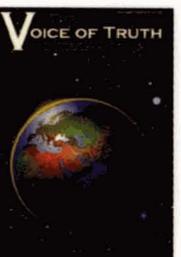
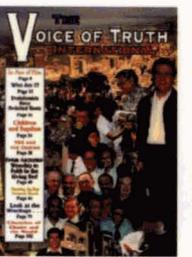
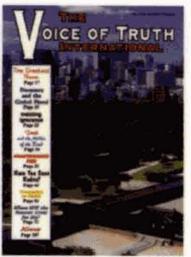
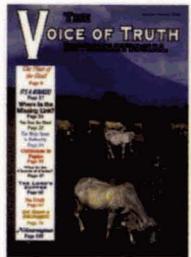
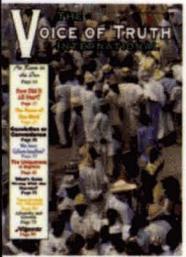
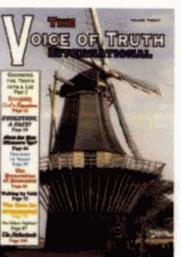
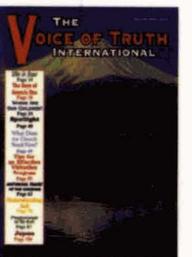
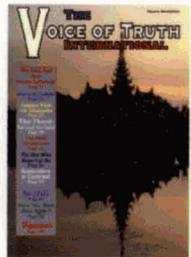
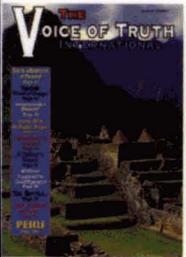
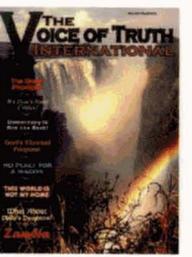
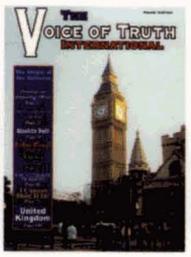
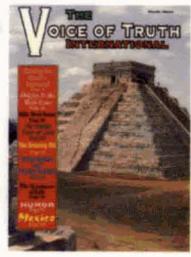
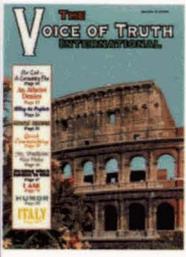
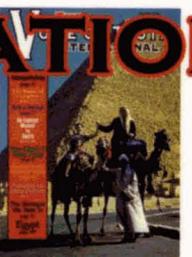
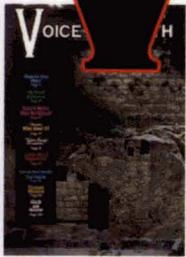
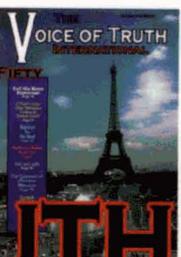
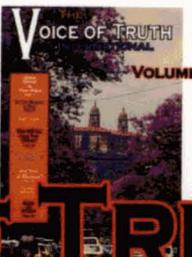
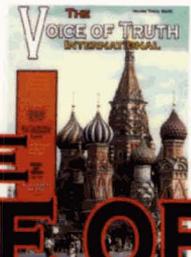
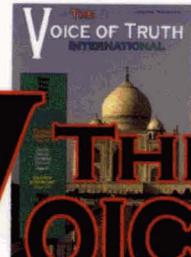
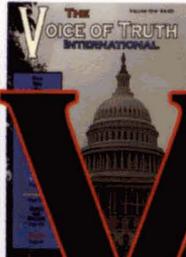


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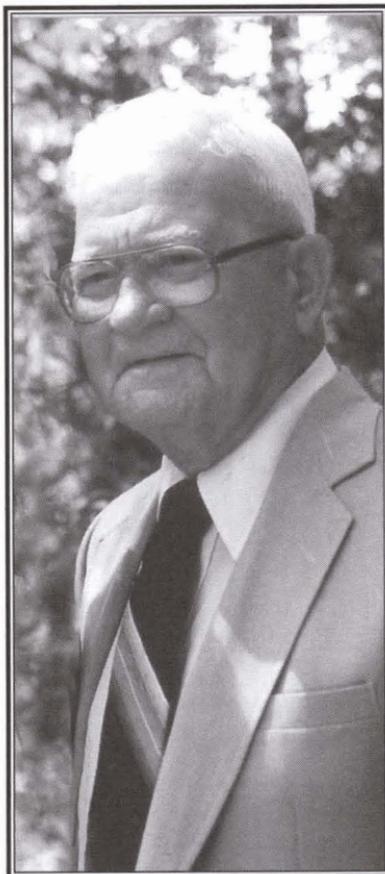


HE FOLDED HIS HANDS AND WENT TO SLEEP

He folded his hands and went to sleep
On the bosom of the Lord,
No effort in sorrow or remorse to weep
He went without a word.
No struggle marked his peaceful face;
In spirit calm and quiet,
He died as he lived, and in tranquil grace
He entered life's soft twilight.

His life was spent in service true
To God and to mankind.
He calmly walked death's
Stygian hue
To those golden steps that wind
To God's great home in that
bright land
Where angels' voices fair
Raise anthems with that heaven-
ly band
That stand to greet him there.
He folded his hands in sweet
repose
And his death was consumed in
life,
No more to struggle with this
earth's woes
Or labor with its strife,
But from this scene of tears and
pain
Beset with trials sore,
He went to be with God again
In Heaven forevermore.

— Owen Cosgrove



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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).



VOLUME 50 OF THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

Having seen the value of Christian literature in the U.S.A., Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar and other countries throughout the world, we have printed many thousands of tracts, magazines, and books in these places. They have been the means of multiplying the

efforts of the church to get the gospel out to the masses. Literature works around the clock wherever it goes. The Lord thought so much of it that He gave us His word in printed form.

We have been told by many that people will not read literature. They say that printing and distributing it is a waste of time and money. That is the Devil's argument, but many of our own brethren have accepted it. Of course, such a conclusion spares them from making the effort and spending the money to print literature and to get it out to the peoples of the world. In the mean time, the masses are pleading for tracts, magazines, and books, and even used materials. While we are not bothering to supply such needs, millions are dying without God. Of course *we* have the truth and its benefits, but how will God deal with us when we refuse to hear the cries of the lost?

Today the people of the world are calling out for help. If we do not respond, their calls will eventually cease. Why? Because they will conclude that we are not concerned, or they will be won over to some other religion, or they will lose interest in religion altogether, as is already true in much of the developed world. The Lord commanded us to take the gospel to every creature under heaven. How can we be saved if we fail to obey Him?

Seeing this great need, we decided to print a magazine that would be international, containing articles of the basic teachings of the Bible, directed primarily to English-speaking people and to those with English as their second language. We planned to cover a variety of topics, mostly short articles, that could be easily read, and hopefully understood. With the accumulation of issues of the magazine in a library, the owner would have reference materials about God, Christ and the Bible, the gospel, the one church of our Lord, and the Christian life, etc.

We invited brother Byron Nichols to serve as the managing editor, handling subscriptions, and sending out boxes to congregations that would use them in their local work. From Winona we also mail boxes here in the States and — at the present time — to more than 400 foreign addresses.

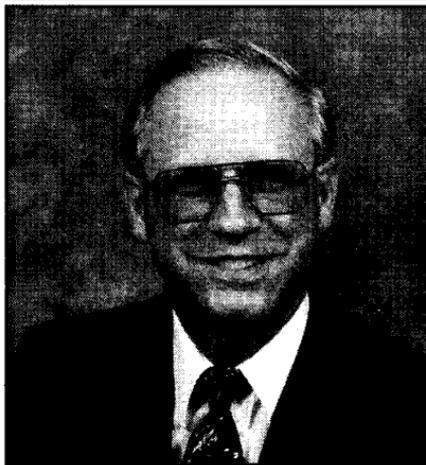
We began **The Voice of Truth International** 13 years ago, and this brings us to our 50th issue. It has been well received, initially in English, and now also in Spanish, Telugu and Tamil (Indian languages) with a total printing of 65,000 copies. 20,000 of the English edition go to foreign mission fields around the world.

One of the unique things about this magazine is that among our staff writers and contributors is a number of foreign brethren. These include local men from India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Nigeria, Austria, Mexico, Australia, and several missionaries in other countries. We hope to include additional foreign writers as time goes by because this makes us truly international. We believe our foreign brethren need to be given the opportunity to develop their writing abilities. We will also be greatly benefited by their thoughts and their way of explaining the truths of God.

We ship **The Voice of Truth International** to foreign destinations free of charge and postage paid. In order to increase that part of the circulation, we need the help of more American brethren. \$35.00 (covering printing and postage) a month for a year will enable us to send 12 boxes with 35 copies in each box. 12 boxes makes a total of 420 copies in a year. It is said that at least 10 will read each piece of literature, which means that 4,200 souls will read these magazines. Just think of the evangelistic impact among people who are looking for the truth! Please help to the extent that you can.

I might mention too that we are presently sending free boxes to a good number of small congregations in mission areas here in the States. We will be adding to this number as requests continue to come in.

Of course, we hope to print another 50 issues of **The Voice of Truth International** and expand to more than 100,000 copies. We invite you to work with us to enable us to reach these goals. With your help and God's help, great and eternal good can be done. To God be all the praise. †



A MOST UNFORGETTABLE CHARACTER

Byron Nichols
Managing Editor

Every miracle is great, but to give sight to one born blind just seems to be extra special. John chapter 9 tells of Jesus having done that very thing.

It is important that we take note in verse 1 that the man was blind from birth. Jesus took pity on the man and anointed his eyes with clay and told him to go wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam. At the end of verse 7 John very matter of factly states that the man did as he was instructed, *“and he came back seeing”*. How remarkable that such a miracle could be described with no fanfare whatsoever!

Verse 10 records the beginning of what may well have been the most questions that had ever been asked of this man who up to now was just “that blind beggar”, but who now has become the center of attention. The people asked how he had been made able to see, and he told them exactly what had taken place.

It appears that the people soon reached a point where they felt that the situation was too much for them, so they took the man to the Pharisees (verse 13). The Pharisees proceeded to ask him the same question, *“How did you receive your sight?”* The man’s answer was simple and to the point — *“He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see”* (verse 15).

Some of the Pharisees said that Jesus could not possibly be from God, having violated the Sabbath by doing this act on the Sabbath. However, other Pharisees were honest enough to question how such a miracle could be performed by a sinner. Thus, there was a significant division among them (verses 14 and 16).

The next move by the Jews was to quiz the parents of the man, doubting that he had actually been born blind (verse 18ff). This poor man had been unable to see all of his life, but we now find that he had another major prob-

lem — his parents loved their standing in the synagogue much more than they loved him (verse 22). Refusing to get involved, they chose instead to just throw their own son to the Pharisee wolves — *“He is of age; ask him”* (verses 21 and 23). The Jews then confronted the man, trying to intimidate him, telling him to glorify God by denying that this so-called sinful man, Jesus, performed this miracle (verse 24), but he was relentless.

Verse 25 is indeed a jewel! This fellow may not have had much education, but he displayed an ability to determine what is really important — *“One thing I know; that though I was blind, now I see.”*

This marks the beginning of a progression of boldness and courage, even aggressiveness, as the man grows more and more weary of their refusal to face the facts and admit that Jesus actually gave him his sight. He is astounded by their admission that they don’t even know where Jesus is from, yet He performed this great miracle (verses 29 and 30)!

This incredible man even proceeds to preach a short sermon to the Jewish leaders, thought by many to be the Sanhedrin itself (verses 30-33). His lack of fear is amazing, and he shows himself to be a man of some understanding of God. The man’s disregard for the leaders and his audacity in speaking derisively to them certainly did not go unnoticed by those proud leaders. Their immediate reaction to his little sermon was to cast him out (verse 34).

Up to this point this man had lived his entire life in complete physical darkness, but he didn’t have much trouble at all in coming to see Jesus for who He really was, that is, *“the light of the world”* (verse 5).

This was an honest man. He was willing to change his thinking when confronted with additional information. Notice the progression of his faith. In verse 11 he simply refers to Jesus as *“A man called Jesus”*. In verse 17 he called Jesus *“a prophet”*. After Jesus explained that He was the Son of God, verse 38 says that the man told Jesus that he believed that Jesus really was the Son of God, and then he worshipped Him. This was indeed a man of character.

Some Lessons for Us

(1) This man born blind came to see things that others were blinded to. The more he was exposed to Jesus, the more impressed he was. The more he saw and heard from Jesus, the more convinced he was of the greatness, the uniqueness, and the divinity of Jesus. (2) This man gave us a most impressive example of courage to stand for right and against wrong. (3) He further displayed an unusual willingness to embrace truth.

I, for one, am deeply grateful for this most unforgettable Bible character!

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Our God of Comfort

Randall Caselman

Jesus came to show us God. No one has ever seen God. It is God, the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made Him known. Our view of God is important to our daily comfort. A distorted view brings doubt and misunderstanding. For instance, consider these improper views of God...

- Some view God as only their conscience. Their concept of God is that He is that small, inner voice that convicts us of wrong and makes us feel guilty.
- Others see God as a cosmic Santa Claus, one who exists only for the purpose of satisfying our wants and wishes, regardless of how petty they might be.
- Still others see God as a celestial policeman. They view Him as one who is simply waiting for us to do something wrong so He can correct us and punish us.

So, the question becomes ... How should we view God?

God is our friend. There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. God is a friend Who never fails us. As a friend, He knows our every thought, every need. He knows the problems with which we struggle. Regardless of how dark the moment, how lonely the road, how rough the path ... God is near. "My God and I go in the fields together, we walk and talk as good friends should and do; we clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter, my God and I walk through the meadow's hue."

God is our shepherd. David saw God as his guide, counselor, and comforter. He is our creator, provider, and sustainer. He gives us inward renewal. He leads us in paths that are right, reasonable, and proper for us to honor His name. He accompanies us in the valley of death. He uses His resources to care, comfort, and discipline us. He blesses us in this life and

GOD

then brings us home to be with Him eternally. God, like a shepherd, never withholds anything that is good for us. We are told that all good and perfect gifts come down from our Father.

“When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.”

God is our Father. Think of the comfort that is ours from knowing that the creator, sustainer, protector, provider of the whole universe is our Father — and that He treats us like a good father should. He knows our needs. He hears our prayers. Even when we don’t know what to ask for, He supplies. *“I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”* (Matthew 6:25-27).

God is our Savior. All too many of us have exiled God to the remote past. We see Him as a great figure in history, but we fail to see Him as a present reality. We see Him in the creation, in the flood, at the Red Sea crossing, on Mount Sinai, in the manger, calming the seas, at the cross, on the Damascus road ... but we fail to see Him as our personal Savior. Jesus was not just a good man or a superman — He was God in the flesh, come to save us. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us ... We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth ... In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us”* (John 1:1-3; Eph 1:7) John 3:16 is alive today: *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 1:1,14; Ephesians 1:7,8).

What is our view of God? Do we find comfort in Him? Are we enjoying the blessings found in the Father’s house? I pray that we are, and that this article has reminded us of His grace and greatness. †

Randall Caselman is the preacher for the church of Christ in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.



The Spirit and His Power

David Pharr

Who is the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost)? What are some things you need to know about the Spirit? What was His miraculous work in the time of the apostles?

The terms “Holy Spirit” and “Holy Ghost” are interchangeable. Some of the other terms that are used to refer to the Spirit are “Spirit of truth”, “Comforter”, “Spirit of God”, etc. The Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, just as God the Father and Christ the Son are Divine Persons.

The study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit is a deep subject, and it is not our purpose to go into detail in this article. It is important, however, for you to understand certain basic truths about the Spirit.

In New Testament times there

was a **baptismal** measure of the Spirit. Jesus promised the apostles that they would be “*baptized with the Holy Ghost*” and that “*ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you*” (Acts 1:5-8). On the day of Pentecost those chosen men were miraculously filled with the Spirit and spoke the Word of God in many languages (Acts 2). Except to the apostles, the only other time the miraculous power of the Spirit was given directly was to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46; 11:15-17). This was to prove that Gentiles were to receive the Gospel, the same as the Jews.

Also in New Testament times miraculous gifts of the Spirit were sometimes given by the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 8:14-18;

19:6). The miraculous gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 were given in this manner. Only the apostles were enabled to bestow these gifts. For example, Philip was given miraculous powers, but he could not pass them on to others (Acts 6:5,6; 8:5-7,14-18). Instead, as these verses show, it was necessary for apostles to come to Samaria, that the miraculous gifts might be given by the laying on of their hands.

There is no record of miraculous gifts of the Spirit ever being given in any other way (with the exception of the apostles and Cornelius, as discussed above).

Since, therefore, these gifts were available only through the laying on of an apostle's hands, and since there are

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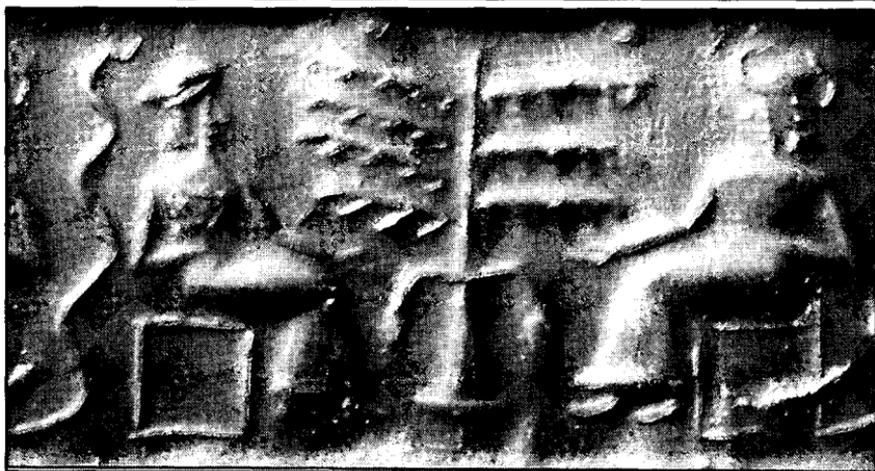
obviously follow that miraculous gifts are not being given today.

When we remember the purpose of the gifts, it is not difficult to understand that the miraculous work of the Spirit ceased with the end of the apostolic age. Remember, miracles were used to confirm the Word, which was still being revealed (Hebrews 2:3,4; 1 Peter 1:12; Mark 16:17-29). When this purpose of confirming the Word was finished, the gifts would no longer be needed. We now have the complete, perfect, written, and confirmed Word of God.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8 Paul listed three of these gifts and plainly declared that they would be of limited duration. This is in a context which discusses all the miraculous spiritual gifts and names these three as typical of the whole. The gifts were present at the point in time when Paul was writing, but the day was coming when they would "cease", "vanish", and "fail". The verses that follow show that the age of miraculous gifts was the childhood period of the church; but with the coming of the manhood stage, these temporary gifts would end. Then "faith, hope, and charity" would continue to abide until the return of Christ. †

David Pharr is editor of *Carolina Messenger* and preaches for the Charlotte Avenue Church of Christ in Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA.





