of old:

Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of the rams.

—1 Samuel 15:22, NIV

We cannot conclude that Jesus was banning all religious observances because then the passage from Matthew would read:

... if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, forget about your gift and be reconciled to your brother. That is the gift that God wants.

Instead, Jesus says that the process of giving the ritual gift should be interrupted, not superseded, by the act of reconciliation. Therefore if we attain ethical superiority, we are not exempt from attending church, taking communion, or any other duties which we may label "ritual" when we find them inconvenient.

We also cannot conclude that Jesus was revealing that the entire purpose of spirituality is to produce ethical behavior, because then the passage from Matthew would have read:

... if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, you have eyes to see the altar, and ears to hear the commandment, but



you do not discern the purpose of God in them. Forget about the gift and the altar! Go and be reconciled to your brother and realize that gifts and altars are just training wheels.

Jesus is teaching us about two aspects of our lives, our ethical behavior towards each other, and our spiritual relationship with God. These are two separate things, in that we cannot exempt ourselves from religious obligations on the grounds that we are ethical towards others, nor can we exempt ourselves from ethics because we have religious duties. Ethics and spirituality are separate but they are interrelated. Ethics forms a lower layer that stands between us and spirituality. A religious person is a hypocrite if he fails to love his neighbor as himself, in deed as well as in slogan.

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother

lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.  
—1 John 1:9-10, NIV

Note that John does not say, “whoever loves his brother lives in the light and has attained perfect fellowship with God,” rather he says, “there is nothing in him to make him stumble.” Thus we see that the ethical person who loves his neighbor as himself has a clear path to God, but has not necessarily traveled it yet.

So what are we to conclude?

If we rely upon Jesus to save us — that is to say, if we are saved by our faith in Him — then our first concern in life is to keep that relationship in good order; that is, we should be concerned to stay on good terms with Him through obedience to His commands and through good stewardship of His trust. Jesus teaches us in this passage that our ethical behavior towards each other can cloud our relationship with Him [who is our mediator with God]. Our ethical behavior must be in order before our reli-

gious behavior is considered acceptable. We are exempt from neither; we must do both.

Therefore, all of us who truly trust Him will strive in every way to behave responsibly towards other people. Sometimes dealing with other people properly may result in messing up our fancy clothes or even in personal danger, but if we truly trust Jesus, we won't have to worry about such things. If we can't trust Jesus to look out for us in this world, how can we say without hypocrisy that we trust Him to look out for us in the world to come?

Suppose you dropped your mother's birthday present into the mud. Wouldn't you have it cleaned before giving it to her? Then shouldn't you, through the help and power of the Holy Spirit, clean up your life as you continually present it as a living sacrifice to the one almighty and eternal God? □

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### Editorial (continued from page 2)

2. The idea that one should be thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving in all possible respects if one is to consider oneself worthwhile.
3. The idea that certain people are bad, wicked, or villainous and that they should be severely blamed and punished for their villainy.
4. The idea that it is awful and catastrophic when things are not the way one would very much like them to be.
5. The idea that human unhappiness is externally caused and that people have little or no ability to control their sorrows and disturbances.
6. The idea that if something is or may be dangerous or fearsome, one should be terribly concerned about it and should keep dwelling on the possibility of it occurring.
7. The idea that it is easier to avoid than to face certain life difficulties and responsibilities.

8. The idea that one should be dependent upon others and therefore needs someone stronger than oneself on whom to rely.
9. The idea that one's past history is an all-important determiner of one's present behavior and that because something once strongly affected one's life, it should indefinitely have a similar effect.
10. The idea that one should become quite upset over other people's problems and disturbances.
11. The idea that there is invariably a right, precise and perfect solution to human problems, and that it is catastrophic if this perfect solution is not found.

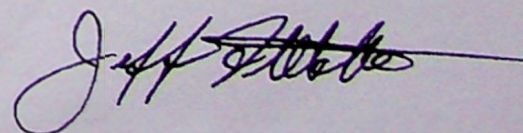
By correcting or changing an irrational belief we can go a long way toward overcoming some kinds of depression. This can be done through intimacy with God in prayer and reading the word, and by talking through feelings and thoughts with a trusted pastor, counselor, spiritual director or friend.

If you are experiencing feelings of depression, remember, you are NOT ALONE. God does not call us to follow Christ in isolation, we are members of a community: the body of Christ. Find someone to help you.

There are a number of excellent books available for those who want to know more about overcoming depression or helping others cope with depression:

*Happiness is a Choice* by Frank Minirth and Paul Meier; *Walking Through the Valley* by Robert L. Randall; *The Pastoral Care of Depression* by Binford Gilbert; *Coping with Depression in the Ministry and other Helping Professions* by Archibald Hart.

May God bless you with a healthy and HAPPY year 2000.



Jeffrey Fletcher

# Bring Jesus to Work with You

SUBMITTED BY CHARLES W. SAVAGE

I drive into work listening to gospel music or a pre-recorded sermon on the radio. I get out of the car and walk to the building entrance.

As I open the building door I leave just enough room for me to get in and I leave Jesus standing outside as the door closes behind me. He's standing with His palms on the door glass and watches me as I get on the elevator.

His eyes are sad and He turns and goes to sit on the stone bench. There He'll sit patiently and wait for me for the next nine hours.

First two hours of work — I fuss and complain about things not going right. Jesus, sitting with His chin in His hand looks upward toward the building wishing He could help me.



By lunch time — I'm flustered, regretting I work in this place and sputtering bitterness all over folks. Jesus comes around to the side of the building where my cubicle is located. He looks up from the ground trying to get my attention but I can't hear Him; my focus is on my problems.

*What are our actions  
saying about us  
and about who,  
or whose, we are?*

. . . . .

Jesus goes back to the front of the building, sits down and continues to wait for me. He thinks to Himself as He looks up to the third floor, "She went in there defenseless. If only she had taken me in there with her. When will she learn?"

End of the day — I'm tired, run down, with no energy, irritable and frustrated. I leave the building and Jesus gets up happily to greet me but I'm in no mood for Him now. I've just left work and the last thing I want to do is be bothered with anyone.

Jesus just actually showed me this is how I'VE been acting. He showed me each act and worst of all, He let me feel a small portion of how grieved He was because of my actions and attitude.

I left Jesus standing outside, almost let the door smack in His face and I went inside defenseless. From time to time our jobs overwhelm us and we completely forget to "take Jesus with us." We may not go around cursing anyone out or punching anyone in the face (hopefully) but what are our actions saying about us and about who, or whose, we are?

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house (Matt. 5:13-15 KJV).

We should be bringing peace to our jobs, not be the cause of confusion. We should be the ones to bring our gifts and talents to the table to help in WHATEVER area God has chosen for us to work in.

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ (Col. 3:23-24).

My hope in sharing this is that this will help someone who may be having a hard time in their workplace. □

# I Cannot Pray

**I** cannot say OUR if my religion has no room for others and their needs.

I cannot say FATHER if I do not demonstrate this relationship in my daily life.

I cannot say WHO ART IN HEAVEN if all my interests and pursuits are in earthly things.

I cannot say HALLOWED BE THY NAME if I, who am called by His name am not holy.

I cannot say THY KINGDOM COME if I am unwilling to give up my own sovereignty and accept the righteous reign of God.

I cannot say THY WILL BE DONE if I am unwilling or resentful of having it in my life.

I cannot say ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN unless I am truly ready to give myself to His service here and now.

I cannot say GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD without expending honest effort for it or by ignoring the genuine needs of my fellow men.

I cannot say FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US if I continue to harbor a grudge against anyone.

*Our Father who art in heaven,*

*Hallowed be thy name.*

*Thy kingdom come,*

*Thy will be done,*

*On earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread;*

*And forgive our debts,*

*As we also have forgiven our debtors;*

*And lead us not into temptation,*

*But deliver us from evil.*

I cannot say LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.

I cannot say DELIVER US FROM EVIL if I am not prepared to fight in the spiritual realm with the weapon of prayer.

I cannot say THINE IS THE KINGDOM if I do not give the King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.

I cannot say THINE IS THE POWER if I fear what my neighbors and friends may say or do.

I cannot say THINE IS THE GLORY if I am seeking my own glory first.

I cannot say FOREVER if I am too anxious about each day's affairs.

I cannot say AMEN unless I honestly say, "Cost what it may, this is my prayer." □

# Something for Mothers

A few months ago, when I was picking up the children at school, another mother I knew well rushed up to me. Emily was fuming with indignation.

"Do you know what you and I are?" she demanded.

Before I could answer — and I didn't really have one handy — she blurted out the reason for her question. It seemed she had just returned from renewing her driver's license at the County Clerk's office.

Asked by the woman recorder to state her "occupation," Emily had hesitated, uncertain how to classify herself.

"What I mean is," explained the recorder, "Do you have a job, or are you just a . . . ?"

"Of course I have a job," snapped Emily. "I'm a mother."

"We don't list 'mother' as an occupation; 'housewife' covers it," said the recorder emphatically.

I forgot all about her story until one day I found myself in the same situation, this time at our own Town Hall. The clerk was obviously a career woman, poised, efficient, and possessed of a high-sounding title, like "Official Interrogator" or "Town Registrar."

"And what is your occupation?" she probed. What made me say it, I do not know. The words simply popped out. "I'm . . . a Research Associate in the field of Child Development and Human Relations."

The clerk paused, ball-point pen frozen in mid-air, and looked up as though she had not heard right. I repeated the title slowly, emphasizing the most significant words. Then I stared with wonder as my pompous pronouncement was written in bold, black ink on the official questionnaire.

"Might I ask," said the clerk with new interest, "just what you do in your field?"

*"And what is  
your occupation?"  
she probed.*

• • • • •  
Coolly, without any trace of fluster in my voice, I heard myself reply, "I have a continuing program of research" (what mother doesn't) "in the laboratory and in the field" (normally I would have said indoors and out). "I'm working for my Masters" (the whole darned family) "and already have four credits" (all daughters).

"Of course, the job is one of the most demanding in the humanities" (any mother care to disagree?) "and I often work 14 hours a day" (24 is more like it). "But the job is more challenging than most run-of-the-mill careers and the rewards are in satisfaction rather than just money."

There was an increasing note of respect in the clerk's voice as she completed the form, stood up, and personally ushered me to the door.

As I drove into our driveway buoyed up by my glamorous new career, I was greeted by my lab assistants — ages 13, 7, and 3. And upstairs I could hear our new experimental model (six months) in the child-development program, testing out a new vocal pattern. I felt triumphant. I had scored a beat on bureaucracy. And I had gone down on the official records as someone more distinguished and indispensable to mankind than "just another . . ." Home — what a glorious career. Especially when there's a title on the door. □



# Putting Her in Her Place: Matthew 15:21-28

ANONYMOUS

**T**his story about Jesus and the Canaanite woman is one that really bothers me. It starts out just like so many other miracle stories in the Gospels, somebody needs help, and comes to Jesus. Now, ordinarily, we expect Jesus to respond, to demonstrate God's great love for us by healing the person or providing for their needs. Isn't that what He usually does? But this time, He doesn't. First, He ignores this woman, tells her He can't help her, then He makes a very denigrating remark about her ethnicity. Is this the Jesus we know? The One who came to show us God's love? What's going on here?

I've been wrestling with this story, and trying to figure out why Matthew would tell such a story about Jesus. It certainly doesn't show Jesus in a very positive light. Yes, the story is there in Mark, (who calls her a Syro-phoenician) and Matthew is following Mark pretty closely at this point in his Gospel. But Matthew takes the sparse little story in Mark and expands it. In Mark, the woman comes, Jesus gives her the line about not feeding the children's food to the dogs, she answers that even the dogs get the crumbs from under the table. End of story, move on! Matthew takes this story, makes it a three-fold denial, adds dialogue, and makes it clear that this is a very significant event. Why?

I think we need to take a closer look at this text, and see what we can make of it. First, Jesus withdraws to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Matthew is careful to tell us He's withdrawing. He wants to get away for a while. He's just had a heated argument with the Pharisees over the question of

washing hands. What makes a person unclean? The Pharisees look to the traditions of ritual cleansing and purity. There are very special rules about all this, and a person has to be very careful to keep them. Jesus says, no, it's simpler than that. It's what comes from the heart that makes a person unclean. It's the lies, the deceit, the sinful nature. That's what defiles a person. In the course of the debate, Jesus seems to be downplaying the importance of the Pharisees' traditions and the Law. They are

*She was a mother,  
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for her daughter.*

getting dangerously angry. Jesus remembers the recent execution of John the Baptist. He's not ready yet to take too much heat for this kind of controversy. He has more work to do. His disciples have certainly demonstrated that they aren't ready yet to carry on alone. He wants a place to get away and let the situation cool down.

On top of that, it's been an exhausting time. Since the death of John, there's been the feeding of the 5,000, walking on the water, healing large crowds... I think He's tired. It would be good to get away for a while and renew His energies.

Tyre and Sidon are outside the bounds of Galilee, on the seacoast. A nice spot for a vacation, walks on the beach, quiet dinners with just the few disciples coming along. He would be out of reach of the Jewish authorities, out of Herod's territory. Maybe He hoped He wouldn't be known there. But the minute He arrives—behold! A Canaanite woman came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon!" She's blown His cover, and there goes the vacation.

Her calling out to Him didn't seem out of the ordinary to me, reading with twentieth century eyes. But as I began to dig into my resources, I began to learn some things. Elaine Wainwright points out that this is the very first time in Matthew's Gospel that a woman speaks! This is chapter 15. And that's not all, she goes on to say that in all of Matthew, there are only seven verses where a woman speaks, and three of them are in this story. That makes this story pretty unusual. I think we need to understand what it means for this woman to call out to Jesus in the public streets of first century Palestine, apart from destroying His plans for a quiet getaway.

It just wasn't done. First, she was a woman, and women did not address men in public, and certainly not by shouting out! Secondly, she was a Canaanite, descended from those people who were already in the land when Moses and the Israelites came marching in to take it over. These are people the Israelites have had trouble with all through the Bible. Some of the Bible history even goes so far as to suggest that the biggest reason that the people of Israel had

*(continued on page 10)*

so much trouble obeying God and keeping the covenant all started when they failed to completely wipe the Canaanites out. They were pagans. They were unclean. So this Canaanite woman came to Jesus with two strikes against her: an unclean woman calling out to Him on the street.

It's no wonder that Jesus ignored her. This woman was way out of bounds. According to Jewish tradition, ignoring her would have been the correct behavior. But she demands His attention. She will not be ignored. And her call to Jesus is remarkable.

"Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!" This from a pagan woman. An outsider. Where did she learn the proper way to address the Jewish Messiah? This is a messianic title. And these are exactly the same words used by the two blind men who called out to Jesus and were healed back in chapter nine. How did she hear about Jesus? There were a number of Jews living in the area of Tyre and Sidon. She must have learned some things from them. There must have been exciting stories about Jesus told around the village well as the women gathered there. She must have overheard the Jewish women talking about Him, and maybe even dared to talk with them, asking



some questions. She must have heard somewhere about this great healer, Jesus. How desperate must she have been, a Canaanite, to appeal to Jesus to heal her poor daughter? She knew she was taking a risk, stepping out of her place. But she was a mother, and she was willing to do anything, even risk public humiliation in the street, to get help for her daughter. As a parent, wouldn't you?

Jesus "answers her not a word," but she keeps on calling out! Jesus ignores her, but that doesn't stop her. She follows Him and His disciples, and she's still calling, "Jesus! Son of David! Have mercy on me! Lord, please heal my daughter! Jesus! Jesus!" The disciples don't have as much nerve as Jesus, and they can't take it anymore. "Send her away!" they say to Jesus. He must have turned and looked at her then. He said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." He tries to explain to her that she just isn't a candidate for His help. He came for the Jews. Period.

But this is hard for me to understand, as well. Jesus has already healed Gentiles on at least two occasions in Matthew's story (the centurion's servant and the two Gadarene demoniacs). He has healed other women (the ruler's daughter, and the woman with a hemorrhage, to name two). So what can He mean? Is He testing her? Is He teaching her a lesson? Or is He truly refusing to help her daughter?

This woman amazes me. She is not discouraged. She is determined to get help for her daughter, and she is convinced that Jesus is the one with the power to heal her. I imagine her thinking, "Okay. The shouting didn't work. Time for a fresh approach. I know, beg! Maybe he'll feel sorry for me." And so, she breaks into that little circle of disciples around Jesus, and she prostrates herself at His feet, kneeling low, looking down at the dirt. Pouring all her pain into her voice, she softly implores, "Lord, help me!"

And Jesus looks down at her, kneeling before Him in the dirt, and He answers, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

Ouch! Now why would Jesus say such a thing? Bible scholars have been trying for a long time now to soften the blow of those words. Maybe He's really joking with her, and she gets the joke. Maybe He's teaching her a lesson in humility, or testing her faith. Maybe He's just tired. Or, maybe it really doesn't matter that He's nasty to her at this point, because He heals her daughter in the end. Now the epithet Jesus used is apparently a common expression used by the Jews against the Gentiles, kind of like "Don't cast your pearls before swine." But that doesn't explain how Jesus could use it. I wonder why?

I think there's more going on here. I think this woman needed to learn a lesson about her place in the world, and I think Jesus taught it to her. I'm taking a class in marriage counseling, and I was astonished when I looked at this text and realized that human relations between men and women haven't changed all that much in 2,000 years or so. Certain ways of relating to another person usually generate certain responses. I can see it in this story.

Three times in this story the woman asks Jesus for help. The first two times, He refuses, and the third time He happily agreed to give her what she wanted. What made the difference?

The first time she comes to Jesus, shouting after Him, this Canaanite woman is demanding. Antoinette Clark Wire even classifies this story along with some others, as a "Demand Story," one where a person seeks Jesus out for the purpose of healing. The Canaanite woman first relates to Jesus with a demanding attitude. Perhaps she wasn't sure how to approach Jesus, so she put on some false bravado. Maybe demanding worked for her in other situations. But demanding does not work with Jesus. He responds with stony silence.

Healing can't be demanded. Love can't be demanded. And it doesn't respond on command. So she tries again.

She relates to Jesus in a different way. She gets down and grovels, puts her face in the dirt. How does He respond? The way that many of us would if someone laid down in front of us, and in effect, said, "Kick me." He kicked. She plays victim; He plays the corresponding role, and responds to her subservience with hostility. So she learns, no, this isn't the way to ask something of Jesus, either.

Then, finally, she discards the patterns she was using. Those old patterns for relating just didn't work with Jesus. She takes a risk. She responds to Him genuinely, and with real insight. She relates to Him, not from a position of power, not from a position of weakness, but with hope for an honest dialogue, looking for mutual respect. And He responds to her, "Woman great is your faith!"

It's as if He were saying, "Yes! Now you get it!" And He honors her trust in him by healing her daughter. He has shown her her place. Not over against Him, demanding; not down on the ground, groveling; but beside Him, questioning and learning. She has joined the community of faith by trusting Jesus, coming to Him with honesty. That is the place for this woman. That's the place for you and me.

I have to admit that my first reaction when I read this story is one of anger. Never mind that such a reaction would probably never have occurred to a woman in her day, in that world. But on reflection, I'm glad that the woman doesn't respond to hostility with more hostility. That doesn't solve anything. It just creates a cycle of anger and hurt, violence and more violence. It's not going to do her any good, and it's not going to heal her daughter. No, this woman is wiser than I. Even after having that insult thrown at her, she is not daunted. I imagine she gets up, and dusts off her skirt a bit. And she answers Him, not with anger, but in a respectful tone, with dignity, "Yes

Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." She's debating with Him now, in true rabbinical fashion. With wit and ingenuity she catches Him in His own words. "O.K.," she says, "if you want to call me a dog, call me a dog, but the dog can be fed without taking away what belongs to the children."

She is reminding Jesus of the truth that He knows. The gifts of God's Kingdom are limitless! There is enough bread for everyone at God's table. Healing, forgiveness, peace, joy, love: these aren't precious, limited commodities that we need to hoard. NO! God's love is boundless, the more we share, the more there is. Isn't this what Jesus taught us when He multiplied the loaves and the fishes? The bread of God's

*Do we come with lists  
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kingdom is an unlimited resource, spread it around! Feed it to the children, the men, the women, the young, the old! Throw it to the dogs! Throw it in the air to feed the birds! Give it to everyone!

And Jesus answers her joyfully! "Woman, great is your faith." He recognizes her as a member of God's family, welcome at God's table. And her daughter is healed. That's why Matthew tells this story. His community is in conflict over the whole concept of a mission to the Gentiles. How can they take this precious Gospel and give it to unclean people? Matthew says, Jesus struggled with this, too, and here is the answer. The gifts of the Kingdom are for all! Spread them around, share the bread! All who come to Christ with honesty and trust are welcomed at the table!



How do we come to the Holy One? Do we come with lists of requests that we expect to have answered, as if we were going grocery shopping? I call that the "Touched by an Angel" mentality. God is good to us, God forgives us and heals us because that is God's job. There aren't any demands on us. We're God's children, aren't we? And we expect to be spoiled rotten.

Or do we come with fear and trepidation? Do we degrade ourselves, and act as though we were subhuman, and not the human beings God made and pronounced "good"? Yes, we are unclean. Yes, we are separated from God and in need of healing for ourselves and our human family. But that does not give us an excuse to look on ourselves as worthless. Christ did not live with us and die for us because we are worthless. We are called to be God's people, to love and to serve God, but please note that there is a difference between serving and being servile. "Sometimes self-sacrifice is necessary, but that's not possible if you don't have a self to give."

*(continued on page 19)*

# The Substance of Faith

BY DAVID W. DYER — LEOMINSTER, MA

**A**mong Christians in our country today there is much talk about faith. Many preachers consistently expound on this one topic. Others have written entire books on the subject. Entire denominations are even being organized centering around this one aspect of God's revelation. "Faith" is becoming quite popular. In view of these things I believe it is worthwhile for us as Christians to take a little time to investigate exactly what the substance of faith is. If we are going to talk about faith and have faith — genuine faith — we must understand what it really is. It is not enough just to have a natural concept or idea but, as with all the things contained in the Bible, we must have supernatural revelation to understand it. If we are truly to know what faith is, then we must have God reveal it to us. Let us pray together that God would use this message to accomplish this purpose.

Perhaps the best way to grasp exactly what faith is is to take a look at the experience of the father of faith — Abraham. By examining just how he arrived at faith perhaps we can discover exactly what God's way to faith is. The scripture reads: "the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision" (Gen. 15:1). Then it says, "And he (Abram) believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). The order in which these two events took place is very significant. First God supernaturally manifested His will and His glory to Abraham. Then he believed. His response to this heavenly vision was faith. He reacted to this divine revelation by believing that God existed and that what He said was true.

Please notice on the other hand how his faith did not happen. Abraham was not walking in the desert one starry night looking into the heavens and suddenly thought, "There must be a God. By golly, I think there really is God. Why, I believe, I believe there is God and He surely must want me to have many descendants." And God did not, upon hearing these "words of faith," come rushing down and reveal Himself to Abraham. No, Abraham's faith came in exactly the opposite way. First God revealed Himself and then Abraham believed. It was this kind of faith that pleased God and caused Him to label Abraham as righteous. What a wonderful event that must have been when God first showed Himself to Abraham. Do you still remember the time when God was first revealed to you? If you are a Christian today it is because at some time and in some way God manifested Himself, and your response to this was faith. You may have said something like, "God is real. I've seen Him. He has shown Himself to me and now I believe in Him." Unless you have come to know the one true God personally through Jesus Christ, you cannot be a real Christian.

Let's continue here with a brief definition of faith. "Faith is the human response to divine revelation." Once God shows us something of Himself then we can believe. But unless He chooses to reveal Himself to us nothing we can do or think will qualify as real faith. Unless we have seen Him in some measure we cannot believe in Him. We can perhaps give our mental assent to something we have read or heard about God but this is not what the Bible calls "faith." James tells us that even the demons

have a kind of faith. They believe and tremble (James 2:19). But saving faith — genuine faith — the kind of faith that justifies before God those who possess it, is faith which results from God's revealing Himself. The scripture explains that faith is not of ourselves but rather it is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8). This means that it does not originate within us but that God gives it to us through revelation.

Unfortunately, not every man's reaction to divine revelation is faith. Many people we read about in the Bible reacted to the manifestation of God's power and divinity with unbelief. Most of us probably imagine that if God would speak audibly from heaven everyone would surely believe. Nevertheless this is not the case. Several times in the gospels it is recorded that God did just that. One time Jesus was praying to the Father and said, "Father, glorify thy name." In response to this a voice came out from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28). Even though the entire crowd heard the voice of God, not all believed. Some of them said, "Surely it must have thundered." Their reaction was one of complete unbelief. They had heard God audibly yet they chose not to believe in the reality of what had just happened. Still another striking instance of such unbelief is seen when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. After this event, we are told that many of His disciples believed on Him. But there were some among the crowd who scurried off to report to the Pharisees. Even though they had seen the dead raised they did not believe. Instead their hearts were hardened and they went to tell on Him.



True faith occurs when the human heart responds positively to God. It is not something which comes from within ourselves. When God through His mercy reveals Himself to us in some way, we are then in a position to choose whether or not to believe. Even this ability to choose correctly comes from God. The scripture is explicit that in some instances God hardens some individuals' hearts and blinds their minds so that they do not believe (Rom. 9:18, John 12:40). Not only is the initial act of revelation something from on high but it is through God's mercy alone that any of us believe. He is the only one who gives faith to men by showing Himself to them and enabling them to respond by believing. This is the substance of faith.

Many people today, misunderstanding this truth, have attempted to make faith into a human kind of hope. They mistakenly teach that if you simply read the Bible, choose passages which please you and try to claim them by constantly reasserting your agreement with the truth expressed in them, that you will thereby arrive at faith and receive something from God. This method is as difficult as lifting yourself up by your own bootstraps. No amount of continual restatement of scriptural truths will lead us to genuine faith. Only the supernatural revelation of God can accomplish this. The scriptures read, "and Jesus manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him" (John 2:11). Once their eyes were opened and they saw who He really was, then they believed. This is the kind of faith that the Bible is talking about.

Unfortunately human beings are often blinded to spiritual things by worldly definitions. Just because we've grown up thinking we knew what faith was—that is, giving our mental assent to some idea—we imagine that this same definition will be good enough to use in our Christianity. Sadly this kind of mental activity will never work. Only those who have seen God and know Him believe in a way that will cause

them to be accounted righteous and enable them to receive something from God.

All too often preachers and healers of various sorts encourage believers to strain themselves, trying to make their minds believe that a certain event or healing will take place. Many times these people are greatly disappointed. In some instances they are even condemned for their failure and told that they don't have enough faith. It is explained to them that in essence it is their fault. They simply did not try hard enough. On the other hand once God reveals to you (either through the scriptures or directly by His Spirit) that something will take place you can then know beyond any doubt that it will happen. You can

*When we open the Bible  
we must also open our  
hearts to God Himself.*

. . . . .  
respond to this revelation in the same way Abraham did—by believing. It is this kind of supernatural assurance that is the substance of faith and it is only when we have this assurance that we have true faith.

In all fairness it should be said that there is great value in encouraging people to believe when it is done properly. Many times God reveals Himself to Christians, showing them something which they can apprehend by faith, yet they do not believe. Their hearts may be bound by fear, bitterness, depression, darkness or any number of other things which keep them from responding to what God is revealing. Those who are in this situation should be exhorted to lay hold of that which God is showing them. They need to be encouraged to exercise their faith—to respond with their will, choosing to believe God. Of course in this situation, as in other examples about which we have been speaking, God must be the initiator of this faith. It is not enough just to hope something will

be true and try to get ourselves to believe it. But if the Lord is prompting us, if He has already shown us something of Himself and His purposes, then we must believe if we are to continue walking with Him in all the fullness which is available to us.

Faith does not come merely from reading the Bible. Now before you get offended with this please allow me a moment of explanation. Truly "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). But the reason our faith can be increased by reading or hearing the scriptures is that God reveals Himself to us through them. Pages from a book can never transmit faith unless God chooses to use them to show us something of Himself. It is a great mistake to study the Bible, attempt to figure out what God's will is, and then try to "believe" it. How many Christians waste valuable time in this way! Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for precisely this same activity. He said, "You keep on searching the Scriptures, for you yourselves suppose that you will get possession of eternal life or faith through them; and yet they are witnesses that testify to me, but you refuse to come to me to get possession of life" (John 5:39, 40, Williams). When we open the Bible we must also open our hearts to God Himself.

Of course I am not advocating any extra-Biblical revelation. We must always weigh what we think we see by the Word of God. Neither should we be ignorant of the things which are written in it. Actually Christians should spend as much time meditating on the scriptures as possible. However, it is only when we contact the person of Jesus while reading the Bible that our faith grows. He truly is the "author (originator) and finisher (completor) of our faith" (Heb. 12:2).

The point of all this is that God is the source of true faith. When we desire faith we must come to Him and Him alone. None of our own concepts or scriptural rationalizations will work. Only the super-

*(continued on page 14)*

# Explaining God

BY DANNY DUTTON — CHULA VISTA, CA

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die so there will be enough people to take care of things here on earth. He doesn't make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way, He doesn't have to take up His valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times besides bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV on account of this. Since He hears everything, not only prayers, there must be a terrible lot of noise in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere, which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting His time by going over your parent's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.

Atheists are people who don't believe in God, I don't think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren't any who come to our church.

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work, like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired of Him preaching to them and they crucified Him. But He was good and kind like His Father and He told His Father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said OK. His Dad (God) appreciated everything that He had done and all His hard work

*“Come unto me,  
all ye that labour and  
are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest”*

. . . . .  
on earth so He told Him He didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So He did. And now He helps His Dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones He can take care of Himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important of course.

You can pray anytime you want and They are sure to hear you because They got it worked out so one of Them is on duty all the time.

You should always go to church because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God. Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong! And, besides, the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway.

If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He's around you when you're scared in the dark or when you can't swim very good and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids.

But you shouldn't always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and can take me back anytime He pleases.

And that's why I believe in God. □

*(Danny Dutton, age 8, wrote the above for a third grade homework assignment to explain God.)*

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## The Substance of Faith *(continued from page 13)*

natural manifestation of God will cause us to believe and enable us to receive anything from Him. Let us therefore open to Him—turn our gaze away from everything else—and allow His Spirit to speak to our hearts. As we increasingly come to know God in

an intimate, personal way, our faith will grow and our life will be enriched.

In closing let me say that the substance of faith is not a small or unimportant thing. It is crucial to our Christianity. If our walk with the Lord is to be genuine and our experience of God to be real—if we are to

escape deception and vanity—then we must avoid all unreality in our faith. We must instead give our assent only to what God has revealed to us. Once He has shown us some truth, then we know it certainly. We too can be like Isaiah who “saw his glory, and spake of him” (John 12:41). □

# The Word

BY JUAN BAIXERAS — MIAMI, FL

John 1:1-14 is the backbone of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity is the outcome of a Greek philosophical interpretation of these verses in the third and fourth centuries from the great intellectual center in Alexandria by such men as Clement, Origen, and Athanasius, and Tertullian of nearby Carthage. Their argument is that "the Word" in John 1:1-14 is Jesus. With this premise they ended up with a Jesus who has always existed, and who ultimately was considered to be part of a triune God. This is an incorrect interpretation of John 1:1-14.

Can we, on the other hand, prove that "the Word" is not a reference to Jesus? Yes, we can, quite easily and as a matter of fact. Surprisingly the clarification comes from John himself, in his first epistle which we will be discussing in depth.

There are some scholars who believe that John wrote his first epistle for the sole purpose of correcting the misinterpretation of John 1:1-14 that was occurring even in his own time. I believe they are correct in this assumption because, as we shall see, John goes into great detail to tell us exactly what "the Word" is. In John's first epistle I see a strong effort by John to clarify his position and definition about "the Word." He leaves us with no other way to interpret "the Word."

In this article we will be examining John 1:1-14 and comparing it to verses in 1 John. John's first epistle will shed an incredible amount of light on John chapter 1.

Before starting one thing must be said, John's gospel was not written to prove that Jesus is God, but that he is *the Son of God, the Messiah*. These are John's own words.

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God" (John 20:31). This is the context in which John's gospel must be read. To take it out of this context is to interpret John in a way in which John did not intend.

## **"In the beginning was the Word."**

The main argument with this verse is whether "the Word" is another way of saying Jesus, or whether it is what it has always been, a *message* from God. Yet, theologians

*Some believe John wrote his epistle for the purpose of correcting the misinterpretation in his own time.*

gians have taken the liberty to substitute figuratively and literally "Jesus" for "Word" in this verse. Is this accurate? Judge for yourself. Let's first see the definition of "Word." It does have a real definition after all.

"Word" in this verse is a translation of the Greek word "logos." In the original Greek text, "logos" does not have the capital first letter given to "Word" in the English translation. It should properly be translated "word" (with a small "w").

Another important point to be recognized is the fact that the same exact word (letter for letter) "logos" is used in other Scriptures and nobody has ever capitalized it, or claimed that it referred to Jesus. Examples: 2 Timothy 2:8-9 "This is my

gospel, for which I am suffering to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's *word* is not chained." 1 John 2:7 "Beloved, I am writing no new commandment to you but an old commandment that you had from *the beginning*. The old commandment is the *word* that you have heard." Revelation 20:4-5: "I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus AND for *the word* of God." Revelation 1:2: "His servant John, who gives witness to *the word* of God AND to the testimony of Jesus Christ."

The two verses above from John's book of Revelation use the exact same word "logos" which is translated in English as "word." It is important to notice that those who were mentioned were beheaded for their testimony of Jesus AND the word (logos) of God. John gives witness to the word of God (God's message of salvation) AND to the testimony of Jesus Christ. It is obvious that *Jesus is not the Word*. Logos is used in many places in the New Testament, and it is *never* used as a reference for Jesus.

Consider these descriptions of the biblical use of "logos": "May denote an internal reasoning process, *plan*, or *intention*, as well as an external word, speech, or *message*" (from a footnote in the New American Bible). "*The expression of thought. As embodying a conception or idea*" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*). "The *inward thought* which is expressed in the spoken word" (Liddell and Scott's *Greek Lexicon*).

Unfortunately this is not what it meant to Greek philosophy. In Greek philosophies such as Stoicism, and Neo-Platonism, "logos" was considered divine. To a Stoic,

logos was "the divine principle of life." This is basically a definition of God. In Gnosticism "Logos" was the name of one of the intermediary gods between the high God and humanity.

Someone educated in one of these philosophies could interpret John 1:1 in the following manner: "In the beginning was the divine principle of life, the divine principle of life was with God, and the divine principle of life was God," and then verse 14 becomes: "the divine principle of life became flesh." Now you have God in heaven and in the flesh at the same time. The explanation came in the form of a dual natured Messiah who is fully God and fully man at all times (This definition of Jesus is in the Creed of Chalcedon which is the Trinitarian creed of all Trinitarian denominations). Thus the trinity.

How you can be fully two different things is a mystery in itself. You can be part Italian and part French at the same time, but you cannot be fully Italian and fully French at the same time. This is why people explaining the trinity always end up saying that it's a mystery. To a Hebrew, like John, the phrase "word of God" means "the revealed will of God" (as *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* says). In other words, "A message from God." In 2 Kings 3:12 when it says "He has the word of the LORD" it means that God revealed *His will* to him. We can also compare other verses to verify this definition. 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." Sirach 42:15: "At God's word were His works brought into being." As you can see, word and will are *interchangeable*. God's word represents His thoughts, which is His will. Sirach 37:16 provides us with an excellent example: "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

an important definition to remember in order to better understand "The Word was God" which we will be explaining.

It would be easier if John were here right now to tell us exactly what he meant, but in a sense he is. He left us so many clear verses in his first epistle on what he meant by "word" that sometimes I find it difficult to see how people have misinterpreted his gospel. Let us look at 1 John to find the answer.

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life and the life was manifested; and we have seen, and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also" (1 John 1:1-3).

Notice that in John what is from the beginning is the word, and in 1 John what is from the beginning is something that was *heard* (a message). John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word." 1 John 1:1: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard." Now let us tie in other verses from John's first epistle.

"Beloved, I am writing no new commandment to you but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard" (1 John 2:7). In 1 John 1:1 what was from the beginning is something that was heard, here in 1 John 2:7 the old commandment is what they have had from the beginning, (sound familiar?) and the old commandment is the "word" that they what? Heard! The same as in 1 John 1:1.

Your next question should be, "What commandment is John speaking about?" He is speaking about what Jesus called the greatest commandment, (Mark 12:29) the commandment of love which God gave the Hebrews from the beginning. The message of love that the proclamation of the Kingdom of God brings with it.

How do we know for sure that this is the message and/or the commandment that they

heard from the beginning? Because John tells you so in 1 John 3:11 and 1 John 3:23: "For this is the message you have HEARD from the BEGINNING: we should love one another." "And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." Loving one another is how the world will know that we are followers of Christ. John 13:30 "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

According to Paul (Romans 13:9), the law of love is the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law and it is the Law in the coming *Kingdom of God* which the Messiah has come to proclaim. These are Jesus' own words. Luke 4:43 "To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent."