Evidences of Adam and Eve

Wayne Jackson

In the book of Genesis, God placed man in the beautiful paradise of Eden (Genesis 2:8). Eden was a place of perfection where, prior to man's sin, neither death nor its attendant evils (disease, etc.) had entered. In the archaeological literature from ancient Sumer (near the head of the Persian Gulf) there is the account of the land of Dilmun. It is a paradise that is good, clean, and bright; it knows no sickness or death. It was alleged to be located at the place where "the sun rises" (Cf: Genesis 2:8 — "eastward").¹

According to the Genesis narrative, Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, had access to the "tree of

life" (Genesis 2:9; 3:22). G.H. Livingston says: "From ancient Mesopotamia have come cylinder seals and other art objects which depict a tree and figures of perhaps divine beings....The sacred tree of life was closely associated to the reigning king of almost every ancient nation."²

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (Vol. 2, p. 492) shows the "Tree of Life" depicted as a young fig palm on a bone handle from the ancient city of Hazor. Harold Stigers puts this material in proper focus: "The tree of life motif may be seen represented on the monuments of the Middle

East and represents a witness to the truth of the biblical record but at the same time a corruption of its place in the original design of God.”³

In the last century, a seal was found at Nineveh depicting a man and a woman seated on either side of a fruit tree, and to the left of the woman “stands” a serpent. Of this seal, which is now in the British Museum, Dr. I.M. Price said: “Not one word is recorded on the seal. The group alone tells the story. Most scholars suppose that this is a figurative representation of some tradition of the fall of man which was current among the peoples of old Babylonia.”⁴ Price was Professor of Semitic Languages and Literature at the University of Chicago.

Another seal, called the “Adam and Eve Seal”, was discovered at Tepe Gawra (in Iraq) in 1932 by Dr. E.A. Speiser of the University Museum of Pennsylvania. It features a naked man and woman, walking as if downcast, and followed by a serpent. Speiser said that it was “strongly suggestive of the Adam and Eve story”. Pictures

of both of these seals are to be found in Halley’s Bible Handbook (p 66; see footnote 11).

Again, Stigers has well written: “Some writers have doubted that there is any real significance to these seals as evidence for the fall. However, the specific personages and elements cannot easily be dismissed in such fashion. For what reason should an artist select such a motif by which testimony is made as to the cause of man’s degradation? Rather, one should select a theme that would enhance man’s image.”⁵

Though we are certainly not dependent upon the findings of the archaeologists for our belief in the divine origin of man, it is encouraging to know that the spade has become a willing witness for the credibility of the Scriptures in this connection. Time and further archaeological research will add to that confirmation. †

Excerpt from Biblical Studies in the Light of Archaeology by Wayne Jackson, published by Apologetics Press, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/>, Jackson web site: <http://www.christiancourier.com/>

¹ Kramer, Samuel N.: *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 1963, pp. 147-149; 277-286.

² Livingston, G. H.: *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Merrill C. Tenney, Editor, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975, Vol. 5, p 811.

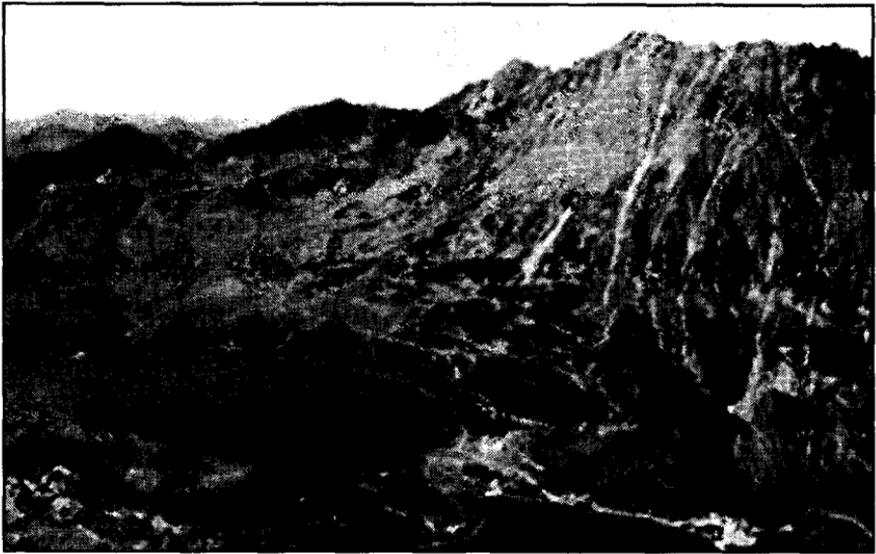
³ Stigers, Harold G.: *A Commentary on Genesis*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976, pp. 67,68.

⁴ Price, Ira M.: *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1907, p. 89

⁵ Stigers, Harold G. (See footnote 3) p. 75.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PRE-FLOOD PERIOD

Rex Banks



The first seven chapters of the book of Genesis contain an account of the creation event and the first seventeen hundred years of human history. In these foundational chapters of the Bible we read of the creation of Adam and Eve (parents of the entire human race) of their original habitat, (the Garden of Eden) of the sin that drove them

from their earthly paradise, and of the world-wide, year-long Flood which brought an end to an increasingly depraved civilization. The preservation of Noah and his family aboard a specially prepared vessel (the ark) closes out this part of the record.

Has archaeology provided insight into the world of Adam and

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Eve, their sons Cain, Abel, Seth and others who inhabited the early earth in the pre-Flood period? Typical of many comments relating to the pre-flood habitat of our first parents is the following by John H. Sailhamer in **The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol 1:**

"The location of the Garden of Eden has long been a topic of debate. Two of the rivers mentioned in association with the garden can be identified with certainty, the Euphrates ... and the Tigris.... It is difficult to identify the other two, the "Pishon"... and the "Gihon".

... universal destruction ... violent tidal actions ... rising mountains and sinking basins" which would have accompanied a cataclysm such as a universal flood. A worldwide flood would have deposited a vast layer of sediment over the face of the earth, altering topography all over the globe. Thus land masses, mountains, streams, and seas in the post-flood era tell us little about the early earth. Reference to "*fountains of the deep*" (Genesis 7:11) suggests that vast subterranean reservoirs supplied much of the flood water, and perhaps after the release of this

A worldwide flood would have deposited a vast layer of sediment over the face of the earth, altering topography all over the globe.

Now, although well-meaning, such comments reveal a failure to appreciate the immense impact which the Flood of Noah had upon the surface of the earth. According to the Biblical account "*all the fountains of the great deep burst open ... the floodgates of the sky were opened (and) all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered*" (Genesis 7:11,19). In his book, **Scientific Creationism**, prominent creationist Henry Morris speaks of the "torrents of water from the skies ... erupting reservoirs from the depth

water these reservoirs collapsed to form the present sea basins. According to Psalm 104:7 the waters "*fled*" and "*hurried away*" which may be a description of the flood waters retreating from the land into these newly created basins.

In the same Psalm we read that: "*The mountains rose*" (v 8) and John Whitcomb (Jn) comments on this verse: "Orogeny, or mountain-building is one of the unsolved mysteries of modern uniformitarian geology; but the Bible supplies the missing dynamic in terms of God's

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omnipotent intervention at the closing phase of the Flood year. Before the huge sedimentary deposits laid down during the Flood had time to consolidate or solidify they were pushed up to great heights. Still somewhat plastic in consistency, they did not split or shatter when uplifted, but rather were bent and twisted like pages in a thick magazine" (The Early Earth).

Although all the details are not clear and supplied to us in the Scripture, it is quite evident that the post-Flood world is quite different from the earlier earth. The site of Eden may now be at the bottom of a sea, under a mountain range, or buried under sedimentary deposits.

Luther made the following sensible comment: "My opinion of the matter ... is that paradise ... left no trace or vestige of its original state remaining... The awful Deluge destroyed all things ... And therefore mountains exist where fields and fruitful planes before flourished, so there can be no doubt that fountains and sources of rivers are now found where none existed before, and where the state of nature was changed by the mighty convul-

sion..." (Commentary on Genesis)

In 1929 during his excavations in Mesopotamia, Sir Charles Leonard Woolley came upon a clay deposit about three metres thick, under which was discovered evidence of human habitation. Woolley announced to the world "We have found the Flood!" Though such an announcement seems supportive of the Biblical record and was welcomed by believers in the Noahic Flood, Woolley was wrong.

The rivers which we know as the Tigris and the Euphrates are not the rivers spoken of in Genesis 2. Likely these names were given to these rivers by the descendants of Noah, and we should not expect archaeologists to find evidence of Eden in the region which we call Mesopotamia. As evidenced by deposits of sea fossils on the tops of even such mountains as the Himalayas, and the burial of fossils hundreds of feet deep, the entire surface of the earth was re-made by the effects of the Flood. †

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... the waters "fled" and "hurried away".... "The mountains rose".... (Psalm 104:7,8).

“Whose Heart the Lord Opened”

Glenn Colley

There is an interesting clause tucked away in Acts 16:14 having to do with Lydia's conversion: *“...whose heart the Lord opened.”*

Sometimes through our lives we have the pleasant experience of seeing a hard heart softened. Here is a miserly man of considerable wealth who never cares about anyone but himself and his money. He falls very ill and contemplates the way his life has been spent and then vows to himself and to the Lord that if his health should return, he will seek out and help those in need. His heart has been opened.

Picture a farmer, a simple, quiet man of brawny physique and calloused hands, a man used to hard living, as the nurse gently lays his newborn baby girl into those big hands. His heart melts.



The entire verse in Acts 16 says, *“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized...”*

How did the Lord open Lydia's heart? The very same way He opens hearts today; with the teaching of His Word. The good news of forgiveness and security and genuine hope for heaven goes deeply into the souls of people who will listen. That is what is meant by the Hebrews writer who said, *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12).

Have you let the Lord open your heart to His wonderful truth and to the joy of serving Him? †

Glenn Colley is the preacher for the West Huntsville church in Huntsville, Alabama, USA.

I Did Not Write the Bible

Albert Gardner

I know that it does not come as a great surprise to you that I did not write the Bible. In fact, I have never been accused of writing the Bible. I have read parts of the Bible that people resented. I have taught Bible truth that made people angry. I have shown people things in the Bible that they did not believe and that crossed their long-held doctrines. But I have never been accused of writing the Bible.

Since I did not write it, **I am not responsible for what it teaches.** I cannot change its message (Galatians 1:8,9), and I can't endorse those who do change it (2 John 9-11). Because so many varied things are taught by religious leaders, we must weigh every doctrine by the Bible. *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1).

Though I did not write the Bible, **I cannot ignore it.** Its claims and commands demand a response. The proper approach to Bible study is to understand that the Book of books came from God. *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God, which ye heard of us, you received it not as*

the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

I must study it. Belief that the Bible is from God requires that we study it. Secular knowledge may be helpful in some ways, but a study of the Bible is life changing (2 Timothy 2:15).

I must understand it. There are some difficult parts in God's word, but what to do to be saved and how to live the Christian life are simple enough for all to understand. *"Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:17).

Philip asked the eunuch, *"Do you understand what you are reading?"* (Acts 8:30). It would be cruel if we could not understand His will, yet be required to believe, obey, and practice it. *"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)"* (Ephesians 3:3,4).

I must believe it. Often people hear gospel preaching, but they do not believe it. They may have a mistaken idea that they must have a certain kind of special feeling, in

order to know that they are saved, not realizing that we are converted through the Word. *"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:21).

I must obey it. Belief of the Gospel is essential, but faith alone is not enough. *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins"* (John 8:24).

Jesus set the example of obedience which we are to follow. He makes clear that we are to obey. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

After one has heard the true Gospel, he can never be the same and must do *something* in response. He will either believe and obey it like 3,000 did (Acts 2:38,41), or he will reject it like Felix (Acts 24:25).

I must teach it. Though I did not write the Bible, I have the responsibility of teaching it to others so they can understand, believe, obey, and be saved by it. Just before Jesus ascended back to His Father, He gave the marching orders to the apostles, and consequently to us, when He said, *"Go preach the*

gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

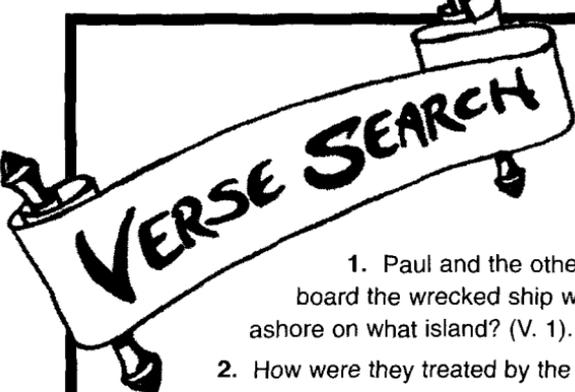
This duty has not been given to angels, but **people** are to teach **people**. When asked if he understood what he was reading, the eunuch said, *"How can I, unless someone guides me?"* (Acts 8:31).

I must defend it. I did not write God's Word, but I must defend it. The attack is not on only one verse, but is against the whole Book. The Bible cannot proclaim and defend itself, but must depend on those who believe it to support it. Error also depends on those who believe it to spread it to others.

False teachers had slipped into the early church, so Jude wrote about our duty in this regard. *"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3).

Summary. I did not write the Bible. Those who did were inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 2:15). What they wrote is accurate, complete, and true. It is **God's Book!** Therefore, we have the responsibility to study, understand, believe, obey, teach, and defend it. †

Albert Gardner preaches for the church of Christ in Strawberry, Arkansas, USA.

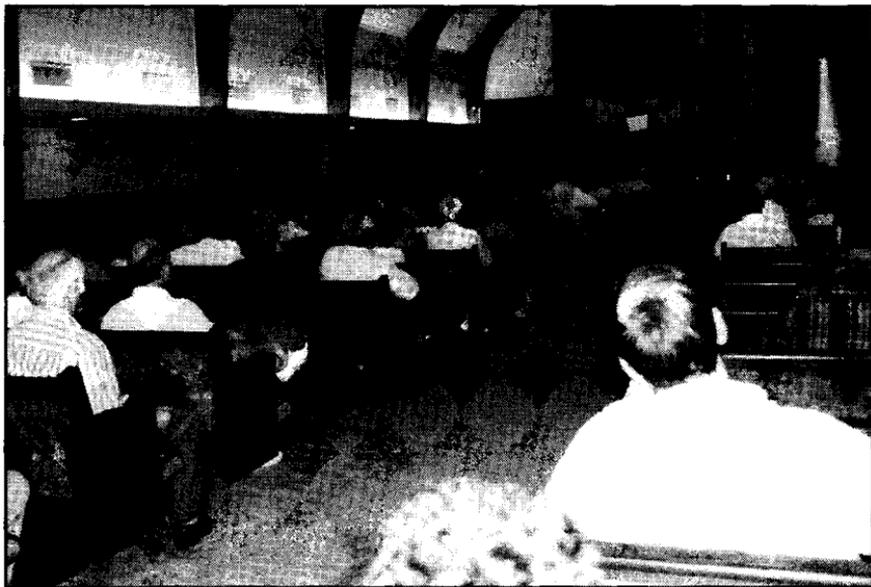


VERSE SEARCH

Supply the missing information from the book of Acts, chapter twenty-eight, NKJV.

1. Paul and the others on board the wrecked ship washed ashore on what island? (V. 1).
2. How were they treated by the native people? (V. 2).
3. What happened to Paul as he gathered wood for the fire? (V. 3).
4. *"So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, 'No doubt this man is _____, whom, though he has _____, yet _____ does not allow to _____'"* (V. 4).
5. When Paul suffered no harm, what did they think? (Vs. 5,6).
6. A leading man on the island, named Publius, did what for Paul and his companions? (V. 7).
7. What did Paul do for Publius' father and others on the island, and how did God use this to provide for Paul's needs? (Vs. 8-10).
8. On a ship from _____, Paul and his companions passed through _____, _____, and _____ (Vs. 11-13).
9. In Puteoli they found brethren and were invited to stay over for seven days. Why would they have waited that long? (V. 14).
10. Brethren from Rome came out to meet them as far as _____ and _____ (Vs. 14,15).
11. What was Paul permitted to do in Rome? (V. 16,30).
12. When Paul called the Jewish leaders and explained his background to them, what did they do? (Vs. 17-25).
13. He said it was for _____ that he was in chains (V. 20).
14. From the Law and the Prophets, what did Paul teach? (V. 23).
15. Paul warned that the salvation of God would go to whom (V. 28).
16. What did Paul do for two years? (V. 31).

[See inside of back cover for answers.]



The Matter of Church Membership

John Thiesen

Question: “Can I be a follower of Jesus Christ without becoming a member of a church?”

No, this is impossible. The reason is that Christ cannot be separated from His church. It is “*His body, the fullness of Him*” (Ephesians 1:23).

God planned the church from the beginning of the world. He planned that He would save both Jews and Gentiles in **one body**, the church (Ephesians 1:23).

The Bible says that the Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts

2:47). The church is made up of those who have come to believe in Christ, repented of their sins, and who have been immersed for the remission (forgiveness) of their sins (Acts 2:38,41,47).

Although it is true that *Christ* does the saving, *not the church*, still **we can't be saved outside of the church**, because it *is* the saved! When the Lord saves us, we automatically become members of His body, His church. †

John Thiesen is a Spanish translator for *The Voice of Truth International*.

How Does God Speak To Us Today?

Charles E. Burch



Did you ever hear anyone say, "Well, God talked to me in a dream", or another say, "I had a vision", or someone declare, "Well, God talked to me while I was driving my car down the highway", or maybe someone vows that God spoke to him and forgave his sins while he laid his hand on the radio or TV? When you hear someone making such claims, you may be sure they are mistaken.

Did you know that God tells us plainly, in His Word, how He speaks to us today? Would you really like to know how God communicates with man? If we do not know **how** He speaks today, we will not know **when** He speaks.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1,2). In this inspired

text, the writer declares that God had spoken. The question is, **how** does He speak to us today?

Yes, there was a time when God spoke to man directly from heaven, and chosen men heard the voice of God. God talked with **Adam** in the Garden of Eden. In the centuries following, He communicated to the faithful fathers, heads of households, who conveyed God's message to their children. Later, He revealed His Word to the **prophets**, who, in turn, spoke to the people. God told **Moses** that the time would come when He would no longer speak through the prophets, but that He (God) would raise up *one* prophet, referring to His Son, **Jesus**, Who would speak the words which

God would place in His mouth. This important prophetic teaching is found in Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

While Christ was on earth He taught the Word of God. Actually, God put the words in His mouth. But, before Christ ascended to His Father in heaven, He chose His apostles. Jesus made them this promise: *“Howbeit when, He the spirit, is come, **He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: And He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: For He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you”*** (John 16:13,14).

God revealed His Word unto the apostles by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guided the writers of the New Testament as they revealed **in writing** God’s message to us. God speaks to us today through His Holy Word. We do not need Him to talk directly to us. Paul declared that God’s Word was inspired and **complete**. *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be **perfect, thoroughly furnished** unto all good works”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

How do we know that the claims of special, personal messages from God today are spurious? In these ways:

(1) The message or direction given in the “personal” contact always **contradicts the directions given in Scripture**. In Galatians 1:6-9, Paul warned that the Gospel message had been given, once and for all, and that even if an angel from heaven spoke something different, it should not be believed or followed.

(2) When people today say that they have had a special revelation, they are claiming that **God is showing partiality to them, or that they are on par with the inspired writers of Scripture** in the first century. When their message contradicts Scripture, when they are members of churches not found in Scripture, when they are teaching “gospels” contrary to the message of the Apostles, when their worship, call to salvation, and doctrine of life conflict with Scripture, none of their “revelation” can have originated with God. They are preaching their own gospel but trying to give it **validity** by claiming to have had a dream, vision, or revelation. All of this is contrary to Scripture.

What we need today is to allow God’s Word to speak to us and to obey what it says. Too many are looking for something mystical, unusual, and exciting instead of sitting down with God’s Word and hearing what He says there. †

Charles E. Burch is a retired preacher living in Mobile, Alabama, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Matthew 16:15-19

“... who do you say that I am?”

Simon Peter answered and said, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

Jesus answered and said to him, **“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

“And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you BIND on earth will be BOUND in heaven, and whatever you LOOSE on earth will be LOOSED in heaven.”

What about the “binding” and “loosing”? Matthew 18:18 shows that Peter and the other apostles had the authority to TEACH, but their doctrine was directed entirely by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, whatever they taught as binding law or whatever they allowed or did not bind was by the authority of the Spirit. Jesus promised (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12) that all will be judged by the Word, the Scriptures. **Both God and man are bound by what is written.**

In answer to Jesus’ question concerning His identity, Peter confessed his faith that Jesus was **the Christ, the Son of God.**

In reply, Jesus pronounced a blessing on Peter, calling him by two names — his Jewish identification as “Simon” the son of “Jonah”, and as Peter (Petros), meaning a “detached stone or boulder”.

This is the first mention of the coming “church” (“ekkle-sia”, “the called out”) which Jesus would begin. He used the word interchangeably with “kingdom of heaven”. Since His first sermon, He had been telling of the coming of the kingdom.

Some say the “rock” (“pet-ra) was a reference to “Pet-er” (Petros), but this form of the word means “a mass of rock”, as in a foundation. The ROCK on which the church is built is the FACT that Jesus is God’s Son (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Work That Lasts For Eternity

Jack Harriman

In the early days of World War II, Winston Churchill called Britain's coal miners together. A great crisis had arisen. The miners were not getting out enough coal to fuel the factories that produced the planes, ships, etc., so desperately needed.

When the Prime Minister arose he said, "I want to give it to you straight — nothing! Two hundred guns, no more! Twenty tanks, that's all! I heard he (Hitler) was coming with a million men, and I said to myself, 'The British Navy will put five hundred thousand of them to the bottom of the channel, but what will we do with half a million of them ashore?'"

For an hour and forty minutes he outlined the desperate situation confronting Britain. Then in stirring language he said, "When at last it is all over, we'll parade these streets again and as you go by people will call out, 'And where were you?' Someone will answer, 'I marched with the Eighth Army,' and someone else will say, 'I was in

the skies over Britain.' Another will reply, 'I was in the Merchant Marines pushing the ships through the sea up to Archangel.' Then I shall be standing there and I will call out, 'Where were you?' I will hear you answer, 'We were down in the black pits right up against the face of the coal.'"

Then, thousands of coal miners arose and with tears streaming down their faces, cheered the Prime Minister, and the coal came out! They had caught a fresh vision of the importance of their work.

When at last it is all over for us, we will parade the streets of Heaven. And it may be that someone will call out, "And where were you?" Many impressive answers may be given, but none more satisfying than to say, "I was in _____ teaching the Gospel of Christ."

"And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9). †

Jack Harriman is a gospel preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

The Missionary and His Family

Bill Nicks

The number one mission field of the missionary is his own family. He cannot set an example for others unless his own family is exemplary. *"Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee"* (1 Timothy 4:16).

There is a great need for the holy influence of Christian families abroad. With all due respect to single people and the good they can do, the family can exercise an even greater influence. There are reasons as high as heaven and holy as God why Christian families are needed. One is the breakdown of the home worldwide. Another is the neglect of women to whom Christian wives can give great encouragement. Still another is the need for leadership which Christian families can give regarding home, marriage, and other subjects.

There are necessary preparations before such families undertake the work in foreign fields. A few of the major points are these:

1. Both husband and wife must have a sincere desire to obey the marching orders of the Lord to "go into all the world and preach the gospel". A young fiancée told her intended husband, "Either you choose a foreign field or me." This was an ultimatum to him that she would be unhappy away from her home country. Such a couple would surely fail as missionaries abroad.

2. Both must be weaned away from their parents. It is hard for the young to adjust if they have never been away from parents. The "leave and cleave" of Genesis 2:24 is a necessary step to follow. Parents must not be selfish, but rejoice with children who are bold enough to want to spread God's Word to the lost and dying of other nations.

3. They must be content with their role as missionaries. This is not a work to be undertaken because a man is a failure elsewhere, but he must be convinced that this is the greatest work in the world and is what God wants the family to do.

4. The family must be emotionally mature. They must have proved they can get along with brethren and sisters here before they go abroad. Otherwise, they may not be compatible with fellow missionaries and nationals overseas. Some marks of maturity are: unselfishness, gratitude, Christian love, and working for the happiness of others. They must have been concerned about "one-on-one evangelism," and prove they can finish tasks started.

5. Above all, they must be examples of moral purity. With our passport and visa to Nigeria in 1955 was a letter from President Eisenhower: "As you travel abroad, the respect you show for foreign



laws and customs, your courteous regard for other ways of life, and your speech and manner help to mold the reputation of our country. Thus, you represent us all in bringing assurance to the people you meet that the U.S. is a friendly nation and one dedicated to the search for world peace and to the promotion of the wellbeing and security of the community of nations."

If a high moral standard is a patriotic duty, how much more is it our Christian duty to glorify God through the life of our Christian family! †

Bill Nicks served as a missionary for several years in West Africa. He now lives in Hobe Sound, Florida, USA.



Keeping the Unity of the Spirit

David Riley

The words of the apostle Paul were very important and very needed for the first century church at Ephesus. They are just as important to the church today. Unless the unity of the Spirit is maintained, the church will never fulfill its purpose for existing.

What is that purpose? Paul said that the eternal purpose for the church was to *"make known ... the manifold wisdom of God"* (Ephesians 3:10). The church is to show the manifold, multifaceted, all-encompassing wisdom of God to the world around us. As we *"walk worthy of our vocation"* (Ephesians 4:1), we accomplish this purpose. When we *"endeavor (to put forth every effort) to keep the unity of the spirit*

in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3) we are truly walking *"worthy of our vocation"*. The church fulfills its purpose when we show the world that we are united in peace.

There are several applications that can be made from these verses in Ephesians, but let us not forget the true context. The church at Ephesus was made up of Christians from pagan, Gentile backgrounds. Paul, in Chapter 2, reminds them of their lost condition as Gentiles before Christ's death on the cross (vs. 11-12). He reminds them of the purpose of the cross for the Gentiles (vs 13-18). The old Mosical law was the middle wall of partition that created the division between Jews and Gentiles. By His sacrifice,

Christ removed the Law and, in so doing, removed the division. The cross made it so that both the Jew and the Gentile could become one and that both might be reconciled to God in one body.

Paul then tells them that as Christians, both the Jew and Gentile are on equal standing with God (vs. 19-22). Those in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, are *“growing into a holy temple in the Lord”* (v. 21) and are built *“together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (v. 22). To Paul, this is the reason he is a *“prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles”* (3:1). This mystery [*“that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”* (3:6)] was revealed to Paul so that he *“could make all men see what is the mystery of the fellowship”* (3:9) and the *“intent”* of the church (3:11).

The *“vocation”* (work or purpose) that Paul had in mind in Chapter 4:1 was the unity between the Jew and Gentile. This unity was not to be **produced** by the Ephesian congregation because the **Holy Spirit** had already produced it. However, the unity between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians was to be **kept, maintained** and **nurtured** by the church. Their spiritual job description was to make sure that they were *“endeavor-*

ing to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3).

The urging that Paul expressed to the Ephesian church is as much needed today as in the first century. We must always be *“endeavoring”* (putting forth every effort) to keep the unity that the Spirit has made between all Christians, no matter their national or ethnic origin — black or white, Indian or Pakistani, American or Iraqi, Japanese or Chinese, Jew or Gentile. As Christians, we are the body of Christ! This unity must supersede race, geography, economics, gender, age, and language. Because, *“there is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (4:4-6).

Everyone is watching — the world is watching, the church is watching, especially God is watching! Everyone is watching us! People will judge the church and God by how we treat one another. Will the church accomplish its divine and eternal purpose? Will we by *“walking worthy of our vocation”* display the *“ manifold wisdom of God”* as we *“endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”*? †

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Who Am I?

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

1. **100** We were two brothers (Exodus 6:23).
2. **90** Our mother's name was Elisheba, and our two brothers were named Eleazar and Ithamar (6:23).
3. **80** On one occasion, we, along with Moses, Aaron and seventy of the elders of Israel, were called up into the mountain to worship the Lord from afar (24:1).
4. **70** We "*saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity...*" (24:9).
5. **60** As priests before the Lord, special garments were required for us, including tunics, sashes, hats, and linen trousers, so that we would be fully clothed when we came into God's presence. (2:1-6).
6. **50** We, and the others of our tribe, among the children of Israel, were



especially anointed to serve in the tabernacle and to take care of everything pertaining to it and to the worship of God (29).

7. **40** God said, "*Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean...*" (Leviticus 10:9,10).

8. **30** We offered profane fire to God (10:1).

9. **20** Our lack of respect for God's laws brought about our deaths (10:1,2).

10. **10** We serve as a warning to all.

My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.

The Centrality of the Cross

Ronald D. Bryant

In His death on the cross Jesus secured salvation. In that cross is the only place where salvation is to be found. It is also the place where sin and evil have been judged and where God's holiness and justice have been revealed. This event is the moment that defines history and to which all future hopes are bound. It is because of God's judgment, justice, and holiness that the redeemed are called to live, love, and serve.

The redeemed exist as a blood-bought body, the church, as a result of this event. Because of the work of God through the cross, because of the triumph of God in His majestic power and holiness, the church is called to be bold in its proclamation of the Gospel, confident in its mission, and joyful in its ministry as it acknowledges the fact that it has been bought with blood, pardoned from sin, and freed to walk and serve in the light.

The church has been called to hold forth the message of the cross, to preach the will of God faithfully in a world that is ruled by darkness (see 1 Timothy 3:15). God's people have been charged with the work of telling the world what God has said about its sin and the destiny of the

sinful. It has not been called to speculate about matters not revealed, nor to develop its own message or agenda, nor to become religious entrepreneurs for the religionists with a worldly appetite. It is called to make known God's judgment of humanity in the cross, and to declare the coming of His final judgment (see 2 Corinthians 5:1-11).

The people of God are possessed with the conviction that God's glory requires judgment, and they await in hope the moment when the will of God will be forever placed upon the throne and error will be forever banished to the ash heap of time and timely things.

The church longs for the coming of the day of transition, when *"time shall be no more"* and to the privilege of entering the home of the soul where *"night shall be no more"* and the saved will *"need no light of lamp nor of the sun, for the Lord God will be their light"* (see Revelation 22:5). And in all this, the church clings to the cross, and because of the cross, it clings to the hope of life eternal. †

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Does “The Truth” Exist?

Victor M. Eskew

The word “the” is a “definite article”. Webster states that a definite article is used “... to indicate that a following noun or noun equivalent refers to someone or something that is unique or exists as only one at a time.” To illustrate, let’s put the word “the” before the word “picture”. *The picture won first prize in the county fair.* “The” refers to a unique picture and only one picture.

Why is it that we can understand this principle, but then have great difficulty with it when the word “the” is put before the word “truth”? Let us again seek to illustrate our point. Jesus said: *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). The words “the truth” make truth unique and singular in nature. There are not **many** truths that exist. Only **one** divine truth has been set forth for mankind.

If only one truth exists and that truth is found in the Word of God (John 17:17), why are so many conflicting “truths” forthcoming from the religious world? Note the following examples:

1. Some say that man is saved by faith only. Others say that man is not saved by faith only.

2. Some say that the church to which one belongs is not important. Others say there is only one true church.
3. Some say that baptism in water is essential to salvation. Others say that baptism is not involved in the salvation process.
4. Some say that man can still perform miracles. Others say that the age of miracles has ceased.
5. Some say instrumental music in worship to God is acceptable. Others say instrumental music in worship is sinful.
6. Some say denominationalism is a good, wholesome concept. Others say the Bible condemns denominationalism.
7. Some say Jesus is an eternal Being. Others teach that Jesus was the first created Being.
8. Some say man can’t fall from grace once he is saved. Others say man can so sin as to lose his eternal salvation.

These are just 8 examples. Hundreds more could be given, but these are sufficient. If one truth exists, why are there so many conflicting doctrines in the religious world? Why does one group say: “We teach the truth of the Gospel”, and another group says exactly the

same thing, yet the doctrines they proclaim are in direct opposition to each other? There is absolutely no way both doctrines can be truth! Both could be error, but both cannot be truth.

Many will allow two men to teach contrasting doctrines and affirm that both of these men teach "the" truth. One argument that is often made springs from the interpretation of truth. When one person disagrees with another person, it will often be said: "Well, that is just your **interpretation.**" Think about that for a moment. The Bible declares that there is **one truth**, but man says there can be several different **interpretations of truth**. If that is the case, then each man becomes his own god. One's interpretation of truth becomes the truth for him.

This interpretation idea basically states that God did not give us a Book that all of us can understand alike. That is an odd affirmation in light of several passages of Scripture in the Bible. 1 Corinthians 1:10 exhorts us, saying: "*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*"

Philippians 3:16 gives a similar charge: "*Nevertheless, whereto we*

have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

Romans 15:5,6 provides yet similar instructions: "*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Jesus Christ: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" All of God's children should be of one mind and walking by the same rule, perfectly joined together with no divisions existing among them.

To adhere to this simple Bible teaching would require that everyone study the Bible much more and be willing to face up to "the truth".

In 1 Timothy 2:3,4, Paul wrote: "*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*"

Dear readers, there is one truth and one correct interpretation of truth. By comparing all that the Scriptures say on a subject, the Bible interprets itself. Let each of us seek for the truth diligently and give up all ideas that conflict with it! The wise writer of old put it in these words: "*Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction and understanding*" (Proverbs 23:23). †

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CHEO, RHANTIZO, BAPTIZO

Francis David

When Jesus was on this earth, He gave a great commission to His people. He said, *"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth"* and with this authority, He said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:18). A lot of my friends say that baptism is not important. But, from the passage quoted above, it is crystal clear that when Jesus said, *"go and make disciples, baptizing them,"* He meant what He said! He commanded that people be baptized (immerse completely in water). This requirement cannot be rejected without rejecting the Christ who commanded it.

Baptism (immersion in water) is part of God's plan of salvation. Jesus, while talking to His disciples, said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). Here, He says that *"he who believes and is baptized will be saved."* Belief plus baptism equals salvation. How much plainer can it be stated! It is so simple!

There are many who pervert the word of God and His plan. Some teach that all you have to do is believe in Jesus and accept Him as your "personal saviour". Others teach that baptism is "an outward sign" and is not important. Still others teach that there are different modes of baptism. They say, "There are three kinds. Which one do you want?"

The New Testament was written in the Greek language and in Greek, there are three words which people generally associate with baptism. These three words are cheo, rhantizo and baptizo. Cheo means "to pour water", rhantizo means "to sprinkle water", and baptizo means

“to immerse or bury in water”. According to some, cheo or rhantizo can be used for “baptism”. However, according to the scriptures, cheo and rhantizo cannot be associated with baptism because baptism itself means “burial” (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12).

Wherever in the Bible the word baptism is used, it is always used for immersion or burial, not to pour or sprinkle. If you want to use cheo or rhantizo, you don’t need much water. We see through Biblical example that these two methods cannot be used. In Acts 8, we read about a man who was from Ethiopia. He wanted to be baptized. Philip did not say to him, “Now sir, I have three methods of baptism. Which one do you want?” If you read the account, you will see that the record says that *“they both went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch”* (Acts 8:38,39).

The Bible does not talk about “modes of baptism”. There is only one baptism, and that is only a burial in water. The apostle Paul, while writing to the Christians in Rome, reminds them that they were *“buried with Christ through baptism into death, that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:4). The Bible says we are buried with Him (Jesus) in baptism

(Colossians 2:12). In the Greek, the word for baptism is **baptizo**. “Moreover, all of the instances of baptism recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:38-41; 8:26-39; 9:17; 9:18; 22:12-16; 10:44-48; 16:32-34) suggest the idea that it was by dipping that the person was baptized, i.e., by immersion” (Easton’s Bible Dictionary). This rules out cheo (pouring) and rhantizo (sprinkling).

Perhaps you might say, “I was baptized when I was a baby. My parents took me to the priest and he baptized me.” Was it really baptism (immersion) according to the scriptures? No! Not at all. It was cheo or rhantizo, not baptizo.

In fact, when you were a baby, you were not the proper subject for baptism. Baptism is for adults, not little babies. A little baby is innocent. Baptism is for those who are accountable for their actions, who know that they are sinners, who believe in Jesus, who have confessed His name before men, who have repented. This is the person who is baptized (immersed) into the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. This is the baptism that washes away your sins (Acts 22:16:). Have you been baptized as the Bible says? †

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Jesus Christ, the Eternal Sacrifice

Betty Burton Choate

The Purpose of the Feasts

When we look into the Scriptures to learn the purpose of the Passover Feast and the animal sacrifices the Israelites were required to make for their sins, we realize that they were not only reminders pointing backward to the exodus from Egypt and to the cleansing of the people by God; they were also prophetic statements of the coming Passover Lamb and the sin-sacrifice in the person of Jesus Christ.

The memorial feast that was given to the church as a commemoration of Jesus' death serves today in a manner much like those feasts of old: it points backward to the cross and forward to His return.

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

The Introduction of the Lord's Supper

What was the beginning of this supper?

"And when the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'

"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'

Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'' (Luke 22:14-16,19,20).

Earlier, in a prophetic statement concerning this memorial supper, Jesus had said:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:51-54).

Some might suggest that Jesus was speaking figuratively of spiritual food. Certainly His discussion of the bread of life (John 6:33,35) at the beginning of His lesson did have that meaning. Similar wording in John 4:10-14 also deals with the subject of spiritual nourishment, which Jesus called the water of life in this case. In both passages He applied the figure of speech to Himself, saying that He was the bread and the water of life.

Jesus said that His followers must eat His flesh and drink His blood.

But in this instance, Jesus moved from the concept of spiritual food, in which the fitting metaphor of bread [and water, elsewhere] was used, to wording that could not have been literal, and yet neither could it have been intended solely as a figure of speech. He said that **His followers must eat His flesh and drink His blood** if they were to live. Because there was no parallel, even figuratively, to such a cannibalistic-sounding statement, the listeners did not understand, and "... *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more*" (John 6:66).

Living in today's world, after two thousand years of weekly memorials of the sacrifice of His body on the cross, believers see His statement in perspective and can appreciate the fullness of what He was saying. **He was introducing the concept of the spiritual feast which He would inaugurate as a memorial of His death.** Only on this occasion and on the night of His betrayal did He speak of **His body and His blood as something to be partaken of.** Such parallel wording must have been deliberately chosen.

But to listeners in His own day, accustomed to the Old Testament law which forbade the eating of blood, Jesus' statement must have sounded like nauseating heresy. He knew this, yet it was necessary that the introduction to those profound truths be made.

The Bread of the Covenant

Taking the bread before His crucifixion, He explained, *“Take, eat; this is My body ...”* (Matthew 26:26).

The concepts build, one upon another, to teach these lessons:

(1) *“Remember, through this memorial, the body which was given for you”* (Luke 22:19).

(2) *“As often as you eat this bread ...”* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Early Christians had two examples of memorial feasts: **the shewbread** of the Temple which was changed **weekly**, each Sabbath (Leviticus 24:5-9), and the Passover bread which was an **annual** supper. Often, today, members of denominational groups who believe in Christ partake of His memorial only quarterly or even once yearly, and it is not uncommon for the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine to be substituted with other things.

But those under the Old Testament law had no trouble distinguishing between the frequencies of their feasts or the elements involved in them. Christians of the first century were equally clear in their understanding of how often God wanted His Son’s memorial to be observed and just what symbols were to represent His body and His blood.

True Christians today follow the same pattern. On the first day of each week, their purpose in coming together is to partake of the bread and of the cup (1 Corinthians 11:24-26).

(3) *“Let a man examine himself ... for he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself ...”* (1 Corinthians 11:28,29).

(4) *“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life ...”* (John 6:54).

(5) *“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me”* (John 6:57).

Those who think of this supper as merely a “ritual” are mistaken. Jesus deliberately chose elements with deep meaning, and it is the responsibility of those partaking of the supper to understand that meaning for themselves.

Our very spiritual life is bound up in the regular participation in this memorial. **We live, because He died to give us life, and because He lives through us.** †

Betty Burton Choate is the author of the study, *Jesus Christ the Eternal Sacrifice*. This lesson, and the following lessons by sister Choate, will be taken from that book.