Is Jesus' good news about the kingdom the same thing as "the word" that John speaks about in his writings? Yes it is, this is the word that they *have heard*. Look at the parable of the sower. Matthew 13:19 "The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it."

The message of the Kingdom of God is a *message of love*. In other words, "the word" is the message of love in the coming Kingdom of God in which love is the rule, not the exception. The New Age (the Kingdom of God) which Jesus will establish when he returns will be a kingdom of love. This is what proclaiming the word of the kingdom is about, a New World order (new heavens and new earth) based on love. This is the message ("the word") that Jesus has brought us. This is the "word" Jesus spoke about. "Remember the word I spoke to you" (John 16:20). "Because the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them" (John 17:8).

Because of God's love for us, God has provided us with a message of hope, the hope of entering God's Kingdom of love. He has demonstrated His love for us and at

the same time provided a way for us to enter into his kingdom as His pure, sin-free children by sacrificing for our sins the only unblemished lamb of mankind, Jesus of Nazareth. John 3:16 — “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”

We can also examine the writings of the Apostolic Fathers (men that the Apostles or the Apostles’ disciples put in place) to see what they considered “the word” to be. *The Epistle to Diognetus*, one of their writings says in verse 8:11: “But when he revealed it through His beloved Son, and manifested the purpose which He had prepared from the beginning.” When God revealed what? The word (message) that Jesus brought us. Notice that what was prepared from *the beginning* is God’s *purpose*, and it was *revealed* to us by Jesus.

Another of the Apostolic Fathers was Polycarp, who knew John the Apostle personally, he wrote in his letter to the Philippians in verse 7:2: “Wherefore let us forsake the vain doing of the many and their false teachings, and turn unto the word which was delivered unto us from the beginning.” Polycarp is urging the people to turn away from false teachings and turn unto the word. In other words, “Turn away from false teachings and return to the original message that was delivered to them from the beginning.” His usage of word is very Jewish, and identical to the way that John the Apostle uses it. This is fitting because Polycarp was a disciple of John, and one would expect his views to coincide with John’s, which they do.

Polycarp has no idea of “the word” being Jesus. He even says that the word was delivered unto us in the beginning. Jesus was not delivered unto us in the beginning. He was revealed to us in the *final days*, the *last days*. Hebrews 1:2 states: “In these last days He spoke to us through a son.” 1 Peter 1:20 says: “He was known before the foundations of the world, but revealed in the final times for you.

God’s message, or will (the Kingdom of God based on love and ruled by the Messiah), was delivered unto us in the *beginning* through the Patriarchs and the Prophets. What is from the beginning is God’s love and His message (logos) for our redemption and salvation that He revealed to us through Jesus. Ephesians 3:11 confirms this. “This was according to the eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What is God’s eternal purpose for us? That we live a life of love and not perish. This is provided for us through His Son Jesus. Because of Jesus’ sacrifice we are able to enter the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16).

#### “And the Word was with God.”

If John was really trying to say that Jesus is God, he would simply have written; “in the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God.” I do not think that he would have written it in a kind of code that would not be understood except by Greek philosophers of a later century.

When John says that the word was with God, he simply means that the “word” (message, plan) was *present in His mind*. It was with Him, just like a person’s thoughts are *with them* until they speak. The New American Bible says this of “word”: “Was thought to be a reality lodging within the person, and that it goes out from that person when spoken or written and then lodges within the person to whom it is directed.” This idea is confirmed by Jeremiah: “How long must your pernicious thoughts lodge within you?” (Jeremiah 4:14).

Now let’s look at 1 John 1:1-2 to shed some light on this verse. John refers to the Word as the “Word of Life.” “Concerning the Word of life and the life was manifested; and we have seen, and bear witness,

and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.”

Notice that in the verse above it is the eternal life that was with the Father. In John 1:1 it is the Word that was with God. This is why John calls it the Word of Life in 1 John 1:1. “Word of Life” is another way of saying “The message that brings us eternal life.” This is the message that they heard, this is the message that was with God from the beginning. God’s Word of Life (His plan for our salvation) was known to God from long ago. It was with Him from *the beginning*. “To do what your hand and your will had long ago planned to take place” (Acts 4:28). “For I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the entire plan of God” (Acts 20:27).

#### “And the word was God.”

The word is God’s expressed will that He uses to communicate with us. God’s will is God. What John is saying is that God’s word *expresses* God’s mind. Word = God’s Will = God’s mind = God.

The Trinitarian (Catholic) New American Bible states the following on this verse: “Lack of a definite article with ‘God’ in Greek signifies predication rather than identification.”

According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, predication means, “to affirm as a quality or attribute.” Even the Roman Catholic Bible tells us that it *does not signify identification*.

We can cross-reference other Scriptures to prove that the Word (His thoughts, will) is God. Examples: Jonah 1:1-3 — “The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me. But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish.” It says the *word* (revealed will of God) of the LORD came to Jonah, then it says that Jonah ran away from the LORD. God came to Jonah and told him His *will* or *plan* (which was to go to Nineveh), and

Jonah ran away from God. The Word (God's will) is God.

Isaiah 55:11 — "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it." In this verse, when God speaks, His thoughts and power (*His word*) go out from Him to do *His will*. God's will is God. The Word is God.

The *gospel*, the good news of the kingdom of God which is based on love is *God's plan of salvation for us*. This is His *will*. It reflects the *mind of God*. My mind is reflective of me. It reflects who I am as a person. The gospel is referred to many times in the New Testament as "the word of God," or just "the word." The gospel (His word) is *the expression of God's mind*. In other words, *the gospel is the mind of God*. The mind of God is God. Another way of saying it is, "the gospel is God," or: "*The Word was God*."

Another way of understanding this verse is in the following manner: John states in 1 John 3:11 that the word is a message of love — "For this is the message you have HEARD from the BEGINNING: we should love one another." Just like the "Word of life" is a message that brings life, the message that brings love can be known as "the Word is love." Remember what the New American Bible said: "Lack of a definite article with 'God' in Greek signifies predication rather than identification."

According to *Webster's Dictionary*, predication means, "to affirm as a quality or attribute." The Word has the attributes of God. What is an attribute of God? Love. 1 John 4:16 states: "God is love." The Word is love. God is love. The Word is God.

**"Through him all things were made."**

John is describing how God made the world and the universe through His word. In other words, because of His love for us, God created the world and the universe. Furthermore, although in Greek "logos" is

a masculine noun, this is no proof of personality. This comes into play in this verse. The Greek word that has been translated as "him" can be translated as "it," "he," or "she" depending on the noun it is describing. In this case, since theologians were claiming that "Word" is a reference to Jesus, they obviously chose "him" instead of "it." This unfortunately reflects more theology than it does strict accuracy. This is evident in 1 John 1:1-3 which is a parallel to John 1:1-3 in which "the Word of life" is translated as "it."

*My mind is reflective  
of me. It reflects who*

*I am as a person.*

*The gospel (His word)*

*is the expression*

*of God's mind.*

.....  
"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of Life, for the life was made visible; we have seen IT and testify to IT and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us, what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you."

The translation "through him" should be "through it" (His word). Here is another example: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12-13). It should be noted that the "Word" was not assumed to be a second person in Bible translations prior to the KJV. The Bishop's Bible of 1568, replaced by the KJV in 1611, understands the word to be impersonal, and uses the pronoun "it," as does the Geneva Bible of 1560.

It is through God's word, which is His expressed will, that all things were made — through "it," not "him." "But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed" (2 Peter 3:5). "For you created all things; because of your will they came to be and were created" (Revelation 4:11). "In accord with the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things according to the intention of His will" (Ephesians 1:1). Wisdom 9:1 says, "God of my fathers, LORD of mercy, you who have made all things by your word" (will). Sirach 42:15 says, "At God's word (will) were His works brought into being."

Everything was created by *God's word* (His will), not by Jesus. In other words, God has a plan (logos) to create the universe. When He speaks (word), he is expressing His thoughts. *His thoughts are His will*, and whatever *God wills* happens. This is how everything was created by the word (His will).

**"The Word became flesh" — John 1:14**

What John is saying is that the prophecies that God had spoken of in the past to the fathers and the prophets about the Messiah were fulfilled when *Jesus was born*. In order to better understand this verse I am going to use an analogy that most of us can relate to. Say that you and your spouse decide to have a child. You have an idea, (logos) a plan in your mind to have a child. That plan *becomes flesh* when your *child is born*. God's logos (plan) became flesh, became a reality when Jesus was born. We can see this type of expression used again by John in 1 John 1:1-2. "Concerning the Word of life and the life was manifested; and we have seen, and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us."

Notice that in John 1:14 it is the Word that became (is manifested) flesh, and in 1 John 1:1-2 it is the life, the eternal life that is manifested.

The life is not Jesus, it comes to us through Jesus. John 1:2: "What came to be through him was life." So if we use the definition that Word = Jesus, then we have the Word being manifested in John's gospel and the life being manifested in John's epistle.

Now we have two different things being manifested, the Word and the life. If Jesus is the Word then who is the life? If we understand "Word" to mean a message that brings life (Word of life), then there is no conflict, we are speaking of the same thing.

In other words, God's message of love that brings us eternal life was manifested (revealed) to us by Jesus. 1 John 4:9 "In this the love of God was MANIFESTED toward us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him. In other words, by seeing Jesus, how he lived, how he loved, how he perfectly followed God's will, God's word (His message) was no longer an abstract idea, it was being acted out in the flesh. It was *manifested* in the flesh. *You could actually touch it.* God's works are also said to be manifested. A good example is the blind man that Jesus cures in John 9:3. (The blind man) "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made *manifest* in him."

The outcome of the Greek philosophical interpretation of the Word becoming flesh is Dualism. Dualism is the view that reality is divided into two essential forces. There are two forms of this understanding. From a cosmic perspective, the world struggles between two opposing forces — typically, one of evil and one of good. From a philosophical approach, the essence of a person is divided between two incompatible natures — that of the body and that of the soul. Early Christianity incorporated both views from those religions and philosophies with which it came in contact. This is the same concept used not only in Greek philosophy, but also in Greek mythology. Hercules is the son of Zeus and the mortal Alcmena. He had a dual nature, he was a man that had supernatural strength which he inherited from his father Zeus. The Pharaohs were godmen and so were the Caesars. The Bible even provides us with an example of this belief in Acts 14:11 when God healed a crippled man through Paul and Barnabas: "When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they cried out in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in human form."

The idea of gods becoming men was very prevalent in the Roman-Greco world. This is why it was so natural to inject this belief into Christianity. As you can see, the idea of Dualism is the exact definition that Trinitarians have used for Jesus: He has two natures. He is fully God and fully Man. This is stated in the Chalcedon Creed of 451 A.D. Jesus is not a godman, He is *the Anointed* (the Messiah).

With the proper definitions a proper understanding of John 1:1-3 and 14 is not difficult. The problem arises when you bring a lot of preconceived ideas with you when trying to interpret these verses.

Today we have to do the exact opposite of what Bible scholars of the fourth and fifth centuries did. They injected Christianity with a huge and dangerous dosage of Greek philosophy. We have to remove all the erroneous interpretations that that philosophy brought with it in order to understand God's message for us. These verses are a good starting point. As you can see, many people have been falsely lead to believe that John 1:1-3 is saying that Jesus is God when in fact it has *nothing at all* to do with the deity of Jesus.

May God always keep you in the truth. □

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### Putting Her in Her Place (continued from page 11)

There is another way. We could come in hope and in trust, seeking a relationship where we can come to Christ with our wholeselves, our minds and our hopes, our dreams of wholeness. "Come, let us reason together," says our God. God made us beings with free minds and free hearts,

because God wants to be with us in a relationship of love. Who knows better than God that love can't be compelled? And so God made us free, knowing the risk of sin and brokenness. And when we fell God sent to us Jesus Christ, who came to show us

our true place as women and men. That place is in mutual fellowship with Christ and one another, learning and growing together. And together we will heal our broken relationships, our broken families, and our broken world. □

# Time Management

BASED ON A STORY FROM STEVEN COVEY IN *FIRST THINGS FIRST*

**A** while back I was reading about an expert on subject of time management.

One day this expert was speaking to a group of business students and, to drive home a point, used an illustration I'm sure those students will never forget. After I share it with you, you'll never forget it either.

As this man stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz." Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is

this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks.

Then he smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was onto him. "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?"

"No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of

water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!"

"No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all."

What are the big rocks in your life? A project that YOU want to accomplish? Time with your loved ones? Your faith, your education, your finances? A cause? Teaching or mentoring others? Remember to put these BIG ROCKS in first or you'll never get them in at all. □

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# The Restitution Herald

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Some of the leaders of the churches  
assembled at Morrow, Georgia  
for Ministerial Conference, February 2000.



## On getting it together

I just had an unexpected visitor stop by my study this morning. He asked "Have you got everything together?" I laughed and said "I never have everything together." I'd love to hear some advice from someone who has "everything" together. Life is getting more and more complex. There are so many things to be done and expectations to be met on the job, in the community, at home. So many things to juggle, so many responsibilities. How can we get it all done . . . and still be human?

For most of us life is a kind of balancing act. We have to make choices. We have to say "yes" to certain things; but in saying "yes" to one thing, we have to say "no" to another.

Jesus provides us with a powerful example of a person who understood who He was and what God wanted Him to be and do. He was able to confidently say "yes" to some things and "no" to others.

In Luke 4 we're told that Jesus went to the town of Capernaum. While there, He had a lot of demands placed on Him. He taught in their synagogue on the Sabbath. He cast out an unclean spirit from a man. He went to Simon's house and healed Simon's mother-in-law of a fever. He worked until dark healing the sick and casting out demons.

He got up in the early morning and went to a deserted place. The people tracked Him down and insisted that He not

leave town, but stay there and continue with His healing ministry.

What an opportunity for Jesus. The people in this village wanted Him to stay. No doubt they would have given Him whatever He asked for, in order to keep Him there: a house to live in, food to eat, acceptance, love — all the things a man could want or need. Jesus could stay in their village and be their full-time teacher and physician. And yet, Jesus said no. "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose."

Jesus knew His purpose. He had a strong sense of mission in His life and He was guided by that mission. That gave Him the ability to say "no" to something good in order that He might say "yes" to something better.

That's what balancing priorities in life is all about, knowing where God is calling us so that we can say "no" with confidence and "yes" with confidence.

I want to speak directly on one area of concern for me. That is in the area of parenting. It's far too easy, sometimes, for us to heed the demands of work or community . . . the urgency of the requests of others for help . . . and far too easy to say 'later' to the important commitments we make to our families.

I came across the following anonymous piece that helps me put these things into better perspective:

### If I Had It To Do Over Again

I would love my wife more  
in front of my children.

I would laugh with my children more —  
at our mistakes and joys.

I would listen more —  
even to the youngest child.

I would be more honest  
about my own weaknesses  
and stop pretending perfection.

I would pray differently for my family.

I would do more things with my children.

I would be more encouraging  
and bestow more praise.

I would pay more attention to  
little things, deeds, and words  
of love and kindness.

Finally, if I had to do it all over again,  
I would share God more intimately with  
my family. I would use ordinary things  
that happened in every ordinary day  
to point them to God.

May God bless you as you strive to do  
the right things — to say "no" to the good  
and say "yes" to the better while you "seek  
first the kingdom of God."

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Fletcher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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);
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- 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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# Rekindling the Fire of First Love

BY ALLON MAXWELL

**T**he thought behind this comes from Revelation 2:4-5.

The church at Ephesus gets a VERY GOOD "reference." In the things for which they were commended, it is probably better than a lot of churches today might get.

Nevertheless, it was not enough. They had "abandoned the love they had at first."

Whatever this means, it was a **very serious matter**. They were urged to remember what they had fallen from, repent, and do the works they did at first. If they did not, they would lose their "lamp stand" (their right to bear witness for Jesus).

I suspect that the particular problem at Ephesus is not specifically named because it is **representative** of many different sins, in which Christians might abandon their first love by doing things which require "repentance." By these verses, **every** church, and **each** individual, is challenged to consider whether the quality of their love for Jesus measures up to what it ought to be.

Since it refers to things which they "did at first," it seems likely that it refers to their original repentance, and the initial

changes they had made when they forsook their sins and began to obey. They had slipped back into committing some of their former sins.

We are not left without possible clues. Acts 19:18 and 19:23-27 tell us that the Ephesian church included some who had forsaken witchcraft and idolatry. Their "first works" had included a costly repentance from those things.

Some years later, the epistle to the Ephesians contains Paul's challenge "to

*"put off the old nature  
... and put on  
the new nature."*

... no longer live as the Gentiles do." This much-needed challenge names some of the "Gentile" things they were doing. Paul mentions specifically things like lying, anger, theft, evil talk, bitterness, wrath, clamor, slander, fornication, impurity, idolatry, drunkenness, covetousness, and marriage and family relationships. That is quite a list for one church!

A church which tolerates those things in its members, and ignores its responsibility to deal with the issues in a biblical way, cannot be an effective light stand for Jesus. (But you can grow **big** churches that way!)

Paul urges the Ephesians to "put off the old nature . . . and put on the new nature." Most likely the same sort of thing is in view in Revelation. Therein lies the warning for other churches. It is possible to have a **very** active church full of people who do not love Jesus enough to deal with their sins (John 14:15, 23-24)!

To abandon the first love is to forget that we have been cleansed from our old sins, and fail to pursue the virtues of life and godliness which will keep the flame alight (2 Pet. 1:3-11). Paul's "cure" for the problem starts with a reminder of the Gospel:

- The cross, in which the love of God is revealed.
- The **great** personal forgiveness which has been purchased by the suffering of Jesus on the cross.

*(continued on page 5)*



# What Does it Mean to Have Faith in Christ?

BY JIM MATTISON

**W**hat does it mean to have faith in Christ? It means to have an earnest lively belief in Christ's being what the Bible declares Him to be: God's divinely appointed Teacher, the continual Mediator between our God and us, an all-sufficient Savior, and the righteous coming Governor of the earth in the Kingdom of God.

Such a faith is saving faith. We are justified by faith (Rom. 3:28). But notice that this is an all-consuming *faith* in Christ and what God has said about Him — Who He was, what He did, and what He will do. It is a hungering and thirsting after Christ and His teachings.

The Christian life is not a passive life. Jesus is our example. *He loved us like God loved Him* (John 15:9). He wanted His disciples to have that same depth of love in their love for Him (John 17:26). To me this means that we are to love Jesus as God loved Jesus.

How can we love Jesus like His heavenly Father loved Him? Only by the Spirit of God working in our hearts. How can we

have such a love without God's help? Our prayer is, "Father, give me Your Holy Spirit to love your Son like you love Him."

Hebrews 12:2 urges us to "fix our eyes" on Jesus. It shows what passion we ought to have for our Messiah: focusing our life and attention on Him ("Looking to

*Christ is our  
all in all.*

Jesus, the *author* and *finisher* of our faith").

Only by having the Spirit of God to help us can we develop that depth of love for our Lord and our Savior.

It seems to me we need to spend more time asking God to grant us a real passion for His Son. *Christ is our all in all*. He is our Alpha and Omega. There is Salvation in no other.

What does He mean to you? Am I loving Him like God loved Him? It is evident that this is the kind of love God wants

from us. And it is also evident that we can develop such a love for Christ or He wouldn't have asked it. But we need God's help. Perhaps we have not because we ask not. Shouldn't our daily prayer be, "God, please help me to love Jesus like You love Him?" If we repeat this day after day, don't you think God will hear and grant it?

I think this closeness to Christ was what Paul had in mind when he told the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."

Real belief, real faith in Jesus is not passive. It is passionate. It is something that really motivates our life. Real belief in Jesus is believing He is our Teacher, and studying what He taught; knowing and practicing that He is our daily mediator with God; fully realizing that He is our Savior, and our *King* today, as well as King over the earth in the coming Kingdom of God. To me, this is what it means to "have faith in Christ." □

*(In memory of Rita Lukawecki, who demonstrated such a faith.)*

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## Rekindling the Fire of First Love *(continued from page 4)*

- The hope (of resurrection and inheritance of the Kingdom of God).
- The new life in relationship with Jesus, in "heavenly places."
- The gift of the Holy Spirit, which guarantees their inheritance.

Those are the things which inspired love and obedience when we first heard and believed the Gospel. They do not stand alone. They are a composite whole. We

cannot ignore any of them. And it is to those which we must return on a regular basis, to keep the fires of first love alight.

"We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

"The Holy Spirit is given to them that obey Jesus" (Acts 5:32).

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

Of course the best way of all is not to let the fire go out in the first place! □

# The Sacredness of a Child's Life

BY KEN GIRE

I heard a cry one evening from my daughter. She had returned from a party at a friend's home, where a bunch of kids from her school had gone to watch the Super Bowl. The front door was locked, and she rang the doorbell. When I opened the door, it framed what looked to me like a full-length portrait of sadness.

"How was the party?" I asked.

"Okay," she said, her eyes turned downward.

"Are you okay?" I asked. She nodded. "You sure?" She nodded again and went downstairs to her room.

I could see, even on the surface, that inside she was hurting. I could also see that she didn't want to talk, not then anyway. Later that evening she came to the kitchen, where my wife and I were, and fixed herself a bowl of ice cream. When I put my arm around her and asked how she was doing, she burst into tears. And through her tears she said:

"Nobody at school likes me."

"That's not true," I said, trying to console her. "Lots of people like you."

"No they don't. No one talks to me. And whenever they do, I can tell they just feel sorry for me, feel they have to say something when they see me in the hall. But I know they don't really want to. I've been there two years, and nobody wants to get to know me. Nobody."

I held her as she cried. It broke our hearts to hear those words, to see this precious person we love reduced to tears, feeling so worthless and so hopeless. After a few minutes, the tears ran their course and dried.

When they did, my wife and I talked with her about the rejection Christ went

through. Even in His hometown. Even from His friends, His own family. He had so much inside He wanted to share. But so many people didn't want to hear, didn't have the time, didn't care about looking beneath the surface, had other places to go, other people in their lives who were more important, more interesting. Part of the Savior's suffering, we told her, involved rejection. It involved people ignoring Him, turning their backs on Him, walking away from Him. Through the rejection at school, she had entered into what the Bible calls "the fellowship of His suffering." Although the rejection was mild in comparison to His, through it our daughter felt something of the Savior's pain, something of His loneliness, something of His sadness. She was learning things about Christ that she could never learn in a school where she was the most popular kid. And what she learned would help her understand Him more, appreciate Him more, and love Him more.

The words seemed to help. We told her she could have the next day off from school if she wanted to. And she did. By now she was feeling better, and she asked if I wanted to sit in the hot tub with her out on the deck. "I'd like that," I said. As we warmed in the tub under the shivering stars, I told her about what my life as a writer was like. I told her what it was like to work hard at writing something, putting my heart into it, and then getting it back after several months with a form letter saying things like "It's not a right fit for our publishing list, but best of luck placing it with some other publisher."

When you get a letter like that, I told her, you wonder if they read it, if they even

took the time to skim it. There was so much you wanted to say in the manuscript, but people were too busy to read it, or didn't recognize the name on the manuscript and dismissed it, passing you by with a polite but impersonal wave: "Best of luck placing it with some other publisher."

I told her what it felt like to be rejected like that, how it still hurts, even after all these years as a professional writer. My entering in to something of her suffering opened a door that enabled her to enter in to something of mine. And there was fellowship there, in the sharing of our suffering. And there was a deeper sense of understanding that hadn't been there before. And a deeper sense of the sacredness, not only of the other person but of the other person's pain and the divine role that pain was playing in shaping that person into the image of Christ.

My daughter got out of the water and sat on the edge of the tub to cool off. Then she asked a question that forced my whole system of values to come out of hiding.

"What are you doing tomorrow?"

It wasn't a question really. It was an invitation. She was asking me to spend the day with her, but she didn't want me to feel the pressure to do it if I were too busy. Which I was. I was behind in my work and feverishly trying to catch up. But suddenly catching up didn't seem all that important. Not at the moment anyway. I knew something sacred was at stake in that moment. And though I didn't know exactly what it was, I knew what it wasn't. It wasn't my work.

"I don't think it's fair that you should be the only one to get the day off," I said.

“Why don’t we both take off, spend the whole day together. What do you say?”

“I’d like that,” she said, and her face beamed.

“Me too.”

Then, as she stepped out of the hot tub and reached for a towel, she said, “Ya know, Dad, this is one of those memories I’ll treasure the rest of my life.”

The next day we didn’t talk about anything in particular, certainly nothing life-changing. We just spent the day together and had fun. We went to the car wash, ran a few errands, ate lunch. We went to the mall, where she bought a pair of sunglasses. At the mall we saw a movie. Then we went home.

All that day I thought about her words from the night before. I still think about them.

“Ya know, Dad, this is one of those memories I’ll treasure the rest of my life.”

You would think those words made me feel like Father-of-the-Year. Just the opposite. As I reflected on what she said, I thought to myself, *I came so close to missing that time with her, missing making a memory that my daughter would treasure the rest of her life.* And I realized how many times like that I had missed over the years. Not just with her but with the other kids, with my wife, my friends, other members of my family. And the loss of those times, the loss of those moments

in the lives of the people I loved and in my own life, made me sad.

It also made me determined. To slow down, so I can see when those moments present themselves. To stop, so I can honor them. To respond, so I would not pass by those moments without in some way touching them and without them in some way touching me.

Too many of those moments have passed me by.

I don’t want to miss any more of them. Life’s too short.

And too sacred. □

*Excerpt from The Reflective Life by Ken Gire, Chariot Victor Publishing. Used by permission.*

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## Thanking God

BY FRANCIS BURNETT

**H**ow does one thank God? The apostle Paul wrote, “Thank God in every situation. This is what God wants for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:18, Simple English). BUT, one may say, how can I thank God if I have been diagnosed with cancer? Or if one of my children is so sick that death is forthcoming? How can I thank God if many burdens and problems have come my way? Paul wrote, “in every situation.”

Without expecting reward, to take the time to thank God “in every situation” is a reward in itself. It gives one comfort and peace which in reality can only come from God. Yes! Thank God for persecution which may be in the form of illness –

yours or another’s. Thank God for occasionally being almost out of money – not enough to pay the bills on time.

Again from Paul, “First, through Jesus Christ, I thank my God for all of you” (Rom. 1:8). How often do you thank God for your brothers and sisters in Christ? I mean those who are in your congregation, OR friends in other congregations. “First of all, I beg you to pray for all people. Ask for things. Speak for them. Be thankful to God for them. Pray for kings and all those who have authority, so that we may have peaceful, quiet lives” (1 Timothy 2:1, 2). YES! Ask God to lead the president, his cabinet, Congress, and those who are responsible for our lives in this nation –

even in the world. It is for our benefit. Read the quote again.

Give thanks before others. “Paul took some bread and, in front of them all, thanked God for it” (Acts 27:35). All of them were non-believers. Actually, in Bible words, they were heathen. YET, Paul honored the God of Heaven with thanks. He set an example. Have you thought of being that BOLD for God?

Finally, “continue living in Christ, just as you did when you accepted Christ Jesus as Lord. Be rooted and built up in him. Be first in faith, as you were taught. Overflow with thankfulness” (Col. 2:7). We have learned to “give thanks in every situation” and to “overflow with thanksgiving.” □

# What is the Church?

BY BRIAN HALL

**T**oday, when one thinks of the church, they often think of a building with a steeple or cross on it. While such a building is a church, church is also so much more. The church is the collective body of Christians. When one enters into Christ through conversion, he becomes a part of the body, building and bride of Christ, or in other words a part of the church. The word "church" in the English Bible is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means "called out of." The *ekklesia*, or church, is the assembly or congregation of called-out persons. The word church can be used in two different ways: as the visible church and as the invisible church. The visible church is the group of believers who can be seen in a particular locality. The invisible church consists of all true believers who have lived during the Church Age. This includes those who are dead in Christ, and alive. In this article, I will show how the visible churches in the New Testament functioned.

The Greek word *ekklesia* occurs 115 times in the Greek New Testament. This word meant different things to the Greeks and to the Jews. For the Greeks this word pictured the church as a self-governing democratic society, called out from the world by a herald. For the Jews, this word pictured the church as the people of God. Peter described the Christian society by using titles of honor which previously had belonged to the congregation of Israel. 1 Peter 2:9 reads, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God."

The church in the New Testament met in houses of members as can be seen in

Romans 16:23, 1 Corinthians 16:19, and Colossians 4:15. According to Alva Huffer, there were no actual church buildings until AD 255. The historical origin of the church is in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. On this day the disciples were all sitting together in one's house waiting for the Spirit, which was promised to the church from Jesus.

Jesus is the head of the Church. He is the Church's only foundation. In Matthew

## *The historical origin of the church is in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.*

16:16-18, Jesus states that He will build His church.

The New Testament church had two ordinances that were important to them; these are baptism and the Lord's supper. In the Great Commission (Mark 16:15,16; Matt. 28:18-20), Jesus says that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. The Lord's supper is recorded in four accounts (Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). All the accounts include the taking of bread; the saying "This is my body"; the taking of the cup; and the explanation of the relation of blood to the covenant. Paul and Luke record Jesus' command to continue to celebrate the supper. These two things, baptism and the Lord's supper, were held very dear to the churches in the New Testament.

The New Testament Church was a joyous fellowship of believers as described by Luke in Acts 2:41-47:

"Those who accepted this message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

This picture of the New Testament Church should give our churches today something to long for. This church seemed so healthy. They were growing, and everyone in it was excited, and earnestly devoted to Jesus and His church.

The Bible gives us ideals on what church should be and how it functions. In 1 Corinthians 14:33, Paul writes, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." Some churches today could certainly learn something from that verse. The Bible also lays down some positions to be held in the church. These are elders and deacons. Other names for elders are bishop, presbyter, overseer, pastor, and shepherd. Each congregation was supervised by

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# We're Only a Dot in God's Universe, But God's Selected Dot

BY KEN HAM

When anyone mentions Carl Sagan, I immediately think of: billions of years, evolution, and that life on Earth is meaningless. Billions of words have also gone out to the world from Carl Sagan telling the world that: "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be" (*Cosmos*). "We are the product of 4.5 billion years of fortuitous, slow biological evolution" (*The Cosmic Connection*, p. 4). "I am a collection of water, calcium and organic molecules called Carl Sagan. You are a collection of almost identical molecules . . . Is there nothing in here but molecules? . . . I find it elevating that our universe permits the evolution of molecular machines as intricate and subtle as we" (*Cosmos*, p. 127).

As Sagan faced death from a deadly disease, he stated in *Parade* last March [1996]: "I would love to believe that when I die I will live again, that some thinking, feeling, remembering part of me will continue. But as much as I want to believe that,

and despite the ancient and worldwide cultural traditions that assert an afterlife, I know of nothing to suggest that it is more than wishful thinking."

In these final words with Ted Koppel on ABC-TV, he really summed up his view on life which he had influenced millions to believe. "We live on a hunk of rock and metal that circles a humdrum star that is one of 400 billion other stars that make up the Milky Way galaxy, which is one of billions of other galaxies which make up a universe which may be one of a very large number, perhaps an infinite number, of other universes. That is a perspective on human life and our culture that's well worth pondering."

In other words, Earth and its inhabitants are nothing special. We are just part of a meaningless existence. However, 2000 years ago, a man who walked this Earth told people the true meaning of this life and the universe. Read Psalm 139:16-18; John 3:16, 17; Psalm 115:16. Mankind and the Earth are very special.

Unlike Carl Sagan, Jesus Christ did not receive the honor of men even though He healed the sick, raised the dead and told the true meaning of life: that He is "the way, the truth and the life." For all this, He was whipped cruelly, tortured with a crown of thorns, and crucified, dying an agonizing death. However, His last words will never be forgotten: "Then said Jesus, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do'" (Luke 23:34). On that cruel cross He was thinking about you and me as He died. But, praise God, we can say with the angels "for He is risen." For those with faith, we will spend eternity with Him.

"The word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8). These words will resound through the heavens for eternity! The earth, though a dot in the universe, was selected by God. We give Him our praise and, by faith, believe this "dot" will soon be glorified and occupied by Him. □

Ken Ham, *Answers in Genesis*, February, 1997. Reprinted with permission.

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## What is the Church? (continued from page 8)

elders. Qualifications for the office of elder are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The work of elders is related to teaching the word of God and overseeing the congregation. Deacons are mentioned in Philippians 1:1, and in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, where Paul lists the qualifications for deacons.

The church is given three main jobs to do: Glorification of God, Evangelization

of the World, and Edification of the members of the church. Sinners have been redeemed from sin and have become members of the church so that they might declare God's glory to sinful humanity. All activities and services of church members and church workers should result in the fact that God is glorified. First Corinthians 6:20 reads, "You were bought at a price: therefore honor God with your

body." The church also needs to evangelize the world. The church is the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14-16). Before Christ ascended to heaven, He commissioned the church to evangelize the world (Matt. 28:19, 20). Another important job of the church is to instruct and edify the members. The church needs to grow in number and in spiritual maturity. □

# Community = Unity, Through Communication

BY THE EDITOR

**W**hen we talk about *community*, what exactly do we mean?

When I hear the word community the first thing I think of is coffee. "Community" is a brand of coffee, and it is my favorite coffee in the whole world. It's made down here in Louisiana and is not available except in the South (or via mail order).

What makes Community so good? It was a family-run business that started out in a small southern community over 80 years ago. The company has high standards and principles. Recently I visited their web site and found a list of their company principles which I think explains a lot about them:

## 12 Principles of Community Coffee

1. Quality is routinely meeting or exceeding our customers' expectations.
2. If we don't take care of our customers, someone else will.
3. Focus on what our customers expect from us, not on what our competitors are doing.
4. Be a wolf, not a sheep or a parasite.
5. Pay attention to the details.
6. Make sure that the product always comes out the winner.
7. Always be honest and act with maximum professional integrity with all of our customers.
8. Never avoid communication with the customer because we want to avoid conflict.
9. Wear the shoes of your customer in your decisions.
10. Spend Community Coffee Company money like it is your own — because it is!

11. Be contagious. Once you've gotten "religion" on Community Coffee Company quality, convert others.

12. At Community Coffee Company, everything we do has to be as good as our coffee.

These are the principles around which the entire company operates. Everyone, from the president of the company down to the guy who delivers it to the store believes in and follows those principles.

Community Coffee is a Community in that they have come together to agree upon shared values to which they are all committed.

The word "community" has at its root the meaning of fellowship, sharing, holding things in common. A community is a group of people who have things in common, who share with one another.

We find an excellent description of Community in the Bible in the Book of Acts 2:42-47. Verse 42 says "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Notice it says they had everything in "common" (v. 44). They came together and formed a community.

Quite often communities are formed out of the context of a crisis. The word "crisis" means opportunity/threat. The Church was formed on the day of Pentecost, when the small community of 12 apostles and 120 disciples (inclusively) suddenly grew as 3000 additional members joined the Church. The apostles had spent three years of their lives with Jesus, now they were being joined by thousands who had never even met Jesus in the flesh,

how could they become unified? This was truly a crisis (opportunity/threat).

The answer is that they committed themselves to four things: the teaching of the apostles (Bible study), *koinonia* or fellowship (sharing), breaking of bread (communion), and prayer (worship). In being devoted to those four things they became a community. These were the things that they had in common.

What was the result? The Church grew as daily new people were being saved. One of the best books ever written on the subject of community, outside of the Bible itself, is a book called *The Different Drum* by Scott Peck. It's all about community. In this book Dr. Peck shares some of the things which are necessary in order for us to have "Authentic Community."

**Inclusivity** — Who will we let in; what does it take to be a part of our community? True communities look for reasons to let people in, rather than to shut people out.

**Commitment** — In order for a group to become a community, they must make a commitment to become or stay a community.

- Marriage is a commitment — you don't quit the marriage just because you don't feel like being married any more.

- Church membership is a commitment

To be committed to something means that you "hang in there" even when the going gets rough at times.

**Consensus** — Communities strive to arrive at decisions by consensus, so that every person is heard, every viewpoint is shared and understood.

**Realism** — Authentic communities are realistic. They allow people to have different points of view on issues and are realistic in the fact that it requires work to arrive at agreement.

**Contemplative** — A community is not afraid to examine itself; to look closely at its values and at how it operates. It seeks to know and understand itself.

**A Safe Place** — A community is a place where one feels safe to be who they are.

• A number of years ago Pastor Charles Swindoll wrote a piece for *Leadership Magazine* entitled “Lessons from a Tavern.” In it he asked “why do people go to the tavern?” His answer: Because they feel that it’s safe to be themselves, they believe that there they will be accepted for who they really are, they don’t have to pretend to be something that they are not. Swindoll wrote that “Christians are the only people who shoot their own wounded.” In order for the church to be a community, it needs to be a safe place to be who you are.

**A Group that can fight Gracefully** —

A rabbi was strolling through the streets with his disciples. When they came to the city square, a battle was being fought between government troops and rebel forces. Horrified by the bloodshed, the students asked “Quick, rabbi, which side should we help?” “Both” the rabbi replied.

The disciples were confused “Both? Why should we help both?”