It's a Big, Big World!

Maxie B. Boren

It is so easy for us to become "caught up" in our own "little world" that we fail to perceive just how **big** the rest of the world is. Too many Christians remain unaware that more than **six billion** people are living (tens of thousands of which are dying every day!) apart from Christ, without God, and without hope!

Jesus said, "*Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest!*" (John 4:35). Brethren, the harvest is not somewhere in the distant future...*it is now*. Hundreds of millions of souls are perishing in spiritual starvation and thirst ... **surely**, in view of the precious

Savior's sacrifice for all, we will be constrained to at least **try** to save as many as we can.

Brethren, when will we realize that "warming a church pew" on Sunday morning is just not enough? All of us must become "soul seekers", and hopefully, "soul winners" for Jesus. Remember, it's a **big, big, world** out there. We

must "go into" it and rescue the perishing! The matter is **urgent and needs nothing less than a "911" emergency response from every congregation and Christian of the Lord's body!!!** †



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A Real Nobody

David Deffenbaugh

We have all suffered through periods of low self-worth, times when we have felt of little value. We may have been rejected by those from whom we desired acceptance, or failed in some endeavor and disappointed those who were counting on us. We felt like a real nobody.

But that doesn't come close to the case of "Mr. Nobody". That is the title ascribed to a young Englishman who was mugged in Toronto, Canada in late 1999. As a result of the mugging, he lost not only his memory, but also all his legal documentation. He has no idea who he is or where he is from. His distinctive British accent is a clue, but extensive publicity in England by the media has produced no hint of the man's origin. What is more, he is unable to leave Canada without a passport, and cannot obtain a passport without a birth certificate, and cannot obtain a birth certificate without knowing his name or place of birth. This unfortunate young man is about as close to a real nobody as anyone can be. Imagine the relief and elation when and if his identity is ever discovered.

Consider the identity God gives those who are His. No matter who or what we may have been before, when we become a Christian we obtain a new identity. That identity includes a new name. Isaiah prophesied concerning God's people, *"You will be called by a new name which the mouth of the LORD will designate"* (Isaiah 62:2). To the persecuted Christians of Pergamum who overcame, the promise was given of *"a new name written on the stone"* (Revelation 17).

That new identity also includes a new family, the family of God. He allows us to call Him Father. *"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"* (Galatians 4:6). We are able to be known as His children. *"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are"* (1 John 3:1). What is more, we are *"of God's household"* (Ephesians 2:19).

Our new identity also provides a place where we belong. *"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints"* (Ephesians 2:19).

You see, in Christ, no one is a nobody.

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No Condemnation



Here is good news: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). What a wonderful blessing! Those who have entered into union with Christ stand uncondemned.

What does it mean to be in a position where there is “no condemnation”? It means that Christians have been freed from the effect of their sins. It is sin in a person’s life which condemns, condemns him to death. Condemnation, then, is the result of man’s sin (Romans 5:16, 18). The entire human race was tried for sin. The verdict was read: “Guilty,” it said. The sentence was condemnation.

But Jesus died for sin and condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). Through His act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men (Romans 8:3, 4). They have been spared from condemnation, for in Christ Jesus they have been set free from that which causes condemnation — the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

Christians stand uncondemned. They have been acquitted of their sins. The verdict has been read, and it is “Not Guilty!” Rejoice, Christian! There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ, who are not walking after the flesh but according to the Spirit!

My sin — O the bliss of this
glorious thought—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
is nailed to the
Cross and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord,
Praise the Lord, O my soul.”

— H. G. Spafford †

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Jesus: Head of the Church, or Figurehead?

Royce Frederick

Queen Elizabeth II recently celebrated her 50th year as Queen of England! She is highly honored and loved. However, elected officials actually govern the nation.

Jesus "... is the head of the body, the church ..." (Colossians 1:18). But some men want to take control — and give the church a "head transplant"! They are "... not holding fast (firmly) to the Head..." (Colossians 2:19).

Is Jesus truly Head over the church where you attend, or merely a "figurehead"? If we praise Him in sermons and songs, does that make the church truly His church? He asks, "*But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46).

Many sermons are aimed at helping us follow Jesus as Lord of our life. We need those. But our life includes our participation in the local church. By our giving, labors, and attendance, we endorse and support the local church. If you or I see the church departing from the will of Christ, we must speak up — in kindness — and help correct the wrongs. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12,

26,27; 2 John 9-11; Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Ephesians 5:11).

Our Head tells His church how to behave. Jesus said "... love one another. ... By this all will know that you are My disciples ..." and He prayed, "*that they all may be one ... that the world may believe that You sent Me*" (John 13:34,35; 17:21). Division and strife dishonor our Head. When we cling to God's will and each other, many more will come to Christ.



Our Head tells His church what to teach. There are two choices: (1) walk by opinion, following men's teachings, treating Jesus as a figurehead, OR (2) walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), following God's written word, for "*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17), thus honoring Jesus as Head.

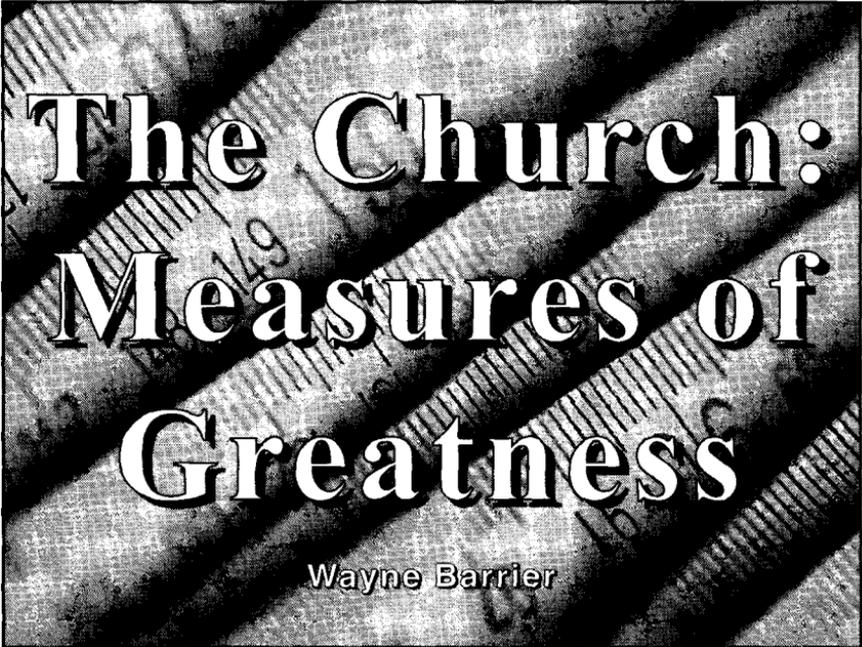
Our Head tells His church what to call itself. What religious name do you wear? What is the church called where you attend? Can you find those names given to the Lord's people in the New Testament? Christ gave one name to His people: "Christian" (1 Peter 4:16). He did not give a name to the church, but uses terms such as "body", "temple", "church of God", and churches of Christ — and often includes the location (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 3:16; Romans 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1). God owns everything, but gave all authority to Christ (Matthew 28:18). So, the church primarily belongs to Christ. Why name the church after Paul, John, any other man, any doctrine, or a feast day (1 Corinthians 1:10-13)? Christ died for the church, built it, and owns it (Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:18). He is its "head" and should have "preeminence" in all things (Colossians 1:18), including what we call His church.

Our Head tells His church how to worship. His word instructs us to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, sing, pray, give, and listen to His word (Acts 20:7; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 14:15,16; 16:1,2). If we added incense, musical instruments, candles in front of images, or bananas in the Lord's Supper, we would not be following our Head, because His word does not tell us to worship in those ways.

Our Head tells His church how to organize. To lead the local church and its work, the Lord's plan is that we have "*elders in every church*" (Acts 14:23; see Titus 1:5). The New Testament also calls them "bishops" (overseers) and "pastors" (shepherds). And we should select "deacons" to help with special labors (see Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). Every time the New Testament mentions a church and its elders, at least two elders are leading the church. But many churches have departed from the Lord's plan, omitting the elders. Some are overseen by one man, others by a "board" of men, and some by men in distant places.

Will you honor Christ as Head by obeying His will in your daily life and in the church? †

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The Church: Measures of Greatness

Wayne Barrier

Organizations that are trying to increase productivity and effectiveness often establish quality control programs. This involves defining measures of success and achievement. What about measures of success and achievement in the world's most important organization — the kingdom of Christ? How do we measure success in the church? I believe there are several areas of measurement that should be considered. Those that will be discussed now are the measures of great things and greatness, based solely on some key passages of Scripture in the book of Matthew.

The Greatest People: In Matthew 18:1-4, Jesus gives a definition of the “*greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*” This passage quotes the disciples of Jesus, asking, “*Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them and said, Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*”

The Greatest Position: Jesus,

THE CHURCH

in Matthew 20:20-28, addresses the issue of the greatest position in the kingdom of heaven. The mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and great apostles of Christ, asked Jesus about their position in His coming kingdom. Notice the response in verses 25 through 28 as He says, *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant, and whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

The Greatest Principle: In Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus answers a question concerning the greatest commandment in the law. Read verses 36-40, *“Teacher, what is the great commandment in the law?”* Jesus said to him, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

The Great Commander and Mission: As Jesus nears the time of His return to heaven, He states the

clear and distinct mission of the church in Matthew 28:18-20. We call this *“The Great Commission”*. Jesus says, *“All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

The Greatest Organization: In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says, *“Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Nothing is greater than this church, and nothing on earth can destroy it.

These statements in Matthew are not difficult to understand. They are not the only passages in Scripture to help us measure quality, success, and achievement in the church, but they certainly cover a broad range of areas. They reflect the great love God has for us (John 3:16) and are consistent with the teachings in 1 Corinthians 13:13, that the greatest power or spiritual gift is love. We can benefit by incorporating them into our efforts to serve as Christians. †

Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA and does mission work in various other countries.

The Secret to Waking Up



the
Key
Potatoes

This Begins Your Personal Work Notebook

You may copy and enlarge the following pages to compile in a folder for ready use!

Remember: This Bible study works *only* if **you** work!

When you use this notebook, you are obeying

Acts 20:20

“And how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.”

WE MUST ESCAPE POTATO MODE!

Romans 13:11

“... now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

Ephesians 5:14

“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

5 Minute “Getting Back to the Bible” Study

(Use this small study in waiting rooms, etc.)

Romans 3:23 _____ have sinned. Does this include you and me?

Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is eternal _____.

John 3:16 God _____ the world. He sent His _____ for us to believe in.

CHURCH GROWTH

Colossians 1:13,14 Through God's Son, we have _____ and _____.

Romans 1:16 The _____ is the power of God unto salvation.

1 Corinthians 15:1-5 The Gospel is the death, _____ and resurrection of Christ.

Mark 16:15,16 In obeying the Gospel, we must _____ and be _____.

Romans 10:10 With the mouth we make _____ unto salvation.

Acts 2:38 We must repent (turn) and be baptized for _____.

Acts 2:47 When we are baptized, the Lord adds us to His _____.

(Hear, Romans 10:17; Believe, Hebrews 11:6; Repent, Acts 17:30; Confess, Acts 8:36,37; Be Baptized, Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:19,20)



MTT. 9:8-19 **EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION** MRK. 16:15-16

PREACHING	BELIEVED	REPENTED	CONFESSED	BAPTIZED	SAVED
PENTECOST ACTS 2:14-41		REPENT VERSES 37-38		BAPTIZED 38-41	REMISSION OF SINS 38-47 SAVED
SAMARIA ACTS 8:5-13	BELIEVED 12			BAPTIZED 12, 13	
EUNUCH ACTS 8:35-39	BELIEVED 30-37		CONFESSED 37	BAPTIZED 38	REJOICED 39
SAUL ACTS 9:17-18				BAPTIZED 18	SINS WASHED AWAY 29:10
CORNELIUS ACTS 10:24-48	BELIEVED 42			BAPTIZED 48	REMISSION OF SINS 43
THE JAILER ACTS 16:29	BELIEVED 31			BAPTIZED 33	
LYDIA ACTS 16:15	ATTENDED 14			BAPTIZED 15	

PREACHING
ROM. 10:14

FAITH
HEB. 11:6
HEB. 5:8,9

REPENTANCE
LUKE 13:3

CONFESSION
ROM. 10:10
II THESS. 1:7-9

BAPTISM
GAL. 3:27

SALVATION
II TIM. 2:10

How to use this Bible Study Notebook

1. Change the "Services offered by Christ's church" to reflect what is offered where you attend.

Services Offered by Christ's Church

We are concerned about you physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Therefore, we have a number of helps FREE to the public.

1. Many types of Christian counseling such as: grief, marriage, depression, teen pregnancy, anger, pre-marital, and worry.
 2. Free clothes, coats and shoes for anyone in need, including children.
 3. Free food for any needy family in our community.
 4. Free transportation to and from worship services.
 5. Puppet show every Sunday night after worship.
 6. Tuesday ladies' class each week from 2:00 to 3:00.
 7. Adult and Youth devotionals.
 8. Frequent Senior Saint Trips.
 9. Youth skating, bowling and fellowships.
 10. Youth rallies and a monthly area Bible quiz.
 11. 30-minute "Getting Back to the Bible" study.
2. With notebook in hand, knock on someone's door.
 3. Here is what you say:
 "Good Morning", "Afternoon", "Evening", etc...

CHURCH GROWTH

“I’m from the local church of Christ. I’m visiting in the community today to tell you of some of the free services we offer to the public. You probably haven’t heard about them. May I come in and share some of them with you?”

4. After you are invited inside, say something nice about their home, the weather, or other pleasantries, and sit with the prospect wherever they direct.
5. Next, go through the list of services from top to bottom. When you reach the 30-minute “Getting Back to the Bible” study, say: “We also offer a short 30-minute ‘Getting back to the Bible’ study. Can we do it here in the living room or at the kitchen table, whichever you prefer?”
6. At the end of the study, try to set up a time for follow-up studies.
7. Remember you must sift through the shallow, rocky and thorny soil to find the good heart.

Never forget that you and I are only tools for God’s use!

We plant, and God gives the increase.

Won’t you plant the seed of the Gospel?

*Therefore said He unto them, the harvest truly is great,
but the labourers are few ...” (Luke 10:2).*

(Chapter eight of John-Mark Wilson’s study book and work-guide, **The Secret of Waking Up the Pew Potatoes.**)

John-Mark Wilson works with the Apple Hill Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.

Families Pass on the Faith

May I share with you some reasons why I believe? All good reasons, none of them the really *real* reason. There’s my family. **I believe because I was brought up in a believing family.** I don’t make any bones about that. I don’t know what would have happened to me if I had been born in the depths of Manchuria to a Chinese family. I just don’t know. I do know that I was led to believe in the love of God as soon as I learned I should eat my oatmeal. We did a lot of believing in our house. We didn’t have much else to do, as a matter of fact. Other kids sang, “Jesus loves me this I know, ’cause the Bible tells me so.” I sang, “Jesus loves me this I know, ’cause my Mama told me so.” **Families are God’s primary teachers!** — *Selected*

Editor's Note:

We concluded Dr. Grimm's very valuable and enlightening history of the Lord's church in Volume 49 of **The Voice of Truth International**, ending with his awareness of the burgeoning restoration movement that was taking place in the United States at the very time when the church had almost been extinguished in Europe.

The American Restoration

Dr. Joe D. Gray



A "restoration movement" is simply that: restoring in the given locality what was already in existence. The church or body of people for which Christ died was begun on the Day of Pentecost in AD 33. According to prophecy (Isaiah 2:2,3; Joel 2:28; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 16:18), that kingdom — once begun — would never be destroyed. *"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."*

So, since AD 33, the church of Christ has existed among humans. It began in Jerusalem and had spread to all the world within thirty years, according to Paul's statement in Colossians 1:6. Because of persecution, a scattering of the Christians, and apostasy among some believers, the church waxed and waned in numbers, becoming weaker in one area while becoming stronger in another. Often it has gone out of existence in entire sections of the world. And often there have been "restoration movements", situations in which people would turn to the Scriptures with the determination to follow God's word alone, and to be simply what was taught and practiced in the New Testament church.

That is what happened in the United States in the 19th Century. The accusation is sometimes made that "the church of Christ" began as a result of the "Stone-Campbell Movement", but this thinking is wrong. When people today, anywhere in the world, teach, practice, and obey exactly what people taught, practiced, and obeyed in the first century, they will be added

CHURCH HISTORY

by God to the church, just as He did then. This is a truth which has taken place repeatedly through the centuries. It can happen today anywhere people choose to turn away from the doctrines and organizations of men, and to be simply the church they read about in the New Testament.

To serve as an example for others who long to see pure Christianity flourish in their area, we want to share with our readers brother Joe Gray's study on the history of the Lord's church in the American Restoration Movement.

BY WAY OF BACKGROUND

Joe D. Gray, Ph.D.

There was deep **concern** — even dismay — in the hearts of many religious leaders as the **18th century neared its close**. **Religion** seemed to be on the **decline**. Even a Jonathan Edwards and a Barton Stone, with raging camp meetings and fiery sermons were only temporary sparks on a vast frontier. No one seemed really capable of turning the minds of the masses to things eternal — especially the educated and the wealthy. The churches were torn asunder with division upon division — until one denomination might have two dozen different groups using its name but with no fellowship between them. Serious-minded religious leaders sought prayerfully for a true and wide-spread awakening.

Many turned to **personal prayer** and **study** to find solace or solution. In their study, they discovered a wide **variance** between **Biblical teaching** and **then-current practice**. These men (and women) **believed the Bible to be God's Word**; they were confident that it contained God's Way. In various places and under different circumstances these students of the Bible began to turn to the concept of **restoration**. A **divine pattern** had been **violated**. In order to regain the beauty, power, and purity of the pattern, they understood that men **must return to its original order or design**.

The restoration movement in America is slightly more than two hundred years old (if one begins with James O'Kelley). Overall, therefore, there are two centuries from which to learn from the mistakes, failures, and successes of this effort. I am aware that **history does not determine the correctness of doctrine**. Nor does history, or experience, dictate who was right or wrong on any particular issue. **All Truth is revealed — external, eternal, unchanging** — and thus is not subject to the appraisal of the past.

However, there are matters of interest from yesterday which are useful for encouragement, understanding, correction, and challenge. In these early years of the 21st century, I ask that you look back with me through those 200 years.

Let us look and learn, look back and be challenged

In each of the past two centuries, the flow of the church in its inner unity and outward reach has followed a visible, recognizable, repeated sequence. It is in that order of events that I find an unparalleled challenge — an incomparable opportunity for modern times. Think with me briefly through these two centuries.

EARLY 19th CENTURY

Great men of faith in the first years of the 19th century, in a desperate effort to deal with the massive defections from truth in their day and in a humble attempt to please God, turned to a **study regimen** rarely found in modern times. Multiple hours daily were spent in the Book. Introspection led to changes in teaching, life, and church affiliation. There was a widespread feeling that much was wrong; and an urgency to find God's way of repair.

These were good men — religious men sickened with the folly of denominationalism. They discovered widespread rejection of the specific teachings of the Book. Man-centered, institutional-bound organizations were drifting farther and farther away from that simple and beautiful pattern of the Lord. The search in which they engaged was long and sincere. The positions to which their study led them were most unpopular. Yet, they were men of courage who loved their Lord more than the praise of their peers. They had the strength to leave the past — to cut ties of generations based upon their simple faith in His Word. **They studied, prayed, wrote, taught, debated, and interacted with anyone who was willing.**

O'Kelley, Stone, the Campbells, Jones, Smith, Dasher and many others established audiences in various ways. Response was initially disappointing. In 1820, after more than a decade, Thomas Campbell stated that there were only six congregations, and he doubted that there were more than 200 adherents to the restoration plea in the area in which they worked. In North Carolina, New England, and Kentucky the numbers were only slightly larger. The Georgia work was just beginning. **Yet these men pressed on.** They never doubted the truthfulness of their message. After three decades, beginning with O'Kelley, the believers everywhere were relatively few; the visible future was far from positive. While disappointed and frustrated, they kept their faith. They pressed on relentlessly. Although success seemed limited, **they did not despair.**

From: "The Church: Today's Opportunity" by Dr. Joe D. Gray, P.O. Box 156, Altamont, Tennessee, 37301

Parenting Is an Awesome Responsibility

Dale Grissom

Children are a gift from God, but they come with an awesome responsibility. Our heavenly Father, however, did not simply bless us with offspring and then leave us to fend for ourselves. He provided us with a manual — the Bible — in which parents are instructed to discipline their children (Proverbs 19:18; 22:6), and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

We are living in a society that, for the most part, condones divorce for any reason. As a result of that lax attitude toward marriage and the family, some fifteen million American children are growing up in one-parent homes. Children in such circumstances are much more likely to drop out of school, get in trouble with the law, or become

pregnant as teenagers than those who are reared in stable two-parent homes.

Christians should know better. We are to be students of God's Word so that we will know what His will is for our lives. When we fail to avail ourselves of a good Bible knowledge, as well as the friendship of other Christians, we run the risk of being influenced by the forces of Satan rather than by God. *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"* (Galatians 5:19-21).

Many of these sins have consequences that last an earthly lifetime, and those that are not repented of can cause a soul to be eternally lost. †



Dale Grissom works with the Lord's church in Dexter, Missouri, USA.



Mother in the Home

Vance Hutton

Mothering, like commandment-keeping in our day, has fallen on hard times. Some have even questioned the need for mothering. Motherhood is deplored by many and considered ancient and barbaric. Many have shifted the responsibility of rearing their own flesh and blood to anyone or anything that will accept it. The harvest is not a pretty sight to behold.

A great debt is owed to mothers who have sought to meet the responsibilities God has placed on them. We have to appreciate the women who have longed for the privilege to bring life into the world. They go into the jaws of death with love and desire to be mothers

(Genesis 30:1). Notice with me the invaluable, influential, and ideal mother.

The Invaluable Mother: A godly mother's value is beyond estimation. She is priceless. She will be virtuous, and her price is far above rubies (Proverbs 31:10). Of all jobs women do, the task of mothering is probably as important as any and more important than most. It would be hard to overstate the power for good and evil in motherhood. Notice the following quotes:

1. "All that I am, or can be, I owe to my angel mother" (Abraham Lincoln).
2. "The mother's heart is the

child's school room" (Henry Ward Beecher).

3. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world" (John Gray).

4. "Youth fades, love droops, the leaves of friendship fall, a mother's secret love outlives them all" (Oliver Wendell Holmes).

5. "The future destiny of the child is always the work of the mother" (Napoleon).

Mothers have an average of less than twenty years to mould and train their children. All of it is needed. Feminists may devalue the importance of mothers, but God does not. You will never fill a role of greater importance than bearing children, guiding and shaping their lives, and being keepers of the home (1 Timothy 2:1; 1 Timothy 5). Do not fail God and sin against your children by failing in this most important role (Genesis 42:22).

The Influential Mother: Ezekiel 16:44 speaks of the influence of mothers in the statement "*like mother, like daughter*". Mothers just may be the most influential people on earth. Mothers do not serve as elders, deacons, evangelists, or heads of families, but they are often much more influential. You are good examples of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13,14). Be careful in every way not to offend one of the little ones

(Matthew 18). One would do well to study the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She, no doubt, exerted great influence upon His actions from a lad to the cross. Many people draw strength and courage from their mother even long after she has died. She, like Abel of old, though dead, yet continues to speak (Hebrews 11:4). Her works will follow after death (Revelation 14:13).

The Ideal Mother: Certainly not all mothers are ideal. They are not models for imitation. This is so sad. Some mothers need to make changes, and I pray they will. Ideal mothers long for motherhood like Rachel and Hannah. They exemplify courage like Jochebed. They stand by their children as Mary did for Jesus. They teach their children the scriptures and instill faith in them like Lois and Eunice did for Timothy. They are righteous and walk in daily obedience like Elizabeth. Such mothers give the gift of love, set a good example, teach faith in God, discipline, make the home a refuge, and prepare those children for life and eternity.

We commend all godly mothers for what you have done, are doing, and will do. May the Lord bless. †

Vance Hutton is the preacher for the church of Christ in Double Springs, Alabama, USA.

"Teach the Children"

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

The Catholic educator, Francis Xavier, once said, "Give me the children until they're seven, and anyone can have them afterward." When Hitler wanted to subjugate the people of Germany and then the world, he first took the children and put them in youth camps. That gave him control. Marx and Ingells advocated replacing family education with social education. Every major revolution begins by targeting the young.

And God has stipulated that parents teach the children His commandments. Let "these words of mine be in your heart and teach

them diligently to your children" (Deuteronomy 6:6,7). God says that your home is to be a law school, where tender minds are implanted with the Word of God. But, it must be first in the minds and hearts of the teachers: parents.

But, how are we told to communicate the great eternal truths? Note that "you are to talk of them when you sit in the house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (verse 7). We are to teach **convincingly** by practicing what we teach! Parents must be sure that what is taught is in



their own hearts and lives. We are to teach **consistently**, day in and day out! There is to be no let-up. And, we must teach **creatively**, like Jesus, who saw opportunities in ordinary things to teach profound lessons. There are so many things around the house and in daily life that provide objects from which our children learn valuable lessons.

Now consider two more ways to teach:

Teach them conversationally.

That is, to teach them in the normal course of the day's activities. Teaching is not done exclusively in a class where facts are crammed. When a child asks, "What does this mean?" take advantage of his curiosity to teach (Deuteronomy 6:20). Let conversation and talk times be occasions to imprint God's eternal truth. Faith is caught as well as taught!

Teach them conspicuously.

"Bind them as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, write them on the doorpost of your house" (Deuteronomy 6:8,9). What's the idea? The Jews took it very literally and made little boxes called "phylacteries" and fastened them on their heads and wrists. It is doubtful that God meant to do it that literally. But, having His Word *"between the eyes"* surely means to let it control our thinking. And to have it *"on the right hand"* is to let it control our actions. At least His Word is to be

conspicuously practiced in life.

The point in all that Moses said is this: be sure the Word of God is evident in your family — in teaching and in practice. †

Clarence DeLoach, Jr. works with the Walnut Street Church of Christ in Dickson, Tennessee, USA.

How Do I Worship God? I Give to His Work

From the beginning, Christians have given free-heartedly of their material possessions for the support of God's work. We are not commanded to give 10% or 20% of our earnings, but we give as we desire and as we are able. *"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Though Christians may give money, food, clothing, or hospitality whenever they see the need for such aid, early Christians were told, *"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collecting when I come"* (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Such money is used for the functional needs of the church, for preaching the gospel, and for aiding individuals who are having problems greater than they can manage themselves, as is possible.

NEXT: Does Christianity Make a Difference?



Marriage Is to Be Honorable, Not Horrible

Josh Barnett

- 1) Before marriage, a man yearns for the woman he loves. After marriage, the “y” becomes silent.
- 2) When a newly married couple smiles, everyone knows why. When a ten-year married couple smiles, everyone wonders why.
- 3) A little boy asked his father, “Daddy, how much does it cost to get married?” And the father replied, “I don’t know, son, I’m still paying for it.”

- 4) The most effective way to remember your wife's birthday is to forget it once.
- 5) Husband: Honey, why are you wearing your wedding ring on the wrong finger? Wife: Because I married the wrong man!
- 6) First Guy (proudly): "My wife's an angel!" Second Guy: "You're lucky, mine's still alive."
- 7) Marriage is grand — and divorce is at least 100 grand.
- 8) Married life is very frustrating. In the first year of marriage, the man speaks and the woman listens. In the second year, the woman speaks and the man listens. In the third year, they both speak and the neighbors listen,
- 9) When a man opens the door of his car for his wife, you can be sure of one thing: either the car is new or the wife.
- 10) Before marriage, a man will lie awake all night thinking about something you say. After marriage, he will fall asleep before you finish.

Some of these sayings are humorous, some are honest, and some are down right horrible. The perception of marriage has changed in the world. This God-given institution has turned into corruption for many marriages. It's "what I want" instead of "what God wants".

This behavior and belief is not Biblical. God said, "*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge*" (Hebrews 13:4).

If a marriage is truly made "before God", with the **commitment first to God** and then to each other, with the desire to please God **first**, the mate **second**, and self **last**, it will work well. The current mind-set of "what I want" or "what's good for **me**" is from the devil himself and is guaranteed to destroy any relationship.

The church is to be a light to the world and a city set upon a hill. (Matthew 5:14) A part of this light and city is our marriages. If we are going to let our light shine, our marriages must shine as well. Marriage is to be honorable not horrible. †

Josh Barnett preaches for the Westside Church of Christ in Brownsville, Tennessee, USA.

WE WILL LIVE AGAIN TOMORROW



'Tis a life of short duration
That we live upon the earth
Knowing death's cold visitation
Is appointed us at birth;
But this thought will not repine us
When it carries us away
For the grave cannot confine us —
We will rise to live for aye.

We accept our lot as mortals
When we come to realize
We must pass through death's dark portals
On our way into the skies;
Though each passing day now takes us
Nearer Jordan's waiting shore
When the trump of God awakes us
We will live for ever more.

We are placed here on probation
And the years which we receive
Are our time for preparation
For the moment when we leave;
Flesh and blood must be surrendered
To a tomb of silent gloam
But with hope divinely gendered
We await our passage home.

Day by day we're drawing nearer
To the time when life will end
And the moments all grow dearer
As we've fewer here to spend;
But we face it without sorrow
Knowing as we onward plod —
We will live again tomorrow
In the paradise of God.

— Harry Presley

Peter Remembered...!

Allan E. Flaxman

Memory is surely a wonderful thing! It's that power we have of recalling events or things learned in the past. Some things are remembered in sharp focus, while other memories are blurred and unclear, and in between these extremes of memory lie every shade of recall. Further, while we humans stand as God's highest form of earthly creation, we are not alone in regard to memory, for even some animals can be taught to remember a wide variety of things and commands.

Memory can and often does stir the complete range of human emotions, depending on the subject remembered and upon the way we may view that memory at that particular time. It can bring forth in us emotions, ranging all the way from laughter and joy to heart-wrenching sadness and tears. Peter's memory tore at his heart strings as he saw his puny weakness and lack of moral courage displayed before him in sharp contrast to his recent boast that, *"Though all others shall be*

offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matthew 26:33). We know, of course, that within only hours of this boast, Peter had already denied any knowledge of Jesus and had done so with cursing! But, aided by the crowing cock, his memory worked and Peter *"went out and wept bitterly"* (Matthew 26:69-75).

But, as we've mentioned briefly, our memories are not always complete and accurate. True, there are times when we might wish that our memories were not so clear, yet probably more often we will wish that our recall was much more detailed and more accurate. You see, we also have an all-too-good "forgettery"! With that thought in mind, we sometimes wonder if Jesus' Apostles ever feared they might not remember some of the important teachings of Jesus, as they listened to Him daily during those three and one half years of His earthly ministry! There is no suggestion in Scripture that

they were "making notes" as day followed day! But one thing is sure — God had not forgotten!

Jesus, toward the close of His ministry, allayed any fears the Apostles may have had as to memory. He told them, "*I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever ...*," and, "*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you*" (John 14:16 and 26). How wonderfully reassuring this must have been to these Apostles, these men who were still struggling to come to terms with Jesus' repeated warnings concerning the proximity of His death by crucifixion! Memory!!

And, as Christians, there are two things we must keep fresh in our "memory banks", two things that should set our minds at rest as we all honestly acknowledge our sinfulness and our hopeless unworthiness to stand before God in Judgment, as well as the frightening reality of the open gates of an eternal Hell (Romans 3:23 and Ephesians 2:12)! Christ Himself saw to it that we would not forget the first. **He instituted the Lord's Supper.**

This, to be observed on a weekly basis "in remembrance" of Him (1

Corinthians 11:25,26). And, this "remembrance" was of God's Son, whose death was sacrificial in nature, as the Scriptures plainly teach (see Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19,20 and 1 Peter 1:18,19).

The second of these two memories springs directly out of the first. **It is that wonderful and marvelous promise make by God Himself.** It concerns the "New Covenant", or the "New Agreement" God has made with those who love and obey Him. It is stated with great simplicity, yet has a wealth of meaning and reassurance. It reads, God speaking, "*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*" (Hebrews 8:12). How comforting! How reassuring! How marvelous, to think that every sin and shameful thing in our lives is wiped away by God!

Peter "remembered", and his remembrance brought floods of bitter tears to his eyes. Every weakness there may have been in the memories of the Apostles was providentially taken care of by the Holy Spirit Himself. And our memories concerning the sacrificial death of Christ bring with them joy and comfort beyond words to express. †

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



in the "Warm Fuzzies"

Darla Rozinski

If you are like me, you correspond by e-mail; and also if you are like me, you are bombarded with e-mail and web site addresses that promise you (in various forms) that God loves you and wants you to be happy. These are always accompanied by either beautiful photography or cutesy animation. They are designed to make a person feel warm and cuddly inside. In other words, they give you the "warm fuzzies".

Sometimes these e-mails even tell you that you will be blessed today if you send it on to ten other people — very reminiscent of the TV evangelists who tell people they will be blessed if they touch their TV set and send in a contribution. Well, while most of us were laughing at the scoundrels even trying that, the devil was making them rich. What's my point? Don't be lulled into thinking that God loves everyone so much He couldn't possibly want you to be unhappy or that He couldn't punish the disobedient!

It is my contention that these e-mails and web sites are new tools in the devil's bag of tricks. On the surface, there is nothing wrong with sweet e-mails. However, if the devil can lure us into believing that God wants all of us to be happy here on earth, and that He will bring wonderful good things into our lives no matter how we ignore His requirements, the devil has us.

Brothers and sisters, where is the book, chapter, and verse that says that God wants you to be happy in this earthly life? How many times have you heard a person say, "I know God wants me to be happy, so I'm going to do what will make me happy"? Let's look at a few examples of God's servants here on earth.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God told Noah to build an ark because He was going to destroy the earth. Noah built the ark, with all the people around him laughing at him, and he continued to build even though he knew he would lose his home, friends, and family. For a whole year he was in the ark that had only one window at the top, with seven other people and a multitude of animals. When the doors of the ark were opened, the people inside were the only ones left on earth (Genesis 6-8). During Noah's life of obedience, do you think there were some days of great

sadness and unhappiness, when he thought of all the grief and death involved in his story?

Joseph was sold into slavery and spent years in prison because of living by God's rules. The people who promised to help him get out of prison forgot him (Genesis 39-41). Do you think those years were filled with "warm fuzzies" that assured him that God wanted him to be happy?

Abraham was the friend of God. God asked him to leave his father's house and go to a land He would show him. Was it an easy, happy life that he lived as a nomad in foreign countries where he and his large band of dependents often faced drought, famine, and physical danger? Later, God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac (Genesis 12 and 22). Did "warm fuzzies" comfort him as he and Isaac climbed the mountain to make the sacrifice demanded by his faith?

David was a man after God's own heart. He was God's anointed to be the king of Israel while Saul chased him all over the country trying to kill him. When David sinned, he was punished with the death of his newborn child (1 & 2 Samuel). Do you think David told himself, "I'm going to do what makes me happy, because God wants me to be happy"?

The early Christians, history tells us, were eaten by lions. They

were denied the right to buy and sell if they did not worship the emperor in Rome. The apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh, which God would not remove. Paul was bitten by a snake, shipwrecked more than once, went hungry, was beaten and spent time in prison for doing God's will (Acts). As you read his account of his life in 2 Corinthians 11:22-29, is "happiness" a word that comes readily to mind? Had not Jesus Himself told Ananias, concerning Saul, "*I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake*"?

think is best in this life. We are the created, not the Creator. Our time on earth is a time of learning to love and worship God. It is a time of service, even though it may cost us dearly. God does want us to be happy, but godly happiness is not a self-centered life focused on "fun and games".

How many who are expecting God to bend heaven and earth to make them happy are not at all concerned about what He wants them to do? In every example we have considered, godly happiness and fulfill-

**How many who are expecting God
to bend heaven and earth to make them happy
are not at all concerned about what He wants them to do?**

The Gospel accounts tell us about Jesus, the Son of God, sent to earth. His first bed was a manger in a barn. From the beginning, powerful people wanted to kill him. Many of the people He came to save didn't want to be saved. They worked against Him and tried to trap Him. Finally they succeeded. They crucified Him when He was only 33 years old. He is not described in Scripture as "happy", but as "a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3).

Don't get trapped by the "warm fuzzies". God wants what's best for us eternally, and that doesn't always mean what we want or what we

ment came at great cost to the individuals. Their lives were entirely molded and shaped by doing God's will. Obeying God was their quest in life, and not once do the Scriptures mention their expectation that they would be "happy". Even at the point of the cross, Jesus said, "*...not My will, but Yours, be done*" (Luke 22:42).

We want happiness, but do we want godly happiness, and are we willing to invest what it will cost for God to be able to bless us in that way? †

Darla Rosinski is a Christian wife and mother in Prattville, Alabama, USA.

Is For Me and My House,



We Will Follow and Serve the Lord

Peter Mostert

Perhaps the strongest motivation for me to become a Christian was a fear of being lost eternally. Though I was raised in a Christian environment — by this I mean that my parents had me christened as an infant, my mother taught me to say the Lord's Prayer, and I attended various churches — I felt incomplete.

I was nineteen when I was baptized into Christ. Members of the church of Christ from the USA who were missionaries in New Zealand persuaded my brother, and two years later my father, mother, and me, to be obedient to the truth in accordance with Acts 2:38 — to repent and be baptized for the

remission of sins and to receive the Holy Spirit.

Believing in Jesus has never been a problem for me — I have always, from my earliest recollections, done so!

Obedying Jesus in baptism was not a problem for me — once I believed the truth, I was willingly baptized.

Conversion for me was truly a life-changing occurrence. I quit my “worldly” friends, gathered with the church for every service, and spent my weekends teaching the Gospel from house to house. I remain committed to Christ and endeavor to raise my children as Christians, send them to a Christian university, encourage them to marry Christians, enter the mission field, and become leaders in Christ’s church.

Throughout my whole Christian experience, however, there remain things that I continue to wrestle with and have a hard time understanding and believing. I find it difficult to believe that God permits so much pain and suffering in this world; difficult to believe that God allows a hell for those who do not obey Him; difficult to believe that God uses weak people like me to preach His Gospel; difficult to believe that only those who are baptized will be saved; difficult to believe that Jesus had to die for my sin; difficult to believe that if I do

not use my talents God will not welcome me; difficult to believe that countless millions who have not heard the Gospel will perish; and on and on....

But God says, “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts*” (Isaiah 55:8,9). The created is not in position to judge the Creator, nor is it our option to re-write the rules of God that seem difficult to us or to discount what we may not understand. Our God is *The Almighty*. What He does is right. Our part is to wait. One day we will understand what seems so difficult today.

But as a human, not understanding these hard things is a burden for me. Yet I refuse to give up, or go back. I will not be persuaded, nor tricked by Satan and his messengers to forsake God who has done much for me. I am determined! If even the whole world turns against God, I am not prepared leave Him. With all my mental, emotional, and spiritual power, I will remain faithful. As for me and my household, we will follow and serve the Lord! †

Peter Mostert works with the Magnolia Center Church of Christ in Riverside, California, USA.