“We need to help the authorities learn to listen to the needs of the people” the rabbi answered, “and we need to help the rebels learn how not to compulsively reject authority.”

*In genuine community  
there are no sides.*

*It is not always easy.*

• • • • •

“In genuine community there are no sides. It is not always easy, but by the time they reach community the members have learned how to give up cliques and factions. They have learned how to listen to each other and how not to reject each other. Sometimes consensus in community is reached with miraculous rapidity. But at other times it is arrived at only after lengthy struggle. A community is a group that can fight gracefully” (Scott Peck’s *The Different Drum*, p. 71).

It’s important for us to realize that a community, whether it be a family, a sports team, a business, or even a church, will never be free from conflict. In fact, the world will not experience perfect “shalom,” God’s peace, the complete absence of any conflict, until the Kingdom of God is fully established. Until that time, wherever people are together, there will be times when they disagree. But when an organization strives to achieve community they recognize that there will

be diversity, there will be different opinions on certain matters, and they are committed to working through those differences in a healing way.

It’s interesting that out of all the churches the Apostle Paul wrote to the church that was probably the most gifted was also one that had a great deal of conflict. The church at Corinth had some troubles. One of their troubles was at their church “potlucks” — only they weren’t potlucks. Everyone brought and ate their own food. The rich folks brought their rich folk food and ate it (nice thick juicy steaks with baked potatoes, and a cherry pie to boot, I imagine). At the same time the poor folks brought their poor folk food — beans and rice if they were lucky, or maybe even a crust of old bread and some water. And some were so poor they had nothing. Imagine coming to church, where the rich folks are stuffing themselves and the poor folks are sitting back starving to death with nothing. Is that very Christian?

Then, after the rich stuffed themselves and the poor sat there hungrily watching them, they shared in the Lord’s supper — the bread and the cup. But that service didn’t mean very much. Why? Because they weren’t “recognizing the body of the Lord.” What was the body of the Lord? Not the bread — the body of the Lord is the Church. We are Christ’s body. They were coming to church and they were failing to notice the body. The rich folks weren’t noticing that part of the body was starving to death.

Paul said, you are all connected, you are all a part of the same body, you need to pay attention to every part of the body, making sure that every part of the body has a chance to be nourished.

Communion is a good example of community, where every member of the body, the Church, comes to be fed. We all are partakers in the body and blood of

*(continued on page 12)*



Christ in the communion, and we are reminded that we need to remember the body every time we come together.

So far we have described what community is. Now it's time for us to ask "How do we get there?" Paul lays out a prescription for community for us in Ephesians 4; it is unity through communication.

1. In order to achieve unity you must live a life worthy of the calling you've received. What is your calling? You are called to be a child of God, to be a part of the body of Christ. You are called to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God. One day you will reign as kings and priests with Christ in His kingdom. Today, you are called to be His lights, to shine that all the world might be attracted to Jesus Christ. You are a Christian: a little Christ, a student of Jesus. Live a life that conforms to who you are.

2. What does it require for us to live that life? Unity requires four things

- a. Humility — think of others before we think of ourselves.
- b. Gentleness — we mustn't be too hard on others.
- c. Patience — we need to give people time to change.
- d. Bear with one another in love — we need to help the other guy carry his load.



3. Unity requires effort — it is hard work! It requires effort. There is no such thing as "cruise control" in the church. There is no "auto-pilot." We have to be vigilant.

When I was a young boy in school I learned the second law of thermo-dynamics. This law teaches us that things tend to move from order to disorder, from stability to chaos. If you don't believe me, try not cleaning your house for a week. Don't wash any dishes or clothes, vacuum, sweep or tidy up at all. Is that a place you want to be in after a week? NO WAY!!

*"Why do people go to the tavern?"*

*Answer: Because they feel that it's safe to be themselves, they believe that there they will be accepted for who they really are, they don't have to pretend to be something that they are not.*

There is an organic unity to the Church: One body, the Church; one Spirit, the Spirit of God; one hope, the Kingdom of God; one Lord, Jesus; one faith, the gospel; one baptism, into Christ; one God, Jehovah. There is an organic unity to the Church but it takes EFFORT to maintain that unity; understanding, trust, love, patience, perseverance, commitment, and communication.

4. Unity does not equal uniformity — we are not all exactly alike in the Church. God doesn't take a cookie cutter and stamp us all the same. We are different.

Paul affirmed this when he wrote that in the church we are given various roles/offices/gifts — some lead, some challenge the status quo, some train others to share their faith, some give care, some teach. We are not all alike. We have diverse gifts. We are to use those gifts to strengthen the Church, to bring us to greater unity, to help us to grow up, to

become more mature, to help us keep from falling away, being led astray by the devil, or by false prophets, or by our own carelessness, we need each other to make us all stronger.

Every Christian has gifts. Every Christian reading this article has something that you can give, some talent, some ability, some gift to build up the church. You need to find it and use it.

We are all gifted, however, this diversity is one of the reasons that sometimes we have disagreements. Let's take an issue that is controversial — abortion.

A person who is gifted in leadership might approach abortion in this way, "we need to lead our people to vote for politicians who are anti-abortion."

Someone with a prophetic gift might say, "that's not enough, we need to call our politicians to account, to warn them through the media that God is going to bring judgment against our nation for the many abortions we've allowed."

Someone with a gift of shepherding might say, "no, we need to care for young women who are pregnant outside of marriage and give them a viable alternative to abortion, by helping to feed and shelter them and provide medical attention."

Someone with a gift of teaching might say, "no, what we need to do is to teach young men and women what the Bible says about purity and maintaining virginity until after marriage. We need to teach prevention and we need to teach that abortion is wrong."

Someone with a gift of evangelism might say "no, what we need to do is share the gospel with the abortion doctors, nurses, and the potential clients. Once they know Jesus Christ they won't participate in the sin of abortion."

You see people with different gifts might see different solutions to a problem. But, guess what, they can all be right. Each of those solutions is appropriate and we, as Christians, can support all of them. One single person may not be equipped to deal with all of those solutions, but each of us could do something.

The key in all of this is that community is unity through communication. We need good communication skills. Paul tells us that we need to learn to "speak the truth in love." We need honest, clear, loving communication. I believe that one of the greatest barriers to unity today is a failure to follow God's principles of communication. What are those principles?

#### Learn to listen

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry" (James 1:19). God gave you two ears and only one mouth, there's meaning in that.

"It is better to be quiet and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt."

"Listening is a commitment and a compliment. It's a commitment to understanding how other people feel, how they see the world. It means putting aside your own prejudices and beliefs, your anxieties and self-interest, so that you can step behind the other person's eyes. You try to look at things from his or her perspective. Listening is a compliment because it says to the other person 'I care about what's happening to you, your life and your experience are important.'"

*There are a number of blocks to listening:*

**Comparing:** We often compare ourselves to the person who is speaking.

**Mind Reading:** "What's he/she really thinking?"

**Rehearsing:** I can't really listen to what you're saying when I'm too busy thinking about what I'm going to say next.

**Filtering:** you're only listening for certain things, you filter out everything else.

**Judging:** "He's stupid, I'm not going to listen to what he has to say."

**Dreaming:** Something she says triggers a distant memory and suddenly you are far away.

**Identifying:** Everything the other person says reminds you of something in your life and you never give them a chance to finish sharing their thought.

**Advising:** You hear a little of what they say and then start thinking up solutions to solve their problems, without listening to everything they've said.

**Sparrring:** You love to argue, no matter what someone says, you look for something to disagree with.

**Being right:** You can't take criticism and you won't hear suggestions to change. You're so busy defending yourself that you are not open to what they are really saying.

**Derailing:** You get uncomfortable with a topic, so you derail and get off the subject completely.

**Placating:** You agree with everything in a superficial way, you're only half listening. You're more interested in having people like you than really hearing what they have to say.

*There are four steps to being a good listener:*

1. Be an active listener — mirror what they say, give them feedback and encouragement. Restate their main points back to them until they are sure that you've really heard them.

2. Listen with empathy — try to understand how they are feeling, try to see the experience through their eyes. What is their need? What danger are they experiencing? What are they asking for?

3. Listen with openness — don't pre-judge or filter, really listen.

4. Listen with awareness — compare what they are saying with what you already

know. You're not listening in a vacuum. Be aware of the person's body language, facial expression, and tone of voice. Make sure that what they are saying and how they are saying it match.

(The preceding section was adapted from *Messages, the Communication Skills Book*, by Matthew McKay, Martha Davis, and Patrick Fanning, 1995, New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA.)

In order to communicate, we need to learn how to listen, but we will, at times, need to speak. How will we speak? We need to speak the truth, and we need to do it in love. Sometimes that means we'll need to correct others. Here's what Ray Steadman says in his book *Body Life*:

"Most of us tend to shy away from confrontational situations and understandably so. Confrontation is unpleasant. But in the church, confrontation is sometimes necessary for the health of the church. This is an area where Christians often fail one another, and allow the body of Christ to become unhealthy and ineffective.

"If someone has an unpleasant or irritating habit, we're quick enough to discuss it with others — but are we willing to say something directly to that person? If we do, it is usually only when we have been angered or annoyed to the point of unloading on that person in a destructive way! Why are we so reluctant to deal with our complaints and objections face to face? We tell ourselves, 'I don't want to hurt his feelings,' or, 'I don't want to make her feel bad.' But we're just fooling ourselves.

"The fact is, we don't want to pay the price of 'speaking the truth in love.' We don't want to risk having to deal with an unpleasant or uncomfortable situation. We don't want to have to deal with their tears, anger or resistance. It's so much easier to simply gripe behind that person's back rather than to lovingly confront their sin or flaw. The problem; in our silence and timidity we do the other person a great deal of harm. We condemn the

*(continued on page 19)*

# A Look at Domestic Violence

## Within the Church

BY SANDY FIEDLER (WITH PASTOR DAVID O'LEARY)

**I**n 1994 a pastor's wife was killed by gunshots to her neck and chest. Her four-year-old son was in the house at the time.

The newspaper reported that her husband had returned to their suburban home late one night from a business trip to find her body. The next day, during routine police questioning, mysterious evidence came to light, evidence that has never been made public. Two days after the murder, this pastor-husband jumped from a highway overpass to his death, leaving behind two suicide notes declaring his innocence of her murder.

The murder case was immediately closed by police who stated that the pastor himself was the only suspect. The police chief reported that evidence had exposed a "dark side" of the pastor. While their public life was without reproach, this young wife cannot tell us what their private life was like. Someone probably knew. A friend or sister may have observed or guessed or may have been told. However, perhaps to preserve the public image of the educated, well-groomed pastor and his schoolteacher wife, symptoms of the underlying "dark side" were ignored, leaving two people dead and a child an orphan.

This tragic story strikingly illustrates the topic of domestic violence in the church. It caught my attention because it occurred, not in some remote locale, but rather in my own small East Texas town, population 18,000. The story seared my heart because domestic violence had also touched my own home.

My situation followed a classic pattern in which my husband would verbally berate me, shout, wave his arms and glare at

me. He would threaten to hit me or to take away my children. My most effective response was to keep silent while he wound down.

But over the long term, things did not wind down; instead, they escalated. My husband moved from verbal abuse to physical violence. At the same time, he tried to separate me from others who would have provided emotional support. I became more passive and withdrawn, hiding from everyone.

Finally, I turned to my church for help. I remember my pastor sitting at my kitchen table, looking at the black eye my husband had given me. He said that my husband "wasn't a wife-beater." Then both he and his wife minimized my husband's sin and encouraged me to submit to the elders of the church, without being clear what that meant. The tragedy in this approach is that it failed to take seriously what Jeremiah 17:9 tells us about the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart. An opportunity to explore the possibility of secret sin was lost. The long-term result was the end of my marriage when my husband came home in a rage one afternoon, threw me and my clothes into the car, and dumped me at a friend's house.

How could this have happened? My husband was the pastor's closest friend. He was the church organist and a contributor to our small, struggling church. As a respected professional, he projected a facade of prominence and influence in the community which effectively hid the truth of his sin. Recognizing the directly conflicting testimony, my pastor could have pursued the matter further to get the truth. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

### *What is battery?*

Battery, as defined in Black's Law Dictionary, means "any unlawful beating, or other wrongful physical violence or constraint, inflicted on a human being without his consent" (Goodrum v. State, 60 Ga. 511) and "an unlawful touching of the person of another..." (Kirland v. State, 43 Ind. 153, 13 Am. Rep. 386).

In Texas, the law specifies that a slap, even by one's own spouse, is criminal battery. The battery does not have to produce a visible mark. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, the weapon of choice in seventy-five percent of domestic violence cases is a strong arm. Punching, kicking, shoving, and jerking by the hair are other common forms of battery. With practice, most batterers learn to hit women in places on the body where the effects will not be visible.

"If he did it once, he'll do it again," says Katy Wilson, director of the Anderson County (Texas) branch of the Cherokee County Crisis Center, a shelter for battered women. That statement comes from her experience in dealing with many families in which there is violence. However, where there is spiritual intervention, there is the prospect for a Christian to repent and take steps toward change. Domestic violence usually follows an escalating cycle of abuse, remorse, and promises to stop; a "honeymoon" phase, plateau, growing frustrations and blame; and then abuse again. Batterers often make death threats to the victim. Too often, these threats are carried out, especially if alcohol or drugs are involved. Forty-two percent of murdered American women are killed by either their husbands or boyfriends.

*Why doesn't a battered woman just leave?*

Often her emotional turmoil is so great that she doesn't know what to do. She sees the problems, believes that they are partly her fault, and hopes that the marriage will work out. Unfortunately, even when she turns to the church, there is the risk that her situation might be minimized or dismissed.

*Who are the batterers?*

A batterer can be from any race, education, religion, or group. According to the Texas Department of Human Services, "A batterer is usually outwardly charming and congenial and may be an active member of his religious community. However, in the privacy of his home, he can be controlling, cruel, and violent. He blames others for his violence and denies responsibility for his behavior."

*How has the Church often responded?*

Battery is sin. Unfortunately, some churches have been tempted to excuse a husband's sin because of a false understanding of what the Bible teaches about submission. In *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse: Recognizing and Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority Within the Church*, David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen give the example of Charlotte who was being battered by her husband. Both were active in their local church. One night, in fear for her life, she called the police. Later, she went to the leaders of their church telling them what had happened and stating that, for the safety of herself and the children, she must leave him. The leaders told her that if she left him, she would be out of God's will. They proceeded to prove their point by using Bible verses such as Ephesians 5:22: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." They successfully silenced and shamed her into returning to an abusive mate, rather than dealing with a genuine case of sin.

Another woman reported that when she told her pastor that her husband had strangled her into unconsciousness, the pastor advised, "Stay with him, and if he kills you, God will use that to draw him to Himself."

Domestic violence even extends to senior citizens and ministers' wives. An affluent, 70-year-old Martha was terrified that anyone would discover that her highly regarded minister-husband had subjected her to thirty-three years of marital violence. But she couldn't hide the truth any longer when she ended up in the hospital with broken ribs after he pushed her down the stairs. Upon being discharged from the hospital, she went to a women's shelter.

*Churches must not  
hesitate to exercise the  
authority they have to  
deal with such problems  
in the congregation.*

. . . . .

These horror stories should not lead us to abandon biblical authority and the authority God gives to the church. According to *Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home* by James and Phyllis Alsdurf, studies show that there is no significant difference in the amount of violence occurring in religious versus nonreligious families. It is a grave error in biblical practice for a wife to be told to forgive her husband, go back home, be more submissive, and not to stir up trouble. Rather, Scripture speaks of the Christ who "shall deliver the needy when he (she) crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper . . . He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight" (Psalm 72:12,14), and tells us in Malachi 2:15-16, ". . . and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the

LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously." When faced with claims of domestic violence, the church has to confront the issue while making provision for the protection from further abuse. When a church overlooks, dismisses, or hides spousal abuse in its midst, it allows criminal activity to continue. If the abuser puts on a good face to the church, attends services, and contributes tithes, the woman who tries to describe his other side simply may not be believed. In addition, battered women in churches are more likely to hide the problem than unchurched women out of a desire to maintain a facade of respectability. Notice two areas of sin: The husband's violence and pretense; and the wife's giving way to fear which leads to silence. Effective pastors and elders have to address both when necessary.

As I reflect on my own experience with domestic violence, I recognize two things: my ignorance and withdrawal allowed domestic violence to continue, and my church's ignorance and lack of appropriate intervention allowed the abuse to persist. Had the church clearly understood domestic abuse, the results might have been different for my husband, myself, and our marriage. Churches must not hesitate to exercise the authority they have to deal with such problems in the congregation. At the same time, hurting women must get help, if not from their churches, from somewhere that offers compassion, an honest appraisal of the situation, and tools for recovery.

*How can the clergy help?*

"Clergy offer one of the largest groups of professionals who can deal directly with domestic violence, but a clergyman's willingness or ability to help abused women is still more dependent on his personal knowledge and opinions than on training in the problem," state Stacey and

*(continued on page 16)*

# The Empty Chair

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

A man's daughter had asked the local pastor to come and pray with her father. When the pastor arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows and an empty chair beside his bed. The priest assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit. "I guess you were expecting me," he said.

"No, who are you?"

"I'm the new associate at your local church," the pastor replied. "When I saw the empty chair, I figured you knew I was going to show up."

"Oh yeah, the chair," said the bedridden man. "Would you mind closing the door?"

Puzzled, the pastor shut the door.

"I've never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man. "But all of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about

prayer, but it always went right over my head."

"I abandoned any attempt at prayer," the old man continued, "until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me, 'Joe, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here's what I suggest. Sit down on a chair, place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because he promised, 'I'll be with you always.' Then just speak to him and listen in the same way you're doing with me right now."

"So, I tried it and I've liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful, though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she'd either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm."

The pastor was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old guy to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him, and returned to the church.

Two nights later the daughter called to tell the pastor that her daddy had died that afternoon.

"Did he seem to die in peace?" he asked.

"Yes, when I left the house around two o'clock he called me over to his bedside, told me one of his corny jokes, and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead. But there was something strange, in fact, beyond strange — kinda weird. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on a chair beside the bed." □

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## A Look at Domestic Violence Within the Church *(continued from page 15)*

Shupe in *The Family Secret: Domestic Violence in America*. The Texas Department of Human Services and Christian sources suggest several specific ways the clergy can help.

- Study current social issues. Realize that every kind of social issue that affects nonmembers can also touch the lives of the members in every church.
- Get to know the resources in your community. Consider inviting representatives from shelters to speak for a few minutes at a church meeting to explain the assistance the local shelter offers as well as the ways church members can help.

- Counsel an abused woman at first without her husband present but in the presence of another woman. Be willing to confront the abusing man. While he must not be allowed to continue his behavior, recognize that he needs help also. Help the woman assess her personal strengths, community resources, and her options. Of course, a pastor also needs to study the scriptural prescriptions for the problems of those whom he counsels and counsel them to obey God and submit first to Him.

*Where can you get help or information regarding domestic violence?*

Someone cares! Reader, if you are ministering to someone who suffers from

domestic violence or if you are a battered spouse yourself, services are available to help you. You might find local resources by checking the phone book's Yellow Pages under "Crisis Intervention." In addition, you can turn to the following for help:

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). This hotline links callers through a nationwide database to shelters, legal advocacy, and social services programs. □

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# The Bible Paradise

BY DR. G. W. TUPPER

**I**n John 14:6 Jesus said: "I am *the* way and *the* truth, and *the* life." He used the definite article three times in this sentence, because He was trying to impress on the minds of the people that He was far more important than being just *a* way, *a* truth, and *a* life. That would permit others to introduce another way, another truth, and another life. There could be a multiplicity of ways if the definite article had not been used. Jesus was not only *a* way; He was *the* only way.

The same thing is true about *the* paradise; it is not just *a* paradise, with a possibility of there being many more. Jesus said *the* paradise, cutting out any possibility of there being another place by the same name. In every instance where paradise is mentioned in the New Testament the definite article is used. The paradise, which Adam and Eve lost by disobedience, disappeared after the earth was cursed, so that it is probable that no one ever saw it except Adam and Eve.

John 1:36 says: "Behold *the* Lamb of God." There was only one Lamb of God, and that was Jesus who was typified by the passover lamb and by the daily sacrifice of a lamb in the morning and a lamb in the evening. The definite articles exclude all others, as there was only one who had been slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). John pointed to Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. The Word of God, the Lamb of God, the Way of God, the Truth of God, all say with a unanimous voice, there is no other Word, Lamb, Way, or Truth but that which is expressed in the Christ, the Son of the living God.

John *the* Baptist came preaching "*the* kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus followed him saying "*the* kingdom of heaven

is at hand." Jesus commanded His disciples to preach, saying, "*the* kingdom of heaven is at hand." There were other Johns but there was no other John the Baptizer; there was no other heavenly kingdom, only the one preached by Jesus, John, and the disciples.

The Kingdom and the Paradise must be the same as the Kingdom of Christ, which



is to cover the whole earth. Psalm 72:8 declares that "He (Christ) shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from *the* river [Deut. 1:7 calls it "the great river, the river Euphrates" which was the eastern boundary of Israel's inheritance] unto the ends of the earth." Zechariah 9:10 says: "And his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from *the* river unto the ends of the earth." Note that *the* river specifies only one river.

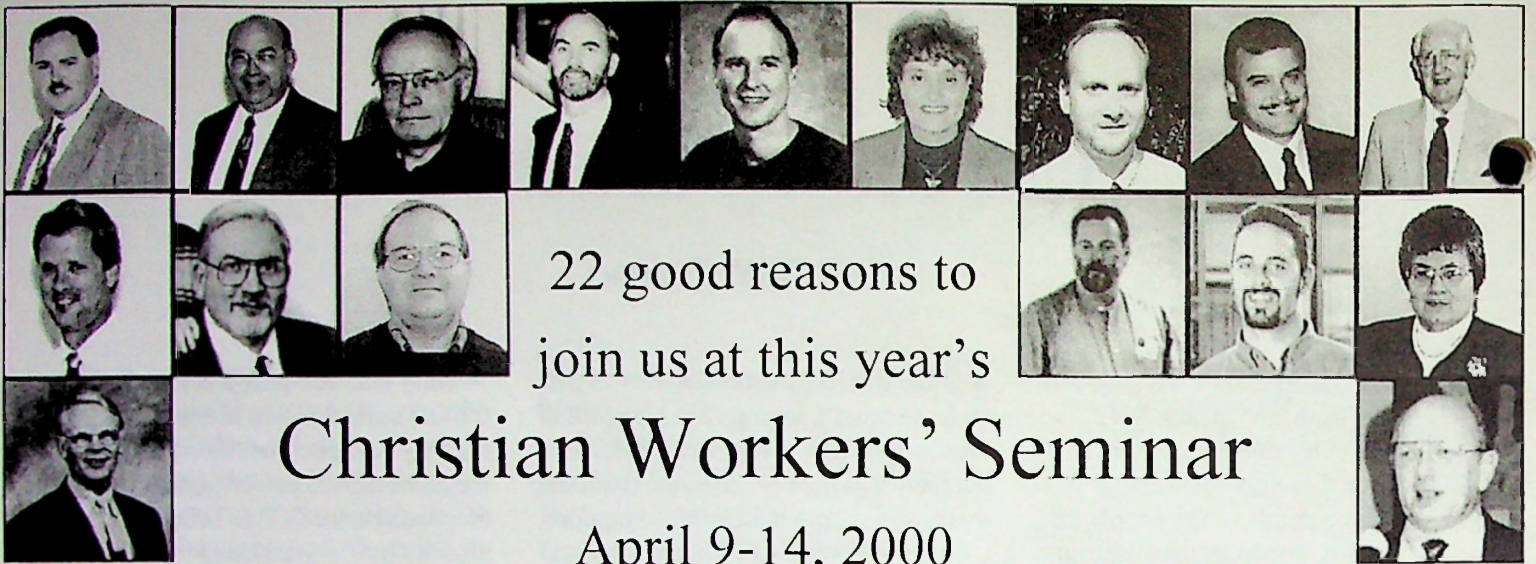
Revelation 2:7 says that the tree of life is in the New Testament Paradise. If the tree of life in the New Testament is the same as the tree of life in the Old Testament, then why should not the N.T. Paradise mean the same as the O.T. Paradise, the home of Adam?

Only one tree of life is mentioned in the O.T., and that was in connection with the only paradise mentioned in the O.T., the home of Adam. The same tree of life, mentioned in the O.T. as being in the paradise of God, is mentioned in the N.T. as being in the paradise of God. Jesus promised this same paradise to the thief, using the definite article before it (*in the Greek, see the Diaglott for example*); therefore, the paradise of the O.T. must be the same as the paradise of the New Testament.

The new Jerusalem, capital city of *the* paradise of God, is to come down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and rest upon this earth after it is purified. Then there shall be no more death nor sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things shall pass away; and He that sitteth upon the Throne saith, "Behold I make all things new."

Revelation tells us that a river of water flows forth from the throne of God and the Lamb, and the tree of life is upon the bank of the river. This takes place after the curse is removed and the new earth becomes the restored paradise, where sin and all unrighteousness shall be no more.

Paul saw *the* paradise in connection with the third heaven, which is the new earth heaven. Peter mentions the heavens and the earth before the flood, the heavens and the earth after the flood, and the new heaven and the new earth. We according to His promise look for a new heaven and a new earth, which is the third. The heaven before the flood is heaven number one. The heaven after the flood is heaven number two. The new heaven in connection with the new earth is heaven number three — at which time *The Paradise* will be restored. □



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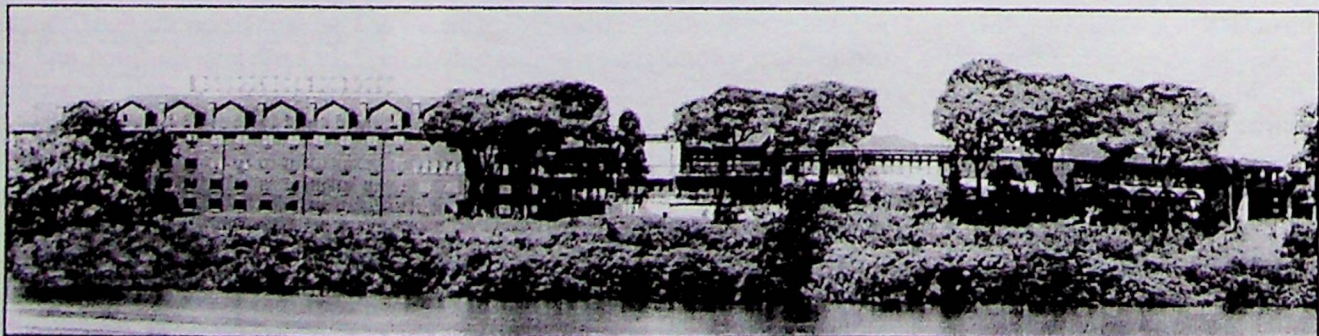
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## Community = Unity Through Communication *(continued from page 13)*

person to go on offending others and suffering rejection, when we could allow God to use us to produce positive change in that person's life! Worst of all we baptize our silence, convincing ourselves that our cowardly avoidance of confrontation is actually a mark of Christian love.

"Christians who have lived in an authentic atmosphere of community and body life will tell you: they are grateful beyond words that another Christian has cared enough to illuminate their blind spot and help them become more mature in Jesus Christ."

We need to speak the truth, but do it in a loving way. That means going directly to a person and speaking with them privately. Jesus laid out those principles in Matthew 18:15-20. If we can't resolve it, just between the two of us, then we may need to ask for help from a couple of spiritual brothers and sisters. Only as a last resort do we "tell it to the church."

Far too often when we have a problem we tell it to two or three people who tell it to the church, and the one we have a problem with finds out only after everyone else knows about it. By then it's usually too late to resolve.

In one of her *Anne of Green Gables* novels, Lucy Maud Montgomery relates a story of a cranky old churchwoman named Aunt Atossa. At Sunday evening prayer

services in Aunt Atossa's church the members would stand and pray in turn or share a prayer need or praise report. It happened that one of these services was led by a visiting minister who was a very kind and spiritual man, but also very deaf. He would lean toward each person who stood and spoke, and he would appear to be very attentive, but he could scarcely understand a word that was said.

At this service, cantankerous old Aunt Atossa — who had been storing up a trunkful of grievances and bitterness in her heart for years — finally decided to unload. After a few people stood to pray or share a prayer request, Aunt Atossa jumped to her feet and loudly raked the congregation up one side and down the other. She called out various parishioners by name and accused them of various sins. She castigated every church member with whom she had ever had a quarrel or disagreement (which was practically everyone). She ripped the lids off several church scandals, causing several of the ladies in the surrounding pews to collapse in a swoon.

"I'm so disgusted with this church," she concluded fiercely, "that after I leave tonight, I intend to never darken its door again! May God bring a fearful judgment on all of you!" Then, finally out of breath and out of hateful words to say, she sat down.

At the pulpit, the kindly, hard-of-hearing minister smiled benignly, nodded gently, and said in a very pious voice, "Amen! The Lord grant our dear sister's prayer!"

That old woman in the story stored up all her anger and bitterness and then let everyone have it in public. Wouldn't it have been better if she would have dealt with each situation when it arose, and a little bit at a time, going, as Paul said, in a spirit of gentleness?

The church is called to be a community, a group of people who are committed to God and to each other. We can only live as a true community when we work at maintaining unity. That's hard work. It requires commitment, patience, humility, gentleness, and love.

Being a community means we recognize that not everyone is alike. God has gifted us in different ways, and each one of us needs to use whatever gifts God has given us toward building up the church as we carry out the mission of bringing the gospel to everyone.

It means that we will commit ourselves to learning and practicing the skills of good communication. This means learning to listen, really listen. It means that we will be slow to speak, and when we do speak we will speak the truth in a loving way. □

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## *Food for Thought*

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered; forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; give the world your best anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God; it never was between you and them anyway. □

# The Importance of Love

BY DAVID KROGH

**H**ave you ever looked in a concordance to see how many times the word "love," "loved," "loves," and "lovingkindness" are used? Over the last year and a half as the General Conference Board has been studying and discussing seeking, knowing, and loving God and Christ more, I have become increasingly convicted that it is necessary to make love a priority in our lives. Everywhere you look in the Bible, you see how important love is, such as:

1. God's love – many Bible texts, such as all-time favorites John 3:16 and Romans 5:8, assure us that God loves us.
2. Our love for God – Jesus said that this was the greatest commandment in Mark 12:28-30.

3. Our love for our neighbors – Jesus said that this was the second greatest commandment in Mark 12:31.
4. Love for one another – Jesus said that our love for each other is how others will know we are His disciples (John 13:35).
5. Love for truth – Paul links a love for truth with salvation in 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

I see all of these loves intertwined. Jesus linked love for God and love for our neighbors as the greatest commandment. 1 John 4:20, 21 links our love for God with our love for our brother: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love

God whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15), so love is directly linked to the Great Commission of making disciples. And it seems reasonable that if we love God, we will also love His truth. It is hard to conceive of anyone saying that they love God but that they don't care about what He has written in His Word, and that truth doesn't matter! It seems that we would do well to make love a priority in our lives. If we make loving God our number one priority, I believe that other things in our spiritual lives will fall into their proper place.

*"Love is the fulfilling of the law."* □

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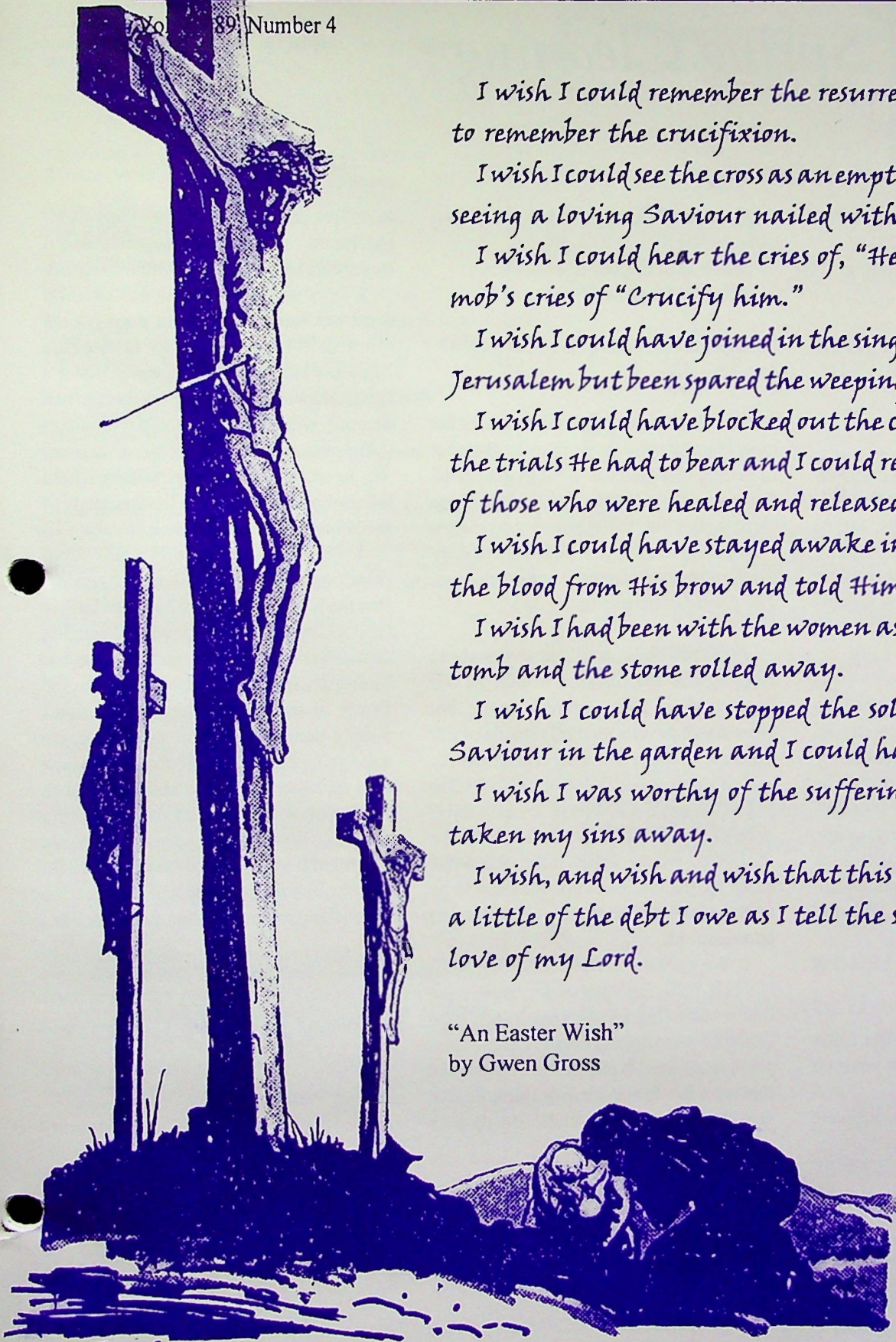
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# The Restitution Herald

Volume 89 Number 4

April, May • 2000



*I wish I could remember the resurrection without having to remember the crucifixion.*

*I wish I could see the cross as an empty piece of wood without seeing a loving Saviour nailed with spikes.*

*I wish I could hear the cries of, "He is risen," without the mob's cries of "Crucify him."*

*I wish I could have joined in the singing when Jesus entered Jerusalem but been spared the weeping as He died on the cross.*

*I wish I could have blocked out the cruelty and mockery of the trials He had to bear and I could remember the happy joy of those who were healed and released from sin.*

*I wish I could have stayed awake in the garden and wiped the blood from His brow and told Him that I understood.*

*I wish I had been with the women as they found the empty tomb and the stone rolled away.*

*I wish I could have stopped the soldiers from finding my Saviour in the garden and I could have taken Judas' kiss.*

*I wish I was worthy of the suffering and death that has taken my sins away.*

*I wish, and wish and wish that this Easter, I can pay back a little of the debt I owe as I tell the story of Easter and the love of my Lord.*

"An Easter Wish"  
by Gwen Gross

# A MESSAGE from the Editor . . .



## Spring Cleaning

**I**t's spring . . . you know what that means?

Time to do some spring cleaning.

Air out the house.

Scrub it down.

And, most important, if you're like me . . . **TIME TO CLEAR OUT THE CLUTTER.**

What is clutter?

"Clutter is anything that keeps us from being all we can be. It's anything that distracts, creates detours in our lives, gets in our way, and makes our lives unnecessarily complicated. Clutter has the potential to leave us feeling out of control and victimized" – Norman Wright (*Simplify Your Life and Get More Out of It*, p. 131).

It is a mistake to believe that for life to be full it must be like a room crammed with furniture. Thoreau claimed that he had only three chairs in his house: "one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society." A crowded life leaves no space and no time for enjoyment. Crowding distracts the mind, dulls the senses, and starves the soul. Simplicity enriches. (David Yount, *Spiritual Simplicity*, p. 17.)

As an exercise Wright suggests that we:

"conduct a clutter search of your life. Look in each room in your house. Ask yourself these questions:

What things in this room complicate my life?

How could changes in this room simplify my life?

Make a list of your responses.

Then do the same for the next room."

Finally, get rid of those things that complicate your life.