BECOMING MORE LIKE CHRIST

Jane McWhorter

As Christians, most of us want to develop Christ-like traits. We pray that God will help us become more knowledgeable of His Word, more compassionate, more joyful, forgiving, and meek. The problem is that we ask, and then we expect the gifts to be handed to us as beautifully-wrapped presents. We are so busy looking for elaborately-decorated packages that we frequently walk right by a tattered package wrapped in plain brown paper and tied with a string. If only we would bother to look, we could discover that the plain box by the roadside is the answer to our prayers. Upon turning the package over, we find that in tiny letters in one corner is the word "opportunity". We ask for a gift and God gives us the opportunity to develop that trait.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

- ☞ We ask for more Bible knowledge and evidently think such wisdom should descend miraculously from on high. The only way to know more about God's Word is to take the time to study. The Father gives us a Bible and a clock and expects us to use them wisely.
- ☞ We want to be more compassionate, more loving, and gentle. However, we often walk past the gift because we find it in a nursing home, wrapped in a tattered bathrobe without family and friends as the elderly person cries to go home and see about a little dog. If we have never experienced that same desire to return home, it may be difficult to step into another person's shoes and show compassion. God may give us the gifts of affliction, heartache, the loss of a loved one, or the loss of material possessions to help us understand and be able to identify with the problems of others.
- ☞ Forgiveness is a necessary Christian trait, but it has to be developed. We may ask for a forgiving nature, and God may send it in the form of a critical brother or sister. Learning to understand such people is the opportunity sent our way.
- ☞ We ask to be meek, but pride interferes. Far too often meekness is wrapped in a brown package with the opportunity called "degradation" written on the back. How often we must be broken before we can handle achievements, for it is only then that we realize we are nothing but the shells of human vessels through which God works.

Christ begged for a special gift: the salvation of mankind. Long before He ever set foot on this earth, He knew how that gift would be wrapped — in thorns and nails. This was the gift looming ahead as He prayed in Gethsemane. Although the divine nature of Christ accepted the inevitable, it was His human side that cried out in agony, "*Let this cup pass*" (Matthew 26:39). If He could accept the gift of our salvation wrapped in thorns and nails, dare we grumble and complain about the wrappings of some precious gifts sent from God? †

Jane McWhorter is a writer and the wife of a gospel preacher, and they live in Fayette, Alabama, USA.

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.



The English language can be confusing at times, for example:

- The bandage was wound around the wound.
- The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
- The buck does funny things when the does are present.
- Upon seeing a tear in the painting I shed a tear.
- I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.



“When I was a youngster,” complained the frustrated father, shaking his head, “I was disciplined by being sent to my room without supper. But our son has his own color TV, phone, computer, and CD player.”

“So what do you do when your son misbehaves?” asked his friend.

“I send him to **our** room!”



The joy of motherhood —
What a woman experiences when all the kids are in bed.



This woman back home has a hard time understanding things. One day someone asked her, “Did you hear the story about the dirty window?” She answered, “No.” The other person said, “Well, you couldn’t see through it anyway.”

She ran next door and asked her neighbor, “Did you hear the story about the window that you couldn’t see through?” The neighbor said, “No.” The woman then said, “Well, it’s too dirty to tell!”



It is said that:

- An ostrich’s eye is bigger than its brain.
- A “jiffy” is an actual unit of time for 1/100th of a second.
- More people are killed annually by donkeys than die in air crashes.

PROVERBS 17:22

A famous football coach was on vacation with his family in Maine. When they walked into a movie theater and sat down, the handful of people there applauded. He thought to himself, "I can't believe it. People recognize me all the way up here."

Then a man came over to him and said, "Thanks for coming. They won't start the movie for less than ten people."



We won't tell who the preacher was but as the collection plate was being passed, a child was heard to say "But Mom, that dull speech he gave isn't worth a whole dollar."



Granny lay back on her hospital pillow, a comfortable look on her face. "I feel so much better today, and it was sure nice of the preacher to come and visit."

"But Granny," said her granddaughter, "that wasn't the preacher. That was a doctor from the city. He's a specialist, and he came to examine your appendix."

"Oh," Granny replied. "I thought he was a little familiar for a preacher."

It's really hard to be nostalgic when you can't remember anything.



One park ranger asked another, "What do we do if we see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant?"



"I got a new fishing pole for our preacher," bragged a deacon.

His friend from another congregation said, "Wow, that's great! I wish we could make a great trade like that!"



In spite of what some folks think, I'm no dummy. I remember one time back in grade school the teacher asked me to spell Mississippi, so I said, "Do you mean the river or the state?"



You may have missed seeing this used car ad in the Sioux Falls, South Dakota newspaper: "1984 Ford Escort, pushes easily. Rolls nicely down hills. Looks good in the driveway."

7 Scriptural Reasons for Opposing Abortion

Bobby Dockery

The word "abortion" is not specifically used in the Bible. However, there are many biblical principles which apply to the subject and which clearly preclude the acceptance of abortion as a moral act. Consider:

1. Life is a gift from God.

"He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things," (Acts 17:25). Human life is constructed in the image of God (Genesis 1.26). Because of its origin, human life is sacred.

2. God forbids the willful taking of human life. Romans 13.9 enjoins, *"You shall not murder."* Mankind has always been forbidden to wantonly kill a fellow human because of the special character of human life. According to Genesis 9.6, the penalty for taking

an innocent life was death.

3. The Gospel emphasizes human worth and dignity.

Christianity was born into a world where human life was cheap. In the Roman Empire, 60 million people lived in degrading slavery; thousands flocked to the gladiatorial games to cheer the senseless butchery in the arena; it was the accepted thing to abandon or drown unwanted or sickly infants. Ninety-nine out of 100 families made it a practice to abandon ill female babies after the first; abortion was widespread. In such a world, the teaching of Jesus emphasized a radically different attitude toward life. He stressed the worth of the individual, insisting He had come to *"taste death for every man"* (Hebrews 2.9). Jesus taught that little children were precious

(Matthew 19:14). Society was literally revolutionized! The influence of Christianity led to the end of slavery, gladiatorial contests, the murder of infants, and abortion!

4. The Bible teaches that human life begins in the womb.

No distinction is made in Scripture between unborn and newly born babies. The same Greek word (brephos) is used in the Bible to refer to both (Luke 1:41; 2:12; 1 Peter 2:2). Thayer says that the Greek word refers equally to "an unborn child, embryo, fetus, newborn child, infant." The unborn possess all the qualities of personality. Each life is unique. God said to Jeremiah: "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you*" (Jeremiah 1:5).

5. God condemns selfishness (Philippians 2:4, etc.). Except in cases of dire medical necessity, where the actual life of the mother is at stake, abortion is always a selfish act!

6. Those without natural affection are detestable to God.

Among the sins of the Gentiles which subjected them to the wrath of God was the charge that they

were "*without natural affection*" (Romans 1:31). The Greek word (*astorgos*) refers to a lack of love on the part of parents for offspring. Surely the mother who chooses, merely for her own convenience, to destroy the innocent life in her womb is lacking in natural affection.

7. Abortion violates the "Golden Rule".

"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you" (Matthew 7:12). Application of this principle would close every abortion clinic in the world. What "pro-choice" advocate would wish to have his or her body dissected, as in a partial-birth abortion ... or savagely ripped apart, as in a suction abortion ... or immersed in corrosive liquid, as in a saline injection abortion? How can those who reject such treatment for themselves justify it for others?

The basic question reduces to this: How can any people claim to honor God's will while refusing to reverence all life created in His image? †

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

A child will make love stronger, days shorter, nights longer, bank rolls smaller, homes happier, clothes shabbier, the past forgotten, and the future worth living for. — Selected

Homosexuality Will Damn Your Soul

Demar Elam

We live in a day and age when all manner of sin and evil is expected to be accepted, condoned, and/or overlooked. Homosexuality is a sin that will damn an individual's soul in hell. Yet the "alternate lifestyle" is receiving growing acceptance in today's world. How can this be?

God's Word is so clear regarding homosexuality that it takes a complete denial of truth to accept this way of living. I read these words in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10: "*Do you not know that the righteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God.*"

We do not render the homosexual a favor when we fail to point out to him that his course is set on fire of hell. Broadmindedness to the neglect of truth will only result in a sinner remaining a sinner and being lost. "Let us not mistake the stretching of the conscience for the broadening of the mind." Regarding

this issue (as well as any other), only the truth will be profitable. The truth, in this instance, is that our God will not receive the homosexual into that heavenly home unless he repents.

Paul dealt with those practicing homosexuality in Romans 1:26-32, "*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.*"

"*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to*

parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

Please note that — *through inspiration* — Paul condemned men who burned in their lust toward one another, men with men committing what is shameful. Homosexuality is shameful, and dare we give it the least air of respectability today, in outright contradiction to the condemnation clearly spoken by the Almighty God of Heaven?

We must point out to the homosexual that even though God loves every soul — as Christians must also love and grieve for those in error — yet He will not condone and overlook the sins committed in violation of His Word. He has repeatedly condemned homosexuality in the Scriptures and has said that those who practice such things are worthy of [spiritual] death (Romans 1:32). Notice, also, that in verse 32 Paul states that individuals should not approve of those who practice such things.

The homosexual charges the Bible believer with prejudice and bigotry. However, it isn't prejudice on the part of Christians that makes them speak out against this sin.

God Himself clearly labels homosexual behavior as **sinful**.

But to better understand how homosexuals and lesbians excuse their behavior by rejecting the authority of Scripture, and then demand that everyone else also reject that authority on the basis of their thinking alone, note the statement made recently by a leader in "SoulForce", a group that promotes the acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle: "When asked to defend a hermeneutic that supported same-sex relationships, the SF individual, in part, said that we likely misunderstood the Bible passages, but *when it came down to it, Paul was just wrong about some things. He was wrong about women, was wrong about slavery, and was wrong about same-sex relationships.*" [Emphasis mine, Editor] (Quoted from a letter by Dr. Jack Reese, Dean of College of Biblical Studies at Abilene Christian University, which hosted the meeting)

A practicing homosexual cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. This is not **my** judgment. It is God's (Romans 1:26-32). Who are we, as beings made of dust, to raise a voice in contradiction to what the Creator God has said? †

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Heaven

Mark T. Tonkery

Are you going to Heaven? There is a growing tendency to believe that all “good” people, whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their Savior, will live in that eternal home after they die on earth. In 2005 a Barna survey found that 54% agree, 39% disagree that if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during his life, he will earn, or be rewarded with, a mansion in Heaven.

Heaven, as described in the Bible, is certainly a wonderful place. It is not surprising that people want to go there. In Isaiah 66:1, the Bible describes that world as the eternal dwelling place of God, “*Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne....*” When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said that they should address God the Father, “*which art in heaven*” (Matthew 6:9), a statement that confirms that God dwells in Heaven. The Bible describes many wonderful characteristics of this Paradise.

Heaven is a place of eternal peace and happiness. Revelation 21:4 tells us, “*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*”

Hebrews 4:9-11 and Revelation 14:13 also describe Heaven as a place of glorious rest. This is a major contrast with Hell. Jesus points out that Hell is a place of continual pain and suffering where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30), torment (Luke 16:23), and eternal fire (Matthew 25:41). Unlike Hell, Heaven is a place of eternal rest for the Christian’s weary soul.

The Bible also states that Heaven is a better dwelling place, a better country. We who live in the United States of America realize that in many respects this is a great country, but it is not Heaven. Countless problems exist here because of sin. All we have to do to verify that fact is to look at the daily newspaper.

But Heaven is a better country — far better — than the United States, because in that world there will be no more sin, no more death, no more sorrow, no more evil, and no more of the things that break our hearts. Hebrews 11:16 states that the faithful long for a better country. The idea, as

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

described in this passage, is that Heaven is far superior to anything we can ever hope for or imagine on this earth.

Heaven will also be a place of fellowship. First, as we have already noted, Revelation 21:2 describes how the apostle John saw New Jerusalem — the church — come down *as a bride adorned for her husband, Christ*. The text also says that *“the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.”* 1 Thessalonians 4:17 states, *“...so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* What joy it will be to dwell with God!

Heaven will be a place of fellowship with the righteous of ages past and with the saints who have been found faithful in Christ. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 says,

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

But the question remains: Are you going to Heaven? Will all “good” people go there, even if they were never believers in Christ and even if they were never washed in His blood? Since no human has the authority to give an answer to this question, we must let Jesus legislate concerning who will pass that final judgment, and on what basis a soul will be accepted into Heaven: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* (Matthew 7:21-23). †

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What Cancer Cannot Do!

David A. Sargent

Cancer! This very word brings a broad range of emotions to those who hear it: sadness, despair, disappointment, and the list goes on. One would be hard-pressed to find a family that has not been affected by this terrible disease.

Yet, as the following poem written by an unknown author reminds us, cancer is still very limited:

Cancer Is So Limited...

It cannot cripple LOVE,
It cannot shatter HOPE,
It cannot corrode FAITH,
It cannot eat away PEACE,
It cannot destroy CONFIDENCE,
It cannot kill FRIENDSHIP,
It cannot shut out MEMORIES,
It cannot silence COURAGE,
It cannot invade the SOUL,
It cannot reduce ETERNAL LIFE,
It cannot quench the SPIRIT,
It cannot lessen the power of the RESURRECTION!

Because of **Jesus**, cancer does *not* have the last word! Because of Jesus, *any* disease and even death itself are not the **final chapters** of our lives. The Apostle Peter wrote the following words of assurance to some suffering Christians: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you*" (1 Peter 1:3,4).

This is the hope of the Christian, and this hope can be yours if you will place your trust in God (Hebrews 11:6), repent of sin (2 Corinthians 7:9,10),

confess Jesus before others (Romans 10:9,10), be baptized (immersed) for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38), and cling to that living hope that Christ offers — through your continued, faithful obedience (1 John 1:7).

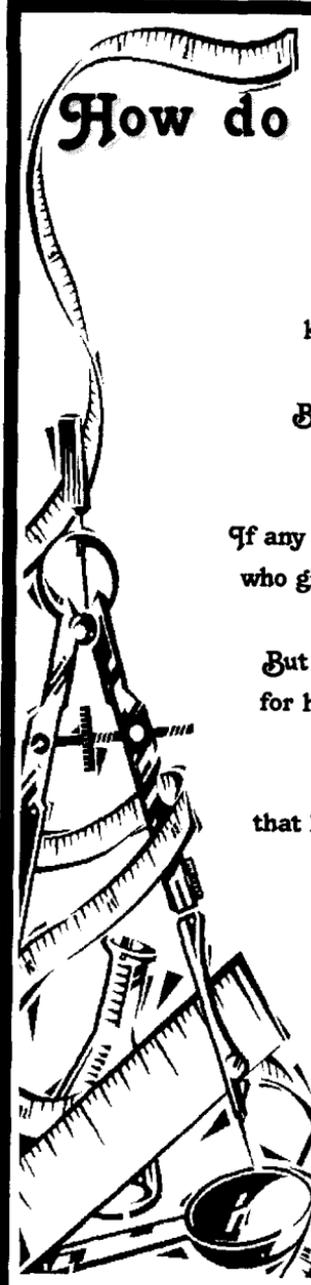
Hear the words of the apostle Paul: *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8: 38,39).

Cancer **cannot** touch the hope that Christ brings! Cancer **cannot** tarnish the inheritance of the faithful child of God.

Will you trust and obey so that this hope can be yours? †

David A. Sargent is minister of the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, Alabama, USA.





How do you measure up?

My brethren, count it all joy
when you fall into various trials,
knowing that the testing of your faith
produces patience.

But let patience have its perfect work,
that you may be perfect
and complete, lacking nothing.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God,
who gives to all liberally and without reproach,
and it will be given to him.

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting,
for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea
driven and tossed by the wind.

For let not that man suppose
that he will receive anything from the Lord;
he is a double-minded man,
unstable in all his ways.

James 1:2-8



“Worth-ship” reveals the worth, honor, value, and respect placed on the object of worship. If the true and living God of the Bible is to be revered, only that which is worthy will be accepted. Equally, the worshiper must also be true (John 4:23).

A Samaritan woman, whom Jesus Christ taught, was used to untrue worship, making her (the worshiper) untrue, though the worship act was correct — “*you worship*”, Jesus affirmed. Worship here is *proskuneo* — “to kiss toward”; but the object

True Worship Offered By True People

Danny Cline

of her kiss was incorrect — “*you worship that which you do not know*”. Worship (the physical act) happened; acceptable worship (the act plus the right object, and done with the right attitude) did not happen (John 4:20-22). Worship must be done in truth and in spirit (verse 24).

In a worship context, some Greeks in Thessalonica had “*turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God*” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). This

“serve” word differs from the previous one in that it is “to serve as a slave”. Implying deep humility, these people who formerly bowed to idols now served the true God. Having humbled themselves before untrue gods, they were now in the service of the true God. Their attitude was extremely important, originally misplaced, now well placed, previously well intentioned but wrong, now well-pleasing.

Along with humbleness, the attitude of true worship is seen in reverence and respect. Though idol worshipers may have the right attitude, as did those in Ephesus, their worship is false because their god is false (Acts 19:27).

Another word (*threskeia*) is used in the New Testament to illustrate the outer form of worship, “religious worship”. This formality can be applied even to the worship of angels, which is forbidden (Colossians 2:18; Revelation 2:8, 9).

Physical acts of worship, even when done with utmost dedication, do not fully constitute acceptable worship to Almighty God. The **attitude** must be worthy of the one receiving the honor of this act done in **gratitude** (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 12:28). Jesus said, *“I speak the truth, but ... you do not understand what I am saying ... because you cannot hear My word. He who is of God hears*

the words of God ... I honor My Father ... and keep His word” (selective phrases from John 8:45,43, 47,49,55). Honoring God, in showing our appreciation of His worth, is rooted in **listening to Him and keeping His Word**.

This attitude of gratitude will not insist on its own freedom to worship God in the way that pleases *me*. To insist that God change His “musts” is to open the door to every imaginable “act” of worship from any good-intentioned, though unacceptable worshiper. The discussion that the Son of God had with the Samaritan woman — a person who was seemingly humble, curious, well informed about worship in general, who thought that worship was mostly a matter of form, and whose history included deep loyalty to her ancestors’ ideas of presenting oneself to the God they worshiped — was summarized by the Christ with unalterable “musts” that must be practiced. *“God is spirit, and those who worship Him **must** worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24). **Without exception, worship must be to God’s liking:** *“...for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers”* (verse 23).

True worship is offered by true people to the true God, according to the truth in His Word. †

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You may be an expert on this subject already, but in case you need some extra pointers, please consider the following tips for helping us worship appropriately:

1. Go to bed early on Saturday evening so you can get up early on Sunday. Get rested well. Don't go to the assembly sleepy.

2. Come to the church building early. Don't wait till the last minute. Your presence might be needed to arrange, usher, organize, etc. You may also stop and pick up someone along the way.

3. Bring along your Bible, pen, paper, and markers. Take notes during the message or Bible Study and neatly file them for future use.

4. Participate in the service. Sing, pray, ask questions when it is

appropriate, and say a hearty "amen" when you agree with the thought.

5. Sit next to visitors. Introduce yourself and make him/her feel welcome. Share with them your Bible if they have none, and help them find the verses.

6. Encourage and compliment one another, particularly the speaker, songleader, prayer leaders, fellow Christians, visitors, etc.

7. Spend extra time after the service visiting with the brethren, especially visitors. Don't go out in a hurry, and don't speak only to people you know. Make the guest or newcomer feel welcome. †

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Jesus never got excited with people who did things halfway. We are told in the Scriptures to dedicate ourselves to God's cause. We are told to sing *with our hearts* in Ephesians 5:19. We are told to study to show ourselves *approved* in God's eyes in 2 Timothy 2:15. We are even told to pray *without ceasing* in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. God wants us to be committed, and He delights in our efforts to please Him!

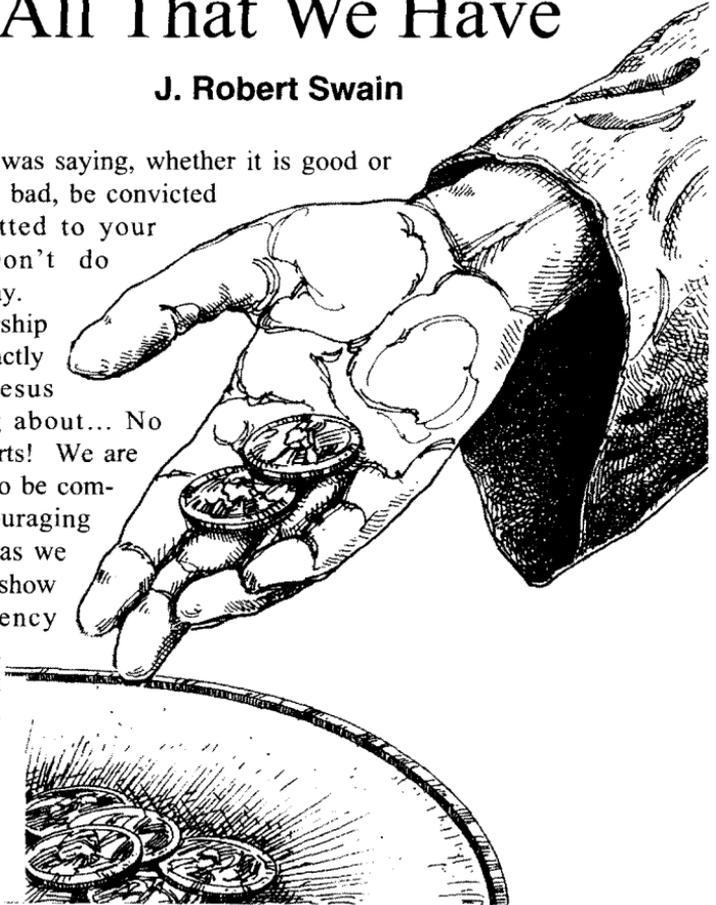
In the book of Revelation, Revelation 3:14-22, the Lord told the church in Laodicea that He wished they would make up their minds to be either hot or cold, but because they were lukewarm, they made Him nauseous. In a

All That We Have

J. Robert Swain

sense, Jesus was saying, whether it is good or whether it is bad, be convicted and committed to your cause! Don't do things halfway.

Our worship to God is exactly like what Jesus was talking about... No halfway efforts! We are encouraged to be committed, encouraging one another as we worship and show our dependency upon Him. Commitment to our worship should never be taken lightly. In fact, worship and



WORSHIP

praise to our God should cost us something.

I am reminded of the story in Genesis chapter 23, when the old patriarch Abraham lost his wife Sarah in death. Out of respect for him, Ephron, the individual who owned the piece of land where Abraham wanted to bury his wife, tried to give the old man the property. Abraham would not accept it. He surely appreciated the offer, but he was adamant that something this important should not come from someone else. The burial place for his wife had to be what he had provided for her.

When we worship, it should cost us something. We sacrifice our **time** when it would be easy to sleep in or be preoccupied with other things. We sacrifice our **will** by humbly bowing our heads to His rule, to worship Him in spirit and in truth. We sacrifice our **money** by giving from our heart to help His church function and grow.

Our worship should cost us something. Sacrificial worship and true devotion simply do not happen by accident. They require effort on our part. We must consciously make the decision to sacrifice, or it is not a sacrifice... it is an accident, or a routine, or simply a ritual!

I'm also reminded of the account found in Mark 12:41-44. Jesus was watching different individ-

uals put in their tax into the temple treasury. Many wealthy people put in large amounts out of their great wealth. The individual who was praised by Jesus was the little widow lady who gave two coins with no practical value. The temple did not need these two coins, worth less than a penny. But *the lady needed to give them*. The tax was not a civil tax, it was for the temple, for her God. Jesus said excitedly that she had given everything she had. Nothing was held back. No halfway measures, no lukewarm worship! That's why Jesus was excited. He had found someone who got it right.

God doesn't want just a *part* of us... He wants *all* of us! Jesus was in a position to know and understand this. He was God. This was His temple. This tax was for Him. He deeply appreciated this widow's humble and dedicated act of worship. Let's follow her example and give God all that we have. No halfway efforts!

If you need a further reminder of why we give Him everything in our worship and praise, just read John 3:16 again: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" †

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Giving, Praying, and Fasting

Ancil Jenkins



Introduction:

- I. **One can find a definite organization in the subjects of the Sermon on the Mount.**
 - A. Jesus started with the **character** of those in the kingdom. This is the beatitudes.
 - B. He next moved to the **behavior** of those in the kingdom.
 - C. He addressed five demonstrations of righteousness.
 1. Not only is murder prohibited, Jesus does not even allow hatred.
 2. Righteousness is demonstrated by a fidelity to your mate and to God's principles of marriage.
 3. He spoke of divorce and allowed only one provision for remarriage.

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4. One is to be committed to truth, “yes” is to be “yes” and “no” is to be “no”.
5. We are called to an attitude of non-retaliation.

II. Yet, Jesus shows there is more to being righteous than just living a moral life.

- A. He also shows that proper worship is considered part of being righteous.
- B. Some never see this. They separate morality from religion.
 1. They feel that morality and good works replace religion.
 2. On the other hand, some adhere to religion to the exclusion of good works or morality.
- C. It is impossible to separate these two.

III. In this expression of righteousness, Jesus calls for us to rise above the expected and ordinary.

- A. He calls for a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees.
- B. He calls us to do more than the tax collectors.
- C. He expects a higher standard of behavior than from the pagans (Matthew 5:20,47; 6:5,8).

IV. No contradiction exists between 6:1 and 5:16.

- A. We are to let our light shine by our good works.
 1. These are to be done before men.
 2. They are seen by men.
 3. Motive is the focal point in all that we do. Jesus condemns giving to be seen of men so we can receive their praise.
- B. There is a vast difference between doing good works that people see, and doing works to be seen of men.
 1. A good rule of thumb: “Reveal your good when tempted to hide and hide when tempted to reveal.”

Discussion:

I. How to Give

- A. None should seek to call attention to their good works.
 1. The Lord knows what we do (Mark 12:41). He saw “how” people gave.

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2. Perhaps some used trumpets when they gave. Their explanation was that they were calling the poor to come to receive help. It is easy to believe the trumpeting was for another reason.
3. Those who seek attention will be rewarded by the praise of men. However, this is the only reward they will receive.
 - a. The word “receive” is a business term in the Greek. It means one has been paid in full.
- B. He next calls for a seeming impossibility — not to let the left hand know what the right hand was doing.
 1. This, of course, is literally impossible.
 2. Jesus is warning us to avoid self-satisfaction in giving.
 - a. We are not to dwell on the good we do.
 - b. We must not feel ourselves better than those who do not give or do not give as much as we do.
- C. We are to seek no applause for our good works.
 1. We should not seek the approval of men.
 2. We should not seek self applause, letting the left hand clap with the right.

II. How to Pray

- A. Once more Jesus condemns one thing.
 1. He does not condemn praying or the love of praying.
 2. He doesn't condemn a discipline of prayer. Like Daniel, some Jews prayed three times a day.
 3. It is not wrong to stand and pray.
 4. He doesn't even say it is wrong to pray in public.
- B. The one thing He shows to be wrong is praying to be seen of men and to receive their praise.
 1. He commends the closet to us. We are to withdraw to pray.
 - a. We are to avoid distractions and disturbances.
 - b. Even more, we are to go to our room so people will not see us praying.
- C. How should we publically express our religion?
 1. We cannot put our light under a basket. I once heard of a young man who was to spend the summer working as a lumber jack. His mother told him before he left that he might have some difficulty. These were rough men and might mock him when they found out he was a Christian. When he came home

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at the end of the summer he was tanned and strong. One of the first things he told his mother was, "You should have not worried about me. I spent three months with those men and I don't think any of them ever suspected I was a Christian."

2. What about offering thanks for food in public?
 - a. Some did not grow up with this practice.
 - b. Once more, the motivation must be right.
 - c. Perhaps there are times it would be best to offer thanks silently.
 - d. However, praying publicly is not wrong if the motive is right.
3. What about religious symbols?
 - a. Once more, one must examine his motive.
 - b. We must not avoid open identification with Jesus.
 - c. Be aware of one fact: If we tell the world we are Christians, it will closely examine our lives to find some inconsistency. People will seek an opportunity to point out that you are not a Christian.
- D. We need more sympathy with men who lead public prayers. They have a most difficult task.
 1. They are praying to God in the presence of others.
 2. There is a temptation to talk to the crowd, even to impress it. A newspaper reported a religious meeting and spoke of the prayer as "the finest prayer ever offered to men".
 3. They do pray for the edification of the church.
 4. One aid in learning to be effective in praying in public is to pray much in private.

III. How to Fast

- A. Fasting plays a role in some religions.
 1. The Old Testament commanded only one day of fasting, but by Jesus' day, some had many days (Luke 18:10-12).
 2. The disciples of John fasted often.
 3. Even Jesus fasted for forty days.
 4. He expects His followers to fast (Matthew 9:15).
- B. What is fasting?
 1. Fasting is abstaining from fleshly pleasures, particularly from food, to demonstrate our humility before God.

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2. We can fast over our sin and guilt. The people to whom Jonah preached did this.
 3. We can fast to show our dependence on God's mercy as Esther asked the people to do.
 4. We can fast to show that the spirit is stronger than the flesh.
 5. We can fast to have money to spend on good works.
 - a. If each of our members would skip one meal a week and give the ten dollars that would have been spent, we could raise \$182,000 a year for good works.
- C. Fasting is not an end within itself.
1. Jesus approved fasting but only with the right motivation and demonstration.
 - a. There may be a good deal of fasting taking place. We do not know it because people follow Jesus' directions.
 2. Fasting alone will not make a person better before God.
 - a. Isaiah 58:3 says, *"Why have we fasted", they say, "and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?" "In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your laborers."*
 - b. *"Indeed you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, to make your voice heard on high."*
 - c. *"Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?"*
 - d. *"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?"*
 - e. *"Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?"*

Conclusion: The Father in heaven is concerned about your acts of righteousness.



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The Ministry of Restoring

Galatians 6:1-4

Jess W. Nutter

Introduction:

- A. From the dawn of human history, man has erred from the revealed will of his Creator (Genesis 3:6; Hosea 11:7; 2 Timothy 2:17,18).
- B. But if man's departure from God's will has been universal, so have been God's efforts to restore him to a place of favor and acceptance (See Ezekial 33:10,11; 2 Peter 3:9).
- C. In this lesson we will focus on what the Bible says about restoring the "erring".

I. It Is Possible for Christians to "Err" or "Fall" from God's Favor.

- A. The testimony of the scriptures (1 Corinthians 10:1-12; Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 3:12; James 5:19,20).
- B. Despite the unending list of those who have done it, some have written into their creeds that it is "impossible" to fall. Take heed!

II. What Are the Causes of "Erring"?

- A. One's religious leaders (Isaiah 3:12), "blind leaders" (Matthew 15:14).
- B. Elders (Acts 20:30).
- C. Ignorance of the scriptures (Matthew 22:29; Acts 13:27).
- D. One's own lust (James 1:14).
- E. It matters little what the cause might be, one's condition is the same.

III. What Is the Condition of the "Erring"?

- A. The scriptures are graphic. It is not a pretty picture.
 - 1. An unfruitful branch (John 15:1,2, "cut off").
 - 2. Overtaken in a fault (Galatians 6:1).
 - 3. Not fit for the kingdom (Luke 9:62).

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4. In the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity (Acts 8:23).
5. The dog turns to his own vomit, the sow to wallowing in mire (2 Peter 2:20-22).
6. Latter end worse than the beginning (2 Peter 2:20).

IV. What Are We to Do for the “Erring”?

- A. Pray for him (1 John 5:16).
- B. Exhort, admonish, and rebuke him (Acts 8:20-23) (Note: Simon’s sin was named, he was told his heart was not right, his condition was revealed, and he was told to repent and pray).
- C. Restore him (Galatians 6:1).
- D. Forgive him when he repents (1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8).
- E. Withdraw from him when he does not repent (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

V. What Must the “Erring” Do?

- A. Repent and pray (Acts 8:18-24).
- B. Confess his sins (1 John 1:9; 2 Samuel 12:13; Luke 15:21).
- C. Confession ought to be as open and public as the sin.

Conclusion:

- A. There is pardon for every wayward child of God who will repent and return to the God who loves you and to the church that misses you. †

Jess W. Nutter (1911-1997) was a well-known and highly-respected Gospel preacher, working primarily in Ohio and West Virginia, USA.

**We are here on earth, not
to see through others,
but to see others
through.**

poor Judas?

E. Claude Gardner

As long as one reads and believes in the inspiration of the Bible, he honestly cannot think or imagine that Judas and his conduct were misunderstood.

How does the Holy Spirit describe him? He was chosen as one of the original Twelve Apostles. He is called Judas Iscariot (Matthew 10:2). Judas was the treasurer for the group. He had "the bag." *"This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box, and he used to take what was put in it"* (John 12:6). He, along with the others, was well-trained by Christ. But his greed and temptation of thieving led him to commit the heinous sin of denial of the One who had so honored and befriended him. *"For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, 'Buy those things we need for the feast,' or that he*

should give something to the poor" (John 13:29, John 12:6). Judas' lust led him to betray Jesus, and to consort with the Lord's enemies for a mere 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave.



BIBLE CHARACTERS

Shortly, he changed his mind and wanted to return the money, but when the temple hierarchy would have no more to do with him, he committed suicide. The “blood money” was used to purchase a field for the burial of strangers.

“Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem, so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood” (Acts 1:18,19).

Judas is called “*the son of perdition*” (John 17:12). He went to “*his own place*” — Another was chosen “*to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place*” (Acts 1:25).

Contrary to these true facts, some scholars and theologians have sought to redeem Judas. The claim is made that he misunderstood what the chief priests intended to do with Jesus. Others say that, with the best of intentions, Judas was simply trying to “force” Jesus’ hand, to get Him to declare His Kingship while the exuberance of the people was high in His support.

These are false views of an

apostate. One influential professor argues, “We owe him [Judas] an enormous debt for having helped Jesus to accomplish God’s will. Why the church has turned against him so terribly badly is a mystery to me, and it also means that the church still hasn’t understood the meaning of Christ’s death” (from William Klassen’s book **Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus**).

Another professor wrote, “The Gospels are not historical documents, they’re theological documents. They’re trying to express faith, and the Judas character functions differently within each of those” (Ray Anderson in **The Gospel According to Judas**).

A third writer declares, “If there had never been a Judas, Jesus still would have been on the cross. We need to see Judas as a person who represents the terrible possibility of betrayal, but also the depths of God’s forgiveness and grace.”

Friends, let’s just rely on the accuracy of the inspired Word of God as it tells us about Judas, his conduct, and that by the wisdom and judgment of God, “*...he went to his own place.*” †

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Could Judas have been forgiven, if he had repented? (Colossians 2:13).



NOAH

Hans J. Dederscheck

Noah is one of the outstanding personalities of Genesis. His faith and works show his devotion to God, although he lived in a world of godlessness and evil. Unrighteousness had grown to such proportions that we are told "*...the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Genesis 6:5).

Noah must have been a lonely man since no one shared his faith except his family. He was divinely instructed with regard to God's purpose to punish and cleanse the world. Right here we see Noah's sincere faith demonstrated in obedience. The Lord told him to build a great ship with the dimensions of a modern ocean vessel, to save himself and his household from the

flood that would come upon the earth.

But this case of divine judgment is also related to God's plan of redemption. The flood of Noah's days is not simply a divine punishment — it is a demonstration of God's saving grace to the obedient. These events regarding the flood are powerfully related, along with God's plan to redeem posterity, and to fulfill the promises given to the generations before Noah.

Adam and Eve had been required to act under moral conditions of obedience. Their conduct came under condemnation. And in the intervening time leading up to Noah's day, human beings had fallen even more deeply into sin, such sin that the Lord had no choice but to destroy them. God promised, however, to save the obedient, righteous souls among mankind. Out of all the population, how many were acceptable? Only eight!

Noah was a man of righteousness, a man of faith. He must have been the laughing-stock of that godless people during the period of 120 years while he was building the ark. The apostle Peter says that Noah preached righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), and faithfully declared the coming doom.

What was special in Noah's life? His faith. He lived alone in a wicked world. He showed his faith by obey-

ing God's Word. Would you think it was easy to accept such a requirement of the Lord, to build a ship (ark) of such tremendous measurements, in spite of the fact that there is no indication he was near a large body of water, or that there had ever been rain, much less a flood? The voice of God speaking to Noah regarding a universal flood to destroy all flesh must not have been easy to believe. But for Noah, a man of faith, there was no problem. We may learn an excellent lesson from him: Christians can survive and bring forth good fruits for God in a world that is very similar to Noah's world.

"And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my beloved Son: hear him'" (Luke 9:35).
"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

"And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26,27). †

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Remember the Parchments

T. Pierce Brown

“When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments” (2 Timothy 4:13)

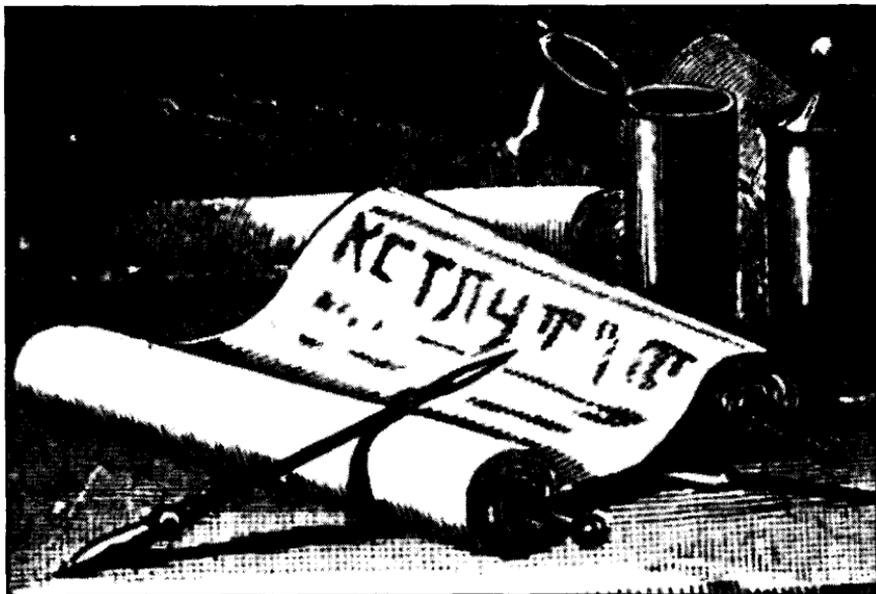
Near the close of his life, Paul gives Timothy some interesting instructions in 2 Timothy 4:13. He says, *“When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments”* (NIV). The KJV says “books”, but since the books of which he speaks were doubtless scrolls, we use the NIV in this case. Of course we do not know what books or parchments these were, but the fact suggests some worthwhile thoughts.

Some have assumed that since Paul was at the end of his life, he could not want these for his own use. Clarke says, “The books and parchments now sent for could not be for the apostle’s own use, as he was now on the eve of his martyrdom. He had probably intended to bequeath them to the faithful, that they might be preserved for the use of the church.” However, this is

merely an assumption, for no matter how short Paul’s remaining time might be, if he ever needed books and parchments, he may have wanted them now.

Our point in this article is that although Paul was inspired, there is no indication that his inspiration gave him information that he might have obtained in other ways. For example, an Athenian poet said, *“We are also his offspring”* (Acts 17:28). This was recorded by inspiration, but there is no reason to assume it was revealed by inspiration. There is little doubt that Paul as an educated man had read the Athenian poets. He also had apparently read the Cretan prophets (Titus 1:12) and did not need inspiration to reveal that they had said, “The Cretans are always liars”.