"Getting rid of things may be one of the most liberating things you can do. But a lot of people can't decide what to get rid of. Let peace of mind be your guide. When you clear things out, ask if something makes you feel more alive and peaceful, or confused and overwhelmed" (Cecile Andrews, *The Circle of Simplicity*, p. 38).

I've spoken in practical terms about clearing out the physical clutter in our homes, which is our exterior space, but what about the clutter that's inside of us? Listen to what the Bible says about this . . .

1. It's not our **EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT THAT CORRUPTS US, BUT WHAT IS INSIDE OF US.** See Matthew 15:10-20, where Jesus talks about the clean vs. the unclean cup. We need to be aware of what is cluttering up our hearts and remove it.

2. We need to be **AGGRESSIVE AND RUTHLESS** about removing everything that is cluttering up our temple (see John 2:12ff). Jesus cleared out the earthly temple in Jerusalem. It is even more important that we allow him to clear the temples that are our bodies. What's cluttering up your

temple? Lack of forgiveness? Unproductive habits? Sin? It's time to set those out by the curb and be done with them for good.

3. Once we've cleared out the clutter we must not leave our interior empty – we must fill it with good things; or else (see Matthew 12:43-45). Jesus warns that it's not enough simply to rid ourselves of our demons, we must replace them with something positive. Nature abhors a vacuum. We need to fill our lives with spiritual things through prayer, meditation, study of the Word, worship and service.

4. We reorganize around a new set of priorities. Matthew 6:33 says "seek ye first the Kingdom of God." Is your faith in God and His Kingdom the core of your life or just the window dressing? It's time to establish a new set of priorities, with God firmly at the center. Some of us don't simply need to clear out the clutter, we need to tear down the house, pour a new slab, and do a whole new building project. So during this spring let us do a spring cleaning. We can clean up our outer world and there is some benefit to that, but a far greater benefit will come if we clear up those things which clutter our inner life.

Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor

# 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 Importance of the Resurrection of Christ

BY PASTOR JIM MATTISON AND PASTOR LINFORD MOORE

**G**od resurrected the Messiah, Jesus, from the dead.

Revelation 1:18. I was dead but am alive forevermore.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Christ died for our sins.

Acts 3:15; 4:10. Whom God has raised from the dead.

Acts 10:40. Him God raised up the third day.

Acts 13:30. God raised him from the dead.

1. His appearances afterward proved it.  
Mark 16:9. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.

Mark 16:12. After that to the two men going to Emmaus.

1 Corinthians 15:5. He appeared to Peter.

Mark 16:14. He appeared to the eleven.

John 20:26, 27. To Thomas.

1 Corinthians 15:6-8. He appeared to 500 at once. Then to James, all the apostles, and finally to Paul.

Acts 1:3. Jesus showed Himself alive after His suffering and death by many infallible proofs. He was seen for forty days. During that time He continued emphasizing His favorite topic, the Kingdom of God.

## Why all these appearances?

They proved He was alive and now Immortal (Rom. 6:9). He was real, He had a material body. He ate (Luke 24:36-43). He was raised to fulfill Old Testament Scripture that Messiah would suffer and be raised from the dead (vs. 44-46). He told the apostles that there was something to do now to continue His work; they were

to go and preach repentance and forgiveness to all nations in His name (vs. 47, 48). After He ascended, He continued to work with them, confirming their preaching with miracles (Mark 16:19, 20).

2. If He had not been raised He could not have ascended to heaven.

Psalm 110:1. The LORD (Jehovah) said to my Lord (Jesus), Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

*He told the apostles  
that there was  
something to do now*

His ascension fulfilled that prophecy of God (Acts 1:11; Luke 24:51).

God did not promise this to the angels, only to Messiah (Heb. 1:1-14).

Jesus' resurrection and ascension are all tied into God's Plan for our Salvation.

3. If He did not leave the earth the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit and the spirit of truth, would not come (John 16:7; John 14:15-18, 26). Now the Holy Spirit has come and is available to all Christians since Pentecost (Acts 2:38, 39). We are to be filled with that Spirit (Eph. 5:18). His resurrection is tied into our having access to power from God.

4. His interceding for us now depended on His being resurrected. His interceding for us with His Father is His second work in our salvation (sacrifice – we have been saved, intercessor – we are being saved,

resurrector – we will be saved). Hebrews 7:25 – He ever lives to make intercession for us. Also Romans 8:34. He is our High Priest and we are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace for help (Heb. 4:16).

As we come before God day after day, thanking Him, praising Him, confessing our sins, Jesus is always there at His right hand interceding for us. How wonderful this is. Jesus' resurrection and ascension are all tied into the Plan of Salvation.

5. The next great thing Jesus will do is to Come Again (Acts 1:11, John 14:3).

Why is this necessary?

A. For the third part of the saving process – to raise the dead righteous and to change the living righteous to Eternal Life (Rev. 20:6; John 6:40; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Cor. 15:20-23; John 5:28, 29; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Col. 3:1-4).

B. To be King of the earth on the Throne of David, God's throne over the earth, and establish God's Rule over earth (Matt. 25:31; Luke 1:32, 33; Rev. 11:15; 1 Cor. 15:23-26; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 20:6; Rev. 2:26, 27; Rev. 3:21). This will be the time earth will be restored (Acts 3:19-21; Rev. 22:3; Isa. 35; Isa. 55:12, 13; Ezek. 36:33-36; Isa. 11:6-9).

C. To Judge the world (Acts 17:31). By raising Jesus from the dead, God gave assurance to all men that all men must be judged (Matt. 25:31-46; Matt. 13:41-43; Isa. 13:9-13; 2 Tim. 4:1).

We see, then, the great importance of Jesus' resurrection. All these parts of the Plan of God depended on Him being made alive eternally after His death and burial.

*(continued on page 7)*



# Do Souls Go to Heaven?

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

**W**hile the Jehovah's Witnesses and other adventists are labeled cultists because they say that the soul does not go to heaven when a person dies, the records of early church history are testimony to the fact that "orthodoxy" is the real culprit.

Did the early church teach the separation of a conscious soul from its body at the moment of death *and its immediate departure to heaven*? (I am not here discussing the condition of the soul as church fathers understood it, but the question of its *immediate location* following death.)

## Irenaeus

Here are the words of Irenaeus, in the mid-second century (*Against Heresies*, Book 5, chapter 31):

[S]ome who are reckoned among the orthodox go beyond the prearranged plan for the exaltation of the just, and are ignorant of the methods by which they are disciplined beforehand for incorruption. They thus entertain *heretical opinions*. For the *heretics*, . . . not admitting the salvation of their flesh, . . . *affirm that immediately upon their death they shall pass above the heavens*. . . .

Note that it is the "heretics" who teach that the soul goes immediately to heaven at death. Today, according to present orthodoxy, it is the heretics who teach that souls do not go immediately to heaven or hell. This makes Irenaeus a heretic, and John Wesley one as well.

Those persons, therefore, who *disallow a resurrection affecting*

*the whole man*, and [do their best to remove it from the Christian scheme], . . . know nothing as to the plan of resurrection? For they do not choose to understand, that if these things are as they say, the Lord Himself, in whom they profess to believe, did not rise again upon the third day; but *immediately upon his expiring . . . departed on high*, leaving His body to the earth. But the case was that for *three days He dwelt in the place where the dead were*, . . . "as Jonas

## "Orthodoxy" is the real culprit

. . . . .  
remained three days and three nights in the whale's belly" (Matt. 12:40) . . . David says, when prophesying of Him: "And thou hast delivered my soul from the nethermost hell [grave]." And on His rising again the third day, He said to Mary, . . . "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" [John 20:17] . . .

How must these men not be put to confusion, who allege . . . that their inner man [soul], leaving the body here, ascends into the super-celestial place? [Irenaeus thus reckons today's teaching as shameful!] For as the Lord "went away in the midst of the shadow of death" [Ps. 86:23], *where the souls of the dead were*, yet *afterwards* arose in the body, and *after the resurrection* was taken up [into heaven], it is manifest that the souls of His disciples also . . . shall go away into the invisible place [Hades] . . . *and there remain until*

*the resurrection*, awaiting that event; then receiving their bodies, and rising *in their entirety*, that is bodily, just as the Lord arose, they shall come thus into the presence of God. . . . As our Master, therefore, did not *at once* depart, taking flight [to heaven], but awaited the time of His resurrection . . . , so ought we *also to await the time of our resurrection*. . . .

Inasmuch, therefore, as the opinions of certain [orthodox persons] are derived from *heretical* discourses, they are both ignorant of God's dispensations, and of the mystery of the resurrection of the just, and of the [earthly] *kingdom* which is the *commencement of incorruption*; by means of which *kingdom* those who shall be worthy are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature. . . . (*Against Heresies*, Book 5, chapters 31, 32)

Irenaeus thus condemns the whole "orthodox" tradition about what happens at death. That is the tradition which eventually swamped the biblical teaching, from the third century onward.

## Justin Martyr

The protest of Justin Martyr (about AD 150) against what later became orthodoxy, and remains so to this day, is no less incisive (*Justin on the Resurrection*, chapters 2, 8, 9):

They who maintain the wrong opinion say that there is no resurrection of the flesh . . . For as in the case of  
(continued on page 6)

a yoke of oxen, if one or other is loosed from the yoke, neither of them can plough alone; so *neither can soul or body alone effect anything, if they be unyoked from their communion* [i.e. the soul can have no separate, active existence] . . . For what is man but the reasonable animal composed of body and soul? *Is the soul by itself man? No*, but the soul of man. Would the body be called man? No; but it is called the body of man. If, then, neither of these is by itself man, but that which is *made up of the two together is called man*, and God has called *man* to life and resurrection, He has called not a part, but the whole, which is the soul and the body. . . . Well, *they say, but the soul is incorruptible*, being a part of God and inspired by Him . . . Then what thanks are due to Him, and what manifestation of His power and goodness is it, *if He purposed to save what is by nature saved . . . ?* But no thanks are due to one who saves what is his own; for this is to save himself. . . . How then did [Christ] raise the dead? Their souls or their bodies? *Manifestly both*. If the resurrection *were only spiritual*, it was requisite that He, in raising the dead, should show the body lying apart by itself, *and the soul living apart by itself*. But now He did not do so, but raised the body . . . Why do we any longer endure those unbelieving arguments and fail to see that we are retrograding when we listen to such an argument as this: *That the soul is immortal*, but the body mortal, and incapable of being revived. For this we used to hear from Plato, even before we *learned the truth*. If then the Saviour said this and proclaimed salvation to the soul alone, what new thing beyond what we heard from Plato, did He bring us?"

Justin thus implies that teaching an immediate survival of the soul in heaven or hell is Platonism, not Christianity.

Justin is here refuting the arguments of Gnosticism which denied the resurrection of the flesh. Traditional Christianity has taken a similar, but slightly different track by including in the creed a belief in the resurrection of the body, while also teaching an immediate salvation of the soul alone in a conscious, disembodied state. This is said to be the real person, albeit disembodied. Such an idea is flatly contradicted by Justin and Irenaeus and is identified by them as pagan.

Here is a portion of Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* (from chapters 80, 81).

Trypho: "[D]o you really admit that this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the Patriarchs . . .?"

Justin: "I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong<sup>1</sup> to the pure and pious faith . . . think otherwise. Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians, but are godless, *impious heretics*, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, atheistical, and foolish. . . I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines [delivered] by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [the truth of the resurrection] . . . who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and *that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven*; do not imagine that they are Christians . . . But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a

<sup>1</sup> A number of commentators believe that the text has been corrupted here and that Justin wrote "who do *not* belong . . ." The alteration was made to make Justin less condemning of amillennialism.

thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare . . .

"We have perceived, moreover, that the expression, 'The Day of the Lord is as a thousand years,' is connected with this subject. And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the Apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation that was made to him that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place."

Here is Justin's statement on the Intermediate State, in full, from his *Dialogue with Trypho* ch. 80 (available in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, Eerdmans, p. 239).

For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [the truth of the resurrection], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, *and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians*, even as one, if he would rightly consider it, would not admit that the Sadducees, or similar sects of the Genistae, Meristae, Galilaeans, Hellenists, Pharisees, Baptists, are Jews . . . but are [only] *called Jews* . . . worshipping God with the lips, as God Himself declared, but the heart was far from Him. But I and others, *who are right-minded Christians on all points*, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.

## Tertullian

The Latin church father Tertullian (often know as the father of Western Christianity) is another who would disagree strongly with modern "orthodoxy" about what happens to the soul at death. He protested against the idea that the soul leaves the body at death and goes to heaven:

*Plato . . . dispatches at once to heaven such souls as he pleases . . . To the question, therefore, whither the soul is withdrawn [at death] we now give an answer . . . [T]he Stoics . . . place only their own souls, that is, the souls of the wise, in the mansions above. Plato, it is true, does not allow this destination to all the souls, indiscriminately, of even all the philosophers, but only those who have cultivated their philosophy out of love to boys [homosexual love] . . . In his system, then, the souls of the wise are carried up on high into the ether . . . All others souls they thrust down to Hades . . .*

By ourselves the lower regions (of Hades) are not supposed to be a bare cavity, nor some subterranean sewer of the world, but a vast deep space in the interior of the earth, and a concealed recess in its very bowels; inasmuch as we read that *Christ in His death spent three days in the heart of the earth*, that is, in the secret inner recess which is hidden in the earth, and enclosed by the earth, and superimposed on the abysmal depths which lie still lower

down. Now although Christ is God, yet, being also man, "He died according to the Scriptures" [1 Cor. 15:3] and "according to the same Scriptures was buried." [v. 4] With the same law of His being He fully complied, *by remaining in Hades* in the form and condition of a dead man; *nor did He ascend into the heights of heaven before descending into the lower parts of the earth*, that He might there make the patriarchs and prophets partakers of Himself. [Nothing is said in the Bible about Jesus altering the condition of the Patriarchs while he was in Hades.] This being the case you must suppose Hades to be a subterranean region, and *keep at arm's length those who are too proud to believe that the souls of the faithful deserve a place in the lower regions*. These persons, who are "servants above their Lord, and disciples above their Master," [re. Matt. 10:24] would no doubt spurn to receive the comfort of the resurrection, if they must expect it in Abraham's bosom. But it was for this purpose, say they, that Christ descended into hell, that we might not ourselves have to descend thither. Well, then [they say], what difference is there between heathens and Christians, if the same prison awaits them all when dead? [But I say] *How, indeed, shall the soul mount up to heaven*, where Christ is already sitting at the Father's right hand, when

as yet the archangel's trumpet has not been heard by the command of God? When as yet those whom the coming of the Lord is to find on the earth, have not been caught up into the air to meet Him at His coming, in company with the dead in Christ, who shall be the first to arise? [1 Thess. 4:13ff.] To no one is heaven opened. . . . When the world, indeed, shall pass away, *then the kingdom of heaven shall be opened.* (*Treatise on the Soul*, chapters 51, 54, 55)

## Hippolytus

Another "Church Father," Hippolytus (ca 170-236), certainly did not think that souls were in heaven:

But now we must speak of Hades, in which the souls both of the righteous and the unrighteous are detained . . . [T]he righteous shall obtain the incorruptible and unfading Kingdom, *who indeed are at present detained in Hades*, but not in the same place with the unrighteous . . .

Hades, *in which the souls of all are detained* until the time which God has determined; and then He will accomplish a resurrection of all, *not by transferring souls into other bodies*, but by raising the bodies themselves. (*Against Plato, on the Cause of the Universe*, chapters 1, 2)

(Emphasis added throughout.) □

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## The Importance of the Resurrection of Christ (continued from page 4)

God did this when He raised Messiah Jesus from death to Eternal Life.

If we believe He was raised, let us confess that. "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." (Romans 10:9, 10).

If there is no resurrection, our faith is vain, we are false witnesses, and miserable (1 Cor. 15:12-19).

If Jesus was not raised:

- He would not have ascended to the right hand of God.
- No Comforter would have come.
- We would have no High Priest to intercede for us.
- There would be no hope of resurrection for us. Faith would be vain.

- There would be no King for God's Kingdom.

- There would be no Judgment Day.

But HE WAS RAISED! Verse 20. Now He INTERCEDES. We can come boldly to the throne of grace. He is our Strength! He is our Peace! How GLAD we are that He was resurrected from the dead! Because He lives, we, if faithful, will live also, at His Second Coming. □

# "I Change Not"

BY PASTOR FRANCIS E. BURNETT

**D**uring the year of 1999 there were many suggestions put forth as to what would take place on December 31, 1999. Some, probably a small minority, thought the world (this age) would come to an abrupt end. Others thought that most systems such as electric, transportation, etc. would be closed down for a few weeks or perhaps several months. Many were persuaded to do what could be classified as irrational. For instance, they purchased pieces of land in the remote areas of the United States and in other parts of the earth where they could exist with the ordinary things we consider necessary. They stored in their homes for future existence hordes of food, water, clothing, and more. Some paid out quite a lot for gold, hiding it away because "experts" were telling them the gold would be worth more than double at the beginning of 2000. Gold in fact, was of less value January 1, 2000, than it was during the summer of 1999.

We know all of you who are reading this article, that January 1, 2000 was really just another day. OH YES! It was New Year's Day and the entertainment was the same as in past years – football games. Why was it that so many followed the suggestions to protect themselves against some kind of disaster?! Could it be there was a lack of faith in the God who provides every day? Could it be that, even more alarming, many had forgotten the God in whom they believed? (At least many of these *said* they were believers.)

This is not to suggest that there will not be an end of this age. The Bible teaches plainly there will be. However, it will be when the God of Heaven brings it to pass.

As to setting the exact time, anyone who does so and those believe in it, are very foolish. Jesus said that only God knows "the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7) The CEV reads "in which only the Father has control."

God made a profound statement to Malachi, the prophet, "I am the LORD; I change not" (Malachi 3:6a). It is extremely important for all "believers" to put a dedicated faith in God. Believers

## *The Bible is very plain as to the place of God in the world.*

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must realize that God will watch over all of those who steadfastly serve Him. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said concerning clothing, food, and shelter, "Your Father knoweth you have need of these things." He further added, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and all of these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). One of the ills of this day is the fact that men, women, and younger ones have put their faith into themselves. It seems that we may be duplicating a time, as it was, when there was not a king to govern Israel. "Every man did that which was right in his own sight."

Christian leaders are finding that in the beginning of this the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a great majority of Christians, so-called by professing that they are, really do not desire to believe that God should provide for them. And they do not want to rely on God since they are so capable of taking care of

themselves. Solomon wrote, "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he" (Proverbs 16:20). Again he wrote, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool; but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26).

God is in control of everything including each one of us. God is to be fully trusted to care for us, guide us, watch over us and bless us beyond anything else that can be done by us or someone else. James wrote, "Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father who created all the lights in heaven. He is always the same and never makes dark shadows by changing" (James 1:17 CEV). So many put their trust in government whether it be that of the United States or another. Millions put trust in the United Nations and feel that those chosen are there to guide the world. As stated by Solomon, "he that trusteth the LORD; happy is he." YES! It takes faith – sometimes outstanding faith – to put all of one's trust in the living God. Furthermore, it takes a relationship with God through His son, Jesus. The Bible is very plain as to the place of God in the world. We read, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God . . . Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men" (Psalm 9:17, 20). As God deals with nations, let us be assured that He will treat us in the same way. "Arise, O God, judge the earth; for thou shalt inherit all nations" (Psalm 82:8). This is the teaching in Revelation 11:15; "Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish; that men may know that thou, whose name is JEHOVAH, art the

*(continued on page 13)*

# God and Racism

BY TRACY (SAVAGE) ZHYKHOVICH

**"R**ed and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight."

But are "they" in yours? Maybe "they" are precious to you, those "colored people," those nameless colored faces. But why distinguish colored or uncolored, from either perspective? Aren't we all PEOPLE? Aren't we all people created in God's image? I would think that after 2000 years we, those claiming Christ as Lord, would have renewed not only our minds but our eyes and our hearts to the simple truth that we are all one and we are all PEOPLE. (In this article I am considering the issue of racism from a Christ-like perspective. I don't expect "un-renewed" and sinful minds and hearts to comprehend this. Those given over to a depraved mind have an "excuse" as to why they still have a curtain over their eyes and can only see black and white or categorize everyone they see as to their nationality or status.)

Racism — it is everywhere. From the affluent and "civilized" to the poor and simple. Racism is among the educated and the uneducated, and its stench is rising. What is racism? One of *The Random House College Dictionary's* definitions says "racism is a doctrine that inherent differences among the various human races determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior." Another definition they give is: "racism is hatred or intolerance of another race or races."

The second definition I won't dwell on, because it is obvious. I don't think that there are many Christians who would fall into that definition, but I think we must consider the first definition more closely.

Are we racist? Are you racist? We might all answer that we are not, but that might be because we are considering the second definition. We certainly don't "hate" other races. We want them all to be saved. (But why do we want them saved if we discriminate against them now?)

Discriminate: 1) to make a distinction in favor or against a person or thing on a categorical basis rather than according to

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actual merit. 2) to note or observe a difference. Maybe we don't have anything against "them," so we say, but why then do we discriminate? Maybe we think they will change in the kingdom, for we'll all be clothed in "white." Or maybe we'll change, maybe our minds and hearts will finally be renewed as God intends for His race, His PEOPLE. The only distinction after the resurrection of Jesus was between those working out their salvation and those giving theirs up — between the believers and unbelievers — and those "superior" should be loving, not discriminating against the others. "For there are no longer Jews or Gentiles, slave or free, male or female" and I think we can add, black and white to that. Those in Christ are ONE.

We must consider how people discriminate. It isn't always with words. We can discriminate in our hearts, in our minds or in our thoughts. Distinguishing differences amongst ourselves should be

for the good of each other, not to label or rate or determine a hierarchy.

Why do people discriminate or why are they racist? I think there are two answers. They are either ignorant or they just want to feel superior. "Superior;" this word is in the first definition of racism. A racist person thinks his race is superior. I think that if there are so many racist people in this world we ought to consider if there really might be one race superior over the others. According to the Bible, the only superiorities I found were that God is superior over all; that Jesus became superior over the angels; and that God gave mankind superiority over all the creatures of the earth. (Yes, God is head over Jesus and Jesus head over the church and man is head over the woman, but this isn't, or shouldn't be, discrimination. God and Jesus love us, they don't discriminate against us.) Man is superior only over the animals. And there is ONE mankind. We are all people with the same needs. We are all people. Regardless of our nationality or our color of skin, we have all sinned and have fallen short of God's glory.

In Russia I have come to see that people distinguish between nationalities. It is even listed in their passport as to which nationality they are. They may be a Russian citizen but they will be listed as Jewish if that is their lineage, even if they are not "religiously" Jewish, but Christian. It irritates me beyond all ends here each time people say, "he's a Jew" if they see his facial features or last name. WHO CARES?! He's a person first! And it's just as absurd when people say, "he's black." Unless you are describing someone to a blind person, WHY DISTINGUISH?! Yes,

*(continued on page 10)*

God is a great artist and designer. He made our earth beautiful. He painted the sky, the birds and the fish with great intricacy and a variety of colors, just as He created different races and different faces. We should distinguish only the different beauties and consider the creative mind of God if we are going to meditate on the differences. It is just as saddening to see how the "educated" look down on the less educated and how the rich think they are better than the poor. Many think this gives them more power or influence. (And unfortunately we even see this in many churches or Christian organizations.)

As is God, I too am more interested in a person's heart and relationship with the Creator and His Son. Any physical distinctions only make a person unique. The existence of differences doesn't mean that we need to be put on a ladder as to who is better. A difference doesn't always determine if something is better or worse, it is just what the word says, it is only a difference. Recognizing a difference isn't bad if it praises God or builds up another person. Let's marvel in God's creation and see in color without categorizing it!

The last thing I would like to consider with you is the issue of "mixed" mar-

riages. The only biblical comment on this was in the Old Testament and it referred to mixing Jews with Gentiles. We see now that this no longer matters since we are all one in Christ.

If we are to consider any "mixing" today, it can only be mixing between believers and unbelievers. So why ought we consider marrying between different *skin* colors to mean a "mixed" marriage? What about different color eyes, or hair? Some may even consider or condemn marriages of mixed cultures, countries, backgrounds, financial status or the like, along with the "mixing" color of skin. But why? It isn't biblical. I think it is because they either have a superior attitude about their race or they are afraid of or uncomfortable with those they are discriminating against. And who is the judge of which colors or shades mix and match and which do not? The only sexual unions (marriages) that God condemns are sexual relations outside of marriage, between the same sex or between mankind and animals. If God doesn't have a problem with two people of different nationalities or colors uniting in marriage, why should this concern anyone else? If Jesus proposed to

us all (red, yellow, black and white) to be His bride, why then not your's or your neighbor's? Do we have different standards than Jesus? (Throughout the New Testament Jesus is seen as the bridegroom and He says to all, "Come to me." He is coming for His bride, the church, made up of all different colors and nationalities.)

If you have read this far you may be wondering why I chose such a topic to write on. It is my desire that we become more Christ-like and less discriminating. It is my desire that we would see with eyes as children who haven't been tainted by discrimination or racism. Let us strive to see the beauty of the rainbow and rejoice in the different colors. All of God's creation is different and unique, even more so human beings. No matter which continent we reside on or in which city or village we live or how we dress or how we look, we are all God's creation destined for the Kingdom of God or for the lake of fire, both of which know no color or nationality. Jesus loves the little children, red, yellow, black and white, and we should too. Perfect love casts out all fear and it doesn't know discrimination. □

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## Rosebud

**A** young, new preacher was walking with an older, more seasoned preacher in the garden one day and feeling a bit insecure about what God had for him to do. He was inquiring of the older preacher.

The older preacher walked up to a rosebush and handed the young preacher a rosebud and told him to open it without tearing off any petals. The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the WILL OF GOD for his life and for his ministry.

Because of his high respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to TRY to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal in tact. It wasn't long before he realized how impossible it was to do so. Noticing the younger preacher's inability to unfold the rosebud while keeping it intact, the older preacher began to tell the following poem . . .

### Unfolding the Rosebud

It is only a tiny rosebud,  
A flower of God's design;  
But I cannot unfold the petals  
With these clumsy hands of mine.  
The secret of unfolding flowers  
Is not known to such as I.

GOD opens this flower so sweetly,  
When in my hands they fade and die.  
If I cannot unfold a rosebud,  
This flower of God's design,  
Then how can I think I have wisdom  
To unfold this life of mine?

So I'll trust in Him for His leading  
Each moment of every day.  
I will look to Him for His guidance  
Each step of the pilgrim way.  
The pathway that lies before me,  
Only my heavenly Father knows.  
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments,  
Just as He unfolds the rose.

*Submitted by Pastor Rex Cain*

# A Brief History of the Formation of the Church of God General Conference

BY JANET STILSON, DAVID GRAHAM, MARK MATTISON

**M**uch about the formation of the Church of God, Age-to-Come movement in America prior to the 1840's is still unknown. A series of articles in *The Restitution Herald* and the *Church of God History Newsletter* has done much to clarify our understanding of the early years of the movement. At this point we are able to outline briefly the development of the Church of God, emphasizing its relationships with other movements and disclosing some of the struggles that led to its final reorganization in 1921.

## I. INCEPTION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Many who had endured the Bitter Disappointment of October 22, 1844, still believed wholeheartedly in the near return of Christ to this earth to establish the Kingdom of God. Some of them were Literalist, Conditionalist, Arminian,<sup>1</sup> Age to Come, Zionist, Millenarian, and Biblical unitarian. Generally, each one of these doctrines fell outside the realm of accepted orthodoxy.

The unitarian doctrine seems to have developed in America at the end of the eighteenth century. Sydney Ahlstrom, noted Yale historian of religion, notes that two or three smaller groups were developing at the same time as the emergence of the King's Chapel Unitarian movement.

<sup>1</sup> "Arminianism was a term used to designate almost any form of Reformed theology that modified the traditional doctrines of total depravity, limited atonement, or unconditional election and accentuated man's role in salvation" (Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1975, 490).

These groups shared a concern for a return to the "primitive gospel." Ahlstrom writes:

One of these was the so-called Christian Connection, a minority revivalistic movement among people of lowly station on the New England frontier. Strongly anti-Calvinistic in sentiment, it grew contemporaneously with the similar body of Freewill Baptists, who were also strongest in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine; and many of its ministers had been ordained by Freewill congregations. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the two groups contemplated merging, since both held similar doctrines, inclined toward primitivism, and practiced open communion. But as they expanded westward across New York State, the "Christians" began more and more to show Unitarian tendencies, which alienated them from the Baptists and turned them toward the Stonites — and occasionally toward the Unitarians.<sup>2</sup>

Another group of "Christians" with a Methodist background came out of Virginia and North Carolina and worked with Barton Stone. It would seem safe to conjecture that the Church of God emerged primarily from the unitarian Christian Connection, with which Joseph Marsh had been associated.<sup>3</sup> Marsh became one of the most vocal Age-to-Come publishers,

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 541.

<sup>3</sup> This is not to deny a connection with English Literalists and early heretical Baptists, linking our movement to the Radical Reformation.

after his earlier work with the Christian connection and as an editor of Millerite papers. In 1841, Marsh had written fourteen influential articles entitled "The Church of God" in which he had insisted on the return of the Church to New Testament principles.

It should be noted that the development of the Church of God was not isolated from other religious developments in American history. Our growth coincided with that of the Unitarian denomination and the Christian Connection, the latter group contributing significantly to the theology of the emerging Adventist movement. Individuals such as Joseph Marsh, who remained aloof from the mainstream, concentrated on Age-to-Come doctrine, even though major tenets of our faith were held in common with other groups. From the Congregationalists, the Church of God developed church polity; Arminianism was a common doctrine with the Methodists; the unity of God and Divinity of Christ proved an area of agreement with the Unitarians; evangelical interest and primitivism were held in common with the Christian Connection. Parallel with all early American denominations was an intense effort to spread the Word by publishing quality journals.

Joseph Marsh was the leading editor for the emerging Church of God, publishing first the *Voice of Truth*, then the *Advent Harbinger*, and, finally, the *Bible Expositor*. Marsh was also in contact with several congregations across New England and Canada West. R.V. Lyon, another evangelist, worked primarily among the western brethren in Canada.

(continued on page 12)

## II. SOCIAL CONCERNS WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

As the church developed during the mid-nineteenth century, it struggled with the same ethical questions which faced other denominations. A brief survey of some of Marsh's early journals will reveal some of the social attitudes which prevailed among the people.

Four short articles concerning the temperance question appeared in the *Advent Harbinger* in 1851. One was written by O.R.L. Crozier, a former advocate of the "Shut Door" theory. Crozier admonished the Methodist Conference for tabling a measure regarding the endorsement of the Maine law in 1851. He maintained that the Group should not be so hesitant above endorsing the law.

That same year, a letter was published by Rockwell Thompson from Macedonia, Ohio. He wrote that the consequences of intemperance are blasted reputations, homes made desolate, and fortunes squandered. Not enough zeal was being shown for temperance. Christians should try to persuade others by their good example and advise both seller and buyer to forego their self-destruction, serve the Lord, and await His coming.

It must be concluded that at least in the year 1851, Joseph Marsh and his readers were not primarily occupied about the temperance issue. This is particularly evident if one compares the number of articles concerning temperance (four articles) to the number of articles devoted to women leaders in the church (thirteen articles) and the subject of abolition (thirty-one articles, including a lengthy discourse on the Federal Anti-Slave Act).

## III. THE CHURCH OF GOD, ADVENTISM, AND CHRISTADELPHIANISM

Many Age-to-Come evangelists, including J.L. Burnham, R.P. Moore, N.A. Hitchcock, and H.V. Reed, had contact with pioneer brethren on the frontier and, as a result, Marsh's writings were being mailed to subscribers in the West. Marsh was also contacted by a group of English

Millenarians in Geneva, Illinois. These Millenarians — James, Joseph, John, and Benjamin Wilson — had already been in contact with John Thomas.

John Thomas had been friends simultaneously with Alexander Campbell and Nathaniel Field. Field was part of the Adventist movement, but Campbell was not. Campbell eventually dissociated himself from Thomas because of the latter's views on the mortality of man. Thomas was then left to gravitate towards Field. Through Field, Thomas learned of Joseph Marsh, the foremost exponent of Age-to-

### *The development of the Church of God was not isolated from other religious developments*

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Come doctrine. As a result of these connections, Thomas became convinced of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God on the earth in the Age-to-Come. Writing in the third person, Thomas confessed:

His faith had now attained an amplitude it had not possessed before. It embraced the hope of God's calling to his kingdom and glory in the name of Jesus as the future Lord and sovereign of the world. He now perceived what the faith of the gospel was that was necessary to constitute an immersion Christian baptism. It was nothing less than the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus as the Christ; and he discovered accordingly that if a man would inherit that kingdom he must believe with an honest and good heart the things concerning it. It was not simply a Future Age of glory, but it was "a kingdom, glory, and dominion" in that age with "honor and immortality" that were the glad tidings of "the truth as it is in Jesus." To become a joint-heir with him of this kingdom the Editor was

immersed in 1847. Having thus obeyed the gospel himself, he forthwith commenced its announcement to others in the United States, and afterwards in Britain.<sup>4</sup>

Eventually, Thomas' sectarianism drove him to break with Field and Marsh in a barrage of scathing articles. In 1859, Field wrote:

The doctor is very hard on the Adventists, Millerism, and Storrism. I fear he is ungrateful. For had it not been for the Advent movement, I do not believe that this day he would have a corporal's guard of followers. A broken down ex-Campbellite, he goes north to take advantage of the movement, and is now building on other men's foundation, and all the while exposing its rottenness! Such, at least is my opinion of his course.<sup>5</sup>

In an editorial addition to the article, Marsh wrote of Thomas' "manifest ingratitude to those who raised him from obscurity to his present notoriety among us."<sup>6</sup>

While on a trip through Ogle County, Illinois, during the Civil War, Thomas applied at the county courthouse for the creation of a new denomination, the Christadelphians (Brethren in Christ). From that time on, although Age-to-Come believers in the Church of God tradition held many doctrines in common with Christadelphians, they developed as separate organizations. They often met together in congregational worship, although the latter would not celebrate communion with the former. At this time,

<sup>4</sup> John Thomas, "On the Names of Our Periodicals," *Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January, 1851, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Nathaniel Field, "Thomasism, Number III," *Expositor and Advocate*, Vol. 29, No. 24, May 15, 1859, 665.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



the members of the newly organized Advent Christian denomination fellow-shipped closely with Church of God believers, often worshipping and attending conferences with them.

#### IV. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

As John Thomas became an increasingly unpopular person among Age-to-Come believers, Benjamin Wilson, editor of the *Gospel Banner* and translator of the *Emphatic Diaglott*, grew more prominent in influence. After the death of Joseph Marsh in Michigan in the early sixties, Benjamin Wilson and his nephew Thomas Wilson became more widely read and accepted among the leading exponents of the Age-to-Come doctrine, which among other things explained that the Jews would one day return to their land and become a nation. This doctrine was advanced long before the Zionist movement became a popular topic. In the early days, the return of Israel to its native land was a subject for scorn by the orthodox denominations. Even reformers like Alexander Campbell

who were willing to be open-minded on many points of doctrine nevertheless shunned this teaching.

#### V. ORGANIZATION

The early leaders of our movement generally avoided organization. Wilson wrote extensive articles encouraging congregations to organize themselves with elders and deacons, yet they hesitated. Some visionaries were desirous of organizing a general conference of individual congregations and state conferences for the purpose of uniting to conduct business and develop educational and missionary programs.

In 1888 at Philadelphia, and again in 1889 in Chicago, conferences were established in attempts to form a national organization. The minutes of the latter conference indicate that the board continued to function until 1892 when it disbanded due to its inability to convince people to support the work financially. In 1921, however, a national organization became a reality.

Since its reorganization in 1921, the Church of God has continued to stress the importance of local congregations, supporting them while not threatening their autonomy. The churches affiliated with the corporate headquarters elect delegates to attend an annual General Conference meeting. Denominational business is conducted, but the direction comes from the local churches, not from the headquarters.

In the seventy years of its existence, the denomination has maintained a small Bible college, published literature for worldwide distribution, maintained an active youth program, engaged in foreign missions, and participated in the Church-growth movement. With the move of its headquarters to the more promising Atlanta area and the creation of a new theological journal, the Church of God seeks to make its heritage more widely known. □

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### “I Change Not” (continued from page 8)

most high over all the earth” (Psalm 83:17, 18).

There was a chorus that was sung in camps, which had these words: How great is our God, how great is His name. He’s the greatest wonder, forever the same . . . That God, whose name is JEHOVAH, has not changed nor will He ever change. He said that He would not and James wrote that He would not. We need, as believing and professing Christians, to know that the God we serve is as described by Isaiah, “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; He will save us” (Isaiah 33:22). About this God in whom we believe, we have these words, “Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know: and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea there is none that heareth your words” (Isaiah 43:26).