So whether Paul wanted these books and parchments for his own use or to have them to pass on to



others when he had departed, it seems apparent that he had taken them with him before and found them useful. If an inspired man as learned as Paul found that it was useful to have books and parchments, we should realize that we need to have knowledge as broad and deep as we are capable of handling, that we might better proclaim God's Word. We should try to have access to as many good books as our intellect can properly use.

Even if the parchments contained only Paul's own writings, or letters that he may have received from friends or churches, we still have the same lessons. Those things were very precious to him, and such

should be precious to us, whether for our own use, or to pass on to friends when we are gone. While each one of us should recognize that the Bible is the only book we need to find out what God wants us to do to be saved and live in a way that is pleasing to Him, we should not be either arrogant or stupid enough to think that nothing but inspired writing is of any value to us.

We should never substitute the learned opinions of man for God's Word, but not every jewel of value is a diamond. A pearl or a ruby may also have its proper place. †

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The Prophecies of Isaiah

Todd O'Donnell

"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, king of Judah" (Isaiah 1:1).

According to the very first verse of Isaiah, we can know when this man of God was prophesying: during the reigns of the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah. From historical records we find that these kings ruled from about 740 B.C. till 700 B.C. These facts are significant to the book of Isaiah because many of the predictions that he made (by inspiration of God) would be fulfilled hundreds of years later. There are 35 Messianic prophecies in the book of Isaiah alone, and a total of over 300 concerning the Messiah throughout the Bible.

We want to look at a handful of Isaiah's prophecies and trace their fulfillment in the New Testament. The impor-

ance of this study is seen when we read 2 Timothy 3:16,17, where the Bible claims to be inspired by God. If Isaiah had been only an ordinary



human being, there is no way he could have so accurately predicted so many things. The explanation for his ability to foretell future events is clearly understood in light of Biblical inspiration. God was the mind behind Isaiah's writings and prophecies.

Isaiah 2:2-4: *"In the last days."* This has reference to the Christian or New Testament age (Acts 2:17; 2 Peter 3:3). The "mountain" has reference to the church in which all nations (Jew and Gentile) would become one people (Ephesians 2:11-16). The Word would go forth from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Now look at Luke 24:46,47. Jesus shows that Isaiah 2:2-4 was to be fulfilled when the church was established. Take special note: *"Thus it is written..."* The events of verse 47 were written by Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 2:2-4 and were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the church was established and the Gospel went forth from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 7:14: This is one of the most famous prophecies by Isaiah. *"Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel."* The fulfillment is seen in (Matthew 1:22,23). How could Isaiah have known that a virgin would give birth, that the child would be a boy, and that he would be called Immanuel, which means

"God with us"? These things took place around 700 years later, so either Isaiah was good at guessing things, or he had some help from God. Obviously, he was inspired by God to write what he wrote.

Isaiah 52:13; 53:12: Christ was rejected by the Jews (Matthew 27:17-22). He took our sins upon Himself (1 Corinthians 15:3). He was scourged. He was put on the cross, and He was pierced. He kept silent before His accusers (Matthew 26:63). His grave was assigned with criminals because He was accused of being a criminal. He was with a rich man in His death in that He had an honorable burial (Matthew 27:57-61). He became a mediator for us (1 Timothy 2:5,6).

There is even more in this chapter that I have not brought out in this short study. But again, how was Isaiah so accurate in all that he said? It is unreasonable to conclude that he just guessed!

These are but a few of the prophecies found in Isaiah. There are others that do not refer to Christ, but have reference to the rise and fall of nations, such as Babylon in chapter 13. It can only build up our faith to study these prophecies and realize that we serve a mighty God Who has revealed His will to us. †

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But They Paid No Heed

Loy Mitchell

"The Lord spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no heed" (2 Chronicles 33:10).

Who was Manasseh and who were his people? Manasseh was king of Judah and his people were his subjects, the people of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for fifty-five years and did *"what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord"* (verses 1, 2).

Did the Lord have regard for this man and the people? Yes, He did. That is why He spoke to them. God wanted them to do His will. He had the desire that they be faithful servants of His. However, they paid no heed. They followed the abominable practices of the nations God had dispossessed. Manasseh erected altars to Balaam and worshipped the *"host of Heaven"* leading the people of Judah away from faith in the true God.

Did God punish Manasseh? Yes, He did. *"So the Lord brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, they captured Manasseh with spiked weapons, and bound him with fetters, and brought him to Babylon"* (verse 11). Sin has a penalty, and this man and his nation suffered.

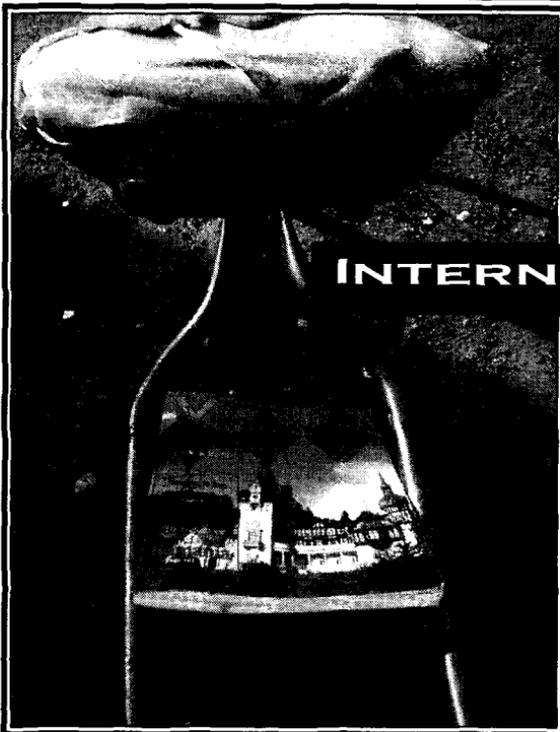
Did Manasseh repent? Yes, He did. *"In his distress he prayed to the Lord his God and sought to placate Him, and made his humble submission before the God of his fathers"* (verse 12).

Did God forgive him? Yes, He did. *"He prayed and God accepted his petition and heard his supplication. He brought him back to Jerusalem and restored him to the throne; and thus Manasseh learned that the Lord was God"* (verse 13).

Let us learn from this tragic story. Let us see the consequences of the sin in Manasseh's life, and determine to follow God's laws. Let us **heed** daily the Word of the Lord. Let Him speak to you as you read, study, and meditate upon that Word. Then do what he commands! When you find you have fallen, **repent! Pray!** God does forgive and restore. Let us do His will today. †

Loy Mitchell, former missionary to Zimbabwe, now lives in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.

EVANGELISM THROUGH



THE
VOICE
OF
TRUTH

INTERNATIONAL

Dear Brother in Christ,
REQUEST FOR *THE
VOICE OF TRUTH
INT.*

Warmest greetings to you all from the Legon Church of Christ. I am Conrad Kakraba and a 2nd year student at the University of Ghana. I became a member of the Lord's Church in 2004 and since then I have been abiding in the doctrine of Christ and His apostles as

The Voice of Truth International on the back of a bicycle in Ghana. Thousands of copies of each issue are sent free of charge to many countries of the world.

well as preaching the good news to others. My seeing the Light is the greatest thing that has ever happened in my life. I am even making plans to establish the church in my village after graduating.

Nevertheless, my problem is that, I do not have enough materials to

read inasmuch as I would now like to preach. Recently, I met a brother with a copy of 'THE VOICE OF TRUTH INT'. With my avid desire for reading, I devoured every little bit of information in the magazine that same day. In fact, **I couldn't help admitting I hadn't read a religious magazine with so rich a content cutting across all the facets of Christianity. I was bent on getting a copy of the magazine but I couldn't. I therefore borrowed that very copy and guess what, it is a POWERFUL instrument for evangelism!** In view of the fact that many students give excuses such as not having the time to listen to you preaching, **I now give that mag to them to read and ask me questions with regards to what they have read and that opens up discussions on the Bible.** I NOW HAVE A LOT OF PROSPECTS I'm studying with and some are going to give themselves for baptism in no time.

I would be very grateful if you could include my name on the mailing list. More especially, if you could get some back issues (including the one on GHANA). Please do send them to me.

I am looking forward anxiously to receiving my lovely copies of THE VOICE OF TRUTH INT. May the good Lord continue to strengthen you all and shower His blessings on you the more for the good work you are doing. Bye for now.

Yours fraternally,
Conrad. (Ghana)

Dear brethren,

I sincerely appreciate you for the books you send to me titled 'THE VOICE OF THE TRUTH TERNATIONAL' volume 42. I prayed that may the Lord almighty continue to bless you and ministry, so that you can always send books of this kind for the growth of his kingdom.

I want to use this opportunity to also please ask for other volume 1 to 30 or there about. Because those ones you send are helping tremendously in the growth of the church. So, please send me some more.

I shall be very grateful if my letter is considered and my request is granted.

Yours in the Lord
Evan. Jonathan S. Endurance (Nigeria)

J. C. and Betty, enclosed is a \$15.00 check. I want you to send me as many copies of your "The Voice of Truth International", Volume thirty-

three, as the money will buy. **This is the best “follow-up” booklet I have seen for my WBS students who advance to that point. It appears from the front cover to inside articles that it will go over well for my students.** The articles are great reading. In Christian Love, Roy C. Watson (Mississippi)

Dear brother in Christ

I am a brother and a minister of the gospel of Christ in the Lord's church and have read much about your writings from the books called **Voice of truth international**. **In fact, they are found to be very wonderful.** I am young in the ministry and therefore lack so many experiences, so I have found out that, **if I can do the work effectively, I need to read a lot. But where are the necessary materials to read?** In short I want to ask for your favor if you can help me with some useful materials like books, Study Bibles, and all that you can do to help me.

Yours in Christ.

Joshua. (Nigeria)

Bro. Choate,

I thank you very much. I have received my copies of **The Voice of Truth International** and **The role of Woman** in the Church by Betty Choate. God bless you.

I do not have means to be getting regular supply of The Voice of Truth International so I am pleading with you if you could be sending me the subsequent copies you will be publishing. The book written by Sister Betty has done great work as I used to put down false teachings when the women were going to preach in the public.

Thanks,

Maurice M. Onumah (Ghana)

Beloved Brother,

Greetings. Grace and Peace from our Father and Lord Jesus Christ.

I am Jojo A. Ramos from the Midtown Church of Christ, Baguio City, Philippines. I have been reading the magazine **“The Voice of Truth International”**, and had been using it in expounding God's word. I have also been involved in expounding God's word thru newspaper articles under my column, **“Christian Living”** in the local newspaper, speaking to seekers and also in our congregation paper.

As of the moment, with the help of my brethren here, we are opening a "Family Life Center" right in the heart of the city, to be used as a Bible study center and counseling center for seekers.

Our province "Benguet" is a mountainous region and as of this present only 7 churches of Christ had been fully self-supporting including the Philippine Bible College.

We need a lot of materials, especially from the brotherhood since only a few can be acquired here where mostly others had flooded our brethrens with their own interpretations and influences making preaching a difficult process.

Thus my appeal, brother, for help.

I am very willing to pay whatever amount in my own capacity to furnish our "Family Life Center" with your magazine, if possible ALL Volumes, With discount please.

I need your connection and knowledge concerning how we can avail of such precious gifts coming from God. We need all the help here brother due to the difficulties in preaching God's word to my province.

I need help, brother. The war here is getting more difficult every day and many have fallen.

Thank you, Brother, for hearing me.

In His love, Jojo Ramos (Philippines)

Good morning to you. I'm hermann djiongo Leutze from DSchang church of christ in the west province of Cameroon. I have had an opportunity to read one of the book **The Voice of Truth International** and i want to know if it will be possible to receive the other books.

God bless

Hermann (Cameroons)

Dear Brethren

I greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I would like to thank you for the hard work that you are doing to carry out the great commission in trying to reach the lost of every nation with the saving gospel of our Lord.

I have been reading several old copies of **the Voice of Truth International that belongs to a friend and I have been so blessed by them. I was so disappointed when the owner took them back after I had read them. You see in our country we have so very few sources that**

have wholesome gospel teachings. There is widespread denominationalism and at times it becomes difficult to teach them some Bible precepts without literature. So I was requesting if you could add me to your mailing list for future copies of this wholesome publication. I would appreciate if you could send even some old copies.

I would like to say keep up the good work.

Tapiwa Kuzamba (Zimbabwe)

Dear Saints,

I am so very happy to tell you that yesterday, i collected from the Igarra post office M-Bags of gospel materials. Of these 5 contained copies of the **Voice of Truth International**, J C Choate- volume 45 and 46.

I thank you all and i thank God Almighty for these wonderful resouces for the gospel work in which i and many other evangelits are involved. May God take the glory for the prudent use of these materials-which has cost money to produce, post and receive!!

I am yours in Christian Love

Sylvester A Imogoh (Nigeria)

DEAR SIR Choat

iam the preacher of church of christ. sir iam working at gajapati dist in orissa state. **i see your books at my friend. it was very intrest to read. i ask my friend that book to keep with me and read every day, so my friend give me your adress, so iam request you sir please send me your books that i may do very great job in the future.** please pray for me

YOUR BROTHER IN CHRIST

ARATH PANI (India)

Dear brother in Christ J. C. Choate.

I write from the city of Matamoros, Tamaulipas Mexico and there am he/she received a copy of their Magazine and I wanted to subscribe to her, but regrettably in Mexico we don't have the handling of checks like it is common that in the united states they make it for I want to request it information to know like I can send my subscription here to the magazine. **I also love him that this magazine contains a great material that builds many sibilings of the congregation where I meet.** God blesses them Brother.

P. S. apologizes for English but I am using a translating Spanish-English and for consequence he/she has some errors. (Mexico)

Sir, I am a brother of church of Christ Yaounde, cameroon. I came across your Biblical literature which really helped to clarified some of the ambiguities I have been going through. It is from this backdrop that i am soliciting for some of yur documents to be sent to me so that i can use them for evagelism in the university. i am a lecturer in the university of yaounde.

sir, while waiting to hearing from you, i remain, yours brother in church; my names are:mbeh adolf tanyi.(Cameroon)

Dear Brother,

Accept greetings from Cameroon. Thank you, for the wonderful work you are doing for the Lord.

I write to request free Christian books and study materials written or published by you for oue edification, Christian development and evangelism. You are awre, Brother that Brethren in the third world lack the talent, means and equipment to produce your kind of Christian Literature, and as such we must depend very much on our American Brethren of talent and means for our edification, Christian development and evangelism. A few of your books in the hands of a few Brethren here is knowledge in Christian living expanded or extended further away from home. If you will, Brother, mail materials to the address below!

May God bless you. Thank you

Yours in Christian Love,

Ndiba Noah Ndifon (Cameroons)

Dr. Brother,

Greetings from Bro Ch Prasanth kumar Church of Christ RAJAM. India I lead five coc congregations in my area. we ara praying for your health &work Thank you so much for your literature support. your materials was very Use full to us in teachings&planting churches in my area. So I would Like to know more about bible knowledge. please send the Magzine of THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL in English & Books to me. This is my humble request to you.

Prasanth kumar (India)

Dear brother Choate:

Maranatha! I saw your web site, and one of our brothers here,they have

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

your magazine LA VOZ INTERNATIONAL in spanish, and it seems to me a very effective tool to share with our contacts like students of WEI and WBS too.

I am graduate in SIBI 1976, we are working for the Lord, selfsupporting, for this reason I don't know if you like to send at least 5 books of this magazines in spanish please. Pray for the Perù for Christ and Lima too.

Another hand, I had some articles that I can to send by files for your consideration, also to help you in correction in spanish of America, because there are Spanish for Spain, for people inside of USA like different, also I can to make corrections or translations from english, free charges, because is the Lord's work firstly. I would like to learn about you, and God bless you in your ministry overseas.

Your servant in Christ, Julio Valverde (Peru)

Dear Mr. J. C. Choate,

Melody Redd here. I am not sure you remember me. I live in Bitburg Germany and have written to you before.

The men of our congregation have asked me to write to you and ask how much it would cost us to get 10 copies of '**The Voice of Truth International**' for our church family here. We only have 8 families at this time. Five are consistent to worship services. We were wondering if we could get 10 copies each quarterly issue (vs the usual 35). We have been praying for more membership to move into this area. We have three families that will be gone by June. We believe **the Voice of Truth** will be an inspiration and strength for us.

I am grateful for your time and any help you may be able to give to us.

Yours truly, sister Melody Redd

Bitburg Church of Christ (Germany).

Brethren,

If you received such requests every day, what would you do? These are letters that tear our hearts and move us to keep asking our American brethren for help. Your subscriptions and contributions enable us to have the funds to print and mail more copies of THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL to those in other countries who have so little in the way of printed materials, other than the Bible.

Please keep these appeals in your heart, pray for them, and help to the extent that you are able. Thank you. J.C. Choate

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We Are Calling for Your Help Now!!! It is Urgent!!!

"I am a Christian, preaching and teaching the word of God to others. I have one of your books here, entitled BIBLE THEMES, which I have read for almost 6 times. I have no other book to read apart from the Bible. Please, I kindly request for more books that you may have at the moment — even second-hand books I will appreciate very much. Martin Mazzai (from Zambia)"

Brethren, are you listening? We are getting many calls from our brethren in Africa and Asia, begging for **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL** and other books. Those people are starved for Christian literature. Will we hear them or will we deny them the spiritual food they crave? It is up to you.

With our editions in English, Spanish, (Telugu and Tamil in India), we are printing around 70,000 copies of this quarterly magazine, but our goal is to reach 100,000 copies of each issue (we wish it could be a million or more!). With that volume they will cost only 50 cents a copy. Our printer will package and address them for \$3.00 per bag, and then the postage for 35 copies in an M-Bag is \$11.00. This means that we can print and ship one box of 35 copies to a foreign address for approximately \$35.00, providing literature for 35 people. If you send \$35.00 a month, covering the cost of 12 boxes a year or 3 per quarter — 420 magazines — you will be enabling 420 X 10 people to read 112 pages of Gospel message in a year. That's 4200 people you can be instrumental in teaching with this small contribution and small effort on your part! Think of the good that would do! Surely, most individuals and congregations can spare that much for the spreading of the Gospel.

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

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

 To speed up your announcement that you want to help, call us at 662-283-1192 or send your E-Mail to

Choate@WorldEvangelism.org

[Web site: WorldEvangelism.org](http://WorldEvangelism.org)

Dear Brethren:

I want to subscribe to the quarterly magazine, **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 for four issues, or \$20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. ***My address is given below.***

I want to order the complete set of volumes in print (50 issues) for the reduced price of \$2.00 per copy. ***My address is given below.***

Please send special prices for WBS teachers and their students.

I want to **MAKE A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION** of **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 for four issues, or \$20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. ***The address is given below.***

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

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

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

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

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Springfield, MO 65808

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search — 50 (from page 20)

1. The island of Malta.
2. They showed them great kindness, kindling a fire for them, because of the cold and the rain.
3. A viper came out of the sticks and fastened onto his hand.
4. *A murderer; escaped the sea; justice; live.*
5. That he must be a god.
6. He received them in his home and showed them great courtesy and hospitality.
7. He healed them; the islanders honored them in many ways and provided for their needs when they departed from the island.
8. Alexandria; Syracuse; Rhegium; Puteoli.
9. It is likely that they landed on Monday and stayed over in order to be with them on the Lord's day, as Paul had done in Acts 20:6,7.
10. Appii Forum and Three Inns.
11. He was allowed to rent a house and to live there with his soldier guard.
12. They argued among themselves about the things he was teaching.
13. The hope of Israel.
14. Things concerning the kingdom of God.
15. *"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it."*
16. He was preaching *"...the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him."*



Nadab and
Abihu

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