Our God, who changes not, has made some (many) definite promises. Let us examine two of them, which have different aspects as to the greatness of the living God. “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Psalm 2:6, 7). The other statement, “he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Daniel 2:21). In the last one, it is important for each of us to realize that we can know and understand much of the Bible because God will help us to know. It seems certain that today that such knowledge comes through the Holy Spirit.

Our future is anchored in our trust in the God, whose name is JEHOVAH. “How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God!

therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings” (Psalm 36:7). God wants to protect us, God wants to help each one of us. We can not put our trust in governments, stocks and bonds, other persons — not even should we “lean on our own understanding.” The apostle Peter wrote, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:6, 7).

Because God does not change, you and I have the greatest of assurance that what God has spoken will be literally and fully fulfilled. Be even stronger in putting your faith in the Word of God. Become more active in your life for God’s Son, Jesus. Follow more closely in the ways that God has prescribed for us in His Son. That is what the future of all believers is based upon. □

# Fulfilling the Great Commission Through Tracts

BY BETTY ACKELS

**W**hen he sees the seasons turning and it is planting time, there is no time for hesitation if the farmer wants to harvest a crop in due season.

So it is with our tract ministry. Though we don't see results from our tract ministry, this is our role — laborers in the vineyard. We never know but what we may give a tract to someone seeking the Kingdom.

As the parable of the sower shows, he broadcast the seed far and wide. We can see that our efforts will fall on hard ground, rocky ground, and good ground. We can't hesitate to sow because all the ground doesn't appear to be good.

We must trust God, believe there is good ground out there, and remember that our efforts will be repaid! God has promised that some of the seed will fall on good ground and will bring forth fruit manyfold.

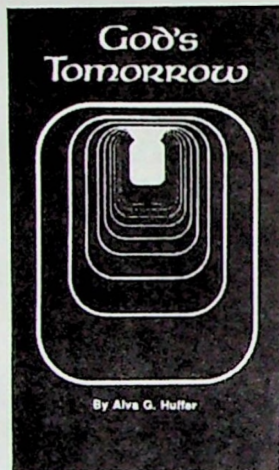
The farmer puts the seed in the ground and waits. He waits for the rain and the sunshine: for the seed to take root, for the leaves to appear and, finally, the ear of corn.

The farmer doesn't go to his field the day after planting and expect to see a tall plant with green leaves and full ears of corn.

All in God's time. So the farmer waits. And so we wait.

We needn't expect to see a great number of people charge the doors to get into the church to hear the gospel. But we can be sure that someone out there is searching for truth.

A Christian handed a tract to a bus driver. He wasn't interested, but when he arrived home, he found the tract in his pocket. He laid it on the table, his mother



picked it up, read it, and was overjoyed. In it were truths she had been searching for all her life!

We of the Church of God have access to many good tracts. I carry several in my car at

all times, and one in my purse. I make a pack of several leaflets.

I like these:

"God's Tomorrow," a message of hope and a colorful tract;

"What Happens After Death?" (people do want to know the answer);

"Steps to Salvation" — showing that not only belief, but obedience is also necessary for salvation [note: this tract is about to be re-printed];

"The Kingdom of God" — I like this

pink-backed one, by Harry Goekler;

"The Gospel — What is It?" [available from Anthony Buzzard] is a great tract — it covers all the above topics.

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH ?



I hand my pack of tracts to people in our area when I go to garage sales,

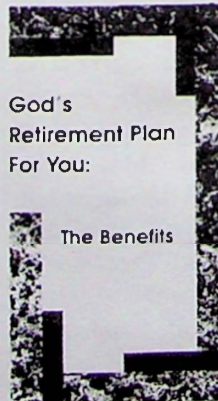
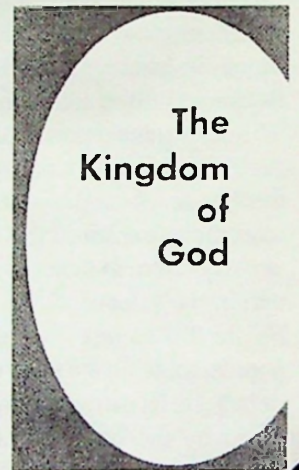
along with the money for the article I'm buying. Generally the tract is accepted with thanks (as is the money). I pray that the tract or tracts will be read and that God will enlighten the reader. Prayer should always accompany our efforts.

When the woman at the well ran to tell the men of her city about Jesus, she asked them, "Is not this the Christ?" Evidently the men rushed back with her. Jesus called the attention of the disciples to the sight. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest!" (John 4:9-35).

How much more now! We have the means to spread the gospel far and wide.

I enclose a tract when I pay my bills.

Last month it was a copy of "The Resurrection." That's a good tract. It's eye-catching. Many people have not studied this subject and may be interested. Yes, perhaps it will be thrown away; then again, perhaps not. [Note: pictured here is our



new, retitled, edition of "The Resurrection," titled "God's Retirement Plan For You: The Benefits."]

I write letters of appreciation for products I like, to companies all over the U.S.A. I enclose a leaflet of prophecy and a tract or two. I have had notes of thanks for my letters and for my literature. I sent a pack to an address in the Yukon last month. Perhaps they are short of good reading material up there.

It is interesting to keep a record of how many tracts are sent out and where they go, but this is not necessary; I'm sure our Father knows and approves our efforts. I stamp the packs with the name and address of the Raymore Church, which provides the tracts.

In closing I'd like to share a story I read in *Guideposts* some time back.

### The Good Seed

At the foothills of the Rocky Mountains are the Franklin Mountains. These rise from a desert floor. Golden California poppies were a native wildflower, growing only sparsely until in the 1930's a local newspaper spearheaded a drive for funds for poppy seeds. Eventually, pounds of seed was sown from an airplane along the base of the mountains. Then came spring and all the excitement died because the poppies did not come up. Years passed, and if anyone remembered the poppies at all it was with wry regret that the big experiment had failed.

Then one fall and winter there was an unusual amount of rain. That spring — dormant for almost 40 years — seemingly overnight, golden poppies burst into bloom!

God's time is not our time. If seeds can produce blooms almost 40 years after they are planted, sowing the seed of the Kingdom will certainly bear fruit even if we can't see the results right away.

The seeds which turned into those golden blossoms under the right conditions were the proper kind of seeds to grow poppies. It will take prayer and work to distribute truth — planting the seeds of the Kingdom — but those seeds in themselves have the life to bring forth! Let's not get discouraged when we see no results or very little results in our planting! □

(Previously printed in the February / March 1992 RESTITUTION HERALD)

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## Honk for Encouragement

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

**T**he next time you see geese flying south for the winter in a V-formation, you might be interested in knowing what science has discovered about why they fly that way. There are four things that geese have to teach us.

One, they rotate their leadership. When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point. (I'm sure one of the reasons leaders burn out is because they are expected to stay in front all the time and they just plain wear out.)

The second thing that they do is to create upward air current for one another. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following.

Then, by flying in a V-formation, the whole flock gets seventy-one percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. (One reason for loneliness is that so many of us are all heading in our own directions rather than seeking to mobilize with each other in the same direction.)

Third, when a goose gets sick or is wounded by a shot or falls out, two geese fall out of formation and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he can fly again. (If people knew we would stand by them like that in the church, they would push down the walls to get in.)

Finally, it's the geese in the back who honk; letting the leader know that they're following and all is well. (I am sure, too,

that if people thought we would be constantly honking encouragement to them, our churches would have standing room only.)

When was the last time you stopped to encourage the pastor or one of the leaders in your church? Gave a honk of encouragement to a hurting or lonely person in your church? When we are focused together in a cooperative way in what God's call is, we are able to save much time and energy. □



# A Rope With Three Cords

BY J. OTIS LEDBETTER AND TIM SMITH

**E**very family has a heritage, a legacy passed from generation to generation. In truth, though, the heritage is something few parents really understand. Too many times we are not sure what it is or the impact that it has on our lives—and the lives of those we love.

Every family legacy has three distinct yet interrelated parts, like a rope with three cords: spiritual, emotional, and social. These cords secure a person to the past, give ballast in the present, and help him look with hope into the future. The wise King Solomon said, "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecc. 4:12). Together, the cords are stronger than any one or two alone. Each cord is essential and influences the other two. They are intertwined and interdependent. We will see in our children exactly what they have seen in us. Let's look at how each cord contributes to a strong family heritage.

The spiritual cord is the process of modeling and reinforcing the unseen realities of life. Many families neglect this vital aspect of heritage, dismissing it as "religious," "unnecessary" or "irrelevant." Yet every human being is made in the image of God with a built-in-hunger for connecting with Him. Those without a spiritual cord are destined to have a weak sense of identity and purpose. Spiritual legacy is more than baptism, a camp experience, or deliverance from tragedy. It is integrating God's timeless truths into our everyday experiences as a family. It is usually caught rather than taught. Our children observe in us, their parents, the truth of spiritual realities by watching how we live.

The emotional cord creates an atmosphere of security and love at home, preparing children for the challenges of life. We've met many adults suffering the long-term effects of a painful childhood, now crippled with a negative emotional legacy. Insecure, feeling unloved, and desperate for approval, these adults are not equipped for the roller coaster of life's ups and downs. The emotional cord provides the connection of belonging and approval. When a child feels connected to her parent(s), she sees herself as competent, capable, and supported. This emotional cord is woven over time through a parent's expressing unconditional love and acceptance to offspring. It is woven by communicating in a variety of ways, "I will always love you—no matter what."

The social cord means teaching a child the skills necessary for cultivating healthy, stable relationships. I've seen children who are in emotionally healthy Christian homes (the first two cords), but are handicapped by an inability to relate to other people. Those who are able to make friends and keep them have an edge in the game of life. Those who don't are limited; they have a loss of freedom and resources. Instead of feeling blessed, they almost feel cursed by isolation and loneliness. The best way to pass a social legacy to your child is to model it. Let him see you demonstrate respect, responsibility, compassion, and boundary setting. When you teach children to relate effectively and solve conflict, you are preparing them for marriage and a family of their own.

## Importance of a Heritage

The concept behind heritage building is rooted in a Biblical mandate summarized in Deuteronomy 6:5-9.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children!"

How?

"Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

In other words, we need to take advantage of every opportunity to impress our beliefs and values in the lives of our children. Heritage Builders provides the resources for you to realize your heritage and begin to pass on the godly heritage God wants for your children. □

For more information on Heritage Builders Resources, visit your local Christian bookstore or call the Heritage Builders Hotline (800) 528-9489 or visit our web site [www.heritagebuilders.com](http://www.heritagebuilders.com).

# The Truth About the Word

BY GOSPEL PUBLICITY LEAGUE

**"I**t is written, that man shall not live by bread alone but by every WORD of God." (Luke 4:4)

## GOD, THROUGH HIS WORD, BEGAN ALL THINGS:

The Bible, God's WORD, His grand revelation to mankind, commences, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). We are not told when that beginning was but scientists seem to have proven by carbon dating fossils, and by other means, that it was many millions of years ago.

However about 6,000 years ago the Great Creator, the God of this universe, planned another world — of living things — out of the primordial chaos which the natural world He had created became. "And the earth was without form and void [waste and empty], and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Genesis 1:2). The earth was completely covered by water, surrounded by absolute and total darkness and devoid of life of any kind.

From this starting point our loving, moral, God commenced a new world of people with whom He wished to share His own being and blessings; with people who would choose of their own free will to love and serve Him.

Thus God said "'let there be light': and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). There followed "six days," during which the all-powerful and all-knowing God, through His mighty angels, fashioned the earth to what we know it to be: a beautiful world of interesting places with a wonderful diversity of life in vast multitudes of forms and species (Genesis 1:21).

The means by which God accomplished such a stupendous feat was HIS WORD,

which is filled with His eternal, miraculous, invisible power.

We learn Psalm 33:6-9 "By the **WORD OF THE LORD** were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the **breath of his mouth** . . . for he spake and it was done; he **commanded** and it stood fast." The Lord Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, confirmed that His Father had created all things, telling the Apostle John through His angel

*God commenced a new  
world of people with  
whom to share His own  
being and blessings.*

. . . . .  
to write "O Lord . . . thou hast created all things" (Revelation 4:11).

## IN ABRAM GOD MADE A NEW BEGINNING:

Because of long, continued and increasing violence and wickedness, the Great Creator became the Great Destroyer. The world of the descendants of Adam and Eve perished under the waters of a flood as He foretold (Genesis 6:7). Only Noah, a righteous man, and his immediate family, were saved from death, along with at least two representatives of all species (Genesis 6:19). In love for His creation, "the work of His fingers" (Psalm 8:3), God by His WORD made a covenant with Noah, saying "neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done" (Genesis 8:21 and 9:15-18).

But God knew that, left to themselves, men and women would again multiply violence and wickedness . . . "for the imagination

of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21). He therefore planned not only a righteous man through whom **HIS WORD** and His Name, would be sanctified, but also a righteous nation to be the "Kingdom of God," to serve as AN Example to other nations, with a righteous law, HIS WORD, as an INSTRUCTOR to all people. Moses said to Israel, "this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say surely this is a wise and understanding people" (Deuteronomy 4:6).

To this end, God by **HIS WORD**, called Abram from family idolatry in the Chaldean University city of Ur (Genesis 11:31; Joshua 24:2). By **HIS WORD** God gave to Abram special promises involving an eternal inheritance of all the land from the River Nile to the Euphrates River (Genesis 15:18). By **HIS WORD** God also promised to Abram he would become the father of a great "seed," who would share the promise of the same land (Genesis 13:14-17). By and through **HIS WORD** God developed that "seed" through Isaac and Jacob (Deuteronomy 1:8) to the Lord Jesus Christ and, in Him, to all those who become related to God's promises through baptism (Galatians 3). There would come to be a multitude of people, out of all nations, who display His (Christ's) spiritual characteristics — *faith in God's Word and obedience to His commands in that Word* (Romans 16:26).

## THE LORD JESUS CAME TO FULFILL GOD'S WORD:

God's **WORD** was fulfilled in the birth of Isaac, the development of the Jewish nation, and in the provision of God's Law

*(continued on page 18)*

## The Truth About the Word *(continued from page 17)*

(WORD) through Moses to Israel. Under some righteous Kings Israel was a living example to the other nations. Sadly more often, when led by faithless kings who ignored GOD'S WORD, they were faithless and a bad example. However there were always individuals and families, like those of John the Baptist and Jesus, who upheld GOD'S WORD and remained faithful. Even though Israel failed GOD'S WORD, God remained true to His promises in His WORD, sending His Son as "the WORD made flesh" (John 1:14) not the Son made flesh, as some claim. The Lord Jesus' whole coming and ministry is summed up by Himself: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law [WORD] or the

prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil [the Word]" (Matthew 5:17, 18).

Whilst the Apostle Matthew and Luke the evangelist provide the literal details of the origins of the Lord Jesus (through David and back to Abraham and Adam), the Apostle John gives His *spiritual* origins, as direct from God, a living embodiment of HIS WORD: "In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was GOD . . . and the WORD was made [became] flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14). Thus John depicts the Lord Jesus as a fulfilment of, and a fulfiller

of, GOD'S WORD. Jesus was, and still is, and when He comes back to earth again will be seen to be, GOD'S WORD in living action. JESUS WILL COME AGAIN and *all* of God's word will be fulfilled.

**Note:** The Greek for "word," *logos*, is a "masculine" noun and thus must be accompanied by masculine pronouns in the Greek text. This in no way indicates that the word was necessarily male, or a person (English does not use gendered nouns like Greek, and French, thus this is unusual to many). When John 1:3 reads "all things were made by him" the correct reading is "all things were made by *it*" the *Word of God*. □

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## 27 Wonderful & Loving Ways to Show Your Friend You Care

BY DOLLEY CARLSON

1. Call just to say "Hi" (be careful not to call only with business or to ask for a favor).
2. Plan a fun "out-of-the-ordinary" outing.
3. Give or send flowers — just 'cause!
4. Love her family.
5. Send an anniversary card with a note to her parents.
6. Provide dinner when she's sick or after the arrival of a new baby.
7. Offer to help her with an overwhelming project.
8. Give small presents to her children on their special occasions or to celebrate accomplishments.
9. Surprise her on the morning of her birthday with cinnamon rolls, a candle, confetti, and streamers.
10. Clean her house when she's sick.
11. Send a note affirming her as a wife, mother or friend.
12. Present her with a gift certificate for a pedicure in her 9<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy.
13. Compliment her — often and with sincerity.
14. Pray regularly for her and her loved ones.
15. Organize contributions from several couples to foot the bill for a night away when she and her husband have been under a lot of stress.
16. Give her space.
17. Send a Scripture verse in a pretty card or leave one on her answering machine.
18. Be available.
19. Offer forgiveness.
20. Extend to her unconditional acceptance.
21. Make an acrostic with her name.
22. Give her a snapshot of the two of you or the bunch of you.
23. Surprise her with a pretty ribbon or clip for her hair.
24. Throw her an encouragement luncheon (just like a birthday party) to help her through a difficult time.
25. For a fun autumn gift, put a pumpkin, a bottle of apple cider and popcorn in a box, drop it on her doorstep, ring the bell, and run.
26. Plan a picnic after church for your families.
27. Give her your trust. □

## A Testing of God's Faithfulness *(continued from page 20)*



also. It took about thirty minutes to stabilize them enough to get them to ICU.

This began about eleven o'clock in the evening and concluded at 4:08 a.m. with Victoria's birth. During the course of the storm I was told that a CAT scan revealed a cloudiness in Lisa's brain, indicating a possible ruptured aneurism. Next I was informed that some x-rays showed a crack on one of the lobes on a vertebra in Lisa's neck. Of course during this time Lisa was placed on a ventilator. After a spinal tap, which revealed no blood in the spinal fluid, and another cat scan some eighteen hours later, Lisa was cleared of both infirmities. The ventilator would remain on her for nearly two days.

Victoria was born at a whopping 2 lb 3.1oz. She needed help to start breathing and was placed on a ventilator as well. Lisa was in the ICU on one side of the hospital, and Victoria was in the NICU on the other. To shorten a rather long story, Lisa is now

as healthy as you and I, and since she was without oxygen to the brain for about a minute, she has been spared any memory of the week following Victoria's birth. Victoria is a beautiful, vibrant, healthy, normal three-year-old. Through a long three-year process we have chosen, we believe with God's guidance, not to have another biological child.

I, on the other hand, have much more gray hair and two of the greatest blessings in the world to share my life with. During the events of that evening, and the subsequent three months Victoria spent in the NICU, there were two verses from the Bible that comforted me and brought me through a storm in my life I did not have the strength to endure on my own. The first is that all things work for the good of those who love the Lord. If you are like me the first thing to come to mind is, "how could any of this be good for anyone?" Three years later I look back at the many

doors our testimony has opened and the opportunities we have had to testify to Christ's love and mercy. The second is more personal, it comes from Second Corinthians. Nothing will seize you except what is common to man, but God is faithful and just and will provide a way out. I am not pulling out my Bible and quoting this because as I squatted praying, petrified yet with a sense of peace, in the hall outside of Lisa's room this is the way I remembered them. I couldn't remember the books and verses as they are written. I didn't have to. What I could remember, and the presence of God, assured me that no matter what happened He would be glorified and all three of us would be all right. I also understood that did not mean both or either of my girls would be with me today. Praise God they are!!!

---

## Are We YHWH Compliant?

BY PASTOR DELBERT RANKIN

**M**any were worried about being Y2K compliant. And it was perhaps this fear that was the motivation to make the necessary adjustments to become electronically and functionally compatible. But in this world there is a much bigger concern, a more important question. Are we YHWH compliant?

What does THAT mean?

Open your Bible to Psalm 146. Verse one reads: "Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul." The English term "LORD" reads in the Hebrew Bible as "YHWH" (English letters as they would sound in

Hebrew). "YHWH" is variously translated as "Yahweh" or "Jehovah." This is God's personal name.

In Psalm 83, God is spoken to (verse 1) as the one "whose name alone is (YHWH) JEHOVAH (or, if you prefer, YAHWEH), the most high over all the earth" (verse 18).

He alone was Creator of the universe and served as Redeemer of Israel (Isaiah 44:23-24) the God of Jacob (Psalm 146:5). God sent His prophets to speak His word; the faithful complied. Their compliance grew out of a healthy fear channeled into

reverence and resulting in making the necessary adjustments in order to obey. See Haggai 1:12-15; Ecclesiastes 12:14.

We, too, are called to be obedient children, motivated by a healthy fear and respect for God and His truth revealed through the message of Christ. See 1 Peter 1:13-25. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God . . . cast all your cares upon him; for he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

So the question is: Are we YHWH compliant?

# A Testing of God's Faithfulness

BY JIM WILSON

**A**t twenty-eight weeks gestation my wife was hospitalized for high blood pressure. During the hospital stay an ultrasound revealed the umbilical cord was wrapped around Victoria's neck three times. We were informed we would have a severely premature child. My wife Lisa and I were in our mid-thirties and had been married for seven years before the greatly anticipated child's arrival.

The evening my daughter, Victoria, was born Lisa had an eclamptic seizure. She got out of her bed to reach out to me for help. She apparently had another and collapsed. Her head hit the food tray as she fell, causing massive bruising and a possible neck injury. She then fell face first onto the concrete floor. The combination of traumas threw her into cardiac arrest. I was awakened by the commotion and ran

for the nurses. The nurses' station was about fifty feet from the entrance into her room. One nurse ran to help us and the other called for the code blue team. In mere seconds the nurse, Karen, and I were at Lisa's side. As we rolled her onto her back she had already started turning purple.

As we rolled her over the code blue team reached our room and you could hear a collective gasp as they realized they were fighting for the lives of a young woman and her unborn child. My wife's body was

continuing to have seizures and she was not breathing. They had to pump Lisa full of medication to help her, and they had to shock her heart twice to restart it. Everything they gave Lisa, Victoria received

*(continued on page 19)*



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# The Restitution Herald

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**Don't Just Age,**

**Mature.**



**Grow in  
Christ.**

# A MESSAGE from the Editor . . .



## Children of God, Called to Grow

**W**ho is responsible for your spiritual growth and maturity as a Christian? Wow! That's an important question, isn't it? Do you ever think about who is responsible for your growth as a Christian? Are you aware that spiritual growth is *normal* and *expected*?

Have you been born again? Has the gospel of Jesus Christ entered your mind and heart? Have you heard the message and believed and been baptized? Have you received the spirit of God? I hope the answer for you is "yes." If your answer is "no" or "not yet" then I encourage you to read the gospel, or ask a trusted pastor, teacher or Christian friend to explain the gospel to you. Take the initiative.

I think about the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading from the prophet Isaiah. He was searching the scripture and ran across things he didn't understand, so he invited Phillip to come into his chariot and explain to him. He took responsibility for his spiritual growth. If you are a seeker, keep on seeking, keep searching until you find the good news of Jesus Christ and you believe it. Take responsibility for your spiritual growth, don't wait for someone else to do it for you.

Have you believed the gospel and been baptized? If yes, who is responsible for your continued growth? Is it your parent, your spouse, your teacher or pastor? Whose job is it to make sure that *you* grow spiritually? I suppose it's natural to think that it's someone else's job. After all, as a newborn Christian one is compared to a "babe" in Christ. We don't expect babies to go out and grow or hunt their own food. We expect Momma to feed them milk — for a little while. Maybe there are six months of milk, but then we move to soft, easily

digestible foods — for a little while. But even at that the child gives some indication that he or she is hungry. They cry; they say "I'm hungry, can I eat?" They have some responsibility to first communicate their hunger, and then they nurse, or chew, or whatever — but they aren't *force fed*.

As a new Christian you need to show up at feeding time and feast — from Sunday School classes and sermons, Bible studies, devotional books and other materials. Let your pastor and other teaching leaders know you're hungry, and ask for food. For a while — not forever.

I don't see many healthy adults being fed by others. We expect people to grow on into maturity. The writer of Hebrews said "Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore, let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity" (5:13 – 6:1).

When you grow out of infancy and move toward maturity you don't wait for someone to feed you, you feed yourself. You fix your own peanut butter sandwich if you are hungry, Mom doesn't always do it for you. You don't sit around complaining about not being fed, you get up and feed yourself.

Hebrews says "though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again" (5:12).

I'm amazed at how many Christians have been baptized and attended churches for five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty years or more and all they do is show up to hear a sermon or listen in a Sunday school class. They don't teach, they don't disciple others,

they don't serve, they don't witness — they don't do anything but sit there like little infants and say "feed me, feed me!" They never grow to maturity.

Who is responsible for helping you grow to maturity? "Maybe if the preacher preached better sermons;" "maybe if the Sunday School teacher spent more time preparing a lesson," etc. — WRONG! Your pastor, your teacher, your spouse — none of them are responsible for your growth and maturity in Christ; YOU ARE!! That's right, you. Paul wrote to Timothy and said "train yourself to be Godly" (1 Tim. 4:8).

In our local churches, on the internet, in libraries and Christian bookstores, there are all kinds of resources available to help assist us in our Christian growth. No one can force feed you and make you grow. No one else is responsible to make you grow. It is your decision, it is your responsibility. Do you want to grow in your relationship with God through Jesus Christ? Do you want to be effective in serving Him and sharing the gospel with others? Do you want to use the gifts He has given you? Great! Then take the initiative to grow and to use your gifts in His service.

THE RESTITUTION HERALD is committed to providing helpful articles that can assist you in your growth as a Christian. We are pleased to be able to serve you in this way, and we hope and pray that you will make use of whatever resources are available to you to help you grow.

Your Servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor

# 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 PASTOR JIM MATTISON

**W**hen 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" (2 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 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 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 evidence. Here we see the accusation and any defence. Paul provides a good example of this accusing and examining as he stood before Felix and Festus, Agrippa and Bernice (Acts 24-26).

*Second* is coming to a decision. Is the

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defendant 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.

*Third*, 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 at 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 into 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. 20:5, 6, 12). The first resurrection is one to eternal salvation in the Kingdom of God. Jesus called it "the resurrection of life" (John 5:29). The other one, where the *rest of the dead* live again — for judgment — Jesus calls "the resurrection of judgment" (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

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# Communion: What is it? Why does one need it?

BY PASTOR FRANCIS E. BURNETT

Communion is one of the important services in any church program. It is considered by many Christian leaders to be so vital that if one does not participate in it, that one will be lost. There is no biblical statement which presents the matter in that way. However, there is strong teaching that such a situation could be true. As we examine the biblical teachings here your understanding of the verses will determine your thought on communion's importance.

The communion service is practiced in various ways in the Christian churches. Some have it once a month, others every Sunday. Some have it only once a year. The frequency of the event may not be the main issue to consider. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Every time you eat this bread and drink from the cup, you are telling about the Lord Jesus' death, until he returns" (1 Corinthians 11:26, Simple English Bible).

A question that has been asked is this: What if one, having been baptized, never takes communion? What should they say if asked why? Has such a person lost salvation? The Bible does not answer this specifically, but it suggests some ideas that may be relevant.

John's gospel includes a teaching of Jesus relevant to communion which the others do not have:

"I am that bread from heaven! Everyone who eats it will live forever. My flesh is the life-giving bread that I give to the people of this world." They started arguing with each other and asked, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus answered, "I tell you for certain that you won't live unless you do eat my flesh

and drink the blood of the Son of Man. But if you do eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will have eternal life and I will raise you to life on the last day. My flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink. If you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you are one with me, and I am one with you" (John 6:51-56, Contemporary English Bible).

These words of Jesus, recorded by John, are strong — if not harsh. Yet these were words from the mouth of Jesus. Surely we

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should understand that no one can literally eat the flesh of Jesus or drink His blood. Rather it seems to me that those words explain what it means to take part in a communion service regularly. I believe they teach that people who do not take part in communion have no part with Jesus. Matthew's gospel records this at the Last Supper: "While they were eating, Jesus took bread and gave thanks. He broke off some of the bread and gave it to his followers. He said, 'Take it and eat it. This bread is my body.' [Take special note that this was bread which had been sitting on the table for the meal.] Then he took the cup. He gave thanks to God for it and gave it to them. He said, 'All of you, drink from it. This is my blood which I am pouring out for many people for the forgiveness of sins. It shows the new agreement which God has made with men. I tell you, from now on, I will never drink this fruit of the vine again,

until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'" (Matt. 26:26-29, Simple English). Again, notice the simple solution to the question of how anyone could eat Jesus's body and drink his blood. The bread and wine were representative of these things. They did not turn into flesh and blood. In fact, when these events took place Jesus had not yet died and shed his blood. It should be obvious that his words were symbolic. In eating bread and drinking juice in a communion service, those who partake recognize by their actions that Jesus lived, died, and rose again from the dead. They recognize that Jesus is a part of life — believer's lives.

Understanding *what* we do, and *why*, is extremely important. The answer to what and why in taking communion emphasizes the words of Jesus. The meaning in the Greek for communion is "a sharing; to be an associate." In the beginning, Jesus was sharing in His future with the apostles. Later the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians to share with one another the wonderful fellowship that can be had in Jesus Christ.

Some church leaders feel that if you take of communion you should understand that doing so shows confession. There is nothing wrong with that kind of thinking. Paul's account says "So, if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord with the wrong attitude, he will be guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! Each person must look deeply into his own heart. Then he should eat the bread and drink from the cup in the right way" (1 Cor. 11:27, 28, Simple English). I find no indication in the Bible that if one discovers a "sin" in their heart this should

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keep them from taking of the communion. The point is the need to look deeply into your heart, confessing your need for forgiveness through Jesus, and then take of the emblems in the "right" way.

Jesus taught the need for confessing Him as the Lord and savior of our lives. These are not the exact words but the thought is in there. Let us read, "If anyone confesses in front of other people that he believes in me, then I will speak for him in front of my Father in heaven. But if he is ashamed of me in front of people, then I will be ashamed of him in front of my Father" (Matt. 10:32, 33, Simple English). It seems that when one takes part in a communion service, that one is confessing before all of the others in that service his or her need of Jesus. Further, that same taking part shows a belief in Jesus as Savior.

In Paul's letter to the Romans we find strong emphasis for the need to recognize "confession" as an important part of the Christian life. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from death, you will be saved. To become right with God a person believes with his heart. Declaring it openly, that person comes into salvation. The Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be ashamed'" (Romans 10:9, 10, Simple English).

From Acts 2 we learn that the taking of communion emblems, in keeping with Jesus' instructions, began almost immediately after Jesus' ascension. It is there called "breaking of bread." The procedure, no doubt, was after the pattern that Jesus had used. It was the giving of the bread to

each one who was present and then the cup from which they all drank. The Apostle Paul wrote "when you gather to eat the supper of the Lord, wait for one another" (1 Cor. 11:33, Simple English). So, it seems, the practice in any service should be that all would be served and then all eat or drink at the same time.

Communion includes all of the following items: 1) that Jesus is *our* personal savior; 2) we declare *our* need of him; 3) the need to examine *ourselves* ("look deeply into our heart"); 4) all of us are "one body" in Jesus Christ; 5) that Jesus will return again to the earth and we will have fellowship with him: "drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (see Matt. 26:29). These are some answers as to the *what* and *why* of communion. □

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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 Peter 4:7).

Paul put it like this: "some men's sins are open beforehand, going before the judgment; and some men they follow after" (1 Tim. 5:24).

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.

But 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" (also see Rev. 2:26, 27; Jude 14, 15; and Mal. 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. □

# Lost and Found

BY EDWARD H. GOIT, SR.

**C**an you recall your first experience of being lost? I can remember being lost as a three-year-old while seeking Santa Claus. A kindly policeman interrupted my lostness and returned me to my very worried and searching mother. There was rejoicing! The lost had been found.

No doubt some of you have had a lost experience, having lost something or having chosen to lose yourself. Being lost can be frightening and being lost spiritually can be even worse. It is in those terms that Jesus considers the lost and the found in Luke 15.

## Jesus Charged!

Jesus' ministry attracted hearers of all persuasions, even the lost. On the occasion recorded in Luke 15 there were publicans, sinners, scribes and Pharisees with their murmuring. They charged Jesus saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). They opposed Jesus because He welcomed and shared table fellowship with sinners!

The rules of ritual purity practiced in the Temple were applied to their common meals. When eating a meal that involved placing one's hands in a common dish to secure the food, the purity of everyone present at the meal became very important. Table fellowship with publicans and sinners whom the Pharisees branded ritually impure was clearly out of the question. It suggested to them a rejection of God's laws and thus they wouldn't dare eat with sinners.

Their charge, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" prompted Jesus' parables as recorded in Luke 15. These illustrated truths of God's love refuted the

Pharisees' charges of yesterday as well as of the Pharisees of today.

Jesus shared table fellowship with Zacchaeus, the chief publican, and changed his life. He has His Father's love and compassion for sinners while opposing sin. He said, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32).

God's love for sinners was the reason behind Bethlehem's manger and Calvary's

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cross. With these introductory thoughts, let's consider the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the lost prodigal son.

## Parable of the Lost Sheep

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:4-7).

We observe in this parable how precious one sheep is to the shepherd. Though the sheep stray far, he will seek that lost

one, and when found, will rejoice over it. He will gather his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him saying, "I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6).

The shepherd in this parable is illustrative of our heavenly Father who is, "longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

## Parable of the Lost Coin

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:8-10).

This parable relates the story of a woman who had ten pieces of silver and lost one. A diligent search to recover the lost piece and the joy when it is found is told. The lost piece was a silver coin, no doubt a Roman drachma with the stamped image of the emperor.

Research reveals that the Palestinian homes of this time in history were small adobe huts, very dark and sometimes lighted by only one small circular window. The floor was beaten earth covered with dry reeds and rushes. Scholars have suggested that the lost piece of silver could have been part of a lady's headdress made of ten silver coins linked together with a silver chain. A girl would sacrifice and save for years till womanhood to amass ten silver coins for this headdress. It was the mark of

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a married woman and almost the equivalent of a wedding ring. When a woman secured it, it was hers and could not be taken from her to satisfy a debt. It may have been one of these ten coins which she searched for until she found it.

As in the previous parable, Jesus reveals the heavenly joy over one sinner who repents. This parable justifies Jesus' welcome and treatment of sinners. God's Word instructs that the life of a lost person as well as a saved one bears the image of God. No matter how much it may be covered with the filth of sin, it is recoverable. It is written, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly . . . God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6-8; see also John 3:16 and Acts 3:19-20).

### **Parable of the Lost Prodigal Son**

Bible students commonly call this parable "The Prodigal Son." I suggest it be named "The Waiting Father." This story focuses our attention on a father's love for a lost son.

One may ask, "What is God's position toward those who have forsaken Him?" Jesus' last parable of response to the Pharisees' and scribes' charge furnishes the answer. It affirms that God had no pleasure in sinners' sins but He has great joy in their repentance.

God's Word declares, "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psa. 34:18).

The story begins, "A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divideth unto them his living" (Luke 15:11-12). The younger son journeyed into a far country and there wasted his inheritance with wild living. In doing this, he separated himself from a loving father.

Israel's culture permitted a father to bequeath property by a will or to divide it among his heirs before his death and to

receive the interest on the bequest while he lived. The law directed the division (see Deut. 21:17).

As our story proceeds, it is recorded that, "when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want" (Luke 15:14). Experiencing poverty and disappointment, he joined himself to a citizen of that country for employment. His employer sent him into the fields to feed swine, which was the supreme insult to a Jew. In his present condition he would have gladly eaten the pods of the carob tree that were fed to the swine, but no man would give him any.

This starving lad finally came to himself. He regained his senses and said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 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 worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father" (Luke 15:17-20).

### **Decision Time**

It was decision time for the lost. Today might well be decision time for someone in the reading of this story. The Christian life begins with a decision, a decision to change one's life and invite Jesus to be that one's life. One's salvation depends upon this acceptance of Jesus Christ and obedience to the way God has provided.

The prodigal had been secure while living at his father's home, but when he left and journeyed into the far country, he became utterly lost. Circumstances caused him to realize he needed to confess his sin and that he was no more worthy to be called the father's son. Realizing this, he arose and came home to his father. His actions would resolve his lost condition.

Do we realize that as long as a person remains apart from God, his heavenly Father, he is not a true son? Only when he recognizes his sin and accepts personal responsibility for his state of separation can reconciliation come to pass. There

must be conviction. You must know what is right before you can know what is wrong. There can be no turning back unless first there is a conviction that you are going the wrong way. This conviction alerts one to danger. One must be convicted of his sins before he can come to the Father for forgiveness. The lost prodigal did this!

There must also be contrition! One must recognize his uncleanness and demonstrate a godly sorrow (see 2 Cor. 7:10). There must be a change of mind, of attitude, and of one's ways. The lost prodigal decided to change his wayward life. He decided to cast himself upon his father's mercy. This spirit of repentance was accepted.

Jesus informs His hearers that when the returning son, "was a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

### **Forgiveness**

What made the waiting father run as fast as his pounding heart could make his legs go? Someone was coming up the road. Who could it be who was so important? It was the father's lost son returning home! The waiting father joyously welcomed the sinner home. He extended his forgiveness and showered his mercy on the forgiven by ordering his servants to "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:22-24).

The repentant, changed and forgiven son was well received. In this showering of gifts, each gift was a sign of position and acceptance. They were tokens of a father's joy at finding one who had been lost. Recovery was evident! A priceless one had been recovered and it was meet to celebrate.

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# Repentance and Forgiveness

BY RABBI DAVID R. BLUMENTHAL

I offer the following reflections on the Jewish teaching on repentance and forgiveness, which is an old tradition reaching back thousands of years and drawing on the wisdom of untold numbers of sages. As a further part of the dialogue I include here the Hebrew terms, accented for proper pronunciation, together with a short bibliography.

## What Judaism Does Not Teach

The spiritual task of interfaith dialogue requires each party to understand what the other teaches and what the other does not teach because, in reaching out to the other, we tend to assimilate what we hear to what we already know. It seems, therefore, prudent to note those conceptualities which Judaism does *not* embrace in the hope that [Christians] will, then, better be able to set aside ideas already familiar and reach out to encompass ideas that are not already known.

Judaism does not recognize *confession of personal sin to a religious figure* as part of the process of sin and repentance. There is no designated authority to whom

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**Editor's Note:** As Christians we share a common heritage with the members of the Jewish Faith. This article is intended to help Christians appreciate and better understand the Jewish concepts of repentance and forgiveness. J.F.

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one can confess sins; sins are confessed privately, in prayer, before God. Nor does Judaism recognize *penance* as a necessary part of the process of sin and repentance. Although the practice of penances did exist in Jewish life for part of the middle ages, largely under Christian influence, this was never formalized into classic rabbinic theology and practice. Further, there is no rabbinic authority who can prescribe

*Judaism does not recognize absolution as part of the process of sin and repentance.*

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penances, either of a therapeutic or a ritual kind; rather, spiritual discipline in the presence of sin is undertaken voluntarily, by individuals so inclined, sometimes after consultation with a rabbi.

Judaism does not recognize *absolution* as part of the process of sin and repentance. There is no designated authority who can dispense forgiveness of sins after confession and penance; rather, sins between persons require the asking and granting of forgiveness by the parties concerned, while sins between persons and God require the asking of forgiveness by the penitent and the granting of forgiveness only by God.

Finally, Judaism does not recognize *reconciliation* (the whole-hearted yielding of all inner negative feeling) as a necessary part of the process of sin and repentance. Although reconciliation is known and even desirable, rabbinic Judaism realizes that there are other modes of rapprochement

that are fully adequate and, perhaps, more realistic.

## Teshuva (Repentance)

*Teshuvá* is the key concept in the rabbinic view of sin, repentance, and forgiveness. The tradition is not of one mind on the steps one must take to repent of one's sins. However, almost all agree that repentance requires five elements: recognition of one's sins as sins (*hakarát ha-chét*), remorse (*charatá*), desisting from sin (*azivat ha-chét*), restitution where possible (*peira'ón*), and confession (*vidúí*).

"Recognition of one's sins as sins" is an act of one's intelligence and moral conscience. It involves knowing that certain actions are sinful, recognizing such actions in oneself as more than just lapses of praxis, and analyzing one's motives for sin as deeply as one can. For example, stealing from someone must be seen not only as a crime but also as a sin against another human and a violation of God's demands of us within the covenant. It also involves realizing that such acts are part of deeper patterns of relatedness and that they are motivated by some of the most profound and darkest elements in our being.

"Remorse" is a feeling. It is composed of feelings of regret, of failure to maintain one's moral standards. It may also encompass feelings of being lost or trapped, of anguish, and perhaps of despair at our own sinfulness, as well as a feeling of being alienated from God and from our own deepest spiritual roots, of having abandoned our own inner selves.

"Desisting from sin" is neither a moral-intellectual analysis nor a feeling; it is an action. It is a ceasing from sin, a desisting

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from the patterns of sinful action to which we have become addicted. Desisting from sin involves actually stopping the sinful action, consciously repressing thoughts and fantasies about the sinful activity, and making a firm commitment never to commit the sinful act again.

“Restitution” is the act of making good, as best one can, for any damage done. If one has stolen, one must return the object or pay compensation. If one has damaged another’s reputation, one must attempt to correct the injury to the offended party.

“Confession” has two forms: ritual and personal. Ritual confession requires recitation of the liturgies of confession at their proper moments in the prayer life of the community. Personal confession requires individual confession before God as needed or inserting one’s personal confession into the liturgy at designated moments. The more specific the personal confession, the better. One who follows these steps to teshuva is called a “penitent” (*chozér be-teshuvá*).

The tradition is quite clear, however, that recognition of sin, remorse, restitution, and confession, if they are done without desisting from sin, do not constitute teshuva. Without ceasing one’s sinful activity, one has only arrived at the “preliminaries to teshuva” (*hirhuréi teshuvá*). Actual desisting from sin is what counts. Thus, if one desists from sinful action because one has been frightened into it, that is still teshuva and the person is considered a penitent. For example, if a person ceases to gamble compulsively because someone threatens to beat him severely the next time he does it, such a person is considered a penitent. Or, if a person ceases to steal because he has been told he will be sent to jail the next time it happens, such a person is considered a penitent. Furthermore, if a person becomes convinced that he or she will be punished in the life-after-death and ceases sinful action on that account, this person too is considered a penitent, though this motivation for desisting is higher than the previous ones because it is a function of a larger religious worldview

which considers the wrongdoing as actual sin.

Teshuva which is rooted in fear of humans or God is called “repentance rooted in fear” (*teshuvá mi-yir’á*) and, while not the highest form of teshuva, it is the core thereof. Reform of one’s character through analysis of sin, remorse, restitution, and confession, when combined with the ceasing of sinful action, is called “repentance rooted in love” (*teshuvá mei-ahavá*). “Repentance rooted in love” is desirable but, without cessation of sin, reform of one’s character is useless. Maimonides, the foremost halakhic (legal) and philosophic authority of rabbinic Judaism, lists desisting from sin as the very first step to teshuva.

Rabbinic tradition teaches that all the steps to teshuva are necessary. Their interrelationship is best described as a spiral which touches each of the five points, yet advances with each turn. Thus, one may begin at any point — with action, analysis, remorse, restitution, or confession. However, as one repeats the steps of teshuva again and again, one’s analysis and remorse deepen, one’s restitution and commitment-to-desist become firmer, and one’s confession becomes more profound. As one cycles through the five phases of teshuva again and again, one’s teshuva becomes more earnest, more serious. At its height, one achieves “full teshuva” (*teshuvá gemurá*) which would require full consciousness and action such that, given the same situation, one would refrain from the sin for which one had repented. Sinfulness is a very deep dimension of human existence and dealing with it calls upon all our spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and moral resources — even when we recognize that ceasing to sin is the base line of repentance.

### Forgiveness

Sin disrupts our lives on the human level; it distorts our relationships with other persons, social institutions, and our selves. Sin also disrupts our spiritual lives; it distorts our relationship with God and our deepest inner spiritual being. Because sin

alienates us from humanity and from God, there is more than one kind of forgiveness.

In a civil contract, one party incurs a debt to, or obligation toward, or claim against another. In such a situation, the creditor can forgo the debt, waive the obligation, or relinquish the claim. The creditor can do this for no reason at all, although the creditor usually has some grounds for being willing to forgo the debt. Similarly in the matter of sin. When one sins against another, one incurs an obligation to right the wrong one has committed. This is a debt toward the offended party borne by the offender. The more serious the wrong, the more serious the obligation to set it straight. In rabbinic thought, *only the offending party can set the wrong aright and only the offended party can forgo the debt of the sin*. This means that, if I offend someone, it is my responsibility to do whatever it takes to set matters aright and, conversely, if someone has offended me, it is my responsibility to allow the offender to do teshuva, that is, to correct the wrong done to me. Teshuva is part of the structure of God’s creation; hence, the sinner is obligated to do teshuva and the offended person is obligated to permit teshuva by the offender.

The most basic kind of forgiveness is “forgoing the other’s indebtedness” (*mechilá*). If the offender has done teshuva, and is sincere in his or her repentance, the offended person should offer mechila; that is, the offended person should forgo the debt of the offender, relinquish his or her claim against the offender. This is not a reconciliation of heart or an embracing of the offender; it is simply reaching the conclusion that the offender no longer owes me anything for whatever it was that he or she did. Mechila is like a pardon granted to a criminal by the modern state. The crime remains; only the debt is forgiven.

The tradition, however, is quite clear that *the offended person is not obliged to offer mechila if the offender is not sincere in his or her repentance and has not taken concrete steps to correct the wrong*

(continued on page 12)

# Choices – Jesus' and Ours

BY CHARLES BOTTOLEFS

**W**hat was or is the hardest choice you ever made?? What did it involve? Was it buying or building a house? Was it going to school or which particular college to attend? Was it choosing a lifetime partner or taking on a certain job or career? Each of us has made a number of choices, some of them quite difficult choices, and we must each live with the consequences of those choices for the rest of our life. All of us make choices.

Well, guess what. Jesus made a lot of choices in His life just like we do. Jesus faced a number of major choices during the final week of His earthly ministry, beginning with His entry into Jerusalem.

Think of this, finally people have begun to recognize to some degree who Jesus really; not quite as the Messiah, but they are getting warmer. The word has gotten out. Lazurus was certainly not raised in secret. People were beginning to talk about Jesus and His abilities all over the countryside. He is recognized as a healer prophet, one who many people wanted to see and hear — and some were looking for a miracle.

We find Jesus approaching Jerusalem in the area of Bethany and Bethphage (Jerusalem's suburbs), with His disciples and apostles. Notice that they were all with Him. The time is the beginning of the Passover season or perhaps the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple. In either case Jesus sends two disciples to the village to get a colt — a donkey — which no one had ever ridden. Once the colt was brought to Jesus, they threw some garments over the animal's back and Jesus sat on it.

As this occurred, people began to put garments in the road while others spread branches in front of Jesus as He rode down the road toward Jerusalem. The fact that He was on a donkey, not a horse, shows that he is a peaceful ruler — the King of Peace. Only the military rulers rode horses. This event also fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 9. Interestingly this parade that we make so much of was small enough that it did not catch the eye of the Roman soldiers. BUT it certainly must have been Jesus' finest hour if He was made like us — and I believe He was.

*He chose to follow  
God's plan for His life  
(and ours) — obeying  
God's commands.*

• • • • •  
The crowd is shouting "Hosanna" and "Hosanna in the Highest" thus giving credence to Jesus' ministry in man's eyes. To me this *had to be* His finest hour, in human terms. The decision He now has to make is "Do I keep on being called the King or do I follow my Father's commands?" The Bible teaches clearly that He chose to follow God's plan for His life (and ours) — obeying God's commands. When Jesus' disciples questioned Him about His death He told them "For this cause [to die for man's sin] I was born," leaving no question at all as to what He should do.

In essence Jesus is answering the Tempter's challenge, made shortly after His baptism, all over again. The Tempter showed Jesus all of the Kingdoms on earth

and said "all of this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me" (Matt. 4:8). Jesus chose to worship God by obeying His commands, and once again here He chooses to obey God rather than choosing to gratify His own lusts of the flesh or pride of life.

What Jesus chose was to follow God's plan, to suffer and die, knowing that God would resurrect Him and vindicate Him. His choice ultimately results in Jesus being the king of the earth, having demonstrated the love of God to man through God's continued love of man even though we are not deserving of that love.

Jesus in Matthew 7:13 tells us that "Narrow is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life." But "Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction." Jesus took the narrow gate. He chose to suffer. He made the hard choice of the narrow road instead of the easy road. He started into Jerusalem on the easy road but chose the narrow road. How many of us would choose the tough road? I am not sure that I would have, though I pray that I would have the insight to choose rightly. Think about the choices Jesus made and how these compare to the choices we must make. I feel that God has a lesson in this thought.

There is no doubt in my mind that had Jesus chosen to do so, He could have led a movement that many would have followed — perhaps not as Messiah because He wasn't recognized as such except by a few disciples. His majesty was hidden by His outward appearance and to a great extent by His deliberate design.

No matter what could have been He chose to obey, and thus has the conflict

*(continued on page 12)*

with the church leaders that begins the next day upon His return to Jerusalem. He cleanses the temple, stopping a financial practice which was making the chief priest and his henchmen rich. He debated the issues raised by the chief priest and teachers of the law only by putting them to the test of answering a question which they chose not to answer. Finally one of them asked Jesus "What is the greatest commandment?" and following Jesus' answer we read that "from then on, no one dared to ask him any more questions" (Mark 11:34).

So Jesus has won the battle, there are no more questions, but ultimately He loses the war. In Mark 14:43 Jesus is arrested, and finally in chapter 15 He is condemned and ultimately crucified. (Yet we know that God is the final victor.)

The choice for all of us to decide is whether to suffer with Jesus or go through the wide gate and follow the broad road to destruction. Do we make the tough choice and go through the narrow gate and down

the narrow road to life? These are the choices. Do we seek to mirror the palms, or the passion? Each of us are challenged by them. Our sins find us choosing the easy way out. Following the plan God has is not always the easiest thing. I have yet to find the person who follows God's plan and says it is easier to do than to follow the road to destruction. Jesus certainly didn't find it easier.

What we should be seeking is the comfort and love we find in Isaiah 50. What we learn from this text is that the Sovereign Lord "YAHWEH'S" servant determines to suffer and obey YAHWEH'S will and because YAHWEH loves the servant, He vindicates Him, and us, finally through the resurrection and life unending. YAHWEH will stand His people upright — triumphant over the Tempter, the world and worldly things. The choices are tough. It's much easier to accept the praise than it is to accept the challenges of the Chief Priests and teachers of the law of the world. BUT

challenge them we must, if we wish to overcome sin in our lives.

Joshua made his decision, saying "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). His choice was made and clear for all. Can we do the same?

Examine your choices! Remember, the likelihood is that as you grow spiritually, your choices will become more difficult.

In conclusion, I say to you — choose now to pray to YAHWEH, our Sovereign Lord, that He grant you both the foresight to find the narrow gate and road and the will to take it. God did not make Jesus' choices easy. If He had, would Jesus have been sweating "drops, as it were, of blood" when He was in the Garden praying to His Father that the cup might pass from Him? Would He have asked His disciples to pray with Him as He wrestled with the issue? *I think not!* Jesus made a conscious choice to do what God asked Him to do and it was not easy. But God suffices!!

May we be as determined as Jesus to make the right choices. God be with you. □

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## Repentance and Forgiveness *(continued from page 10)*

done. Maimonides is decisive on this subject: "The offended person is prohibited from being cruel in not offering mechila, for this is not the way of the seed of Israel. Rather, if the offender has [resolved all material claims and has] asked and begged for forgiveness once, even twice, and if the offended person knows that the other has done repentance for sin and feels remorse for what was done, the offended person should offer the sinner mechila" (*Mishne Torah*, "Hilchot Chovel u-Mazzik," 5:10). Mechila is, thus, an expectation of the offended person but only if the sinner is actually repentant. For example, a woman who has been battered by her husband, or abused by her father, is not obliged to grant such a person mechila unless he has, first, desisted from all abusive activity; second, reformed his character through analysis of sin, remorse, restitution, and confession; and third, actually asked for forgiveness

several times. Only then, after ascertaining that he is sincere in his repentance, would a woman in such a situation be morally bound, though not legally obligated, to offer the offender mechila.

The principle that mechila ought to be granted only if deserved is the great Jewish "No" to easy forgiveness. It is core to the Jewish view of forgiveness, just as desisting from sin is core to the Jewish view of repentance. Without good grounds, the offended person should not forgo the indebtedness of the sinner; otherwise, the sinner may never truly repent and evil will be perpetuated. And, conversely, if there are good grounds to waive the debt or relinquish the claim, the offended person is morally bound to do so. This is the great Jewish "Yes" to the possibility of repentance for every sinner.

The second kind of forgiveness is "forgiveness" (*selichá*). It is an act of the heart.

It is reaching a deeper understanding of the sinner. It is achieving an empathy for the troubledness of the other. Selicha, too, is not a reconciliation or an embracing of the offender; it is simply reaching the conclusion that the offender, too, is human, frail, and deserving of sympathy. It is closer to an act of mercy than to an act of grace. A woman abused by a man may never reach this level of forgiveness; she is not obliged, nor is it morally necessary for her, to do so.

The third kind of forgiveness is "atonement" (*kappará*) or "purification" (*tahorá*). This is a total wiping away of all sinfulness. It is an existential cleansing. Kappara is the ultimate form of forgiveness, but it is only granted by God. No human can "atone" the sin of another; no human can "purify" the spiritual pollution of another. □

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# A Spiritual "Workout"

BY WARREN W. WIERSBE

"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12-13).

"Work out your salvation" does not suggest "Work for your own salvation." To begin with, Paul is writing to people who are already "saints" (1:1), which means they have trusted Christ and have been set apart for Him. The verb translated as "work out" carries the meaning of "work to full

completion," such as working out a problem in mathematics. In Paul's day it was also used for "working a mine," that is, getting out of the mine all the valuable ore possible; or "working a field" so as to get the greatest harvest possible. The purpose God wants us to achieve is Christlikeness, "to be conformed to the likeness of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). There are problems in life, but God will help us to "work them out." Our lives have tremendous potential, like a mine or a field, and He wants to help us fulfill that potential.

The phrase "work out your own salvation" probably has reference particularly to the special problems in the church at Philippi, but the statement also applies to the individual Christian. We are not to be "cheap imitations" of other people, especially "great Christians." We are to follow only what we see of Christ in their lives! □

Excerpted from *Pause For Power*, by Warren W. Wiersbe, Chariot Victor Publishing. Used by permission.

## Muslim Expansionism

Muslim nations are pursuing "a clear program of expansion and re-conquest" in Europe, an Italian bishop told a Vatican synod. Oil-rich nations are using their money "not to create jobs in poor countries of North Africa and the Middle East but to build mosques and cultural centers in Christian countries," said 72-year-old Giuseppe Bernardini, who lived in Muslim-dominated Turkey for 42 years, according to Reuters.

"Thanks to your democratic laws, we will invade you. Thanks to our religious laws, we will dominate you," a Muslim leader once told him. Bernardini said in a letter to the Synod of European Bishops. "One can believe, because the domination has already begun." He said Islam has become the second largest faith in Italy and that mosques have been built in several cities. A \$50 million mosque in Rome was financed by 23 Muslim nations, with \$35 million coming from Saudi Arabia.

Bernardini called on the pope to convene a special synod to address the issue. John Paul II has attempted to foster better Muslim-Christian relations and has visited several Islamic nations, including Morocco, Tunisia, and Sudan, preaching a message of religious tolerance. He has asked Muslim nations that forbid Christian worship to afford equal rights to all. □

From ReligionToday.com, 10-15-99; submitted by Pastor Rex Cain.

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## Lost and Found (continued from page 8)

As the celebration got underway, the elder brother comes upon the scene. Hearing music and dancing he questions one of the servants, who informed him that his brother had returned safe and sound. Suffice to say he became unpleasant and refused to enter the festivities and his father came out and entreated him: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found" (Luke 15:31-32).

The father's love included both sons as our heavenly Father's love includes all believers. Our heavenly Father is calling, "Come home, come home to your Father who loves you."

Many have hearkened to this invitation. Among them was a seriously depressed young man. This man told of his confinement to a mental hospital. He was suffering severe depression and the doctors had given up on him. One morning, on hearing a commotion down the hall, he put on his bathrobe and found his way to the hospital's chapel where some people were singing

about putting your trust in the Lord. This young man was J.C. Penney, the son of a Baptist minister. He knew about Jesus and decided once again to put his trust in Him. His whole life changed and, from that point until he died at ninety-five, the Lord was the center of his life. He had been lost and was found.

Reader, perhaps you have wandered away from the Lord and now you would decide once again to put your trust in the Lord. You can be recovered! Though lost in sin, our heavenly Father loves you and will receive you. It is not too late! Though lost, you can be found! □

# Of the Children, by the Children, and for the Children

BY TAB LOBELL

I wish you could get inside the heart and mind of a child and see life and people as a child does! Children live in the here and now. They see immediate reality, whereas adults are often blind to their surroundings because of distracting thoughts and worries. Children have tender emotions — they have not yet been hardened by disappointments, cruelty, and failure. They are very responsive! A baby will often smile when it sees a smile and cry when it sees a frown. And young children are very trusting of what adults tell them. Observing children is refreshing and brings us joy. How much more beneficial would it be if we could learn to be like them?

Jesus seized an opportunity to enjoy the company of some young children in Mark 10:13-16, and to command us to learn from them. Jesus had just traveled over fifty miles by foot from Galilee, where he had settled a dispute about ambition among his disciples by holding a child in his arms as an example of how to live. He arrived in Judaea to face the taunts and goading of his enemies, whom he called hard-hearted. Just then some young children were brought for Jesus to touch. His disciples not only tried to run the kids off, they scolded the “intrusive” parents.

When Jesus indignantly called for the children to come to him to hug and hold, he could have been thinking, “People will think I’m insensitive if I don’t kiss the babies.” Being aware of the crowds around him, Jesus could have been expected to engage in an easy public relations gesture. That is absolutely not what was happening! Jesus’ point was that these kids are the kind of people who will inherit the kingdom. This was not posturing for an effect. Jesus’ shocking message was, “all you sophisti-

cated adults need to step back and look at these kids and evaluate your life compared to them, not make them evaluate their lives compared to you. These are the most kingdom-like people I’ve been around in a long time.”

As Jesus spent time with the children, the various adults were a little put off. The disciples, who had tried to “protect” Jesus, had been shot down in front of everyone; they were moping around, insulted and deflated. The surging crowds with their urgent spiritual issues saw “real ministry” being interrupted. Their frustration grew as time was wasted during this time out for children. Looking at the sun dial, they began muttering and asking how long this ridiculous display would go on.

As Jesus looked around and saw the adult’s confusion about why this “side show” was being allowed, he said something profound. “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” Then he picked up the kids and focused entirely on them. To these children, who weren’t accepted in the adult world, Jesus gave the blessing of acceptance (“come unto me”), of physical touch, and of emotional warmth. The blessings in the Bible were personal and prophetic, individual and unique. Jesus may have been saying to them quietly, “you are valuable because God created you. This is what you are good at; these are character traits I value in you.”

Meanwhile the adults were nudging each other and asking, “what did he say? I missed it. I was busy during the intermission. What did he mean by ‘as a little child’?”

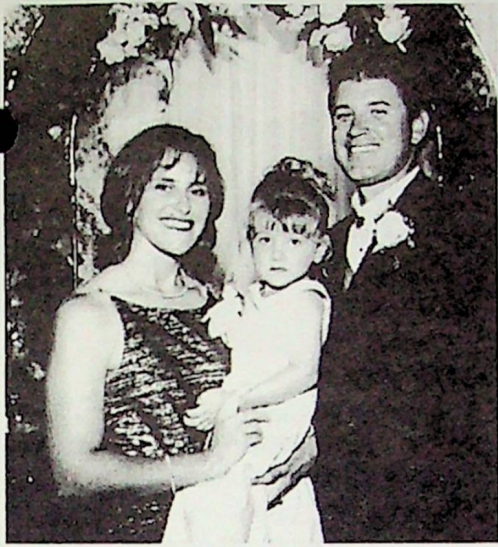
A common question, both then and now, is “How do you know if you are saved?” The answer is, “Did you come to Jesus and accept his Kingdom as a little child?” Jesus had admitted that children have a lot to learn, but he also declared that they have a lot to teach. In this scripture, they are teaching us something pretty important! To enter the kingdom, we must receive it “like a little child.” How can we do that?

The difference between how adults and children learn things is: adults focus on facts and children focus on the teacher. For children, it’s not *what* is being said but *who* said it. Children believe things based on who is doing the telling, not what is being told. The credibility and authority of the teller determines what is true for the child, not the ability of the child to figure it out.

A recent event with my daughter illustrates this perfectly. Miranda, who is almost three years old, was dragging our pet dog, Cooper, around by his legs. I bellowed, “Stop that! You might break his leg off! How would you like it if I pulled your leg off?” She started crying, “But Daddy, I don’t want you to pull my leg off. I couldn’t walk.” I had to comfort her by saying, “I’m sorry, I didn’t know you’d take me seriously.”

I can remember my absolute faith in my Dad’s comments. If my Daddy had told me I could run through a brick wall, I would have tried it. After bouncing off, when I regained consciousness I’d have backed up and tried again. If Daddy said I could do it, I must not have hit it hard enough. I wouldn’t even question if it were true or not. If Daddy said it, that makes it true to me.

That unconditional, naïve, trust is what Christianity is all about. It is coming to the point where we say “Lord, I don’t under-



stand everything that is in the Bible and I sure can't explain it all to anybody who asks me, but I believe it because you said it." The great thing about this is it is a trust issue, not a knowledge issue. The first time you ever hear the gospel or go to church, you have just as much of an opportunity to be in the kingdom as someone who has warmed a pew for fifty years!

In the same passage here where Jesus commands us to become like children, he also puts a responsibility on parents and other adults to not destroy a child's faith. Our job is to remove anything and everything we can from our lives that could hinder them from coming to Christ. Mom and Dad, it starts at home with us. What do we have or do that could be a stumbling block for our kids? This is a tough question.

First, are there things in our *characters* that could hinder our children from coming to Christ? Are we different on Sunday than on Monday through Saturday? Are we different around our Christian friends than we are around our non-Christian friends? If our children think we're doing everything right when some of our values and actions are wrong, usually they'll absorb our errors and carry them on. If we're lucky, there will come a time when our kids will notice that "something doesn't fit" and they will confront us, straightening us out. If we are not so fortunate, our iniquity may be visited upon our children unto the third and fourth generation (Ex. 20:5). That pos-

sibility should terrify us into being consistent Christian parents who align our lives with Jesus!

The way I look at it, it is o.k. for me to screw up — I'm willing to face the consequences. But I don't want them taken out on my kids! If you told me I had to stomp through a briar patch and wade through a river of cottonmouth water moccasin snakes, if necessary I'd do it. But don't tell me to send my child! But that is like what we do when we set a bad example for our children.

Secondly, our *schedule* could be a hindrance. Are we not just the busiest generation of people ever to live on this earth? And if we're not careful we'll let that be a hindrance to our children coming to know Christ. I was recently impressed with how important it is not to let my schedule come ahead of my daughter. I had a job to do, and Miranda wanted to help. I was in a hurry, and the easiest thing to do would have been to send her in the house with Lynette, my wife. But I let her help. She even wanted gloves like Dad's, so we had to go to town. Have you ever tried putting gloves on a two-and-a-half year old — and getting one finger in every hole? As a result, a fifteen-minute job took me an hour and fifteen minutes — but she had a good time! To a child, love equals time.

There is a George Strait song that expands on that. The title of the song is "The Best Day." It says, "Dad, this could be the best day of my life!" The first verse describes a camping trip that could be "the best day of my life." The second verse is similar, but describes fixing up a car and "dreaming of the fun we've had," not the fun he will have, burning rubber and picking up women. The third verse talks about this same son's wedding day. "Now it's me and her. Watching you and Mom I've learned I'm the luckiest man alive — this could be the best day of my life." What an honor and a testimony it would be if we are able to live a Christian life and our kids would say, "I've been dreaming day and night of being like you." What a privilege it is to spend time with children — and what an awesome responsibility!

A practical application about our schedule and time should be added here. Our children should get their Christian training at home, but the reality is that other adults' influences are important too. Some of the best, most consistent teaching most kids will get is in a Sunday School program at church. The songs that mean a lot to children, like "Jesus Loves Me," are not usually learned at home but at Sunday School. So if you're too busy to take your children to church, you are hindering them.

Thirdly, the stuff in our homes could be a hindrance to our children coming to Christ. Are there some things tucked away somewhere that our kids may (will) find that would be a stumbling block to them? What about that television? Do we allow influences into our homes from people who we would be horrified to let our children mingle with in person? Little children don't differentiate make-believe scenes from reality.

Our responsibility to allow children to come to Christ, and to not hinder them, does not stop at home. We have an opportunity to reach out to other children in our community and in our church. We have been given the awesome opportunity to work with them and lay a foundation that they will never depart from. When you see some frustrating child you've had to spend time chasing around the church grounds for years, remember that he will do some things that disappoint you but also some things that will make you proud. And you will know that you had a part in helping to mold and shape that little mind.

So, Mom and Dad, big brother, big sister, let's do a little self-examination. Let's look into our character, our schedule, and our stuff. Measure it by the standard of how a little child would evaluate it — as something that shows our closeness to Jesus and that brings a child closer to him, or as something that reflects selfishness or worldliness and that hinders children from coming to Jesus. If a child were in charge, what would he change about how your church operates, how your home operates, and how you operate? □

# The Learning Principle

BY KURT AND OLIVIA BRUNER

Little David sits between his siblings, gathered together by Mom and Dad for a ritual of scolding and boredom. He hates this part of the day. He's been told it is for his own good. But to this seven-year-old squirming ball of energy, the supposed benefits haven't yet shown themselves. Given the option, he would choose a visit to the dentist over the routine of sanctimonious torment known in his household as family devotions. Besides enduring Sunday morning sermons at church, there are few experiences less exciting in life.

If they were honest, David's parents would have to agree.

Dad would much rather be watching the game. But guilt and Mom's nudge have compelled him to force the kids to sit through his awkward presentation of a Bible lesson and prayer. He feels inadequate, ill equipped, and embarrassed as he fumbles his way through yet another chapter in the little book billed as containing "meaningful family reflections" on the faith. From the looks on the faces of his kids, they're getting about as much out of it as he is. Little Scott is picking his nose, David is staring out the window yearning to join the neighbor kids as they play hide-and-seek, and the older kids are sneaking glances at the clock wondering what time this is going to end. "Yes sir," he muses, "another highly rewarding investment of time."

Mom, though pleased her husband is finally "taking spiritual leadership" in the home, wonders whether she made a mistake pushing the matter of daily devotions onto the family. The moments of lively, scriptural discussion and resulting spiritual growth she expected have yet to occur. In fact, each episode seems to reinforce her children's perception that Christianity

is boring. She worries, but would never say anything to discourage Dad in his effort at spiritual training. So, with a silent smile, Mom reluctantly endures the medicine of meaningful family devotions along with the kids.

Sound familiar? Is it any wonder that so many kids who grow up in Christian homes consider the faith boring and irrelevant by the time they reach adulthood? It is unlikely this is what the Lord had in mind when he commanded us to "teach them to your children." There must be a better way.

Could it be that we have been forcing a very natural, comfortable process into a very unnatural, uncomfortable mold? Is it possible that we become frustrated with spiritual training because it was never intended to be so complicated?

Erase all your preconceived notions about faith training your children. Just for a moment, forget all the guilt-driven, unpleasant attempts you've made in the past. Rather than focus on methods and activities, let's try to understand the process that is already taking place and make it work for us rather than against us. There is a reality we must understand before we build a plan to teach our children Christian values.

The learning principle: Our children can only learn what we teach them in a manner that will reach them.

So, how can we teach our children in order to reach them? Impression points are the method for reaching our children. Impression points occur every day of our lives. Intentionally or not, we impress upon our children our values, preferences, beliefs, quirks and concerns. It happens both through our talk and through our walk. When we do it right, we can turn them on to the things we believe, but when we do it

wrong, we can turn them off to the values we most hope they will embrace. The goal is to find ways of making this reality work for us, rather than against us. How? By creating and capturing opportunities to impress upon our children our values and beliefs.

Take the following impression point as an example. The kids are all standing at the foot of the stairs. Jim is at the top of that same staircase. They eagerly wait for Dad's instructions.

"I'll take you to Baskin Robbins for ice-cream if you can figure how to get up here." He has the attention of all four kids. "But there are a few rules. First, you can't touch the stairs. Second, you can't touch the railing. Now, begin."

After several contemplative moments, the youngest speaks up. "That's impossible Dad! How can we get to where you are without touching the stairs or the railing?"

After some disgruntled agreement from two of the other children, the oldest gets an idea. "Hey, Dad. Come down here." Jim walks down the stairs. "Now bend over while I get on your back. Okay, climb the stairs."

Bingo! Jim proceeds to parallel this simple game with how it is impossible to get to God on our own. But when we trust Christ's completed work on our behalf, we can gain eternal life. A lasting impression is made. After a trip up the stairs on Dad's back, the whole gang piles into the mini van for a double scoop of mintchip.

For ideas from Heritage Builders on how to create lasting impressions call the Heritage Builders Hotline (800) 528-9489 or visit [www.heritagebuilders.com](http://www.heritagebuilders.com). □

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# Do Souls Go to Heaven? Part Two

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

Modern scholars realize that the view of death which has prevailed (and is now promoted in church constantly) is not biblical. Far from it, it is, amazingly, actually "pagan" and "Gnostic." Moreover, as the previous quotations from the early apologists for Christianity show, the idea of going to heaven or hellfire immediately at death was a novel, heretical doctrine not taught by the church for some three hundred years after Christ. In a standard text of Christian dogmatics we read:

The hellenization process by which Christianity adopted many Greek [pagan] thought patterns led in a different direction as the eschatological hope came to be expressed in Hellenistic categories. Irenaeus said: "It is manifest that the souls of His disciples also, upon whose account the Lord underwent these things, shall go away in the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection, awaiting that event. Then receiving their bodies and rising in their entirety, that is bodily, just as the Lord arose, they shall come into the presence of God." Irenaeus' statement contains the concept of an abode or purgatory in which the soul of the dead remains until the universal resurrection.

We should not denounce this as a deviation from biblical teaching, since the point of the assertion is antignostic. Irenaeus wanted to reject the Gnostic idea that at the end of this earthly life the soul immediately ascends to its heavenly abode. As the early fathers fought the pagan idea that a part of the human person is simply immortal, it was im-

portant for them to assert that there is no rectilinear ascent to God. Once we die, life is over

(Braaten/Jenson, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, p. 503, section written by Hans Schwartz, Professor of Protestant Theology, University of Regensburg, Federal Republic of Germany).

*Confusion about  
life after death  
has permeated  
traditional Christianity.*

There is a further impressive protest against the popular idea that the dead survive as conscious "souls" in heaven. One might expect that such protest would initiate a wide-scale reform amongst the clergy. Alan Richardson writes in *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (pp. 111, 112, emphasis added):

The Bible writers, holding fast to the conviction that the created order owes its existence to the wisdom and love of God and is therefore essentially good, *could not conceive of life after death as a disembodied existence* [as millions of sincere believers are now taught in church to think of it!] ("we shall not be found naked"—2 Cor. 5:3), but as a renewal under conditions of the intimate unity of body and soul which was human life as they knew it. Hence death was thought of as the death of the whole man, and such phrases as 'freedom from death,' imperishability or immortality

could only properly be used to describe what is meant by the phrase eternal or living God 'who only has immortality' (1 Tim. 6:16).

Man does not possess within himself the quality of deathlessness, but must, if he is to overcome the destructive power of death, receive it as the gift of God who "raised Christ from the dead," and put death aside like a covering garment (1 Cor. 15:53, 54). It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that this possibility for man (2 Tim. 1:10) has been brought to life and the hope confirmed that the corruption which is a universal feature of human life shall be effectively overcome.

The fundamental confusion about life after death which has so permeated traditional Christianity is brilliantly described by Dr. Paul Althaus in his book *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Fortress Press, 1966, pp. 413, 414):

The hope of the early church centered on the resurrection of the Last Day. It is this which first calls the dead into eternal life (1 Cor. 15; Phil. 3:21). This resurrection happens to the man and not only to the body. Paul speaks of the resurrection not "of the body" but "of the dead." This understanding of the resurrection implicitly understands death as also affecting the whole man . . . Thus [in traditional orthodoxy] the original Biblical concepts have been replaced by ideas from Hellenistic, Gnostic dualism.

(continued on page 18)

## Do Souls Go to Heaven? Part Two *(continued from page 17)*

The New Testament idea of the resurrection which affects the whole man has had to give way to the immortality of the soul. The Last Day also loses its significance, for souls have received all that is decisively important long before this. Eschatological tension is no longer strongly directed to the day of Jesus'

Coming. The difference between this and the Hope of the New Testament is very great.

That difference may be witnessed in contemporary preaching at funerals which, though claiming the Bible as its source, reflects a pagan Platonism which both the

New Testament, the early Church Fathers and modern informed scholars reject.

Can belief in pagan ideas, promoted in the name of Jesus, result in a knowledge of Truth which leads to salvation? Is not this obvious paganism of Christianity a cause for alarm and a reason for returning to the Truth of the Bible? □

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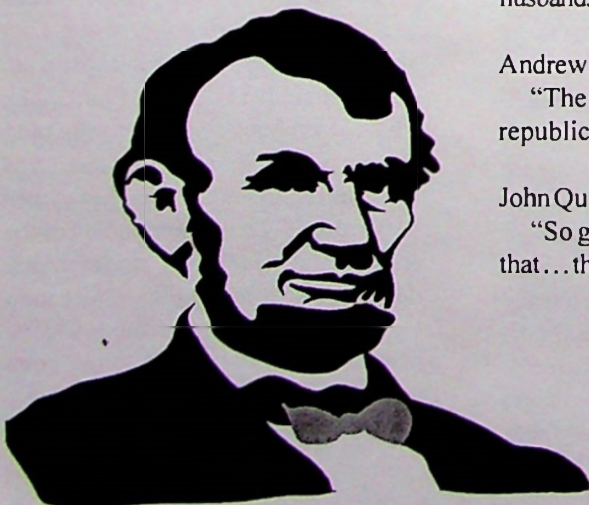
# American Presidents and the Bible

SUBMITTED BY PASTOR REX CAIN

**"H**e that ruleth over man must be just, ruling in the fear of God." (2 Sam. 23:3)

George Washington:

"It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible . . . True religion affords government its surest support."



John Adams:

"The destiny of America is to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to all men, everywhere."

Thomas Jefferson:

"I have always said that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers and better husbands."

Andrew Jackson:

"The Bible is the rock upon which our republic rests."

John Quincy Adams:

"So great is my veneration of the bible that . . . the earlier my children begin to read

it, the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society."

Franklin Pierce:

"Let not the foundation of hope rest upon man's wisdom. It must be felt that there is no national security but in the nation's humble, acknowledged dependence on God and His over-ruling providence."

Abraham Lincoln:

"All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated through this Book . . . All the things desirable to man are contained in it." □

# Just What is the Gospel?

BY PASTOR JOHN RAILTON

A passage that frequently comes to mind when I hear people imply that the summation of the gospel is Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and coming again, is Luke 18:31-34. This was toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. For perhaps three years Jesus and the disciples had been busy preaching the gospel. Now, on his way to Jerusalem, anticipating the betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection, Jesus proceeds to warn disciples as to what is coming. He told of being handed over to the Gentiles, being mocked, insulted, spit on, flogged and killed. But he promised he'd rise again, on the third day.

This is old information to all of us today, but notice Luke says of those disciples who heard him speak of these things, "The disciples did not understand any of

*this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about."* If the gospel is Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and coming again, and if the disciples didn't know what Jesus was talking about when he told them about such things than what was the gospel they had been preaching for three years? Would it not have to be the good news of the Kingdom of God, the same message Jesus himself had preached?

It seems to me that Acts 8:12 ("... he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ") well sums up the gospel message today. The good news Jesus came preaching was not his death, burial, and resurrection, but rather the good news of the kingdom. Jesus'

death, burial, and resurrection become part of the good news, in that this is the means, and the only means by which we or any may enter that kingdom. It seems to be that the gospel message we preach must include both these two major ingredients — the good news of the Kingdom of God (what it is, when, where, for whom, what it will be like), and the name of Jesus Christ (who he is, what he is all about, and what he has to offer).

In Acts 8:12, it is belief (which no doubt would include understanding) in this two-fold gospel that was evident before the Samaritans were baptized. This is what I study with people before I baptize them. Of course, there must also be repentance and commitment. □

## Proposed Constitutional Amendments

The following two Constitutional Amendments are being published for consideration by delegates to the 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Church of God General Conference. The Constitution of Atlanta Bible College/Church of God General Conference requires that proposed amendments to the Constitution be published three times in THE RESTITUTION HERALD and/or the *Progress Journal* prior to the summer Conference. The Conference will meet in Rockford, Illinois, July 31 to August 3.

### Constitutional Amendment, Article II, Section 1

The Board of Directors would like to propose the following amendment to the Constitution of Atlanta Bible College/Church of God General Conference

regarding delegate representation at the Summer General Conference:

Article II Section 1, Current Constitution: "Each member church of fifteen or more members, which has held at least six preaching services during the year, shall be entitled to one delegate for each fifty of its active members or fraction thereof. Delegates named shall be active members of the Church of God."

Proposed Change: "Each member church which has held at least twenty-four services during the year, and which has made a financial contribution to the operating budget of the College/Conference, shall be entitled to one delegate for each fifty of its active members or fraction thereof. Delegates named shall be active members of the Church of God."

### Constitutional Amendment, Article IV, Section 5

The Board of Directors proposes the following change in Article IV Section 5: Current Constitution: "Nominations printed in the *Progress Journal* will be brought to the floor of the business session by the Chairman at least one day before the day set for the election. Additional nominations will be received from the floor, and shall not be closed with fewer than two nominees for each directorship."

Proposed Revision: "Nominations printed in the *Progress Journal* will be brought to the floor of the business session by the Chairman at least one day before the day set for the election. Additional nominations will be received from the floor, and shall not be closed with fewer than *one more nomination than the number of directorships.*" □

# Top Ten List

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



**H**istorian Martin E. Marty, now retired from the University of Chicago, has made a top ten list of significant religious events of the closing millennium. They are:

- 1) The Reformation;
- 2) Gutenberg's invention of printing with movable type;

3) and 4) The Nazi Holocaust and the founding of Israel;

5) The Crusades;

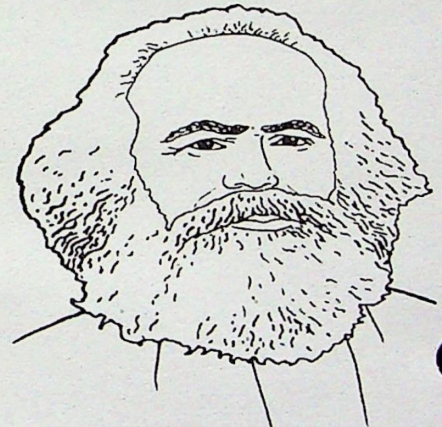
6) Islam's expansion in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries;

7) The reforms at Catholicism's Second Vatican Council (1962-65);

8) America's innovations in religious liberty;

9) 19<sup>th</sup> century thinkers (Darwin, Freud, Marx, Nietzsche) pose challenges to religion;

10) Pentecostalism becomes "the fastest growing segment of Christianity" in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. □



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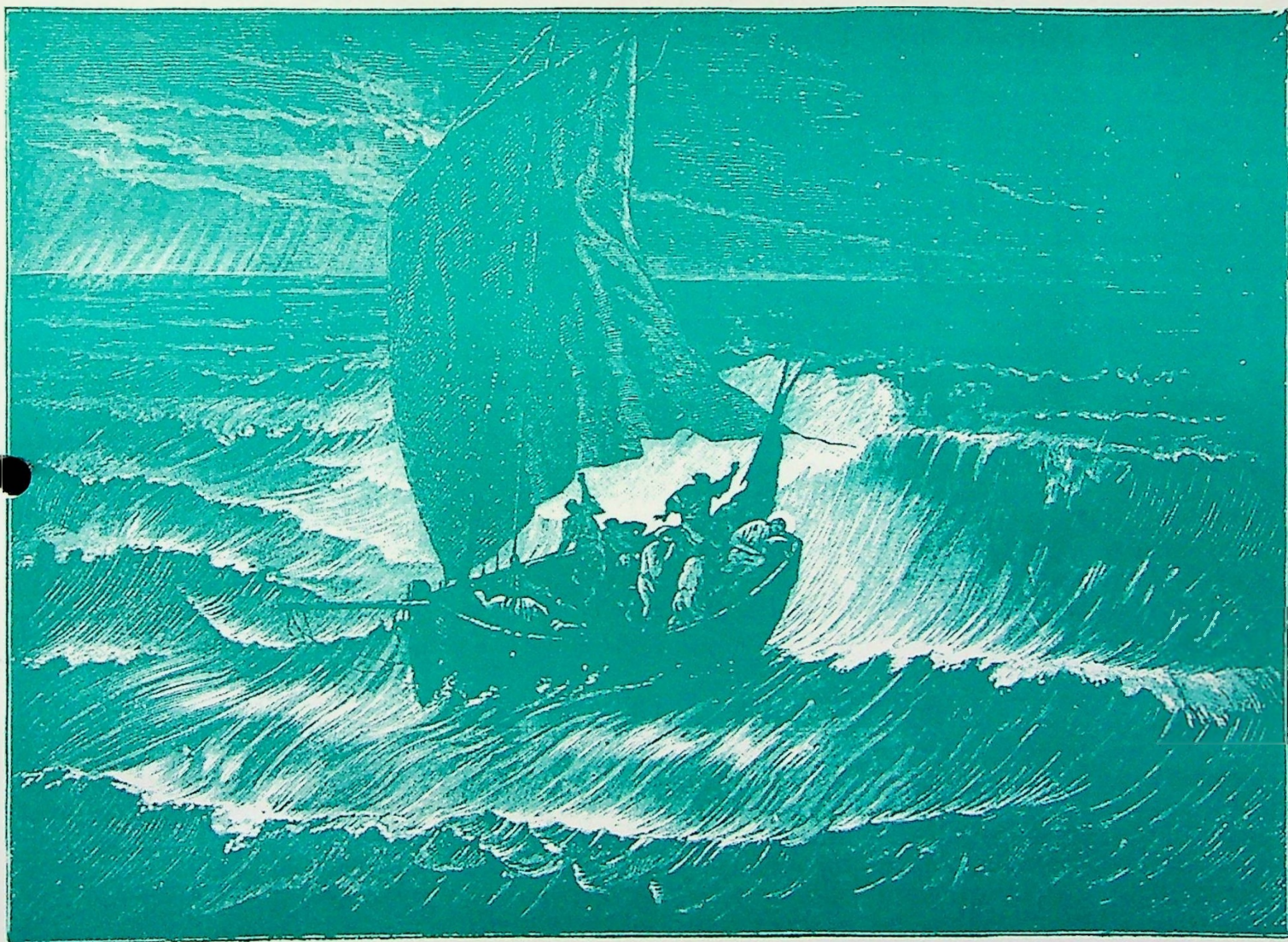
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# The Restitution Herald

Volume 89, Number 6

August, September • 2000



Jesus and His Apostles, in the midst of a storm.



## Of the Court and the Constitution

For this issue's editorial I would like to share something that my predecessor, Kent Ross, recently shared with me. I believe it is well presented. The following is excerpted from an article in the biweekly Catholic newspaper *The Wanderer* (July 13, 2000 issue, in the regular column "From the Mail," by its editorial staff).

### Clarence Thomas' Brilliant Analysis

What have we, as a nation, become?

Yours truly was rattled by the U.S. Supreme Court's latest abortion decision for the simple reason that it shows that the downward trajectory of the culture is now irreversible. Every once in a while one holds out hope that society can be turned around. But the fact that the Supreme Court overruled the wisdom of 30 legislatures which wanted to ban the gruesome medical practice that kills a baby on his birthday — to borrow the unforgettable line of former Cong. Bob Dornan — indicates that this country is now ruled by a radically evil oligarchy of unelected judges. And those judges are led by a mediarchy that shapes public opinion and dissent.

*From the Mail* recommends to all *Wanderer* readers the dissents written by Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and Anthony Kennedy — especially Thomas',

which is brilliant and powerful in its analysis of the Supreme Court, now, in his view, a rogue court that no longer even pretends to be guided by the Constitution.

To really understand what the Supreme Court is up to, *FTM* offers the following commentary by syndicated columnist Charley Reese, reacting to the court's earlier decision banning prayer at football games. The column was published June 25 in *The Orlando Sentinel*:

"The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that a school district may not allow a student to lead a prayer at a football game.

"It's interesting when you recall a statement made by Mikhail Gorbachev — America's favorite liberal — to a group of Communist Party officials on December 15, 1987, in Uzbekistan:

There must be no letup in the war against religion because as long as religion exists, Communism cannot prevail. We must intensify the obliteration of all religions wherever they are being practiced or taught.

"Gorbachev is a disciple of the late Sardinian Communist Antonio Gramsci, who advocated the policy of *active social demoralization* [*FTM's* emphasis — because that is the effect of the court's decision in the Nebraska case].

"The Supreme Court ruling is simply flat wrong. The justices as much as admitted it in their majority opinion by prattling on about how a Christian prayer makes non-Christians feel like outsiders. What has that got to do with the Constitution? . . .

"The only thing the First Amendment states is that 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.' Since when is a local school district the federal government? And since when does a prayer spoken in public establish anything? And if a student can't pray in public in Texas, how come the late President of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, led the nation in public prayer over national radio hookups? . . .

"We would do well to remember the words of George Washington in his farewell address, in which he states that anyone who is an enemy of religion is an enemy of republican government.

"It's interesting that Washington saw religion as essential to a free republic and Gorbachev sees the destruction of religion as essential to the triumph of Communism. That means that both men are smarter than the majority of the justices on the Supreme Court who wrote this latest opinion about public prayer . . ."

God bless,

Jeff 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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# Peace in the Midst of a Storm

BY PASTOR JEFF FLETCHER, HAPPYWOODS CHURCH OF GOD

**I**f we are truly going to live, we will experience many storms in our lives. Jesus doesn't keep us FROM the storms, but He provides us peace in the MIDST of the storms

Let us live our lives to the fullest and trust Jesus, who has a power greater than any storm.

In October of 1991 a storm stronger than any other in recorded history hit the coast off of Gloucester, Massachusetts. This "Perfect Storm" — so called because it was three storms combined into one — created an almost apocalyptic situation in the Atlantic Ocean, where boats encountered waves of 100 feet (30 meters) — the equivalent of a ten-story building. These storms are some of the strongest and most terrifying manifestations of nature's strength.

Dave Epstein, a meteorologist, describes the storm:

"What made this storm so extraordinary was the fact that, for one thing, it had been an old hurricane which did regenerate itself, and you also had three things combining meteorologically to form what we now call the 'perfect storm' or the 'no-name storm,' because it wasn't given a name of a hurricane. Sometimes when storms interact, they can flip around each other, one can cause another one to die. The interaction of these two was most interesting, because it actually combined into one and did form one perfect storm.

"Both local meteorologists and the National Weather Service and the Hurricane Center were faced with a dilemma at that

point, whether you rename the storm system, or whether you give it back the old name. It was late in the hurricane season, we were approaching November 1st, and it was also in an area where it really wasn't a danger to land *per se* — it was going in the shipping lanes. Of course we now know that that danger presented itself, unfortunately, to ships out at sea.

"Most meteorologists still refer to it as the 'no-name storm,' because it wasn't given a name . . . and it probably should have been."

*Jesus doesn't care about the storm. But does He care about us who care about the storm?*

One of the boats that was out at sea was a fishing boat named the *Andrea Gail*. It was made up of a six-man crew of seasoned fishermen who specialized in swordfish.

On this particular haul they could bring in a quarter to a half a million dollars worth of fish. It was to be the last fishing run of the season, before the weather becoming unsafe for fishing boats to venture out.

The *Andrea Gail* was built for encountering rough seas. Yet nothing could have prepared the boat or its six seasoned fishermen for "the Perfect Storm."

For days it struggled in seas with wave crests the height of ten-story buildings. Survivors who were on the seas during this storm describe it as something unlike anyone had ever seen before.

The Bible tells a story about another group of fishermen on a boat at sea. There were 13 altogether on this boat, not in the North Atlantic but on the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus had been busy ministering, healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, teaching about the Kingdom of God. At the end of a long day He suggested to the disciples that they cross over the Sea of Galilee to the other side. Jesus was always looking to minister to as many people as possible, always willing to leave His comfort zone and come to the aid of those in need, offering them the gift of wholeness and salvation, shalom.

They head out across the sea toward the eastern shore. The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by high mountains which form a basin. Sudden, violent storms are very well-known on that sea. Violent winds enter from the southwest corner of the basin, from a cleft in the rock, so that storm and calm can succeed one another quite rapidly.

Jesus, exhausted from a long day of teaching and healing, climbs down under the seat at the stern of the boat and falls asleep on a cushion.

Meanwhile one of those sudden, violent storms comes up. Remember, it's night, the end of a long day. It's impossible to see. The boat is being tossed about by waves. Bear in mind that a number of the disciples of Jesus are experienced fishermen, they know these waters, they've fished these waters all of their lives. They know how to manage themselves in a boat, even during bad storms, yet this storm is so fierce that even they are terrified. They believe they're in danger of sinking.



The boat begins taking on water, it's becoming swamped. They are bailing water like mad just trying to survive, and there lies Jesus, sound asleep at the back of the boat, resting, dreaming peacefully, without a care in the world.

Finally, some of them go to Jesus. "Master, wake up. Can't you feel this storm? Don't you realize that we're in danger of drowning? Help us. Do something!"

I imagine that what they are hoping is that Jesus will wake up and help them bail water. Jesus wakes up, but they are not prepared for what He does next.

Jesus has healed the sick, Jesus has cast out demons, Jesus has impressed them time and time again with His authoritative teaching, His wonders and signs, but now Jesus does something that is so amazing they literally can't believe it. He says with authority, to the wind and waves, "Shalom. Peace, be still!"

Immediately, the storm subsides and all is calm. They are rescued. Then Jesus turns to them and gives them a sharp reprimand, "Why are you so afraid, don't you have any faith?"

I can imagine what Jesus is thinking, "You've seen what I've done, you've heard my teaching and preaching, but still you don't really know who I am."

The Scripture says that then they literally "feared a great fear." "Who is this man? How can the wind and sea obey him?"

The disciples' question is ours: "Do you not care that we perish?" Jesus doesn't care about the storm. But does He care about us who care about the storm?

William Williman, Dean of Duke University's Chapel tells the following story:

"About this time of the year, I invariably think of a divinity student whom I taught. He felt called by God to serve as pastor to rural churches. Amazingly, he found a woman who felt called by God to marry him and go with him into a lifetime of service in out-of-the-way places. They went,

in June, on a honeymoon, traveling by bicycle in the mountains and camping, the only honeymoon they could afford. First day out, on the road, there was an accident. She was hit by a car, crushed, and died a painful, terrible death.

"I could imagine that young man crying out, 'You called me into the ministry. You put me in this boat, placed her here with me. Do you not care that we perish?'"

"On this beautiful June day, it is easy to sit here in this air-conditioned sanctuary and think good thoughts about the world. But you know life. There can be darker, more difficult days than this. In June, walking around a placid lake, hiking in the park, nature, the world seems benevolent and benign. We moderns, because we have devised so many means of protecting ourselves from nature, tend to be nature romantics.

"But this story of Jesus and his disciples in a boat renders another world, a world

*"When Jesus is near, the wind picks up, and there is trouble."*

where storms rise up out of nowhere and nature puts us in peril. If you have ever suffered from say, cancer, you know that world. In cancer, the normal reproductive processes, the 'natural' workings of cells, somehow go out of control, reproduce with astonishing speed, oblivious to the checks and balances of the body. The once placid lake which has been our body on most days becomes an angry, raging sea.

"And this story is about that.

"Perhaps you thought that there would be smooth sailing with Jesus. You thought that, with Jesus in the boat, there would be no storm, no waves, no fear. No. Almost every page of Mark's gospel proclaims that Jesus is the center of a storm. When Jesus is near, the wind picks up, the waves bang against the side of the boat, and there is trouble."

There are three lessons we need to understand from this story:

First, if we are truly going to live, we will experience many storms in our lives. Life is difficult, there will be trials, there will be storms that come up suddenly, unannounced: A sudden, unexpected illness or accident, loss of a job, marriage strife, a child or grandchild who is wayward. The list of possible storms is endless. Who can know, who can predict what storms may arise in our lives? They can be external storms, caused externally by events that happen to us. Or they can be internal storms, psychological storms that come from within us.

Some people try to avoid life's storms. They try to look ahead and anticipate potential storms, or they fail to live at all. Six men boarded the *Andrea Gail*, they were experienced fishermen, they knew the risks. They knew that the sea can be unpredictable and dangerous, and yet they still climbed onto the boat.

There are people who are too afraid to climb aboard, who seek safety and security, who are unable or unwilling to take a risk or face a challenge. That is sad, because they aren't really living life to its fullest. If we are truly going to live, it's not a question of "if" there will be storms, but "when" and "how severe?"

Jesus doesn't keep us FROM the storms, but He provides us peace in the *midst* of the storms.

Some people live under the faulty assumption that "it could never happen to me, storms don't come to my family . . . those things only come to other families, we're safe, we're immune." WRONG!! Storms will come!! Storms will come unexpectedly. Becoming a christian doesn't mean that we won't face storms. Don't let anyone try to convince you that becoming a christian is an inoculation against storms, it simply isn't so.

You see, in the story, Jesus could have avoided the storm. He could have chosen a different path for them. Instead of taking a boat across the lake, they could have stayed

*(continued on page 7)*

# The "Ifs" of Christianity

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

A popular form of evangelism invites you to "just trust in Jesus and be saved." This form of preaching can be dangerously misleading unless the matter of trusting Jesus is more carefully defined.

We can all agree that salvation is by grace, but to receive it we must believe in the Jesus of the Bible, the Messiah, the King of Israel and the world; we must also persist in our faith until the end of our life (Matt. 24:13). To believe in the Jesus of Scripture, we must first know something about who He was, what He does now and what He is going to do in the future. We must understand that Jesus is the promised Messiah whom God planned to send by birth from the virgin Mary — a birth having its origin in Holy Spirit, that is, divine power (Matt. 1:20 in the original Greek). The Messiah is not only the one whom God sent to die for the sins of the world; He is also the High Priest of all the Christians and the future king of the world. We must welcome this information about the Savior before we can believe in Him in the way the Bible asks. That is why the Gospel is a call to believe in the Kingdom or Reign of God as well as in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Mark 1:15; Acts 8:12; 28:23, 31).

When we first understand and believe in Jesus, the Messiah, and His teachings, we are rescued from all the false beliefs we have previously held. We should then be baptized as a sign that we want to become a member of God's family and receive His Spirit. Can we then relax, knowing that there is nothing further for us to do? Here is where the "ifs" of Christianity come in.

After baptism there is a sense in which we have been saved. Yet that is only part of the story. It is not always realized (due to obscure translation in the King James version) that the Christian is one who is *being* saved and looks forward to complete salvation in the future. This shows that there can be no room for complacency: "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he falls" (1 Cor. 10:12). The popular notion that there are no conditions to salvation once you have made an initial commitment

*The word "if"  
is a sign  
of condition.*

is not borne out by the New Testament facts.

The word "if" is a sign of condition. If Paul had taught that salvation could never be rejected after it had been initially granted, he could not have used the "if" as he did. In Colossians 1:21-23 he makes a most interesting statement: "You who were once alienated from God, enemies in your mind by wicked works, Christ has now reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and unimpeachable *if* indeed you continue in the faith founded and firm and not being moved away from the hope of the Good News which you heard . . ." (emphasis added).

Paul makes it very clear that the Hope offered by the Gospel — the Hope of Resurrection and rulership with the Messiah in His Kingdom when He comes back — must

be held on to. This is a condition of receiving salvation. Salvation is indeed offered by grace, but our cooperation is required. Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2: "I made known to you the Good News which I preached to you as the Gospel, which you also received and in which you now stand, by which you are *being* saved, *if* you hold fast to the Message which I announced as the Good News" (emphasis added). This makes it quite clear that persistence in the Gospel is a condition of obtaining final salvation. The facts embodied in the Good News, including faith in the person of the Messiah Jesus, must be held firm. This includes the Hope of rulership with Christ in the Kingdom.

In three other passages Paul uses similar language: In 1 Thessalonians 3:8 he says: "Now we live *if* you stand fast in the Lord." The implication is that he will be most unhappy if they do not! And again, in 2 Timothy 2:12, there is a most important passage written by Paul at the very end of his career as an Apostle: "If we endure we shall reign as kings with him" — that is, if we successfully come through the trials of this life, we shall reign with Him in the Messianic Kingdom of the Coming Age. Paul had said the same thing in slightly different words in Romans 8:17: "If we suffer with him we shall be glorified with him." You will find by comparing Mark 10:37 with Matthew 20:21 that the word "glory" is another term for Kingdom.

In all the passages we have quoted the *ifs* show the condition which must be fulfilled by Christians before they can finally enter the Kingdom of God to be revealed at the Second Coming of Christ. Salvation is

*(continued on page 7)*

## Peace in the Midst of a Storm (continued from page 5)

right where they were, or they could have traveled to the other side by land rather than by sea. Sure, it would have taken longer, but it could have happened.

I imagine that Jesus knew EXACTLY what He was doing when He suggested that they ride in a boat. I believe He KNEW that they would be riding into a storm. He could have spared the disciples that journey through the storm, but He didn't. He had a reason for sending them into the midst of a storm. He wanted them to grow in faith. He wanted them to learn to trust Him. He wanted them to believe!

There's a part in James where he wrote "consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (James 1:2, 3). Jesus allows our faith to be tested so that we have a chance to exercise our faith muscles and grow stronger.

The main lesson in this story isn't that Jesus has the power to calm the external storm, (in this case wind, rain and rough seas). The main lesson in this story is that if we trust in Christ, we can experience true peace while we're in the midst of a storm.

Jesus says, "Don't be afraid. . . I'm here with you. Don't lose hope, I'll never leave you nor forsake you."

The disciples needed to learn this lesson now, while Jesus was physically there with them, for the day would soon come when Jesus wouldn't be there in bodily form anymore. The disciples had to learn

this lesson because a day would come when they would face many other kinds of storms, like the storm that blew up when Peter and John healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate in Jerusalem, and found themselves standing before the council being told *not* to preach in Jesus' name again. That was a storm, yet they had learned their lesson well. They trusted that Jesus was there with them in the midst of that storm, and they did the right thing.

Over and over and over again they went through the storms, and Jesus was with them. They learned to have faith. You see, in order for Jesus to accomplish His mission, He needed to have a Church that was unafraid to go out boldly, amid great opposition, "through many dangers, toils and snares," and do His will.

He needed a Church that was *not* afraid to venture out in a boat across the sea, or across an ocean, in order to serve God and proclaim the good news of the coming kingdom.

We should live our lives to the fullest and trust Jesus, who has a power greater than any storm. This is true in our individual lives — we need to take risks when those risks are called for by God in order to do His will in our lives. This is true in our corporate life, both as part of a church and a conference of churches. We must *not* be afraid to step out of our comfort zone and respond to God's call to be His Church — to be His witness. Now is *not* the time for caution, now is *not* the time for us to shrink

back in fear from doing what God is calling us to do.

That's true of whatever He calls us to do and be as churches, whether it's expanding our buildings so that we have adequate space and facilities to carry out our ministries, or taking on new ministry challenges, to feed the hungry of our communities in the name of Jesus, or working with at-risk children in mentoring relationships, or providing adequate housing for the needy, or sharing our faith with a neighbor or friend.

Are these things risky? Yes. Could they result in storms? Yes! Does that mean we should avoid doing them, simply because there is risk? Should the disciples *not* have gotten in the boat with Jesus? Should the crew of the *Andrea Gail* *not* have gone fishing in the North Atlantic? Should the crew of the Space Shuttle *Challenger* *not* have boarded their craft, which exploded? Should we *not* take any risks with our faith?

In order for us to be faithful to God's mission in our lives we must risk the occasional storms that will, inevitably, blow into our lives. But when those storms come we know that we do *not* need to be afraid — for Jesus is with us, He is in the boat, He won't let us drown.

If we are truly going to live, we will experience many storms in our lives.

Jesus doesn't keep us *from* the storms, but He provides us peace in the *midst* of the storms.

Let us live our lives to the fullest and trust Jesus, who has a power greater than any storm. □

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## The "Ifs" of Christianity (continued from page 6)

therefore in one sense past; we have been rescued from the world, the Satanic system which at present dominates all forms of civilization. In a very important sense salvation is a continuing process — we are being saved. 1 Corinthians 1:18 speaks of those who are being saved as contrasted

with the rest who are perishing. Thirdly, salvation is a future event to which we are to look forward. This is why Paul can say "Salvation is now nearer to us than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11). That salvation comes to us only *if* we hold fast to the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God and the things pertaining to the name

of Jesus until the end (Heb. 6:11).

The Christian life is thus properly likened to a race. At the starting tape you have not won the race. You must persist and persevere until you reach the finishing tape. A prize awaits each winner. We must all finish the race! We shall achieve this only by the grace of God working in our lives. □

# Facing the Church's New Challenge

BY WHAID GUSCOTT ROSE

**B**ecause the earthquake had registered high on the Richter scale, officials of a historic church decided to check the building out. When they arrived, they were pleased to find everything safe and sound — or so they thought.

To be on the safe side, the officials brought in engineers who discovered that the building had literally shifted off its foundation and was no longer safe for occupancy. What began as a minor concern about possible structural damage turned out to be a major challenge: full reconstruction of the building.

The twentieth-century church experienced a major earthquake, presenting new personal and ministry challenges. Depending on how we respond, these could either make or break the church's capacity to see and reap the present harvest. The church may seem safe and sound, but a closer look reveals significant shifts in the prevailing pattern of thought, or paradigm, and of the culture in which the church exists. These shifts pose important questions about how we do or don't do ministry.

Serious setbacks await — yea, confront — churches that continue to do “business as usual.” To paraphrase what they said about Oldsmobile, “this is not your grandfather's church.”

## Paradigm shifts

Numerous words and phrases describe shifts in the paradigm, but perhaps one sentence captures them all: We live in a post-Christian era. *Post-Christian* means that the day of the biblical worldview — seeing and understanding God and the world through a Judeo-Christian frame of reference — is over. The average person no

longer takes for granted that we live in a three-tiered universe: heaven, earth, and under the earth. For the first time, we have cultivated a whole generation that is biblically literate. Gone is the “churched culture” in which the church enjoyed the respect and appreciation of society. In fact, in the post-Christian era, the church is either irrelevant or, at best, one among many options.

It gets even worse. One of the hallmarks of this new paradigm is religious intolerance, based on the concept of moral relativism. This teaches that there are no absolute truths, which interestingly, for the moral relativist, is absolutely true. Since nothing is true and everything must be tolerated, Christianity is naturally seen as bigoted and narrow-minded. How absurd to suggest that Jesus is the only way to God and that the Bible is God's only inspired Word. This causes many in the secular arena to view the church as a real threat to society and arouses in some a spirit of antagonism toward the Christian faith. With Christianity seen as a threat and preachers and evangelists held in increasing suspicion, the gospel doesn't do well in the market place of religious values.

## Spiritual hunger

Measuring the damage of the earthquake reveals more than just the prevailing anti-Christian spirit. It also reveals that paradigm shifts have caused a new kind of spiritual hunger and interest in spiritual things. Thankfully, our temptation to believe that the post-Christian era means the end of the gospel and evangelism is countered by reliable statistics that the present

generation is hungry for spiritual things. If this sounds paradoxical, perhaps it is because the greater the degree of darkness people experience, the greater their desire to see light. And the darker the night, the brighter the light shines.

However, this spiritual hunger does not necessarily mean an interest in God or in things Christians deem spiritual. Nonetheless, that they have an interest is important because it presents unique opportunities for us to share the gospel. The church's challenge is to discover new, attractive methods to clearly communicate the gospel to the unchurched.

## New methods, same message

It's a new century, but the same old story. Sin is still sin, and people are still dying. Because of this, some naturally resist the idea of change in the way we do ministry. The message of the gospel is unchanging, but many Christians are realizing that the new paradigm requires new approaches to ministry. They are realizing that they can improve their ministry effectiveness and can experience exciting growth without compromising their message and mission.

It is important to understand the difference between changing the methods by which the gospel is presented versus changing the message. As the old adage reminds us, “Methods are many, principles are few; methods may change, but principles never do.”

In his book *The Second Coming of the Church*, researcher George Barna declares that the world is caught up in rapid, unprecedented change. Every few years the core

attributes of society—including language, values, customs, etc.—are being substantially reshaped. Yet most American churches continue programs started years ago. It's no wonder, Barna concludes, that Christian churches show decline and loss of influence.

Barna's observation is right on and must be heeded by all those who will take ministry seriously in this new century. Churches must change their methods to reach the world with the unchanging gospel.

### Understanding the culture

It was said of the sons of Issachar that they "understood the times and knew what Israel should do" (1 Chronicles 12:32).

Living out this "Issachar principle" is a big part of the church's new challenge. The church needs men and women who can understand the trends of the culture—how it thinks, what influences it—so we can effectively minister to it.

Understanding Generation Xers and how they differ from Boomers and Busters prepares us to meet the challenge of ministry to the up-and-coming generation: the Millennium Kids. As our church expands its missions . . . we will emphasize keeping an eye on the culture, helping our people understand the times for the most effective evangelism possible.

### Seeker-sensitive

Another challenge facing the church in this century is being seeker-sensitive. While the concept has been around for at least a decade and is familiar to many in the Christian community, many have yet to get a handle on it. For that reason, the typical church service is not designed to attract the seeker; it actually creates barriers for the unchurched. The reason many believers do not invite their friends and neighbors to church is that it doesn't occur to them that they should. Even if it did, they know the unchurched would be embarrassed by the quality or content of the

service. For too many, church is like a weekly family gathering in which a non-member finds it difficult to break through the established circles.

Scripture calls us to a seeker-sensitive approach: "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity" (Colossians 4:5). Being seeker-sensitive is creating an environment in which unchurched Harry and Mary feel comfortable. It is intentionally changing much of how we do church to making it visitor friendly. It is creating an atmosphere where grace abounds and where someone who has never been to church before can understand what is going on.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church "If, therefore, the whole church comes to-

*The challenge to be  
seeker-sensitive has  
never been more crucial.*

. . . . .

gether and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind?" (1 Corinthians 14:23, NRSV). While the context is the use of tongues, the principle applies to everything we do in our corporate gatherings. Much of the lingo we learn could sound like unknown tongues to people who have never walked through the door of a church. The challenge to be seeker-sensitive has never been more crucial.

### Compassionate witness

Historically, people have chosen to join a church based on its doctrine and its denomination. Research now shows that people choose a church based on its function (ministries), worship style, quality of ministry, and doctrine (particular beliefs that influence lifestyle). Doctrine is last on the list because people don't care how much we know until they know how much

we care. In the old paradigm, the big question was "What does that church believe?" In the new paradigm, it's "What can that church offer me, and how will joining enhance the quality of my life?"

This challenges the church to a more holistic approach to ministry; it becomes a hospital for broken lives. This is Christianity in blue jeans. It is serving the world and offering a real difference. Service becomes our love for Jesus dressed in work clothes. As one wise person suggested, we must preach the gospel, and use words only when necessary.

Much more could be said about the challenge facing the church in this century. We could also mention being purpose-driven, focused in ministry, serving with kingdom vision, and cultivating courageous and godly leadership. These aren't new ideas, but this twenty-first century we minister in, makes them paramount because the paradigm of the church has shifted significantly. All may seem safe and sound at your church, but if you continue to do business as usual, you will miss your part in the great harvest of souls being reaped for the kingdom.

Paul's words to the Corinthian church provide the best conclusion: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I might share in its blessings" (1 Corinthians 9:22, 23). Each generation of the church has had to face the very same issues. It's our turn. May God give us the grace to rise to this challenge. □

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From the **Bible Advocate** (used by permission).

# Removing Mountains

BY PASTOR JAMES MATTISON; PELZER, SC

**T**he prayer promises that our God and our Lord Jesus have given to us are POWERFUL! Jesus has granted us *authority over mountains* (problems): If our relationship with Him is full, deep, and rich; if we fully believe what He said and act upon it; and if it is God's will. But just suppose all these conditions are met, and WE PRAY THE PRAYER OF FAITH! What blessings can result!

Let us consider the power of these promises.

"And *this is the confidence* that we have in him, *that if we ask anything according to his will*, he heareth us: And if we know that he hears us, *whatsoever we ask*, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

We can have complete confidence in God, that He hears and will answer and give us the petitions we ask of Him, if it is according to His will. What, then, is God's will? From Scripture we see that it is His will that:

"It is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9:27).

"In everything give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:18).

"Ye should abstain from fornication" (1 Thess. 4:3).

All who believe in and follow Christ will have eternal life (John 3:16).

We seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

We live by faith (Heb. 10:38).

We walk in the Spirit and not in the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-17).

Many more could be added to this list. We see that *God's will is written in His Word*. His Word is His will. Any promise He has made He will keep. He does not lie.

Every prayer of faith must be in accordance with God's will. The powerful promises we will consider are still subject to the condition that it be God's will. Jesus asked for deliverance but ended His prayer with "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." Jesus was not delivered from death, but a greater thing happened: God raised Him to Eternal Life!

Again, what is God's will? 1) What He has said in His Word, 2) In our problem He may have a will for us that is UNKNOWN to us, but known to Him. In that case, we must continue to trust in Him and wait on

*The powerful promises  
we will consider are still  
subject to the condition  
that it be God's will.*

• • • • •  
Him. At the right time the answer will come, even though it may be in God's coming Kingdom.

Notice in the passage quoted from 1 John 5 that we are invited to ask "anything" and "whatsoever." If we have a need and humbly ask God for help through Jesus, God will give us our petition as long as it is in His will. What a powerful statement is made here by the Apostle John!

## SIMILAR PROMISES

"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, *it shall be done for them* of my Father in heaven" (Matt 18:19).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he

do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And **whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.** *If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it*" (John 14:12-14).

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

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and *bring forth fruit*, and that your fruit should remain: That *whatsoever ye shall ask* of the Father in my name, *he may give it unto you*" (John 15:16).

"Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matt. 7:7).

"Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the *prayer of faith shall save the sick*, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, *that ye may be healed*. The effectual *servent prayer* of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:14-16).

In each of the above promises a close relationship with God and with our Savior is emphasized as being necessary for prayers to be answered. This faith in Him and in what He said is of utmost importance.

Now notice in Mark 11:22-24 how Jesus delegates to us His power to remove mountains (problems) in our lives, if we believe in Him and in what He has said and *not doubt*.

## DOUBTING, OR REALLY BELIEVING

“And Jesus answering them saith unto them, have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that *whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt* in his heart, but *shalt believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have* whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, *what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*” (Mark 11:22-24).

Our doubt about the above words being true will cause us to lose the blessing we could have. According to Jesus, the one who *believes “that those things which he saith shall come to pass”* is the one who will receive the blessing of having the mountain removed. He is the one who does not doubt. Doubt questions the truth of what Jesus said. That is why doubt is a sister to unbelief. At Nazareth Jesus could do few mighty works “because of their unbelief” (Matt. 13:58).

To doubt is to waver in an opinion. It is to hesitate to believe. It is to be undecided, to question, to be inclined not to believe, to distrust (Webster).

Certainly no Christian wants to be in that category. We either believe Jesus or we do not.

Let's look at several Scriptural illustrations that show how doubt robs us of blessings God invites us to receive:

Jesus was walking on the water. The disciples in the ship were afraid, thinking He was a ghost. Jesus reassured them that it was He. Peter said, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” Jesus said, “Come.” Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. (Matt. 14:25-31).

It is important to notice **why** Peter began to sink. “When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid,” and he began to sink (v. 30). Peter quit having faith in Jesus' word **come** and started to walk by sight. He lost his faith. He possibly thought to himself, “People can't walk on water. I can't do

this.” He forgot Jesus had told him to *come*. He quit walking in faith and **doubted** that what Jesus told him he could do could be done. He lost the blessing. What a testimony he could have had! Jesus immediately caught him and said, “O thou of little faith, **wherefore didst thou doubt.**”

A man brought his afflicted son to the disciples, but they could not cure him. Then Jesus came, rebuked the devil, and the child was cured immediately. Afterward, the disciples asked Jesus why they could not heal the boy. He said, “*Because of your unbelief*: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain (problem), Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:14-20).

Remember Jesus had given these very disciples power to heal the sick and cast out demons (Matt. 10:1) But in this case, Jesus said they failed because they didn't think it would happen. If they had believed they had the power from Jesus, they would have succeeded. They failed because of unbelief. What about *our* belief in Mark 11:22-24? Do we believe what Jesus said? He said our problem would be removed if we believed and did not doubt. Are we willing to try that?

The people of Nazareth lost blessings because of their unbelief. They didn't realize this hometown boy was the **Son of God**, filled with God's Spirit without measure. Jesus left many people sick at Nazareth because they would not believe.

We see from these passages that it is **crucial to believe that a mountain can be removed, and not doubt that it can.**

The first rule we must follow, then, in desiring that a problem be removed is to believe Jesus — believe that this promise in Mark 11:22-24 is **TRUE**.

Let's look at it once again: “Whosoever shall say unto this mountain (or problem), Be thou removed, and be cast into the sea (be completely gone); and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith . . . What

things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

Notice there are two parts to this: **believing**, and **saying**.

## SPEAK TO THE PROBLEM

After **believing** Jesus' words in Mark 11:22-24, the second thing we are to do is to **speak** to the mountain (problem) and tell it to be removed. Three times in this passage a form of the word “say” is used. “Whosoever shall say.” “Those things which he saith.” “he shall have whatsoever he saith.”

The teaching of Jesus here is that we are to *say* to our problem “*Be removed.*” *When we do this — do what He said — we are to believe it will happen.*

*This was the kind of faith Abraham had.* He believed in things that were not as though they were. God told him he would have a son. It was 25 years before the promised son was born. Abraham had to wait on God's timetable, yet still believe. In those 25 years, Abraham's faith deepened as he saw God always working in his life. He continued to believe even when his body and Sarah's body were too old for childbearing. It was then the child was born. Paul explains *the depth of Abraham's faith*: “Against hope he believed in hope. Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the purpose of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform” (Rom. 4:17-21).

This is the kind of faith we want: faith in the unknown, hope of things yet to come, because of the promise of God. Most people believe when they see. We are asked to believe when we cannot see.

This means to me we are to speak to the problem, we are not to doubt in our hearts, and believe that it will be removed. While I was pondering on these promises several

(continued on page 12)

years ago, in the middle of the night a terrible cramp seized my left leg. I sprang out of bed and at the same time cried out, "Cramp, be removed in the name of Jesus my Lord." Instantly it left. My leg hurt for a few moments but the cramp was gone. Later a cramp seized my right foot while I was sleeping in my truck on a hunting trip. I said the same thing in great earnestness, and it left. This was not the normal way cramps have treated me.

Notice Jesus used this same rule Himself:

Here are some verses that show Jesus *speaking to a problem*.

"Hold thy peace, and come out of him . . . with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him" (Mark 1:25-26).

"Be thou clean" (Mark 1:41).

"Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. . . . Arise, and take up thy bed" (Mark 2:5, 11).

"Stretch forth thine hand" (Mark 3:5).

"Peace, be still. There was a great calm" (Mark 4:39).

"Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit" (Mark 5:8).

"Be opened" (Mark 7:34).

"Young man, I say to thee, arise" (Luke 7:14).

"No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever" (Mark 11:14).

Many times Jesus *spoke the word* for a "mountain" to be removed, and it was removed. *We are asked also to speak to our "mountain," "Be removed," and believe it will be and it will if we do not doubt and if it is God's will to remove it at this time.*

### THANK GOD FOR THE ANSWER BEFORE IT COMES

If you believe that God has answered your prayer, and that the mountain has been (will be) removed, then you will naturally want to thank Him for it.

Romans 4:20 says that Abraham gave glory to God even before Isaac was born. He praised God because he was "strong in faith." And because he "believed" that God would give him a son, that "what God had

promised" He would do. **Therefore he could praise God for the answer before it even came.**

Jonah 2:9 says Jonah "sacrificed unto God with the voice of thanksgiving" *even before* the fish vomited him up. He cried to God by reason of his affliction (inside the fish), and God heard him. Jonah said "What I have vowed I will make good." Jonah had to get right with God first for God to hear him but when he did Jonah *knew* that God would be faithful and was able to give thanks *before* God commanded the fish to vomit him out.

Second Chronicles 20:1-28 tells of Ammon and Moab coming to fight Jehoshaphat. He was afraid and prayed earnestly to God before all the people. He did not know what to do, so he prayed to God and said "Our eyes are upon thee." "And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." This is a most touching scene. A prophet of God rose up from their midst and told them, "Thus saith the Lord . . . be not afraid nor dismayed . . . for the battle is not yours, but God's." They were told to go and watch what would happen. The king and all the people bowed to the ground and thanked God *before the battle (mountain) was won*. The next day Jehoshaphat set singers in front of the army to sing praises to God as they went. They watched as *God removed their mountain* by having the enemy destroy one another.

We, too, can thank God even before the answer comes, for we know that it is on the way. David said, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." Paul said, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Is this praise to God only for blessings already given, or is it not also for blessings to come? Praise for future blessings show faith in God. We live then by faith and not by sight.

### Act of Belief in the Answer Coming

Not only will the believer who really believes God's promise that the mountain

will be removed praise God beforehand for taking care of the problem; but he will also act upon it.

Almost all of James 2 deals with this. Faith without acts of faith is dead. James said in effect, "try to convince me you have faith when you never act like it, and I will ask you to observe my faith by my actions."

All through the Bible faithful people acted upon their faith. Abraham left Ur and went to Canaan. Noah built an ark. Daniel's faith stopped the mouths of lions. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." Some "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises . . . quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight . . . women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

In Mark 2:11, when Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Arise and take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house," the man did **not** say, "But Lord, I'm paralyzed and can't get up." No, it says, "Immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all." He acted on Jesus' word.

Jesus told the man with the withered hand to stretch forth thine hand." The fellow didn't say, "But I can't." "He stretched it out. And his hand was restored whole as the other." That man believed Christ's words enough to act upon them. (Mark 2:12).

The crippled man by the pool also acted when Jesus told him to "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." The man didn't say, "I can't walk." He did what Jesus told him to do. He acted upon Jesus' words. "Immediately the man was made whole.

When Jesus was at Peter's house, He took the mother-in-law by the hand after He rebuked the fever, and "lifted her up." Immediately the fever left her. Why? Jesus believed. This was faith in action.

In the book of Acts, Peter told the crippled man, "In the name of Jesus rise up and walk." *The man obeyed by faith*. He was willing to try. He began to walk and leap and praise God (3:6-8).



We act upon the word of the law officer, the word of the doctor, the banker, and everyone else, even our wives. We also ought to act upon the Word of our Lord. He urged us, "Tell the mountain to be removed. Don't doubt. It will remove." What is the problem with trying this? We believe Jesus, don't we?

We want to trust and believe these prayer promises God has given us through Jesus. The angel said, "No word from God is void of power" (Luke 1:37, RV).

"Is there anything too hard for the LORD?" (Jer. 3:27).

### WAIT ON GOD'S TIMING

Psalm 27:14 says, "Wait on the LORD, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait I say, on the LORD." Jeremiah said, "It is good that a man should both hope and *quietly wait* for the salvation of the LORD" (Lam. 3:26). God told the Jews in Zephaniah's day to *wait* for Him to work (Zeph. 3:8).

When the children of Israel were frantic at the Red Sea because of the Egyptians behind them Moses told them, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." *They had to wait* while the Lord rolled back the waters. Then they crossed. How awed they must have been.

Jesus asked the apostles to *wait for the promise of the Father*. Paul said it this way: "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience *wait for it*" (Rom. 8:25).

Sometimes God's promises take a long time to fulfill. He promised Abraham (and us) inheritance in the earth long ago and it still has not yet come to pass. We have faith that it will.

Years ago, when I was under great stress and cried to God for help, He gave me peace instantly. But answers do not always come so quickly. Sometimes we have to wait on God's timetable. We may have to wait till God sees it is the right time to answer. Perhaps something else has to happen first.

We do not see things like God does. We must remember that God may have a better use for our mountain. Paul besought God

three times for a mountain to be removed but God told him it was better for him to keep it. Perhaps our problem is left to keep us humble, or to grow deeper faith, or some other spiritual blessing God has for us.

### GOD'S WILL IN HEALING

How might God manifest His will in prayers for healing? Here are a few of the means that we have seen.

At times it becomes obvious that God performs a miraculous healing of a person that cannot be explained by any other means.

God can also work through doctors and medicine to bring about healing. What we eat also has much to do with our health.

God has also given us a wonderful body that in many ways is able to heal itself. And many times *physical* healing does not occur at all. But probably spiritual healing does take place. The spiritual world is far more important than the physical and natural world. Our conversion and spiritual life are more important than our physical well-being and soundness. In knowing that, we are still mindful that Jesus' invitation to speak to the mountain is for us to use.

People are suffering and die all the time. Is this from lack of faith or the will of God that this should happen? When is it that God will intervene in this normal process of disease, injury, and death? Can we know? Remember Jesus words in Mark 11:22-24. And also James 5:15-16 which says "and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." Do we believe this?

We conclude that only by having a right relationship with God; daily laying down our own will to follow the will of the Father; studying His word to discover that will; being filled with the Holy Spirit; and following the steps outlined in this paper; can we have confidence in our God and in our Savior Jesus Christ that "If we ask anything in my name, I will do it."

### CONCLUSION

1. Whatever God said is true.
2. Believers have been given powerful promises.
3. If we follow the rules: 1) It must be according to God's will, 2) really believe, 3) and not doubt, 4) Tell the mountain to be removed in the name of Jesus, 5) Thank Him and act upon it, our prayers will be answered.
4. James said that we should not waver, but **ask in faith**, for the man who wavers or doubts God will receive nothing. (James 1:5-6)
5. God wants to give us the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:3-5) as long as they are according to His will. God knows what is best for us.
6. God will answer according to His will, and according to His timetable. We must leave it in His hands, and wait on Him.
7. In everything we can give God thanks. Perhaps not for the thing that is happening now but how God can use it to bring about good and *bring Him glory*.
8. We must resist the devil's attempts to let doubt creep in and wither our faith, and hold fast to the *truthfulness* of Jesus' words.
9. We must live by faith and not by sight. Unshakable faith is the kind of faith that is counted for righteousness.
10. When a person sees a miracle answer to his prayer or the prayer of another, it deepens faith and humility, and gives so much glory to God.
11. There are so many mountains that people have in this world. We can help them remove them... A more abundant and faithful life will result. Again, let us live by faith, not by sight. We live in faith that Jesus will return to establish God's Kingdom. We live by faith that we have been forgiven and are God's children. Why not live by faith in Matthew 18:19? Is it not true that if two of us earnestly agree on some mountain to ask God to remove, and follow the scriptural teachings, will that mountain not be removed? □

# Of Martyrs and Martyrdom

PREPARED BY THE EDITOR

**E**ditor's Note: Jesus said "Blessed are you when men persecute you . . ."

*Few people reading this edition of the RESTITUTION HERALD will be called on by God to lay down their lives for their faith. Yet we must remember that throughout the history of the Christian Church, and up to this present day, Christians die because of their faith in Jesus Christ.*

*The following is an excerpt from Fox's Book of Martyrs describing the traditions surrounding the deaths of the Apostles. It is followed by a modern day account of Christian persecution.*

## History of Christian Martyrs to the First General Persecution Under Nero

Christ our Savior, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, hearing the confession of Simon Peter, who, first of all others, openly acknowledged Him to be the Son of God, and perceiving the secret hand of His Father therein, called him (alluding to his name) a rock, upon which rock He would build His Church so strong that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. In which words three things are to be noted: First, that Christ will have a Church in this world. Secondly, that the same Church should mightily be impugned, not only by the world, but also by the uttermost strength and powers of all hell. And, thirdly, that the same Church, notwithstanding the uttermost of the devil and all his malice, should continue.

Which prophecy of Christ we see wonderfully to be verified, insomuch that the whole course of the Church to this day may

seem nothing else but a verifying of the said prophecy. First, that Christ hath set up a Church, needeth no declaration. Secondly, what force of princes, kings, monarchs, governors, and rulers of this world, with their subjects, publicly and privately, with all their strength and cunning, have bent themselves against this Church! And, thirdly, how the said Church, all this notwithstanding, hath yet endured and holden its own! What storms and tempests it hath overpast, wondrous it is to behold: for the more evident declaration whereof, I have addressed this present history, to the end, first, that the wonderful works of God in His Church might appear to His glory; also that, the continuance and proceedings of the Church, from time to time, being set forth, more knowledge and experience may redound thereby, to the profit of the reader and edification of Christian faith.

As it is not our business to enlarge upon our Savior's history, either before or after His crucifixion, we shall only find it necessary to remind our readers of the discomfiture of the Jews by His subsequent resurrection. Although one apostle had betrayed Him; although another had denied Him, under the solemn sanction of an oath; and although the rest had forsaken Him, unless we may except "the disciple who was known unto the high-priest"; the history of His resurrection gave a new direction to all their hearts, and, after the mission of the Holy Spirit, imparted new confidence to their minds. The powers with which they were endued emboldened them to proclaim His name, to the confusion of the Jewish rulers, and the astonishment of Gentile proselytes.

## I. St. Stephen

St. Stephen suffered the next in order. His death was occasioned by the faithful manner in which he preached the Gospel to the betrayers and murderers of Christ. To such a degree of madness were they excited, that they cast him out of the city and stoned him to death. The time when he suffered is generally supposed to have been at the passover which succeeded to that of our Lord's crucifixion, and to the era of his ascension, in the following spring.

Upon this a great persecution was raised against all who professed their belief in Christ as the Messiah, or as a prophet. We are immediately told by St. Luke, that "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem;" and that "they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."

About two thousand Christians, with Nicanor, one of the seven deacons, suffered martyrdom during the "persecution that arose about Stephen."

## II. James the Great

The next martyr we meet with, according to St. Luke, in the History of the Apostles' Acts, was James the son of Zebedee, the elder brother of John, and a relative of our Lord; for his mother Salome was cousin-german to the Virgin Mary. It was not until ten years after the death of Stephen that the second martyrdom took place; for no sooner had Herod Agrippa been appointed governor of Judea, than, with a view to ingratiate himself with them, he raised a sharp persecution against the Christians, and determined to make an effectual blow, by striking at their leaders. The account

given us by an eminent primitive writer, Clemens Alexandrinus, ought not to be overlooked; that, as James was led to the place of martyrdom, his accuser was brought to repent of his conduct by the apostle's extraordinary courage and undauntedness, and fell down at his feet to request his pardon, professing himself a Christian, and resolving that James should not receive the crown of martyrdom alone. Hence they were both beheaded at the same time. Thus did the first apostolic martyr cheerfully and resolutely receive that cup, which he had told our Savior he was ready to drink. Timon and Parmenas suffered martyrdom about the same time; the one at Philippi, and the other in Macedonia. These events took place A. D. 44.

### III. Philip

Was born at Bethsaida, in Galilee and was first called by the name of "disciple." He labored diligently in Upper Asia, and suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified, A. D. 54.

### IV. Matthew

Whose occupation was that of a toll-gatherer, was born at Nazareth. He wrote his gospel in Hebrew, which was afterwards translated into Greek by James the Less. The scene of his labors was Parthia, and Ethiopia, in which latter country he suffered martyrdom, being slain with a halberd in the city of Nadabah, A. D. 60.

### V. James the Less

Is supposed by some to have been the brother of our Lord, by a former wife of Joseph. This is very doubtful, and accords too much with the Catholic superstition, that Mary never had any other children except our Savior. He was elected to the oversight of the churches of Jerusalem; and was the author of the Epistle ascribed to James in the sacred canon. At the age of ninety-four he was beat and stoned by the Jews; and finally had his brains dashed out with a fuller's club.

### VI. Matthias

Of whom less is known than of most of the other disciples, was elected to fill the vacant place of Judas. He was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.

### VII. Andrew

Was the brother of Peter. He preached the gospel to many Asiatic nations; but on his arrival at Edessa he was taken and crucified on a cross, the two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground. Hence the derivation of the term, St. Andrew's Cross.

### VIII. St. Mark

Was born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi. He is supposed to have been converted to Christianity by Peter, whom he served as an amanuensis, and under whose inspection he wrote his Gospel in the Greek language. Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria, at the great solemnity of Serapis their idol, ending his life under their merciless hands.

### IX. Peter

Among many other saints, the blessed apostle Peter was condemned to death, and crucified, as some do write, at Rome; albeit some others, and not without cause, do doubt thereof. Hegesippus saith that Nero sought matter against Peter to put him to death; which, when the people perceived, they entreated Peter with much ado that he would fly the city. Peter, through their importunity at length persuaded, prepared himself to avoid. But, coming to the gate, he saw the Lord Christ come to meet him, to whom he, worshipping, said, "Lord, whither dost Thou go?" To whom He answered and said, "I am come again to be crucified." By this, Peter, perceiving his suffering to be understood, returned into the city. Jerome saith that he was crucified, his head being down and his feet upward, himself so requiring, because he was (he said) unworthy to be crucified after the same form and manner as the Lord was.

*(continued on page 18)*



# Idols of Our Day

BY RICHARD J. FOSTER (Author of *Celebration of Discipline*)

**W**e need a **Reformation of the Heart** which focuses upon a vital, daily obedience to Jesus Christ as the result of transformed personality. The transformation of personality is essential, of course, otherwise we will lack the power, the moral habits, and the inclination to obey Christ in all things and at all times. There are many facets to such a transforming work, but from a human standpoint it always involves both affirming action (things we do) and abstaining action (things that we do not do). Over the years a large percentage of my writing and public discourse has worked on the affirmative side of this equation, and it is well that it should. But in this article I want to work on some of the abstaining action we must undertake if we are to prepare ourselves for a Reformation of the Heart.

I am concerned that we think together about **the idols of our day**. Now, I know that this is not a feel-good topic, and yet if we do not clearly identify the reigning idols of contemporary culture we will forever be at their mercy and unable to obey the very first of the Ten Commandments, namely, "you shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3).

The idols of modern society are legion, and in this brief article I must not even try to touch on them all. But I do want to think with you about three of the most pervasive in the hope that this will enable us to look at the world with a view to naming the many modern idols that vie for our allegiance. And once the reigning idolatries of our day are named (and thereby identified) we can, in the power of the Spirit, defeat them in the Name that is above every name, Jesus, the Christ.

**The Idol of Personal Autonomy.** For vast numbers today the ultimate goal in life is personal autonomy: the power to do my own thing, define my own future, determine my own fate. "I've gotta be me," "I did it my way," "watch out for number one," "if it's gonna be, it's up to me" all characterize this idolatry. The driving impulse of this worship of the self is freedom without responsibility. It spreads throughout the land by means of the numerous miniature, self-idols that people carry with them every day: self-indulgence, self-promotion, self-will, self-sufficiency, self-preservation, self-gratification, self-service, self-aggrandizement, self-righteousness, and more.

The idolatry of personal autonomy pervades our entire culture: from the New Age mumbo jumbo that "I am God" to the self-help books that assure me I can be and do anything and everything. (Which brings to mind a corrective jingle: "They showed him the thing that couldn't be done, And with a smile he went right to it. He tackled that thing that couldn't be done. And found out he couldn't do it.")

How very different the biblical and Christian vision of personality and selfhood. Here we are called to deny ourselves and take up our cross, to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit" (Mark 8:34; Matt. 6:33; Phil. 2:3). Here we are called into a community life of mutual-love, mutual-care, and mutual-responsibility.

Our good friend and counselor, the Apostle Paul, puts it well, "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). Dietrich

Bonhoeffer gives us a contemporary commentary on this reality when he speaks of Christ as the "man for others," the one in whom all deliberations, all decisions, all actions are based on relationship to others. And we are called to be "people for others," to live in "existence for others through participation in the being of Jesus. The church is the church only when it exists for others."

We defeat the idol of personal autonomy by **compassion and service**. Compassion turns us toward the good of others. Service allows us to enter the many little deaths of going beyond ourselves. Together they draw us into the gospel paradox of finding our life by losing it.

**The Idol of Pleasure.** Closely tied to the idol of personal autonomy is the idol of pleasure. Pleasure, of course, has to do with good feelings and there is nothing wrong with feeling good, but that has to be brought to an easy place in our life where it does not control us. Pleasure becomes an idolatry when it becomes an absolute right, demanded at all times and under all circumstances. "I want what I want when I want it" becomes its trumpet call.

In Western culture (strangely enough) pleasure is intimately connected with material possessions. The irrational belief of modern society is that masses of things will produce pleasure, and so the pleasure god and the consumer god are found to be two heads of the same idol. Our attachment to things fuels in us an endless appetite for more: more money, more power, more toys. More. More. More. We can never get enough. Never.

This lust for things has reached the level of psychosis in contemporary culture. It is

psychotic because it has completely lost touch with reality. We crave things we neither need nor enjoy. "We buy things we do not want to impress people we do not like," writes Art Gish. Where planned obsolescence leaves off, psychological obsolescence takes over. We are made to feel ashamed to wear clothes or drive cars until they are worn out. Our lust for affluence has convinced us that to be out of step with fashion is to be out of step with reality. It is time we awaken to the fact that conformity to a sick society is to be sick.

In large measure the pleasure impulse is linked to the consumer impulse because of our deep-seated feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. Surely a little more of this or a little more of that will give us the security we desire or the status we crave. But, of course, things can never deliver, because insecurity and inadequacy are matters of the heart and the soul, and we simply cannot cure the heart or the soul by an ever increasing accumulation of things.

We defeat the idol of pleasure by **sacrifice and simplicity**. Sacrifice empowers us to surrender our rights for the greater good of the kingdom of God. Simplicity ushers us into a way of living that is free from the passion to possess. Together they are able to dethrone pleasure and put it, along with material possessions, into proper perspective as simple goods to be enjoyed, never demanded.

**The Idol of Efficiency.** Of the three idols I am discussing with you I view efficiency as the most entrenched and pervasive of the modern era. And the most destructive. The engine driving this particular idolatry is modern technology. And the technological advances of recent years are impressive indeed: cell phones, laptop computers, the worldwide web, palm pilots, and much, much more. And all these technological advances are aimed at our hankering after efficiency.

Please don't misunderstand. It is good to do our tasks in a timely fashion, and advances in technology have been extremely helpful in accomplishing many

tasks. But we have created our technological society at an enormous human cost. Jacques Ellul, perhaps the most astute contemporary observer of technique, efficiency, and technology, writes, "the technological society requires order and efficiency. Even people must be reduced to being only machines . . . in order to be treated technically by the hundreds of techniques which converge on them."

This is the great danger of technology — and the reason it must be viewed as a contemporary idol. By its very nature it dehumanizes people, turning them into objects to be managed and controlled. In the end it signals the triumph of means over the end. All in the name of efficiency.

Also dangerous are the excessive, God-like claims made for technology. We're told that, given time, technology will surely solve every problem, restore every loss, deliver every good. The claims for the Internet, for example, exceed all credibility — it is, in fact, the new utopian movement of contemporary culture.

Now, I admit, it is nice to travel along "the information super highway," as we call it. But I would like to put in a word for "the information country lane." The super highway does give us information by the ton, but that does not particularly translate into insight, discernment, or wisdom. In fact, the sheer volume of information often mitigates against insight, discernment, and wisdom. Sometimes, instead of zipping along an electronic super highway we need to meander through some of wisdom's backroads, pausing now and then at a phrase from a John Milton ("They also serve who only stand and wait") or an Evelyn Underhill ("Being, not wanting, having and doing, is the essence of a spiritual life").

Then, too, instant accessibility is not always what we need. A day of quiet reflection is often far more productive than a constant bombardment of on-line services, e-mails, and faxes. If we want to be genuinely helpful to people, we need the perspective that can only come from solitude and silence.

Another caution I have about all this amazing technology — and it is truly amazing — is that its very amazingness can easily distract us from thinking. We can get so intrigued with the process of information communication that we miss the information, not to mention insights from the information. As a result many people never even ask the question of what information is worth communicating. Again, all in the name of efficiency.

The kingdom of God, on the other hand, operates from a pattern exemplified by Jesus on the cross. From a human perspective the vision of life that Jesus gives us is one of inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and ultimately, irrelevance. After all, would an efficient kingdom welcome in strangers and seek out prodigals? How effective is it to preach good news to the poor or to search for one lost sheep? And would a relevant pastor really spend time listening to individual human pain and sorrow when mass media technologies that could reach multitudes await?

Friends, it is time to say, "No more!" No more time-saving technologies, no more revolutionary ways to prioritize our day, no more habits for highly effective people. Rather let us give sustained attention to life-giving relationships: relationship with God, relationship with other people, relationship with all of creation.

We defeat the idol of efficiency by **holy leisure and spiritual friendship**. Holy leisure tempers our everlasting itch to get ahead. Spiritual friendship helps us to value people for who they are rather than for what they accomplish. Together they dethrone efficiency and free us from "an intolerable scramble of panting feverishness."

Autonomy, pleasure, efficiency — these are the three unquestioned assumptions of our day. God give us the wisdom to see through their idolatrous tendencies and the strength to place them in their proper role as servants rather than masters. □

## Of Martyrs and Martyrdom (continued from page 15)

### X. Paul

Paul, the apostle, who before was called Saul, after his great travail and unspeakable labors in promoting the Gospel of Christ, suffered also in this first persecution under Nero. Abdias, declareth that under his execution Nero sent two of his esquires, Ferega and Parthemius, to bring him word of his death. They, coming to Paul instructing the people, desired him to pray for them, that they might believe; who told them that shortly after they should believe and be baptised at His sepulcher. This done, the soldiers came and led him out of the city to the place of execution, where he, after his prayers made, gave his neck to the sword.

### XI. Jude

The brother of James, was commonly called Thaddeus. He was crucified at Edessa, A.D. 72.

### XII. Bartholomew

Preached in several countries, and having translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of India, he propagated it in that country. He was at length cruelly beaten and then crucified by the impatient idolaters.

### XIII. Thomas

Called Didymus, preached the Gospel in Parthia and India, where exciting the rage of the pagan priests, he was martyred by being thrust through with a spear.

### XIV. Luke

The evangelist, was the author of the Gospel which goes under his name. He travelled with Paul through various countries, and is supposed to have been hanged on an olive tree, by the idolatrous priests of Greece.

### XV. Simon

Surnamed Zelotes, preached the Gospel in Mauritania, Africa, and even in Britain, in which latter country he was crucified, A.D. 74.

### XVI. John

The "beloved disciple," was brother to James the Great. The churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira, were founded by him. From Ephesus he was ordered to be sent to Rome, where it is affirmed he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. He escaped by miracle, without injury. Domitian afterwards banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Nerva, the successor of Domitian, recalled him. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death.

### XVII. Barnabas

Was of Cyprus, but of Jewish descent, his death is supposed to have taken place about A.D. 73.

And yet, notwithstanding all these continual persecutions and horrible punishments, the Church daily increased, deeply rooted in the doctrine of the apostles and of men apostolical, and watered plentifully with the blood of saints.

### Prayer Request

The following prayer request is sent anonymously on behalf of the persecuted Christians of Indonesia.

Evidence of this growing wave of Indonesian persecution is described in the following item from the e-mail newsletter "Religious News Summary" of June 20, 2000.

"Several Christian villages in Indonesia were destroyed and their inhabitants slaughtered by Muslim militia June 19, Christians in the country said. Villages around Galela and the interior of Tobelo on Halmahera Island were attacked by as many as 3,000 Jihad soldiers and their inhabitants either died or fled to the jungle, inhabitants reported, according to John Barr of the Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly. The Indonesian army 'offered no protection,' Barr said. . . . In Duma village, 'a fine old church, recently renovated, has been burnt down. It is not known

how many people have died. Thousands have fled,' he said."

In one personal e-mail the individual indicated that "radical Jihad forces are bent not only to wipe Christians from Ambon, but also to spread the Christian persecution to other Indonesian provinces, including Java — the most populated island in Indonesia (80% of 200 millions people live in Java)."

The anonymous request follows:

"Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We, the Indonesian Christians, would like you to know that we are living dangerously these days. Particularly, our brothers and sisters who live in the Maluccu islands.

As you know there has been religious conflict, Moslems versus Christians, for the last two years. The situation is worsening since the arrival of the Moslems' Jihad force from Java, who have vowed to defend their religion with their lives.

The capital city of Ambon, which was predominantly Christian, has been surrounded by the Moslem force. A few church buildings that are not destroyed can not be used for services, due to the tension. It is a matter of time before destruction comes to those buildings. Thousands from both sides have fled to the neighbouring islands or provinces. The whole city is like a killing field. Doing daily chores may get them killed by snipers.

Our Christian brothers and sisters there need help very urgently. The purpose of these radical Jihad forces is to wipe out Christians from Ambon, which is predominantly Christian. The churches have been uprooted because villages are destroyed. Monday, during the last fighting or, more accurately, attack on Christians, in Duma town, there were 170 people killed and thousands fled to neighboring islands. The fighting has spread to literally the whole province of Maluccus.

Please, pray for us, Christians in Indonesia. Thank you. □

# Toward a Theology of Nonviolence

BY MARK M. MATTISON, GRAND RAPIDS, MI

**"P**ut your sword back in its place," Jesus said to His disciple, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52, NIV). With these words Jesus yet again rejected the path of violence in the course of His ministry.

Jesus chose instead the way of the cross. But His rejection of the sword was not a pragmatic or temporary measure, simply because He knew He had to die; it was part of a consistent principle, the principle of love that characterized His whole life. That same apostle who was rebuked later wrote that Jesus' death was not only a sacrifice (1 Pet. 2:24), but "an example" as well, for "he did not retaliate" (1 Pet. 2:21-23, NIV).

## Nonviolent Resistance

Jesus taught this principle repeatedly. "Blessed are the peacemakers," He said (Matt. 5:9, NIV), and "love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44, NIV). According to the NIV's translation, He also said, "Do not resist an evil person" (Matt. 5:39, NIV).

This last translation, however, is misleading. This understanding of Jesus' words has inspired an entirely passive response to evil, a form of nonresistance. This brand of pacifism is rightly criticized as contributing to the problem of evil. But Jesus did not teach nonresistance; He taught nonviolent resistance instead.

Jesus Himself resisted evil in all its forms, often going out of His way to do so. He created a scene in the temple, and talked back when struck (John 18:23). He was vocal in His criticism of both the religious authorities and the government (cf. Mark 8:15; Luke 13:31-32). Jesus never ignored evil.

What, then, did He mean in Matthew 5:39? The key lies in the Greek word translated "resist," *antistenai*, a technical term from the Greek Old Testament that denotes warfare. The Scholars Version rightly translates Jesus' words: "Don't react violently against the one who is evil." What Jesus was rejecting was not resistance, but the violent resistance of the Zealots. Rejecting both passive acquiescence and violent retaliation, Jesus outlines a third path, a path of nonviolent resistance.

This is well illustrated, as Walter Wink points out, in three illustrations that Jesus gives (5:39-41). Turning the other cheek is an act of resistance; it disempowers the oppressor, who learns that he may strike the resistor, but cannot break him or her. Removing one's cloak or undergarment as well as one's tunic, in those days, implied stripping naked — a sure way to embarrass a creditor in court and expose economic injustice. And carrying a Roman soldier's load an extra mile was to risk getting the soldier in trouble with his superior.

Jesus denounced Gentile oppression as much as any revolutionary firebrand. But His revolutionary solution was the path of nonviolent action, not violence.

## The Spiral of Violence

Most of Jesus' contemporaries rejected the path of nonviolence. As He approached Jerusalem for the last time, He wept and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace" (Luke 19:42, NIV). He went on to prophesy about what would happen when the oppressed Israelites rose up against the Romans in an attempt to win their peace through violent means (vv. 43, 44). It would lead only to

destruction. And violence leads only to destruction today.

According to Martin Luther King, Jr., "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy." These words reflect the Scriptural truth that we are not to be transformed by evil, but to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21). Violence begets violence; peace begets peace. Violence cannot bring peace. It might be able to oppress the enemy, but it lacks the power to transform the enemy. It transforms only the assailant, turning the attacker into the very thing he or she seeks to oppose.

Tragically, however, many Christians shun nonviolence as idealistic and impractical. They endorse violence instead, arguing that capital punishment, war, and armed coercion are the only way to maintain civility. Romans 13:4 is marshaled to buttress this view, despite the fact that it describes not the role of the Christian magistrate, but a military dictatorship ruled by one of its most ruthless emperors, Nero. Paul sandwiches this description of Rome — God's unwitting servant — between passages exhorting Christians to a different path, the path of nonviolent love (Rom. 12:9-21; 13:8-10). Presumably, if Christians were ever to become involved in the machinations of the State, they were to operate by different principles.

Unfortunately, however, when Christianity did become the dominant religion in the empire, the State's ways affected the Church, not vice versa. Violence of every variety has been perpetrated in the name of the Christian God ever since. Those who will heed the call of the nonviolent cross, however, will shun violence altogether.

*(continued on page 20)*

## Toward a Theology of Nonviolence *(continued from page 19)*

### Organized Nonviolence

But how can nonviolence overcome evil? Surely it could not have defused the evil of Nazi Germany, could it? Or could it? In actual fact, nonviolent tactics worked overwhelmingly when they were employed. Mass protests, demonstrations, and non-compliance with the Nazis saved all the Jews in Bulgaria and large numbers in Finland, Denmark and Norway as well. There are many stories of nonviolent victory during the war. The tragedy is that nonviolent strategies were not used enough.

Today organized nonviolence is happening on unprecedented scales. From the Philippines to South Africa, sustained nonviolent, democratic action has toppled dictatorships and oppressive societies.

Since early 1998, the refugee community of Polho in Chiapas, Mexico has protected itself from 19 surrounding military bases with a human chain. Peace Brigades International, Witness for Peace, Christian Peace Teams, Michigan Peace Team,

and many other peace organizations continue to train and deploy peacemakers in organized nonviolent resistance, both domestically and in war zones abroad.

In May of 1998, more than a hundred of us in the Michigan Peace Team interposed ourselves between riot police, white supremacists, and violent protestors at a Ku Klux Klan rally in Ann Arbor, Michigan, reducing the level of violence significantly. Without our presence and peace work, the violence would have escalated into a full-scale riot.

Such work is very dangerous. It requires vigorous discipline and training. It is not a task for cowards. People are hurt and killed in nonviolent resistance, just as they are hurt and killed in war. But nonviolence is superior, in that it seeks to transform the opponent, not subjugate the opponent. It seeks to reconcile, not destroy.

Critics will still dismiss nonviolence as impractical. Indeed, sometimes it doesn't work. But violence doesn't always work either. In fact, it works only fifty percent of

the time. Every war has a winner and a loser. But nonviolence transforms the very shape of the conflict, seeking only reconciled winners.

### What If?

Nonviolence is often challenged by hypothetical questions: "What if someone attacks you or a loved one?" The questioner often assumes that only violence can resolve the situation. But creative nonviolence has often worked in these situations.

When a stranger broke into the house of nonviolent theorist Angie O'Gorman late one night, she surprised him by not assuming the expected role of the victim. She asked him if he knew what time it was. Thrown off balance by this bizarre response, the intruder answered, and they engaged in conversation. The violence was defused before it even emerged.

Nonviolent resistance transforms as well as protects. And transformation is what the gospel is all about. □

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